

## INTRODUCTION

South Africa's first democratic national election of 1994 is generally perceived as the definitive marker of the country's transition from apartheid to democracy. The terms "old" and "new" are used in popular discourse to make a distinction between pre- and post-1994 South Africa, which suggests an expectation that life in the "new" South Africa should have changed immediately. This anticipation of immediate improvements in the lives of those who were disenfranchised during apartheid has generated a climate of both excitement and anxiety in South Africa. In theory, the expectation of change puts South Africans in the unique position of feeling that they have the chance to participate in creating an entirely new vision of their country's future. Yet this expectation has also created an unrealistic optimism that the effects of apartheid on people's identities, dreams, and material conditions could be reversed as of the date of one political event.

The African National Congress-led government is under intense pressure from voters to deliver immediately the improvements to life upon which the promise of the "new" South Africa has been built. The African National Congress (ANC)'s local constituency is calling for wrongs perpetrated during apartheid to be redressed both symbolically and materially. At the same time, the government is attempting to meet the demands that re-entry into the international community is placing on the country. Since 1994, as a result of demonstrating its commitment to constitutionalism, political democracy, and a culture of human rights, South Africa has been welcomed back into the global *moral* community. South Africa has also been encouraged to re-enter the global *economic*

community after years of economic sanctions and general economic isolation. The country is thus in the difficult position of being a “young democracy trying to cope with the strains of globalisation, neoliberal economic restructuring and the accumulated weight of its own violent, painful and still largely-repressed historical memories” (du Toit 2001:3). The government faces the heavy burden of proving that it is capable of satisfying local demands for rapid change, while simultaneously struggling to make South Africa’s economy globally competitive.

The concept of “empowerment” is being promoted by the government as a solution to both the domestic and the international pressures for immediate economic and social change. The extremely high voter turnout in the general elections of 1994 and 1999 suggests that the government has achieved its objective of politically empowering its constituency. However, there has been little evidence of any widespread economic empowerment. This situation explains why recent government policy on empowerment has increasingly focused on programs linked to what the government calls Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). South African President Thabo Mbeki, in his most recent State of the Nation address before Parliament, announced: “As we approach the end of the first decade of our new democracy the need for an economic transformation that brings about effective and significant Black Economic Empowerment becomes more pressing” (Mbeki 2003).

A fundamental tenet of the government’s BEE policy states that empowerment cannot happen without cooperation and collaboration between the government and the private sector in South Africa. This reinforces President

Mbeki's controversial decision to pursue private sector-led micro- and macro-economic development as outlined in his Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (Cull 2002). According to the government, this partnership between the public and private sectors will create a mutually beneficial situation: previously disadvantaged South Africans will be empowered, local levels of production will become competitive and attractive to domestic and foreign investors, and the economy will thrive. The government is confident that private sector-supported economic empowerment is the solution to South Africa's domestic and international woes. South African critics of the government, however, are skeptical. Social scientists Andries du Toit and Joachim Ewert have questioned the government's claim that it can successfully reconcile "the aims of local economic growth, the need for social equity and the desire of multinationals to launder their supply chains" (du Toit and Ewert 2001:6).

In this thesis, my aim is to look ethnographically at the concept of "empowerment" in the South African context. I want to understand how the government's official empowerment policy and its emphasis on the private sector's role in implementing empowerment affects people's everyday lives. I will consider the government and the private sector's interest in empowerment and the way that both economic and moral factors serve as justification for empowerment. Most importantly, I will explore what empowerment means to people whose lives are affected by empowerment policies and programs.

The scope of this study is necessarily narrow given the complexity of the ways in which the concept of empowerment can be interpreted. I have chosen to

focus my research on the effects that empowerment projects have on farm workers living and working on several wine farms in the Western Cape, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The focus on farm workers is relevant in that so much of the government discourse on empowerment in South Africa centers on the need for land redistribution as well as a complete overhaul of past labor practices, both of which are particularly pertinent to farming and farm workers in South Africa. I chose to look at wine farms because of the burgeoning number of self-proclaimed “empowerment” projects and “empowerment” wine labels on wine farms in the Western Cape, which have been given much publicity in the South African media. These wine farms are part of the South African wine industry, and thus firmly entrenched in the private sector, and they seem to be wholeheartedly embracing the government’s call for private sector “empowerment” initiatives. In a sense, these wine farm initiatives bridge the gap between local and global demands for change: they address issues of land reform and labor relations, as well as the growing urgency for the South African wine industry to compete globally. This makes wine farms an illuminating case study of how the government is enlisting the private sector in its efforts to use empowerment as a strategy to meet both domestic and international pressures.

My study has two components. The primary component is a documentary film that focuses on the daily lived experience of several workers who are involved in empowerment projects taking place on Sonop Wine Farm and Cilmor Wine Farm. The film does not give a definitive answer as to whether or not empowerment “works,” but instead serves as an exploration of the subtle and

varied effects of the Sonop and Cilmor empowerment projects on the farm workers' lives. The secondary component is this thesis, which provides an analysis of the discourses of empowerment as shaped, contested or affirmed by the government, the wine industry, and wine farm owners and workers. In this written thesis, I will explore how the history of labor relations on South African wine farms has shaped current empowerment discourses and practices. I hope to reflect on my observations and interactions on the wine farms in a way that is not possible in the film, and to articulate questions about my own methodology – questions that plagued me during my research, and questions to which I will return in the Conclusion.

I did the filming for my thesis film on two wine farms in the Western Cape over June, July, and August 2002, and returned briefly in January 2003 for follow-up filming and fieldwork. The majority of the filming was done on Sonop Wine Farm near Paarl, and the rest took place on Cilmor Wine Farm in Worcester. During this same period, I conducted additional interviews for this written component on five wine farms in the region that have recently started highly publicized empowerment projects or launched empowerment wine labels: Cluver Wine Estate, Papkuilsfontein Wine Farm, Helderkruijn Wine Farm, Fairview Wine Farm, and Uitzicht Wine Farm.<sup>1</sup>

In justifying the scope and methodology of my thesis, I find Arthur Kleinman's distinction between moral/local and ethical/global discourse useful. Kleinman defines "ethical discourse" as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Appendix for more detailed descriptions of the empowerment projects on these wine farms.

[Ethical discourse is] an abstract articulation and debate over codified values...conducted by elites, both global and local...[it] is usually principle-based, with metatheoretical commentary on the authorization and implication of those principles. [Kleinman 1999:363]

Kleinman contrasts ethical discourse with “moral experience,” which he defines as:

[A]lways [being] about practical engagements in a particular local world, a social space that carries cultural, political and economic specificity. It is about positioned views and practices: a view from somewhere...[it] is...about the actualities of specific events and situated relationships...[It] is the medium of engagement in everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are deeply engaged stakeholders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to preserve. [Kleinman 1999:365, 362]

Empowerment in South Africa has both ethical and moral dimensions. The South African government and private sector’s discourse on empowerment falls into the category of the ethical. The wine farm workers’ experience of empowerment, however, falls within the realm of moral experience. My focus is on how these ethical discourses play out in the local, moral world where wine farm workers experience “moral processes at the local level of lived experience” (Kleinman 1999:358). I am acutely aware of the limitations of my research, given my positioning as a White South African, a female, and a Harvard student with a video camera – an issue to which I will return in the Conclusion. Yet I also recognize the value of the ethnographer’s commitment to “engaged listening” and “witnessing” despite his or her problematic positioning (Kleinman 1999:418).

A significant amount of research has been done on the changing nature of labor relations on wine farms in the Western Cape in the last two decades. I will elaborate on this research in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Here, I will briefly address the gaps in the existing literature. The bulk of the research on empowerment projects on the wine farms has ignored farm workers’ own perceptions of the

changing nature of labor relations. There is thus a striking gap in the literature when it comes to addressing the experiences of farm workers in relation to empowerment projects. In a 1993 research paper titled “The Micro-Politics of Paternalism,” du Toit commented on this gap:

Although successive waves of research about farm workers have made available a mass of factual information about macro-economic trends, migrancy, health, and wage levels, there is little qualitative data to help make sense of this information: what we still do not know is what these grim facts *mean*. Farm workers’ own understandings of their problems have for the most part been ignored. [du Toit 1993:3]

The existing relevant research that has been produced in recent years tends to examine wine farm empowerment projects at a policy level. The central research question in this work is usually whether or not an empowerment project “works,” and not the extent and nature of the changes for the farm workers who participate (Eckert, Hamman and Lombard 1995; Fast 1999; McKenzie 1993; Nel 1995). There also seems to be very little research that critically explores the wine industry’s enthusiasm for empowerment on the wine farms. There appears to be a general consensus that empowerment in any form – whether corporate-led or government-initiated – is an inevitable and positive step on the road toward rationalizing and modernizing farm labor relations (Lipton 1993; McKenzie 1993; Nel 1995).

Andries du Toit’s research is a notable exception. Du Toit is one of the few researchers who has attempted to fill these gaps in the existing research. He has consistently produced research in which he tries to understand the “impact on the ground,” that is, the effects that empowerment is having on wine farm workers’ lives (du Toit 2001:21). He has criticized the existing scholarship on

wine farm labor relations for the way that authors tend to assume that labor relations could “best be described in terms of the struggle between the ‘feudal’ relationships inherited from the past and the ‘rational,’ ‘modern’ and ‘businesslike’ practices that would accompany economic progress” (du Toit 2001:8). Du Toit thinks that this assumption tends to result in researchers unquestioningly endorsing empowerment projects as the natural and necessary catalysts for economic progress and positive changes to labor relations. Du Toit’s research has guided my own thinking as well as my methodological choices.

In Chapter 1, I will briefly examine the South African government’s policy on Black Economic Empowerment, and probe the wine industry’s possible motivations for taking up the government’s call for empowerment. In Chapter 2, I will give a broad historical background to labor relations on wine farms in South Africa in order to place recent efforts to develop empowerment projects on the wine farms in a larger context. In Chapter 3, I will present my ethnographic data thematically, and attempt to answer my central research question on the extent and nature of the changes these empowerment projects have on farm workers’ lives. In the Conclusion, I will reflect on the ethics and limitations of my own methodology.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Government Ideology and the Wine Industry's Response to Empowerment**

I am primarily interested in how empowerment is experienced by the people who are its supposed beneficiaries. However, I realize that in order to do this, I must first understand how this ideology is conceptualized in official terms. In this chapter, I will analyze the South African government's ideology of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), and in particular its emphasis on private sector responsibility for implementing BEE. My most important source is the government's policy document on economic empowerment, which is still awaiting cabinet approval: the South African Department of Trade and Industry's 2002 draft working document on Black Economic Empowerment (Department of Trade and Industry 2002).

There is immense domestic and international pressure on South Africa to overcome rapidly the damage done in the past, in order to survive economically in a global economy that makes no concessions for a country's past hardships. The African National Congress-led government is acutely aware of this pressure, and is responding by formulating a detailed strategy called Black Economic Empowerment. In his most recent State of the Nation Address, President Mbeki insisted that Black Economic Empowerment is a top priority for the government. Mbeki defined empowerment as:

A broad-based process...covering ownership, management, employment equity, skills development, procurement, corporate social responsibility, investment and enterprise formation. [Mbeki 2003]

In the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)'s draft working document on BEE, the government warns of the risks to South Africa should it fail to meet the demands of globalization:

The government is particularly conscious of a danger. Strategically we are committed to engage with the global economy. This means we have accepted that we have to be competitive in the global economy...In the global economy those economies and enterprises that adapt to the new knowledge driven age can make immense progress. But the converse is also very true. Those that fail to adapt can be rapidly marginalized. This in turn means that there is a very real threat of increased inequality and uneven development. If this threat were to be grafted onto existing racial disparity in our society we run considerable political, social and economic risks. Integration into the rapidly changing global economy requires actions to benefit from this integration and antidotes to its potential dangers. [Department of Trade and Industry 2002:4]

The above passage emphasizes that the danger South Africa faces is particular to its history. The imperative to adjust rapidly to the global economy has been felt worldwide, but in South Africa the drastic social and economic inequalities that are the legacy of apartheid mean that a failure to adjust rapidly may carry extreme costs. If South Africa falls behind globally, it has little hope of rectifying the economic inequalities that already exist within its own borders. This passage stresses that BEE is essential to the South African economy's ability to compete globally, which in turn is essential to the government's ability to deliver the promised improvements in quality of life to its citizens.

One would assume that the DTI's draft document would justify BEE in purely economic terms, but in fact BEE is defined as a "moral, political, social and a fundamentally economic requirement of our collective future" (Department of Trade and Industry 2002:5). This indicates that, while fundamentally informed by economics, the government's ideology on empowerment also addresses the call for social and political changes that are the basis of the democratic ideal of

the new South Africa. According to the document, the desired outcome for BEE is “a skilled and internationally competitive workforce that is reflective in its racial composition of the racial composition of the population of South Africa” (Department of Trade and Industry 2002:8). The government clearly hopes that empowerment will satisfy more than simply the economic needs of the nation. According to this document, there is not only an economic imperative for empowerment, but also a moral one, rooted in redressing the wrongs perpetrated under apartheid.

This raises the question of why the government would be interested in blurring the economic and moral justifications for empowerment. One explanation is that the African National Congress has received a consistent 63% mandate in both the 1994 and 1999 national elections (ANC 2003). Given this mandate, the ANC, a liberation movement turned political party, has to lead the post-apartheid government in what is obviously much more than an economic transition. Du Toit suggests that the ANC is increasingly aware that in post-apartheid South Africa, “the discourses of popular democratic struggle have been supplanted by those of ‘delivery’ and ‘development,’” which makes the government highly accountable to its constituency (du Toit 2001:2). By emphasizing the *moral* imperative for empowerment, and not just the *economic* imperative, the ANC may be attempting to ensure that it cannot be held accountable if it fails to keep all of its promises to deliver change to its constituents. As anthropologist Susan Levine emphasizes, the moral justification for empowerment allows the ANC to interpret all of the problems of post-

apartheid South Africa as the result of past, not current, forms of oppression and corrupt leadership:

Apartheid as a national narrative is being replaced by democracy, reconciliation, truth and reparation. That extreme racism, poverty and corruption exist in the post-apartheid state is viewed not as a failure of democracy...but as the legacy of apartheid, which over several generations will be healed. [Levine 1999:141]

In the DTI draft document on BEE, the government appeals to the private sector to play a major role in implementing BEE, emphasizing that it will not be able to deliver results without the private sector's commitment and support. President Mbeki stressed this dependence at last year's State of the Nation address:

I would like to emphasize that the task of Black Economic Empowerment faces all sectors of society, including the established business community...progress will depend on active government leadership and co-operation from various sectors of the business community itself. [Mbeki 2002]

Indeed, the very success of BEE seems to depend on private sector cooperation, as the following passage from the DTI draft document shows:

Market forces and the equality of rights that now exist are thus not enough in themselves to change a powerful legacy of structural economic inequality between the black and white citizens of South Africa. Specific state led interventions have to be made to correct this structural dimension of inequality. This fundamental task, we believe, can only be achieved through agreement and joint action between the public and private sectors. [Department of Trade and Industry 2002:4]

According to the government, the private sector's biggest responsibility with regard to BEE is "to design and implement industry Empowerment [sic] plans or charters and company BEE programmes" (Department of Trade and Industry 2002:17). One industry in the private sector that has immediately responded to the government's appeal for support is the South African wine industry. The rapidity of its response is especially interesting given that the government has not directly indicated that the wine industry is required to implement BEE programs.

The few industries on which the government has put direct pressure to implement BEE policies are strategic industries that the government knows it must control in order effectively to control the country (such as mining, power, and communications). The wine industry's enthusiastic and self-motivated response to empowerment is thus somewhat surprising, since it is not considered a strategic industry by the South African government.

In addressing the question of why the wine industry in South Africa would implement BEE seemingly of its own volition, one might argue that it has a vested interest in reforming its business practices and ridding itself of all previous associations with the apartheid state, of which it had many (as I will discuss in Chapter 2). By concurring with the government's conflation of the economic *and* moral basis for empowerment, the wine industry can create a new image of itself that is in keeping with the image and values of the new South Africa. This new image is essential to South African wine producers eager to increase export sales to overseas markets. South African wine will not sell well overseas if the South African wine industry still has an international reputation for being dominated by Afrikaner nationalists who supported the apartheid regime.

Indeed, in the course of my research, a representative for the *Tukulu* empowerment wine label told me that "for marketing [the empowerment brand], it's a nice story to sell, we can sell the wine for a good price overseas" (personal interview with Carlen Groenewald, 7/20/02, Stellenbosch). Similarly, the *Thandi* empowerment brand wine made on Cluver Estate is mostly exported to the UK, Scandinavia and Germany because, as co-owner Paul Cluver IV stated, "there's a

large population with a desire for what you call fair trade products, and will actually go out and search for those products” (personal interview with Paul Cluver IV, 7/31/02, Elgin). With an empowerment label on the wine bottle, wine producers have an immediate advantage over competitors, “and that’s why story becomes really important, and that’s what *Thandi* has, it’s got a very good story, it is a story of empowerment of previously disadvantaged people” (personal interview with Paul Cluver IV, 7/31/02, Elgin). Perhaps not surprisingly, there have been accusations that the empowerment projects on the wine farms are “all a public-relations gimmick” (Barron 1998:15). I will examine this accusation in greater depth in Chapter 2.

The wine industry’s unusual engagement with the government’s official policy of empowerment makes it an important and interesting case study for understanding the link between the government and the private sector that is the basis of BEE. In Chapter 2, I will outline a history of labor relations on South African wine farms, and explore in more depth the possible interests that the wine industry has in supporting and implementing empowerment projects. My interest is less in whether this kind of private sector-led empowerment is a success or failure, and more in the kinds of changes this official policy is having on farm workers’ lives. My aim in Chapter 3 is to analyze the lived experiences of the wine farm workers who are supposedly being empowered.

## CHAPTER 2

### **A Historical Perspective on Labor Relations on Wine Farms in the Western Cape**

Wine farming in the Western Cape is intimately implicated in the construction of the racial and ethnic categories on which apartheid was based, and the exploitative economic infrastructure that made apartheid profitable. From the first White settlement in the Western Cape in the mid-seventeenth century, the labor needs of the wine farmers in large part provided the impetus for the creation of an ethnic hierarchy and an Afrikaner and Coloured ethnic identity.<sup>2</sup>

Andries du Toit, one of the founders of the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape, found in his fieldwork in the early 1990s that labor relations on the wine farms were overwhelmingly paternalistic, and had been for centuries. Du Toit used the phrase “farm as family” to describe the particular paternalistic logic that informed the way in which labor was organized on the wine farms where he did his fieldwork. He also used this phrase to distinguish farm labor relations from those that existed in other working situations (du Toit 1992). Several social scientists have used the term “paternalism” to describe the cultural, political and economic interactions between Western Cape Afrikaners and Coloureds during apartheid (Marks and Trapido 1987). Du Toit found the term “paternalism” an appropriate description of labor relations between Afrikaners and Coloureds on wine farms as well. His

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<sup>2</sup> There is much controversy over the use and definition of terms that signify ethnic or racial difference in South Africa. The terms “White,” “Black,” and “Coloured” are now generally used in South Africa to refer to supposedly distinct racial/ethnic categories. See Giliomee 1989, 1992 and Marks & Trapido 1987 for more detailed analyses of the origins and use of these terms.

research has been seminal in developing a more precise understanding of the features of this long-standing paternalism on the wine farms.

Du Toit has insisted that paternalism must be understood not just as “a vaguely benevolent authoritarianism,” but also as a “very specific set of institutions” (du Toit 1993:4). Since the earliest vineyards were planted, workers have been dependant on farmers not only for work, but also for housing, clothing, food, alcohol, transport, health care, and education. On the wine farms, the contract between farm owner and worker has not been that just of employer and employee, but of landlord and tenant, charity-giver and recipient, vehicle owner and passenger, provider and dependent. The farm worker has always been a farm *dweller* because he/she has had to live on the farmer’s land, in houses owned by the farmer. This web of dependencies created a situation where profound abuse could occur. Farm workers were often infantilized by the farm owner, and stripped of any responsibility and control over their own lives. “Paternalism” implies that the farmer had a kind of parental, fatherly authority over the workers, which is perhaps misleading – “authoritarianism” might be more appropriate. Yet the term “paternalism” is useful in describing the unusually dependant relationship workers were forced into having with farm owners.

As du Toit’s research shows, paternalism on the wine farms persisted into the 1990s and possibly still exists currently. However, the proponents of the empowerment projects that have recently emerged on several wine farms claim to be initiating a radical shift away from paternalistic labor relations. I will investigate the effects of this purported shift on the lives of wine farm workers in

Chapter 3. In this chapter, I will trace the development of paternalism on the wine farms by surveying the history of labor relations on wine farms in the Western Cape. I have identified several phases in this history: slavery; labor tenancy; protectionism; state intervention; “reform” and “upliftment”; and finally, the most recent phase of “empowerment.”

### **Slavery**

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established an agricultural settlement at the Cape to feed the crews of its fleet on their way around Africa to the East. Wine farming was actively encouraged by the VOC because of the demand for wine by the fleet crews. In 1688, a community of French Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in France settled in the Western Cape. The VOC had encouraged them to emigrate to the Cape because they were specifically looking for “those who are cultivators of the vine and understand the making of vinegar and the distillation of brandy” (Schwager 1992:22). Agriculture was thus the reason for, and basis of, the Cape Colony.

From the beginning, chronic labor shortage was one of the biggest obstacles to agricultural success for the European settlers. The VOC’s initial response to this problem was to import slaves from (present day) India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Angola, and Mozambique, as well as Chinese ex-convicts, and make them available to the settlers on credit (Elphick and Shell 1989:219). As agricultural settlement expanded, the demand for slave labor grew sharply. From the early decades of the eighteenth century, “the largest slave holdings were

found...among the wine farmers” (Armstrong and Worden 1989:137). The extent to which wine farming was dependant on restrictive labor controls was made evident by a survey of Stellenbosch farmers in 1806: 39.8% of farmers employed only slaves, 54.2% had both slave and indigenous Khoisan workers, and 6% were dependent solely on Khoisan labor (Armstrong and Worden 1989:138).

As the colony expanded, some of the new farmers could not afford to buy enough slaves to work their farms. As a result, by the mid-1690s, the settlers began to employ the indigenous Khoisan people. The Khoisan often went to work on the farms because they had no other choice, having been squeezed off their land, and having lost all of their cattle as the settlers expanded their farms. Thus began a long system of labor tenancy: Khoisan were employed as farm laborers and “lived with their families and livestock on the farmers’ land” (Elphick and Malherbe 1989:17). They were not paid uniform wages, and often were paid partly in food and alcohol – the beginnings of the *dop* system, whereby workers were given wine at regular intervals throughout the day (Armstrong and Worden 1989:146). The *dop* system thus became firmly entrenched as one of the most destructive and lasting institutions of paternalism on the wine farms. Workers were forced into alcohol dependency because this made them dependant on the provider of the alcohol – the farm owner – and ensured that they would not leave the farm. Thus slaves and Khoisan labor tenants were forced to be wholly dependant on their masters for food, shelter, protection, and even alcohol. This dependency formed the basis of the paternalism that has persisted throughout the history of wine farming in the Western Cape.

## **Labor Tenancy**

After nineteen years of wrangling for ownership of the Cape, the Dutch finally ceded it to the British permanently at the London Convention of 1814 (Freund 1989:325). This change in government caused a major shift in labor policies on the wine farms. The British instituted a system of “imperial preferences” designed to boost the colony’s agricultural production, and in 1813 the duty on Cape wines being exported to Britain was greatly reduced. Wine production and exports boomed, and the demand for labor grew.

As soon as there was talk of emancipating the slaves at the Cape, the wine farmers became very anxious. In 1798, farmers from Stellenbosch sent a petition to the Burgher Senate pleading that “slaves cannot be dispensed with in this settlement” (Armstrong and Worden 1989:138). The Senate responded by encouraging the wine farmers to “inculcate habits of diligence amongst slaves after emancipation so that they would remain ‘compliant labourers’” (Armstrong and Worden 1989:164-5). The irony is that the British abolition of the slave trade created a major source of labor for the Cape farmers. From 1807 onwards, many slaves who were “liberated” from slave trading ships by the British navy were released at the Cape, where they were “apprenticed” to local farmers for fourteen years (Armstrong and Worden 1989:120).

The British also instituted several restrictive labor laws that in effect gave the Landdrosts (administrators of the districts) complete control over the distribution of labor. In 1809, the British governor of the Cape, Lord Caledon, issued the “Hottentot Proclamation,” giving the Landdrosts the power to force

Khoisan workseekers to carry officially-issued work permits, and thereby to distribute Khoisan labor as they wished (Peires 1989:493). In the 1820s, the British permitted the continued practice of farmers obtaining labor by raiding Khoisan communities even though it had been officially outlawed in 1817. These “colony-wide proclamations enshrined restrictive practices previously upheld by custom” (Elphick and Malherbe 1989:40).

It was obvious whose interests the British government was protecting even when Cape slaves were officially emancipated in 1834. Wine farmers were allowed to apprentice their slaves for a further four years, until 1838. Neither land nor capital was available to the newly freed slaves, so that most freedmen and women were forced to work as permanent or seasonal workers on the very farms on which they had been enslaved. Furthermore, in 1856, after the Cape colonists achieved self-government, they passed the Masters and Servants Act. This placed severe penalties on laborers who deserted, and made any form of disrespect to the farm owner by the laborer a criminal offense. As a result, “legal emancipation for slaves was not accompanied by any significant change in the inequalities of their economic or social position” (Armstrong and Worden 1989:168). This point is evidenced in a letter to the *Cape Town Mail* in 1834 by an English Cape Town resident who made the following claim:

[T]he majority of Dutch farmers who complained that their slaves and servants have been taken away...cannot get servants because they will not pay them. They want servants to work for nothing...farmers frequently when they hire individuals only give them in payment a little wine or a little Cape brandy to make them intoxicated. [Quoted in Worden 1992:168]

## **Protectionism**

In 1871, shortly before gold was discovered on the Rand, more than 90% of Dutch-Afrikaners lived on the land, on isolated farms, and dominated wine production (Giliomee 1989:30). Once gold had been discovered in South Africa, however, the Dutch-Afrikaners in the Western Cape began to feel the sting of escalating British imperialism. They increasingly felt that the British-dominated Cape government was not acting in their interests. Having already been shouldered out of industry, mining, banking and government by the more skilled and wealthy English-speakers, the only economic stronghold the Cape Dutch-Afrikaners had left was agriculture. It was around the call for protectionist policies for farmers that the Cape Dutch-Afrikaners first rallied as a unified ethnic group.

The political expression of this growing ethnic identification amongst Cape Dutch-Afrikaners was the creation of several organizations specifically established to address the needs of the farming population. In 1875, the Fellowship of True Afrikaners was founded in Paarl, the heart of the wine farming region, by S.J. du Toit, the son of a wine farmer. In 1878, the South African Farmers Protection Association (BBV) was established by several wine farmers, led by Onze Jan Hofmeyr, to oppose an excise bill threatening wine exports. In 1880, du Toit founded the Afrikaner Bond to prevent the “sacrifice of ‘Africa’s interests to England or those of the Farmer to the Merchant”” (Giliomee 1989:36). The wine farmers’ interests were intertwined with this new ethnic identification to such an extent that in 1878, the speaker at a Paarl meeting of the BBV “expressed

the hope that the enthusiasm for a ‘nationality’ would lead to the establishment of brandy as national drink” (Giliomee 1989:39). It is revealing that the *Zuid-Afrikaan*, the mouth-piece of the Afrikaner Bond, defined “Africaanderism” as “a curtailment of the non-White franchise and the promotion of farming interests” (quoted in Giliomee 1989:31). An early history of South Africa, published in 1898, defined an Afrikaner as “a person of Dutch extraction, who believed in the advancement of the brandy market...and the repression of the native” (quoted in Giliomee 1992:75). These newly formed Afrikaner ethnic organizations explicitly defined themselves in opposition to the English. They contrasted the “industrializing, corrupt, greedy English” with the “worthiness of the patriarchal social relations typical of the rural Dutch-Afrikaners” (Giliomee 1989:34). By the 1880s therefore, the Dutch-Afrikaners at the Cape had already begun to articulate the benefits of paternalism in maintaining their power base on the farms. As Giliomee points out, “over the past century the wine and wheat farmers of the Western Cape have arguably been the firmest pillar of support for the Afrikaner nationalist movement” (Giliomee 1992:63).

At the same time that this Afrikaner ethnic consciousness was being formed, the “Coloured” ethnic category was also emerging. Ian Goldin traces the evolution of the term “Coloured” in several official censuses toward the end of the nineteenth century to show how it was manipulated by the British Cape government. In the 1875 and 1892 censuses, the term “Coloured” included all non-European people. In the 1904 census, however, after the Anglo-Boer War, there was a shift in the discourse: the term “Coloured” was used to describe an

“intermediate class of people distinct from the Bantu-speaking population” (Goldin 1989:243). This was the first time in official discourse that three distinct racial classifications – White, Bantu and Coloured – were used. This change was partly the result of the ethnic affiliations that emerged during the Anglo-Boer War. The British made a direct appeal for support to the Cape Coloured population during the war to entice them to fight on their side. The British promised the Cape Coloureds that they would end the discrimination against them by the Dutch-Afrikaners if they won the war. They also promised them that they would ensure better working conditions for Coloureds working on wine farms. Neither promise was kept by the British after the war.

### **State Intervention**

In 1929, the National Party (founded in 1913 by Hertzog) won the “wine seats” of Stellenbosch and Paarl. The strong roots that the National Party (NP) and its apartheid ideology had in the Western Cape wine farming region are made clear by Giliomee in the following passage:

The active involvements of Stellenbosch and Paarl farmers in local financial institutions and ethnic projects laid the groundwork for the Cape Afrikaner economic and cultural advance during the 1920s and 1930s. This was the main support base of the ‘purified’ Afrikaner nationalist movement that was launched in 1933 under the leadership of D.F. Malan and other Cape Afrikaner nationalists. [Giliomee 1989:45]

Many of the NP’s later apartheid policies were based on state intervention to secure labor for Cape Afrikaner farmers in the face of the threat of losing rural Coloureds to the urban areas. The Nationalists appealed directly to White

Afrikaner wine farmers, promising them state support and a steady labor supply, a promise they kept after winning the 1948 election.

In order to prevent Coloured farm workers from uniting with Black farm workers to protest the conditions on the Western Cape farms, the NP made it advantageous to Coloureds *not* to identify with Blacks. In 1923, under the Urban Areas Act, Blacks were forced to carry passes, but Coloureds were exempted. When Hertzog came to power in 1924, he proposed a program of disenfranchisement for Blacks alongside a program of increased representation for Coloureds. In the 1940s, the Coloured Affairs Department was established to “give greater salience to Coloured identity” and to isolate them from Blacks (Marks and Trapido 1987:30). Coloureds were a thorn in the side of the NP’s apartheid ideology, because the apartheid engineers could not deny that the Western Cape was both their own, and the Coloureds,’ historical homeland. Yet they were reluctant to share the Western Cape because many Afrikaners “saw in the Western Cape a final refuge for White South Africans – a White homeland” (Goldin 1987:172).

To solve this dilemma, ideologues at the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA) in Stellenbosch formulated ethnic ideology in regard to the Coloured population around the issue of labor. They put forward the Coloured Preference Policy in 1953, and formally designated the Western Cape as a “Coloured labor preference area” in 1955. This policy was in large part a belated response to the threat of the influx of Black workers into the Western Cape during the Second World War (when many Coloured workers were away on war duties).

The Coloured Preference Policy was designed to “bolster the paternalism which mediated the relationship between Cape Afrikaners and Cape Coloureds,” and to appease the Coloured population (Marks and Trapido 1987:31). Cape Afrikaners paternalistically called Coloureds their “brown Afrikaners” (Marks and Trapido 1987:31).

The official aim of the Coloured Preference Policy was to replace all Black labor in the Western Cape with Coloured labor. Secretary of Native Affairs at the time, W.W. Eiselen, tried to frame this policy in terms of how it was beneficial to the Coloureds, claiming that the presence of “Natives” (Blacks) in the Western Cape would lead to the moral and economic degeneration of the Coloureds (Goldin 1987:173). What it was really about however, was getting rid of the Blacks in the Western Cape. This would create a complacent Coloured work force loyal to the apartheid government, and make the Western Cape a “Native-free” safe haven for Afrikaners, to be shared paternalistically with their “brown Afrikaners.” Blacks were forcibly removed from the Western Cape, and were only allowed to stay in jobs that Coloureds did not want. Afrikaner nationalists thus tried desperately to manipulate Coloured identity to meet the demands for Coloured, not Black, labor on wine farms in the Western Cape. As Marks and Trapido point out, the Nationalist Party apartheid ideology of segregation had its basis in labor needs and demands, not only for Afrikaners, but for Coloureds too:

[The ideology of segregation] served white farmers demanding additional controls over their tenants and labourers and white workers seeking protection from cheaper black labour...its doctrines even provided opportunities for...those Coloureds anxious to protect themselves against being reduced to the status of Africans. [Marks and Trapido 1987:8]

## **“Reform” and “Upliftment”**

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the international community began to put pressure on the South African government through economic and social sanctions to change its apartheid policies. The South African government’s response was to attempt to deflect criticism of its apartheid policies and improve its global image by replacing the rhetoric of “apartheid orthodoxy” with the “catchwords ‘realism,’ ‘pragmatism,’ ‘reform,’ ‘labor stabilization,’ and ‘effective government’” (Marks and Trapido 1987:58). The government further distanced itself by pushing for the decentralization of the state’s economic responsibilities, and advocated that “decisions about welfare matters such as income redistribution, development assistance, education, health, housing” be made by decentralized organizations not specifically linked to the state (Greenberg 1987:394).

Afrikaans farmers were encouraged by the state to do their part by presenting labor issues not as problems of political control, but “merely *technical* ones, the solutions to which [could] and should be non-ideological and therefore non-contestable” (Pasel 1987:421). The Afrikaner Nationalist-dominated wine industry dutifully recast the oppressive labor situation on the farms in economic or technical terms, rather than political ones. By speaking of “reform” not in terms of ideology, but of economics, the Afrikaner Nationalist wine farmers attempted to avoid the moral and political implications of their labor policies, and thereby tried to avoid economic sanctions by insisting to the international community that they had changed their practices.

The result was a shift to policies promoting “upliftment” of the farm workers’ quality of life through a series of moderate “reforms” on the wine farms. In 1982, a group of wine farmers in Stellenbosch established the Rural Foundation. The aim of the Foundation was to encourage “social upliftment” of the farm workers. In a promotional tourist pamphlet on Stellenbosch published in 1985, the Rural Foundation’s aims are described as follows:

To provide guidance and leadership in the development of rural communities – and each farm is its own micro-community – to create a better future for all people in rural areas in southern Africa. It aims at promoting a community life that is healthy, both physically and spiritually, through involvement in self-care and the attainment of peace and justice for all rural people. In practical terms it includes the arrangement of pre-school care for the children of farm workers, primary health care, the improvement of living conditions through, for instance, the electrification of cottages. Sport and recreation and the improvement of adult literacy are among other concerns. [Quoted in Schwager 1992:110]

This Rural Foundation pamphlet denies that the reasons for the poor living conditions on the farms are political and ideological, thus legitimating the wine industry’s oppressive labor policies. In 1990, sociologist Andrew Ball criticized the Rural Foundation as promoting paternalism “dressed up” as reform. He accused the Foundation of encouraging farmers to placate their farm workers in order to prevent them from joining trade unions, and to appease international investors who were threatening economic sanctions (Ball 1990:14). Andries du Toit concurred with Ball’s criticism, and claimed that despite this rhetoric of reform, wine farmers still insisted on maintaining the paternalistic relationship with their laborers that had existed throughout the history of farming in the Western Cape (du Toit 1992:314). As anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano observed in 1985 in his ethnography of the small wine farming town of Wyndal, despite the so-called “reforms” by the White farmers, paternalism still governed

the farmer-worker relationship. By casting themselves as the benevolent “fathers” to their worker “children,” the farmers hoped to justify to the international community the domination of their farm laborers. They emphasized their paternalistic closeness to the Coloured workers and their mutual loyalty. One of the Wyndal farmers’ wives told Crapanzano that “the Bantu [workers] are different. They are not loyal the way the Coloureds are” (Crapanzano 1985:22).

In an article about one wine farm that was supposedly reforming labor relations published in *The Argus* in 1987, the sense of the impending changes and potential conflict the country was going to face is palpable. The article begins, “While South Africa’s white political leaders bitterly debate the idea of sharing power with blacks, a group of wine farmers have started their own multi-racial grassroots scheme.” The farm owner, Nicky Krone, is quoted as saying that his farm labor practices “are based on the philosophy that ‘everyone has the right to get the best from life.’” Yet in the article, the changes are justified not in terms of the farmer’s moral obligation to his workers to give them the best in life, but because “productivity rose and land use trebled” after the farm workers were allowed to be members of a decision-making committee. The underlying assumption is that the farm workers’ facilities should be upgraded to keep the workers happy, but that the workers’ enforced dependency on the farmer should not be challenged. Yet even these “reforms” were strongly resisted by the majority of Afrikaans wine farmers. Nicky Krone’s wife claimed that they were called “a bunch of communists” by the more conservative farmers in the region (Argus 1987).

In the conservative publication, *Farmer's Weekly*, in a 1991 article titled “A Share in the Profits,” farmer Carl Havinga’s defensive opening plea reveals that readers of the magazine were not particularly receptive to ideas of reform at the time. He begins, “A ‘new’ idea was expressed at the conference of the Agricultural Economic Association of Southern Africa. At the very least, it merits some thought, if not acceptance.” He goes on to describe farmer and businessman, Dr. Fred le Roux’s, idea that “farmers should develop a system whereby farm workers be given a share in profits and participate in management, although it must be founded on good productivity.” Havinga interprets le Roux’s idea as advocating “that more responsibility should be given to farm workers. They should realize fully that a better life for them is attainable, and that this depends as much on their input and the quality of their work as it does on profit sharing and management participation.” Yet what Havinga goes on to claim gives an insight into the mindset of some wine farmers at the time. He argues:

This proposal is not as radical as may appear at first glance. It’s just more formalized. After all, some farmers have for ages given their managers and workers either a bonus after the harvest or made payment (apart from basic wages in cash or in kind) on the basis of how much was produced on the farm in a season. As far as management goes, any farmer who has a good relationship with his workers will in the course of day-to-day chores on the farm discuss practical matters with them. [Havinga 1991]

That Havinga thinks that this kind of discussion counts as decision-sharing, or that this kind of bonus counts as profit-sharing, reveals his deeply ingrained belief in the benefits of paternalism, and his limited understanding of “reform” and “equity share.” His final assessment of the viability of such a scheme is that “the only limitation to this lies in the limitations of the farm worker – that is, the level of his ability to reason and come up with solutions” (Havinga 1991). This

statement simultaneously absolves the farmer of all responsibility for making the scheme work, and implicitly doubts the farm workers' ability to take any form of responsibility – the belief on which paternalism is founded. By the early 1990s, the “social upliftment reforms” had simply reinforced the paternalistic labor relationship between farmers and workers.

### **“Empowerment”**

It was only in 1992 that an Act was passed by Parliament extending basic workers' rights to farm workers. This was a highly controversial move at the time. For centuries, farmers throughout South Africa had no state interference in the way they treated their workers. This was one of the factors that made paternalism on the wine farms possible. This legislative shift was for the wine farmers an ominous sign of changing times, as was the African National Congress's calls for land reform (du Toit 1992:31). In October of 1994, newly inaugurated President Nelson Mandela gave a speech at the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary congress of the South African Agricultural Union in which he stressed that the ANC's policy “acknowledges the property rights of existing land workers. It also recognizes the legitimate demand for justice from those who have been excluded or dispossessed. Organized agriculture should seek to be part of the process of change” (quoted in Farmer's Weekly 1994a).

The ANC realized that land reform would not be possible without the transformation of farm labor relations. As a result, new legislation has been passed in the last ten years which is specifically aimed at changing the way that

farm workers are treated throughout South Africa. In 1992, the Restitution of Land Rights Act was passed (and a Land Claims Court was established to evaluate claims); the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act was passed in 1996; the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act was passed in 1996; and in 1997 the landmark Extension of Security of Tenure Act was passed. The Extension of Security of Tenure Act in effect prevents a farmer from evicting someone from his or her property if that person has been living on the farm for ten years or more, or if he or she is older than 60. The Act also puts controls into place that prevent arbitrary eviction of farm workers and their families: to evict a farm worker living on his or her property, a farmer must give two months' notice to the worker, the worker's family, the local municipality, and the Department of Land Affairs, and the worker must have access to alternative accommodation (as interpreted by South African lawyer Johannes Spamer in a personal interview, 07/20/02, Stellenbosch). That this new legislation focuses so strongly on security of *tenure* for farm workers reveals the extent of the problem of workers living on their employer's farm – the basis of the paternalistic system – as well as the government's determination to change this situation. More recently, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1998) and the Employment Equity Act (1998) – the foundation of the government's affirmative action policies – were passed. These Acts impose further state controls on the employer-employee relationship, including that between farmer and farm worker.

Another strategy used by the ANC in its urgent tackling of the land reform issue was the launching of a land reform pilot program in October of 1994, under

the guidance of the Land Affairs Ministry. One of the proposals under the program was for housing grants of R12,500 (about \$1,200) to be made to farm workers to buy land and to build a homestead (Farmer's Weekly 1994a). This proposal became a reality in February of 1996. A representative from the Development Bank of Southern Africa, a regional investment and finance organization that funds land reform initiatives, was paraphrased in *Farmer's Weekly* as saying that "farm workers' equity participation schemes should be accepted as part of South Africa's land reform programme. Workers involved in such schemes should be eligible for land reform grants" (Farmer's Weekly 1994b). The first highly publicized empowerment project on a South African wine farm was part of the ANC's land reform pilot program. The farm workers on Whitehall farm in Grabouw were given the opportunity to buy a third of the shares in the farm business. The deal was negotiated by the farm owner, Henry Hall, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and the newly formed Whitehall Workers' Committee and Trust. Owner Henry Hall became interested in the idea after a year of bad harvest, when he was looking to reduce his debt without selling off any land. After reading a paper written by the DBSA on this model of land reform, he contacted the DBSA and they started negotiations. In an article in *The Argus* published in 1994, the Workers' Committee chairperson, Johannes Muller, is quoted as saying, "Now the workers perceive a third of every bag of apples picked belongs to them. This has led to better planning of the work day and workers are contributing new ideas to improve productivity" (Aranes 1994:13). Increased productivity is constantly used as a justification of and

encouragement for the Whitehall empowerment project. An interesting point that Muller makes is that the workers are planning to use their shares in the business as collateral to buy their homes from the farmer. This is a feature that differentiates the empowerment projects from the earlier “reform” projects, and breaks with one of the central features of paternalism: the workers’ enthusiasm to own their own houses and no longer be dependant on the farmer for housing. Many of the empowerment schemes on the wine farms have been possible only because the farm workers have pooled their Department of Land Affairs housing grants in order to buy a piece of land or their houses from the farm owner.

The Whitehall example shows that while some of the empowerment schemes on the wine farms grew out of earlier “reform” projects, others (like Whitehall) made a radical departure from the calls for moderate “reform.” A significant difference between the “reform” and “empowerment” projects is that empowerment emphasizes *ownership* by the farm workers of part of the farm business itself. This does not always mean that the farm workers end up owning a piece of land, or even their houses. Many of the schemes began with workers owning shares in the farm business – as was the case on Whitehall farm – but then using the shares as collateral, or pooling their Department of Land Affairs housing grants, in order to buy their houses and a piece of land from the farmer. Whitehall worker Muller recognizes the enormous impact of this shift in labor relations on the farm: “We had a lot of problems just explaining to people that this was a real thing and not just a *foefie* (stunt). We knew of workers in factories getting shares, but this was a new thing for us. It’s the first project like it in South

Africa; there are no guidelines” (quoted in Davis 1994:14). The concept of equity share – owning a share in the business, and not necessarily a piece of land – was regarded suspiciously by Whitehall workers at first, because the scheme asked the workers to sacrifice their bonus in order to participate, and possibly to forfeit benefits for three or more years.

In the existing research on empowerment projects in the wine industry, there is uncertainty as to how many projects are currently in operation. Researchers use vague terms such as “a small number” when estimating how many empowerment projects exist on wine farms (Ewert et al. 1998:49). There seems to be a general consensus that they are few in number, but that the media attention they have generated has led to the impression that there are far more than actually exist. Given that there are about 4,500 grape farmers who employ 50,000 laborers to cultivate approximately 106,000 hectares of vineyards spread throughout the Western Cape (Wines of South Africa 2003), the fact that most researchers refer to the same ten or so empowerment projects reveals that they are extremely few in number. However, there is also general agreement that the existing empowerment projects are having a domino effect because there seems to be a burgeoning number of projects being initiated on wine farms across the Western Cape.

Many of these empowerment projects have launched their own empowerment brand wines. The *Winds of Change* empowerment brand wine was launched in 1999 on Sonop Wine Farm near Paarl. An article in the international wine newsletter, *Wine Today*, describes the label as follows:

Best of all, the money used to upgrade Sonop has come not from a charity but from the residents' own wine, *Winds of Change* - a new label launched specifically to benefit previously disadvantaged black workers. In other words, the people who live here have profited directly from the product they make. Fair trade wine. For every case of *Winds of Change* sold (mainly in Europe; it will soon be available in the United States), a portion of the money goes toward upgrading the living conditions of the workers and providing better education and health care for their families. [Atkins 2001]

Not all of the empowerment projects are structured in the same way. Under a different venture called *New Beginnings*, a group of farm workers have pooled the housing subsidies they received from the government and used this capital to plant vineyards on land given to them by the farm owner. The farm owner lets the workers use his cellars, and shares winemaking expertise with them to help them produce their own label. A project called *Tukulu* has recently been started in association with a wine exporting company called Distell. With financial help from Distell, the local community of farm workers and several Black liquor retailers bought Papkuilsfontein, a large wine farm in Darling. The aim is for the wine farm to be completely independent of Distell within twelve years.

The claim that many of the proponents of the empowerment projects are making is that empowerment on the wine farms is finally breaking the bonds of paternalism that have shackled wine farm workers since the early days of slavery. Journalist Clyde Russell, in an article in *The South African Quarterly Report* published in the October/December 1996 issue, is full of optimism for the potential empowerment has to issue in an entirely new way of managing and organizing labor on the wine farms:

Not so long ago, many farm workers received a ration of wine, a so-called *dop*, as part payment for wages, and often *in lieu* of wages. Practiced mainly in the

Cape, the dop system symbolized the relationship between worker and farmer, a relationship of perpetual servitude to a master which existed in one form or another throughout the country. More enlightened practices adopted by some farmers in recent times were still based largely on patronage. But now...relationships are beginning which place worker and farmer on a business footing. [Russel 1996:7]

These empowerment projects are being offered as proof that the “white Afrikaans-speaking community is involved in a process of redefining itself and its role in democratic South Africa” (Webb and Kriel 2000:43). A recent *Wines of South Africa* newsletter proclaims that “the breaking down of political barriers and the redressing of almost 350 years of historical wrongs in South Africa is seeing people from disadvantaged communities emerge as wine farmers and winemakers in the Cape Winelands for the first time” (Wines of South Africa 2002). In Chapter 3, I will investigate these claims by analyzing my research findings from several wine farms that have recently begun empowerment projects.

It is worth noting, though I did not encounter evidence of their claims during my own research on the wine farms, that some researchers critique the empowerment projects as heralding a phase of “ethnic corporatism,” whereby the labor force is divided along Coloured-Black racial lines (Ewert and Hamman 1996:160). Ewert and Hamman claim this is used as a strategy to prevent the forging of “worker solidarity between Coloureds and Blacks and [the erosion of] the ethnic affiliation that has existed between Whites and Coloureds in opposition to Blacks” (Ewert and Hamman 1996:160). They point out that the supposed affiliation between Afrikaners and Coloureds has been emphasized in the worker empowerment projects. According to Ewert and

Hamman, “the emergent ‘modern’ labour regime builds on the historic division of labour (and social tensions) between Coloured farm workers and African migrants from the Eastern Cape, to generate a new version of the ‘ethnic corporatism’ at the core of the racial order” (Ewert and Hamman 1996:149).

Ewert and Hamman contend that this “ethnic corporatism” has been sparked by the increasing unionization and adversarial bargaining of farm workers with the influx of Black migrant workers from the Eastern Cape. They claim that farmers are reluctant to hire Black workers from the Eastern Cape on a permanent basis because of the perception that they are more militant than the Coloured workers. As a result, farmers are increasingly hiring the wives of their Coloured farm workers and only employing the Black laborers as seasonal laborers. As such, the permanent labor force is Coloured and increasingly female. In the wake of an influx of Black seasonal workers, Ewert and Hamman claim that the ethnic affiliation between Coloureds and Whites on the wine farms is stronger than ever:

Whatever divisions exist between Coloured men and women, these are largely set aside when it comes to maintaining solidarity vis-à-vis outsiders, that is, Africans. Almost without exception the Coloured farm workers...did not regard Africans as part of the ‘farm family,’ and are reluctant to work under an African supervisor or have Africans living next door to them...[Coloured workers stressed] differences of language, religion, culture, lifestyle. [Ewert and Hamman 1996:159]

While this is an interesting claim that possibly holds true on many wine farms in the region, I did not see any evidence of it on the wine farms where I did my research, and will therefore not make reference to it in Chapter 3.



## CHAPTER 3

### **The Local Lived Experience of Empowerment on Wine Farms**

Most of the following observations are based on my field research on Sonop Wine Farm near Paarl, where I spent two and a half months filming and observing the farm worker community, and in particular two families: the Lotters, and the van der Westhuizens. The Swiss company that owns Sonop also buys grapes from Cilmor Wine Farm, and I visited Cilmor several times to film and observe. For the first month of my research, I also filmed and observed on Helderkruijn Wine Farm near Stellenbosch, but for reasons I will explain in the Conclusion, I stopped filming there after a month and focused on Sonop. I also visited four other wine farms that are marketing empowerment wine labels or have started empowerment projects (Uitzicht, Cluver Estate, Papkuilsfontein, and Fairview) in order to interview the farm owners and worker representatives. Details of how each of these empowerment projects is structured are provided in the Appendix. I have also drawn selectively on newspaper articles published in the South African media about empowerment projects on wine farms.

Du Toit has urged researchers to look closely, with an “ethnographic sensibility,” at the nature of the changes occurring on the wine farms (du Toit 1993:3). Du Toit and Ewert claim:

Such a close look would highlight the fact that the dynamics of change are much more complex and elusive than the simple model of sweeping aside paternalist labour relations and replacing them with modern practices might lead us to believe. More specifically, policymakers and scholars have tended to underestimate the implications of the social embeddedness of commercial agriculture – the extent to which its economic institutions and workings have been intricately interwoven with social identity, culture, gender, race and politics. [du Toit and Ewert 2001:12]

Du Toit has also pointed to the difficulty of accessing “workers’ dissenting voices” in his own fieldwork, and calls for researchers to “leav[e] the ‘white spaces’ of official discourse on the farm...and [enter] into the more private and secret spaces of coloured workers” (du Toit 1996:7).

I want to stress again that the most important component of my ethnography is the film, and my motivation for making the film was largely to attempt to access the workers’ perspectives on the changes in their lives. This chapter is an attempt to answer more explicitly than is possible in the film du Toit’s call for close analysis of the extent and nature of the changes that the empowerment projects are having on wine farm workers’ lives. For conceptual clarity, I have grouped my observations according to the following themes: the shift from “farm as family” to “farm as business”; responsibility, choice and ownership; gender; scars of the past; and perceptions of the future.

### **Shift from “farm as family” to “farm as business”**

Du Toit claims that there were several myths at the center of paternalist discourse, which were attempts to legitimize paternalism as an ideal. These myths were voiced by both the farm owners *and* farm workers on the farms where du Toit did his fieldwork in the early 1990s, which reveals the extent of paternalism’s influence. Some of these myths were: the importance of workers and farmer understanding one another on the farm; the mutual obligations and duties of both the farmer and the workers; and feeling that one belongs securely to the farm family. The reality of living and working on the wine farms usually contradicted

these myths, however. The farmer had paternal authority over the farm workers and their families, and could treat them like children – at times benevolently, but there was no guarantee that he would not punish them harshly too. This meant that the working conditions on each farm varied depending on the whim of the farmer: some farmers were benevolent in their patronage of their workers, but others were abusive, and there were no labor laws standardizing or monitoring how workers were treated (du Toit 1992).

Linda Waldman also criticizes the deep hypocrisy underlying the ideology of paternalism that allowed farmers to maintain “hierarchical relations” while “defin[ing] the relationship as an organic partnership of cooperation” (Waldman 1996:65). Waldman claims that the basis of paternalism was that it promoted more than “simply a contractual relationship between employer and employees” (Waldman 1996:65). In particular, it forced workers to be dependant on farmers not just for work, but for housing, the legacy of which is still evident: the wine farm workers’ colloquial term for losing their job is still *huis leegmaak*, which means “emptying the house” (du Toit 1993:2).

Making the shift from the “old” style of paternalistic labor relations – the farm as family – to the “new” style – the farm as business – is generally promoted as the goal of empowerment. This is cause for anxiety for both farmers and workers because of both groups’ assumed lack of familiarity with business principles. A worker on Whitehall farm, the first farm to start an empowerment project, said, “We aren’t business people. What we do know about is farming. People were scared in the beginning” (Davis 1994:14). On Sonop Wine Farm,

farm worker Andries Lotter described the difficulty of understanding the concept of a “business” when the empowerment project was first started: “When Jaco [the empowerment project manager] began to try to explain how the company worked, we couldn’t understand. We always asked him, Mr. van der Merwe, this thing you’re telling us about, is it a ghost? Because he always said that you couldn’t touch it” (personal interview with Andries Lotter, 6/10/02, Paarl). Others have embraced the new concept of running the farm like a business. A different worker on Whitehall farm, Jan Witbooi, said, “This isn’t so much a farm as a business,” proud to show how much things had changed since the empowerment project began (Davis 1994:14). A spokesperson for another empowerment project claimed that “In a nutshell, we are bringing them [the farm workers] into the boardroom” (Simon 1998).

Part of the reason the paternalistic model of farm labor relations has persisted is that wine farms have traditionally been owned and passed down by families over generations. Workers have also often had a long family tradition of working on the same farm. Johan Reyneke, joint owner of Uitzicht Farm, says that his “workers [have] been here for generations, and their parents used to stay here and their grandparents...working with vines is in their blood and it’s part of who they are” (personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 07/25/02, Vlottenburg). Based on research conducted in 1998, Ewert claimed that “over half of all farms in the wine industry have been inherited, having been in the same family for an average of 80 years. Fewer than 30% of current owners are first generation, and of these, only a third – including a growing foreign clientele – have entered the industry since 1990” (Ewert et al. 1998:26). Most wine farms are still run as

family farms, but there is a growing trend of local and international corporations buying and running wine farms, and many of the most publicized empowerment projects have been initiated on corporate-owned farms such as Sonop and Papkuilsfontein. This burgeoning corporate ownership of the wine farms partly explains the emphasis in the empowerment projects on organizing the farm according to business logic, and not family ties.

An important part of this proclaimed shift away from paternalism on the wine farms is the new labor legislation which has standardized and formalized the working relationship between farmer and worker, making it more similar to labor relationships in business (see Chapter 2 for more details about this legislation). This legislation has been interpreted by many wine farmers as absolving them of having any obligations to their workers outside of paying them wages. At a church-organized curry and rice evening for the local farm worker communities, the White Afrikaans *dominee* (minister of religion), Jan Coetzee, said that he has worked with these communities for fourteen years and he thinks that the recent legislative changes have had some unexpected negative effects. Jan said, “I can tell that wine farmers in the area are abiding by the new labor legislation, but they are no longer willing to take workers to the hospital in the middle of the night, or to pay for workers’ children to go to school, or to give workers clothes or food” (personal conversation with Jan Coetzee, 6/27/02, Paarl). These are all services that many farmers had felt it was their duty to provide to their workers before the new labor legislation was passed – the side benefits of paternalism, the farmer’s supposed “obligations” to his “children.” The “new” business arrangement on

wine farm empowerment projects is not yet set up to provide these services for the workers, and so Jan is seeing the workers being deprived of some essential services as they are caught in the middle of the legislative shifts.

The labor legislation is having even more ominous effects in terms of worker housing and employment. The Extension of Security of Tenure Act of 1997 (which ensures that workers who have lived in a house on a farm for ten years or more cannot be evicted) has led to farmers taking drastic measures to prevent people from moving into worker houses on the farm and claiming they have lived there for ten years. On Helderkruijn Wine Farm, farm owner Niel du Toit said that if his workers leave their houses, even for short periods, he knocks their houses down so that other workers cannot move in and lay claim to the house and the land it is on. He says he has families living on his farm who do not work for him, but who claim they have lived there for ten years. The new legislation affirms their right to stay on his farm, and he is not able to evict them (personal interview with Niel du Toit, 06/20/02, Stellenbosch). It seems that the motivation for his empowerment project, which involves building the workers houses of their own on a piece of ground adjacent to his farm, is mainly to remove them from his land under the guise of giving them their own land.

Paul Cluver IV, joint owner of Cluver Wine Estate, makes the point that fewer permanent workers are being employed because of the new legislation:

If you look at labor legislation it's been made very difficult to fire people, and because of that the result has been, okay, we don't employ because it means that if the people are of a subquality than we can't get rid of them so it becomes a very long and expensive process...so the result has been that you get external or labor brokers. So in that sense the legislation has limited or discouraged further permanent employment and the benefits that go with permanent employment...I think the intention of labor laws was good, I think if you look at how some people

actually did treat labor, it was unacceptable and it's brought in...a good standard especially if you look at the basic admissions in the employment packet and it's brought in a lot of good discipline, but at the same time, yes, it's where previously you probably would've overlooked something, now you don't because if you do overlook it you set a precedent and you can't act against it later on. And in that sense what the labor laws have done is actually force you to be more strict and look at things in a more cold way, and say well, these are the rules we are forced to act by. [personal interview with Paul Cluver IV, 7/31/02, Elgin]

In 1998, in a survey of 104 Western Cape wine farmers, 56% of the farmers did not think that the new labor legislation had changed their relationship with their workers. Of the 44% who thought that the legislation *had* changed their relationship, 51% said that it had forced them to “bring their labour practices in line with the law” by reducing working hours per week. Another 23% “lamented the ‘loss of trust’” between farmer and workers since the new labor legislation had been passed (Ewert et al. 1998:43).

For some of the White farm owners and farm managers, the conceptual shift to running the farm more like a business has been difficult. Often they seem not to be able to understand the new “rules” of empowerment and being a part of a “team” rather than a hierarchy. Magnus, the White Afrikaans “vineyard team leader” for the *Winds of Change* empowerment project on Sonop, was previously the “farm manager” on the same farm before the project was started. The workers complained that he was still trying to act like their *baas* (master) instead of seeing himself as part of the team. Apparently Magnus sometimes makes them work all day in the rain while he drinks coffee inside, and expects them to weed his own private garden when they should be working in the vineyard. Jaco van der Merwe (the company's project manager for the *Winds of Change* empowerment project), who, like Magnus, is also White and Afrikaans, said that Magnus is meant to

work alongside the workers, and no longer has the right to give them orders. Jaco complained that “this country is going to take so bloody long to change because these bloody stupid Afrikaans *boers* [farmers, but with the negative connotation of being racists] are still trying to play *baas*” (personal conversation with Jaco van der Merwe, 08/05/02, Paarl).

### **Responsibility, control and ownership**

One of the most damaging features of paternalism on the wine farms was that it aimed to give the workers as little responsibility and choice as possible. One of the most powerful ways in which it did this was by denying them ownership of their houses and land. Both the workers and the farm owners on wine farms that have started empowerment projects seem to stress that empowerment leads to ownership, ownership means responsibility, and responsibility leads to choice. Many farmers describe empowerment as not just giving away land or houses to workers, but making them *earn* it by becoming responsible. Paul Cluver IV, joint owner of Cluver Estate, defines empowerment as “exactly the opposite of disempowerment, and if you look at disempowerment it’s actually the taking away of the ability to make choices. So if you want to empower people you have to give them the ability to make choices in life” (personal interview with Paul Cluver IV, 7/31/02, Elgin).

The farm owners’ assumption is often that the workers will waste the opportunities given to them if they are not first made to understand that they are now responsible for their lives. Cluver warned:

We should proactively give land to previously disadvantaged people, but in such a way that they can farm it commercially. And I don't think you'll be able to do that by just giving people land because they'll more than likely end up not farming it commercially...just handing it over would not be the right thing to do. [personal interview with Paul Cluver IV, 7/31/02, Elgin]

The owner of Whitehall farm said that when he started the empowerment project, he told his workers that they wouldn't "get anything for nothing anymore. You have to sacrifice something for the opportunity" (Davis 1994:14). Many farmers stress that empowerment is not charity. On Broodkraal farm, the farm owner stated, "there is no welfare on this farm. Each is responsible for the work he or she can and wants to do, the entire community is responsible for its own happiness, and education and ambition are encouraged on the farm" (Schimke 1999:14-15).

Similarly, Jaco van der Merwe (the company representative in charge of the Sonop empowerment project, who is also responsible for starting an empowerment project on Cilmor Wine Farm) initiated the idea of holding a clean-up competition for the workers on Cilmor to encourage them to take responsibility for looking after their houses. He offered R1,000 (at the time, equivalent to \$100) to the community that most effectively cleaned their houses and surrounding ground. The company's plan is to help the workers raise the money to build new houses for themselves, but Jaco believes that before this can be done, the workers have to show him that they are aware of their side of the bargain (personal conversation with Jaco van der Merwe, 07/22/02). Jaco said on several occasions that the workers have to take responsibility for their own houses before the company will do anything for them, which is the logic behind the clean-up competition. He implied that if the houses are fixed without first making the

workers take responsibility for them, the workers will not take care of them (personal conversation with Jaco van der Merwe, 07/22/02).

What struck me while I was filming the workers in their houses before the clean-up competition, however, was how tidy and clean the houses were. Even though the workers have so few things, in all the houses I saw, everything was very neatly placed on plastic bags spread over tables like table cloths. The blankets on the beds were old and threadbare, but every bed had been neatly made, and none of the workers was given advance warning that I was coming to film. The workers on Cilmor themselves challenged the farm manager when he went around to the houses asking the people what they thought about the clean-up challenge. One of the workers said, “We want to make our houses clean, but how can we?” (personal conversation with Piet Olifants, 07/26/02, Worcester). He said that there is no garbage service, so they have nowhere else to throw their rubbish except in the bushes around their houses. While trying to encourage the workers to take responsibility, Jaco at times still reverted to the language and logic of paternalism, despite his attempts to avoid it. At one meeting, Jaco urged the workers on Sonop to show that they were *grooter as kinders* (bigger than children) and that they could stand on their own two feet (personal observation at Sonop CPA meeting, 08/10/02, Paarl).

Many of the farm owners and workers I met emphasized that empowerment means taking responsibility for one’s life, which is important because responsibility leads to self respect and having purpose in life. Johan Reyneke, joint owner of Uitzicht Farm, recently initiated an empowerment project, and

claims that his desire was to give the workers a sense of purpose and pride in their work. Johan first had the idea of starting an empowerment project when he was working in the vineyards alongside the workers during the harvest of 1999:

What made me work faster and harder as opposed sort of [to] taking my time and hanging around and doing it at leisure [is that] I realized that as opposed to the guys I was working with, I stood to gain a lot more at the end of the week than just a pay check. I had long term interests and goals and I was sort of building up a place for myself over time...I was trying to figure how I could create a sense of belonging for these guys as well who worked on a farm – you know, to basically install the same sense of pride or whatever you want to call it in them so they also saw this as their farm. [personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 7/25/02, Elgin]

Yet for many workers, there is increased anxiety and tension because of the sudden pressure on them as a result of their new responsibilities. Andries Lotter, the foreman on Sonop Wine Farm, told me that he has constant nightmares because of his anxiety about doing something wrong in the vineyards. He says he can only relax once the “team leader” – Magnus, the White Afrikaner – has come to inspect the work he has done at the end of the day and said that it has been done well (personal interview with Andries Lotter, 07/15/02, Paarl).

The owner of Misgund Wine Farm, Hendrick Kritzinger, started an empowerment project by arranging for his workers to use their Department of Land Affairs subsidies to buy the neighboring farm. He highlighted the difficulty of suddenly expecting his workers to take responsibility for their lives when for so long they have been actively encouraged to be dependant on him for everything from housing to clothing to food to transport. Kritzinger said in an interview in the *New York Times* in 1997, “In the past, we spent so much time telling these people, ‘Don’t think – just work.’ Now all of a sudden, we are saying, ‘You’ve got to think, then act.’ It is very difficult.” He candidly expressed a doubt that

many farmers would be reluctant to voice in the new South Africa: “Sometimes, you wonder if [the workers] can. I battle to keep that idea out of my head every day” (Daley 1997).

This issue of workers being empowered to make their own decisions is complex, as evidenced by the fact that many of the farm owners who have initiated empowerment projects started them by making the unpopular and autocratic decision to stop supplementing the workers’ wages with alcohol. The foreman on Nelson’s Creek, one of the first wine farms to start an empowerment project, said that the workers had for years been receiving a tot of wine or brandy “at 6am...at 8am, 8:30am, 11am, midday, 12:30pm, 4pm and 6pm. Every day” (Barron 1998). When the new owner bought the farm and started the *New Beginnings* empowerment project, his first move was to stop giving the workers tots. More than half his workforce left as a result. Now, according to one of the workers, Daantjie Jagman, “We don’t drink and party on weekends anymore. That story is over. Now we work instead” (Barron 1998). Johan Reyneke, joint owner of Uitzicht farm, said he faced a similar problem at first:

When we walked onto this farm [in 1988] these guys would come to us in the evenings and say, “Ok, we get a bottle of wine every evening, and come Friday we want two for Friday night and two for Saturday night.” I suppose it’s a form of slavery, really, you know, like addiction. And my folks obviously just flatly refused and said, “No, that’s not going to happen.” And we almost had a small sort of scuffle right on the farm, you know, because these guys were really hooked on their drink. They said, “You know, we don’t care if this is good or bad for us, this is what we want.” And my mom said to them, “Well, let’s compromise.” So she gave them a chicken as opposed to a bottle of wine on weekends...It was just a process of weaning the guys off. And as simple as it may sound, I can say to you today, that none of the men or women on the farm drink anymore, where they all used to drink, not one of them now touch alcohol. [personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 07/25/02, Elgin]

One of the dangers of this generally endorsed emphasis on empowering workers to take responsibility for their lives is that it implies that they have only

been able to do this with the help of the farmer who has started the empowerment project. It is important to recognize that many of the workers had taken responsibility for their lives long before empowerment projects were started on the wine farms. Several of the female workers on Sonop made their own decisions to stop drinking in difficult circumstances, before the *Winds of Change* empowerment project was started in 1997. Loala van der Westhuizen, who used to work in the vineyards and now cleans the farm guesthouse, decided to stop drinking when her son was three years old, in 1995. Loala's mother, Drieka, made the decision to stop drinking the day that Loala's son was born, in 1992. For both Loala and Drieka, the most important catalyst for their life-changing decision to stop drinking seems to have been their awareness of the responsibilities of motherhood.

### **Gender**

Paternalism on the wine farms not only affirmed the farmer as patriarch over his workers, but also endorsed male domination in the worker community and families. One of the claims that the farm empowerment projects are making is that gender relations are being transformed as women are empowered alongside men. Officially, women are being treated as equals in the structure and organization of the empowerment projects. The numbers of women and men on the Worker Trust committees (the worker decision-making bodies for most of the empowerment projects) are always equal, and in theory the women have as much say as the men do in how the empowerment projects are run and how the workers'

share of the profits is allocated. In practice, however, the patriarchal culture of the farm worker communities is still affecting the extent to which women are participating in empowerment projects.

In the Coloured farm communities, one of the lasting features of paternalism is that the men have more power than the women, but expect the women to take responsibility for more of the work. Johan Reyneke, joint owner of Uitzicht farm, described the contradictions of this culture of male domination which paternalism encouraged:

It's supposedly a paternalistic system where the man is the head of the household, and you will often see that he tells the wife what to do, the kids what to do, whatever. But in practice, the men are also the ones on weekends who get wasted and go to the *shebeens* [local pubs] and stuff like that, and the wife is the person keeping the family together and the wife is the person who takes her money and buys the groceries and makes sure that the electricity is paid and things like that. So what I have found from practical experience is that if you really want to get stuff done you must speak to the women. Because they, although not officially in charge, they are actually in realistic terms, in practical terms, they are really the solid person keeping everything together. And we've seen that a lot, on this farm especially. So we have equal everything for everybody, equal pay for man and wife, and this and that, and everything else, but as far as keeping things together goes, the most effective thing to do would be to work with the women. [personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 07/25/02]

The female workers bear the burden of this responsibility without the benefits of increased power or pay. The work that they do in making the empowerment projects possible seems to be mostly behind-the-scenes work within their families. The men are still rewarded by the farm owner with the positions of visible power and prestige. On most of the newly "empowered" farms, I noticed that the farm owners still have a tendency to find a "strong man" representative in the farm worker community who is the liaison between them and the other workers on the Worker Trust committees. Even though the Trust committees represent an attempt to move toward team-based structures, there still seems to be one male

worker – Andries on Sonop, Alfred on Cilmor, Bennie on Helderkruin, Tommy on Fairview – who is given the most responsibility, and who is in charge of the committee. It seems that men are still endorsed as leaders, but the women do most of the ground-level work.

At the Sonop Workers' Trust monthly meeting that I attended, all the women sat together on one side of the room, and all the men sat together on the other side. During the meeting, Jaco (the company representative) suggested that the community organize a talent concert for the children, and a sports day. Andries Lotter, the foreman, protested, saying that the children already spend too much time with the women learning how to dance and sing. His wife, Lilly, said to Andries angrily (when Jaco had left the room) that the reason the children do the dancing and singing is because the men are never around and never prepared to spend time with them. When Jaco returned to the room, Andries complained that he was tired of always having the responsibility of organizing everything. He said that the men do not ever work together like the women do, and that whenever there is something to organize, then this man has a sore foot, and this one has a sore leg, and in the end nobody helps him. He claimed that the women have the easy job because they all stick together and cooperate with each other, but Loala challenged him by saying that the women do not all stick together, that it is only she and Lilly who do everything (personal observation at Sonop CPA meeting, 08/10/02, Paarl).

Loala and Lilly are exceptional, however, because they have a kind of confidence in interacting with the men that most of the other women lack. Loala

in particular is unusually independent. She has two children from two different men, but it was her decision not to marry the father of her second child. She told me that she did not want to marry because of her sense of responsibility to her children. She said, “The way I live now, I live as husband and wife – I’m the husband and I’m the wife! A lot of people ask me when I’m going to find myself another guy, and I say to them, have you seen my oldest son? That’s my guy” (personal conversation with Loala van der Westhuizen, 08/03/02, Paarl).

One apparent outcome of these gender issues is that there seems to be a polarization of the identities available to the young boys in the community. On the one hand, an aggressively dominant masculine culture is promoted. The men who can afford cars tint their car windows and display banners proclaiming “Boss of the roads” and “I rule the roads” on the car windows. There are rival gangs among the younger men, and often fights between gang members lead to serious injury, as in the case of Lilly’s son, Johan. Johan was in a gang and stabbed a member of another gang in a fight. He spent six months in jail and is now back on the farm and no longer in a gang. On the other hand, there is a “feminization” of some of the younger boys that seems to be related to the amount of time they spend with the women in the community. For example, at the curry and rice evening on Sonop, there was a beauty pageant for the girls. One boy of age eleven entered the competition and when his turn came to model, he took it very seriously. The audience roared with laughter, but gave him lots of applause, and in the end he won Miss Personality and the audience cheered and clapped for him. His behavior was accepted at a level that I did not expect it to be – he was very

self-possessed and the audience supported him. Loala told me that usually they have a “Miss Moffie” competition for the younger boys whenever they have a beauty contest for the girls, where the boys dress up as girls and parade as models (personal conversation with Loala van der Westhuizen, 07/28/02, Paarl). *Moffie* is an Afrikaans slang word for a gay man. At the curry and rice evening, a play was performed called “HIV Positive,” written and directed by Loala. One of the actors was a boy who dressed up to play the part of the mother in the play, and the audience found this very amusing. One afternoon, Loala had all of the children – boys and girls – over at her mother’s house and coached them how to model. She showed them how to walk, how to turn around, and how to throw their jackets over their shoulders in an appropriately “cool” way. I often heard the mothers in the community saying to their little boys, when they were pleading to play with one of the girls’ dolls or paint their nails, “*Jy is nie ‘n meisiekind nie!*” (“You are not a girl!”). It seemed to me that the younger boys want to behave like girls because the girls receive more attention from the women in the community. The fathers were either absent (as in the case of Loala’s children’s fathers), or paid little or no attention to the children. The only role models the younger boys seem to have are the women who are constantly organizing fashion shows, talent contests, and other activities for the children.

### **Scars of the past**

Loala told me that many of the men and women on Sonop still drink a lot and that this is the reason they look so much older than they are. She pointed out one man

and asked how old I thought he was. I guessed 45, and she said, “No, he is 23” (personal conversation with Loala van der Westhuizen, 06/15/02, Paarl). She told me that some of the children in the community whose parents drink go without food for days, so she always tries to give them food when they come to her house. One day she asked her son, Melvino, if he remembers when she used to drink and he said he did. He told me that he remembers going out into the dark at night to look for his mom when she was drunk (personal conversation with Melvino van der Westhuizen, 06/20/02, Paarl).

While I was at Loala’s house one morning, the police arrived. Some men from the farm next door had come to Loala’s brother’s house the night before, drunk, looking for a fight. They had assaulted him and his girlfriend, and the girlfriend had bitten one of them and they had come back the next morning and assaulted her younger sister as well. There seems to be constant tension between the Sonop community and the farm worker community next door. The next door farm is still owned by a traditional Afrikaans farmer, so they have no empowerment project, and the workers still have old, run-down houses and seem to resent what the Sonop community now has. One day, Jaco was giving a tour of the Sonop community to a group of Business School students from England who had come to find out about the *Winds of Change* empowerment project. Jaco told them that the project has had the effect of creating “positive jealousy” between the communities, because the workers next door are now putting pressure on the farmer to change things (personal observation of MBA tour given by Jaco van der

Merwe, 06/05/02, Paarl). From what I observed, however, at the moment the effects of the jealousy are more negative than positive for the workers.

While the wine industry seems to have embraced the empowerment projects wholeheartedly, there is little evidence that there has been any sharing of power in the upper echelons of the industry in the new South Africa. At the 2002 South African National Wine Show, all of the judges were White, middle-aged, Afrikaans men. The only Coloured people there were responsible for taking away the glasses to be cleaned. While the media attention given to the empowerment projects has created the impression that there are hundreds of them cropping up throughout the region, this is not really the case, and old-style Afrikaner wine farmers who refuse to support empowerment still represent the majority. Alan Nelson, a farmer who recently started an empowerment project on his farm, said that “the farmers [in the region] have not been full of congratulations, put it that way. There have been no derogatory comments, but there is a feeling that we are creating expectations among the workers” (Barron 1998:15). African-Terroir, the Swiss company that owns and runs Sonop Wine Farm and started the *Winds of Change* empowerment project, has recently started to put pressure on the farmer who owns another farm from whom they buy grapes – Cilmor – to start a similar empowerment project. Jaco, the company representative, criticized him as an old-style Afrikaner who wants to get as much as possible out of his workers and does not care how they live (personal conversation with Jaco van der Merwe, 07/24/02, Worcester).

## **Perceptions of the future**

Many of the farm owners told me that when they first started the empowerment projects they assumed that the workers would want partial ownership of the farm business over more immediate material benefits (such as houses or cars). As the following story reveals, this was usually not the case. When Johan Reyneke decided he wanted to empower his workers by sharing ownership of the farm business with them, he says he made the “classic western or ethnocentric or paternalistic mistake or whatever you want to call it and I went to all the experts, all the clever people, sort of a top-down approach, and I went to rural legal aid, and I...spoke to some people from the government.” Together they “created this ideal plan, now I think about it, it’s a bit like what Marx did with communism, you know, this wonderful theory of what would work, and it was based on a share-holding agreement and these guys would in effect work for themselves and they would have a share in the business.” But right after the government had agreed to get involved and contribute capital to the workers so that they could buy a share in the business, Johan says that the workers came to him and said that it all made sense and it sounded fantastic, but it was not what they really wanted.

When he asked them what they did want, he says they replied as follows:

Well, if you think about it, we’re getting shares, shareholding in a company, it’s a young company, you guys are still planting vines, and from the discussions we’ve had we gather that there’s not going to be much profit for the next ten years, and only thereafter will we start getting dividends and stuff. But at the same time, living in South Africa on a wine farm...there’s no ownership of your house. [personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 07/25/02, Vlottenburg]

Johan realized that they did not want equity share, because it gave them “nothing tangible, nothing they could really feel or say was theirs.” He tried at first to

convince them that “the house is actually just a detail, you know, you can buy ten houses later if you want to, this is about money, you know, making money and empowering yourself, putting you in a position where you can choose to buy whatever house you want to, where you want to...you have to stick it out for a couple of years.” Their response was: “Where we come from it’s different. It’s not a given thing that everyone’s going to be here ten years from now, it’s rough, it’s tough.” The most important thing for the workers on Uitzicht was to own their own houses, not because they could not understand the concept of equity share, but because of the reality of their present which made investing in the future a less attractive option (all of the above quotations are from a personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 07/25/02, Vottenburg).

In theory, it is this reluctance to invest in the future that empowerment projects should try to erode, but before this can happen, as the workers pointed out to Johan, there has to be something to live for in the present. For the workers on Uitzicht, owning their own houses and having a certain quality of life in the present was essential before they could begin to dream of the future. Johan changed the plan, and the workers pooled their Department of Land Affairs housing grants (which had been increased from R12,500 to R16,000 per household since the DLA first started this scheme) to buy houses for themselves in a nearby town. Once they have moved into these houses and settled, Johan and the workers will plan together what the next step of the empowerment project will be. Johan admitted:

Actually what happened was a good thing because we realized you need to find an African solution for an African problem, you can’t have this paternalistic or ethnocentric old view, and say that I know fresh water and carrots is better than

beer and cigarettes for you. Real empowerment is about the capability to choose. And even at this stage we were not giving these guys that capability, telling them what they should choose as opposed to allowing them to choose for themselves. But it was a major wakeup call. [personal interview with Johan Reyneke, 07/25/02, Vlottenburg]

At the first meeting of the newly begun empowerment project on Cilmor Wine Farm, Jaco van der Merwe (the company representative) asked each of the farm workers what their dream for five years' time was, and what they would like to have changed most by that time. Every worker, without exception, said that fixing the houses – having electricity and running water and a flushing toilet – was what they most dreamed of being different. After the meeting, Jaco told me that this was also what the workers wanted when they first started the *Winds of Change* project on Sonop. He said he had thought the workers would say things about wanting a share in the farm business and profits, but everybody had said that fixing the houses, and eventually owning their own houses, was the priority (personal conversation with Jaco van der Merwe, 06/10/02, Worcester). It seems that once the workers have seen concrete benefits of empowerment in the present, they are freed up to think and dream about the future. This is possibly the most powerful aspect of empowerment: that it has the ability to change the workers' perceptions of the *future*.

Many of the workers cite the dream of a better future for their children as a motivation for participating in an empowerment project. One of the workers on Whitehall farm said, "The damage done under apartheid has been turned into something good. We're part of this farm. We've got security for our old age. And I definitely see a better future for my children" (Davis 1994:15). A worker on Fairview farm, Attie Adams, said, "Yes, maybe our forefathers suffered here

for little gain. We must forgive and move forward. Now we are looking to the future, and the future of our children” (Friedman and Gool 1997). On Fairview farm, when an empowerment project was first proposed whereby the workers would be helped to buy their own farm next door to the one they worked on, they were at first very reluctant. The workers did not want to move because they were worried about losing their right to stay forever on Fairview farm (a right they would have once they had been on Fairview for more than ten years.) The Worker Trust committee chairman, Tommy Fonteyn, asked a government official from the Department of Land Affairs to come and speak to them to explain how it would work. The government official told them that even though they would be able to live in the Fairview houses for the rest of their lives because of the new labor legislation, their children would not have that right. This was the deciding factor in the workers agreeing to participate in the empowerment project and moving into their own houses on the adjacent farm they had bought: so that their children would be able to inherit their houses (personal interview with Tommy Fonteyn, 08/19/02, Suider Paarl).

The impact of these empowerment projects was most evident to me when I gauged their effects on the children of the current farm workers. When I asked the children on Sonop farm what they want to be when they grow up, they said they want to become lawyers, policemen, dancers, singers – not one of them said that he or she wants to work on the farm (personal conversation, 07/24/02, Paarl). When I asked Lilly what her dream for her children is, she responded, “They must leave the farm, get work somewhere else, get a big salary” (personal conversation

with Lilly Lotter, 06/14/02, Paarl). Jaco told the workers that he wants their children to be the “future Mbekis of South Africa, the big leaders” (personal observation at Cilmor community meeting, 06/10/02, Worcester). Johan, Lilly’s eldest son, returned to the farm in January 2003, after spending six months in jail. The company has agreed to pay for him to take a course on holding wine tastings for customers. I asked him what his dream for the future is, and he responded, “I am looking forward to learning how to do a wine tasting, because that is a better future for me than if I had to work in the *boer*’s [farmer] vineyards, and stand in the land with a spade. I don’t want that. I want to show my father and family that I can get better work than they could” (personal interview with Johan Lotter, 01/13/03, Paarl).

## CONCLUSION

I made a decision to conduct my ethnographic research using film as my primary medium. I was repeatedly made aware of the shortcomings of using film as a medium for ethnography, and my problematic positioning as a White South African woman. Kleinman writes that an ethnographer cannot but be aware of the limitations of her own methodology:

The ethnographer's angle of exposure places her so uncomfortably between distinctive moral worlds and local and global ethical discourses and, what is more, creates such a destabilizing tension between them that she is forced to become...self-reflexively critical of her own positioning. [Kleinman 1999:415]

In this conclusion, I will try to acknowledge some of my own limitations as an ethnographer and the limitations of my methodology in the field.

I became aware of the empowerment project on Sonop Wine Farm when I received a bottle of *Winds of Change* wine on an international airplane flight. I was intrigued by the label that promised that a percentage of the profits from the sale of the wine would go to the farm workers themselves. I did some Internet research from the United States and managed to contact Jaco van der Merwe, the White Afrikaans employee of African-Terroir, the company that owns Sonop. I asked whether it would be possible for me to spend three months making a film about the Sonop workers' experience of the empowerment project, and he agreed. When I arrived on Sonop, I realized that he had not asked the workers themselves if they would mind being filmed. He told one of the farm dwellers, Loala van der Westhuizen, in my presence that I would be filming her for the next three months. The first day I filmed Loala I felt terrible, because I felt that she had been forced into the situation and that she had no choice as to whether or not she was filmed.

As time passed, I was able to explain to her why I was filming and gauge whether or not she was comfortable with my frequent presence, but every time I asked one of the workers on Sonop whether I could film them I knew that they knew that they had little choice in the matter because Jaco had said I could film them.

This severely limited what the workers would say to me on camera. Not only was I – as a young White South African female filming in a Coloured farm worker community – already an “outsider,” I had also established my connection to the community through my relationship with their “boss,” Jaco. No matter what the workers really thought of the empowerment project, I discovered that they were not going to be critical about it if doing so would jeopardize their jobs and their relationship with Jaco. That I had a period of time to spend on the farm getting to know the workers, building relationships with them, and gradually being invited to observe some of the intimate details of their lives mitigated the situation to an extent. As I came to know the people I was filming better, it became easier to pick up on subtle distinctions between what they were saying about their lives, and what they were thinking or doing. Spending time with Loala van der Westhuizen and Lilly Lotter without filming them was also very important because it gave us time to get to know one another, and I hope showed them that I was interested in more than simply obtaining footage for the film.

I initially also made contact over the Internet with the farmer who owned Helderkruijn Wine Farm. He told me that he had recently started an empowerment project on his farm and would be happy for me to film there. Soon after I arrived in South Africa and started filming on Helderkruijn, however, I realized that the

farm owner had ulterior motives for wanting to start the project. He was eager to get the workers off his land in order to avoid having to implement new labor legislation related to security of tenure for farm workers. He was thus offering to build his workers new houses on a different piece of land. The workers told me off-camera that the farmer had been promising them new houses for years and nothing had happened. After a month of filming on Helderkruid, I decided to stop filming and focus on Sonop only. The main reason I stopped filming on Helderkruid was that I was not sure how to keep filming the workers knowing that they were not happy and that they were saying things about the farmer that I knew the farmer would not want to hear or have made public. I was on the farm filming because he had given me permission to film there, and I knew that he wanted a copy of the film. In a sense I felt that I had an obligation to him because he had let me film on his farm, and that I would be breaking it by making a film about how unhappy the workers were. This made me feel as if I were not being true to the workers' experience, and that I was only willing to make a film that showed the farm owner in a good light, but I did not know how else to handle the situation.

On the other farms where I conducted interviews, it was difficult to break through the spin-doctoring gleam of the empowerment project PR, because I usually only had access to the farm owner, or was put in touch with a "representative" (usually a company spokesperson on the corporate-owned farms) or the chairperson of the Worker Trust committee, who all had a vested interest in only promoting the benefits of the project and had been well versed in what he or

she should say. The data from these interviews can only be of limited value as a result.

When I look back at the questions I asked Loala the first few days I filmed her on Sonop, my own initial assumptions become painfully obvious. The first day I filmed her as she cleaned the bathroom in the guesthouse. I asked her, “Have you always worked hard in your life?” (my assumption being that she must have because she is a Coloured farm worker), and she gave me a quizzical look and said, “*Nee, nie eintlik nie*” (No, not really). Often Loala or Lilly subverted the response I was expecting from them. The workers on Sonop often wanted to see the footage of themselves and of the other farms on which I was filming. When I showed Loala some footage from Cilmor Wine Farm, she could not stop laughing at how the Cilmor workers spoke – with a stronger “Cape Coloured” accent than her own – and she laughed especially at one woman who was obviously an alcoholic, who was complaining to me about a plank that kept falling off her door. I was not expecting Loala to laugh at the other workers who were living in poverty.

I also assumed that the workers would resent the fact that although I am South African, I have not lived there for seven years. When Jaco was introducing me to the workers on Cilmor Wine Farm, he jokingly referred to me as a “traitor” because I had left South Africa to study overseas, first in Australia and then in the United States. I felt sure that the workers would reject me once they knew this, and afterwards I asked Jaco what he thought the workers felt about my having left South Africa. He was amused that I was concerned, and told me that the workers

would not think anything of it because they do not know where Australia or the United States are. Perhaps Jaco was just saying this to make me feel better, but it reminded me that getting too caught up in one's own positioning can paralyze one unnecessarily.

One of the problems I faced on Sonop was that even though I had access to the workers when Jaco was not present, I knew that Jaco had an agenda in agreeing to allow me to film in the first place. Soon after I arrived on Sonop, Jaco asked me to film on a neighboring farm, Cilmor, where the company was just starting an empowerment project. He was organizing a clean-up competition for the farm worker communities, and he wanted me to film the workers' houses before they started fixing them, so that the company would have a record of how the houses looked before the competition. I felt that I should agree to do it because Jaco had been so helpful to me. The workers, however, did not know about the competition at that stage, and did not know why I was coming into their houses to film. Jaco wanted shots of the inside of each room, including the bedrooms. I felt that I was invading the workers' intimate space. Toward the end of my time on Sonop, Jaco asked me to make a promotional video about the *Winds of Change* project for African-Terroir from the footage that I had shot on Sonop. He implied that I "owed" the company something because they had let me film on the farm. I felt that this was not something I could do because my aim was not to give *Winds of Change* good publicity but to try to understand what life was like for the workers living on Sonop, so I refused, and Jaco was offended.

One of the issues I struggled most with was judging when it was appropriate to put the camera down and stop filming. Lilly's son, Johan, was in jail for stabbing someone in a gang fight, and I asked her if I could come with her to visit him in jail. She agreed, but seemed a bit uncomfortable about it. Once I arrived at the jail, I asked the administrator at the jail if I could film and he said that I could. I knew that the footage would be important for the film, but I could also tell that Lilly was embarrassed about her son's situation and uncomfortable about me filming at the jail, so I did not film anything. The morning when the police arrived on the farm because of a fight that had happened the night before that involved Loala's brother (see Chapter 3), I could have filmed, but did not because I sensed that Loala was not happy about me filming.

Although I would like to think that somehow a filmed ethnography can give a voice to people – literally – in a more powerful way than a written ethnography can, I know that using film as ethnography is just as problematic as written ethnography. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the ethics and limitations of using film as ethnography, about which much has been written (MacDougall 1998; Turner 1991; Wright 1998). However, I do want to stress that I am aware that a filmed ethnography can be just as – if not more – manipulative and misleading as a text-based ethnography in the way it represents people. The danger is, as Faye Ginsburg warns, that “many anthropological films and videos are still regarded as transparent representations or ‘research documents’ rather than forms of knowledge production in their own right” (Ginsburg 1998:174). At every step in the process, I made choices and decisions which result in the film

being far from a “true” or “transparent” representation of the people I was filming. I chose where I wanted to film, whom I wanted to film, the ways in which I wanted to film them, the parts of their lives I did not want to film, the parts of their lives I could not film because I had no access to them, the footage I wanted to use in the film, the scenes I wanted to put next to each other in the film, the shots I put side by side in the film.

In the editing of the footage, one of the most difficult issues to deal with was finding ways to critique in a subtle way the role of African-Terroir (the Swiss company) in starting the empowerment projects on Sonop and Cilmor. For the reasons discussed above, it was difficult to capture *conflict* on film since the workers on Sonop were always full of praise for the way their lives have changed since the project began. I chose not to focus too much on Jaco because I did not want him to appear as the “savior” of the workers, and I wanted to give the workers credit for what they have achieved on their own. What made it complicated was that I could see that there had been concrete changes in the workers’ lives, but I knew that there also had to be some critique of the empowerment projects for the film to be more than a public relations exercise for African-Terroir. Relatively late in the editing process, I decided to include parts of an interview I conducted with Bernard Fontannaz, the Swiss Managing Director of African-Terroir at the time. In these extracts from the interview, Bernard says that the company started the empowerment project to increase worker productivity, and because it made good business sense. I also included scenes of White people consuming, tasting and judging wine. My hope is that, by

including Bernard's comments and these scenes, I can subtly signal to the viewer that the empowerment projects and the changes in the workers' lives cannot be considered outside of the context of the increasingly corporate-owned, and still White-dominated, wine industry in South Africa.

I went into this research project skeptical of the claims that the owners of empowerment farms were making about the positive effects of the empowerment projects on the lives of their workers. Although I knew I wanted to try to tell a positive story about South Africa – or at least a story that was not devoid of all hope – I also wanted to avoid naively endorsing these projects without understanding the nature of the supposed changes they were making. When I arrived on Sonop Wine Farm and realized that the workers genuinely seemed to prefer their current working and living conditions to those they had before the empowerment project was started, I did not quite know what to do. I thought that I should not take what they were saying at face value given my own positioning, and their awareness that I was filming with the consent of their boss. I was determined to uncover the ways in which the empowerment projects were perpetuating old patterns of paternalism. But as I spent more time on the farms, I realized that I could not deny that life had changed for the workers as a result of the empowerment projects, and that the changes could by no means be easily categorized as “good” or “bad.”

When I began my research, I did not know exactly what “empowerment” in South Africa meant. I still do not know exactly what it means. I know that it has something to do with changing from a state of powerlessness – whether it is legal,

economic, social, personal or political – to a state of having some degree of choice, representation, agency, or control in one’s own life. As I investigated the meaning of empowerment in South Africa, the ANC-led government’s policy on Black Economic Empowerment intrigued me because it repeatedly refers not only to the economic, but the moral imperative for empowerment. This reminded me of South Africa’s unique and difficult situation as a new democracy struggling to respond to the local demands for social, moral, political and economic change while it simultaneously attempts to compete in the global economy.

In the film and this written thesis, I chose to use empowerment projects on wine farms in one region of South Africa as a case study for reflecting on the concept and meaning of empowerment in South Africa at this crucial point in the country’s history. My intention was not to criticize the government’s empowerment policies, nor to disparage the wine industry’s implementation of these policies. I recognize that empowerment of South Africans who were systematically abused and disadvantaged during apartheid is essential to the country’s survival, and I respect the government’s attempts to come up with creative solutions to the problems the country is facing.

That said, putting empowerment policies into practice is inevitably going to be full of contradictions and conflict, given the three century long history of paternalism on Western Cape wine farms (which I described in Chapter 2). My aim was not to determine whether or not these empowerment projects are a success or a failure, but to try to understand the nature of the changes they are having on farm workers’ lives. By focusing on the effects of empowerment

policies at ground level, in the realm of moral experience where things are at stake (Kleinman 1999), I hoped to contribute a nuanced understanding of how empowerment is experienced by the people for whom the policies on empowerment were created. I realized early in my research that asking whether empowerment on the wine farms “works” or “does not work” is an impossible question because of the multiple and complicated motives for and experiences of these empowerment projects. I believe passionately in the ideology behind empowerment, but I was forced to challenge my assumptions about how that ideology should be put into practice almost every day during my research.

I would like to conclude with a story about one woman, Gini Fonteyn, a worker on Cilmor Wine Farm. I met Gini when I filmed her house before the clean-up competition on Cilmor. She was angry about the condition her house was in, and told me that she had stopped working in the vineyards out of protest. When I met her, she had not worked in the vineyards for a year. I did not see Gini again until the company-sponsored sports day and prize-giving for the clean-up competition. Jaco organized the sports day for the workers as a reward for taking part in the competition and to prove to them that things really were going to change. Gini’s farm community won the clean-up competition and the workers were given the R1,000 prize by Jaco. I spoke to Gini just after they found out they had won. She said she had started to work in the vineyards again because she could see that things really were changing. She told me that she really believes that everything is going to change because the workers are enjoying themselves now. My first reaction was to think, quite cynically, that Jaco had

made a very shrewd move in thinking up the idea of the clean-up competition, because the company now had a very happy worker who was ready to be productive again. But I realized that I did not know any better than Jaco did what was best for Gini, and I had no right to assume that she was being duped by the company's empowerment strategy. In the end, she got what she wanted – a flushing toilet – and the company got what it wanted – a willing worker. So who derived the greater benefit – the company, or Gini? That is the kind of complicated question that an analysis of the lived experience of empowerment in South Africa raises. Ideally, attempts to answer it will further nuance our understanding of the concept of empowerment.

