

services to non-whites along with the forcible removal of Africans to ethnic 'homelands'. (Baskin, 1998: 22) This rigid system of racial domination not only required all Africans to carry a passbook revealing their identity, employment and legal history at all times but also stripped non-whites of South African citizenship. Up until the 1970's severe state repression quelled most civil disobedience and opposition to the state was fundamentally limited. However during the 1970's labour activity became more militant with workers protesting student murders, police brutality and demanding the release of political prisoners. In response to labour unrest and the resulting economic impact, the government embarked on a series of labour reforms in the late 1970's which extended rights to Africans to join and form registered unions, bargain collectively, and strike. (Harcourt, 1998: 5)

By this point the African population was devastated by apartheid, existing in conditions of extreme overcrowding, with scarce provision of water, energy and other basic facilities. In 1980 the per capita income of Africans was one-twelfth that of whites and malnutrition and mortality levels were appallingly high: all factors contributing to Gini coefficient levels of 0.66 to 0.71 between 1970-1993. (Wilson, 1994: 104) During apartheid the vast majority of Africans never received education beyond primary levels in low quality schools, this probably being the most disastrous legacy of the racist system. (Baskin, 1998: 27) Freedom of movement was severely constrained, as blacks could not move about without a valid passbook and some amount of money. Citizen participation was not only restricted by law but also accessed mainly by men who had the opportunity to join unions through work and participate in covert political planning. Nelson Mandela's banned political party, the ANC, was the main political party supported by Africans and industrial membership essentially translated into political citizenship. In spite of their meager standards-of-living, black membership in unions and civic councils continued to grow and opposition activities against the state continued unabated as the struggle for democracy surged ahead.

THE DECADE OF STRUGGLE: 1980-1990

During the 1980's rising popular activism and state repression reached historically high levels. Violence in the townships was commonplace and activities of the MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC) gathered strength and increased levels of activity. With townships under heavy police oppression and civilian militancy intensifying, the task of mobilizing citizens outside of the workplace became virtually impossible. Political parties other than the ANC competed for membership, including the United Democratic Front (UDF), AZAPO, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Reformers outside of the townships, including many South Africans, worked to strengthen NGO capacity and develop alternatives to the apartheid system, garnering financial and moral support from some members of the international community. With opposition political parties banned and freedom fighters exiled, unions became the key vehicles to mobilize the necessary political will and increase public pressure on the National Party government.