



# **AIDS, Sex, and Culture**

**Global Politics  
and Survival in  
Southern Africa**

**DA SUSSE**

**WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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Global Politics and Survival in Southern Africa

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**WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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## **AIDS, Sex, and Culture**

For Philip and Jonah

## Preface

### *Southern Africa: A Personal Geography, History, and Politics*

Feminists and anthropologists have long recognized that understanding the author's position is an important aspect in interpreting text. For this reason I have decided to situate myself at the beginning of this book in terms of my own personal history and politics. I believe this is one way in which an author claims neither more credibility nor legitimacy than they are entitled to, but claims anyway the right to speak from whatever background they may have emerged. Those readers who regard this as irrelevant may skip this section.

As neither a South African nor completely an outsider, I have chosen to take advantage of my ambiguous standing and to address crucial and controversial issues from a global and comparative perspective. In both South Africa and the United States, HIV/AIDS, sexuality, women's place, and global corporate investment are highly explosive topics. I argue in this book that growing inequalities have generated sharp divisions buttressed by identity politics.

As a woman born in South Africa, I take the contemporary tragedies of HIV/AIDS as a personal as well as a political concern. However, this stance does not represent any theoretical espousal of the constraints of identity politics. My first book was based on research as somewhat of a foreigner in New York City. Perhaps I had the advantage at that time that the United States still appeared to me as mysterious and exciting. I have never known what country to claim as my own or even any way to describe my accent. As a consequence, a universalistic framework seemed the path of least resistance.

The analysis in this volume is based on fieldwork and the systematic tracing of particular events across space and time. The journey and the perspective taken derive from my own peripatetic experience, stretched across oceans and lacking national allegiance. I have focused on southern Africa but at the same time drawn into the analysis significant events that have taken place in the United States as well as discussions of the transformations in global capital.<sup>1</sup> In addition, I have developed a

comparative analysis of the ways in which national policies in South Africa and the US frame women's chances for liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness.

Ethnography is a form of science that in many ways relies on the art of creative and synthetic analysis in connecting the uneventful happenings of everyday life to broader themes. In a brilliant article summarizing the work of situational analysis in what came to be known as the Manchester School of anthropology, Jaap Van Velsen (1967) delineated the importance of ethnography in capturing the early signs of social change rather than the statistical rendition of established behavior. Van Velsen was a student of Max Gluckman, a South African-born anthropologist who led the Manchester School and was himself trained by one of the founders of the discipline of anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski. Van Velsen succeeded Gluckman as director of the Zambian Institute of Social Research and later became Professor of Sociology at the University of Aberystwyth in Wales. As he recognized, the power of ethnography can be its ability to sense trends or transformations as they emerge.<sup>2</sup>

In the past three decades, anthropologists have come to analyze and incorporate more explicitly the idea that ethnography is part humanism and part science.<sup>3</sup> As a science, requiring detailed on-the-ground observations, it is based on humanism in that the observations are mediated by the intuitive researcher. Insights are generated through a form of immersion of the self in the data and a reevaluation of all hints and experiences. Similar to the idea of transference in psychological analysis, ethnography puts the self in the equation. I would argue that the self can be called into question in the process and in many cases is never quite the same afterwards. In fact, that change which takes place in the ethnographer as she or he works in a place or interviews people is perhaps the source of the intuitive understanding of a society or cultural setting. A good ethnographer combines theoretical rigor with the continuing interpretation and rethinking of chance circumstance, everyday dynamics, historical events, and passing conversations. Such observations are not necessarily representative but rather indicative of larger conceptions.

Thus, recent discussions in anthropology suggest that situational analysis be illuminated and rethought with an emphasis on the reflexive. The patterns and features identified or deciphered depend partly on the varied experiences and frameworks of the ethnographer: the self that entered the field and the potential transformations of self by the field. From this point of view, I believe that my own life and the way I encountered southern Africa and the centers of capital in the United States are significant historical factors framing the arguments in this book. In the spirit of collaboration with many other researchers and approaches (Altman 2001; Campbell 2003; Farmer et al. 1993; Nattrass 2007; Parker et al. 2000), I offer this as one perspective in a broader effort to understand the global pandemic of HIV.

As the granddaughter of Jewish immigrants who fled to South Africa to escape the pogroms of eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century, I did not suffer as did black South Africans from the bitter oppressions of segregation, poverty, and the racist violence of a police state. I was reared in the shadow of apartheid and, fortunately, the light of the anti-apartheid movement. My parents, Mervyn Susser



and Zena Stein, were led by their experiences fighting against Nazi Germany in World War II to reorient their professional interests from early training in English and history toward medicine and eventually public health.

In 1948, the Nationalist government was elected in South Africa on the platform of apartheid. Nationalist Party policies aimed at the black population echoed those of Hitler's Germany and were explicitly positively compared with National Socialism by the Party leadership. By 1950, when I was born, my parents, along with many of their friends and relatives, were already immersed in the battle against apartheid. Simultaneously, they were taking their final medical school examinations.

Under this oppressive regime, the Communist Party became the only non-racial anti-apartheid group still active. Many people, disillusioned by reports of Stalin's repressive policies and his 1939 pact with Hitler, had abandoned the Communist Party in the 1940s but later joined with the South African Communist Party (SACP) to fight apartheid. In 1952, the Communist Party was banned by the apartheid government but then re-formed underground as the South African Communist Party. Party members formed underground cells, connected only by pairs, four to a cell. As activists were forced into exile, many, including my relatives, left the CP but were unable to discuss the topic because of anti-communist regimes in the United States, Australia, and many of the other countries to which they fled. Secrecy was so great that my mother and her brother did not tell each other until 50 years later that each of them had joined in the early 1950s and operated from different cells.

In my early years, we lived in Johannesburg. With my parents' full-time commitment to medicine and politics, our family life resembled that portrayed in Shawn Slovo's film *A World Apart*. In fact, Shawn is the oldest daughter of Joe Slovo and Ruth First and we are only a few months separated in age – my mother claims that the pregnancy clothes were handed from Ruth to Myrtle Berman to her as each of them became pregnant with their first child. This ritual was repeated consecutively with the second and third children. In between, the clothes were dry cleaned at the Immaculate Cleaners, a business Monty Berman inherited from his father. (The Bermans were both anti-apartheid activists and, later, exiles with their children in London.)

Most of the politically active families I knew involved active mothers as well as active fathers. The mothers were heroic intellectuals, activists, and strong role models for their daughters. However, as documented by one such historic mother, Hilda Bernstein, in *Rivonia's Children: Three Families and the Cost of Conscience in White South Africa*, and as the South African Nobel Prize-winning author Nadine Gordimer describes in her novel *Burger's Daughter*, the general parental preoccupation with politics generated feelings of abandonment and unimportance among many children of this era. Sometimes, parents were taken to prison in the early dawn and children were left in shock and alone. Politics may have led to a sense of parental remoteness from childish traumas and a general focus on "more important matters" pervaded such childhoods. After his wife Ruth's death, Joe Slovo, born in a Yiddish shtetl in Lithuania, a founder and leader of the South African Communist



Party for 50 years, as well as of the armed wing of the ANC, possibly began to understand his daughters' perspectives on their family life. He wrote in *Slovo – The Unfinished Autobiography*, "One thing is clear, however; the world would be a poorer place if it was peopled by children whose parents risked nothing in the cause of social justice, for fear of personal loss. If I regret anything, it is certainly not how my daughters turned out but rather that we might have found a way of easing the hidden traumas they were suffering. . . ." (Dolny 1995:111). Slovo lived to plan new housing for the poor as the first Minister of Housing in post-apartheid South Africa.

Most children of such activists suffered much greater disruption and dislocation than I ever did. I only lived this kind of life in South Africa for my first five years. Later, when I returned to South Africa in the 1990s, I came to know cousins and friends who had stayed through many traumatic years and, in fact, were the original models for the children in Gordimer's novel. One model for a fictional character in *Burger's Daughter*, who paid a high price for her family's political struggle, was my cousin, Sheila Weinberg, born in Johannesburg immediately after World War II. Her parents, after spending months in detention without trial and subjected to police interrogation, were banned for five years, which meant that they were confined to their own home and were constrained in whom they could meet or even with whom they could speak. Later, they left South Africa to live in exile in Tanzania. Sheila herself was detained without trial for 65 days at the age of 17 and had to take the full burden of responsibility when her brother died, suspected of suicide, while their parents were in prison. From 1994 to 2004, she served as a Member of Parliament for Gauteng in the new South Africa, concentrating especially on financial policies. In November 2004, at the age of 59, she died suddenly of a brain aneurysm.

My early memories of Johannesburg are few. I can visualize the nuns who ran Alexandra Clinic, where both my parents shared one doctor's position and another politically active couple, Michael Hathorn and Margaret Cormack, shared the other. I remember the long corridors where the patients waited. Even then I was aware of the daily racial inequities. The horror and urgency of apartheid in South Africa, vividly lived in Alexandra Township, was especially symbolized for me in images of the suffering of people coming to the clinic. Following so immediately after World War II and the Holocaust, as I was reminded as an impressionable young child by my parents, this seared images of fear and misery deep into my psyche. At that time, I had yet to develop the strong defenses or independent opinions in relation to my parents' overwhelming political and emotional engagement.

However, I also remember wonderful experiences from my childhood in South Africa – the freedom and the wild, wide-ranging sense of sun and fresh air on the large cooperative farm where we lived. I learned to swim in the small round pool with no shallow end. My four-year-old cousin swam across the pool under water like a mermaid, with her long scraggly blonde hair trailing after her, never coming up to breathe because she never learned how. Even at that age, I could proudly breathe and swim at the same time. We roamed freely across the farm as most of

our parents were gone most of the time, and, anyway, they believed in greater freedom and exploration than I could ever allow my children growing up in the United States. I climbed right to the top of high trees with the six- and seven-year-old boys, after we helped each other up the first hard step of the bare but gnarled trunk. I remember clearly the exhilaration of reaching the top of a tree perhaps 20 feet high, with the wind blowing through the thin spiky branches. The children on the farm ran free with no shoes and we proudly compared the hard soles of our feet. (Even as somewhat disaffected exile-children in London, feeling out of place and unable to conform to English manners, my cousins and I would still compete over who could walk over the spikiest pebbles or glass.)

I remember the sense of warmth, well-being, and familiarity, playing in the sand on the long, wide crowded beaches at Muizenburg, a popular resort outside Cape Town. I would sit next to the parasol under which my grandmother set her chair, doubly protecting herself from the sun with a wide straw hat, a pretty blue ribbon tied around its brim. In spite of her apparent domesticity, my grandmother had been an early feminist and, also reflecting the adventurous outdoor esprit of white colonial South Africa, she was renowned in the family for staying in the ocean the longest of any swimmer. I heard many stories about my parents scrambling up Table Mountain with me in their backpack. We had family pictures of both of them climbing in the challenging and unpredictable Drakensberg mountains which stretched across the borders of South Africa and Basotoland (now Lesotho), encountering hair-raising adventures as streams suddenly turned into torrents or a sunny day was transformed into mist and cold.

In England, my brother slept under a Basotho blanket and our lampshades were contrived from hats made and worn by the Sotho peoples. My brother and I fought over the extraordinarily colored and smoothly warm and comforting blanket, and the name Basotho conjured up romance and mystery. However, although it was a household word to me, I could not have told you where on the map of southern Africa such a place existed. In London, my father read us the classic *Jock of the Bushveld*, written in 1907 by Sir Percival Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick's recounting of his nineteenth-century colonial childhood, learning to track animals and survive in the bush with his dog, takes place in the Transvaal near where my father grew up. My father told us of his childhood on the remote tin mine where his father ran a small unprofitable hotel. He recounted his own exploits wandering through the bush, encountering snakes and hunting small deer. As an older child in England, these memories and stories painted a nostalgic image of the vast natural beauty of southern Africa.

In 1999, when I visited the old hotel, which was, in fact, still there, my father showed us his mother's grave. The tombstone was set apart, some meters distant from the other graves, because hers was the lone Jewish burial in this Christian cemetery.

In July 1955, my father had agreed to speak out publicly against an upcoming controversial case in the implementation of apartheid. Judge Oliver Schreiner, then one of the judges on the Supreme Court and one of the judges in the case, was also

chair of the board of Alexandra Clinic. Schreiner objected to the fact that my father had agreed to appear on a critical panel organized by the African National Congress. Rather than agree to the political strictures of the Alexandra Clinic board, my parents left their shared job at the Township Clinic. With three small children in tow, they moved to my grandparents' apartment in Durban. My grandfather, Philip Stein, an early South African graduate of Caius College, Cambridge, was the first professor of mathematics at what was then a Technical College and is now the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

My most vivid memory of Durban at that time is of the enormous number of little monkeys that inhabited every tree in the vicinity. Our apartment complex stood near a little park where I used to swing and watch the Vervet monkeys, babies clamped on mothers' backs, careen through the trees. Sometimes, the sun came through after short-lived showers, creating a rainbow that my grandmother called a "monkey's wedding." My grandfather and I would walk past sugar cane fields, both chewing the cane he cut, as we climbed the terraced grounds up to his office at the university. When I returned for the first time in 1992, post-apartheid, urban development had left not a monkey to be seen.

My parents used the enforced free time of their unemployment in Durban to study with Sidney Kark, who was developing "community health clinics" – a concept and model later to be replicated around the world. Indeed, following Kark's model in South Africa, the first community health center in the United States was founded by Jack Geiger, now a family friend, in Bayou, Mississippi after he visited Kark in Durban on a student internship from Case Western Reserve Medical School. Similarly, Violet Padayachi Cherry, who ran the Englewood, New Jersey, Department of Social Services for 30 years, was inspired to pursue a career in community services by her early involvement with Kark's Community Health Center as a teenager in a poor Durban neighborhood. In an unexpected continuity, in 1997, when Richard Lee and I interviewed an extraordinarily active and effective community health director concerned with HIV/AIDS in Rundu in the Kavango region of Northern Namibia, it turned out that she, too, as a young African nurse in apartheid South Africa, had been trained under the auspices of Sidney Kark.

As a result of my parents' departure from Alexandra Clinic for political reasons, it was difficult for them to secure further paid employment in South Africa. At five-and-a-half years of age, I found myself aboard the steamer *Dunotter Castle* bound for Europe. I can still visualize the great ship majestically pulling out from Durban's Victoria Embankment. As we proceeded beyond the rows of sand reefs that rose up from the tide, bathers shouted and played far out in the ocean on their way to stand on these temporary islands. I, of course, had no idea of our future, but the scene remains in my memory as a momentous end to an era.

As my mother tried valiantly to keep three small children occupied after my baby sister woke up our cabin at dawn, we gazed for hours at the ocean and tracked the gulls and the flying fish. One afternoon the whole ship was alerted as we sailed past a large slate-like rock with water spraying out. Word was that it was an enormous whale but I was never quite convinced.

As we passed the equator, the ship's company and passengers indulged in a variety of folk rituals. They sprayed people with shaving cream and threw them and others fully clothed in suits and dresses into the swimming pool. They pretended to cut a lady in half, and to cut off people's legs, all in the name of crossing zero latitude. This was rather horrifying to me. I had not yet seen any television cartoons or the weekly newsreels with the pat comedy routines. For years afterwards, I looked warily for ladies with amputated legs. For this event, we were finally allowed into the area of the deck that was designated first class. True to the long tradition of British class division, dramatized in the sinking of the *Titanic* when the first-class passengers had priority access to the lifeboats, the *Dunotter Castle* was rigidly divided into first and second class. I already knew that first class had a large white tile-lined swimming pool in contrast to the dark green canvas-lined cavity held together by thick ropes in which we generally splashed, but this was the only time I stood near its edge. Apparently, crossing the equator had emerged over the centuries of exploration and colonial rule as a liminal experience in which British sea travelers temporarily violated rules of class and status.

It was on the ship, too, that I learned to read. British children started school earlier than South African children. In fact, my unshackled childhood owed much to this difference. Now that we were about to arrive in England, where children had already been in school for at least a year, my parents enlisted a nun on board ship as a teacher. While my brother and sister were assigned to day care, my tutor and I sat in deck chairs overlooking the ocean and reading sentences: "See Dick and Jane!" "See the ball." "See the dog!"

After three memorable weeks at sea, we landed at the British port of Southampton in the depths of winter. Snow was exciting but the cold was unfamiliar and brutal. My parents dragged us three children from one London boarding house to another over the grey damp winter months. In each new place, they were very careful with the shillings that we put in to extract a little heat from the electric burners. They paid little attention to what they viewed as "bourgeois" concepts of warm boots or other winter paraphernalia and they firmly believed in long, healthy walks. As a consequence we were frequently prone to frostbite as we marched off, colonials steeped in English folklore, to see such famous sites as the Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens. We wore waterproof boots and thin cotton socks. As we were told, in colonial admiration for all things English, these were the same garments sported by Christopher Robin in A. A. Milne's poem: "I've got great big waterproof boots on. . . ." Such comparatively cheap footwear, designed for summer rain, was not much use in snow and ice and most outings were accompanied by extensive crying and complaints.

As the oldest child, and expected by my parents to be responsible in difficult times, I was always most aware of the conflict we had left behind. I was both frightened and inspired by the implications of South Africa, as well as the slightly more distant stories of my father's military experience in World War II and my grandmother's accounts of relatives disappeared in the Holocaust. Her stories were eerily accompanied by letters from faraway places stamped "no known address" and returned unopened. My father's youngest uncle, Boris, and his three aunts, whose

names were seemingly less significant but remembered by my father as Sophie, Bayla, and Masha, had stayed behind in the family home at Lutzen, 200 miles from Riga, now in Latvia, when the three older brothers migrated to South Africa. In 1933, posed laughing and looking surprisingly contemporary, sitting on the step in front of the Zusser butcher's shop, they were photographed by one of the brothers, George Susser, visiting from South Africa to check on their situation. In one photograph, which has come down through the family, the woman, who seems to be in her thirties, is dressed in a short sack dress, reminiscent of a flapper, with a cheerful sardonic look. In 1946, when my father's aunt returned to Lutzen to search for their relatives, no trace remained. She spent five years working with the Red Cross and other agencies devoted to tracing missing persons from the Holocaust but no one could suggest any leads to follow. Eli Weinberg, married to my father's cousin, Violet, and Sheila Weinberg's father, was long active in the anti-apartheid movement. He was quite explicit about the converging histories of fascism in Europe and apartheid in South Africa. He escaped anti-Semitism in a tortuous passage from Latvia and, in 1929, arrived as a young man in South Africa. When the Nationalist Party came to power in South Africa, he said that there was no point in running further. He had come all this way and found that this time he had to fight fascism where he found it. It was Eli who made a book of photos of me at two years old in the sand pit and on the swing. It would be hard to overstate the long-term effects of these collected histories on my thinking.

Wherever we lived after we left South Africa – London, Manchester, Kanpur in India or New York City – my parents were constantly involved and in touch with the anti-apartheid movement and were in fact founders of the anti-apartheid in London and Manchester. For the first year, we lived among exiles in London and my parents moved in a circle of South Africans. But even later, after we moved to Manchester and elsewhere, the London circle remained their touchstone, where we went for most holidays. We attended anti-apartheid rallies in London; we listened to South African Kwela music and to the historic South African musical *King Kong*, which we were immediately taken to see when it came to the UK. Although I followed events in South Africa, as I grew to be a teenager, I rebelled against what I viewed as excessive preoccupations with a South African heritage.

After we moved to Manchester, my parents formed a local anti-apartheid group and I remember the day, in 1963, when anti-apartheid activists Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich, who had just escaped from a South African prison, came to speak in Manchester. Several times we marched along Wilmslow Road, in those days the street connecting the village of Didsbury to the central shopping area of Manchester. We were a bedraggled group, maybe 20 people strong, of whom half were young children, walking through the northern English drizzle, carrying anti-apartheid placards. I recollect that our little contingent was led by Mary Gluckman, the stalwart, progressive English wife of the well-known South African born anthropologist Max Gluckman.

I always felt different in England, perhaps privileged to be connected to a lively, cosmopolitan, artistic, and intellectual exile community and partly deprived and



embarrassed because I was not a “normal” English schoolgirl. I was somewhat uncomfortable that my mother worked and did not stay home to cook and clean house, although, of course, I grew up to do the same. I was more embarrassed that we had no religion, despite our Jewish heritage. In my primary school in the 1950s, when morning prayers occurred I was sent off to a special room for Jewish children. At the age of six, my parents sent me to school on a Jewish holiday and I found myself all alone in the special Jewish room, a strong message about the differentness of our family. I discovered recently that my sister, four years younger and much more comfortably “English,” simply went to the daily assembly and Church of England prayers. Ironically, my sons have told me that, like my parents before me, I did not give them an adequate historical knowledge of their own Jewish background. But, they are similarly steeped in the history of South Africa.

As a ten-year-old, I was still absorbing my parents’ politics and as such I devised my own political activism. In May 1960, when the Sharpeville massacre took place in South Africa, I went to the principal of my primary school and requested permission to collect money to help the protesters who had been shot down by South African government helicopters. I proudly gathered a fund of about two pounds and eight shillings from my school friends and sent it to an organization in London. Although I had not realized, it was even difficult to send money directly to South Africa to help the protesters under the apartheid regime. In those days, South Africa represented the heart of my active political existence.

Even after we left South Africa, my childhood and early adolescence were darkened by the specter of apartheid, and intertwined with the excitements as well as desperation generated by the history of the anti-apartheid movement. We heard about the Rivonia trials and the arrest of the parents of many of our childhood friends and then more emigrants started to arrive in London. My cousins showed up several years after us, when my uncle was fired from his job. As the editor of *Drum*, he had printed a picture on the front cover of a white woman tennis player kissing a black woman tennis player who had just won an international match. Later, Monty and Myrtle Berman, an international with whom my mother had shared maternity clothes, and their four daughters arrived. South African exiles also came to Manchester, assisted by my parents and others at the University. My friends were the daughters and sons of South Africans in exile, underfoot at London parties, surrounded by African music, Kwela dancing, and fierce political discussion.

In my early teens, I became involved with the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. However, even then I marched the four days from Aldermaston to London protesting nuclear proliferation alongside the children of South African exiles. We had digested our parents’ general principles of the struggle for social justice, but we wanted to fight our political battles in the new countries where we had all tried so valiantly to fit in. Those very sons and daughters of Africa were to become leaders in the 1968 student protests at the London School of Economics.

In 1965, after my family emigrated to the United States, we were abruptly cut off from this vibrant political community, although we returned in the summers to stay with relatives in London. In 1966, a freshman at Barnard College, I joined



other American university students protesting the Vietnam War. I made a conscious decision to live as an American and not to stay an exile forever. To me, trying to readjust as my family traveled from country to country, focusing on South Africa began to appear like avoiding a connection with my own daily reality. I distanced myself from my parents' ongoing commitment to the African National Congress. Nevertheless, in New York City, too, I found myself in the swirl of South African émigrés passing through, who often stayed with my parents or in my student apartment as they tried to establish new homes for themselves in the United States.

Trying to understand my own place in the world, I inhaled all the works of Doris Lessing, a southern African novelist and member of the London exile community. I read the *Golden Notebook* and the preceding volumes of the *Children of Violence Series*, took courses on politics in Africa, specifically at that time the independence movements and the war in Biafra, and majored in anthropology. As a result, I found myself reading the monographs on the Zambian copperbelt written by the Manchester professors among whose children I was reared.

In 1968, as a sophomore, I took a doctoral course with Immanuel Wallerstein who was greatly respected among politically active students at the time. Wallerstein was outlining his fledgling theory of the emergence of capitalism as an interconnected system, later published in his path-breaking volume *The Modern World-System* (Wallerstein 1974). I had a hard time following the lectures. I mainly remember little chalk circles on the board that apparently represented his view of multiple classes of professionals and businessmen in different societies. I also remember undergraduate men from Students for a Democratic Society, the largest student movement of the 1960s predominantly focused on ending the Vietnam War and very active on the Columbia campus, articulately and fearlessly standing up in class and arguing each point with the professor. That was the atmosphere of the times – for young men of political bent and white male privilege, inspired by anger at the Vietnam War and the omnipresent threat of being drafted. However, as an anxious young woman, I participated in all the demonstrations and activities but had neither the courage nor the encouragement and support to speak up whether in class or at meetings.

Eventually, I read Wallerstein's work on nationalism and ethnicity in Africa and chose to write a paper on a related topic. I took an incomplete and spent weeks of the following summer at the library of the London School of Economics in Gower Street reading rather aimlessly and trying to figure out what to do. Finally, I approached Ruth First, a leading South African anti-apartheid activist and a constant visitor at my cousin's house, and asked her for help. I believe she was writing her book *From the Barrel of a Gun* and she generously gave me a number of reprints on various aspects of political economy and ethnicity in Africa. That fall, after months of angst – and, most unforgivably, because of guilt about this project, skipping a trip to a certain music festival at Woodstock – I handed a paper to Wallerstein based on First's articles. I barely managed to achieve a C in his course.

Living in New York City, I continued to read most of what First wrote – from *117 Days* (1965), her description of life in solitary confinement under “preventive

detention" (in other words, without trial), to her biography of Olive Schreiner (1980). Olive Schreiner had always been an important historical feminist figure in South Africa and one of my favorite writers. My cousin, who through her teenage years still swam only underwater like a bedraggled mermaid, was named after Schreiner's independent and rebellious heroine, Lyndall, in *The Story of an African Farm* (Schreiner 1924). First wrote about Schreiner, who like Doris Lessing and First herself was born in southern Africa but spent much of her life in revolutionary or at least progressive circles in Britain. Reading Schreiner, Lessing, and First informed my own struggles as a woman, adding depth to my understanding of what it meant to be a feminist, a white South African woman in exile, and a political activist.

Based in many places and rethinking, as each generation of women is forced to do – a woman's place in a man's intellectual world – Lessing and Schreiner were as much concerned with women's sexuality as their employment or country of origin. First chose to write about Schreiner, who perhaps was more like the early twentieth-century Russian analysts of free love Emma Goldman and Alexandra Kolontai than the austere figure I envisioned First to be. In fact, however, I was probably misunderstanding her. As a naïve and intimidated young girl, I imagined that First, a grown woman and sharp-witted, politically active scholar, must be without emotional conflicts and personal tensions. In reading some of the biographical material about her, I have come to think that First, renowned among her political comrades as a most beautiful woman, may also have been considering some of the dilemmas of sexuality and woman's place when she chose to research the life of Olive Schreiner. Sadly, in 1982 in Mozambique, Ruth First was killed by a letter bomb planted by the South African secret police – an act of state terrorism that also injured anthropologist Bridget O'Laughlin.

Clearly it was over-determined that I go into anthropology, or at least work in an international setting. My image of research was based on a romantic ideal of understanding the lives of people oppressed and undermined from apartheid rule, whom, in spite of my own extensive academic reading in the area (in completing a master's degree at the University of Chicago under the supervision of the Africanist anthropologist Lloyd Fallers), I envisioned in terms of the acclaimed memoir *Down Second Avenue* by my parents' friend Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele and the novel *Second Class Taxi* by my uncle Sylvester Stein. Both books were banned in South Africa. My uncle's book, a hilarious satire of apartheid in the 1950s, hardly sold but was finally hailed as a literary classic in Nadine Gordimer's recent review of South African literature.

In 1973, on entering the doctoral program in anthropology at Columbia University, an ongoing preoccupation with Africa was reflected in my application essay, stating that I wanted to research race and ethnicity and that for my dissertation I planned to go to southern Africa to do fieldwork in an urban township. In the end, however, I conducted my doctoral research in Brooklyn, New York, concerned with working-class social movements and the transformation of women's lives by the New York City fiscal crisis. An early harbinger of the dismantlement of the welfare

provisions in the United States, and structural adjustment policies applied at home, the work was published as *Norman Street: Poverty and Politics in an Urban Neighborhood* (Susser 1982). Later, as the AIDS epidemic emerged, I focused on the possibilities for HIV prevention among homeless men and women in New York City and conducted fieldwork on the potential for community mobilization around HIV in a rural barrio of Puerto Rico where I had been working with my anthropologist husband and young children. We organized a conference at Columbia University in the early 1990s and co-edited with George Bond and Joan Vincent the book, *AIDS in Africa and the Caribbean* (Bond et al. 1997).

As South Africans began to fight free from apartheid, I redirected my research on the negotiations of men and women in community mobilization around AIDS in the effort to contribute to AIDS prevention in southern Africa and with Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Zena Stein, and several other people, submitted a proposal to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). It was in relation to this research that I made my first trip back to South Africa since boarding ship from Durban in December 1955. I traveled with my two sons, age three and ten and Zena Stein, who also worked on the grant, while she assisted me with the children, allowing me, a single mother recently split up from my first husband, to pursue my research.

During that first visit, I was walking past the luxury Carlton Hotel in central Johannesburg with the three-year-old in a stroller when shots rang out near the taxi stand. We had to take cover and then, in fact, look for a taxi to get back to where we were staying. That experience, among others, opened my eyes to the challenges of the transition from apartheid and to the violence that marked the struggle for change.

In the course of this first trip back, I met Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who was one of the principal investigators on the original proposal. When she became the Minister for Health in South Africa she appointed Quarraisha Abdool Karim as the Chief Director for AIDS in South Africa. I returned in 1995 to follow up on the experiences of women in the informal settlements around Durban.

In 1989, the guerilla war led by the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) against the apartheid South African army had resulted in Namibian independence. In 1996, with Canadian anthropologist Richard Lee, who had worked for three decades among the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari, I initiated a training program in social science research concerned with AIDS at the University of Namibia. For several weeks each year from 1996 to 2003, funded through the HIV Center at Columbia University, we worked with Scholastika Iipinge to train students, NGO workers, civil servants, and faculty in ethnographic research on the social context of AIDS. In 2000, we went to the historic Durban International AIDS Society Conference together with researchers initially trained in this program who presented abstracts at the conference. This project was later adopted by the University of Toronto and the University of Namibia and is still in operation. Over the past decade in conjunction with our training program, Richard Lee and I conducted research in Namibia and Botswana among the Ju/'hoansi and also among men and women in other areas.