"The Group Areas Act affected us all": Apartheid and Socio-Religious Change in the Cape Town Muslim Community, South Africa[1]

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Oral history interviews with elders of the Cape Town Muslim community were conducted in order to record and explore the socio-religious changes that occurred over the last century. Our research explored experiences related to culture, society, language, religion, education, traditions, family life, dress, food and values. The primary event that was consistently identified by elders as a focal cause of change was the Group Areas Act (1950), which was a policy of the South African Apartheid government that resulted in the forced relocation of many members of the Muslim community in and around Cape Town, South Africa. This paper explores how individuals experienced the Group Areas Act at the time of its implementation and how elders understand this Act as contributing to long-lasting socio-religious change. Rather than draw conclusions, point to causes of change and outline specific outcomes of the Act, we end this article with diverse, inconclusive and debated experiences: a reflection of the oral histories of the Cape Town Muslim community.

Introduction

> "…change, even when benevolent, can be dangerous."[2]

Social and religious change are on-going processes; individuals and communities do not exist in static socio-religious states nor do they experience change at a constant rate. Instead, change occurs at different times, places, rates and in relation to a range of direct and indirect shifts. This article explores socio-religious change in the Muslim community of Cape Town, South Africa, with specific reference to impact of the Group Areas Act, which was first established in 1950 to enforce racial geospatial segregation in residential life and business

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[2] Alexander Leighton and Robert J. Smith, "A Comparative Study of Social and Cultural Change" Proceedings of the *American Philosophical Society*, 99/2 (1952): 82.

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activities. Those who participated in and contributed to this study fully recognized the diverse array of push and pull factors causing change within their community, however, the Group Areas Act was consistently identified as a key cause of change, and is therefore our central point of reference in this article.

The focus of this article is the experiences of those who lived through the changes directly and indirectly caused by the Group Areas Act. The diverse experiences are presented not as contested truths, but as unique perspectives that arose from specific contexts. As a result, statements that appear to conflict or contradict one another are not viewed as being problematic, rather as multiple valid experiences. As one of the elders stated: "there are also different opinions."[3] Our research process relied upon qualitative and ethnographic methods, and seeks to present the voices of the community members themselves. We believe that there are no people more informed about socio-religious changes than those who experienced them directly; as children, parents, siblings, grandparents, caregivers and beyond, each of these voices reflect expertise in their own respective right. In recognizing, prioritizing and honouring those experiences and expertise, we also recognize that the collection, analysis and writing of this work are influenced by our own ideas, as are all works of this nature.[4] It is our hope that qualitative works such as this will help to address the lack of research about Muslims in Cape Town.[5]

Methodology

The objective of this article is to explore socio-religious change within the Cape Town Muslim community in South Africa. The primary purpose of presenting these oral histories is to collect and honour the lived experiences of the community. While secondary sources are utilized, we draw upon this material to enhance and support the experiences of the elders rather than critically analyze or deconstruct their experiences. The in-depth semi-structured interviews provided a wealth of information, spanning hundreds of pages of content. The material presented in this article reflects that which addressed the Group Areas Act, and those issues that are related to it.

During 2011, twenty-five interviews were conducted with elders from the Cape Town Muslim community (eleven males, thirteen females). Participants represented different socio-economic backgrounds, with some struggling to meet

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[3] Elder 01, male.

[4] Francis L. K. Hsu, "The Cultural Problem of the Cultural Anthropologist," *American Anthropologist* 81/3 (1979): 517-532.

[5] As noted in: Sindre Bangstad, *Global Flows, Local Appropriations: Facets of Secularisation and Re-Islamization among Contemporary Cape Muslims* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

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daily needs and others from the middle and upper class. Each of the participants was around the age of sixty, or older, from the Sunni Muslim community, and had spent most of their life in Cape Town. Participation was voluntary and verbal consent was recorded after explaining the objectives of the study. Interviews were conducted in English or Afrikaans, based upon the preference of the participant, hereafter referred to as elders, a term used to convey respect and as a means of honouring the expert knowledge these individuals each have. This ought not be equated with religious status, as in the terms *shaykh*, saint or *imam*. While some participants are called *shaykh* in the community, this is in reference to the linguistic meaning of the term: their age and experience, and a sign of respect. It is not, in these instances, a reference to religious leadership.

Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed, and translated if required. The interviews were conducted by a female member of the Cape Town Muslim community, who also completed the first translation from Afrikaans into English. The translations were then checked by one of the authors in order to verify accuracy. Positionality is important. We recognize that the interview process, being conducted by a female member of the community, fosters a form of bias towards the religious experience, as opposed to an outside, non-Muslim interviewer with whom the religious experience may have been deemphasized. We also recognize that the analysis and writing done by the authors is influenced by their initial interest in socio-cultural change, and may have be presented differently had the research questions been shaped by a different set of interests.

The initial objective of the research was to conduct a qualitative study about change, covering a range of socio-cultural and religious issues, including: language, education, traditions, household roles and responsibilities, parenting, manners, dress, food and values. The interviews were arranged assuring anonymity to those that participated because some of the issues discussed were sensitive; for example, elders spoke about their family history of enslavement and members of their lineage bearing children after having been sexually assaulted. In upholding this agreement, all names and identifying points of reference have been altered or removed.

When this research project began, it was an academic endeavor that sought to understand how and why change occurs. During the data collection process, and when we shared some of the findings with members of the community, the feedback took the research project in a new direction. The elders that participated felt that their history and experiences had not been recorded in a fashion of this nature, for some they had been purposely neglected or ignored. The stories it captured, bringing about warm-hearted smiles and laughter to tears of pain, resulted in a return to the data, a revisiting of the objectives, a revision of the

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research questions and a search for platforms that would enable the experiences of the community to be reflected in the publication.

The Cape Town Muslim Community

Cape Town has been shaped by distinct and diverse cultures, religions and people.[6] It is, however, beyond the scope of this article to present an overview of these historical, ethnic, linguistic, religious and political components. Due to constraints of space, we recognize that many important issues are insufficiently explored, such as the history of slavery, colonialism and Apartheid. Nonetheless, this contextualization of the Muslim community of Cape Town does emphasize some of its unique features, history and political engagement, including the Muslim community's existence as a minority community over the long term, with many of its members having roots in slavery. While facing legal and societal challenges to its existence, the community thrived and established institutions under colonial and Apartheid governments. For most of its history the community developed in relative isolation from the wider Muslim world.

The Muslim community has remained a minority in Cape Town since the founding of the modern city by the Dutch East India Company in 1652. The area that became Cape Town has deep roots in human history, with archeological sites indicating habitation for thousands of years.[7] With the arrival of the Dutch East India Company, the local residents of the area, the Khoisan people, were stripped of their land and rights.[8] Muslims were brought to Cape Town as slaves by the Dutch East India Company, the first thought to have been Malays from Batavia being punished with hard labour for insurrection against Dutch rule.[9] The Dutch East India Company continued to bring slaves from the East Indies, Bengal, Madagascar and East Africa, many of whom were Muslim and joined the growing Muslim community. To this day many community members strongly identify with one or more of these respective origins, although very few retain physical links with their places of origin.

The first Muslim immigrants who arrived are thought to have been from Indonesia, and were called *Mardycka*, meaning freedom. Others were political exiles, called *Orang Cayen*. Slaves, immigrants and political exiles were forbidden from publically practicing Islam, an order that was first issued in 1642

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[6] Ralph J. Bunche, "Review: Culture Conflict in South Africa," *The Journal of Negro Education* 6/4 (1937): 639-642.

[7] Deano D. Stynder, Fiona Brock, Judith C. Sealy, Sarah Wurz, Alan G. Morris and Thomas P. Volman, "A mid-Holocene AMC 14 C Date for the Presume Upper Pleistocene Human Skeleton from Peers Cave, South Africa," *Journal of Human Evolution* 56 (2009): 433.

[8] John Western, "Africa if Coming to the Cape," *Geographical Review* 91/4 (2001): 617-640.

[9] South African History Online, "History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology" (2012): www.sahistory.org.za/archive/1652-1699, accessed 19 January 2016.

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with the stated punishment being death.[10] The ban continued to be the official law until 1804.[11] Overt oppression and discrimination did not cease with the change of law; for example, an 1856 newspaper mentions Muslim marriages being deemed unlawful, Muslims being denied citizenship, that Muslims could not hold property and that they were unable to leave their homes without a pass, amongst other daily challenges.[12]

Racism was a social and legal reality in Cape Town. Occupations were limited, housing and health conditions were of poorer quality for 'coloured' people and as a result rates of poverty much higher.[13] The 'coloured' community experienced "gross disparities" in accessing social services.[14] Such realities did not discourage Muslim activism and social engagement, ensuring that the Muslim community has been a "recognizable part of the political landscape" for centuries.[15] When Muslim organizations played an important role in the struggle against Apartheid, such as the Africa Muslims Agency, Qibla and Call of Islam,[16] this was a continuation of its history of political engagement.

Even when legally barred from public practice, the community established institutions that served its own members as well as the wider community. Islamic schools have been operating in Cape Town for over 200 years, and it has been suggested that Muslims wrote the first publication in Afrikaans, an Arabic-Afrikaans work.[17] Saartjie van die Kaap and Sameda were two women in the 1800s that secured their own freedom and supported the establishment of mosques, one of which many of the elders who participated in this study have attended.[18] Haji Sullaiman Shah Mahomed, who arrived in 1882, established a chair of Islamic Studies and Arabic at the University of Cape Town. Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman served as a City Councilor from 1904 until 1910. In 1945 the Muslim Judicial Council was established, an organization with which Nelson

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[10] Esack, *Quran, Liberation & Pluralism*, 45.

[11] South African History Online, "History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology" (2012): www.sahistory.org.za/archive/1804-1899, accessed 19 January 2016..

[12] Esack, *Quran, Liberation & Pluralism*: 45.

[13] Shamil Jeppie, "Leadership and Loyalties: The Imams of Nineteenth Century Colonial Cape Town, South Africa." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26 (1996): 139-162.

[14] Harry T. Phillips, "An Inter-Racial Study in Social Conditions and Infant Mortality in Cape Town," *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 35 (1957): 11.

[15] Aslam Fataar, "Discourse, Differentiation, and Agency: Muslim Community Schools in Postapartheid Cape Town," *Comparative Education Review* 49 (2005): 25.

[16] Gorkeh Gamal Nkrumah, "Islam in Southern Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 52 (1991): 94-97.

[17] South African History Online, "History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology."

[18] Achmat Davids, "Muslim Women in the History of Cape Town" (2010): http://www.livingislam.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=722:muslim-women-in-the-history-of-cape-town&catid=87:history&Itemid=445, accessed 19 January 2016.

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Mandela communicated while he was imprisoned at Robben Island.[19] The active and engaged political role Muslims played in the past continues to this day; recent examples include: Ebrahim Patel being Minister of Economic Development, Yunus Carrim being Deputy Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Naledi Pandor being Minister of Education and Minister of Science and Technology, Kader Asmal being Minister of Education, the anti-Apartheid activist Dullah Omar being Minister of Justice and Minister of Transport, Lieutenant-General Anwar Dramat being head of the national intelligence agency, and Ebrahim Rasool being the ANC leader for the Western Cape and serving as an Ambassador to the United States.[20] In light of its history and small minority population, the role of Muslims in Cape Townian society is noteworthy.

Being different from both the 'white' and 'black' communities, Muslims were referred to as 'Malays,' despite being from diverse backgrounds.[21] According to available statistics, the Muslim community in Cape Town remained relatively small for the first century and a half, however grew significantly throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Table 1), having one thousand members at the beginning of the century, at least twelve thousand by mid-century and one hundred and twenty thousand by 1969. The rapid population increase is thought to have been driven by immigration and conversion. The shifting composition of the 'Asiatic' people in South Africa, who were at one time seventy percent Hindu[22] and recently only forty percent,[23] supports these claims of transition. In recent decades, however, the Muslim population of South Africa has grown only slightly faster than the national rate; 1.2% in 1960 and 1.5% in 2001.[24] The current population of Muslims in Cape Town, not all of whom are considered 'Malays' or consider themselves to be 'Malays', exceeds 500,000. These official figures, however, appear low when compared to other figures that

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[19] Esack, *Quran, Liberation & Pluralism*, 7.

[20] Institute for Security Studies "South African Crime Quarterly" 39 (2012): www.issafrica.org/crimehub/uploads/SACQ_39_March_2012.pdf, accessed 19 January 2016; South African Government Information "Leaders" (2013): www.info.gov.za/leaders/index.htm; Abdulkader Tayob, "Muslim Political Space in South Africa: Imaging a Local Ummah" (1998): http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/religion/documents/ARISA/1998_8.pdf, accessed 19 January 2016.

[21] Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Black Ethnicities, Communities and Political Expression in Lake Victorian Cape Town," *The Journal of African History* 36/3 (1995): 443-465.

[22] Edward Higgins, "The Sociology of Religion in South Africa," *Archieves de Sociologie des Religions* 16e/32 (1971): 143-164.

[23] Statistics South Africa, "Mid-year Population Estimates" (2011): http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022011.pdf, accessed 19 January 2016.

[24] Edward Higgins, "The Sociology of Religion in South Africa"; Statistics South Africa "Population Census" (2001): http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/RSAPrimary.pdf, accessed 19 January 2016.

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have been mentioned on political and media platforms.[25] Although not always the case, many members of the Muslim community are labeled as being a part of the 'coloured'[26] segment of society. These simplistic categories are challenged by the diversity of the ethnic composition of the Muslim community. Within that diversity, however, Muslims are united in their identity as co-religionists; the majority (79%) of Muslims in Cape Town self-identify as Muslim, as opposed to any other category.[27]

Table 1. Cape Town Muslim Community Population[28]

1800	1,000
1840	6,000
1854	8,000
1867	12,000-14,000
1969	120,000
2014	500,000

As this history makes clear, those who are identified as 'Malay' or 'Cape Malay' are not limited to those of Malay heritage. Additionally, some who may be of Malay heritage do not self-identify with that label. As a result, this article does not use this descriptive term, opting for a more general and inclusive description of Muslims living in Cape Town. The background of the elders that contributed to this research exemplifies this. Several of the interviewees converted to Islam in their youth, a number of others are second or third generation Muslims, whose parents or grandparents converted to Islam in Cape Town. The locations from which the elders traced their roots included: England, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, Mauritius, Scotland, St. Helena, Syria, Tanzania, Yemen, Zimbabwe and indigenous to southern Africa. These

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[25] For example: IOL "ANC vows to 'take back the Cape'" (2012): m.iol.co.za/article/view/s/11/a/239901, accessed 19 January 2016.

[26] When used in this work, terms of this nature are quoted as the authors believe them arbitrary, racist and discriminatory. However, these terms continue to be used in South Africa, such as in the Employment Equality Act and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act. As legal terms and common terms in South Africa, these labels are used in the interviews, and when that is the case additional quotation marks have not been added for the purposes of readability.

[27] Yusuf da Costa, "Muslims in Greater Cape Town: A Problem of Identity," *The British Journal of Sociology* 45/2 (1994): 235-246.

[28] South African History Online, "History of Muslims in South Africa: A Chronology"; Jeppie, "Leadership and Loyalties: The Imams of Nineteenth Century Colonial Cape Town, South Africa." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 26 (1996): 139-162; Esack, *Quran, Liberation & Pluralism*, 24.

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roots trace back to different periods of time, but demonstrate the uniqueness of each individual experience and family history.

The Group Areas Act

Nearly every facet of life in South Africa was influenced by the policies of Apartheid; physical, social, cultural, political and economic.[29] The Groups Areas Act of 1950 was one of the means the National Party sought to racially segregate living, working and recreational space.[30] The Population and Registration Act, also of 1950, classified all South Africans into one of three racial groups and enabled the Group Areas Act to be implemented.[31]

Some scholars have suggested that the existence, position and power of the 'coloured' community was one of the primary reasons for the development of the legislation; a means to answer the 'Asiatic question.'[32] While the origins and impetuses of the Act are debated, the outcome is not. The "savagery of forced removals experienced by non-white communities from 1958 onwards resulted in Muslims being uprooted from their ancestral homes and disconnected from their mosques, the centres of Muslim community life."[33] Muslims were not the only ones to face the brunt of this legislation, however their experiences are the focus of this study. The history and experiences of other communities is beyond the scope of the current objectives; the exclusion of others ought not be viewed as a means of emphasizing one experience over another, these are one collection of experiences amidst many.

While the Group Areas Act had specific intended outcomes, it also resulted in a range of unintended and unexpected impacts. Directed change can, and has, affected areas that were not considered or planned for,[34] even fostering

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[29] Brij Maharaj, "Apartheid, Urban Segregation, and the Local State: Durban and the Group Areas Act in South Africa," *Urban Geography* 18/2 (1997): 135.

[30] Kevin Parry and Amanda van Eeden, "Measuring Racial Residential Segregation at Different Geographic Scales in Cape Town and Johannesburg," *South African Geographical Journal* 97/1(2015): 31.

[31] Deborah Posel, "What's in a Name? Racial Categorisations under Apartheid and their After Life," *Transformation* 47 (2001): 50-74.

[32] Uma S. Mesthrie, "Tinkering and Tampering: A Decade of the Group Areas Act," *South African Historical Journal* 28/1 (1993): 177-202; Hamilton Southworth, "Strangling South Africa's Cities: Resistance to Group Areas in Durban during the 1950s," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 24 (1991): 4; Wilmot James, "Group Areas and the Nature of Apartheid," *South African Sociological Review* 5/1 (1992): 53.

[33] Farid Esack, *Quran, Liberation & Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 30.

[34] Robert F. Maher, "Social Structure and Cultural Change in Papua," *American Anthropologist* 62 (1960): 593-602.

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change that is opposite to what was intended.[35] The Act was part of the wider Apartheid system based on racial segregation and 'separate development.' It regulated where people could live and own land, which was a primary mechanism through which Apartheid forcibly relocated millions of people, some being relocated on multiple occasions.[36] During this process, communities were divided and families were broken apart. Disorganization and demoralization resulted from the new realities; not knowing one's neighbours, not knowing how to get to work, not knowing how to deal with new financial burdens, and not knowing where children would attend school and obtain religious education. Nearly every component of life was disrupted. The Act caused more "uncertainty, anxiety, hardship and resentment than any other measure" of the time.[37]

On an individual level, the implementation of the Act was extremely traumatic and every elder spoke about his or her experiences. While some outlined detailed experiences, others simply stated that this injustice took place; that "we all had to move out"[38] and that the "Group Areas Act forcibly removed all the coloured people."[39] The focus upon the Act and the traumas it created is further enhanced as elders have witnessed the intergenerational impacts of it.[40] For some, the details were too difficult to share. For others, the sharing of these experiences was an important part of explaining why and how change took place.

Societal Context & the Groups Areas Act

> "I don't know why but would really like to find out. You see the change but you don't know why."[41]

Oppression of 'coloured' and 'black' members of society did not begin or end with the Group Areas Act. Many of the elders who contributed to this research, who were around the age of sixty at the time of the interviews, understood their

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[35] Bernard Siegel, "Supplement: Some Recent Development in Studies of Social and Cultural Change," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 363 (1966): 137-153.

[36] Charmaine Mceachern, "Mapping the Memories: Politics, Place and Identity in the District Six Museum, Cape Town," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 4/3 (1998): 501.

[37] Muriel Horrell, *The Group Areas Act: Its Effect on Human Beings* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1956: 25); cited in: Karen L. Harris, "'Accepting the Group, but Not the Area': The South African Chinese and the Group Areas Act," *South African Historical Journal* 40/1 (1999): 179.

[38] Elder 08, female.

[39] Elder 05, female.

[40] Susan Moses, "The Impact of Neighbourhood-Level Factors on Children's Everyday Lives, Well-Being and Identity: A Qualitative Study of Children Living in Ocean View, Cape Town," *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 32 (2006): 106.

[41] Elder 01, male.

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roots to be linked with slavery; "that time everyone came to Cape Town as slaves."[42] Although "the old people never spoke about it" their parents and grandparents were "forced to work in the fields and in the mountains. They were all taken to the slave huts. The Germans and all the sailors all came and raped the women."[43]

All members of the Muslim community experienced racism. The manifestation of racism evolved over time, with the Group Areas Act being one of them, but not the only one. Other legislation included: Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, Population Registration Act of 1950, Natives Act of 1952, Separate Amenities Act of 1953, Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, amongst others.[44]

> In terms of education, the white man restricted us. If you learnt or knew too much, you went to jail. If you said anything, you went to jail. They just kept you at a certain level in terms of work. You couldn't learn more or get promoted or earn more. That is how the white man curbed us. The white man was always on top, we [the 'coloured' community] in the middle and the blacks at the bottom. It's only now [at the turn of] this millennium that it was changed…They would brainwash us with cartoons or jokes of the white man being smarter and people of colour being dumb. They just kept us on a certain level.[45]

> There were certain things they wanted to do but they could not because they would be arrested. My parents did the best they could. They mostly went to the Northern suburbs. If they went to the city centre and stared in the window of the shops too long, they would be labeled as thieves. They could not walk on the pavement, which were reserved for the whites, they had to walk in the road. If you wanted to buy things at a shop, you had to go through the back because the front was reserved for whites only.[46]

For many, the limitations and regulations resulted in direct and indirect hardships in daily life, including imprisonment.

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[42] Elder 21, female.

[43] Elder 01, male.

[44] Michael Stent, "The Pillars of Apartheid," *The Legacy of Apartheid* edited by J. Harker. (London: Guardian, 1994), 53-65; cited in Gay Morris, "Own-Made in the (Post-)New South Africa: A Study of Theatre Originating from Selected Townships in the Vicinity of Cape Town" doctoral Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010.

[45] Elder 07, male.

[46] Elder 07, male.

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That time during the apartheid era we were picked up by police vans for being at the wrong beach. We were put in jail for that and our fathers had to come and take us out. It was quite a big deal back then.[47]

At night when we went home to Cape Town during the Apartheid years with my daughters and two sons, we took the bus past nine at night. We weren't allowed to take the E4 buses, except the Netherlands people that were the last bus that time. The bus was empty at the bottom then still we weren't allowed to sit downstairs. My wife was pregnant and the driver still says we must go upstairs even though my kids are asleep. Even though my children were asleep I had to wake them up. No matter how late we come from Mowbray we still forced to sit upstairs. I still have vivid memories of Apartheid.[48]

Most families struggled to make ends meet and lived in entrenched poverty. They encountered legal, social and political challenges in their daily lives. Families survived on 'foods that stretch,' with meat considered a luxury that was only eaten on holidays. At the same time, almost all recall a more integrated, interconnected and interdependent community wherein the closeness was not bound by religious affiliation, but through a mutual sense of concern for one another. They thrived as a community. Extended families tended to live together, often in small homes that were not well equipped. Roles and responsibilities were allotted according to gender and age. Some women worked outside of the home, as teachers and launderers. The elders recognized the co-existence of difficulties and injustices posed by racist practices and policies of the day as well as the societal conditions that fostered a safer environment, one wherein community members experienced far less crime than what followed the Group Areas Act.

The Coming of the Act

The implementation of the Group Areas Act was not uniform nor was it done in all places at the same time. This was partially due to ones location, but also socio-economic status. Some were given notice and tried to negotiate their relocation while others were removed forcibly and without notice.

When Apartheid came, we had to move out of Cape Town and the Separate Amenities Act came into place. We had to move. We were from the people that did not want to move. We stayed until the last in District

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[47] Elder 09, female.
[48] Elder 04, male.

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6.[49] They really put us out, my father said. Around voting time, a taxi from the DA [Democratic Alliance][50] would come around and pick my father up. When I was there, they said 'They going to make the brown people move out and the white people move in.' That was when the Apartheid era started. As I said, we were from the last people who moved out. They made us move out.[51]

Those years in Cape Town they put me out on the streets for two days. My daughter was a newborn and they still put us out. The boer[52] saw the baby and allowed my wife to stay in a room downstairs. They made a condition that as soon as we found a place to stay we must move because they want to lock their doors […] Apartheid was passed and we were forcibly removed by the government.[53]

The trauma that resulted from relocations was not limited to moving from one physical place to another. Livelihoods were changed and places of individual and religious importance were destroyed. The emotional trauma of the moment and continued trauma of having lived these experiences is insufficiently expressed in these quotes, however we were unable to find an appropriate means to convey the gravity of intonation, facial expression, body language and tears. The weight of these experiences and the narrative process is inadequately expressed in writing.

My grandfather made various *kitābs* [religious books] including ones that taught *ṣalāh* [ritual prayer]. As children, we made Eid [Islamic religious holiday] cards and walked from Claremont to Wynberg or Rondebosch to sell it, but we survived. That was until we were forcefully removed out of Claremont to live in Wynberg.[54]

When I moved I cried almost every day. It was very different here and there wasn't a mosque. Here they called me on my surname. Where I

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[49] The Group Areas Act was legislated in 1950 but implemented over time, District Six was not declared 'white' until 1966; Charmaine Mceachern, "Mapping the Memories: Politics, Place and Identity in the District Six Museum, Cape Town."

[50] The respondent here meant the National Party (NP), a popular error based upon the prevailing idea that the current ruling DA is still representative of what remains of 'white politics' in the new South Africa.

[51] Elder 06, female.

[52] The term 'Boer' literary means 'farmer' or 'farm' when used as a verb in Afrikaans. The participant is using the term in its colloquial sense meaning 'white Afrikaaner' as it refers to their ethnicity.

[53] Elder 04, male.

[54] Elder 20, male.

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came from everybody was like family. Here we had high walls, which we never had there. In Strand, you could walk from this house right through to the next person's house. They had a fence wiring which they cut off. Before I came to Cape Town we moved according to the Group Areas Act like they did with District Six. They threw all the coloureds out. They even removed all the Muslim cemeteries. They dug up the bones, put it on a truck and took it to where the coloureds are staying now.[55]

A high degree of cultural erosion, in this case resulting from the breaking apart of families and communities, can result in the development of entirely new practices and behaviours.[56] When change is too rapid and too extensive, it can result in generalized disorganization and demoralization.[57] The systematic dehumanization affected many of the Cape Town Muslim community, and unquestionably the community as a whole. As South Africa moved toward the democratic, post-Apartheid era, the Group Areas Act was repealed, in 1991. Amongst other changes, this enabled reflection, reinvention and transformation of society.

Relocation

One of the ways in which the Group Areas Act was problematic for Muslim members of the community was that it separated a minority population, dislocating individuals from the networks, places of worship, gathering platforms and events that helped maintain continuity. It is amazing that the faith, traditions, cultural practices and values continued over centuries amidst direct and indirect opposition. However, the means through which religious knowledge, practices and values were taught became disorganized as a result of the forced relocations. Institutions that were vital for social welfare, such as mosques and Islamic schools, often had to be re-established in the new locations the community found themselves in. Not all people lived in such enclaves before the Group Areas Act, however many did. Nonetheless, everyone recalls a more cohesive society that extended beyond the bounds of faith that was radically altered by their forced relocation.

Society was definitely different. They were there for each other; they helped each other a lot and gave a lot of charity if there was someone poor. We were all poor but we always had something left for the other.

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[55] Elder 09, female.

[56] Ralph Turner, "Culture, Change and Confusion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 4/4 (1940): 579-600.

[57] Leighton and Smith, "A Comparative Study of Social and Economic Change."

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Neighbours disciplined other neighbour's kids. They worried about each other.[58]

Life was very pleasant and people cared about one another despite being Muslim or Christian. Everybody knows one another. Whenever my mother needed sugar today or teabags even though there weren't teabags, she sends me to aunty so and so then they would give. Someone else would come and say they want an onion and they would share with one another. The same applies to milk but today the people don't worry with one another anymore. I don't understand why neighbors do not worry with one another anymore. Things have changed. If someone was sick or on the deathbed then everybody gathers to help one another.[59]

Society was very different. People were very close. I remember all our neighbours around us […] If something were wrong, they would come and find out. If somebody were sick, make it their duty or go out of their way to see if everything's okay.[60]

Within this context, however, Cape Town was not a place wherein all people were treated equally nor did all people have equal rights. The National Party led South Africa from 1948, and its policies entrenched inequality and racial segregation. The ideas, practices and policies of the National Party were not newly introduced, but a continuation, and expansion, of the foundation established by the Dutch. While a few did explicitly mention a feeling of conviviality between racial groups, most referred to religious groups, suggesting that there was a commonality amongst the oppressed, each recognizing the need to support one another regardless of faith. The elders' inclusion of racial conviviality also highlights the fact that these generalizations do not apply to all people at all times. In some regards, Cape Town did have a unique experience with regard to the extent and type of racial segregation.[61]

As described in the quotes above, the elders feel the breaking up of families and communities contributed to the shifting not only of the locations where people lived, but also where people placed their concern. Just as the individual members of the family were placed into unknown situations needing to find ways to survive, peoples' concerns were no longer societal, they were individual. "People back then had that worry. They had a worry about everything

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[58] Elders 03, female.
[59] Elders 04, male.
[60] Elders 05, female.
[61] Vivian Bickford-Smith, "South Africa Urban History, Racial Segregation and the Unique Case of Cape Town?," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1995): 63-78.

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that went wrong in society and see what they could fix. Today everybody lives their own lives."[62] This was also the case for the Muslim community itself, as a sub-segment of the wider society:

> Society was different; we stood by each other if anything went wrong in a family, we all assisted each other. When someone's house was too small, older people would offer their houses, which was bigger to wash the body and have the *janāzah* [Muslim burial] there. The host provided food and everybody helped cook the food.[63]

> Big families lived together at that time and they were very close. Today we so far apart we don't see each other even on Eid. That is gone. That time we were close and that's the most difficult part. The Boer did that through Apartheid. Half of families that were very close had to move apart. They were all separated.[64]

> Today people just care about themselves. If someone has a good job they don't acknowledge their neighbours because they think too much of themselves. When I was young I was sent by my father to deliver things to people who didn't have. That is how we were raised. In today's society people don't care if their neighbours or family don't have, they just care about themselves… That is the change in the community. Now it's all about you. People don't care if someone else needs help as long as they sorted.[65]

Religious Traditions

The Group Areas Act also affected the religious practices and traditions of the Muslim community. The majority of Cape Muslim elders recall their families being regularly involved with ritual places and ritualized activities and gatherings, such as the traditions of weekly religious gatherings, called *gadats*[66] and annual celebrations of the Prophet's birth, called *mouloods*.[67]

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[62] Elder 03, female.

[63] Elder 06, female.

[64] Elder 02, male.

[65] Elder 20, male.

[66] During a typical weekly *gadat* individuals would gather and collectively recite portions of the Quran, supplications and poetry, the content would later be collated and printed to produce the traditional text commonly called the *Raatibul Gadat*.

[67] The *moulood* is an annual event that commemorates the birth of Prophet Muhammad. These events were similar to the annual Eid celebrations, although on a somewhat smaller scale. In

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At the time the elderly always *batchad* [recited] out of the *Raatibul Gadat surat* [traditional book considered holy]. We came and sat in the *moulood* and *gadat*. There was no writing, you just sat and listened. You learnt it from hearing. We didn't write anything. We just sat and memorized it. We went every Thursday night, sat, and listened.[68]

The old people were very pious. Everything was done on time. If *ṣalāh* [prayer] time came, they left what they did to go and pray. If it was time to read Quran, they stopped everything they did. You had to know your time to read Quran. At every house was a Muslim school. People called the children from the road and tell them to be cleaned up so they could sit and learn. They would come barefoot. We all walked barefoot.[69]

The content of the *moulood* contains the telling of the history of the Prophet Muhammad. This content is written, but its essence takes shape in its oral performance. In a way, the act of reciting history parallels the religious experience, as the first word revealed of the Quran was "recite" and Islam is a tradition that places a great emphasis upon orality of transmitting knowledge. Just as the elders gathered to tell that history, the recollection and therefore preservation of their own histories is a reflection of their religious tradition. The places and people have changed; the modality is seamlessly translated from the religious realm to that of their own personal and community experiences. It could be argued that Muslims in Cape Town, in addition to this alignment of modality, also have a parallel in experience to that of Prophet Muhammad: of forced migration, of suffering, of living under boycott and embargo as minorities. While possible, these connections were not drawn. Rather, the elders focused upon their locality and recent history, providing only glimpses into the deeper plight the community faced, often arriving to Cape Town as slaves or as forced labourers.

We had *gadats* together and were always good to each other. The men and women each had a *gadat jamaah* [a group officiating the *gadat*] and every Thursday we made a *thikr* [in this context a synonym for *gadat*] to keep our community together. Society changed drastically [. . .] The *moulood* tradition was very nice. They had a *moulood* every year although it was different dates. Every year a *moulood* celebration took place and the women made their own food. They would ask three or four *jamaahs*

addition to the festive nature of the gather, there was also recitation of the Quran, reading of poetry and supplications.
[68] Elder 10, female.
[69] Elder 21, female.

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[groups] of women and four *jamaahs* of men to invite people to the
moulood. The men's *moulood* took place in mosque and the women's
moulood was underneath a tent at a certain venue.[70]

As children, we used to sit in the *gadat* every Thursday and Sunday. At a
later stage, they only came with the *Raatibul Gadat* but in the early stages
we only did the normal *gadat*. We also use to read Sūrah Yāsīn [Chapter
of the Quran] and just by sitting in the *gadat* we used to catch on and
eventually we knew it. We also had the Afrikaans transliteration with us
when we sat in the *gadats*. I think most of us caught on by sitting in the
gadat and the whole *gadat* went in our heads and stayed there. It didn't
just go in by the one ear and again came out by the other ear, it stayed in
our heads.[71]

It is suggested that these activities declined for a number of reasons, some of
which are directly related to the Group Areas Act, and some indirectly related.
For example, forced relocation made the places of religious gatherings too far
away to participate in or attend. For others, new demands of commuting to and
from town for work reduced the opportunities available to participate. Some were
no longer in the vicinity of those who had the knowledge to lead ritualized
activities. While the experiences varied, the outcomes were similar: a decline in
participation within traditional social and religious activities.

Religious education and the continuation of traditions are passed on in
homes, schools and the community at large. As a result of the Group Areas Act,
communities were spread apart, making Islamic education challenging to access,
either in its full-time manifestation or its afterschool programs commonly held in
mosques. This posed additional challenges in homes were parents and
grandparents had limited religious education, which relied upon the mosque and
Islamic schools to pass beliefs, values and traditions on to following generations.
The home was disrupted as well. Fathers had to spend more time getting to and
from work on buses, whereas the commute in the past was a short walk. Due to
new financial burdens, many mothers needed to start working outside the home,
or work more, reducing the time available for teaching in the home.

When the Group Areas Act came into place people from South End moved
to Garlandale. Three mosques were in South End and one still exists
today. We went all the way from Garlandale to South End to attend
jumu' ah [Friday prayers]. It was so far, we had to take a bus.[72]

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Families aren't as close as they used to be. My families like nieces and nephews hardly see one another because we live away from each other. It's not like we lived in District Six within a walking distance. Nowadays if I want to go to my sister in Manenberg it will cost me petrol. It will cost me R50 petrol just to go and visit my sister. I can't even afford R30 but it costs more to see my sister and that's how we grow apart.[73]

It is much different today because you do not find *gadats* every Thursday. Those things keep our communities together. That made the difference at the time because that child ran for his *koeksisters* and stuff. They ran because they knew they were going to get *koeksisters, bollas and boeber* [sweet traditional delicacies] that kept us together and made the community so close at the time. That is one of the things we trying to bring back. I am sure it will make a big change. I think it is because times have changed and not being aware of each other.[74]

One of the consequences of a dislocation of people from places of prayer was that they were also dislocated from local religious leadership. In response, many began to utilize new means to access religious information and education. This trend has increased significantly since the introduction of the internet, whereby religious rulings could be taken from scholars in India, Pakistan or the Middle East just as easily as they could from local scholars. Some research indicates these trends began as early as the 1970s, with local scholars studying abroad and bringing new ideas to the community.[75] The reliance upon foreign scholars, one of the outcomes of being dislocated from local mosque communities, has resulted in the introduction of new ideas, many of which challenged the traditions of the past.

Seven Nights [*gadat* on the seventh night of a funeral] after a death was held but now they say it's not necessary. They say it's not necessary to have a Three Nights, Seven Nights or Forty Days [all *gadat* based rituals performed on specific nights after a Muslim funeral]. We were taught these traditions at Muslim school. They explained the reasons behind it but I cannot remember them now but if something happened, we made *thikr* we had many *mouloods* and it was made beautifully. Now they call it *bid' ah* [innovations] because we cannot celebrate the prophet's birthday.

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[73] Elder 16, male.
[74] Elder 08, female.
[75] Seraj Hendricks, "Tasawwuf (Sufism): Its Role and Impact on the Culture of Cape Islam" MA Thesis submitted to University of South Africa, 2005.

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We celebrate our birthdays so why can't we celebrate this? The traditions are not the same.[76]

Today they say it is *bid' ah* [innovation]. It is not right. It changed because there is too much *moulanas* [traditional Islamic scholars]. The *moulanas* disagree on the lifestyle of that time. They say the prophet did not practice it. 'Why should people keep *gadat* now?' To them it was, 'Why keep *gadat*? Why keep Seven Nights? Why keep Forty Nights?' All that traditions changed. Too many scholars of *deen* [faith] disagree …All I know and was taught about *gadat* was so uplifting especially spiritually uplifting for myself.[77]

Socio-Cultural Change

The Group Areas Act was not the only change that occurred during this period, and therefore not the only means through which change was occurring. Language use in Cape Town has experienced numerous shifts, with a decline of Afrikaans and a rise of English being common amongst the families of the elders, a process that isolated many of the elders from their grandchildren.[78] For members of the Muslim community, there is limited documentation regarding the extent to which Arabic was understood and spoken; it was certainly read and memorized by a majority, as it continues to be. Although not explored in detail in this work, some elders felt that language expressed more than a means of communication; language conveys worldviews and values,[79] which, they believe, also played a role in the socio-religious changes that took place.

In the decades that followed the fall of Apartheid, income per capita rose rapidly, from US$ 2,921 in 1980 to US$ 7,831 in 2011.[80] While some have argued that a rise in economic status is linked with a decline of reduce religious adherence, this relationship is more complex that suggested, and in the case of

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[76] Elder 21, female.

[77] Elder 05, female.

[78] Data from the 1980, 1991 and 2001 census shows a decline of Afrikaans speakers, a slight decline in English speakers and a rapid rise in Xhosa speakers; amongst the 'coloured' population, speakers of Afrikaans rose by 8% between 1996 to 2001 while use of English rose 30%, amongst the 'Indian' population, speakers of Afrikaans declined by 5% between 1996 to 2001 while use of English rose 18%; Ana Deumert, "Tracking the Demographics of (Urban) Language Shift – An Analysis of South African Census Data" in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 31 (2010): 24.

[79] Judith Irvine and Susan Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," *Regimes of Language* edited by Kroskrity (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2000), 402-434.

[80] World Bank, "GDP per capita (current US$)" (2014): http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD, accessed 19 January 2016.

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Muslim-majority countries around the world is weak and insignificant.[81] During this same period, new information technologies were introduced, including television and the Internet, which have the potential to significantly influence social and cultural change.[82]

In addition, crime rapidly rose; something about which every elder spoke. Statistics support these experiences: the crime rate in South Africa is one of the highest in the world, including for violent crimes of murder, assault and rape.[83] In 2010, for example, the murder rate had declined to 34 per 100,000, from a peak of 66.9 in 1994-1995.[84] Despite the decline, it remained one of the world's highest murder rates.[85] Rates of rape have not followed this trend, however, having increased in recent years.[86] One elder stated, "You can't forget about safety because nowhere is safe nowadays. Not even your own house."[87] However, the elders did not suggest that the Group Areas Act alone caused the rise in crime; communities were diverse before the Act and continue to be so, an experience that prevents elders from making broad generalizations.[88]

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[81] Logan Cochrane and Waleed Chellan, ""We were Extremely Poor but We were Pious": Exploring the Interrelationships between Religious Adherence and Economic Status in the Muslim World" in *Global Humanities* 2 (2015): 112-128.

[82] Robert Jensen and Emily Oster, "The Power of TV: Cable Television and Women's Status in India" online (2007): www.nber.org/papers/w13305.pdf, accessed 19 January 2016; Eliana La Ferrara, Alberto Chong and Suzanne Duryea, "Soap Operas and Fertility: Evidence from Brazil" (2008): www.iadb.org/res/files/WP-633updated.pdf, accessed 19 January 2016; Benjamin Olken, "Television and Radio Destroy Social Capital? Evidence from Indonesian Villages," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 1/4 (2009): 1-33.

[83] Naeemah Abrahams, Rachel Jewkes and Shanaaz Mathews, "Guns and Gender-based Violence in South Africa," *South African Medical Journal* 11/9 (2010): 586-588.

[84] Delia Robertson, "Report: South Africa Crime Rate Shows Sharp Decline" online (2011): www.voanews.com/content/continued-downward-trend-in-south-africas-serious-crime-rate-129476953/158800.html, accessed 19 January 2016.

[85] UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide* (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011).

[86] Robertson, "Report: South Africa Crime Rate Shows Sharp Decline"

[87] Elder 01, male.

[88] Some of these sentiments are echoed in Pillay's deconstruction of gangsterism arising out of the Group Areas Act. The narratives of the elders suggest that the ripping up, disintegrating and destruction of cultures and networks caused significant socio-cultural and individual trauma, which may not have caused crime and gangsterism directly and immediately, but nonetheless played an important contributing role to the changes that were experienced; Suren Pillay, "Problematising the making of Good and Evil: Gangs and PAGAD," *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* 16/2 (2002): 45-47. This does not disregard the role of memory, memory making and the influence of nostalgia, while at the same time does not over emphasize it; Ammaarah Kamish, "Coloured and Black Identities of Residents Forcibly Removed from Blouvlei," *South African Historical Journal* 60/3 (2008): 242-257.

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Times were good then. You could sleep on your *stoep* [patio] and no-one would bother you. The community was like your own family irrespective of religion. We didn't classify based on religion. At sunset when the *adhān* [call to prayer] goes for *maghrib* [sunset prayers] they [Christians] would call you to come inside. I have many Christian childhood friends from District Six who embraced Islam."[89]

People were separated and sent to Townships, which had a different environment and that is when it changed. There wasn't illegal stuff happening. We never knew of men sitting on the corner doing drugs like they do now.[90]

Some elders felt that the Apartheid era had some positive components to it, such as a strict rule of law that kept crime low, in comparison to the present. "Even though you don't want to acknowledge it" one stated, "Apartheid had a lot of good instilled into people."[91] Not all agree that it was the system of the past that sustained a degree of peace greater than what was experienced in later decades. The lower rates of criminality in the past do not take into account the violence that was created by that same system. The demoralization and disorganization that resulted from the Group Areas Act can only be properly understood, some believe, when it is viewed as a creator of violence and a destroyer of systems that established peacefulness. "The things children are doing today are harmful not only to themselves, but their parents and the community."[92] Criminality generally occurs outside of individual control. However, many community members took individual action to address rising criminality and gang activity.[93]

Back then, there were gangs but not as it is today. For example there were two gangs, both gangs would go to Woodstock beach. Then both leaders would have a stand down. They would fight just like that and it would be all over. There were a few uncivilized ones who came with hand held weapons. You could even walk anywhere at any time of the night freely and nobody would bother you. It was very safe back then. A person would not have to be afraid of being robbed.[94]

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[89] Elder 02, male.

[90] Elder 20, male.

[91] Elder 13, male.

[92] Elder 05, female.

[93] For many, the experience of rising criminality resulted in the creation of efforts to oppose such changes, such as People Against Gangsterism and Drugs, PAGAD; Sindre Bangstad, "Hydra's Heads: PAGAD and Responses to the PAGAD Phenomenon in a Cape Muslim Community," *Journal of Southern Africa Studies* 31/1 (2005): 187-208.

[94] Elder 01, male.

The life of today is very different. They think of nothing to shoot you or to stab you for no reason. Life is very different. It isn't like it was before. That time you could sit and walk outside at night in Cape Town but here you can't sit or walk outside at night. They will attack, chase or rob you at night. They will take off your phone and will do it even in broad daylight. They won't even think anything of it. The day before yesterday over the train station opposite the bakery they shot a boy just like that for no reason. They shot him at the back of his head. They don't care. They shot him in broad daylight. You can't even have your own business and then they will shoot you.[95]

In addition to the way that crime occurred and the frequency with which it was encountered, new introductions to the community, specifically intoxicants previously rare, changed the dynamics of criminality:

[. . .] today it is very sad because you see the youngsters taking drugs. They are robbing their own mothers in their houses and murdering people for drug substances. They would steal your food out of the pots and if they enter or break in your house, they steal a pot of food for drugs. It is sad because of desperation. They would kill and rape your children or do any evil actions. They would do anything just to get drugs.[96]

In recalling and exploring all the changes that took place, despite the diversity of factors involved, there was one single event that was consistently and adamantly conveyed as key to causing change: the Group Areas Act. The impact of forced relocation that resulted from the Act has been multi-generational, and Cape Town remains a highly segregated city.[97] Decades later, some still wish and plan to return to the places from which they were removed, as if what once existed in a specific time and place could be returned to unchanged:

The group areas act removed us from District 6 and we moved to Bonteheuwel. My bitter regret I moved to Mitchell's Plain into a worse environment. I am hoping to move back to District 6.[98]

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[95] Elder 22, male.
[96] Elder 23, female.
[97] Parry and van Eeden, "Measuring Racial Residential Segregation at Different Geographic Scales in Cape Town and Johannesburg", 47.
[98] Elder 19, female.

Conclusion

> Family values have definitely changed because families are drifting apart. We know that siblings are not speaking to each other. That love, consideration, and care is not the same. The Group Areas Act had a lot to do with the changes in society.[99]

The Group Areas Act is well documented as a legal, historical and political process. Oral history provides a unique lens through which processes, and their respective impacts, can be understood in relation to those who experienced, and were impacted, by them. Oral history complements current knowledge, it provides sets of lenses from which these processes can be viewed in new ways – those who experienced them themselves. The personal narratives explored in this paper demonstrate how social and religious change took place as both a direct and indirect result of the Group Areas Act; breaking apart families and communities, interrupting the transmission of religious knowledge and identity, limiting the places and possibilities of activities, decreasing the accessibility of employment, reducing community support and eroding social capital. These individual experiences were embedded within a broader communal one, resulting in a shift of collective identity – one not fostered and driven by community-experience and local leaders, but a dislocated and disoriented individual enterprise. That identity no longer relied upon the communal experience; religious knowledge, activities and tradition were reshaped by the individual and collective identity fractured as a result. The physical, forced relocation of individuals is reflected in multifaceted disunity: individual, family, community, city and country.

The in-depth interviews, as a collective, do not suggest that the Group Areas Act is the sole reason for the changes that have taken place. However, every elder felt it was one of the key causes for the changes described. The Group Areas Act was the focus of this article because of the centrality elders placed upon it. The elders and authors recognize the multidimensional processes that push, pull and sustain socio-religious change. All involved also recognize that change has continued to occur, and will continue to occur, with new research providing insight into the past as well as shaping the way in which the past is viewed. The experiences and opinions of the elders are complex and do not collectively allow for generalizable conclusions to be drawn. However, elders' experiences and opinions, collected in the form of oral history, contribute to our understanding of socio-religious change, the Group Areas Act and the way in which individuals from the Muslim community in Cape Town experienced these processes as interacting with one another.

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[99] Elder 08, female.