

GRAFFITI

How much does it cost to publish a book? A lot. All the mass media – radio, TV, books, newspapers and so on, need a lot of money to produce. Private individuals or even groups of people, if they are not rich, find it hard to use the media. If they want to get into radio or TV they have to say things that the owners of media like to hear. It is those with money or power who own the media. Consequently money and power can spread their ideas widely, but anyone who does not have money or power cannot easily distribute their ideas. This is why graffiti and posters are so important. They are cheap ways of publishing ideas.

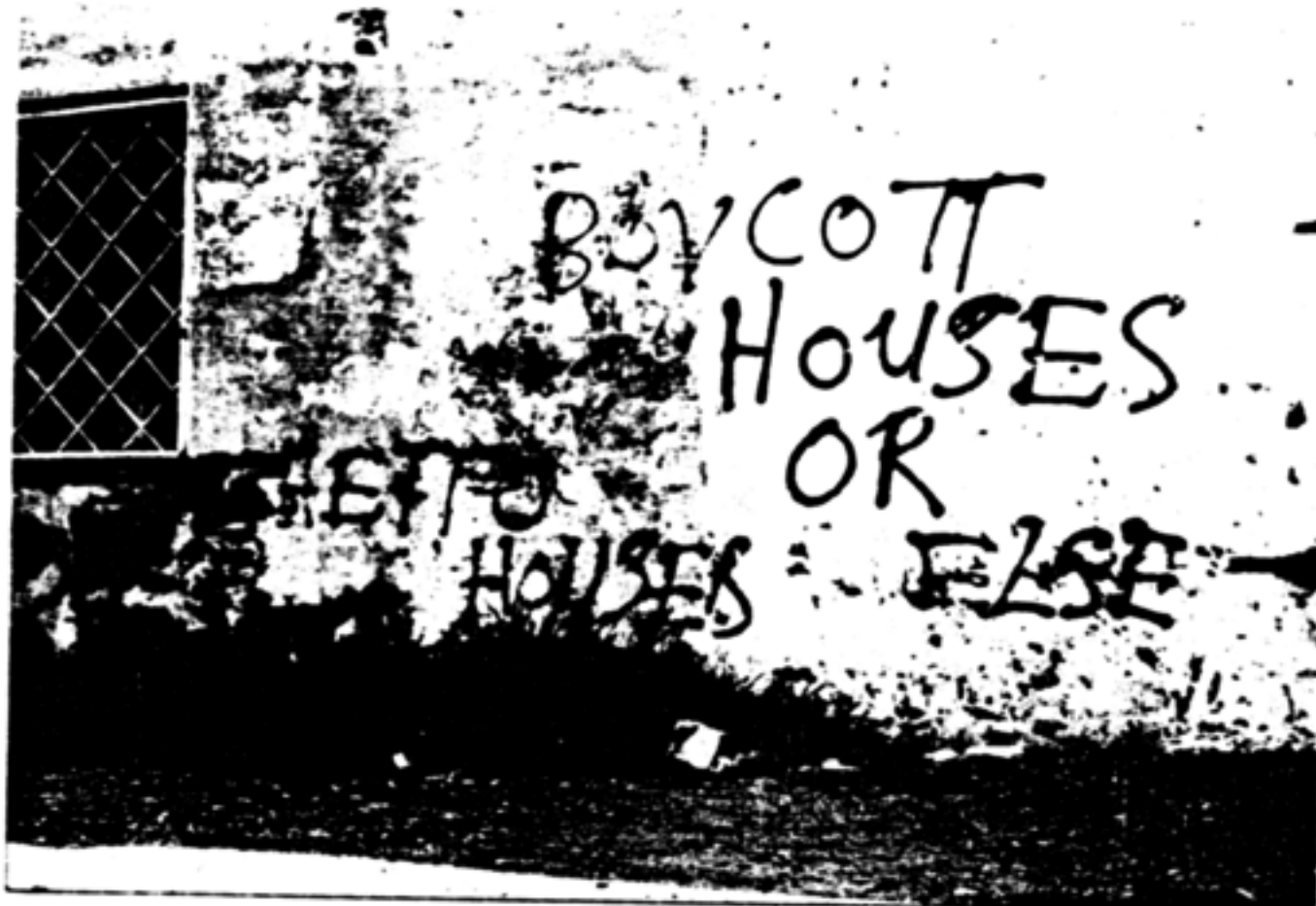
Graffiti is the writing on the wall
The writing on the wall as at Western
Heroes die young. . . .

That is how Chris van Wyk, the fine Riverlea poet, begins his poem about graffiti.

What are these wall-writings, these secrets published on buildings, these short thoughts written in large letters?

There are two qualities in good graffiti: they must be bold and they must be surprising. There is not as much space for writing on a wall as in a book. What you say must have a quick and astonishing effect. Graffiti thoughts are produced under pressure. This is why they are usually things that you are not supposed to say. Because they are forbidden, they burst out. *Free Mandela*. Graffiti are about the political ideas of people (White Republic No – Peoples' Republic Yes); about their anger (Boycott houses now); their desires (ANC lives)

Talking Walls of the Voiceless



Graffiti in Western 1982

Graffiti are also signs that reveal more than they say. Van Wyk develops this idea:

Graffiti is a scar on a face
The mine dump is graffiti
A cockroach is graffiti
A rabid dog is graffiti
Adrenalin and blood in the township
that's graffiti

Often the point of graffiti is a joke, not even a polite one. FREE WOMEN, writes a feminist: WHERE? demands a greedy man. An important thing about graffiti is that they have no author. They are not authorised. They are independent. For a community, graffiti can be a useful way of expressing feelings and frustrations.

We acknowledge The Sowetan for photos of Madzunya and Mokonyane: for other photos the Drum collection at SAAN and The Star

IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP is published by Ditshwantsho tsa Rona. It offers notes and views about events of today or of the past. Though mainly concerned with Alexandra, because that is the home location of Ditshwantsho, we hold that Alexandra is but a part of South Africa, and shares in the general struggle in this country. We reject the ghetto status of the township, and we reject strategies that attempt to divide it from other parts of the nation.

It is necessary to understand society in order to change it. We invite the public to participate in this paper, by carrying out research and by contributing to discussion.

Articles in future issues of IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP will include:
Squatters: Who are they?
Alcohol abuse
Hostels
What Advertising is All about
Library Research
Politics of Male and Female.