

FREE

The weekly newspaper for the city centre, Waterfront and Robben Island

CAPE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS



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## Picture passage to the past

CARL COLLISON

"There are occasions when you're sitting in an Egyptian jail and think maybe it would be good to have a different career," photojournalist Adil Bradlow laughs.

Mr Bradlow was recently held by Egyptian authorities on allegations of spying. The experience notwithstanding, he adds: "The thing is, I'm a news junkie. I love the news. And I'm a journalist – that's what we do."

It is this commitment to bringing the world images from the frontlines that he, with fellow photographers Benny Gool and Zubeida Vallie, are bringing home in their joint exhibition, *Martyrs, Saints and Sell-Outs*.

Currently on show at the Castle of Good Hope, the exhibition looks at the trio's works documenting the anti-apartheid protest movement from the mid-80s to early-90s.

A strong focus of the works is on how ordinary men risked life and limb to try to effect change: Although the usual poster children for South Africa's struggle for freedom (a smiling young Trevor Manuel; a tear-shedding Winnie Mandela), make obligatory appearances, the predominant focus is on the resistance of ordinary men and women – from angry youth dancing amid flames of burning tyres to a defiant on tannic giving the cop who is lazily pushing her into a police van a proper mouthful.

"Looking through these photographs, one sees that the struggle to pull apartheid down was not located in one particular group, but rather with hundreds of thousands of people who have sacrificed so much for this struggle – families, loved ones, their own lives," says the exhibition's curator, Siona O'Connell.



Photographer Zubeida Vallie's photograph of Reverend J P Pearson standing amid the aftermath of an attack by police on his Bonteheuwel congregation is one of the images on show in the *Martyrs, Saints and Sell-Outs* exhibition, now on at the Castle.

There is even a moving photograph, taken by Rondebosch resident Ms O'Connell, of a diary entry written up by a political detainee in a section of a found Bible.

Says Mr Bradlow: "The photographs signify the anonymity of rebellion at the time. What they also do is bring home the whole idea of the passage of time and also how, for so many people, the fight did not work out into any kind of material gain."

On her motivation for putting the impressive show together, Ms O'Connell, a lecturer at UCT's Michaelis School of Fine Art, says: "I felt a great sense of disillusion-

ment with the new South Africa and the way things are. This is not the story I expected post-apartheid South Africa's to be. Although this was ostensibly a research project, it was really a project of the personal for me".

Athlone resident, Ms Vallie adds: "We were documenting uprisings and protests mainly in the Belgravia, Athlone area. We realised we were part of these community protests and were able to cope with police confrontation, so why not be proactive and start documenting what was happening?"

While they may have been able to deal with such confrontation, the

situation still posed many dangers.

Says Mr Gool: "We were forced to work together because it was more dangerous to operate as a single photographer."

In the exhibition's accompanying short documentary film, the trio speak of having to switch cars, hustling their film out of the areas in case it was confiscated by the police, and of not being able to breathe in the tear gas-filled air.

Continued on page 2

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# A lens on life

From page 1

So would it be correct to assume that the trio of frontline photographers are the "martyrs"?

Ms Vallie hastens to correct me. "Look, this is just my opinion," she says, "but I feel the martyrs the title alludes to is basically everyone involved in those protest actions. Everyone who put their lives on the line. And I'd say the 'saints' were the leaders at the time, who were really often nothing more than fairly vocal, community-appointed spokespersons."

And the sell-outs? "The sell-outs are really those who have led to all these broken promises. It's really sad to see how an elite is going about empowering themselves while the masses are out here fending for themselves."

City Centre resident Mr Gool adds: "A lot of people elected to do things

for us have sold out. I certainly have that feeling; that we've sold poor people out along the way."

Although Ms O'Connell is less keen to give a clear definition of who exactly the martyrs, saints and sell-outs are in the clearly inequitable equation that is represented in these works as well as present-day South Africa, she says: "We've sold our dream. We all did."

"But what is great about these photographs is that they serve as a reminder; a reminder that if we could get it right back then, we can get it right now. In other words, we can still grab back our future."

*Martyrs, Saints and Sell-outs* is hosted by Iziko Museums of South Africa, at the Good Hope Gallery, Castle of Good Hope, and will be on show until Friday October 11.

For more information, call 021 481 3800 or visit [www.iziko.org.za](http://www.iziko.org.za)



■ In this 1990 photograph by Benny Gool, Father Michael Weeder, now Dean of St George's Cathedral, was arrested and was dragged away by members of the police force.



## Word on the street

Walking through the *Martyrs, Saints and Sell-outs* exhibition was a bit like walking through time.

The scenes the photographs display (streets filled with burning tyres, weeping women, stone-throwing youths, earnest clergymen, etc), although necessary, ultimately became quite commonplace and, as a result, less effective as means to shock.

Revisiting these scenes years later, however, is without doubt a powerful reminder of where we, as a people, came from, how we fought and, more importantly, how we united in the face of the oppressive apartheid regime.

Speaking to those involved added another dimension to this visual representation of our painful past and brought home another truth: that is indeed possible to do it all again and "grab back our future".

While taking over the streets with petrol bombs and burning tyres might not be the way to go now, what is possible is for us as South Africans (still so divided along class and racial lines) to come together and fight the threat being posed – whatever that perceived threat may be.

Anything less would be disrespecting those who laid their lives on the line so we may enjoy the "freedom" we currently have.

— Carl Collison

## Weekend weather

[www.weather.co.za](http://www.weather.co.za) and [www.zambo.co.za](http://www.zambo.co.za)

**Friday**  
Min: 10 °C  
Max: 15 °C  
Hi: 9:22am; 9:57pm  
Lo: 2:54; 3:44pm

**Saturday**  
Min: 10 °C  
Max: 15 °C  
Hi: 11:02am; 11:31pm  
Lo: 4:41am; 5:24am

**Sunday**  
Min: 11 °C  
Max: 16 °C  
Hi: 12:15am; —pm  
Lo: 6:02am; 6:33pm

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## What's On

### Sunset walk

On Wednesday September 18, the Meridian Hiking Club will have a sunset walk in Sea Point. Visitors pay R15. Call Sam on 082 498 0361.



■ Morris Rozen of Milnerton and a member of Lodge de Goede Verwachting based in the Cape Town CBD read a National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) wish list in a magazine and in the "spirit of Freemasonry" donates regularly to the institute. This year they chose Station 4 based at Langebaan on the West Coast, which has a boat named the "Spirit of Freemasonry". Mr Rozen contacted the four lodges in Cape Town to raise the donation of towels and binoculars, which were handed over at Mykonos on Saturday August 31 by members of the four lodges. Mr Rozen said that the boat, "Spirit of Freemasonry", was donated by the Free Masons of the English Constitution, Western Division. Pictured at the handover are, from left: Avron Jacobson, De Goede Verwachting Lodge; Alvin Woolf, Carnavon Lodge; Morris Rozen, De Goede Verwachting Lodge and Jim Duggan, Mowbray Lodge.

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