

**“YOU’VE STRUCK A ROCK”
Comparing Gender, Social Movements,
and Transformation in the
United States and South Africa**

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In the Montgomery bus boycott and the South African anti-pass campaign, women’s autonomous organizations initiated actions that catalyzed the mass movements for racial justice and national liberation. The activism of women and their organizations sprang from their particular positioning within systems of multiple oppressions simultaneously experiencing racial/ethnic, class, and gender oppression. In both the United States and South Africa, the particular structural location and autonomous resistance of women of African descent was an important aspect of the political opportunity structure and served as a catalyst that catapulted their respective movements for racial justice and/or national liberation to higher levels. This study employs a gendered and comparative approach to these two resistance campaigns to understand better the effects of interactive and multiplicative inequalities on movement processes and the gendered nature of political opportunities.

In the Montgomery bus boycott and the South African anti-pass campaign, women’s autonomous organizations initiated actions that catalyzed the larger movements for racial justice and national liberation (Crawford, Rouse, and Woods 1990; Robinson 1987; Terborg-Penn 1990; Wells 1993). The Women’s Political Council (WPC), a semiautonomous women’s organization, started the Montgomery bus boycott. Their successful example inspired a cycle of direct action and an antiracist struggle in the southern regions of the United States that would last for the

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next two decades, connecting with northern United States and international social justice struggles. Similarly, the South African anti-pass campaign, revived by the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) in the early 1950s, jump-started and redirected the male-led “official” national liberation organizations of that period. Following the success of the FSAW, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) adopted anti-pass campaigns into their movement strategy in the following decade.

While both the Civil Rights and anti-apartheid movements had racial equality and national liberation as primary objectives, the activism of women and their organizations sprang from and intersected with their positioning within systems of multiple oppressions, for example, simultaneously experiencing racial ethnic, class, and gender oppression (Hill Collins 2000; King 1988; Terborg-Penn 1990). In both the United States and South African cases, the particular structural location and semiautonomous resistance of African/Black women¹ were important aspects of the political opportunity structure and served as catalysts that catapulted these movements for racial justice and/or national liberation to higher levels. This perspective, which places gender and women’s participation central in movement analysis, contrasts with the usual thinking about the divisive impact of autonomous women’s organizing on the nationalist project (Molyneaux 2001; Steady 1993).

Since women’s experiences within movements are rarely included in the master narrative and are often invisible and submerged, my analysis rests on information gathered on these campaigns from a variety of sources including primary movement documents, memoirs, autobiographical and biographical accounts, and existing secondary analyses. I re-view this information through a “gender lens,” which makes the systemic divisions and inequalities between women and men, in the context of related systems of inequality, visibly central in the analytical process (Kuumba 2001). My argument is grounded in intersectionality, a recognition that gender systems, which generally deprivilege women relative to men in society, interact with other systems of inequality on the basis of race/ethnicity, nation, class, sexual preference, and age and thus have multiplicative effects.

I use the example of these women-driven campaigns and their autonomous organizations, which were major players in the mobilization and strategic direction of the U.S. Civil Rights and South African anti-apartheid movements, to rethink social movement theory in ways that incorporate systems of gender, race/ethnicity, class, and nation. This article poses three major questions particularly aimed at the political process model: Do the same political opportunities equally catalyze activism for both women and men? To what degree do gendered power relations create or constrain opportunities for activism? How do gendered structures/networks, identities, ideologies, and meaning systems affect the movement process, strategies, and/or outcomes?

GENDERED MOVEMENTS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The gendered nature of social movements is neither unidirectional nor straightforward. At the same time that gender roles, ideologies, and power systems can inhibit social movement activities and processes, they can also catalyze actions and contribute to the dynamism of social movement processes. West and Blumberg (1990) defined a continuum of gendered social movement patterns ranging from gender-independent ones through gender-parallel and gender-integrated ones. Full gender-integration movements engage women and men in overlapping movement structures and tasks to achieve common social transformational goals. Gender-parallel movements include both women and men in the same movement but in separate structures and activities. While, on the opposite side of the continuum, gender-independent movements involve women and men in completely separate actions and organizations with different projects and ultimate objectives.

The Civil Rights and anti-apartheid movements went through phases of gender integration and parallelism but were never completely gender independent, with men's and women's organizations autonomous of each other. Overall, these movements and their official structures were highly gender integrated, characterized by high levels of involvement of both women and men as participants or rank-and-file members. Very often, though, women and men played different roles and held distinct statuses within these movements and their organizations. Furthermore, individual men and male-led organizations became visibly associated with each movement while women and their networks and organizations played key but less visible roles as change agents in both movements. These gendered patterns were manifest differently within each movement and in distinct movement eras. At times, the United States and South African movements worked through gender-parallel structures and processes that separately contributed to the same activities or ultimate objectives (Barnett 1993; Walker 1982; Wells 1993; West and Blumberg 1990).

The Montgomery Bus Boycott and Gender Parallelism

Most of us are familiar with Rosa Parks' refusal to relinquish her seat to a white man, an act which helped to usher in the Montgomery bus boycott. However, what is less known is Ms. Parks's historical involvement in civil rights organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and her training in social resistance at the Highlander Folk School by activists such as Septima Clark just prior to resisting the segregation of the Montgomery bus system (Barnett 1995; Robnett 1996, 1997). Rosa Parks is usually portrayed as a tired domestic worker whose sole motivation for remaining in her seat was her weariness, a portrayal that fits nicely with Western stereotypical images of women as passive and emotionally driven. According to Parks, "I was not tired physically, or not more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. . . . No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in" (Parks 2001, 61).

The WPC, a Black professional women's civic group formed in 1946 with the purpose of improving the status of African Americans, was an organizational expression of women's resistance and gender parallelism in the movement (Robinson 1987). Even prior to Rosa Parks's action, the WPC had been discussing and planning for a boycott of the Montgomery city bus lines. In fact, they had already met with the bus company officials to protest increasing bus fares and press the city lines into more humane treatment of African American customers. According to Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, president of the WPC in 1955,

The question of boycotting came up again and loomed in the minds of thousands of black people. We could see that black people—men, women, and children—were tired. . . . The women felt not that their cup of tolerance was overflowing, but that it had overflowed; they simply could not take anymore. (Robinson 1987, 39)

Immediately after Rosa Parks's act of resistance, the WPC proceeded with boycott preparations and enlisted the support of key institutions within the African American community, not the least of which were the churches. This organization was instrumental in calling the mass meeting at Holt Street Church on the evening of 5 December 1955, at which the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) was formed as a coordinating body for the boycott. While the MIA was formed with a dominantly male executive board, the congregations of the churches, mostly women, pressed the ministers to support the boycott. Semiautonomous women's organizations worked parallel with the MIA to raise funds for the boycott and coordinate transportation for the mostly female domestic workforce to the white areas. Two women's organizations in particular, The Club from Nowhere and The Friendly Club, competed with each other in raising funds for boycott efforts. What began as a single-day boycott became a 380-day act of defiance and resistance in which approximately 45,000 women, men, and children of African descent carpooled, taxied, or walked to their destinations. This action not only forced the city to integrate seating on the local bus system but also is often cited as a key moment in propelling the modern Civil Rights movement, providing a strategic example for social justice movements globally.

Gender parallelism in the movement served as an adaptation to maneuver around the gender constraints and hierarchies in the main movement organizations. This configuration allowed for interaction within and between movement structures and for the wide but differentiated inclusion of both women and men in the civil rights struggle. It also created gender struggles that, in fact, acted as important movement catalysts.

“You’ve Struck a Rock”: The Women’s Anti-Pass Campaign

In 1952, the apartheid regime in South Africa announced plans to extend passes, identification documents, to women. Passes, the vehicle through which government and business interests in South Africa manipulated the labor and movement of

African people, were already mandatory for African men. In response, a small group of women came together informally to “focus attention on the part that women could play in the struggle for liberation” that next year (Walker 1982, 135). Women did not achieve full membership and voting rights in the ANC until 1943 with the establishment of the ANC’s Women’s League (ANCWL) (Kimble and Unterhalter 1982). However, even after this point, they were not represented in the official leadership and had very little say in the strategic direction of the organization. This historic meeting formed the foundation of the FSAW, which would emerge as a semiautonomous outlet for women’s political participation that had been limited in the official anti-apartheid organizations. The FSAW aligned itself with the Congress Alliance, a coalition of national liberation organizations that coordinated anti-apartheid strategy between the ANC, the South African Coloured People’s Organization, the South African Indian Congress, and the Congress of Democrats.

Over the next four years, the FSAW organized branches all over the country and linked the anti-pass movement to other campaigns and issues such as rent increases, forced removals, and inadequate education. On 27 October 1955, a contingent of more than 2,000 women marched on the Union buildings in Pretoria, South Africa. With babies on their backs, from hundreds of miles away, and in defiance of governmental measures prohibiting public demonstrations, this mass of women protested in silence and left 2,000 signed anti-pass statements on the doorsteps of the union buildings in groups of two and three. As testament to their resolve not to carry passes, the women chanted, “Now you’ve struck a rock. You have dislodged a border. You will be crushed!” Ten months later, on 9 August 1956, the Federation gathered more than 20,000 women in a march to the government capital in resistance to pass laws. For the next two years, the anti-pass protests and civil disobedience of the FSAW spread throughout the country and led to thousands of women being arrested and detained (FSAW 1958). Kimble and Unterhalter (1982) pointed out that during this period “women clearly felt themselves ahead of their men in the struggle. In their report on the campaign the FSAW observed: ‘Women await with impatience the active entry of men into the anti-pass campaign’ ” (Kimble and Unterhalter 1982, 27).

At the height of the anti-pass campaign in 1958 when more than 2,000 women in Johannesburg and Alexandria were courting arrest and refusing bail, the Congress Alliance, led by the ANC, called for an end to the civil disobedience. While the women of the Federation argued that the protests should continue and that the jails should be filled to capitalize on their momentum and pressure the government toward change, the ANC leadership was unprepared to deal with the militant energy generated by the FSAW. The federation’s “fill-the-jails” strategy was voted down by the Congress Alliance, which put an end to that strategy and arranged to pay the fines and release all participants. Despite this dissipation of women’s anti-pass efforts, many Congress Alliance organizations incorporated an anti-pass strategy into their larger anti-apartheid efforts.

The FSAW and its anti-pass campaign, like the WPC and the Montgomery bus boycott, exemplify social movement gender parallelism in action. The gender restrictions within established organizations, coupled with this core of politicized women who had organizing experience, stimulated the development of semi-autonomous women's organizations and wings, creating a gender-parallel movement structure. Women's organizations worked toward the same national liberation and racial justice goals as the larger movement but, at the same time, also made demands specific to women's lives. This parallel structure and focus facilitated equivalent, different, and mutually reinforcing participation by women and men.

THEORIZING AND RESEARCHING GENDER IN MOVEMENTS

From a gendered perspective, standard theoretical approaches to social movements have been severely limited by their inherent androcentrism and male-biased assumptions. The resulting blind spots and silences are particularly obvious with respect to the impact of gendered, racialized, and class-based systems of inequality as factors in social movement processes (Buechler 1993; Robnett 1997; Taylor and Whittier 1998; West and Blumberg 1990). Sensitivity to gender in the analysis of social movements means going beyond a simple identification of women's distinct pattern of participation in social movements to an analysis of the way that gender as a historically developed social system operates on social, political, economic, and cultural levels. Instead of approaching gender as if it were in a vacuum, contemporary social movement scholarship is increasingly conscious of the interactive effect of other systems of inequality and difference such as race, ethnicity, class, and cultural factors in movement processes (Brewer 1993; Irons 1998; Robnett 1997; Taylor and Whittier 1998).

The political process model is an example of a theory that has been stretched beyond its original theoretical contours to accommodate gendered critiques. Within the political process framework, the emergence of resistance movements is contingent on multiple structural and subjective factors that must work in tandem: the larger political opportunity structure, the organizational strength and resources of the insurgents, and participants' consciousness and subjectivities (McAdam 1982).

This model has been challenged and pushed further by gender-conscious scholars and activists. Critics have cited the model's neglect of gender structures and subjectivities as important components of the larger political opportunity structure and its underemphasis on informal movement structures and networks of communication. The traditional applications of political process models stress the male-dominated spheres of politics and the positions of leadership within them to the exclusion of the other, more female-dominated, areas of social life (Abdulhadi 1998; Buechler 1993; Noonan 1995). Noonan (1995) argued that this emphasis on the formal aspects of power and the neglect of the informal aspects limits our ability

to capture women's political power and activism. Her critique encourages a view that centers on the workings of informal roles and networks of communication in social movement dynamics. Furthermore, as opposed to viewing political opportunity structures as stagnant and objective, Rita Noonan found that gender structures, ideologies, and identities shaped actual and perceived political opportunities for women's resistance in Chile (Noonan 1995).

As opposed to the larger political structure affording potential activists undifferentiated opportunities to rebel, a gendered perspective reveals that the differential experiences and structural locations of women and men must be taken into account (Barnett 1993, 1995; Robnett 1996, 1997; Walker 1982). The gender-conscious approach to the political process model that has emerged can be applied to the anti-apartheid and Civil Rights movements. In both cases, the differential experiences and structural locations of women and men, within the context of global gender, race, and class-based systems of power, constrained and catalyzed social movement activities. This type of gendered analysis, of which mine is one example, alters and expands the utility and sophistication of the political process model and deepens our understanding of social movements.

GENDERED POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES, RESOURCES, AND SUBJECTIVITIES: THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT AND ANTI-PASS CAMPAIGN

During the 1950s, in the United States and South Africa, gender intersected with racial and class inequalities to systematically disadvantage African/Black women and men in profound, yet different, ways. Thus, while the anti-apartheid and Civil Rights movements were primarily concerned with confronting and changing systems of oppression on the basis of race, ethnicity, and national origin, they were also gendered. Intersecting oppressions were intricately expressed in three areas of both movements: political opportunity structures, organizational networks or resources, and collective consciousness (or subjectivities). Through a gender lens, I will examine each of these aspects in turn.

Political Opportunity Structures

The political opportunity structure refers to the alignment of and shifts in societal power and resources in ways that both impede and facilitate social movement emergence and effectiveness. Commonly identified favorable political opportunities in the social movement literature include shifts in societal power structure, economic changes, and/or other sweeping social transformations such as rapid urbanization and industrialization (McAdam 1982, 1992; Tarrow 1996). In the past, political process theorists focused on political opportunities from "above," such as the relative openness of the political system, alignment of elites, and the state's

capacity for repression in a generalized and unidirectional manner (Abdulhadi 1998; McCarthy, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). Now, theorists pay more attention to the “historically produced political and cultural contexts that created gendered political opportunities” (Abdulhadi 1998, 651). In the cases of the Montgomery bus boycott and anti-pass movements, the political opportunity structures from which both movements emerged created distinctive political openings for resistance by women, relative to their male counterparts (Abdulhadi 1998; Noonan 1995).

The anti-pass campaign, for example, had its basis in the gendered nature of the apartheid state structure and migratory labor system. At a time when the ability of African people to engage in legitimate political processes, already severely limited, was closing even further, women capitalized on political opportunities in the cleavages of the highly racialized, gendered, and class-stratified South African society. Women had resisted passes in the Orange Free State in 1912-13. They successfully wrote petitions, courted arrest, and used the media to have the enforcement of pass laws relaxed and eventually eliminated in 1923 under the Natives Urban Areas Act (Vukani Makhosikazi Collective 1985; Walker 1982; Wells 1983, 1993). In response to the ANC-sponsored Defiance Campaign of civil disobedience in 1952, in which apartheid laws were consciously disobeyed, the South African government jailed more than 800,000 people, using violence to suppress the resistance and banning meetings of movement organizations (Baard 1986). These conditions, characterized as strengthened governmental power and a repressive state, would normally be associated with unfavorable political opportunities for the growth of a movement. However, even at this low point for male-led national liberation activities, women and women’s organizations were able to increase their anti-apartheid activities (Kimble and Unterhalter 1982; Seidman 1993; Walker 1982; Wells 1993). The same shifts in the political opportunity structure that constrained the male-led organizations like the ANC and the South African Communist Party were favorable for the resistance activities engaged in by women.

Indeed, the shifts in the gendered patterns of residential and labor organization during that period of South African history were particularly conducive to women’s resistance activities (Wells 1993). Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the proportion of African women in South Africa’s urban labor force and residential population steadily increased (Berger 1990; Wells 1993). While still disproportionately relegated to the poverty stricken Bantustans and native homelands outside of the towns, African women were increasingly present in urban areas and the shantytowns directly adjacent to them during this period. They found work primarily as domestic servants, vendors, and/or seasonal workers in the food and canning industry.

As a gendered twist, African women enjoyed the freedom to participate in union activism due to patriarchal assumptions about women’s and men’s roles in the private and public spheres, respectively, that were embedded in racist South African labor markets and law: A loophole in apartheid legislation forbade African men, but not women, from union organizing. Since the migratory labor system had been designed to attract cheap male labor to the gold and diamond mines, only men were

required to carry passes and forbidden from union organizing. Women were encouraged to remain in the native reserves and either be supported by male workers or serve as labor on white-owned farms. The passbook, the identification document that served as an instrument of land and labor control, was also a marker and mechanism for the social construction and control of both race and gender (Barnes 1997). The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 forbade union organizing among pass-bearing natives, a category to which African women did not belong until 1954. In 1944,

an historic court case—Christina Okolo vs. the Industrial Council for the Clothing Industry, Transvaal—succeeded in establishing African women's right to belong to registered unions by proving that they did not fall within the definition of "pass-bearing" worker as laid down in the Industrial Conciliation Act. In other words, they were eligible for all the benefits of union membership and industrial legislation that non-African workers enjoyed. (Walker 1982, 120)

The extension of passes to women was an attempt to maintain control over them in the midst of these gendered transformations in the larger political economy (Walker 1982). In 1953, the year following the announcement of pass extensions to women, women activists and women-led organizations sprang into action (Beall, Hassim, and Todes 1989; Nauright 1996; Walker 1982). A small group of women met in Port Elizabeth to discuss the implications of the extension of pass laws to women. In 1954, the First National Conference of Women brought together women from a variety of political, racial, and organizational backgrounds. In addition to the politicizing speeches and discussions of the conference, the participants elected a National Executive Committee and adopted a Women's Charter that laid out the objectives of the organization as being both national and gender-based liberation. This charter would be used as a basis for the Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress Alliance at the Congress of the People in June 1955.

The actions of the FSAW were shaped by the gendered nature of the political opportunity structure within both the larger political economy and the social movement environment. The changing gender dynamics in the workforce and urban residential patterns, coupled with gender-biased legislation, allowed a cadre of women activists like Emma Mashinini and Frances Baard, later a leader in the anti-pass campaign, to gain political consciousness and organizational experience as union leaders (Baard 1986; Berger 1990; Mashinini 1991; Walker 1982). In turn, the momentum of the FSAW anti-pass campaign changed the political environment so that the established national liberation organizations, the ANC and the Congress Alliance (a coalition of other national liberation organizations), then took up the anti-pass cause as a movement focus.

In the case of the U.S. Civil Rights movement, it is no coincidence that the precipitating event in the Montgomery bus boycott was the arrest of Rosa Parks, nor that the initial organizers and main sustainers of the boycott were women. During that period in U.S. history, a large proportion of African American women in

Montgomery, Alabama, worked as domestic servants in white households. As Aulette and Fishman observed,

The bus boycott was not only begun by a woman, it was also led by women, supported by women, and addressed a problem that was most salient for black women. The deplorable treatment of patrons of public transportation in Montgomery was of critical importance to black working class women because they were likely to be employed as domestics across town from their homes. They were the main customers, therefore, of the public transportation system. (1993, 4)

In addition to the gendered nature of the labor force and transportation clientele, women and men had different experiences on the bus lines and in movement organizations. The most violent repression for challenging segregationist practices was reserved for African American men. In 1952, an African American man named Brooks was killed by police while getting off of the bus after an exchange of hostile words with the bus driver. These direct assaults increased the gender disparity in the proportion of women and men that rode the Montgomery buses. Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, president of the WPC during the time, remembered that “the number of Negro men walking increased during 1954 and early 1955. They walked to and from work, to town, to movies, to see their girlfriends, because of fear of riding the buses” (1987, 37).

The WPC had been planning a bus boycott as a potential strategy for months before the actual boycott. Positioned to initiate a response, they had become impatient with the gradualist approach of the established leadership of male-dominated organizations:

The women intuited danger in their men’s tiredness, in the limits of the children’s and their own endurance. . . . They were ready to boycott. On paper, the WPC had already planned for fifty thousand notices calling people to boycott the buses; only the specifics of time and place had to be added. And, as tempers flared and emotions ran high, the women became active. (Robinson 1987, 39)

Thus, while the WPC did not pursue gender-related objectives, its autonomy from the mainstream race equity organizations of the movement proved a crucial factor in its ability to capitalize on the political opportunity structure.

A gendered lens on political opportunity structures, then, forces an expansion of the dimensions contributing to favorable movement conditions in the United States and South Africa. In both the anti-pass and bus boycott cases, the gendered patterns of the urban workforce that differentially positioned women and men, as well as constraints that limited women’s titled leadership roles within movement organizations, provided political opportunities for women-led activism. For instance, the fact that the domestic service roles to which women of African descent were relegated in both countries presented particular “freedom of movement” issues that were used to galvanize protest. The gendered dynamics of the wider social structure

and the internal movement dynamics both play a part in shaping political opportunities.

Women as Organizational Resources: Bridging and Informal Networks

Within the major organizations of the Civil Rights and anti-apartheid movements, a gendered division of labor existed in which men disproportionately occupied official leadership positions of the major organizations. African/Black women, a large constituency if not the majority of movement participants, held disproportionate influence and control through parallel structures and informal networks (Barnett 1993, 1995; Robnett 1996, 1997). These differentiated roles rested on both a masculinist, dichotomous model of movement participation (e.g., leaders vs. followers) and a normative Western sexual division of labor (e.g., instrumental vs. expressive roles). In gender-integrated movements and organizations, patriarchal assumptions are often superimposed on the hierarchical leader-follower conception of leadership. For instance, the small number of women who held formal titles within the MIA or the ANC during the 1950s was in no way commensurate with their high level of movement participation (Payne 1990; Walker 1982). Women very easily outnumbered men in the two campaigns and in the organizations but never possessed equivalent recognized stature with men in the movements (Robinson 1987; Robnett 1997). As a result, the WPC was formed in 1946 in part because of the gender bias in the U.S. mainstream organizations for racial equality (i.e., the NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC], etc.). It excluded men because of the possibility that they "would take it over and women wouldn't be able to do what they could do" (Burks, quoted in Robnett 1997, 56). Likewise, in South Africa, women organized semiautonomously as the FSAW because of these same types of limitations on the contributions that women were allowed to play in the official anti-apartheid organizations.

On the other hand, African women in both the Montgomery bus boycott and the anti-pass campaign wielded significant power in the informal realm, the "cracks and crevices," between organizations and titles. The limited access of women to official leadership positions within male-dominated social movement organizations meant that women often focused their activism more on the grassroots level (Barnett 1993; Neuhauser 1995; Robnett 1997, 1998). Robnett (1997) described this as "bridge leadership." This tier of leadership, she asserted, comprises the actual "foot soldiers" who persuade people to involve themselves in movement efforts and link them to the movement structures.

The autonomous women's organizations that paralleled and supported the official civil rights organizations served this bridging role in the movement. While in South Africa the male-led ANC, PAC, and Black consciousness movement were often stifled by their mutual competition over membership, competing ideologies, and divergent strategic approaches, the FSAW linked women from a broad range of race, ethnic, regional, class, and organizational affiliations (Baard 1986; Walker 1982). Frances Baard remembered,

The Federation [of South African Women] was made up of all the organizations that were at the conference: the ANC Women's League, the Congress of Democrats, the South African Indian Congress and the Coloured People's Organization. You could not join the Federation as an individual; you had to be a member of one of those organizations and then you were automatically a member of the Federation. (1986, 46)

The official movement structures in which men dominated tended to be more dogmatic and separate in their formation; individual women and autonomous women's organizations in the Civil Rights movement offered a place for merging the various tendencies and structures of the larger movement. Women and their organizations established crucial links between movement structures, various sectors, generations, and ideological persuasions of the masses (Barnett 1995; Payne 1990; Robnett 1996, 1997; Walker 1982). In Payne's (1990) words, "men led, women organized."

During the anti-apartheid struggle, South African women often joined the struggle through community activities associated with self-help, family security, and community concerns (Kaplan 1997). The Manyano collectives that were initially formed in the townships by working- and lower-class African women are examples of informal mobilizing structures in action. These mutual aid collectivities that originated in church congregations, organized saving clubs, and provided other welfare services for women in the townships also were used in service of the movement (Meer 1985). Subsequently, according to scholar-activist Fatima Meer,

Manyanos . . . converted temporarily into protest groups against apartheid. They defended women's right to brew beer in the 1940s, resisted the extension of passes to women in 1913 and in the 1950s, and agitated against the expropriation of African-owned property and forced removals in 1954, as well as against statutory inferiorisation of African education in 1955. (1985, 14)

Likewise, in the United States, autonomous women's groupings such as the Club from Nowhere and the Friendly Club, which are rarely mentioned, served bridging functions in the movement (McAdam 1992; Morris 1984). The WPC and the Friendly Club were basically coalitions that included women who held multiple organizational memberships in the movement. These organizations became vehicles for facilitating interorganizational communication, forging new networks for organizing financial and human resources, and generating new paths for involvement and support.

The importance of informal networks and kinship relations to women's involvement in both struggles is part of the gender dialectic of the United States and the South African racial/national liberation movements. These collectivities paralleled, countered, and often challenged the more male-dominated official movement organizations. The church networks that women controlled were also crucial to the efforts of the Montgomery bus boycott. Surveying pictures of the participants of the nightly church services, one is struck by the clear majority of women's faces. As "bridge leaders" and "center women," African American women acted on a more

grassroots and community level than did the male ministers who headed many of the official organizations such as the SCLC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Congress for Racial Equality. The male-led superstructure of official movement organizations was dependent on its majority female constituency and the efforts of autonomous women's organizations like the WPC, the Club from Nowhere, and the Friendly Club (Barnett 1993; Payne 1990; Robnett 1996, 1997). Termed either "invisible leadership," "bridge leadership," or "center women," this work is the essential glue that attracts and holds participation in the movement (Barnett 1995; Robnett 1997).

Gender differences in social location create particular lines of communication and sites of interaction that draw women and men into the movement along different paths and, sometimes, into separate organizations or structures. Emma Mashinini, who would become a prominent South African union organizer in the 1970s and 1980s, said of her own introduction to political struggle, "I don't know exactly when I became politicised. . . . There were many papers which were going about, and the meeting was clearly advertised, but it was only when my friends approached me that I really took notice of it" (1991, 23). Emma Mashinini's quote illustrates the importance of informal social and communication networks in bringing individuals into a movement's formalized structures. Although these mobilizing networks are often devalued by the movement itself and in movement scholarship, they play an important role in galvanizing support for and participation in any movement. According to Berger, South African women's ability to come together and voice their demands builds on "a tradition of union organizing but also on a history of women's solidarity expressed in religious organizations, informal assistance networks, [and] community based protest movements" (1986, 218).

Due to the gendered division of labor in the United States and South Africa, the centrality of women in household and community spheres affords them greater access to and need for kinship-based and community-centered social networks (Payne 1990). At the same time, the informal, grassroots, and/or bridging structures through which women have been mobilized are often less visible and valued than the more officially recognized structures.

In a movement in which the church formed a central organizing base, the informal interaction among members of the congregations was important in the mobilization process. While male ministers comprised the official leadership, women comprised the majority of church members and supporters in the southern urban churches of the United States. In fact, women's networks placed pressure on this leadership to take stances that they were not originally inclined to take. E. D. Nixon, an ex-Pullman porter and NAACP activist in the 1950s, countered the reluctance of the male ministers to overtly support the Montgomery Bus Boycott when he charged,

You guys have went around here and lived off of these poor washerwomen all your lives and ain't never done nothing for 'em. And now you got a chance to do something for 'em, you talkin' about you don't want the White folks to know it. (quoted in Giddings 1984, 266)

Informal networks and lines of communication wielded by women were crucial to the success of the racial/nationalist liberation movements of both the United States and South Africa (Nauright 1996; Robinson 1987; Robnett 1996, 1997; Walker 1982). Women's community-based, informal, and kinship networks were important to women's involvement in both the anti-pass and bus boycott campaigns on both practical and strategic levels. Expanding the political process approach to incorporate a wider range of organizational forms and resources provides a more complete and polyvocal reading of the movement (Perkins 2000). For the political process model to be gender sensitive, the assessment of this "indigenous organizational strength" must include informal networks of communication and action, particularly with respect to women's activism.

The Salience of Subjectivities and Gendered Consciousness

The subjective meanings that people attach to their situations mediate between political opportunity and action strategies (McAdam 1982). Theorists in the political process tradition cite "cognitive liberation"—the collective assessment of the prospects for successful insurgency—as a crucial aspect of this consciousness. This sense of efficacy cannot exist in a vacuum but must be linked to other meaning systems, ideologies, and identities, including those associated with gender. Gender ideologies and identities are often embedded in movement collective action frames, the interpretive linkage that connects the individual to the social movement and its structures (McCarthy, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; Snow and Benford 1992). Gendered and other identities are drawn on and strategically used in the process of creating resistance movements (Cohen 1985; Einwohner, Hollander, and Olson 2000).

In the South African anti-pass campaigns, the FSAW was stimulated into action on the basis of shifts in gender meanings and the narrowing of gender differences in the apartheid regime's repressive treatment of Africans. An educational pamphlet distributed by the Transvaal Region FSAW and the ANCWL that warned "Danger! Passes Are Being Given to African Women" goes on to urge women to resist the pass laws because "women will be handcuffed, jailed, and at the mercy of the police, as men are today under the pass laws" (FSAW n.d.). According to Berger (1986), the combined productive and domestic responsibilities of South African women added to their grievances and stimulated their mobilization rather than restricting their involvement.

A "motherist" justification for, and framing of, social action based on women's prescribed attributes of nurturance and family responsibility also was used in the anti-pass campaign and the Montgomery bus boycott (FSAW 1955; Parks 2001; Wells 1998). The FSAW used women's roles as mothers as one rationale for their resistance to the passes and distributed literature that appealed to women to participate based on their responsibility to their children and family (FSAW 1955, n.d.;

Lodge 1984; Walker 1982). A pamphlet of that period titled "A Call to Mothers" charged that "our children's future depends on the extent to which we, the mothers of South Africa, organise and work and fight for a better life for our little ones" (FSAW n.d.). However, reinscribing traditional gender roles, even within a militant context, can be problematic and sometimes impede social resistance efforts. The anti-pass campaign illustrates this side of the gender dialectic as well. In October of 1958, at the height of the FSAW's anti-pass campaign, more than 2,000 women had provoked arrest by protesting passes in the Johannesburg area. In an attempt to take advantage of the movement's momentum, the federation's leadership took the position that the protests should continue, and they argued against paying fines or bail in order to "fill the jails." As mentioned above, the ANC lobbied the Congress Alliance to vote against this strategy and stop the women from courting arrest. The Congress Alliance leadership put an end to the women's strategy and arranged to pay the fines and release all the participants. According to Tom Lodge, "It is possible to interpret the ANC's restraining influence at this point as the assertion of patriarchal attitudes emanating from a political leadership chiefly composed of men" (1984, 146). Patriarchal structures and gender ideologies within the movement, as well as larger society, were, in this case, a possible detriment responsible for thwarting the ability of the FSAW to take full advantage of a movement opportunity.

Similarly, gendered subjectivities and identities were used as part of the strategy in the Montgomery bus boycott. In her discussion of the Civil Rights movement, Evans quoted activist Charles Sherrod as saying "there is always a 'mama' " (1979, 51). The "mamas" of the movement, and their provision of political involvement and nurturance, were indispensable to sustaining the movement. The leaflet that the WPC distributed on 2 December 1955 argued for support of the boycott in the interests of protecting the women of the community. The leaflet began by stating, "Another Negro woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down" (Robinson 1987, 45). It went on to warn that "the next time it may be you, or your daughter, or mother" (p. 46). These references to women clearly frame the community grievances within the existing notions of gender, particularly those surrounding women and violence.

The Montgomery bus boycott also reinforced patriarchal and class biases in the manner in which the mother identity was used as a mobilizing frame. The fact that Rosa Parks was selected to symbolize the gravity of the indignities posed by the racially discriminatory bus policies over Claudette Colvin, an unmarried pregnant teenager who had been arrested for a similar violation earlier that year, played on normative gender constructions (Parks 2001; Robinson 1987). Claudette's youth and unsanctioned motherhood made her a less attractive representation of African American womanhood and therefore a less attractive candidate to be used as movement symbolism (Parks 2001; Robinson 1987).

These gendered subjectivities that are embedded in collective action frames and identities are submerged and invisible to the standard applications of the political process model but often fuel social resistance.

CONCLUSION: GENDERING SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

A gendered analysis of social movements has the potential to expose the blind spots and limitations of theory. It reveals the fact that social movement theory is not effective as a static process in which concepts and frameworks are superimposed on social reality but only as one in which social reality talks back to and re-visions theoretical models. Theorizing gender and difference in social movements has involved this dialectical process of application, critique, synthesis, and transformation in which theory has been forced to shift and expand to be more relevant to, and useful in understanding, women's experience in a variety of activist contexts.

In this case, I used a gendered political process/opportunities model as the grounding theoretical framework. Through a gendered lens, the theoretical space is opened for the political process model to appreciate the impact of patriarchies and other systemic power differentials on political opportunity structures, the multiplicity of movement structures and forms, and the impact of gendered identities and subjectivities. As opposed to the larger political structure affording potential activists undifferentiated opportunities to rebel, a gendered perspective takes into account the differential experiences and structural locations of women and men (Barnett 1993, 1995; Robnett 1996, 1997; Walker 1982). We find that women's and men's opportunities for engagement in political movements often differ based on their relative positioning within the larger social structure, economy, and political system. A gendered political process analysis also appreciates the distinctiveness of mobilization paths, structures, and networks of communication. As a result, the crucial role played by informal and submerged networks and communication linkages, usually devalued in the study of social movements, becomes visible. This perspective forces a rethinking of movement leadership and counters the binary leader/masses dichotomy in favor of a more dynamic and complex understanding of the relationship between movement sectors and mobilizing structures.

Using gender as an analytical category through which to view the Montgomery bus boycott and anti-pass campaign exposes gaps in, and points to ways to engender, social movement theory. In the South African case, the resistance struggle was catalyzed by the gendered and racialized apartheid and migratory labor systems. The political opportunity structure propelled African women into the movement at different levels, through particular paths and networks, and for reasons related to their positionality. Similarly, structural and subjective notions of gender factored in to the emergence and sustenance of the Montgomery bus boycott. In both cases, women of African descent, within particular social structural locations, ushered in a new phase of the resistance struggle. At the same time, gendered structures and identities served as a double-edged sword, serving to limit and/or eclipse women's activism. The absence of complete autonomy, and the complexities of the combined nationalist and gendered projects, served as an additional component of the political opportunity structure. Even being able to see these levels of intramovement tension requires a gendered, racialized, and class-conscious theory that factors in the impact of these systemic differences on all levels of social life.

As these two examples illustrate, gender systems and women's lives can be a central point from which to critique and identify gaps in social movement theory. In this kind of approach, social movement theory is transformed and its relevance enhanced by gendered critiques that draw from its theoretical strengths and, at the same time, offset its limitations. From this perspective, women's experiences in particular become a location for theorizing about the relationship of gender to social resistance movements (Sharoni 1995). Sharoni stated,

Since women are not a monolithic group, any single framework will not be sufficient to capture the complexity and the different dimensions and particularities of their struggles. In other words, we need to move beyond typologies and into the complex realms and locations where women actually make history and theory . . . to theorize about women's resistance in this context cannot emerge in academic settings and then be applied to case studies. (1995, 29)

In this way, theorizing gender in social movements becomes a back and forth between theory and women's actual lived experiences. This dialectical process results in emergent theory: frameworks and models that emerge organically from the experience of women and men in particular moments in particular social movement contexts.

In both the U.S. and South African societies, Black/African women have historically experienced multiplicative or simultaneous oppressions. The particular configurations of these systemic inequalities created opportunities for resistance that were crucial for the success of those movements but that can be seen only once theory has been transformed (Hill Collins 2000; King 1988). Researching social movements using an intersectional approach requires a basic framework for envisioning race/ethnicity, gender, and class as distinct, yet interconnected, systems. These efforts are necessary to capture the full dynamics of campaigns such as the Montgomery bus boycott and anti-pass campaigns and the larger movements of which they were a part. Using gender to rethink and recreate the theory of social movements is not an empty exercise but an approach that renders a more complicated reading of resistance movements, offers useful lessons about and for the front lines of social struggle on a cross-national level, and affords us an opportunity to see ourselves and other everyday people reflected in those social movements and transformations.

NOTE

1. I have attempted to use language that bridges the gap between the respective histories and constructions of race in the United States and South Africa. Throughout the article, I use "African/Black women" and "women of African descent" interchangeably to refer to Black women in both the United States and South Africa.

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