

# **Conference on Non-Racialism in South Africa – past, present and future:**

**Debates and controversies**

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## **THE UNITY MOVEMENT AND NONRACIALISM IN SPORT**

**PRESENTER: Dr. Basil Brown**

The paper will focus on the history of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) with special reference to non-racial school sport, emphasising the influence of Unity Movement ideas in the formulation of some of the policies adopted by both.

### **INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF NON RACIAL SPORT**

After 1948 the Apartheid government's repressive and discriminatory laws were rigidly applied in sport as in all other areas of social life in South Africa. While on the one hand, "Whites" only sports bodies were further bolstered by the enactment of these laws on the other hand sports bodies amongst the oppressed groups which had been organised on a racial basis into "Coloured", "African", "Indian" and even "Malay" sports bodies started to consider forming non-racial bodies.

The oppressed groups, which will hereafter be referred to as Blacks, were strictly prohibited from any sporting contact with whites except as spectators and then they were herded into separate sections, through separate entrances of the sports stadia where only white teams played.

When the Apartheid government became aware of the first stirrings of a challenge to the status quo from Black sport federations it reacted by announcing what was South Africa's first official sports policy in 1956. The intent and content of this sports policy

is spelt out by Desai and Veriava as follows: *“apart from making explicit the state’s commitment to the separate organisation of sports, it also insisted that black federations seeking international recognition would be forced to do so through the existing white organisations in South Africa, and that athletes who attempted to travel overseas to engage in activities ‘designed to change South Africa’s traditional racial divisions’ would not be issued with passports (Draper 1963: 6). The broad application of the latter measure effectively banned any black sportsperson from competing in international competition without the explicit support of the state.”*<sup>1</sup>

They go on with the following quote; *“The government does not favour inter-racial team competitions within the borders of the Union and will discourage such competition from taking place as being contrary to the traditional policy of the Union – as accepted by all races in the union...The policy of separate development is in accordance with the traditional South African custom that whites and non-whites should organise their sporting activities separately. The inclusion of different races in the same team would therefore be contrary to established norm and custom. (Minister of the Interior Naudé, cited in Lapchick 1975: 35)”*<sup>2</sup>

Desai and Veriava go on to say *“Although the state’s policy would be variously amended in order to navigate the bumpy terrain created by an increasingly powerful campaign to ensure white South Africa’s exclusion from international competition, state policy continued to reflect a deep commitment to the basic tenets of the 1956 policy”*<sup>3</sup>

Added to this the playing of sport was governed by the Group Areas Act of 1950 and proclamation 65 of 1956 which stipulated that all public places of recreation, including sporting events, theatres and concerts in white areas could not be frequented by non-whites and vice versa.<sup>4</sup>

It was thus against this backdrop that the development of the non-racial sports movement, which was to become a part of the more broadly based Anti-Apartheid struggle has to be seen.

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<sup>1</sup> Ashwin Desai and Ahmed Veriava, 2010, “Creepy crawlies, portapools and the dam(n)s of swimming transformation” in *“The Race to Transform: Sport in Post Apartheid South Africa*, HRSC Press.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> SA History on-line

The origins of the non-racial sports movement are well documented and include a personal account by Dennis Brutus, generally acknowledged as being the prime mover behind the formation of both SASA and SANROC.<sup>5</sup>

Briefly the origins of the non racial sports movement can be traced to the formation of organisations like the Committee for International Recognition in 1955, the South African Sports Association (SASA) in 1958, and its successor, the Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) founded in 1963.

According to ES Reddy a former Director of the United Nations Centre against Apartheid, the issue of discrimination and segregation in sports was first raised during the Indian passive resistance campaign of 1946-48. George Singh, who became a founder member of SASA, SANROC and SACOS, was among the leaders of that campaign.

These organisations were formed by non-racial sportspersons, *“to fight against racism in sport and press for international recognition of the non-racial sports bodies in South Africa. Their leadership was largely from the Indian and Coloured communities as the Africans were not practising many of the codes of sport with international affiliations.”*<sup>6</sup>

So for example, the main motivation behind the formation of SASA was the result of a growing demand by black sporting federations for international recognition in the wake of such recognition being fought for and granted to the Non-Racial South African Table Tennis Board (SATTB) in 1955.

The SATTB was the first non-racial sports body to be formed in 1948. The Committee for International Recognition was able to secure its recognition by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) and have the white body expelled. As a result a SATTB team was able to participate in the world championships in Stockholm in 1957, but immediately thereafter the government refused passports to its teams, ruling that no black could compete internationally except through a white sports

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<sup>5</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim (editors), 2006, Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader, UKZN Press.

<sup>6</sup> Enuga S. Reddy: <https://www.aluka.org/struggles/collection/ESRSA>

body. A detailed history of the SATTB is contained in the 5<sup>th</sup> BGM Secretarial report 1983.<sup>7</sup>

The formation of SASA was met with hostility from the state which first started by harassing and subsequently banning the leadership of SASA under the Suppression of Communism Act. However showing that they would not be cowed by this intimidation from the state, and not a little ingenuity they went on to establish the South African Non Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) which was set up specifically to exploit the fact that the South African National Olympic Committee's (SANOC) exclusively white membership was in direct conflict with the non racial constitution of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It was on that basis that SANOC's membership of the IOC was challenged.

After being banned and imprisoned on Robben Island for 18 months for leaving the country illegally, Dennis Brutus went into exile together with other members and played a leading role in ensuring that racist white South African sport was expelled from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and subsequently from most other international competitions and sport federations through SANROC based in Britain and the USA.

It was SANROC which had been responsible for South Africa being excluded from participation in the Olympic Games in Mexico in 1968 and which subsequently successfully, campaigned for it to be expelled from the IOC in 1970.<sup>8</sup>

The Apartheid state, in an attempt to appease the clamour both from inside and outside the country, for the sports policy announced in 1956 to be changed, responded by making certain concessions and reforms such as their multinational sports policy announced in 1976 and implementing recommendations made by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 1983. These reforms and concessions were totally rejected by SACOS.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> SACOS BGM Report 1983

<sup>8</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim (editors), 2006, Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader, UKZN Press.

<sup>9</sup> SACOS BGM Report 1983

It was during the 1970s, that sport in South Africa became defined, from the perspective of the oppressed, in terms of “white “, “establishment”, “multinational” or “Apartheidsport” on the one hand and non racial sport or “Sacossport” on the other.

### **THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL ON SPORT (SACOS)**

The groundwork laid by SASA and SANROC was taken forward to a higher level by the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) which was formed on 17 March 1973 to “strive for non-racial sports structures from school level upwards and to generate opposition to and to expose discrimination in sport, in sport sponsorship and facilities in South Africa.”<sup>10</sup>

An excellent account of the history, structure and functions of SACOS is given by Noel Goodall in his master’s thesis at Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) in 2004.<sup>11</sup>

When opposition to the Apartheid regime by political organisations like the ANC, PAC, SACP and UM were ruthlessly suppressed in the 1960’s, sport became arguably the only avenue through which opposition not only to the sports system, but to the whole system of Apartheid could be expressed.

And thus it was inevitable that as stated by Goodall, *“SACOS undoubtedly played an important role by filling a void created by the banning of the major anti government movements and by adding a new dimension to the role of sport as a vital social activity.”*

Certainly many Unity Movement inspired activists and sportspersons saw it as such and became involved in non racial sport as a means to achieving political ends as it were.

After its formation in 1973, SACOS developed into a strong organisation which by the mid 80’s had established itself both nationally and internationally, as the *“Sports Wing of the Liberatory Movement”* and as “the authentic representative of non-racial sport” in the country. It had Sam Ramsamy, the president of SANROC as its external

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<sup>10</sup> SACOS BGM Report 1993

<sup>11</sup> Noel Goodall, 2004, “Opposing Apartheid through sport. The role of SACOS in South African sport, 1982-1992. Master’s thesis .RAU.

representative based in Britain, was an affiliate of the Supreme Council for sport in Africa, the French sports federation the FSGT and had fraternal links with a number of Anti-Apartheid Movement organisations in Europe and anti-South African Sports organisations like Halt All Racist Tours (HART) in New Zealand, and the American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sport and Society (ACCESS), amongst many others. SACOS was also recognised by the UN Committee against Apartheid Sport (UNCAAS) and the International Committee Against Apartheid Sport (ICAAS) which was based in Sweden. (See BGM secretarial reports for complete list of affiliations and associations

At its height in 1988 SACOS had 30 affiliates representing 19 different codes of sport. The affiliates included two school sports organisations SAPSSA and SASSSA, the Tertiary institutions sports association (SATISA) and 8 Provincial Councils of sport.<sup>12</sup>

SACOS was seen both by the establishment and by conservative elements within the ranks of the black population as being responsible for bringing “politics into sport”. This statement reflected the belief in those quarters, that sport and politics should not be mixed. Whereas SACOS in fact saw the sports struggle as being integrally linked with the struggle for freedom from racial oppression and economic exploitation. Hence, it was not surprising that, in the wake of the HSRC report in 1983, the government labelled SACOS “*an enemy of the state*”.<sup>13</sup>

Goodall summarises the role of SACOS very well as follows:

*“In its reaction to this ideology (of Apartheid) SACOS had adopted as its goal and guiding principle, the principle of non-racialism. SACOS not only challenged apartheid sport on the basis of this principle, but also exposed the fraudulent 5reformist acts of the state and instilled an awareness, locally and internationally, of the evils of Apartheid. This is the new dimension SACOS added to the role of sport.”*<sup>14</sup>

SACOS obviously attracted adherents of all the political tendencies each of which sought to gain hegemony within its ranks. So much so that during 1985 SACOS held meetings with all the major political organisations within the Broad Liberatory

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<sup>12</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> BGM Secretarial report

<sup>13</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> BGM Secretarial Report 1983

<sup>14</sup> Noel Goodall, 2004, “Opposing Apartheid through sport. The role of SACOS in South African sport, 1982-1992. Master’s thesis .RAU

Movement, including the UDF, AZAPO, National Forum and New Unity Movement which all endorsed both its status as the “sport swing of the liberatory movement”, and its policy of political non-alignment.<sup>15</sup>

However it is not hard to see why some of its detractors especially from within the ranks of ANC aligned organisations, accused SACOS of in fact being aligned to the Unity Movement.

Clearly this was so because, as will be shown shortly, so many of the policies and practices adopted by SACOS appeared to be influenced by Unity Movement ideas.

In terms of its constitution, Sacos held Biennial elective conferences (BGM's), annual general council meetings and regular National executive meetings. Over the years a number of special conferences were also held. Sacos meetings were characterised by a high level of debate. In fact it was of such a standard so as to put our current parliament to shame! All matters that had a bearing on the policies of Sacos were debated and decisions taken, after specially commissioned research papers were read at conference.

Another feature of SACOS conferences was the strict dress code applied to delegates.

The last BGM, its 11<sup>th</sup>, was held in Cape Town 22 and 23 April 1995.

## **THE UNITY MOVEMENT (UM) AND SACOS**

Briefly, the UM which was founded in 1943 as the NEUM promoted the following core principles and policies: Non-racialism, the building of a single undivided nation, non-collaboration and anti-imperialism, the Ten Point Programme (TPP) of non negotiable minimum demands and the concept of principled struggle.

Stated simply non collaboration meant refusing to work the machinery of one's own oppression. This policy was given practical effect by implementing the weapon of the boycott which was deployed not only against institutions and agencies of the state but also against persons from within the ranks of the oppressed who were found to be guilty of collaborating.

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<sup>15</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> BGM secretarial report, 1985

The policy of non collaboration and the boycott weapon were seen as being integral to the philosophy, tenets and practice of the NEUM and as being inseparable from its Ten Point Programme (TPP) of political demands.

It is generally accepted that it was the UM that first introduced the principle of non racialism, into political discourse in South Africa. It is an incontrovertible fact that the UM played a seminal role in propagating the principle of non racialism in the '40's and 50's, notwithstanding an attempt by Adhikari to debunk this idea.<sup>16</sup>

The UM concept of non-racialism has to be seen as being in contradistinction to the Multi-racialism of the Liberals and the ANC- SACP with their four nation thesis.

The UM idea of non racialism was linked to that of the building of a single, undivided nation, as expressed by the UM slogan "We Build a Nation"

Although the founders of the non racial sports movement cannot be directly linked to the UM, Dennis Brutus for example does admit to having been influenced by certain members of the organisation.<sup>17</sup> Also, it is highly likely that many of those who initiated the development of the non racial sports movement were inspired by the NEUM's *Declaration to the Nations of the World in July 1945* and *The Declaration to the People of SA* of 1950, as well as other UM writings which espoused the non-racial ethic. Examples of these are: *Background of Segregation* by Ben Kies (1943) and *Origin and Development of Segregation in South Africa* by W.P. van Schoor (1951).

When the New Unity Movement (NUM) was formed in 1985 as the re-incarnation of the NEUM, some of its members were already members of SACOS and its affiliates at code level and in the provincial councils of sport. NUM members assumed leading positions in the various codes, in the Provincial Councils of Sport and served on the National executive of SACOS.

The NUM gave its full support to SACOS, while fully accepting its non aligned position when members of its national executive addressed the general council meeting of SACOS in Cape Town in 1985.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Adhikari Mohamed, "Fiercely Non-Racial? Discourses and Politics of Race in the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943–70, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 31, Number 2, June 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Lee Sustar and Aisha Karim (editors), 2006, *Poetry and Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader*, UKZN Press (Brutus was also a member of the NEUM affiliated TLSA.)

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of SACOS General Meeting 22 September 1985



It should therefore not come as a surprise to discover that sympathisers and members of the UM had influence inside Sacos forums but that is not to say that other political tendencies had no say within the organisation.

In fact it would be true to say that most supporters of SACOS were members of tendencies other than the NUM.

Let us have a look at SACOS policies and some of its practices. SACOS did not only concern itself with discussing sports policies. It also took part in activities which while promoting the interests of non racial sports persons also became involved in initiatives, more broadly linked to its role as an organisation involved in the political struggle as part of the broad liberatory movement.

## **SACOS: PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

### **1. THE POLICY OF NON RACIALISM**

As alluded to above this was the defining principle on which SACOS was based. The SACOS understanding of non racialism agreed in every detail with the principle as enunciated by the UM. So ingrained was the principle of non racialism that when the Black consciousness movement, through AZAPO, arrived on the scene, and took issue with the non racial policy of SACOS they failed in their attempts to influence the organisation to change its stance in this regard.<sup>19</sup>

It was its adherence to the principle of non racialism that ensured that SACOS would be implacably opposed to all the race based reforms introduced by the government through the Koornhof Bills of 1977 and the Human Science Research Council's Recommendations of 1983.

### **2. THE DOUBLE STANDARDS RESOLUTION (DSR) AND “NO NORMAL SPORT IN AN ABNORMAL SOCIETY”**

The DSR which was another defining feature of SACOS correlated very well with the UM's policy of non collaboration. It was first adopted in June 1977 at a General

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<sup>19</sup> Minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> SACOS BGM

Council meeting and had been formulated as a response to the governments newly announced policy of multinational sport or “normal sport” as they called it.

The DSR as adopted in June read as follows:

*“Any person, whether he is a player, administrator or spectator, committed to the non-racial principle in sport, shall not participate in or be associated with any other code of sport which practises, perpetuates or condones racialism or multi-racialism. Players and or administrators disregarding the essence of this principle shall be guilty of practising double- standards, and cannot therefore be a member of any organisation affiliated to SACOS”<sup>20</sup>*

The DSR acquired an overtly political dimension when its application was extended to the rejection of all discriminatory government institutions. This was done in a further resolution adopted in September 1977.

The resolution read:

*“No member of SACOS shall in any way condone, encourage, foster or advocate racialism or discrimination in any form and no individual associated with SACOS or its members shall in any way condone, encourage, foster or advocate racialism or discrimination and for the purposes of this clause the participation in, support of, oral forms of government bodies designed to entrench and /or promote of people via bodies such as the Coloured Persons Representative Council, the South African Indian Council, Local Affairs Committee’s, Community Councils, Management Committee’s and the like, or any successor thereto, shall be deemed to condone or encourage or foster or advocate racialism and discrimination”<sup>21</sup>*

A further dimension to the DSR was added when the slogan “No normal sport in an abnormal society” was formulated. As recalled by Frank van der Horst SACOS Vice President at the time, the slogan was formulated by an official of the WP cricket board, Abel Jordaan.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> BGM Secretarial Report 1989

<sup>21</sup> Minutes September 1977

<sup>22</sup> Frank vd Horst, 2005, “SACOS: The Sportswing of the Liberatory Movement” Unpublished memoir

The slogan soon gained wide spread acceptance and helped in raising the political consciousness of all oppressed communities since it succinctly articulated the idea that non-racial sport could only be achieved in a liberated, non-racial democracy.

As Van Der Horst says *“The strict application of the DSR policy and the “No normal sport in an abnormal society” battle cry, clearly identified SACOS as the sports wing of the liberatory movement”*.<sup>23</sup>

However, the strict application of the DSR did become contentious and, as subsequent events show, came to be its undoing. For example the use of “Permitted Venues” and the use of sports facilities at Segregated University Campuses came under review in 1983 already.<sup>24</sup> And so, for example, after a prolonged period of deliberation a decision to relax the moratorium on using sports facilities at the segregated universities resulted in UWC being used as the venue for the second SACOS sports festival in 1988. The DSR itself was also to come under fire from the ANC and its allies soon thereafter.

## **1. THE NATIONAL SPORTS FESTIVALS**

SACOS hosted two sports festivals in Cape Town in 1982 and 1988. Dubbed *“The Olympics of the Oppressed”* these festivals were staged to show case non racial sport and helped to counter the misperceptions and lies peddled by its detractors that SACOS was small, inconsequential and only concerned with “politics”. Detailed reports of these events are contained in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> BGM Secretarial Reports respectively.

## **2. THE SPORT AND LIBERATION CONFERENCE**

This conference was staged in Hanover Park, Cape Town 20 - 21 August 1983. It occurred over the same weekend as Danie Craven’s International Rugby Media conference and on the launch date of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

Spurning an invitation from Danie Craven to attend his media conference, SACOS decided to take advantage of the presence of the international media both to debunk

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<sup>23</sup> Frank vd Horst, 2005, “SACOS: The Sportswing of the Liberatory Movement” Unpublished memoir

<sup>24</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> SACOS BGM secretarial report 1983

and expose Craven's initiative as a fraud and to highlight the true state of affairs prevailing in the country.

This conference which was attended by more than 1000 delegates representing a wide range of organisations, including sports, community and trade union bodies deliberated on a number of papers prepared by SACOS members. This conference was a landmark event which helped cement the role of SACOS as part of the broad liberatory movement.

5 input papers delivered at the conference were published by SACOS.

### **3. THE MN PATHER MEMORIAL LECTURE**

SACOS started the practice of having an annual lecture in 1982 both as a fund raising venture and as a means of introducing non racial sports persons to a broader perspective on developments outside of the sports arena. In 1986 the lecture became so named to honour the memory of the founding general secretary of SACOS, Mr MN Pather who had also been involved with both SASA and SANROC. He died in 1985.

Those invited to deliver the annual lecture were prominent in the liberatory struggle and included persons like Dullah Omar who delivered the inaugural lecture, Alec Irwin, Education officer for FOSATU at the time, Gwede Mantashe, General secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) at the time and Father Smangiliso Mkhwathswa secretary of the Catholic churches institute of contextual studies, amongst others. All these lectures were published by SACOS.

### **4. THE MORATORIUM ON INTERNATIONAL SPORT CONTACT**

In 1977 SACOS successfully campaigned for the United Nations, through its Commission Against Apartheid in Sports (UNCAAS) to impose a Moratorium on international competition with South Africa. A resolution forbidding all contact with international sports federations was adopted. This supplemented the Gleneagles Agreement through which South Africa's membership of the Commonwealth Games was suspended 6 months previously. True to its principles SACOS forbade any of its affiliates from international sports contact. And when UNCAAS instituted a black list

of sportsmen who violated the terms of the moratorium SACOS instituted an Internal Blacklist of defectors from non racial sport.<sup>25</sup>

## **5. THE SACOS SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR AWARDS.**

This was an annual event to honour the top achievers in each of the codes affiliated to SACOS.

## **6. BREAKING DOWN RACIAL BARRIERS COMMITTEE**

Always aware of its relatively poor support base in the African townships, SACOS tried to address this by setting up a Breaking Down racial Barriers committee in 1984. The purpose of this committee was to explore ways and means of extending SACOS influence into the townships. This proved to be an extremely difficult exercise as access to the townships by non Africans was prohibited by law and the Bantu Affairs Boards rigidly controlled the use of facilities in the townships, as illustrated by the Dan Qeqe stadium affair.

An example of difficulties faced by SACOS is the act that officials like Frank VD Horst, Ihron Rensburg and Allan Zinn were arrested and charged with being in the New Brighton Township illegally.

As far as school sport was concerned “one of the major problems experience when dealing with the schools in the ‘townships’ was teacher apathy. This was so because sport in the DET schools was organised by the Department of Sport and its employees who were mostly job-seeking, washed-up athletes from the ranks of establishment sport. They obviously were not interested in promoting sport but in siphoning off the money which was more part of their programme than anything else.

## **7. POLITICAL NON-ALIGNMENT**

As alluded to above, the question of political alignment became a contentious issue for SACOS. Debates concerning political alignment within SACOS forums started in earnest in 1983 and came to a head in 1988 with the birth of the Mass Democratic

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes of SACOS General Meeting, 1982

Movement (MDM) inspired National Sports Congress (NSC) which insisted that SACOS become aligned to the MDM / ANC and that it drop the Double Standards Resolution (DSR)

It was in response to this development that Colin Clarke the General Secretary mounted a spirited defence of the non aligned position of SACOS as recorded in the secretarial report to the 8<sup>th</sup> BGM in 1988.

Clarke strongly emphasised the fact that all policies adopted by SACOS were accepted only after rigorous debate and that all decisions taken were arrived at democratically.

### **NON RACIAL SCHOOL SPORT**

The Non racial school sports organisations were arguably the most important affiliates of SACOS and given the devastating effect that the demise of non racial sport came to have on school sport for the oppressed children of this country we believe special mention of its history is merited.

The paper presented by Hamilton Petersen at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) Conference of 2005 gives valuable insights into the role of these important bodies highlighting and contrasting as they do, the situation that existed in the schools of the oppressed before 1992 with the situation that currently prevails namely, no or very little organised school sport, and no or very little teacher involvement in the schools of poor, working class children.

We learn that the first attempt at creating a non racial schools organisation was the South African Schools Sports Board catering for primary school learners which was established in the 1950's. After the establishment of SANROC, the need for a high (senior) schools sports organisation was seen. With some former officials of SANROC taking the lead, the South African Senior School Sports Association (SASSSA) was established in 1961.<sup>26</sup> In 1965 the South African Primary Schools Sports Association (SAPSSA) was established. These bodies both affiliated to SACOS, SASSSA in 1977 followed by SAPSSA in 1979.

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<sup>26</sup> SASSSA 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Brochure

The author cited above gives a good account the roles played by these bodies in promoting non-racialism in sport, emphasising the fact that teachers who were members of the Cape African Teachers' Association (CATA) and the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA) both of which were affiliated to the UM played leading roles in both SASSSA and SAPSSSA.

The Apartheid Regime after 1948 introduced 'Bantuised', 'Indianised' and 'Colouredised' education and went to great lengths to prevent contact between these groups at any level. For example in 1970 the CAD used Proclamation No.26 of 1965, an amendment to the Group Areas Act of 1950, to prohibit "mixed" school sport. This diktat was published in the Education Bulletin of the CAD and stated that "Coloured" schools must stop participating in any sort of sport with "Bantu", "Indian" or "White" schools. Furthermore, any "Coloured" school that happened to be in a "white" group area was prohibited from any sort of sporting contact with any other "Coloured" school.<sup>27</sup>

Progressive teachers realised that they were engaged in the battle for the minds of the youth and the schools of the oppressed in the "70's became "sites of struggle"

It is well known that learners had in 1976, 1980 and 1984/85 shown a rejection of both "gutter education" and oppression and exploitation. Petersen suggests that SACOS and its schools organisations had helped to create this "*Liberation culture*" which was so pervasive at that time. Teachers from the progressive teachers' organisations and SACOS teachers played an important role in liberating the minds of the youth from "the racist poison being administered by the apartheid regime."

Petersen informs us that the organisation of sport under SAPSSA and SASSSA was of a particularly high standard. They were both multi-coded, catering for up to 16 different codes of sport.

The codes catered for by SAPSSA and SASSSA joined all national bodies that were affiliated to SACOS. Besides attending the national meetings of these codes and participating in their structures and sharing their expertise, the national SASSSA team played against the adult provincial team of the province in which the tournament was held (as in cricket) or played in their B-Division tournament, or

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<sup>27</sup> Educational Journal September 1970

against a 'colts' team as in rugby. In the primary schools two national teams were selected and played a match to conclude the tournament.

SAPSSA and SASSSA teachers regularly participated in coaching clinics and wrote examinations organised by adult (senior) codes of sport as in rugby, cricket, swimming and athletics. SAPSSA and SASSSA teachers also participated in the administrators' courses run by the provincial councils of sport. SAPSSA and SASSSA teachers were well equipped and well skilled as the result of their certification courses in coaching, judging, umpiring, refereeing etc.

Most senior players in the adult codes were products of these two organisations. SAPSSA and SASSSA came to be known as the nursery of SACOS.

SAPSSA and SASSSA were actively involved in the dissemination of liberatory ideas. At SASSSA this was transmitted to the learners through Workshops which became the "17<sup>th</sup> code. SACOS sport was on the agenda of every meeting and all discussions at every tournament. SACOS literature and the literature of most of the political tendencies were distributed at all meetings and many of the tournaments. At local level in a number of centres, depending on the popularity of the code in the area, school sport was played on Saturday mornings to accommodate parent interest in the code. Teachers were voluntarily out in force on Saturday mornings, refereeing, and coaching, umpiring and accompanying teams. Teachers acted out of commitment to the "sports struggle" as prosecuted by SACOS.

Teachers under the banner of SACOS showed total commitment in sport and society. Being non-aligned politically, SACOS, SAPSSA & SASSSA provided an organisational home for teachers of all progressive political persuasions but also for many who simply identified with its principles and policies. As SACOS was linked to community and political organisations many were influenced by the various tendencies within SACOS. This provided further impetus to the political struggle.

Many SACOS teachers took leading roles in community organisations and Petersen describes how SACOS teachers involved in the sports struggle were victimised for their efforts and citing the example of an incident in the Eastern Cape in 1985 when the CAD tried to summarily transfer 3 teachers to distant parts of the country, as punishment for their involvement in and promotion of Sacos Sport. The community rallied to the defence of these teachers and the CAD backed down.



However this picture of SASSSA and SAPSA sketched by Petersen came to an end with the establishment of the United Schools Sports Association of South Africa (USSASA).

After 1994 SAPSA and SASSSA joined USSASA .The former immediately resigned from SACOS while the latter initially retained its membership of both.

From that point on a very gloomy picture of the situation existing in the schools of the oppressed is painted: *"There is no doubt that in the case of schools the children of the poor are being discriminated against. In order to redress this situation massive funding is needed that will enable South Africa's poor full access to and equity in education, sport and society."*<sup>28</sup>

Bodies like SASSSA and SAPSSA ceased to exist after becoming part of the United USSASA and as a result organised school sport, to a large extent, only occurs at the former model C schools.

## **THE DEMISE OF NON RACIAL SPORT**

Sadly, since 1998 developments inside of SACOS and in the country generally, led to the total collapse of organised sport amongst the oppressed as had existed under SACOS and the demise of SACOS itself.

This history is documented.

Whilst Goodall gives a well reasoned account of how and why SACOS became "marginalised", as he sees it, Brown makes the assertion that the demise of Non-racial sport and of SACOS was brought about as a consequence of the Negotiated Settlement pursued by the ANC and its surrogate the NSC.<sup>29</sup>

The reason why sport became a part of the negotiated settlement is easy to understand. The white minority, especially the Afrikaner section for who sport was like a religion, had been deprived of international sporting contacts as the result, firstly, of being expelled from the IOC in 1970 and secondly, because of a United

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<sup>28</sup> Cornelius Thomas (editor), 2006, Sport and Liberation in South Africa, Fort Hare University and Department of Sport and Recreation.

<sup>29</sup> **Ibid**

Nations and Commonwealth supported Sports boycott imposed on the country in 1977. This had a debilitating and demoralising effect on them.

As the negotiations proceeded and agreement was being reached on the terms of the Settlement, one of the key concessions that the ANC and its Imperialist allies needed to make was to guarantee that the Sport moratorium would be lifted and that South Africa would be re-admitted to the IOC and other international sports federations, in order to allay the fears of Whites that they were not getting much in exchange for agreeing to hand over political power to the Black majority.

The ANC and its allies used sport as a bargaining chip in the Negotiated political settlement and that by so doing they set in train a process that was to result in the effective destruction of Non-racial Sport in general and of SACOS in particular.

Douglas Booth from the University Of Brisbane, Australia conducted a survey of the sports set up in South Africa in the wake of the lifting of the sports moratorium and the unification of sports codes in 1995. Booth's summing up of the situation prevailing in 1995 is an indictment of those who accused SACOS of being out of touch and unrealistic in their approach to resolving the contradictions of South African sport. With reference to the lack of structural reform in South African sport by which is meant; "the provision of sports facilities, the development of sporting skills and the enhancement of sporting opportunities amongst the disadvantaged", he says, *"While some former anti-apartheid activists use sport to empower local communities, the majority view it as a convenient route to self-enrichment or, at best as a symbol of racial reconciliation .Few care about developing sport in disadvantaged communities."*<sup>30</sup>

This statement echoes what SACOS had to say in its memorandum addressed to the UNCAAS in October 1992 which states:

*"The entire unity process has been bedevilled by bad faith, behind the scenes machinations, jockeying for positions and corruption. There is not a single example of unity being established in good faith and on a principled basis nor has the previous gains made by non-racial sport*

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<sup>30</sup> Douglas Booth, 1995, South Africa: Elite sport is winning. In Southern Africa Report, vol. 11 no 1. November 1995.

*been entrenched. Imbalances are not being addressed and development programmes are non-existent.*"<sup>31</sup>

In his presidential address to a General Meeting of SACOS in 1994 Reg Feldman had this to say:

*"Non racial sport has been smashed. United sport is in disarray. Facilities in the townships are lying idle. People on the ground are dissatisfied, not only in sport but in general also with the ANC and the NSC."*<sup>32</sup>

An organisation like the South African Amateur Athletics Board (SAAAB) which had been in existence for more than 40 years rather chose to cease to exist in October 1994 than "go into unity with a "united" national athletics organisation that was the outcome of political bargaining and achieved by methods that to the board were morally unacceptable". There has been no athletics in the townships since its demise.

In conclusion it is asserted that although SACOS had some limitations it nevertheless brought a unique perspective to the sports scene in South Africa and that subsequent developments have vindicated the principled positions it adopted especially on the lifting of the sports moratorium and on the unification of sports codes.

## **THE WAY FORWARD: RE-AWAKENING THE SACOS ETHOS**

It is generally accepted that the promise of "*a better life for all*" as promised by the ANC in 1994 has not materialised. This applies with even greater relevance to sport amongst the disadvantaged, working class communities in every part of the country. The situation in school sport being particularly dire.

Whilst the National Union of Metal Workers' (NUMSA) initiative of building a united front for socialism holds some promise of mounting a challenge to the hegemony of the ANC and its neo-liberal economic policies, the question that arises is whether a new SACOS-like organisation is needed to address the specific problem of sport for the working class poor of this country. If so, then what is to be done to reawaken the

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<sup>31</sup> SACOS Memorandum to UNCAAS October 1992

<sup>32</sup> Reg Feldman – Presidential Address – General Meeting 1994

SACOS ethos in schools and amongst existing sports clubs which are based in working class communities today?

The demise of organised sport amongst poor, working class communities with its attendant social evils needs to be addressed, and community leaders and activists should agitate for the provision of sporting facilities where these people live.

Whilst reports of attempts being made amongst SACOS aligned teachers in Cape Town, Gauteng and Port Elizabeth to revive school sport in those areas are to be welcomed there is a pressing need for the question of the importance of organising sport in working class communities and specifically in the schools located there, must be placed on the agenda of all community based organisations.

The SACOS ethos was about sports organisations of the people uniting in struggle against Apartheid sport. The challenge to-day is the building of a mass based sport movement under the direction of social forces aligned to the working class and the poor of this country. The question is there a role for a SACOS-like organisation at this time?

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**BASIL BROWN (NEC MEMBER OF SACOS FROM 1989 AND AS ITS GENERAL SECRETARY FROM 1993); & PRESIDENT OF THE NUM.**