



Making social worlds

Held hostage to a passbook

Malesela Selepe, Taxi Driver:

My mother took me to the Home Office for an ID. And it was a Pass. And it was status. It was for the people who are in good age, and respected around us. So I was very much proud to go there.

Narrator:

The document was known by many names. Pass, ID Book, Reference Book. It also gained a nickname, from the Afrikaans word for 'Stupid'. It became the 'Dom pass', the 'Stupid Pass'.

Woman (subtitles:)

It was not a pass, it was a dom book. A Dom pass, so at that time it was a very hard time for us. Because you can't go anywhere, if you haven't got a pass. You can't get job. You can't do anything if you haven't got it.

Geoff Budlender:

It was very easy to step out of line. And if you stepped out of line you were vulnerable. So it was a way of enforcing political control through means of social control. And the passbook, the 'Dom pass' was the critical instrument in that.