

NON - PROFIT COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

# grassroots

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5 YEARS OF THE PEOPLE'S PAPER

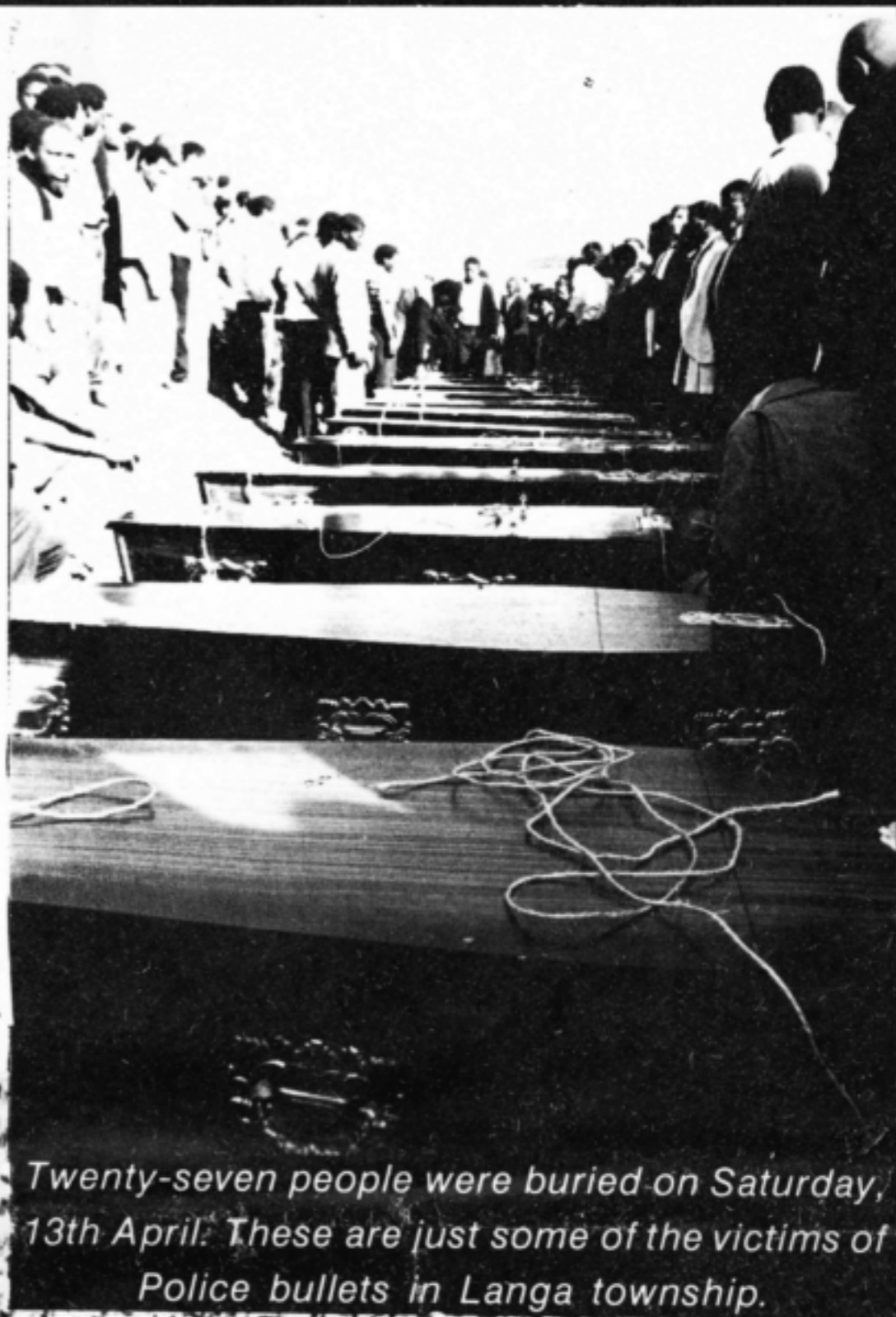
Friday 26 to Sunday 28 April

grassroots 5TH AGM

80 000 mourn victims of Uitenhage massacre

# GRIEF AND ANGER

Page 2 and Page 15



Twenty-seven people were buried on Saturday, 13th April. These are just some of the victims of Police bullets in Langa township.



Thousands raise their fists at the biggest funeral in South African history

UNITING IN ATLANTIS

P. 5



TRIBUTE TO WINNIE MANDELA

p. 7



LEARNING ROOTS The Student Paper No. 2 April 1985

- Stevie Wonder
- writing short stories
- macbeth part 2

FREE SUPPLEMENT

Fighting for Peace UDF AGM

P. 8 & 9



# WE BURY OUR DEAD

"OUR people cannot continue suffering like this. We must put a stop to it. Today we have seen that all of us, black and white, can live together in peace."

These words were spoken by a young man of Kwanobuhle as the funeral procession of 27 people who had died at the hands of the South African police, moved towards the cemetery.

Thousands and thousands of people — parents, youth, priests, teachers, white and black, filled the streets of the small township. People came from all parts of South Africa to mourn the dead.

For those who were there, Saturday April 13 is a day they will never forget. Most of the gravel roads of Kwanobuhle were hidden beneath a mass of humanity. People crowded on to the roofs of township houses to get a proper view of the proceedings. Thousands more gathered on the green hills surrounding the cemetery. There were 80-, 90-, maybe 100 000 people.

Earlier, speakers from various township organisations like the UDF, Uitenhage Womens organisation, Uitenhage Youth Congress, Trade Unions and Churches addressed the massive crowd that had gathered from early that morning at NEW STADIUM in Kwanobuhle.

Just before 3 p.m., the funeral procession left the stadium led by Dr Allan Boesak, Bishop Desmond Tutu and a large group of priests from the Eastern Cape.

Mourners formed a guard-of-honour stretching for about 500 metres. The 27 victims, most who had been killed in the massacre in Langa on March 21, were carried to the cemetery in their coffins.

The 27 coffins were placed next to the 27 burial holes. Families and friends of the victims showed their grief and sorrow. The entire community is shocked and angered at these senseless and unnecessary deaths.



## Langa and Kwanobuhle Townships under siege

As we neared Uitenhage at noon on Saturday, more than 14 hours after leaving Cape Town, we sat up at the sight of an armoured SADF vehicle surrounded by soldiers.

As we travelled on, we stared in disbelief at more and more armoured vehicles and soldiers lining the roads, parked behind bushes, on the top of a hill, next to a shed, on one of the farms. They just stood there, looking bored waiting.

In the business area of Uitenhage, there were soldiers, uniformed policemen and plainclothed security policemen on virtually every corner.

But the area appeared unusually quiet for a Saturday morning.

With the policemen and soldiers in sight, some of the workers who were on duty at shops and filling stations, raised their fists defiantly as our bus headed in the direction of Kwanobuhle.

At the border of the township, a group of soldiers wearing helmets and carrying guns, radiotelephones and binoculars, stood guard.

A busload of people from Cape Town travelled to Uitenhage for the mass funeral on Saturday April 13. A Grassroots team went along and in this report, they describe what they had seen and heard.



We got the impression that a war was in progress. The army, who we are told, defend the country's borders, was right there on the borders of Kwanobuhle.

As we drove towards the stadium where the funeral proceedings had already started two hours before, we passed large groups of people, heading to the same destination. Everyone — young, children, youth, parents, old men and women greeted us with clenched fists and shouts of "Amandla" and "Viva".

We arrived at the stadium two-and-a-half hours late, thanks to three roadblocks — the first in Paarl, the

second just after Worcester and the third a distance outside Oudtshoorn.

Many people in the bus believed it was a deliberate attempt to delay us.

In and around the stadium, there were people everywhere. We had never before witnessed so many people gathered together at one place.

The Cape Town delegation entered the stadium and we made our way through the crowd of 70 000 people, slowly, until we finally stationed ourselves near the grandstand where the speakers were seated. 27 coffins were lined up in front of the grandstand.

Women dressed in purple and white outfits, stood out in the crowd while many priests, including Dr Allan Boesak and Bishop Desmond Tutu caught one's attention with their impressive looking robes.

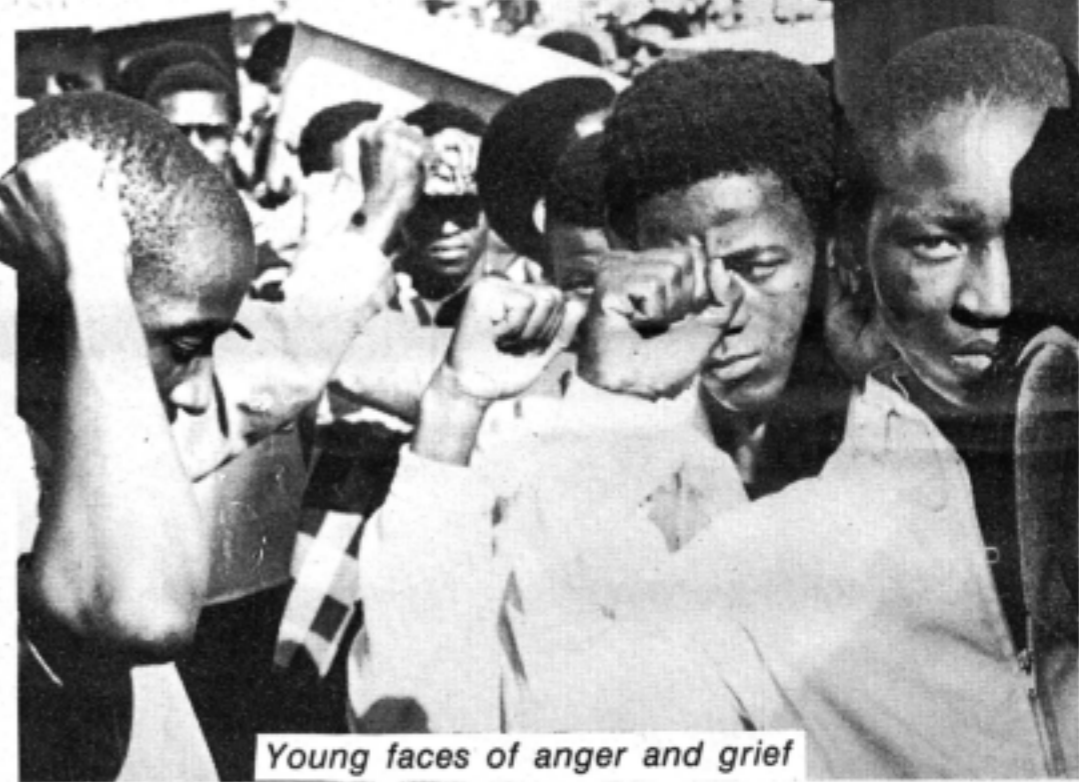
Hand-made and painted banners were held high. Many people wore brightly-coloured T-shirts bearing the name of various township organisations.

For almost three hours, with the sun shining brightly, we were hemmed in by the crowd, hardly able to move forward or backward.

Just before 3 p.m. the funeral procession left the stadium. Young men with clenched fists carried the coffins to the cemetery where their fallen comrades were finally laid to rest.

As people sang and held their banners high, one knew one was among a very determined people. They experience endless suffering under the inhuman system of apartheid.

They refuse to allow the Government to oppress and exploit them any longer. They want freedom and are prepared to fight and die for it.



Young faces of anger and grief

## Crimes against the people

IN December last year, the home of Fiks Qobese, a former vice-President of the United Democratic Front (Eastern Cape Region), was petrol-bombed.

In the resulting fire, his 19-year-old brother Lesley was burnt to death.

The last few months have seen increasing violence in the townships of Langa and Kwanobuhle. Langa, an old township, is situated about 3 km from Uitenhage, while Kwanobuhle is on the opposite side, 13 km away.

About 6 000 people live in Langa, a squatter township, where poverty, unemployment, high prices and retrenchments cripple the community.

Last year people from Langa were moved to the new township of Kwanobuhle but many moved back because there were not enough facilities.

A few months ago, the Uitenhage Youth Congress started a campaign calling for the resignation of the Community Councillors. The Community Council declared war

on people's organisations like the Youth Congress, the Womens organisation and the UDF. They were prevented from using halls for meetings.

Fiks Qobese was attacked and his home later petrol bombed, a result of which his brother died.

Community Councillors were armed and protected by Vigilantes and police.

A number of township youth were either shot or assaulted by bullyboys of the community council.

In February this year, the anger of the people erupted. All the community councillors, except Kinikini resigned.

Kinikini was later hunted down, hacked to death and burnt. Today, not a single policeman or community councillor lives in either township.

The people, after years of frustration, bitterness and suffering under apartheid, are fighting back. And their first targets have been representatives of Apartheid right in the townships.

# BUT NOT OUR ANGER

# MASSACRE!

*What really happened in Uitenhage on March 21*

**THIS IS WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY**

*'There was no warning'*

I WAS moving down 15th Avenue. The people were marching down Maduna Road and I joined them. As the procession was going down Maduna Road there was a hippo in the middle of the road in front of the people. We were going to the funeral of Kwa Nobuhle.

The people were peacefully going to Kwa Nobuhle. We were not carrying stones and I saw no petrol bombs. Some police were on the hippo and some were on the ground.

The man in front of the people who was riding on a bicycle was shot. There was no warning, we were not told to go away. There was no stones thrown at the police. The man on the bicycle was passing the hippo when he was shot. The crowd was behind this man and the hippos were not surrounded.

The police then fired at the crowd and I ran away. I was hit on the head by a bullet and I fell onto the ground and pretended to be dead. As I was lying on the ground I heard a black policeman say that they must finish them or they would make a claim. The man lying next to me was shot while he was on the ground and the police said he was a leader.

I was shot in the foot. A white policeman then examined me to see if I was dead and said "hy is lankal dood hierdie kaffir". Another white policeman shone a torch into my eyes and he left me. The police then gathered some stones and put them on the ground where the bodies were.

The ambulances came and I was put into an ambulance and taken to the hospital and from there I managed to escape. I went to a private doctor who attended to my wounds. The doctor was Dr Peer in Durban Street

ERIC TEMBANI

*'They put stones in people's hands'*

"WE WERE in Maduna Road between 8 and 9 in the morning waiting for transport to go to the funeral of Kwa Nobuhle. A hippo came from 23rd Avenue. The hippo circled around the people. There was no transport so we started on foot to go to Kwa Nobuhle.

At 15th Avenue there was another hippo and two land-rovers. When they got to 15th Avenue the hippo went in front

THE massacre at Langa township, Uitenhage, on March 21 has shocked the whole world.

At 10 a.m. that day about 5000 people were on their way to a funeral. They were confronted by police.

Police said that 17 people were killed immediately and 19 injured. They said that two more people died later in hospital.

The people say that at least 43 people died that day and that hundreds more were injured.

Now the government has appointed a one-man commission to investigate.

On this page, Grassroots looks at what the Minister of Law and Order said about the incident. We also look at what the people of the area said in affidavits signed before commissioners of oaths.

of them. The policeman shot the man on the bicycle in front of the people and then the other people.

I ran away to the houses nearby. When we looked back at Maduna Rd. there were lots of people lying on the ground.

We saw the police collecting stones and putting them in the hands of the people on the ground. The people asked the police what they were doing and the police said the people must say Amandla Wethu.

The ambulance came and took the people away.

We went back to our homes."

LILY MADELA

*'No-one in crowd had stones, sticks'*

"I WAS going to the funeral on 21st March 1985 at Kwano-buhle.

I was in a group. I saw two hippos in front of us and another at the back near 16th Avenue. We were walking down Maduna Road.

When we got close to the two hippos they started shooting. I was shot in the ankle and fell down. While I was lying on the ground the police left the hippos and came among us.

They took our umbrellas (it was hot). They said all who were alive must get up. They hit and kicked us.

The police collected stones and scattered them among the dead people.

I was taken to hospital in an ambulance and later escaped.

I did not see anyone in the crowd carrying stones, sticks or any other weapon.

I escaped from the hospital because, though I was innocent and had done nothing, I was afraid I would be put in goal...

VUYANI MLOMZALE

*'Police threatened us with guns'*

"I WAS moving down 17th Ave heading for the funeral. I joined the procession next to Mita's Shop. There was a hippo in front of the procession and another alongside. We went down Maduna Road.

Some elderly woman were coming and some policeman waved them to join the procession. A man was in front on a bicycle and a white man on a hippo pointed a gun and shot him.

The policeman did not say the people must go back. I saw



*Youth members carry the coffins of their friends and brothers*

no stones being thrown or any spears or petrol bombs. There was no warning when he was shot and then the police fired at the crowd.

The people were in front of the hippo - they were not around it.

When the police fired I threw myself onto the ground. I heard the police say we must kill all the people still alive. They did not see I was still alive.

The police put stones on the road. The ambulances came and I was put in an ambulance. The people who were wounded were trying to run away and the police were beating them...

In the hospital I ran to the toilet where I cleaned the blood from my clothes. I then walked slowly out of the hospital and went home.

JOHN FILA

**THIS IS WHAT LE GRANGE SAID**

AFTER the Uitenhage massacre, the Minister of Law and Order Mr Louis le Grange made a statement in which he said 17 people were killed and 19 injured. He also said the police were attacked with stones, "and other missiles including petrol bombs".

The people said they were unarmed, they were going to a funeral.

Several political parties called for the resignation of the Minister. They said he had lost control over the police.

Dr Allan Boesak, patron of the UDF, said it was useless for Mr le Grange to resign while the Botha government and its apartheid policies still existed.

The following is the Minister's statement.

"I regret to announce that a most unfortunate incident took place at about 10 a.m. this morning when the police were forced to open fire on a crowd of people estimated at between 3000 and 4000 near Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. 17 people

died and 19 injured.

"The crowd, armed with stones, sticks, petrol bombs and bricks were marching towards Uitenhage on the highway from the Langa Black township. They were led by a person dressed in black and carrying a brick.

"About one kilometre from Uitenhage a police unit consisting of 19 men led by a lieutenant confronted the marching crowd and the officer in charge climbed onto his vehicle and told the leader that

the march was illegal in terms of the prohibition on open-air gatherings. He instructed the leader to order his people back but his instructions were ignored.

"When the crowd was about five metres from the police the commanding officer fired a warning shot into the ground next to the leader.

"It still had no effect and the police were suddenly surrounded and pelted with stones, sticks and other missiles including petrol bombs.

"The police officer had no alternative but to order fire, in self defence. Three R1-rifles and some shotguns were used. The crowd retreated and firing immediately ceased. Six R1-bullets, 27 shotgun cartridges and 10 pistol shots were fired.

"Eleven people died during the incident while six others died in hospital. Nineteen people were wounded.

"Police later found traces of exploded petrol bombs as well as one unexploded petrol bomb. Fingerprints have been found on the unexploded bomb.

"I am particularly perturbed that notwithstanding the fact that the police and my office informed the media as quickly as possible after the incident of the correct facts it came to my notice that grossly exaggerated messages which stated that the police had opened up with machine guns and that wounded people had been shot dead in cold blood, had been relayed to the media. [This is a calculated distortion of the facts.