

## RESILIENCE AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN PETER ABRAHAMS' *MINE BOY*

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### Abstract

This paper explores the survival strategies adopted by black South Africans in Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy*. The paper highlights the lived experiences of native South Africans during the Apartheid era, highlighting how these strategies reflect broader themes of identity, race, and resilience. The analysis employs a qualitative methodological approach, drawing on Frantz Fanon's theories on colonialism and Apartheid, to contextualize the novel's depiction of survival strategies. A comparative analysis is further used to highlight the disparities between the living conditions of natives and Europeans during apartheid. Fanon's insights into the psychological and social impacts of colonial rule provide a lens through which the characters' struggles and survival mechanisms in *Mine Boy* are interpreted. The analysis reveals that black South Africans, stripped of their property and livelihoods, resorted to various coping strategies such as drunkenness, prostitution, and other vices to endure their harsh realities. The findings emphasize the novel's portrayal of the resilience of the native population in the face of systemic adversity and highlight the importance of cultural preservation amidst pervasive oppression.

**Keywords:** Apartheid, Frantz Fanon, Living conditions, Resilience, Racial discrimination

### Introduction

*Mine Boy* (1946), a landmark work by Peter Abrahams, portrays the real-life realities of black South Africans during the Apartheid era, which was characterized by severe racial discrimination and economic exploitation. The book offers a socio-political critique of colonialism and its lasting effects in addition to being a survival story (Diakhaté, B. 2020). Abrahams' protagonists traverse a terrain replete with institutional oppression against the backdrop of the South African mining industry, demonstrating their resiliency through a variety of coping mechanisms.

The study looks at how, in the context of Apartheid, these survival techniques speak to larger issues of race, identity, and resiliency. A key theoretical framework for comprehending the characters' difficulties is provided by Frantz Fanon's thoughts on colonialism and the psychological impacts of oppression (Fanon, 1963). This study contextualizes the characters' coping mechanisms, such as alcoholism and

prostitution, as reactions to the socioeconomic degradation imposed upon them by fusing Fanon's views with literary analysis.

By shedding light on the differences between local populations' and Europeans' living conditions, the qualitative analysis hopes to enhance the discussion of survival tactics in oppressed communities (Lodge, R. 1991). In the end, this investigation shows that the indigenous people are remarkably resilient and adaptive, even if they have been deprived of their property and dignity. *Mine Boy* emphasizes the value of identity and cultural preservation in the face of structural hardship via their own experiences.

### Objectives of study

The objectives of this paper are to provide a purely contextual analysis of *Mine Boy*, and they are to:

- a. examine the coping strategies used by the characters in *Mine Boy*.
- b. examine how these coping mechanisms represent their experiences
- c. highlight the differences that influence the characters' survival strategies

### **Theoretical Framework**

The foundational ideas of Post-colonial theory started from the works of Edward Said, a literary and cultural theorist who studied Orientalism and Post colonialism throughout his life and greatly contributed to the theory with written works such as *Orientalism* (1978), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), among others. Said's main concern in these works was to highlight the long-lasting Palestinian struggle to regain their homeland by examining "the historical production and motivations of Western discourses about the Orient in general and about Islam in particular," Habib (2011).

Many other scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak among others including Frantz Fanon also wrote on Post-colonial theory. However for the purpose of this paper, Frantz Fanon's ideology in his *Wretched of the Earth* (1981) will be used. Fanon calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation; He claims that the national literature is a 'literature of combat' (Zeiny, 2019). It is a way of defending their culture and language by using writing instead of physical violence, as well as a way to disguise their rebellion through references only understandable to the colonized people.

In his *Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon states that "Western racism is seen as a form of scapegoating that permits the West to cling to its power and leads to violent reaction by the colonized." Gugelberger (1991). In his writing, Fanon focused not only on the dehumanizing effect on society but also on the effect on the individual. When colonized people are oppressed for a long period of time, a violent reaction is almost unavoidable. Flannery (2009) postulates that Fanon criticized this form of scapegoating and its after-effects on the people. In the book, he writes, "For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence." However, it does not dwell on the colonizers, possibly because Fanon focuses more on fighting back against oppression, which is the consequence of a liberated people.

Fanon recommends violence as a way of freeing themselves from the shackles of apartheid and all forms of dehumanizing treatment meted out to people, particularly natives. In this light, Aghamelu and Ejike (2019) critically examined Frantz Fanon's justification for violence in the anti-colonial struggle within the context of situationism and utilitarianism. They argued that while Fanon's commitment to the creation of a new humanity and restoration of human dignity through violence may appear justifiable, the deleterious effects of violent resistance on both the colonizers and the colonized make his violence-laden decolonization view counter-productive.

### **Methodology**

This study offers a close textual reading of Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy*, followed by a comparative analysis that foregrounds the parallel yet distinct socio-economic realities shaping the lives of Black urban migrants and rural communities in the novel. To enrich the interpretation of the characters' lived experiences, the analysis draws on Frantz Fanon's work, particularly his insights into colonial alienation, psychological violence, and strategies of survival and resistance under oppressive conditions.

### **The Impact of Apartheid on Native South Africans**

The introduction of Apartheid, with its brutal systems of racial segregation and economic exploitation, rendered many natives desolate, hungry, jobless, and very poor. (Chambers 1988) gave a distinction between the five dimensions of poverty that have eaten into the communities of these natives, the first category according to Chambers is 'poverty proper' being a lack of adequate income or assets to generate income; · physical weakness due to under-nutrition, sickness, or disability; · physical or social isolation due to peripheral location, lack of access to goods and services, ignorance, or illiteracy; vulnerability to crisis and the risk of becoming even poorer; and powerlessness within existing social, economic, political, and cultural structures. All of these dimensions contribute significantly to rendering the lives of native South Africans distorted. This was the result of the displacement of people that began with the intrusion of Europeans into their

land, an internal war they fought, which gave the Europeans the impetus to settle amongst them, taking control of their lands and subjecting them to discriminatory rules and governance. Landau & Monson (2008) postulate that displacement and the continued mobility of urban residents are generating new forms of non-state-centric urban sovereignties and new patterns of multinational authority shaped but not controlled by state institutions. The people, now having to work on farmlands, mines, and as maids and maidservants in homes for their livelihood, all of which were under harsh conditions.

Gbadegesin et al (2020) looked at the most crucial elements for enhancing the quality of life for those who live in unofficial housing, as well as the biggest barriers to improving their living status. Understanding the types of problems that influence the quality of life in these places through the use of regression analysis, they conclude by bringing to light approaches that will improve the standard of living for those living in informal settlements. Native South Africans are subjected to living in dilapidated houses in slums with little or no infrastructure and social amenities. But the Europeans, on the other hand, have all they need and beyond; thus, thus: The colonial world is compartmentalized. It is obviously as superfluous to recall the existence of "native" towns and European towns, of schools for "natives" and schools for Europeans, as it is to recall apartheid in South Africa. (WE: p.3).

Fanon asserts thus: They are protected by solid shoes in a sector where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole or a stone. The colonist's sector is a sated, sluggish sector; its belly is permanently full of good things. The colonist's sector is a white folks' sector, a sector of foreigners. (WE: p.4) Xuma's visit to Paddy's house allowed him to see how the other side of his world is. Comparing the natives' world against those of the Europeans thus:

The smell of bad meat hung over the place... A dirty, ragged old man dumped a plate of meat, swimming in its gravy, and a hunk of bread, on the dirty table... White People did not have to crowd into the place and sit on top of each other. They

had nice eating houses in almost every Street in the city. (p.177)

The excerpt above gives a description of the living conditions of these natives. To make matters worse, both sexes and people of all ages cohabit together. This situation is reflected in Fanon's ideals, as he puts it thus:

The colonized sector, or at least the 'native' quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, and the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It's a world with no space; people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized sector is famished, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. (WE: p.4)

Here, Fanon describes the living conditions of these natives just as Abrahams does, so Crenshaw (2005) argues that, by contrast, in the 1940s and early 1950s, state policy on education, urbanization, and housing still differentiated the African population along the lines of social class. State control over housing for Africans was relatively unregulated, with the result that housing conditions varied tremendously by social class.

On the other hand, Reziki & Boussalem (2018) argue that social class and destiny are determined by race, creating harsh circumstances for native people who have accepted this discrimination without protest. Abrahams employs the novel's depiction of Xuma as a tool to motivate readers and society at large to fight racial injustice. Despite being a person of colour and coming from a lower social status, Xuma conquered injustice and battled for the amplification of the black voice. The bad living conditions of these folks cannot be overemphasized, as Abrahams further creates an image of the haphazardness of how these folks live; the street is narrow, discomfiting, and dirty, putting all their health in jeopardy, as opposed to the well-organized, beautiful, and clean spaces the Europeans occupy. At Paddy's home, Xuma is flabbergasted at what he sees, the narrator puts it thus: Xuma looked around. He had never seen a place like that. There was no fire, but it was warm. (P. 64). The narrator further unveils Xuma's psychological state after visiting Paddy his boss thus: Xuma thought, "Now I understand what

Eliza wants. But these things are only for white people". "It is foolish to think we can get them." He looked around the room. Yes, it was fine. Carpets on the floor, books, the radio, beautiful things everywhere. Fine, all fine, but all the white man's things. (P. 65)

### **Survival Strategies in *Mine Boy***

Survival is the ability of an individual or group to withstand adverse conditions or situations and continue to live or exist. It can be defined as "the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically despite an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstance" (Oxford Languages, n.d.). Thumbadoo (1975) empathized on the matter of assimilation in the conversation between Xuma and Leah, thus: Xuma comes from the north, where there is no work, to the mining city. Leah, almost echoing Daisy's words in *Song of the City*, says of him, "You're all right. But the city is a strange place". Leah later elaborates on this theme of assimilation to emphasize its importance to the native, living in a white-dominated environment; "I came from my people, but I am no longer of my people. It is so in the city, and I have been here for many years. And the city makes you strange to the ways of your people" (p. 23).

Xuma struggles to navigate the complex social dynamics of the city, where racial segregation is enforced by law. He learns to adapt to the customs and norms of urban life while also maintaining his own identity and dignity as a black man. He made conscious efforts to survive socially amid white laws through different approaches. One of them is that he tries to get integrated into white culture and society by learning English and adopting their mannerisms. He realizes that to be accepted by the white community, he needs to speak their language and understand their customs. Fanon wrote: "To assimilate the culture of the oppressor and venture into his fold, the colonized subject has had to pawn some of his intellectual possessions. For instance, one of the things he has had to assimilate is the way the colonialist bourgeoisie thinks. This is apparent in the colonized intellectual's inaptitude to engage in dialogue" (WE: p.13). This is evident when he starts taking English classes and learns to read and write in the English language, thus: "I met my

white man and he took me to his place to eat" "Aha! A proper gentleman now, heh? He eats with the white people. And look at his clothes!" (P.79). The conversation above between Leah and Xuma is an indication that he has assimilated well into his new environment and has been accepted even by his white bosses. Therefore, there is the need to keep his identity and culture as a black man, despite the acceptance he receives and his learning of the English language, which satisfies Fanon's concerns about maintaining one's culture and identity against all odds, thus: "On the contrary, the underdeveloped countries must endeavour to focus on their very own values as well as methods and styles specific to them" (WE: p. 55).

Subsequently, Xuma tries to maintain good relationships with his white employers and supervisors at the mine where he works. He does this by working hard and avoiding any form of confrontation with them, even when they mistreat him. He also tries to make friends with the white workers at the mine and goes out of his way to help them whenever he can. This was a strategy he employed to survive amid the hardship they encountered. This is illustrated by the narrator as follows: His white man had even tried to make friends with him because the other mine boys respected him so much. But a white man and a black man cannot be friends. They work together, that's all. He did not want the things of the white man to work for him. Yes, that's all. And didn't the others respect him more than they respected Johannes? It was because he did not say baas to the white man but knew how to deal with him (p. 63)

In resonance with Franz Fanon's ideology on violence, which starts from acceptance, assimilation, and then natives' rejection of European subjugation and oppression in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Xuma first accepts his plight and the fact that his food is in the hands of the white bosses, he submits to their ill-treatment of him, assimilates by way of learning their culture and language, and he also starts to think like them. He is contented and, reaching the place of realization of his true identity, he protests against these forms of oppression, with the agenda, which is not only to take back what has been taken from him but also, as Fanon puts it, "the agenda is

not only to pull through but to catch up with the other nations as best one can” (WE: p.52). Reiki and Boussalem (2018) postulate that black people are treated badly because of their skin color. They conclude that race determines one's social class, fate, and class position. Contrary to this opinion, despite Xuma's skin colour, he makes up his heart to fight until his voice is heard. Taking it a step further, he is determined to fight to be more than the colonists (WE: p.9).

Subsequently, Xuma joins the African political movement, which aims to fight against the discriminatory laws that have been imposed on the natives. Fanon says: The underprivileged and starving peasant is the exploited who very soon discovers that only violence pays. For him, there is no compromise, no possibility of concession. Colonization or decolonization: it is simply a power struggle (p.23). The exploited realize that their liberation implies using every means available, and force is the first (WE: p.23). The need to fight becomes necessary, because, at this point, these natives don't need to know what approach to use, all that matters is their liberation. By joining this movement, Xuma hopes to have a voice and be able to fight for his rights and those of his people. This is evident when he attends political meetings and rallies and becomes an active member of the movement.

As the novel progresses, the characters become more involved in political activism and resistance against the apartheid regime. They struggle to stay safe and avoid arrest and violence from the authorities while also fighting for their rights and aspiring for liberty from the clutches and dominance of their oppressors in their own country. This is illustrated in the text, when Xuma, in an attempt to resist arrest, hits the policeman in the face and takes to his heels (P. 16). Fanon writes: In colonial regions, however, the proximity and frequent, direct intervention by the police and the military ensure the colonized are kept under scrutiny, and contained by rifle butts and napalm. We have seen how the government's agent uses a language of pure violence (WE: p.4). The counter relation from Xuma we see here is an expression of the emotions and frustrations of the oppression the people suffered. Xuma did not want to give in.

Xuma, however, is forced to make difficult choices and must negotiate the complexities of the racial and social hierarchies that control life in Johannesburg since existence necessitates compromise and sacrifice. Both the European and native communities are putting pressure on him to submit to certain standards and laws.

Additionally, the text implies that adaptability and flexibility are necessary for surviving in a culture that is biased against the people. As terrible as the working conditions were in the mines, Xuma was able to maneuver his way through until he became a team leader and found favour with his boss, The Red One. Xuma was asked to push the loaded truck alone, but his coworkers protested in a whisper, as one man said: “It is the work of two men.” Shut up!” the white man roared (p. 39). This is because that loaded truck could only be pushed by several strong men together, unfortunately, Xuma was asked to push it alone. This form of whisper, though silent here, resonates with Fanon's ideology on fighting back and resisting every form of oppression, which can be done only when people realize that their identity is lost and the need to take it back becomes necessary, so Fanon writes: As soon as they are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out-and-out violence (WE: p.3) Xuma gave his best in this situation because he needed the wages that would come at the end of the day, even though they were not equated to the job done. It is better than nothing and better than the poverty that has taken over the countryside where he came from, so the narrator says: Xuma smiled though his leg pained him, leaned down found balance, and pushed. Slowly, the truck moved up the tracks. Here and there, a man laughed with a note of nervousness in his laughter. It is easy if you know how Xuma thought. (p.40)

It is evident that, though Xuma anticipated the danger coming from the risk he was about to take, he took it anyway because it was necessary for his survival. After the exercise mentioned in the excerpt above, we find Chris admitting to the fact that Xuma is strong and resilient, and so he goes further to ask, trying to show some empathy since he finds some potential in him: Are you hurt?

Only a little in my leg, Xuma said. Let me see. Xuma pulled his trousers up and showed the gash (p.41). On the other hand, Leah, representing the female folks in the text, also struggled to survive by selling illicit drinks against the law, which eventually landed her in prison. After many attempts by the police to get her apprehended, she keeps outsmarting them, so they go as far as setting traps for her. To show how mean the police are, Bloom (1957) argues that “It is not as if the police are a merely negative element in this situation. With their never-ending raids on sleeping households, with their indiscriminate arrests, their bullying, and their truculence, they add their share of terror to the townships”. Fox the cop finally gets her and brags about his success after setting different traps just to get her, such as: Hello, Leah, a white voice said softly. Take the light off me, Leah said. Then Fox switched off his torch. So I’ve got you at last, he said Leah smiled from the side of her mouth and pushed her shoulders back. Yes, you’ve got me. (p.165)

Leah was sought by the police and, with no benefit of the doubt, arrested. Concerning situations like this, Fanon writes: “Confronted with a world configured by the colonizer, the colonized subject is always presumed guilty” (WE: p.14). To stress the fact that the natives are being monitored and scrutinized at all times, Fanon writes: “In colonial regions, however, the proximity and frequent, direct intervention by the police and the military ensure the colonized are kept under scrutiny and contained by rifle butts and napalm” (WE: p. 4). Before the arrest, however, Leah had put her house in order in anticipation of such eventualities because, at that time, the natives in the cities were struggling to survive amid indiscriminate arrest at the slightest offence. So, Leah knew that someday she would equally face this demon; besides, her husband had been thrown there for many years until he met his death. Despite all this, they never stopped selling her liquor illegally because she needed to survive with the money she raised from its sales. Leah represents resilience and strength in the face of adversity. Many of the characters in the novel, however, face emotional challenges, which is also a form of survival struggle. Xuma, for example, is

haunted by memories of his past and struggles to come to terms with his feelings for Eliza, a young woman he meets in Johannesburg. Other characters, such as Leah and her son, face emotional trauma and must find ways to cope and survive amidst it. For Xuma and other black mining employees in Johannesburg, survival is a constant worry. They deal with difficult working conditions, meagre salaries, discrimination of different forms and magnitudes from European employers, and police brutality, among others. The narrative explores the difficulties that Xuma encounters as he tries to balance maintaining his cultural identity and roots with trying to make a living in the city. Fanon (2017), postulates that because white culture and racism are so pervasive in colonial cultures, native people frequently experience alienation and a loss of identity.

For Fanon, developing a black identity necessitates rejecting the dominant white culture and recovering one’s cultural roots. This entails a decolonization process, which calls for a collective effort to topple colonial structures and establish new, inclusive systems that permit the expression of various cultural identities. Gaining a black identity, in Fanon’s view, is a difficult and continual process rather than one that is easy. Despite rejection and discrimination, he thought it took an ongoing effort to challenge the dominant culture and proclaim one’s individuality. For disadvantaged groups to feel empowered and self-reliant in the face of oppression, Fanon’s work highlights the value of cultural identity and the necessity for them to recover their cultural history. Furthermore, one of the ways that Xuma and other black workers survived and struggled to get back their culture and identity from the colonizers was by forming tight connections in solidarity with each other and relying on each other for support. They create their subcultures and develop their language and traditions. This is seen in Xuma’s becoming involved with a group of illegal bar owners spearheaded by Leah, who operates in the black neighborhoods of Johannesburg. They provide a sense of security and camaraderie and a place where Xuma could feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging, thus: “This is Xuma from the north”, the woman said. “He is tired and

hungry. Give him food, Ma Pank. Sit down, Xuma” (p.3). Xuma was accepted by these folks and immediately given food and shelter.

Throughout the novel, strong solidarity among natives in South Africa is depicted as they live their lives of struggle in different forms under the oppression and subjugation of Europeans under apartheid. Such acts of solidarity can be seen when Xuma and his fellow mine workers go on strike to demand better working conditions and wages. Despite facing police brutality and indiscriminate arrest, the workers stand together and refuse to give up until their demands are met, which were never met anyway. Men and women, young and old, enthusiastically commit themselves to what amounts to forced labor and proclaim themselves slaves of the nation. This spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to the common interest fosters a reassuring national morale that restores man's confidence in the destiny of the world and disarms the most reticent of observers (WE: p.56).

Another example is the camaraderie that develops between Xuma and other native South Africans who have also migrated to Johannesburg in search of work. Despite coming from different regions and tribes, they find common ground in their shared experiences of oppression and discrimination. Kasanda (2016) postulates that, regardless of the color of the skin, human dignity comes first in the affairs of men, which makes the search for global justice and the universal achievement of human rights attainable. These folks support each other through difficult times and celebrate each other's successes. The role played by black communities and organizations in the fight against apartheid and their attempts to endure it is expounded in this narrative. For instance, Xuma joins the ‘Fatherland Club’ to foster pride and togetherness among South Africans of African descent. This is consistent with Fanon’s assertion that the colonized should resist colonial subjugation, even if it means using violence. For Xuma and some other people who feel marginalized and oppressed by the apartheid regime, the group gives them a sense of belonging.

Xuma and other black laborers depend on one another to survive in this setting. For instance,

Xuma’s association with a group of black bar proprietors who run businesses in Johannesburg’s black areas gives him a sense of communal belonging. Xuma must negotiate the complexities of the racial and social hierarchies that control life in Johannesburg, as survival necessitates compromise and sacrifice. The men in the city, being black, litter the streets fighting and drinking from bear parlors instead of engaging in meaningful activities such as some form of job that would enable them to fend for themselves; besides, the idle mind is the devil’s workshop. Dladla carries a knife around to defend himself against any attacker, meaning he always anticipates a fight. This is illustrated thus: Dladla raised a knife and showed his teeth. Each watched the other. A hush fell over the room. Daddy forgot that the side of his head hurt and gaped with an open mouth and dancing eyes at the sudden prospect of a fight (p. 3). “They always spoil a good fight. Is the fight over?” Ma Plank asked without showing her face. “There is another” (P.4). The community where these folks live is devoid of peace and full of frustration over the distortions of their lives caused by their contact with European settlers, who eventually introduced Apartheid. They would instead have a fight that never ends, as it entertains them and helps them while away their time since they do little or nothing after giving all they lived for to the Europeans. People derive pleasure from either fighting or watching a fight. These fights seem to be the only way they can vent their anger and frustration on each other instead of on their oppressors, who are the cause of their predicament. The prisons seem to be their second homes, as young men and women are thrown into jail at the slightest offence. Leah’s man has been in jail since a year ago and will remain there for another two years because he killed a man. Leah herself gets thrown into jail for selling illicit drinks.

The struggle for survival is evident in Xuma’s experiences as a migrant worker in Johannesburg’s gold mines. Jones (2012) argues, “To survive in Johannesburg, Xuma had to have a job.” The conjunction of Marxism and liberalism in the text is an intervention in the formation of black urbanism in segregationist South Africa. Meanwhile, Wade (1968) suggests that

Abrahams's vision of Johannesburg stresses the straining and dehumanizing experience of being black in the South African city; Jones' focus was on Abrahams's efforts to make the metropolis habitable for black people. He further adds that the experiences of thousands of black South Africans who moved from rural to urban areas during the Second World War's industrialization are reflected in Xuma's isolation. The city's African population reached 455,000 by 1948 (Beavon 2004). Abrahams has succeeded in explaining how people's interactions with public spaces, whether individually or collectively, result in a shared class and race consciousness in opposition to the atomization of the city. Gordimer (1988) argues in 'Great Problems in the Street' that, the Johannesburg Street of the 1940s and 1950s was a location for interracial meetings and the production of alternative discourses to state ideology, reflects perceptions of the street as a possible counter-public.

In addition to recognizing the 'numerous laws, prejudices, fallacies, and fears' that influenced relationships between natives and Europeans. Gordimer also writes: "The street is where the big issues are present and have, up until this point, always been discussed." The world and the body have both been on the street. Because open spaces in the streets, townships, and on the outskirts of the city have served as meeting places for African political groups, progressive movements have generally used the City Hall steps in Johannesburg as a platform. Xuma's survival is dependent on his ability to navigate the harsh realities of life in the city, including poverty, racism, and violence. Despite the obstacles he faces, Xuma remains determined to find a way to survive and make a better life for himself. These acts of the struggle for survival can therefore take different forms, all of which have been carefully illustrated in Mine Boy.

Police brutality was a menace that South African society could not do away with, so on many occasions, the people had to keep running for their lives any time the police arrived. But in this instance, Xuma, coming from the north, did not see the reason why he should run when he had not done anything wrong, so on this day, the police

hit Xuma for no reason. Contrary to native South Africans' reaction to police brutality, he hit back, in fact even more, and eventually had to run for his life (p.16-17). The notion that they are slaves to Europeans causes native South Africans to live in constant fear since they are perpetually being pursued, arrested, beaten, and subsequently imprisoned. To survive, they did as they were supposed to do: carry 'pass' around in their nation. In Malay Camp, where he meets other black people who reside in Leah's poor apartment with no facilities. Leah provides for her fellow underprivileged black people by feeding them with the money earned from her beer parlor business. Leah, a black woman, is terrified of being detained by the authorities for engaging in the same activity as white people. Leah resolves to keep bribing a colored police officer who informs her of impending police visits to her property to survive. The rights of the people, as original owners of the land, have been taken away from them as a result of their naivety and ignorance, allowing these whites to settle on their lands and making them servants, maidservants, and laborers in the quest to survive despite the harsh working and living conditions.

Furthermore, immorality of all forms takes charge of society, thus: 'You are good' he said' good and beautiful,' you are lonely,' she said and laughed. She gave him a cigarette and lit one for herself (P. 24). Eliza's conversation above ended with Xuma having carnal knowledge of her, which was not anything new since it was her way of living to curb the scourge of poverty in her society. 'The land is poor' Xuma told her, attesting to the fact that all the natives had been taken away from them, leaving them frustrated, drinking away their lives, and indulging in illicit behaviors like fighting, prostitution, and so on instead of looking for lucrative jobs to fend for themselves. The few who worked in the mines got sick and eventually died because the mines were harmful to their health. Abrahams emphasizes the value of brotherhood and solidarity within the black community. Black women who offer support, foster relationships, and provide emotional sustenance amid tragedy are exemplified by figures like Leah and Eliza. These connections act

as sources of individual and group power. Xuma struggles with issues of activism and resistance as he grows aware of the injustices he must contend with. This reflects how black communities have gradually become more aware of their collective power and how organized resistance groups have eventually emerged. Despite the enormous obstacles, *Mine Boy* shows moments of optimism and resiliency. The tenacity of native people in the face of discrimination is reflected in the characters' drive to regain their dignity, improve their circumstances, and achieve a brighter future.

### Conclusion

Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* offers a compelling and comprehensive depiction of native people's lives in South Africa during the apartheid era. Abrahams explores the complexity of the characters' challenges, goals, and resilience. The book provides a moving story of the difficulties native people and communities must overcome to survive in a society that is hostile to them. The novel explores themes of identity, race, and survival. This analyzed the different survival mechanisms adopted by black people during Apartheid. Faced with challenges, they often turn to drunkenness, prostitution, and other vices that put their lives in jeopardy. Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy* remains a powerful literary interrogation of apartheid South Africa, foregrounding the lived realities of black urban migrants whose existence is circumscribed by racial discrimination, economic exploitation, and institutional violence. Through the experiences of Xuma and other marginalized characters, the novel demonstrates that survival under apartheid is neither passive nor simplistic; rather, it is a complex negotiation between endurance, adaptation, resistance, and the preservation of cultural identity.

This study has shown that the oppressive structures of apartheid, manifested in spatial segregation, poor living conditions, police brutality, exploitative labor systems, and racialized social hierarchies, create an environment in which survival becomes an everyday struggle. In response to these harsh realities, black South Africans in the novel adopt diverse coping mechanisms. Some resort to alcoholism, prostitution, violence, and illicit

economic activities as immediate, though often self-destructive, means of subsistence. Others, like Xuma, pursue strategies of adaptation and gradual resistance: learning English, navigating interracial relations cautiously, building solidarity within black communities, participating in political activism, and eventually challenging unjust authority.

Viewed through the lens of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial thought, particularly as articulated in *The Wretched of the Earth*, these survival strategies reflect the psychological and material consequences of colonial domination. Fanon's insights into alienation, internalized oppression, and revolutionary consciousness illuminate Xuma's transformation from passive acceptance to critical awareness and resistance. The novel thus dramatizes Fanon's assertion that colonized subjects must reclaim their dignity, identity, and agency in the face of systemic dehumanization. Importantly, *Mine Boy* does not portray black South Africans merely as victims of circumstance. Rather, Abrahams underscores their resilience, solidarity, and moral courage. Communal bonds, informal support networks, collective protest, and the preservation of cultural pride emerge as vital resources for survival. Even where characters falter or succumb to vice, their actions are contextualized within a system designed to impoverish and destabilize them. Survival, therefore, is shown to be both a personal and collective endeavor shaped by structural constraints.

Ultimately, the novel affirms that resilience is not only about physical endurance but also about the preservation of identity and humanity. Xuma's internal struggle to reconcile assimilation with cultural loyalty mirrors the broader dilemma of colonized peoples striving to survive without losing themselves. In portraying this tension, Abrahams emphasizes that the fight for survival is inseparable from the fight for dignity, justice, and cultural continuity. *Mine Boy* thus stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of a people determined to endure and resist, even when confronted with systemic oppression designed to erase them.

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