

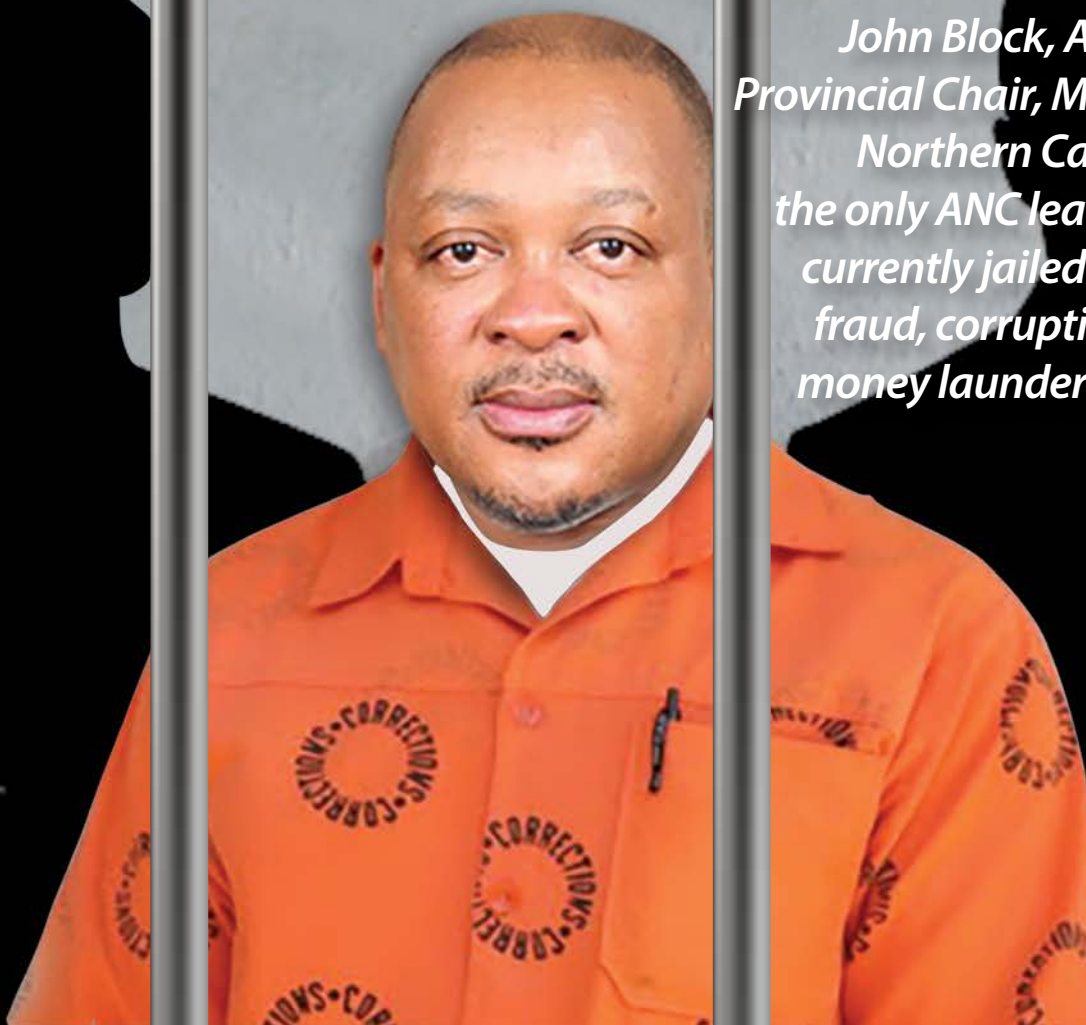


NEW AGENDA

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Comrades to Convicts: *Who will join John Block?*

*John Block, ANC
Provincial Chair, MEC,
Northern Cape,
the only ANC leader
currently jailed for
fraud, corruption,
money laundering*



Also inside:

Kgalema Motlanthe: Criminality and Corruption in the ANC
Land and Heritage: Digging for Cultural Roots



Tribute to a stalwart – one year on

*The Institute for African Alternatives remembers our former Director, Professor Ben Turok, on the anniversary of his passing on 9 December 2019. Below is the conclusion of the last editorial he wrote for **New Agenda**.*



“Our huge inequalities in wealth are intolerable, including the incredible gap between top managers and employees. Our legacy of social discrimination based on colour is unacceptable, including the persisting divide between affluent suburbs and desolate townships. Our state-owned enterprises, which are supposed to be engines for development, are actually serving as employment agencies for a small overpaid middle class. The public service has been allowed to slip into a dream walk where form filling and token effort is enough to bring in a stable income for officials.

All this points to an urgent need for civil society and progressive intellectuals to raise their voices and demand a much more serious effort by all concerned to rebuild our country on a better foundation. Let us work on that.” – Prof Ben Turok, Editorial, *New Agenda* Issue 75, 2019

Rest in peace
26 June 1927 – 9 December 2019

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New Agenda is a publication of the **Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA)**

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Meet our new Director

The Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) is delighted to welcome Zunaid Moolla as our new Director, replacing the late Professor Ben Turok who passed away in December 2019. Zunaid is already a member of the IFAA family; except for a brief spell from April last year to now, having served as the Deputy Editor of New Agenda magazine since the beginning of 2017.

He brings back to IFAA a lifetime of political experience, most of it spent outside the country in Canada where he moved at the age of 19 to escape the attentions of Apartheid's security police. By the time he left South Africa he had already undergone a fairly tumultuous induction as a young activist, having been detained and interrogated as a 16-year-old schoolboy. This was in the late 1960s, when Apartheid was at its peak, defended by a ruthless security establishment.

He left for Canada after passing matric on a second attempt. He failed the first time because he handed in a blank history examination paper to register his contempt for the pro-Apartheid history curriculum taught at that time.

His political awakening at Roodepoort Indian High School was enriched under the tutelage of one of his teachers, Ahmed Timol, an underground member of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the South African Communist Party and among the first

detainees to be murdered by the South African security police.

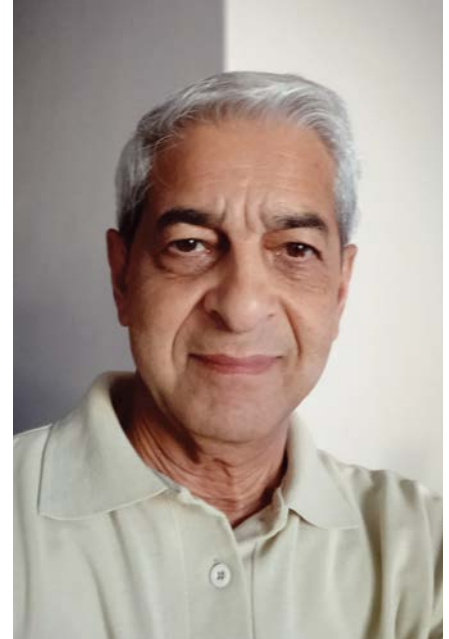
His first few years in Canada were a "life changing challenge". Beds for the night were provided by members of the South African Indian expat community. As welcoming as that was, he missed his family, friends and home in South Africa deeply. After studying political science at Carleton University in Ottawa, he went through spells of unemployment and survived by working night shift in a lumber yard, as a taxi driver and janitor until he found firm positions in the Canadian federal and provincial governments. In 1983 he moved to New York City where he enrolled at the New School for Social Research. He graduated two years later with a Master's Degree in Political Economy.

When he returned to South Africa in 1992 - "the change I had been waiting for all my life, it was a new beginning" - he had an impressive set of skills in governance and economics to contribute to the emerging democracy.

He was responsible for training the members of the first democratic parliament in what they would need to know about economics. Zunaid was also one of the members of the Macro-Economic Research Group (MERG), which worked on formulating a detailed macroeconomic and social policy framework for the new South Africa.

A think-tank comprising economists from multiple continents, MERG advocated for a state-led, pro-growth approach to macroeconomic policy. The MERG proposals offered a radical vision of the future of South Africa which required direct intervention to urgently address the imbalances that our democracy had inherited.

When MERG dissolved, Zunaid became Executive Director of its successor, the National Institute for



“

He wants to see IFAA as 'the pre-eminent organisation with ideas for transformation and for translating policy into practical strategies'.

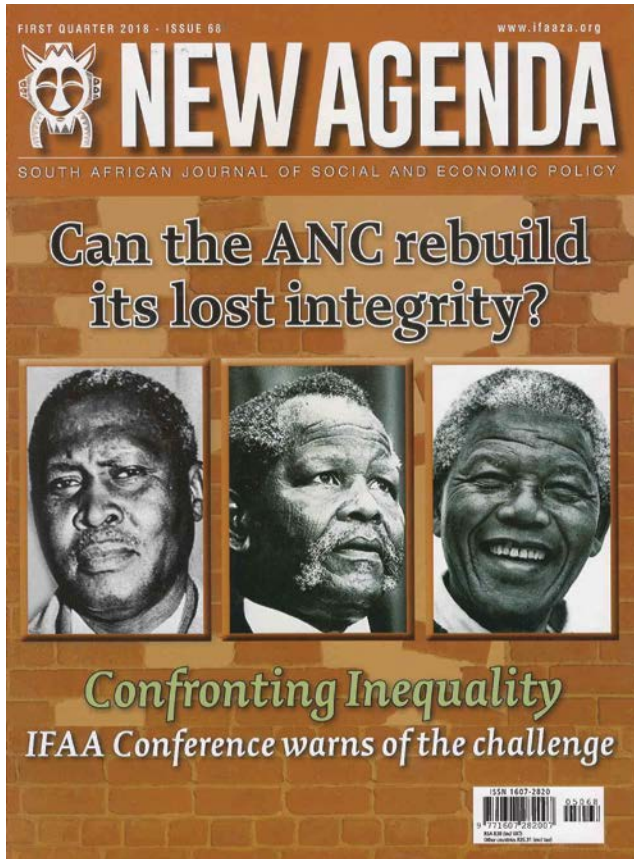
Economic Policy. He continues to share these skills, not only at IFAA, but also at the Training for Transformation Programme at the Grail Centre in Kleinmond outside Cape Town.

Zunaid brings fresh ideas to IFAA about the role of the organisation during this time of crisis in South Africa. He wants to see IFAA become "the pre-eminent organisation with ideas for transformation and for translating policy into practical strategies". **NA**

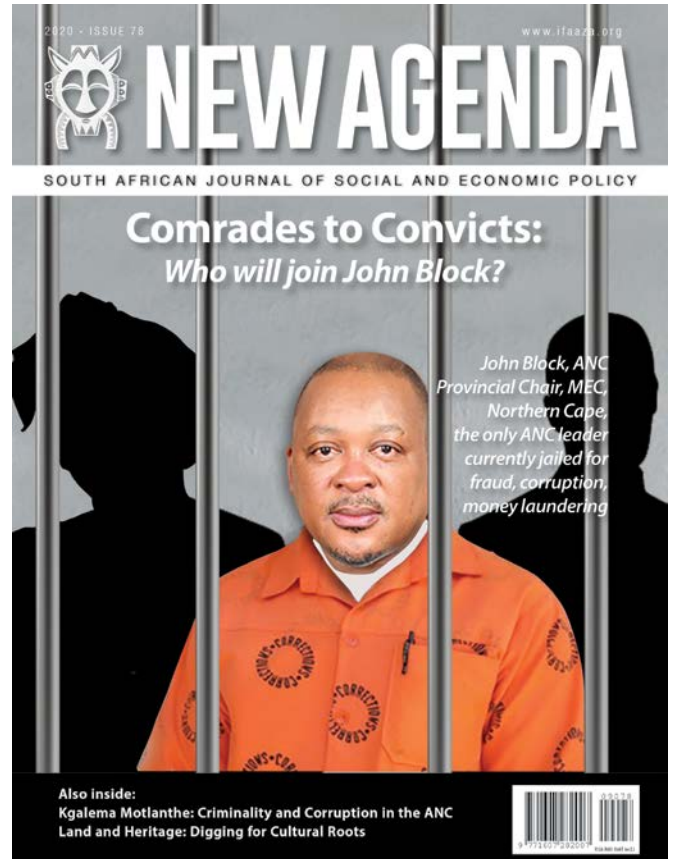
A tale of two covers

By Guest Editor Dr Martin Nicol

January 2018:
Can the ANC rebuild its lost integrity?



December 2020:
Apparently not.



In early 2018, Ben Turok reflected in his New Agenda editorial comment on the outcomes of the ANC leadership contest and the election to top positions of “some people who clearly do not represent the interests of the mass of the people”.

The ANC Stalwarts and Veterans, he said, would get no recognition for their efforts to restore the integrity in the movement. They would have to reach out to other forces seeking change away from “the rot in the state system, in government and within the ANC itself”.

Three years on, things have got worse. In September 2020 Judge Raymond Zondo was quoted in *Business Day* as saying: “...there are no indications that [corruption] is slowing down. It

seems there are people who do not care. They want their share of the corruption”.

We wanted to put the faces of these people on the cover of *New Agenda*. But it has proved impossible because no one has been found guilty in a court of law – as they say. The evidence is there, the sworn testimony of witnesses, but it is all in the passive voice: Public funds were stolen.

Judge Zondo, heading the State Capture Inquiry, commented on three specific instances of corruption in the



ANC-controlled government of the Free State. More than R500 million was paid – illegally – for a housing project when no houses were built. Then there were the asbestos and Estina/Vrede projects:

It is very concerning because the government is there to ensure people get the services they need. A few weeks ago we heard evidence about the asbestos project. I heard evidence that the job could have been done for a cost of R21m but the [Free State] provincial government gave the job to a joint venture for more than R250m.

There is very little, if any work, that the joint venture did. To make it worse, there was no removal of asbestos roofs, just counting.

Leave that aside, I have also heard evidence about the Vrede dairy farm, which was meant to benefit black farmers. There, too, the people who were meant to be beneficiaries – I heard evidence that they never got anything, yet millions and millions of rands were paid out.

We know there are criminals looting the resources of the nation. We know that ANC politicians and state officials who are ANC members are involved – as payers and as payees. The ANC controls the national government, eight of nine provinces and most local authorities. The ANC itself is implicated in wrongdoing against the people.

The rot is in all spheres of government.

Zondo has said: “[The evidence] does

not necessarily mean the Free State was the worst because we have not heard other provinces and we will not because that kind of job needs years to do.”

Far from trying to rebuild its integrity – lost long before 2018 – the ANC has opened its doors to criminal enterprise. This harsh conclusion is doubly supported by the COVID-19 corruption publicised by the Auditor General and pursued by the press. A pandemic has not deterred the criminal activity.

Even President Ramaphosa recognises the situation. He wrote in August, to ANC members: “Today, the ANC and its leaders stand accused of corruption. The ANC may not stand alone in the dock, but it does stand as Accused No 1.”

We would like to believe the President’s word that the ANC National Executive Committee has decided “to make a break with the past and to act”. **NA**

New Agenda will be online from February 2021

The Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) has decided to make New Agenda available to all, free of charge.

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For 18 years we have published *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* to provide you, our readers, with informed and impartial analysis that you can rely on. We publish sound and reliable information that you need to help enable you to call those in power to account.

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Former President Motlanthe speaks the truth – to us, and to power

What Kgalema Motlanthe has to say

State corruption has reached new heights – or rather depths – with the criminal abuse of funds meant for those worst hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa's poorest and most vulnerable and those who risked their lives on the frontline. Decent people in our country are in disbelief and despair. President Cyril Ramaphosa has called in the Hawks and some individuals have been marched off in handcuffs. So what is the state of criminality and corruption now, and do we dare to hope?

New Agenda interviewed former President and the chairperson of the board of the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA), Kgalema Motlanthe, who spoke of what should have been a very different ANC, one that operates deep within the community. He warned that factionalism within the party is preventing the ANC from being the organisation it was meant to be. In this frank interview he shares his regrets and doubts about the ruling party and the state it currently is in.

NEW AGENDA:

Is the ANC a criminal organisation?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

Any organisation, including the ANC, is always more than the sum total of its members. That mitigates the question as to whether we can say it is a criminal organisation. No, it is not a criminal organisation. However, the conduct of members who have been given responsibilities, in all three spheres of government, have been found wanting because as public representatives they come into [contact with] certain information about planned projects and so on. If that information is used to advantage some people who then [take] kickbacks, that is corruption and that's part of the problem we are dealing with. That is part of the problem that gives the ANC a bad name. But the ANC itself as an organisation is not a criminal organisation, it doesn't desire to participate in organised acts

of criminal activity. Given its history, its mores and norms and its ethics acquired over decades, it has a standing above what the individual members do.

NEW AGENDA:

Has the ANC been captured, by elements within it?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

The party seems to legitimise the existence of factions. Ordinarily factions and those kinds of tendencies are frowned upon and not countenanced in the organisation. Now every day we are confronted by views and actions which are tendentious. There is the recent example of certain groups from the Free State province who demonstrated outside Luthuli House [ANC headquarters] in support of the Secretary General [Ace Magashule] and then another group from the same province came to demonstrate, calling for the Secretary General to step aside.



“

... the ANC is not a criminal organisation; given its history, its mores and norms and its ethics acquired over decades, it has a standing above what the individual members do.

You have these polarised, factionalised actions and views expressed in public from time to time which communicates the message that the factions are given prominence and eminence in the ANC at this point in time. The constitution of the ANC doesn't allow for this kind of thing. That is not the mode of existence of the ANC if we follow how the ANC is structured. But, yes, we can say the ANC has been captured by factions within it.

NEW AGENDA:

Our President, in a letter to the party membership, metaphorically referred to the ANC as accused number 1 in the dock. Do you agree? Hypothetically, what then would be the charges, and what would the judge in such a case rule?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

The standing and prestige of the ANC has been severely damaged by evidence adduced in courts of law as well as the Zondo Commission, and even in public spaces and general discourse many South Africans feel that the ANC has let them down. Those who expected the asbestos programmes to be addressed, those who are without potable water, and literally draw water from rivulets that are used by livestock



and other animals ... these concerns of a broad section of the population leave some feeling that the ANC has let them down because of the high levels of crime and corruption. I think that when the President in his letter stated that the ANC is accused number 1, the factions of course immediately repeated that and threw it back at the President in very strong terms. But in a manner of speaking I think there is a deep sense of betrayal of trust. Many people who trusted the ANC feel betrayed by their experience and the debate revolves around two broad issues, corruption on the one hand and poor service or complete absence of public service [on the other]. Hypothetically, I think in such a case we do definitely find the ANC guilty of betraying trust among voters and ordinary South Africans.

NEW AGENDA:

Can the ANC rebuild its lost integrity, as our late editor and director, Professor Ben Turok, once asked in this publication?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

The ANC as an organisation in the early days of its history was regarded as the natural political home of those

who were oppressed under apartheid and those who value democracy and therefore opposed apartheid. Now, after the unbanning of the ANC, it is an organisation of card-carrying members, whereas in its history it had the broadest cross-section of South Africans identifying with its strategic goals. Now of course the ANC is exclusive to card-carrying members, and few are elected into any leadership structures. Your only opportunity to participate in the political life of the ANC is at branch level and when general members' meetings are convened, but those are rare and far apart. The majority of the ANC's members do not have the opportunity to participate in its political life. We have a situation where the elected leadership structures, which were meant to coordinate and lead the general membership, have now substituted themselves for the general membership.

This exclusivist approach means that the ANC is that much poorer. It is unable to benefit from the inputs and thinking of its own general membership and as such it is therefore increasingly isolated from the South African population because the branch, which is strategically located within a ward within the community, is not ➤



functioning as it ought to. So the meetings are exclusively those of the leadership and they deal with matters esoterically, so to speak.

As to the integrity of the ANC, there is a structure called the Integrity Commission, but what we have observed is that the structure is burdened by issues that ought to be addressed by the elected leadership. Yet because it is factionalised it tends to refer those kinds of issues, which should be the purview of elected leadership, to the commission. The commission therefore is unable to deal with issues of integrity. For example, in the province of Limpopo when the government and the premier presented corrugated iron structures to people, in my book the integrity commission of the ANC should be addressing that kind of issue, not how much each structure cost or whatever. [It should] call its premier and the chair of the province and enquire where such a political attitude comes from. Is this how it views the citizens in Limpopo, is this what they deserve, and can the ANC only provide that kind of service? If they fail that test of integrity the commission should say you are not proper to hold leadership positions because your political attitude is flawed. Those leaders ought to be removed from the position of

leadership if that is their attitude and if that is how they view ordinary people. I am using this example to explain what I understand by the word integrity. That is an instance where the ANC acted without integrity.

And so to the question, can the ANC rebuild its lost integrity? Theoretically yes it can, if these kinds of actions are called out and those behind them suffer the consequences because the ANC exists to solve the problems of South Africans.

NEW AGENDA:

You say ordinary people are no longer involved in participation and decision making in the ANC. Do you think we should be returning to a structure like the [United Democratic Front] UDF where ordinary people did participate, on the ground, in their streets, in their communities? Was it a mistake to dismantle the UDF in 1991?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

The decision to disband the UDF at that time was really informed by the desire to create a more unifying structure and the assumption was that the general members' meetings [would] be held on a regular basis and that the members of a branch in a ward would concern themselves with the wellbeing of the community. That is what the

“

Many people who trusted the ANC feel betrayed ... I think we definitely find the ANC guilty of betraying trust among voters and ordinary South Africans.

UDF used to do. Remember the UDF was a front of many non-governmental organisations. It brought together trade unions, civic and religious bodies, sporting bodies and all of that. I think the issue was that apartheid in its brutal form denied ordinary South Africans [the opportunity] to participate in the body politic of South Africa. I think once 1994 happened there was a mistaken view that this is it, now we are in a position to repeal all of the draconian laws and create an environment in which people can participate in the body politic and therefore the ANC is home to all those who associate with its principles. I am saying this was the assumption because the ANC at that point did not say that if we are to be [a] truly representative organisation then we must open up to all South Africans to come into the fold.

In the days of illegality and brutal apartheid only the daring could participate and therefore the majority of those who were not as daring as the others delegated their right of participation to those who were willing to risk life and limb. Now, after 1994, the ANC should have said that all along we have been saying that we waged the struggle in the name and on behalf of the people. Now, where are the



people? The people must have a say in how they want to be structured, what organisation they want to belong to and all [must] make a contribution towards the building of a new South Africa. The ANC did not pause to ask that question and so it remained an organisation which operated like a political party. Members must join. Not even COSATU or SACP members were regarded as ANC members. You had to join the ANC as individuals and this is what has robbed the ANC of its broad perspectives and views. That way it increasingly became a narrow-based organisation. Because it was locally based, with a national leadership, the UDF was a truly representative structure and therefore people had the opportunity to participate in the life of the UDF, but [in] the ANC's branches it's a struggle because the branch is not providing the kind of support and service to residents in the ward.

If somebody experiences violence in their home they have no way to report it except to the police. If the ANC branch was focusing on real community issues it would have a [phone] number that is available 24/7 and manned by five or so comrades who would take turns to listen to messages, to respond and so on. If a branch was really on top of issues it would know that this call, this distress call, comes from such a number down such a road and so when we receive this distress call the nearest comrades, trusted comrades, [would] go there and attend to the issue. This message would be relayed, response would be prompt. In my view that is the only way the ANC can restore and rebuild its integrity and standing in the eyes of ordinary South Africans.

In certain instances there will be an elderly couple who must still run errands. If there are young people in the branch of the ANC every day without fail one [must] go past and just check if there are any errands to run, if all is well, and if there is a problem the structure should be activated to respond to that problem.

That way you don't have to wait for the eve of elections and go door to door and distribute t-shirts and so on because I am afraid that in the near future people will simply say we have a pile of t-shirts but can't you do better than that? In other words, the interaction would be reduced to literally patronage, trading on the votes of the electorate rather than serving the residents, being at their service all of the time.

NEW AGENDA:

Does the ANC's constitution match our country's, and are there instances in which they create a conflict of interest for party members?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

Rule 25 of the ANC constitution defines what constitutes misconduct or an offence in terms of the constitution. Now recently I have seen and read [the] ANC spokesperson saying the organisation is still going to develop policy on how internal campaigning to leadership positions should be conducted and the use of money in that context, and I think what are they talking about? The ANC constitutions, right up to the conference in 2012, had a rule, rule 25. 5, subsection u. I am trying to quote it verbatim – which says giving, collecting and raising funds for campaigning within the ANC with the aim of influencing outcomes of the conference or a meeting is misconduct which must set disciplinary procedures in motion. So the use of money for campaigning for political decisions was an offence in its constitution right up to 2012. Now between the 2012 conference and the [2017] Nasrec conference this rule was deleted from the constitution. It is not there now, as I speak to you. This was not amended by conference at all. It was just deleted at the point when the new constitution was sent to printers.

NEW AGENDA:

Was it a unilateral decision by some individuals?

KGALEMA MOTLANTHE:

Yes, because this was seen as a headache. This was to legitimise the use of money to buy people and votes and so on. That is now permissible. This speaks to how the ANC policies were manipulated. This rule was clearly seen as a headache and in order to create the space for vote buying it had to be deleted. It could not be presented to conference as a proposed amendment because then [conference] would want a motivation.

I have raised [this] with the President, said to him ... in your response to questions in parliament [you] admitted in writing once [that] Bosasa money was for your campaign for leadership so you have made that admission. It is going to hamper your efforts of fighting against corruption because each time you say to the NEC anyone who is facing corruption charges must step aside, they will throw this into your face. They will say to you, well and good but let's start with you. Read this constitution, this rule and the manner in which it was deleted and work out how you are going to provide leadership on this issue.

Ordinarily the constitution of the ANC [stipulates] that six months ahead of conference ad hoc committees must be established for receiving [and] collating proposals to amend the constitution because such proposals once collated must be circulated to general membership three months ahead of conference. That's what the constitution stipulates. This did not happen in respect of this rule. Because it did not happen ordinarily it would just take one member to say 'look comrades, there is something that happened to the constitution here which is unconstitutional and therefore it is a nullity and the rule is reinstated. Ordinarily you deal with it in that way. But in the factionalised environment others will respond by saying conference itself is a nullity. It is a difficult one, but leaders are elected to lead. **NA**

Stop the rot!

By Rev Frank Chikane

A paragraph cannot do justice to the biography of the Reverend Frank Chikane who has played many roles in the struggle for democracy. Outspoken ANC stalwart known for speaking out against corruption in the party, he has served as Director General in the Office of the President under Thabo Mbeki, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, moderator in the World Council of Churches, international president of the Apostolic Faith Mission and until recently pastor of its Naledi church in Soweto. Chikane was prominent in the United Democratic Front and constantly harassed by the apartheid security establishment, which tried to poison him. The author of many books and winner of many awards and internal accolades, his name is synonymous with the struggle against Apartheid.

Create a new people's movement of all the people of South Africa! That is the clarion call from UDF and ANC veteran Frank Chikane, who has spent years leading the fight for transformation. He warns that the corrupt and criminal within the ruling party appear set on bringing the whole country down with them should they fall.

There are among us those who are dead set on bringing down not only the ANC, but the whole country rather than face the consequences of their corrupt and fraudulent activities of the last decade and more. They plan to do the "Samson thing". Like Samson, who collapsed the pillars holding up the temple, and brought the entire structure crashing down in a pile of rubble, they wish to

bring down the ANC and the country together with it. This the people of South Africa must resist. This they must stop, now and not later.

Most of those who have such intentions are found within the governing party, the African National Conference (ANC). To bring it down you have to be strategically next to the central pillars of a structure that holds the building together.

They have looted the coffers of the state and raided the vaults of key strategic State-Owned Entities (SOEs), not only to enrich themselves, but to build a war-chest to ensure that they remain in power, or continue to control the levers of power in government to ensure they never go to jail. Some of the loot is used for patronage to secure their political support.

To make their rotten strategy look legitimate, they distort the "radical socio-economic transformation" policy of the ANC, which is about the people, into a policy, now dubbed 'radical economic transformation' (RET), for the enrichment of individuals, families, friends and their political factions. This

is done at the expense of the poorest of the poor in the country, who continue to live in abject poverty 26 years into a free non-racial democratic South Africa.

It is now a commonly known fact that the British-based Bell Pottinger public relations (PR) company was contracted to develop the strategy to achieve and implement this. According to leaked documents, the PR company was to develop a campaign with a "narrative that grabs the attention of the grassroots population who must identify with it, connect with it and feel united by it". One does not need to be a sophisticated analyst to see this for what it is – a pseudo-revolutionary militancy that is used to shield the worst cases of corruption and fraud which have brought the country's economy to its knees.

Today, South African Airways – the national airline that was once the pride of the country – is on the brink of collapse. We have many ailing SOEs that are draining the resources of the country to bail themselves out of bankruptcy, having failed to use these resources to radically change the lot of



the people of South Africa. This rot was aided by those who were (and some still are) at the highest levels of government, nationally, provincially and at local government levels. Their actions have contributed to weakening our national economy, relegating it to 'junk status' well before the coronavirus hit us and worsened the situation.

Politically, many have abandoned the strategic objectives of the national democratic revolution (NDR) which aimed to better the lives of those who were victims of apartheid. Instead, they now are engaged in a struggle for power at all costs to avoid going to jail. In Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) this has deteriorated into political assassinations, which would be seen as a major national crisis in any other country. Strangely enough South Africans seem not to be alarmed by it. With more than 20 municipal election candidates killed in 2016, results were announced without even a mention of this tragic development. There was not even an expression of condolence to the families who had lost their loved ones and children who were left parentless. Maybe the citizens of this country, particularly KZN, have become numbed to the violence. There are signs that this culture is beginning

to extend beyond the borders of KZN; if not checked, that will soon become the way of life in the country.

Socially, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the fault lines of our post-1994 society by exposing the worst forms of poverty and inequalities that define themselves in racial terms. The deep racial divide has been brought to the surface for all to see. All of this is threatening the future of the country and its people. In the midst of this life and death crisis some saw an opportunity to enrich themselves through the generous state contracts intended for personal protective equipment (PPEs), even if it risked the lives of the frontline workers, patients and the country as a whole.

Such people engaged in these acts without thinking that they could be called to account. They also thought that by capturing the ANC and key strategic parts of the state, like the intelligence services, the leadership of the police and the national prosecuting authority, and with the war-chest they had built through corrupt means, they were untouchable and invincible.

Some of us had warned the leadership that "power does come to an end", and that whilst they have it they

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My expectation was that the branches and members of the ANC would be the ones that would lead the march against the rot that is threatening the very existence of their organisation.

should "use it for the benefit of the people and not for your self-interests or the interest of your family, friends and factions". We warned that "they must not engage in criminal activities thinking that they would be in power for ever". But these warnings fell on deaf ears.

Now the Zondo Commission on state capture is closing in on those who were responsible for this rot. The state is succeeding in cleaning and strengthening the National Prosecuting Authority. The police service is able to act without fear or favour. Those who are in the line of sight of these charges are becoming more desperate. They appear dead set on destabilising the country and bringing it down with them. They want to hold the country hostage with threats that they will reveal all. We should dare them to do so. The country will be better off if all the criminals who are looting the coffers of the state paid back the money and went to jail.

This is where "we the people" come in! I have said before that the top six leaders of the governing party, the ANC, have the first and primary responsibility to stop this dangerous trend that is threatening not only the very existence of the ANC, but also the future of the ➤

country. If they fail, then the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC is the next line of defence. If it fails, the branches of the ANC, which form “the basic structure of the organisation” where members “exercise their basic democratic rights to discuss and formulate policy”, must be the last line of defence within the ANC.

My expectation was that the branches and members of the ANC would be the ones that would lead the march against the rot that is threatening the very existence of their organisation. I expected them to take to the streets and say, “no, not in our name”. I expected that even if they could not do it for themselves, they would do it to preserve the legacy of their organisation and its legendary leaders – Luthuli, Tambo, Mbeki, Sisulu, Kathrada, Ngoyi, Joseph, and all. This is beginning to emerge, but not enough yet to stop the suicidal brigade. If branches of the ANC and its members fail, it will mean that they are also captured and serve the interests of those who have deviated from the trajectory the ANC set to serve the interest of the people, particularly the poor.

The people of South Africa should not wait until the rot within the ANC brings us all down as it will be a huge challenge to rise up again. The people must prepare and position themselves to be the last line of defence for themselves and the country. This will require all of us to move beyond our own self-interest, group interest, and even party partisan positions and interests. We must focus on defending the country from the rotten few within the ANC and society in general. This will require us to unite to save the country and return it to the trajectory that was designed to create an equitable non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) started on this journey as early as 2016 by establishing the “Unburdening Panel” when the

treasonable acts of state capture surfaced. The Panel was to allow those who had information to come forward under relatively safe conditions.

The outcomes were frightening, and interaction with the leadership of the ANC indicated that it was totally paralysed and could not stop these treasonable acts or deal with the rot.

Having resolved at its National Conference that the government was morally illegitimate – a radical position for a democratically elected government – the SACC convened a National Convention of South Africa which produced the “Civil Society Manifesto”, launched in March 2019. The Manifesto is premised on the “Post-Apartheid Promise” of “a just, reconciled, peaceful, equitable and sustainable society, free of racism, tribalism, xenophobia and gender prejudices; free of corruption and deprivation; with food and shelter for every citizen, and where every child born can grow to its God-given potential”.

In the words of the General Secretary of the SACC, “The SACC and the Nation will not stand idly by and watch a reversal of our country’s good gains”.¹

That is why the SACC declared September 2020 a month to campaign against COVID-19 corruption with a clarion call that “Corruption is not our Heritage” and must be stopped! It mobilised other faith communities and civil society entities to work together on this campaign. Civil society groups, including Veterans and Stalwarts of the ANC, engaged in similar campaigns by mobilising all sectors of society to resist the capture of the state, which was at its height between 2016 and 2017.

To stop this rot, we the people of South Africa must unite in action. We must come together notwithstanding our differences and irrespective of colour or political affiliation or persuasion.

The call for ‘unity in action’ reminds us of the January 8, 1983 Statement of the ANC, which was amplified by OR Tambo, then President of the ANC, in the party’s

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It is time to stop the corrupt and rotten from pulling down the pillars on which South Africa is built, to bring the country down with them.

journal, *Sechaba*, and on Radio Freedom. Then the crisis in the country had reached a critical stage. The Apartheid regime was becoming desperate as power was slipping from its hands. It required the unity of all the people of South Africa to save the country – blacks and whites, from all political expressions and structures in our society, the labour movement and the business sector, and all community based organisations countrywide, including all religious formations and expressions.

This resulted in the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. Within a short time the UDF had grown – no part of the country was left untouched. Even the notorious security police and intelligence services could not cope with it. Maybe this might be the time to establish something that resembles it.

To achieve the objective of mobilising the country from the bottom up, the SACC adopted the local (ward) based form of ecumenism. This was embodied in its strategy to minister effectively to all the people of South Africa in a collaborative and inclusive way. All churches in South Africa are expected to work together with communities wherever they find themselves. The vision is to organise churches and community organisations and developmental entities to work together, ward-to-ward, and empower



the communities to take charge of their lives, starting with early childhood development (ECD), and embracing schools and health facilities. The targets are basic services and poverty alleviation by working together to monitor local government audits (Auditor General Reports). During the COVID-19 pandemic this Pastoral Strategy became useful in the form of Local Ecumenical Action Networks (LEANs). Similar efforts of this nature are “Cape Town Together” Community Action Networks (CANs) and “Gauteng Together” CANs.

The inclination of those who occupy public positions to enrich themselves is

widespread. If not vigorously combated, it is destined to be the biggest threat to South Africa’s revolutionary change.”²

It seems to me that this is the time for *Ke Nako*, to work together as the people of South Africa to create a people’s movement of all the people of South Africa. It is the time to stop the rot. It is time to stop the corrupt and rotten from pulling down the pillars on which South Africa is built, to bring the country down with them.

KE NAKO! Aluta Continua.

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ENDNOTES

1. <https://mailchi.mp/bocc8f956f30/conveningsa-civil-society-manifesto-published-statement-city-press-2-february-2020>
2. (Para 39, *Umrabulo* Special Edition, draft 12112020.pdf) < Available at <https://www.ortamboschool.org.za/umrabulo-journal-downloads/> > **NA**

New Agenda asks COSATU: What is the state of our nation?

The view from COSATU

Ben Turok wrote in *New Agenda* **five years** ago: “Economic crime is at a ‘pandemic level’ in South Africa ... asset misappropriation ... procurement fraud ... bribery and corruption ... As much as we applaud the anti-corruption stance of Pravin Gordhan, our brave minister of finance, we seem to be running up an escalator that is quickly moving down – a modern version of Sisyphus.

“The harsh reality is that corruption has seeped ... into all three spheres of government. ...the top layers of government have signalled that looting and cronyism are okay ... opportunists and tenderpreneurs have abused

government procurement processes to feed fat pockets... ¹

Five years on, and *New Agenda* asked for comment from Tony Ehrenreich (former COSATU Western Cape Regional Secretary) and Matthew Parks (COSATU Parliamentary Coordinator).

NEW AGENDA:

What is organised labour’s viewpoint on the persistent and pervasive corruption that South Africa is seeing in its Alliance partner, the ANC?

TONY EHRENREICH:

The widespread corruption in South Africa in the public and private sector has undermined the project of building a united society to confront the challenges ➤

of the past. This corruption has been pervasive and entails huge amounts of money in the private sector, public sector and government political leadership, as well as in civil society organisations. The architecture of South Africa's transition from Apartheid to democracy has created the environment for the political leadership to get caught up in corruption, as their greed is revealed.

This corruption has consumed the ANC and dented its credibility and the only way for the ANC to restore itself is to jail the corrupt. Failure to act decisively against the corrupt will see the ANC lose the popular vote of the people in South Africa given labour's deep unhappiness with the widespread corruption and its desire to see the corrupt prosecuted, as they mainly steal from the poor. If the ANC is seen to protect the thieves or act softly against them, then COSATU would have to work in a way that may see the ANC lose power, so the corrupt go to jail. The societal outrage against corruption and the revelation that so many in the ANC are involved in corruption will be a key issue in the next election.

The only way for the ANC to survive is to prosecute the corrupt, urgently and decisively, lest it loses at the polls and then becomes incapable of directing the transformation of society. The commissions and investigations are no longer acceptable to society. What we need is decisive arrests and convictions. The lifestyle audits must be done and everyone unable to justify the source of their obscene wealth must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

If the Alliance is to survive and lead the transformation in society, then we must, as a matter of urgency, address the corruption that plagues our country. We must, however, also address the moral corruption that sees the levels of inequality deepen under an ANC government. This would require a complete review of the wage gaps that exist and the perks and salaries of political leadership.

NEW AGENDA:

On 7 October 2020, COSATU went on a nationwide general strike with SAFTU (which is a NUMSA-aligned federation). This was in response to ANC corruption and the COVID-19 induced jobs bloodbath of 2.2 million. Mounting corruption cases in the ANC have highlighted the deep crisis of the party. Does cooperation with SAFTU, while distancing itself from the corrupt ruling party, not suggest this is really now the time for COSATU to reconsider the Alliance?

MATTHEW PARKS:

COSATU is a members' mandating and democratic organisation. We receive our mandate from our members. Our affiliates at each congress have reaffirmed COSATU's Alliance with the ANC and SACP. Only a congress could review or amend that.

Yes, there are many problems with the ANC. It has to cleanse itself if it hopes to survive and retain the confidence of voters, including workers. The ball is in its court.

However, no other political formation exists in South Africa that speaks to the demands of workers, except the ANC. Yes, there are huge problems but equally on many fronts workers' demands have been won through COSATU's alliance with the ANC.

SAFTU issuing a statement in support of a COSATU strike would not warrant COSATU to cancel its Alliance with the ANC.

COSATU has always championed the unity of workers. We have worked closely with FEDUSA and NACTU, which are not part of the Alliance. If SAFTU wants to work with COSATU, we would welcome that. Just as we [welcome] support that we received from other organisations for our strike.

NEW AGENDA:

Does the general strike mark a shift in relations between COSATU and SAFTU? What can be expected moving forward as areas of collaborative action?

MATTHEW PARKS:

That remains to be seen. We hope it will. The unity of workers was the central platform upon which COSATU was founded. COSATU's position remains one industry, one union, one country, one federation.

This is not a once-off event. Unity takes time and concrete programmes. From our side we have always supported the unity of workers.

NEW AGENDA:

There appears to be a concerted leaning towards continued austerity to respond to the crisis in the economy and long-term impacts of the pandemic. What kinds of demands is COSATU supporting? For instance, are there demands for a wealth tax, debt cancellation, increased public spending?

MATTHEW PARKS:

COSATU has continuously tabled detailed proposals to Parliament, Nedlac and the Alliance, and in public, on how we believe the state, State-Owned Entities (SOEs), the economy and the country can be fixed.

Yes, the tax regime needs to be more progressive, remove loopholes, crack down on tax and customs evasion, shift the burden to the rich and away from the poor. This would include elements of a wealth tax, for example on inheritance and estate duties.

However, there is little point in increasing taxes if the massive holes in the state, for example corruption and wasteful expenditure, are not fixed. Otherwise whatever is raised will simply be stolen.

Banks and other lenders should provide solidarity and ease debt burdens on consumers, businesses and the state, for example through reducing interest rates, extending payment periods, reductions and cancellations.

COSATU believes that a reckless austerity programme will suffocate the economy when it needs to be stimulated. Yes, finances are extremely



limited but [they] are available.

This includes eliminating corruption and wasteful expenditure, further capacitating SARS [South African Revenue Service] to crack down on tax and customs evasion, reprioritising existing budgetary allocations in support of economic investments and job creation, rebuilding the SOEs so that they cease to be a burden to the state and mobilising private sector investment, especially in infrastructure.

NEW AGENDA:

What kinds of alliances and strategies are needed now to respond to the numerous challenges facing workers and society?

MATTHEW PARKS:

2020 has shown the need for unions to adapt to the new normal. Old methods are not sufficient. Workers are likely to face a flood of retrenchments and wage cuts. Unions need to develop strategies and programmes that provide clear alternatives to retrenchments as well as stabilise and grow their sectors of the economy. Unions must ramp up their recruitment strategies and forge tighter alliances with other unions.

Unions must drive the development of social compacts with government and business as this is the only way to solve the many challenges facing workers and society.

NEW AGENDA:

Remember COSATU's "September Commission" scenarios of 1997.² Turns out they were right on with the middle scenario – called 'Skorokoro', except that they came to a head in 2019 rather than 1999. Is South Africa now the Skorokoro nation COSATU envisaged? Any comments?

MATTHEW PARKS:

Sadly yes, we are at the fork in the road where that is a distinct danger. It is up to all of us to work to prevent that from happening. Or we will all face the consequences.

Editor's note – Key features of COSATU's 'Skorokoro' scenario

In the Skorokoro scenario there was some economic growth and modest delivery. The main features were, on the one hand, increasing social fragmentation and conflict, and on the other hand, the rapid self-empowerment of black business and the black middle-class. South Africa was pictured as a Skorokoro zigzagging from problem to problem.

Some houses and some jobs were created, but unemployment stuck at 30%. Despite these problems, there has been rapid emergence of black business in these years, and the expansion of a black middle-class. Newspapers are filled with reports of new millionaires, new corporate deals and high salaries of government officials and consultants.

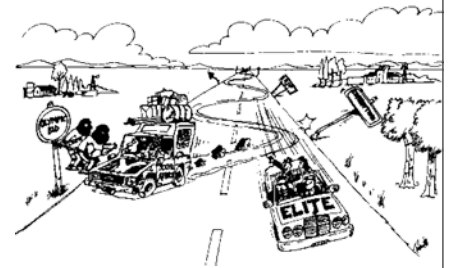
Ethnicity, racism, provincialism and regionalism become very powerful as

a result of lack of delivery and conflict over resources. This makes it even more difficult to deliver. Patronage and corruption become the order of the day in government and in civil society.

On the ground there is a lack of cooperation and violent conflict in communities and on the shop floor. The rainbow nation does not exist.

The ANC zigzags from policy to policy. It announces privatisation, but backs down when workers take mass action. It announces a crackdown on corruption and crime, but takes no firm steps. It proposes a new tax on the wealthy, but changes its mind when they protest that this will discourage foreign investors. It regularly announces new measures to transform the public service, but keeps changing its policies under pressure from various constituencies.

There are repeated calls by business, other political parties and the press for the Tripartite Alliance to end. While



many leaders in the ANC think this would be a good idea, the dominant view is that breaking the Alliance would undermine support for the ANC and worsen the divisions in society.

In their secretariat report to the COSATU congress at the end of 2003, the federation's leadership states that there is a social crisis in South Africa: "The government lacks a vision of where we are going. There is no leadership in civil society. We are rapidly becoming a Skorokoro society, and we face the danger of becoming a Skorokoro union movement as well."

ENDNOTES

1. Ben Turok. 2016. "Dangerous Times," *New Agenda* editorial comment, First Quarter, Issue 61.
2. A Commission of Inquiry was appointed by COSATU in 1996, headed by Cde Connie September, to assess the trade union

movement's position in relation to changes in the labour market. The Commission reported in 1997, beginning with three scenarios to explore uncertainties and provoke discussion within the federation about the future of labour. The three scenarios were called The

desert, Skorokoro, and Pap, vleis and gravy. You can read the three scenarios here: <http://mediadon.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/The-Report-of-the-September-Commission-Chapter-1.pdf> **NA**

South Africa desperately needs Basic Income Support, now more than ever before

By Engenas Senona

Engenas Senona has a background in economics and has been active in the sphere of social protection for the past 12 years, focusing on social grants and Early Childhood Development. He was previously employed by the Department of Social Development and international agencies including the United Nations World Food Programme, Save the Children (South Africa) and UNICEF. He is an independent research consultant and the author of the report, *Basic Income Support: A Case for South Africa*, which was published by the Black Sash in July 2020. The report can be viewed at <http://www.blacksash.org.za/images/campaigns/basicincomesupport/BasicIncomeSupport2020.pdf>

The author argues that the current alarming increase in unemployment and subsequent shocking levels of poverty in South Africa could be drastically improved by the implementation of a universal income grant. Emergency relief funds distributed during the COVID-19 lock down, for those between the ages of 18 and 59 who are not eligible for any other grants, is a critical step towards this goal.

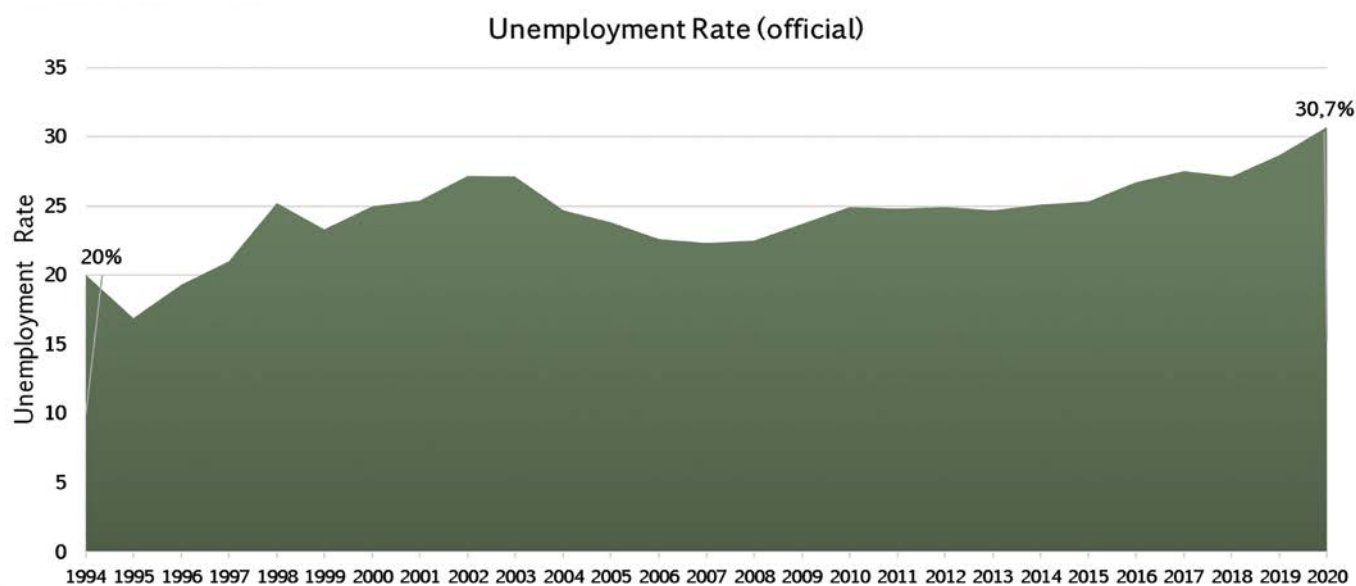
"I'm now convinced that the simplest approach will prove to be the most effective the solution to poverty is to abolish

it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income ... [The] dislocations in the market operation of our economy and the prevalence of discrimination thrust people into idleness and bind them into constant or frequent unemployment against their will ..."
Martin Luther King Jr. 1967.

It has been more than 50 years since Martin Luther King delivered this speech and most of the world today still faces the challenge of poverty and unemployment. South Africa is no different. Since the advent of democracy some 26 years ago, the country has struggled with the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. The country is ranked as one of the most income unequal countries in the world with a Gini coefficient of 63.9.¹ This has had an adverse effect on the reduction of extreme poverty, with more than 40% of

South Africa's population considered chronically poor at the lower bound national poverty line of R810 per month per person in 2019 prices.²

The country also has a high and persistent unemployment problem that government has failed to address over the past 26 years, as highlighted in the graph below. The official unemployment rate peaked at 30.7% at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with the unofficial rate, which includes discouraged workers, reaching over 42% (or 10.8 million adults).³ While employment has increased in absolute terms since the onset of democracy (from 7.9 million people in 1994 to 16.3 million in 2019), employment growth has not matched either population growth or the rate of worker supply. Consequently, employment as a share of the population aged 15 or older has fallen. The participation rate for this



Source: Statistics South Africa (own graph)

group fell from 45.7% in 2000 to 36.8% percent in 2019.⁴ This is a dramatic and alarming decline.

One of the government's responses to these challenges has been the social assistance programme (social grants), which provides monthly payments to poor and vulnerable South Africans, including the elderly from the age of 60 through the Older Persons' Grant, people with disabilities aged 18 to 59 years through the Disability Grant and children under the age of 18 through the Child Support Grant. There is no doubt that social grants have had a positive impact. In fact, studies have shown that removing social grants would result in worse rates of poverty and inequality in the country, and decrease the chances of these people actively looking for employment and finding it. Despite this, the programme has its shortfall. It does not cover the many poor and unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 59 years.

Currently, the only non-contributory social assistance (social grants) available to poor and unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 59 years is the Disability Grant (if you are disabled), the Foster Care Grant (up to

the age of 21), and the provision of the Social Relief of Distress Grant for up to six months in the case of destitution. In terms of contributory social insurance, those in formal employment can access the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) for a maximum of 12 months if they become unemployed. However, it should be noted that people working in the informal economy do not enjoy such a benefit. For a large majority, a day spent not working means no guaranteed income. This was highlighted during the country's COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Whilst the government would argue that the best way to solve this social security gap for those aged between 18 and 59 is the creation of jobs, history has shown that policy interventions have not increased employment opportunities nor decreased the unemployment rate. Current and former public job-creation interventions have not produced the desired results of reducing poverty and inequality. In essence, if we use South Africa's unemployment rate (which has remained stubbornly high) as a benchmark of success for these programmes and initiatives, it becomes clearer that these current labour market

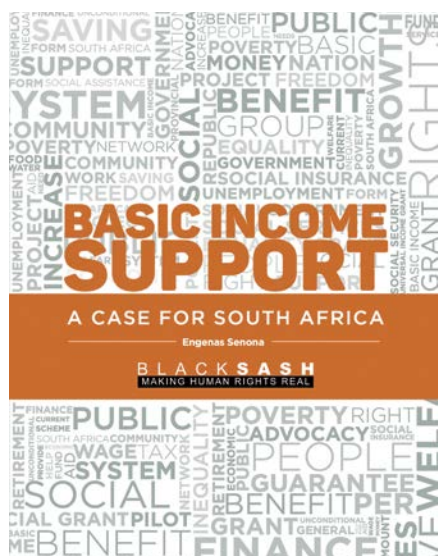
interventions need to be complemented by a more expansive social security system that responds to the needs of those rendered unable to support themselves and their dependents. A well-designed social security system should reduce risks associated with the inability of many to enter the labour market, long-term structural unemployment or loss of work. It should contribute to household income security and social cohesion.

WHAT IS BASIC INCOME SUPPORT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Basic Income Support (BIS) is the optimal solution to ensuring South Africa moves towards a complete social security system. BIS refers to "... an income paid by the state to each full member or accredited resident of a society, regardless of whether he or she wishes to engage in paid employment, or is rich or poor or, in other words, independently of any other sources of income that person might have, and irrespective of cohabitation arrangements in the domestic sphere."⁵ This definition refers to the ideal and what the country should strive to ➤

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... the definition of BIS does not specify the level at which it is paid ... affordability simply requires that expenditure on the BIS not exceed available sources of revenue.



achieve. However, given the current economic context, this ideal can only be achieved in phases. The first phase for South Africa would be to cover the most glaring gap in its social security system: unemployed and poor adults between the ages of 18 and 59 years.

BIS would provide a regular and predictable income to eligible people in this age group, reducing poverty and inequality more effectively than any other poverty-targeted government programme. It would also buffer the possible

displacement of jobs by technology. More specifically, BIS would bring along with it the following benefits:

- *Poverty reduction:* BIS could help to eradicate poverty, regardless of the causes of poverty. Several studies and pilots implemented across the globe, have shown that the introduction of BIS that is above the poverty line in communities could lead to the elimination of absolute poverty.
- *Equity and social cohesion:* BIS, financed through a progressive system of taxation, would be strongly redistributive, helping to address economic inequalities. Evidence from a number of developing countries highlight that inequality is a significant obstacle to economic growth and investment.⁶ Another mechanism through which BIS could decrease inequality is by reinforcing the bargaining position of poor workers, who could refuse to accept degrading or unhealthy working conditions and extremely low wages.
- *Stimulation of economic growth:* Social grants to South African households tend to increase and stabilise demand, consumption and savings. Similarly, spending from money received from BIS is likely to be concentrated on basic, locally produced and labour-intensive commodities, thus benefiting local markets and potentially stimulating job creation. Lastly, success in job seeking for poor people is strongly correlated to income. As income rises, people tend to look for work more vigorously and are more likely to find it (as we have seen from social grants).

- *An economically efficient welfare solution:* One of the main criticisms of BIS is that it will reduce people's incentive to work as it is expected to generate an effect on the demand for leisure. The implication is that this may induce people to work less and decrease their labour market participation, unless they derive personal utility from their work. The incentive effects of welfare policies have long been debated, including in South Africa, where social grants have been accused of creating negative incentives, despite evidence to the contrary. Similarly, BIS should not generate any substitution effects and its potential distortionary impact on the economy may be relatively modest compared to other welfare programmes.

Whilst the idea of BIS in any country would potentially provide many benefits, including those highlighted earlier, opponents have raised concerns. Many people, including some parliamentarians, perceive the programme as financially challenging and contrary to the principle that people should work for their money. Their biggest fear is that government would be left with a huge bill that they would be unable to pay, and that society might be filled with 'unmotivated idlers'.

Firstly, the unmotivated idlers argument assumes that people will suddenly stop seeking employment when they receive the benefit. This is similar to the argument often made against social grants, which has been proven false.⁷ As highlighted earlier, guaranteeing a minimum income is one of the key means to enabling people to engage in sustained and sustainable economic activity (including job seeking).



Secondly, the definition of BIS does not specify the level at which it is paid or how it interacts with the wider system of social security payments. In other words, the question of whether BIS is unaffordable depends upon the specifics of the scheme or proposal, as well as what is meant by 'affordable'. A sensible definition of affordability simply requires that expenditure on BIS not exceed available sources of revenue in the long term. Financing must be sustainable.⁸ By this definition, BIS is therefore not only affordable in the short term, but over time the relative burden on the fiscus will diminish as levels of poverty and inequality decrease.

SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND A SOLUTION BEYOND THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical role of adequate investment in public health, comprehensive social protection programmes, dignified and decent work, and access to food, water, sanitation systems and housing. The pandemic has also intensified the intersecting forms of inequality including income and wealth within our country, as well as gender inequality. The lockdowns imposed by the state in an effort to curb transmission of the virus have caused job losses, endangered livelihoods and heightened exposure to violence, and impacts will be felt for years to come. In April 2020, government introduced the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant. This was a six-month grant (until October 2020) of R350 per month, aimed at people between the ages of 18 and 59 years with no income from any other source. By late September 2020, an estimated 8.9 million people had applied for the grant and just over 5.6 million had received the grant for the period from May to August. In addition, approximately 7.1 million adults also received the Caregivers Grant of R500 per month for a period of five months. The

payment of the COVID-19 SRD and the Caregiver Grants was, and is, a critical step towards the implementation of universal Basic Income Support. These grants highlighted the extent of the need of millions of previously unreached individuals between the ages of 18 and 59. Despite the COVID-19 SRD grant being plagued by a number of administrative challenges, including the rejection of eligible applicants and the fact that R350 is insufficient to cover an individual's basic food, what the grant has highlighted is the political willingness to implement a phased-in BIS, in desperate times, for the poor.

The reality is, however, that poor people are always living in desperate times, not just during this pandemic. Whether it is a global recession, a pandemic, a low economic growth climate or even a positive economic growth climate such as the one the country experienced during the President Thabo Mbeki era, the reality is that poor people in South Africa have always lived hand to mouth. This should not be the reality for any citizen. The BIS debate reaffirms the necessity and importance of providing every member of society with at least a minimum level of income security. This is essential to the realisation of human dignity – the basic principle of social security.

The South African government has a duty to "ensure that those aged 18 to 59 with little and no income have access to social assistance"⁹ and should consider the possibility of introducing BIS. It would need to be combined with effective policies that ensure universal access to health care, education and other social services currently being offered by the government. The value of the grant needs to be high enough to ensure that BIS effectively reduces poverty and inequality for persons who do not have any source of income. Lastly, BIS for unemployed adults between the ages of 18 and 59 would close the social security gap that currently exists in the country.

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ENDNOTES

1. International Labour Organisation. 2018. The aim of the National Development Plan is to reduce inequality (Gini coefficient) to 60.0 by 2030. (StatsSA 2015). Even with this improvement, South Africa will still rank as the most unequal country in the world in terms of hourly wage inequality!
2. Statistics South Africa. 2019. The 'lower bound poverty line' provides an austere threshold below which individuals have to choose between food and important non-food items. The updated 2020 figures have been delayed due to COVID-19.
3. Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Survey, Q2 of 2020.
4. The ILO world average labour force participation rate – the proportion of the entire population with jobs or looking for work – was estimated at 60% for 2019. The figure for South Africa in 2019 was 56%. (ILO, 2015 and 2020)
5. Raventós. 2007. p. 8.
6. See BIG Financing Reference Group. 2004.
7. DSD, SASSA and UNICEF. 2012.
8. Martinelli. 2017.
9. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2018: paragraphs 48 (c) and (f). ➤

EDITOR'S NOTE

COVID-19 CRISIS REVIVES INTEREST IN BASIC INCOME GRANT

Since 31 March 2020, more than 300 academics (including 168 economists) have added their names to an open letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa that calls for “a universal basic income grant”. This is one of a range of measures “that are urgently required to support and stabilise the economy and assist those hardest hit by the crisis” of COVID-19.¹

The interest seen recently in the universal basic income, in this letter and elsewhere, is a direct consequence of COVID-19 – but it is wrong to see COVID as the main reason for promoting such a policy proposal.

As Engenas Senona says in his contribution on Basic Income Support, the reality is that poor people in South Africa have always lived hand to mouth. They are much worse off because of the pandemic, but this is nothing new.

The BIS argument in South Africa is based on the absolute failure of our society and economic and political

system — over generations — to address unemployment, the main reason for poverty.

The argument for a universal income grant (UIG) in the USA was made last year – even as unemployment there reached its lowest possible level, before COVID struck. The proposal was made by one of the most interesting Democratic contenders for the presidential nomination, Andrew Yang.

Yang entered the lists as the complete opposite of Trump – “an Asian man who likes math”, as he said.² His key policy was The Freedom Dividend: an unconditional monthly payment of \$1 000 to every adult citizen of the US.

The reason he gave for this proposal was that in the coming 12 years, one out of three workers in the US were “at risk of losing their jobs to new technologies — and unlike with previous waves of automation, this time new jobs will not appear quickly enough in large enough numbers to make up for it. To avoid an unprecedented crisis, we’re going to have to find a new solution, unlike anything we’ve done before ... [beginning with] the Freedom Dividend, ... a foundation on which a stable,

prosperous, and just society can be built.”³

A universal basic income in South Africa, phased in as proposed by the Black Sash research,⁴ could be part of the way we rebuild a fairer economy post-coronavirus.

Great controversies lie ahead – not least on how our debt-deadened public sector could finance BIS sustainably, in addition to the promised National Health Insurance and free tertiary education!

ENDNOTES

1. The open letter was initiated by the Institute for Economic Justice, a progressive economic think tank based in Gauteng. The letter and all the signatories is available at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jRvoDy19bXD5XF3jA1yglUL_kqPmLN3_Rx7ShU_gpQ/edit> [Accessed 15-Oct-20].
2. Andrew Yang on Stay Tuned with Preet podcast, available at <<https://cafe.com/stay-tuned/stay-tuned-mueller-speaks-the-underdog-with-andrew-yang/>>
3. See Andrew Yang 2020 website. Available at <<https://www.yang2020.com/what-is-freedom-dividend-faq/>>.
4. See Engenas Segona's article in this publication and his longer research report published by the Black Sash in July 2020. Available at <http://www.blacksash.org.za/images/campaigns/basicincomesupport/BasicIncomeSupport2020.pdf> **NA**





“Get money – honestly if you can – but get money”: a bicentenary tribute to the British settlers of 1820

By Prof Jeff Peires

The author is Adjunct Professor of History at the University of Fort Hare in Alice. A renowned historian, he once served as head of the Cory Library in Grahamstown/Makhanda. He graduated with a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA.

Asked to commemorate the bicentenary of the 1820 settlers the author was pressed to identify its significance: ‘it is safe to say that were it not for the presence of the Settlers Monument presiding over our annual festival, very few residents other than their biological descendants would remember them at all. The challenge for the historian attempting to assess the significance of the 1820 settlement ... is to explain not its impact, but its transience and ultimate demise’.

Truth to tell, the COVID-19 pandemic spared the Makana Council some small anxiety by obviating any need to commemorate the bicentenary of the 1820 settlers. Not that feelings were running high on either side of the political and racial divides of our small city. What little historical consciousness we still have is completely absorbed by the name-change controversy (Grahamstown versus Makhanda) which, in turn, is determined by our respective perceptions of the Fourth (1811-12) and Fifth (1818-1819) Frontier Wars, bloody conflicts which preceded the arrival of the settlers in 1820. Indeed, it is safe to say that were it not for the presence of the Settlers Monument presiding over our annual festival, very few residents, other than their biological descendants, would remember them at all.

It nevertheless remains true that the settlement of about 5,000 English-speaking colonists, which boosted South Africa’s white population by more than 10 percent, was a significant

imperial intervention and should not simply be ignored. Politically, its most important consequence was the implantation in southern Africa of an Anglophone culture, otherwise alien to its existing inhabitants, both white and black. Without the 1820 settlement, the Cape of Good Hope would most probably have followed the examples of Mauritius and Sri Lanka, colonies subjected to Great Britain at the same time, but where, despite its official status, English never rooted itself among the local population.

Language apart, however, most of the important innovations associated with the British occupation – the abolition of slavery, for example – originated from the metropole and would have extended to the Cape in due course, regardless of the presence or absence of British settlers. The challenge for the historian attempting to assess the significance of the 1820 settlement, therefore, is to explain not its impact but its transience and ultimate demise. Such indeed is the purpose of this article. ➤

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The historical significance of the 1820 settlers resides therefore not so much in their role as purveyors of racism but as agents of merchant capital.

To begin with a brief overview: The 1820 settlement originated not in the defensive needs of the Cape Colony but in the political needs of a mother country attempting to mitigate the economic depression and popular disturbances which shook Great Britain in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. They were settled on small farms in “Lower Albany” (formerly Bathurst/Port Alfred, now Ndlambe) district, on lands from which the Xhosa had formerly been dispossessed but which were no longer located on the immediate colonial border. In agricultural terms, the settlement was a failure, with 75 percent of the settlers abandoning their farms within the first five years. When the next Frontier War broke out 14 years later, many of the younger settlers joined the British army “Corps of Guides,” one of them, George Southey, distinguishing himself by shooting dead the Xhosa king Hintsa, others compounding the crime by mutilating his body. In the wars which followed, however, the settlers played a lesser role, leaving most of the fighting to the regular British army and its African auxiliaries, and confining themselves mainly to defending their farms and hiring out their wagons at inflated prices. As Thomas Stubbs, embittered bankrupt militia captain, described the settler elite:¹



I could if I wished, enumerate a great many who owe their present positions [to] the Caffer wars. They are all men who never ran any risk by going out to assist in the wars, but who had their eyes fixed on the Commissariat Chest or any other place where money was to be had. They kept up the old saying, “Get money – honestly if you can – but get money.”

Though profiting in many ways by the dispossession of the Xhosa and the Free State Sotho, settler land hunger was driven by speculation rather than agriculture. By the time that responsible government was implemented at the Cape in 1872, the 1820 settlers had long ceased to be an identifiable or coherent force.

Apart from such triumphalist accounts as Sheffield’s *The Story of the Settlement* (1884) and Sir George Cory’s multi-volume *The Rise of South Africa* (1910–30), surprisingly few attempts have been made to grapple with the settler legacy.² Guy Butler, usually seen as the doyen of settler historiography, is a more complex figure who has been somewhat unfairly misunderstood.

His intention, in such works as *The 1820 Settlers* and the Settlers Monument itself, was to represent the 1820 settlement as the commencement of an admittedly new but nevertheless meaningful tradition, compatible with indigenous African traditions but distinct from, and better than, the British Imperial or the African nationalist. In so far as he was willing to face the racial contradictions of the frontier, he drew comfort from the Quaker, Richard Gush, who averted a Xhosa attack on Salem town by literally breaking bread with an invading chief and his councillors. “The Settlers,” Butler explained, “were simple people, ordinary as bread; but, like bread, they could be transformed”.³

Far more sophisticated is Clifton Crais who, considering the 1820 settlers in the light of “Lacanian psychoanalytic theory,” concludes therefrom that “in the transition from an imaginary order – the settler ‘sees’ or ‘imagines’ himself in the African – to a symbolic one, the Other emerged as a signifier around which a colonial discourse was born”.⁴ His argument, as far as I understand it, runs something like this: far from harbouring negative prejudices against Africans, “wealthy British settlers initially viewed blacks with positive enthusiasm”.⁵ This was



because they had mostly immigrated with their own white labourers, and were seeking to recreate in southern Africa, the squirearchy of rural England, replete with a “mansion on the hill”.⁶ When, however, the settlement failed and the lower class of whites broke free from their control, they turned to black labour, stepping up their “call for imperial expansion and the intervention of the colonial state”.⁷ Hand in hand with this process went the “ideological construction of the Other ... a stage where all that was repulsive in their own culture was projected as intrinsic features in the character of the African. This “discourse” eventually produced its own reality which “justified the promulgation of coercive legislation and ultimately legitimated the development of a racial capitalism”.⁸

Ingenious, perhaps, but incorrect. British racism did not begin in 1820, as Joseph Williams discovered in 1816 when British officers, deriding his mission to the Xhosa, warned him that “nothing but powder and ball would do to bring such savages to their senses, and that after a good lot of them had been shot that then would be the time to go and preach salvation to them, and not before”.⁹ More important, a “mansion on the hill” was far from the thoughts of almost all the 1820 settlers. Only 12 out of the 60 settler parties were headed by “proprietors,” bringing out their own employees from England. The vast majority of settlers were urban mechanics and small traders who never from the first had any intention to farm. The impeccable research of M.D. Nash has shown that the misery of the English working classes in 1819 was so great that the government’s offer of an assisted passage to the Cape was many times over-subscribed.¹⁰ Only 36 percent of the men registered as farmers or unskilled labourers, and some of these were most probably lying to get their applications through. Small wonder that three-quarters of the settlers decamped at the earliest opportunity, heading

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Though profiting in many ways by the dispossession of the Xhosa and the Free State Sotho, settler land hunger was driven by speculation rather than agriculture.

for Grahamstown, never intended as the settler capital but, at that point in time, the Eastern Cape’s first and only commercial hub, hoping thereby to make money by means other than the sweat of their brows. Nor did they find this difficult. As the settler, J.W.D. Moodie, explained:¹¹

Anyone of the class of mechanics or artisans who possess industry and steadiness may easily raise himself to a higher situation in society; for, as soon as he has acquired a little capital he may readily obtain credit with the merchants of Cape Town, who will give him goods to sell on commission; and he soon acquires the means of carrying on business on his own account.

Both Africans and Afrikaners conducted most of their business by barter or direct exchange of services, and enterprising settler traders had no difficulty exchanging cheap but attractive goods such as cloth, knives and tinder-boxes for valuable commodities such as cattle-hides and ivory which fetched high prices on the export market.

The historical significance of the 1820 settlers resides therefore not so much in their role as purveyors of racism but as agents of merchant capital. For the uninitiated, the impact of merchant capital has been well explained as follows:¹²

Merchant capital can function in any mode of production so long as a significant part of the product takes the form of commodities. To this extent its existence does not require a proletariat ... Nevertheless the development of commodity production which merchant capital must necessarily foster inevitably corrodes the pre-capitalist social formations in which it operates. The monetisation of the economy that necessarily follows in its wake undermines existing systems of property relations and introduces new criteria into the process of production itself ... Property relations that have been accepted for centuries become an obstacle to the new rationality ... that merchant capital seeks to impose, and relations of private property spring up in their place. These changes do not lead directly and inevitably to the formation of a proletariat.

Hintsa, the Xhosa king shot dead by a settler during the 1834-35 war, may not have expressed himself in quite these terms, but he certainly appreciated the dangers of uncontrolled commercial penetration. “Who gave that man permission to go about my country showing the people his goods?” he asked. “Tell them that I took [these goods],” he proclaimed on looting a trading store. “You need not hide it ➤

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The challenge for the historian attempting to assess the significance of the 1820 settlement, therefore, is to explain not its impact but its transience and ultimate demise.

because they have taken my country from me.”¹³

In the Eastern Cape as everywhere else, merchant capital, once introduced, proved unstoppable. From their original base in lower Albany, settler traders fanned out in all directions, producing in different places different results:

a. *The hinterland of Port Elizabeth:*

One of the very few settlers committed to capital intensive agriculture was one Richard Daniell of Sidbury, who imported merino sheep from Australia. Commercial wool farming accelerated rapidly as enterprising settler farmers like the Southneys, Bowkers, Colletts and Rubidges occupied the extensive lands of the Great Karoo vacated by the departing Voortrekkers. Wool exports from the Cape to Britain nearly quadrupled in a decade, increasing from 1,429,000 lbs in 1842 to 5,447,000 lbs in 1851.¹⁴ By the 1850s, both imports and exports through Port Elizabeth outstripped those through Cape Town, leading the Standard Bank, established in London in 1863, to base its South African



“To commemorate the landing here of the British Settlers in the year 1820” inscription on the campanile, Port Elizabeth, a memorial bell tower built in 1925 to recognise the centenary. John S Young, the deputy mayor and chairman of the Monument Committee, said on the occasion of the opening: “The monument is worthy of this City, of this great country, and of the 4 000 settlers whose fortitude in danger, perseverance against almost overwhelming disaster and steadfastness in carrying forward the traditions of our race, will ever be held in affectionate remembrance by those who speak the tongue of Shakespeare and keep the faith that Milton sang.” (Undated newspaper article from the JS Young Papers)

operations in the former city. Economically, therefore, the Port Elizabeth/Graaff-Reinet axis was well positioned to make the transition from merchant to industrial capital. Politically, however, it never was able to escape the domination of the Western Cape seat of the colonial government. Revenue from the sale of Eastern Cape “vacant lands,” for instance, was deployed to fund a breakwater at Cape Town harbour (essential when shipping upgraded from sail to steam) by 1870 while Port Elizabeth had to wait until 1922 for the equivalent facility. Railway tariffs, to take another example, were likewise manipulated in Cape Town’s favour to offset Port Elizabeth’s greater proximity to the mining centres of the Witwatersrand.¹⁵

b. *The hinterland of East London:*
Settler dreams of another Natal

were abruptly choked off in 1866 when the Cape government, on instructions from London, absorbed the Crown Colony of “British Kaffraria,” thereby confining settler land hunger to the territories west of the Kei River.¹⁶ In its place, mercantile capital transformed the old settler stronghold of King Williams Town into a centre of what Stanley Trapido called the “little tradition” of Cape liberalism, white merchants and black farmers allied in support of a rising black peasantry, intellectually spearheaded and symbolised by J.T. Jabavu’s *Imvo Zabantsundu*, an independent isiXhosa-language newspaper, capitalised by white businessmen for the purpose of advertising in its pages.¹⁷ The fate of the peasantry, made famous by Colin Bundy, is too well known to warrant repetition,



but here we see, as in the case of Port Elizabeth, a hopeful nascent capitalism arising from a merchant base, aborted, in this case not by local jealousies but by the insatiable demand of the mining complex for African migrant labour.

- c. *Grahamstown*: Having shed its most enterprising white inhabitants, to either its west or to its east, the old settler centre of Grahamstown never matured out of its initial dependence on the Imperial Connection. Fattened on the profits of war profiteering and land speculation, settler grandees like Robert Godlonton and William Cock reached the apogee of their influence during the governorship of Sir Harry Smith (1847-1852) and, following his dismissal, could think of nothing more entrepreneurial than “Eastern Cape Separatism,” a euphemism for establishing a local seat of government which they could plunder at will.¹⁸ Bitterly jealous of Port Elizabeth, they disdained the coming of the railway and pinned their hopes on establishing a port of their own at the mouth of the Kowie river. They even renamed its little fishing harbour “Port Alfred” in honour of the pending visit of Queen Victoria’s second son. But, symptomatic of their declining importance, Prince Alfred did not even bother to show up.

I trust that this brief review has shown why, though of critical importance at the time, the 1820 settlement has disappeared without a trace, always excepting, of course, the Settler Monument which still looms over Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown). I have necessarily concentrated on the economic aspects, to the neglect, perhaps, of the human dimension. And so to close, let me

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The vast majority of settlers were urban mechanics and small traders who never from the first had any intention to farm.

quote the words of Sir George Cathcart whose accession to the governorship, following Sir Harry Smith, marked the beginning of the settler decline:¹⁹

The fact is that peace is ruin to them [the white settlers] and the expenditure of public money during the war has been the making of their fortunes, in war prices for their goods, contracts for waggons and provisions etc. In short the expenditure of a million of British sovereigns in this otherwise miserable place. As to the losses by the way, they bear no comparison to the gains. I am heartily disgusted and sick of these mean, dishonest people; the [Xhosa] is much the finer race of the two.

I couldn’t have put it better myself.

ENDNOTES

1. W.A. Maxwell and R.T. McGeogh (eds). 1978. *The Reminiscences of Thomas Stubbs* (Cape Town: Balkema), p.136.
2. Despite its unpromising title, the best book by far on the 1820 settlers remains M.D. Nash’s *Bailie’s Party of 1820 Settlers* (Cape Town: Balkema: 1982). Nash’s research also provided the basis for Karel Schoeman’s greatly expanded but sadly undigested three-volume opus, *Bailie’s Party*, published by Protea Book House of Pretoria in 2019. The best of the traditional histories remains Guy Butler’s coffee table *The 1820 Settlers* (Cape Town: 1974).
3. G. Butler 1982. *Richard Gush of Salem* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller), p.xxv. Butler’s play is based on a real historical incident of the 1834-35 war recorded by the Quaker traveller, James Backhouse, in 1844.
4. C.C. Crais. 1992. *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Wits University Press), pp. 128-9, 242 fn13-14.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 128
6. *Ibid.*, pp.88-90
7. *Ibid.*, p.139
8. *Ibid.*, p.149.
9. London Missionary Society Archives, SOAS, microfiche 76. Journal of Joseph Williams, 2 November 1816.
10. Nash, *Bailie’s Party*, especially Chapter 2.
11. Quoted in T. Keegan. 1996. *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (Cape Town: David Philip), 68-69. See also J.B. Peires. 1989. “The British and the Cape, 1814-1834,” in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee. *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, 2nd ed (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman), pp.475-476.
12. Geoffrey Kay. 1975. *Development and Underdevelopment: a Marxist Analysis* (London: Macmillan), quoted in S. Marks and A. Atmore. (eds). 1980. *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London: Longman), fn 16, p.39. My attention was drawn to this passage by Dr Shula Marks, whose volume, just cited, provides several more examples of the important role played by merchant capital in the economic transitions of nineteenth-century southern Africa.
13. J. Peires. 2003. *The House of Phalo*, 2nd ed (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball), pp. 115-6, fn 70, p.263.
14. For the development of the wool industry, T. Kirk, “The Cape economy and the expropriation of the Kat River Settlement, 1846-1853,” in Marks and Atmore. 1980. p.51.
15. A. Mabin. 1986. “The Rise and Decline of Port Elizabeth, 1850-1900,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19; J. Peires. 2011. “How the Eastern Cape lost its Edge to the Western Cape,” in G. Ruiters (ed), *The Fate of the Eastern Cape* (Scottsville: UKZN Press).
16. C.C. Saunders. 1976. “The Annexation of the Transkeian Territories,” *Archives Yearbook for South African History*, pp 12-14.
17. S. Trapido. 1980. “The friends of the natives’: merchants, peasants and the political and ideological structure of liberalism in the Cape, 1854-1910” in Marks and Atmore; C. Bundy. 1979. *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London: Heinemann Educational), esp. pp.32-43.
18. J. L. Stead. 1984. “The Development and Failure of the Eastern Cape Separatist Movement,” *Archives Yearbook for South African History*; J. Cock. 2018. *Writing the Ancestral River* (Wits University Press), pp. 89-97.
19. Quoted in J. Peires, 2016. “‘The Expenditure of a Million Sovereigns in this Otherwise Miserable Place’: Frontier Wars, Public Debt and the Cape’s Non-Racial Constitution,” *Theoria* 147 (June), p.25. **NA**

Navigating a minefield to assert agency

By Zenzile Khoisan

Chief! Garu Zenzile Khoisan, leader of the Gorinhaiqua Cultural Council, is also a journalist, poet and cultural activist. He is a leading figure in the First Nations Collective which represents the Gorinhaiqua, Gorachouqua, Cochoqua, the Griqua Royal Council, the San Traditional Royal House and the National Khoi and San Council.

Chief! Garu Zenzile Khoisan argues that the controversial proposed development of the Two Rivers Urban Parkway in Observatory, Cape Town, is a means to develop the linguistic, territorial and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples and their descendants. And the way to do it, he writes, is through 'cultural agency' by Khoi and San descendants who regard this as one of the first sites of their land dispossession as well as an area where their social and political roots lie deep.

An intense fight for self-determination and the assertion of cultural agency is currently underway at the site earmarked for the River Club redevelopment in the Two Rivers Urban Parkway, near Observatory in Cape Town. This is both the site of the first dispossession and a place of heritage

and great significance to South Africa's indigenous Khoi and San descendants.

It is the contestation over which pathway to choose, after almost every available avenue for resolution has been exhausted. Many of the structures and leaders at what is known as the First Nations Collective, are using cultural agency as a way to find anchorage for the broader and more intense struggle for recognition, restitution and restoration.

There is a vast body of evidence internationally that suggests increasing marginalisation, suppression of rights, discrimination and outright aggression against foundational, indigenous peoples who, more often than not, have found themselves in a position where they have to navigate complex and dangerous political, social, cultural and economic minefields to assert their agency.

Recent and historical examples illustrating the pathway that indigenous peoples have had to traverse to assert agency include the struggles of the Zapatista Maya descendants in Mexico; the struggles in Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia; the intense fights of the ancient peoples of the Amazon; the struggles of the many indigenous peoples in Canada,

the United States, Iceland, Greenland, New Zealand, Australia, Asia and also on the African continent in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. In all of these theatres of struggle numerous strategies and tactics have been employed to challenge injustice.

Whether it has been to defend linguistic, territorial, cultural, indigenous knowledge or territorial rights, the common denominator is that the first, foundational and indigenous peoples are all the descendants of those who were most viciously put to the sword through genocide, dispossessed of their land and dehumanised and driven to the margins of the societies to exist in a purgatory of unprocessed pain.

What then emerges in the question of what is to be done is the assessment of the forces and the tactics to be employed in the quest for change. Notably, we are in a period where there is growing disillusion that local or international state or official institutions can be trusted to right historical wrongs; to shift unjust paradigms. This leaves indigenous social justice movements either gridlocked in bureaucratic official processes, or taking cultural agency to effect an objective.

This type of action is required

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Our position is that indigenous peoples are not the perpetual children that the colonist and colonial mentality would have us be.

because there is an urgency related to the vanishing borderlands of sentinel points of memory where critical heritage landmarks are disappearing, removed from the narrative of our contemporary world by discriminatory cultural, political, social and economic frameworks driven by mercenary ideologies that damn the narratives and cultural belongings of foundational indigenous peoples to invisibility or evisceration.

A review of complaints before the United Nations special committees dealing with indigenous peoples includes a dossier of indictment, that reveals there is a brazen assault worldwide, and pertinently here in South Africa, on the quest of foundational peoples to be restored to their rightful place in society.

In our local narrative, this condition flows from an unstable faultline in the historical compromise resulting from the negotiations process where, for expediency, a horsetrade was effected in which the disenfranchisement and historical trauma of Khoi and San descendants was excised from the final agreement upon which the new South African state was constructed.

This crude Faustian deal resulted in deep unhappiness which has spurred an intense Khoi and San resurgence movement prior, during and after the



negotiations process that gave rise to the post-Apartheid state. From its early and uncertain beginnings, this movement has gathered strong traction resulting in more than 200 events and engagements over the last 30 years.

It was the correction of this deep injustice that underwrote the collective position unanimously adopted by more than 300 leaders of South Africa's indigenous Khoi and San peoples from across the country when they gathered on 28 February 2010. They met in the main hall at Oude Molen, Cape Town, under full cultural protocol and ceremony.

This event was to mark the quincennial (500th year) anniversary of the Battle of Gorinhaiqua, the group who defeated the feared Portuguese militarist, Francisco de Almeida, and his assault troops at Salt River in the most successful anti-colonial battle in our country.

The gathering at Oude Molen called into existence Die KhoiSan Noodsein or the KhoiSan Emergency Action Committee, which organised a march in September 2010 of thousands of Khoi and San descendants. They marched from many points across the Cape Town Central Business District, culminating in a mass rally in front of Parliament. What is significant about these events, captured for posterity on film, in

pictures and in print, is that numerous demands have been made to the South African government and related local and international institutions over a long time.

Deeply embedded in the core demands by indigenous leaders and cultural activists was that central to the recognition, restitution and restoration of Khoi and San descendants is the clarion call that sentinel heritage points be properly protected and made accessible to descendants of the foundational peoples. The narratives and events with which the sites are associated must be authentically manifest and integrated into the contemporary cultural life of the first nation descendants and the broader society within which they exist.

What then has this history of engaging official institutions to do with reclaiming agency?

My contention is that the discovery and exercise of cultural agency is a necessary condition for self-determination, a universally held principle that is premised on the sovereignty of indigenous people acting in their own interest. This “taking of agency” and the refusal to be railroaded in a bureaucratic process is what drove the First Nations Collective to directly engage the legal owner of the River Club. The club is located on territory ►►

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... there is an urgency related to the vanishing borderlands of sentinel points of memory where critical heritage landmarks are disappearing, removed from the narrative of our contemporary world.

that is significant to the Cape Peninsula Khoi and San peoples, particularly the Gorinhaiqua, who were the historical custodians of the area.

The collective, which is organic, growing and evolving every day, currently comprises the Gorinhaiqua Cultural Council; the Gorachoqua Tribal Council; two Cochoqua councils; the Griqua Royal House; the National and the Western Cape Khoi and San Councils; the Overberg Heritage Council; the KhoiSan Labour Forum and the Foundation Nation Restoration.

Included among our ranks are the vast majority of the resurgent Khoi and San leaders and structures in the Western Cape who for more than three decades has been at the coalface of the struggle for recognition, restitution and restoration for Khoi and San descendants.

This direct contact with the developer, based on indigenous cultural agency, has produced a world-class development proposal. This is where the First Nations Collective will be



empowered to permanently collate and curate our heritage, meaningfully practice our craft and culture, and tell our own stories while also training our own people.

Through this project our voice will have a platform to resonate across South Africa, and reach indigenous communities across the world.

The significance of this area and the adjoining Oude Molen site has been the subject of more than two and a half decades of intense engagement between ourselves and senior state officials.

This includes premiers of the Western Cape government, provincial ministers of several Western Cape government administrations, mayors of the City of Cape Town, the chief land claims commissioners, several ministers of the national government and even the apex of governance, the presidency.

All our efforts in this regard have fallen on deaf ears and we have been

subjected to ridicule or bludgeoned with the arrogant silence of invisibility, which means being treated as having never spoken and not worthy of being heard.

Having been trivialised and bludgeoned into invisibility we elected to directly approach Jody Aufrichtig, representing the registered owners, about the redevelopment proposal. We have found the developer, Liesbeeck Leisure Trust, open and empathetic to our concerns, which were placed on the table in a frank exchange of views.

We believe that the developer has grasped the intense pain that has been associated with the bludgeoning of our narrative. As such, this developer, unlike any other government, corporate or social entities with which we have engaged, has made a firm commitment to ensure that the footprint of the Khoi and San's history of resistance, and its modern-day resurgence, is incorporated into the development plan.



Through this engagement the First Nations Collective has secured an area in the centre of this development, which is of great cultural significance to us. This part of the redevelopment site has been set aside for building a fully fledged heritage centre, a functional indigenous garden and cultural praxis site, a world-first international indigenous media and communication centre, as well as an amphitheatre where the best of Khoi and San art, culture and music can be showcased.

The developer has also committed to cleaning up and indigenising the ecology of the area and to ensuring that the spiritual and cultural symbols of the Khoi and the San find resonance within the proposed development plan.

We are aware that there will be detractors, including those who believe that indigenous people stand diametrically opposed to development, relegated to an anthropoid fetishised state where they roam perpetually in antiquity without the tools to navigate the modern world.

Our position is that indigenous peoples are not the perpetual children that the colonist and colonial mentality would have us be. On the contrary, it is our view that such paternalistic notions must themselves be put to the sword.

Our view is that working with the developers seizes victory from the jaws of defeat, prevents perpetual dithering and provides a strong launch pad from which other more intense struggles for self-determination can be fought. Through this action, the long fight for recognition, restitution and restoration is given a space from which generational trauma can be healed through resilient and sustainable cultural and heritage praxis, authoring a song of hope in the valley of despair that threatens to rob us and our progeny of a future.

We have chosen this pathway because South Africa today is a society that is an uneasy, even volatile, mix of hope and despair, idealism and stoic jadedness, accurately described

as “an unstable tinderbox” by the late Professor Ben Turok during an interview with the author in late 2016.

This sober assessment by Turok came from his reflection on the state of South African society and, more pertinently, the deepening contradictions in the African National Congress which was then and still remains the ruling party.

What is clearly reflected within this condition is a set of actively contesting realities manifested in elements such as expressiveness and censorship; cultural solidarity and cultural balkanisation; constitutional guarantees and rights curtailment; civil activism and state repression; peace and militarism; egalitarian ideals and brazen social deviancy; corruption and watch-dogism; collective aspiration and individual crude accumulation.

Thus, the current state of affairs in South Africa can at best be described as schizophrenic and at worse as an unstable tinderbox that, left without mitigation or intervention, could explode.

This state of affairs has prompted several prominent South African social scientists to express alarm at the rapid social and political erosion, calling for urgent interventions, including the retooling of the security services, the drafting and implementation of a new social compact, and a review of legislation that could imperil transparency in social, commercial and political relations within the young democracy. It has also produced a visible calcification of positions, and polarisation of a country that less than two and a half decades ago held out the greatest promise of any post-conflict society.

Visible manifestations of the deepening tension in South African society can be seen in both the intensity and regularity of social uprisings, deterioration of industrial relations and growing discontent of the people who have grown tired of what Langston

Hughes aptly described as “a dream deferred”.

Within this context, more than a quarter of a century since the dawn of democracy, the issue of the National Question, upon which the resurgence is premised, can no longer be ignored. It presents our country with one of the most pertinent contemporary challenges – one that we ignore at our peril. This specific question is one that has to be addressed if we are to truly realise any form of sustainable social cohesion and nationhood.

In our context the National Question cannot be understood or addressed outside of the national liberation struggle, which resulted from the natural quest of our peoples to free themselves from the shackles of colonialism and Apartheid, which gave rise to dispossession, genocide and racist and political repression.

The earliest challenge to the tyranny of our oppression in this country occurred in the late 15th century with skirmishes in Saldanha Bay and Mossel Bay. This was followed in the early 16th century with one of the major defeats of colonial onslaught in Africa, when Khoi warriors defeated the feared Portuguese militarist, Francisco de Almeida, on the shores of present day Salt River on 28 February 1510.

Since that time there have been numerous wars of resistance waged by the Khoi and San against both the British and the Dutch colonial forces, which reflected their refusal to accept subjugation.

This is critical to understanding our current day dilemmas in this country, for much of that resistance history is not even reflected in our national narrative and is not carried in our history books. I refer to this history, much of which the majority of our country's people do not know, because to correct the wrongs of the past and redress this injustice we need to know what occurred as a result of these first wars of resistance. >>

What cannot be denied is that the Khoi and the San were the first to be dispossessed of their lands and subjected to a methodical physical and cultural genocide, which included widespread displacement and land theft, banning and destruction of Khoi and San culture, including the original languages and cultural structures, and the classification of the first indigenous peoples and the slaves who endured brutal servitude in the colony as coloureds. This meant they had no access to social cohesion, no claim to the land of their forebears, and could not assert the right to self-determination.

This is important today because 26 years after the end of Apartheid and the dawn of democracy we still have not addressed those original injustices. We now have limited legislative recognition of Khoi and San leadership, but this legislation does not address how to rectify what occurred to the vast majority of the people who, correctly, can assert their right to be called the descendants of the first peoples. They bore the first and most devastating blows of colonialism and their dehumanisation was further entrenched by Apartheid and, tragically, persisted into the post-Apartheid era.

Today, 26 years after Apartheid, descendants of the first people have been denied access to jobs, employment opportunities, land restitution, economic development rights and cultural rights, including the right to linguistic recognition, which are granted to other cultural groups and other peoples who comprise the South African nation.

Then there is the question of legislation aimed at rectifying the historical exclusion and injustice that the oppressed in this country had to endure. It is this rising tide of anger, resulting from the destructive and disturbing legacies of colonialism and the failure of the ruling party, and which has its roots in the movement for national liberation, which must deal with the National Question.

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... sentinel heritage points [must] be properly protected and made accessible to descendants of the foundational peoples.

The broad issue to which the National Question in any particular context speaks is built around the inalienable international right of peoples or nations to self-determination. In trying to come to grips with what exactly this question entails, it helps to draw on the wisdom of Guinea Bissau liberation leader and thinker, Amílcar Cabral.

Cabral provided significant insight into this question during his presentation, *History as a Weapon*, at Syracuse University in New York in February 1970, which was part of the Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture series.

In that presentation Cabral stated: “Just as happens with the flower in a plant, in culture there lies the capacity (or the responsibility) for forming and fertilizing the seedling which will assure the continuity of history, at the same time assuring the prospects for evolution and progress of the society in question. Thus it is understood that imperialist domination, by denying the historical development of the dominated people, necessarily also denies their cultural development.”

Cabral further stated: “The study of the history of national liberation struggles shows that generally these struggles are preceded by an increase in expression of culture, consolidated progressively into a successful or

unsuccessful attempt to affirm the cultural personality of the dominated people, as a means of negating the oppressor culture.

“Whatever may be the conditions of a people’s political and social factors in practicing this domination, it is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement. In our opinion, the foundation for national liberation rests in the inalienable right of every people to have their own history whatever formulations may be adopted at the level of international law.”

Cabral said: “A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture.”

It is in the spirit of giving shape and form to Cabral’s words that there is now an intense stirring on the ground across the country, and specifically in the Western Cape, in theatres of struggle such as the River Club, where those who have been at the coalface of the struggle must either capitulate to endless deferment of our people’s dreams or take bold steps to secure spaces of anchorage from which we can intensify our struggle.

In the instance of the River Club it is our belief that we have removed ourselves from the evil gridlock of government paper pushing, paternalistic arrogance of the landed gentry descended from those who usurped our custodial lands and the real and present danger of local and worldwide economic catastrophe. Through this act of agency, we cut our own path of destiny through a minefield. **NA**



KIMI MAKWETU

(1966 – 2020)

Auditor-General of South Africa from 2013 to 2020

We mourn the death of a committed public servant who served South Africa with unfailing integrity and did all he could to rescue this country from corruption and the abuse of public funds.

Parliament and the Auditor General: The accountability gap and what can be done about it?

By Martin Nicol, Bruce Kadalie and Moira Levy

Dr Nicol is consulting as the senior researcher on this project. Also participating in the Checks and Balances Project are staff members of the Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA), Bruce Kadalie, who is responsible for IFAA's events and research, and Moira Levy, production manager of *New Agenda*.

IFAA's Checks and Balances Project is fast reaching a conclusion that irregular expenditure is due to the lack of consequences for those responsible for the devastating ongoing financial mismanagement in government departments and entities. This

progress report, arising out of recent one-to-one interviews and a public forum, lists proposed changes Parliament will have to undertake to address the weak follow-up of the publicly reported audits from the Auditor-General.

INTRODUCTION

Parliament is responsible for ensuring that public funds are spent wisely in the public interest and are not looted. Parliament cannot do this work itself – it relies on the expert, independent services of the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA), who is appointed by Parliament (according to the Constitution) to undertake government auditing. >>

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Parliament is complicit in the failure of government to implement the recommendations of the AG and lacks the ability or the willingness to hold the executive accountable.

Parliament, over many years now, has failed to ensure that there are effective follow-up mechanisms to implement the recommendations of the Auditor-General (AG) on the management of public finances.¹

Parliament is complicit in the failure of government to implement the recommendations of the AG.² In practice, Parliament lacks the ability or the willingness to hold the executive accountable.

The Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) began a project in October 2019 to consult widely and propose a way forward – primarily for Parliament, which is responsible for scrutinising executive action and for holding the executive accountable.

The problems revealed by government auditing – and the lack of follow-up on reports and recommendations of the AG – have been widely reported. There is no need to repeat the details here. It will suffice to recall that audit outcomes across most of government are disappointing, even alarming. Mismanagement of public funds is not being addressed to the extent and at the speed necessary. The



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trend remains one of regression. This is public knowledge widely covered in the press, discussed at length in Parliament, and archived by the online records maintained by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG).³

AG AND PARLIAMENT AGREE THERE IS AN ACCOUNTABILITY PROBLEM

The late Kimi Makwetu, the AG at the time of writing, told the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) on 23 October 2019 that there were several root causes for the lack of improvement in government audit outcomes:⁴

- There was a lack of urgency in responding to AGSA messages about addressing risks and improving internal controls. At fault were accounting officers and senior management political leaders and oversight bodies such as public accounts and portfolio committees.
- There were inadequate consequences for officials who deliberately or negligently ignored their duties. If they were not held accountable, such behaviour could be seen as acceptable and tolerated.

Alf Lees (Democratic Alliance) said irregular spending was on the increase. If there was condonation it took a very

long time. Meanwhile, there appeared to be no consequences for failing to deal with old irregular expenditure issues.

Makwetu had said at the time that irregular expenditure was growing because of a lack of consequences for those responsible. The expenditure would be flagged by AGSA, there would be engagement with SCOPA, a report would be tabled, resolutions would be adopted and the next year there would be even greater irregular expenditure.

“How loud can these voices be? Can they be even louder?” he asked.⁵

The previous issue of *New Agenda* included an article that outlined the importance of a government auditor being independent of the government and insulated from political interference by the legislature. That had been achieved by South Africa’s AG, which is, perhaps, the most successful of the institutions created by Chapter 9 of the Constitution to enhance democracy.

The problem lies in Parliament’s weak follow-up on the issues raised repeatedly by the AG. Parliament is aware of this and is concerned. *Business Day* reported on 25 June 2020: “MPs across the board raised concern about the financial state of the municipalities, saying the lack of consequences was largely to blame.”⁶

On 24 June 2020, the chairperson of the National Council of Provinces’



The cover of the report illustrated the AG's message – that there is a need for a hand to stop the falling “dominoes,” and prevent public money from being stolen or misused.

(NCOP's) Select Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs,⁷ China Dodovu, “called for clear consequence management⁸ in errant municipalities with a negative audit outcome for the 2018/19 financial year.”

The chairperson raised this opinion following the local government audit outcomes briefing by the office of the AG to the NCOP. A parliamentary statement said, “Mr Dodovu highlighted that without concomitant action, the audit outcomes will not improve in the near future, something that has a direct negative impact on the ability of the municipalities to deliver quality services to the people.

“There is a serious problem here. Are we going to sit with the Auditor-General again next year and raise the very same

problems if there is no concomitant action taken against anybody who is responsible for the financial mess in the municipalities? Last year, the same problems were raised, and amongst them is the deteriorating accountability and lack of consequence management, a point that is highlighted today. If we don't put a stop to this, next year we are going to face the same problems,” Mr Dodovu said in a press statement.

Parliament spends a huge amount of time scrutinising the finances and performance of departments and entities. For this it relies heavily on the reports of the AG. Parliament publishes lengthy committee reports detailing MPs' observations, findings and recommendations. Committee chairpersons regularly issue media

releases like the one above.

EFFORTS OF MEMBERS AND THE AG TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY

Who can say Members of Parliament do not try to hold the Executive to account? They do try. The Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) records angry and condemnatory statements from MPs from all parties when they consider reports from the AG on unauthorised, irregular, and fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

South Africa spends a lot of time, money and professional effort on “government auditing”. The research, reading and interviews of the Checks and Balances Project to date have revealed a picture of an AG's office ➤



Research will [aim to] urge Parliament to amend some of its internal rules, as well as some laws and timelines to allow more effective oversight by MPs.

that is truly world class. The AG no longer simply audits and delivers reports. Auditing and reporting are supplemented by pre-audit advice, communication and education directed both at auditees and at citizens and public representatives. The AG pays special attention to the “root causes” – identifying what is weak in the internal controls of departments, municipalities and entities – so that plans can be made to improve administration and meet the standards set by Parliament and by government regulations for the honest and effective management of public funds.

A senior executive at the AG told the project: “The accounting officer is the first line of defence to ensure the proper management of public funds. He or she is responsible for implementing key controls. If you fix the controls, that will produce the outcome you want.” Under Kimi Makwetu, AGSA has extended the “offerings” of the AG. It reacts *during* the year before considering any audit submissions – as soon as it notices issues of concern.⁹ A recent example was seen in September 2020, when the AG released six “Preventative Control Guides”.

The cover of the report illustrated the AG’s message that there was a need for a hand to stop the falling “dominoes,” and prevent public money

from being stolen or misused. The Guides responded to a wide range of problems which were enumerated in the AG’s “First Special Report on the financial management of government’s Covid-19 initiatives”. This report was presented to Parliament by Makwetu on 4 September 2020.

THE MORE EFFORT GIVEN TO AUDITING, THE MORE MONEY IS MISUSED

It is extremely ironic that at a time when the AG has enhanced its offerings and moved into pro-active intervention, South Africa has experienced looting and mismanagement of public funds on a scale so large that the country is going to have to curtail state support for poor and vulnerable citizens.

As Makwetu noted: “In the most recent times, South Africans have been numbed by the staggering numbers of wasteful, fruitless, unauthorised and irregular expenditure. This is the type of expenditure that should not be tolerated by citizens whatever technical justifications are attached to their occurrence. The very existence of such expenditure suggests that those that persistently incur it, are not bothered for as long as there is no accountability or consequences.”¹⁰

The situation has been made still worse by the impact of COVID-19, with the danger looming of a complete economic melt-down.¹¹ An ANC MP, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Appropriations, asked on 17 June 2020 whether it is possible that the challenge posed by COVID-19 is being used by departments and entities as a “get out of jail free” card when it comes to underperformance.¹² COVID-19 has required the urgent expenditure of additional government funds on a scale and at a rate that is unprecedented, and which has provided wide opportunities for theft, fraud and corruption.¹³ There has been no shortage of criminal efforts to steal these funds, abetted by business people, public servants and politicians

with political influence.¹⁴

The citizens’ representatives sit in Parliament and are explicitly charged with oversight on public expenditure. But accountability in this regard eludes Parliament.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT THE ‘ACCOUNTABILITY GAP’?

The Checks and Balances Project has focused on the role of Parliament in making use of reports and briefings from the AG to hold the Executive to account. The research has been guided both by one-on-one interviews and on consultation with a few stakeholders. Some follow-up research suggested by these interactions is still in progress. But one thrust of the proposals from the research will be to urge Parliament to amend some of its internal rules, as well as some laws and timelines to allow more effective oversight by MPs.

These are some changes suggested by the research so far:

- Develop a better oversight model for committees — provide a framework for committees so they are able to do their oversight work in a planned way and are held accountable for doing it properly.
 - Committees must have proper systems for following up on their questions and resolutions.¹⁵
 - Parliament must stop relying on the bureaucrats who run Parliament to set the agenda for committees and their oversight activities.¹⁶
 - Committees should use their existing powers to experiment with different ways of holding meetings and interrogating the executive, for example colloquiums/interrogation as in the



- US Congress.
- The so-called Oversight and Accountability (OVAC) model, which is said to be in place in Parliament following the 2016 revision of the rules, has no real effectivity in addressing the problems and gaps in accountability. The OVAC “model” contains many unresolved issues.
- Review existing laws that set unrealistic time limits and time-consuming procedures, thus hampering the effectiveness of Parliament.
 - The Money Bills Act and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) need to be reviewed to ease time constraints.
 - Parliament should deal with the scheduling of portfolio committee activities so that energy on oversight is planned strategically and spent effectively. This can take place *throughout* the year – not in one burst when the Budgetary Review and Recommendation Reports (BRRRs) have to be tabled.
- Adjust orientation training for all Members when they come to Parliament so they better understand their roles and the role of the AG, the executive and the accounting officer/authority for each department or entity. This training is efficiently managed at present, but it concentrates on practical issues. Member training does not deal adequately with the ethical standards that parliamentarians should espouse and emulate. Members also need to have research assistance so they can

prepare for meetings.

- The *sub judice* rule is used (incorrectly) to limit Parliamentary oversight. The rule is unnecessary and allows departments to browbeat Members. It should be removed.

Additional consultation by the Checks and Balances Project discussions also generated the following points:

- The research team should check where its draft proposals have already been covered in existing resource materials and in previous reports to Parliament (such as the 1999 Corder Report which proposed an accountability standards law). Existing legislation, particularly the Money Bills Act, contains powers Parliament has never used for holding the executive to account.
- Examples of international experience on how other Parliaments have confronted non-compliance by the executive with Parliamentary instructions should be included. What sanctions have been applied by legislatures elsewhere?
- Refer to the question raised by Judge Zondo: where was Parliament when state capture was happening? Why did the National Assembly fail to exercise effective oversight in respect of state capture?
- Consider ways in which non-compliance with the AG recommendations by municipalities could be brought before Parliament. The inter-governmental co-operation framework legislation provides no avenue to enforce co-operative governance. Checks and balances here simply do not work.
- Induction is important for new members but it must be promoted alongside continuity – parties need to return a good proportion of members to the next parliament to ensure that lessons are learned from experience and that

Parliament preserves institutional memory amongst members. Parties need to act responsibly so that committees preserve some level of membership across Parliaments. Parties also need to allocate Members to committees where their experience can be used.¹⁷ Members should not only rely on AG reports – they must be on the ground in their constituencies. Parliament must not hamper members by tying them to parliamentary meetings in Cape Town that in practice limits oversight efforts.

The Checks and Balances research team will prepare recommendations for Parliament and for Members, as well as avenues for citizen and stakeholder participation, to promote better understanding and implementation of the recommendations of the AG. The draft results were discussed at an IFAA Validation Workshop before a final report/action plan is completed in December 2020.

THE BASIC ISSUE: POLITICAL WILL

No changes in laws and rules can however address the basic issue raised by our research – the need for *political will*. When asked why the recommendations of the AG are so often not followed, several interviewees almost brushed the question aside as superfluous:

“... there is only one to blame – the ANC. You will never get recommendations followed because this is seen as a bad reflection on the ruling party. In South Africa, we elect parties, not individuals. The ANC lacks the political will to make decisions [to implement AG recommendations]. If people are driven by greed and self-interest, that is what will happen.”¹⁸ ➤

True as this may be, the IFAA research team was initially very much influenced by the emphatic statements by MPs – including from the ANC – that they are outraged by the failure of the Executive to act against a range of anti-social behaviours – from the theft of money and corruption in contracts to the failure of mining companies to implement social and labour plan commitments.

This bias – it must be termed – influenced the initial set of proposals outlined above. How could parliamentarians get help to succeed with the work they really want to do? How could they work around parliamentary gate-keepers and limited resources to be more effective in holding the executive to account?

MPs expressed strong frustration when departments return to meetings again and again with issues unresolved until, each five years, the clock is set back to zero when MPs are cycled out and government re-jigs portfolios.

The Checks and Balances team's sympathy with MPs has worn thinner as we have done more interviews and as we have absorbed the complicity of the ANC, as well as our legislatures across the country, in the mis-use of emergency COVID-19 funding. There are excellent reports in the records of Parliament on how to improve its influence and effectiveness. These were commissioned by one Parliament and then often ignored by the next one. The Constitutional Court has elaborated upon the great authority granted to members of Parliament in the Constitution. But it is up to the Members themselves to agree on how best to use their authority. In practice, however, many members take their democratic and constitutional duties lightly. Embroiled in constituency distractions, they neglect the work for which they were elected to Parliament.

THE EXPANDED POWERS OF THE AG ARE NOT THERE TO DO PARLIAMENT'S JOB

The “expanded mandate” granted to the AG by Parliament (effective from 1 April 2019)¹⁹ was not intended to take oversight responsibility away from Parliament.²⁰ The new powers allow the AG to intervene administratively to encourage, and then compel, accounting officers to address material irregularities revealed by the auditing process. But Parliament has the prior responsibility to scrutinise executive action and to hold the executive to account. The new powers of the AG become relevant only when Parliament and the Executive fail to perform their functions.

The new powers of the AG are the ultimate backstop, not a substitute for Parliamentary action. (In our view, the new powers compromise the independence of the AG, because they treat the AG as an arm of the Executive, doing what the Executive should have done!²¹ A counter position was expressed during the consultation, that there is no necessary limitation of independence implied in the expanded mandate of the AG.)

This is not a side issue. The late AG told us in an interview on 7 July how very important he thinks the amended Public Audit Act is. The focus of the Checks and Balances Project is Parliament, and how MPs can be assisted to do their work better. Kimi Makwetu said that Parliament has to ask about whether accounting officers have taken appropriate action after being informed of material irregularities. This is a different question from the past, where the focus was on the implementation of AG recommendations.

THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT THE AG

- The AG is responsible for over 1,000 audits a year.
- AGSA has a very significant annual revenue itself – over R3,400,000,000 in 2018/19.
- AGSA is self-funding – from its audit fees – and recorded a surplus of R71 million in 2018/19.
- AGSA employs a huge permanent staff – 3,556 people at present – and it also subcontracts about 17 percent of its audits to private sector audit firms.
- Auditees are supposed to pay AGSA fees after 30 days – but AGSA has R744 million owed to it – mainly by municipalities, who owe R321 million.
- AGSA itself always receives a clean audit opinion. Its own auditors are the private audit firm, Crowe. They are selected by the Standing Committee on the Auditor-General for a non-renewable five year term.
- The AG receives a salary of R6.4 million a year – and AGSA pays the members of its governing body R3 028 per hour – 100 times the government's minimum wage!
- An enormous effort is invested by South Africa in auditing government expenditure and performance.



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- The Checks and Balances Project has received funding support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy. IFAA alone is responsible for the content of this article.
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 - Paton (2020), quoting Tito Mboweni: By the end of this fiscal year government borrowing "will almost entirely consume all of our annual domestic saving, leaving no scope for investment or borrowing by anyone else...[A shift to foreign currency borrowing] could lead to "doom and despair" on a scale of Germany in the 1920s, the Greek debt crisis of 2009 or that of Argentina in the 1980s. Also see Ann Bernstein on the immediate danger of an "irreversible economic decline": <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2020-08-19-ann-bernstein-only-business-can-lead-sa-out-of-the-abyss/>
 - <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/30474/>
 - The AG addressed SCoAG on this precise threat on 22 May 2020: <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/30291/>. There will be special audit reports that will focus on how the funds allocated to the Covid-19 pandemic were spent.
 - See for instance: *The ANC goes into battle against graft – and a battle within itself* by Carien Du Plessis, *Daily Maverick* 23 August 2020.
 - Perhaps Committee staff should work for the Committees they support rather than for the administrative sections of Parliament. Cf interview with Mr Hlengwa, who could not get the research staff that SCOPA needed.
 - There are 400 MPs but over 1,800 parliamentary employees, managed by people who often have individual ambitions and who pursue personal interests and prejudices at the expense of the wishes of MPs. Hlengwa said that the Financial Management of Parliament Act is used by the Administration of Parliament to deny committees research staff, refuse oversight visits and delay urgent investigations.
 - Interview with Hlengwa [AG Bulletin 05], when an expert on local government is sent to basic education.
 - AG Project Bulletin 06, 29 March 2020.
 - See Makwetu (2020) for an excellent description of and motivation for additional powers for the AG.
 - See AG Project Bulletin 11, 02 June 2020: "This is a preventative control, not a regulatory control. It is to 'scare' people into doing their job."
 - This was explicitly acknowledged by the AG himself, who wrote: "The intervention of the Public Audit Act amendments seeks to achieve what is traditionally the role of those charged with oversight..." (Makwetu, 2020) **NA**

Reflections on ‘the Zimbabwe crises: Towards a Just Economic Recovery’

By Dr Hibist Wendemu Kassa

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The author reports back on an IFAA forum in which pan-African feminist scholar activists, socialists and a trade unionist critically analysed the roots of the current crises in Zimbabwe. The discussions focused on fossil fuels and Fast Track Land Reforms. The analysis drew attention to the impact of structural adjustment programmes, economic recovery programmes and austerity budgets combined with the climate crisis aggravated by aggressive

investment in coal-based energy, and state bias towards less productive large-scale farmers. These trends are not peculiar to Zimbabwe but are also relevant in other countries in Africa, and the global South. All these factors have produced the perfect storm in Zimbabwe, strengthening the export oriented extractivist development model and intensifying the current multiple crises, and offering sobering lessons to countries like South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

A global economic recession is underway as the world reels from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is urgency around determining the form of the economic recovery. The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published a global report that highlights how fiscal measures instituted by governments have reduced the contraction in the global economy. These positive projections mainly arise from measures instituted by China, Europe and the United States, while emerging economies like South Africa are projected to experience deeper contraction and mounting debt.¹ As was the case during the 2007/2008 global economic crisis, this emphasises the importance of state intervention to resolve market failure.

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... mining has historically played a critical role in state formation and extreme dispossession of land and natural resources.

This is particularly significant for economies in Africa that have been in a condition of persistent crises. With specific reference to the Southern African region,² mining has historically played a critical role in state formation and extreme dispossession of the land and natural resources.³ Therefore, addressing the land and agrarian question remains critical. The structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and economic recovery programmes (ERPs), with persistent austerity budgets, have continued to erode the ability of states to invest in social provisioning and infrastructure that can absorb the shocks arising out of such crises.⁴ In confronting these circumstances pan-African feminists have sought to turn the post COVID-19 economic response into an opportunity to reimagine our political economies.⁵

Reflecting on the above, IFAA considered it important to convene a webinar on the crisis in Zimbabwe. The country is not only facing deepening and persistent crises, but is also one where radical reforms have been pursued in the recent past. The webinar attracted a mix of scholar activists and trade unionists. Mela Chiponda, coordinator of the Centre for Alternative Development and PhD scholar, analysed the implications of the prioritisation of coal mining and fossil fuel energy



projects. Ian Beddowes from the Zimbabwe Communist Party provided historical analysis of the Fast Track Land Reform programme focusing on smallholder farmers. Austin Muswere, Secretary of the General Agriculture and Plantation Farmworkers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) and Dr Janet Munakamwe from the University of the Witwatersrand analysed the situation of farmworkers.

SUMMARY OF DELIBERATIONS

The discussion opened with an acknowledgement of the critical debates that occurred during the 1980s, when Africa was in a period of economic decline and political instability. Notably, IFAA was formed in this historical moment by radical political economists seeking to advance heterodox economic approaches in Africa. From that period to date, a debt crisis, food security, energy and a care crisis continue to plague the continent. Meanwhile, the imposition of SAPs and ERPs have deepened the export oriented extractivist development model.

In the last three decades, there has been exponential growth of corporations, financialisation and a significant widening of inequality, (even in the face of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic) and mainstream

economic policy thinking doggedly insists that fiscal austerity and economic liberalisation will resolve structural problems.

On the other hand, Jayati Gosh⁶ insists that developing countries urgently need to implement broad-based spending as interim measures to deal with the pandemic, bolster household incomes and ensure employment generation. Capital controls should be placed on the agenda again to prevent capital flight to ensure domestic policy space is protected as interim measures. Longer term steps should include higher corporate tax rates for companies that experience higher rates of returns, especially in the digital economy.

Africa needs to be strengthening its production capacity, especially in agriculture where smallholder farmers continue to be marginalised in support programmes such as access to finance, inputs and appropriate extension services. The climate crisis continues to have an impact on food security, bringing severe drought and at the same time Cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Even while we witness the coronavirus pandemic spreading through a weakened social infrastructure that is a legacy of SAPs/ERPs, the prevailing thinking remains that we must continue to focus on dirty fossil fuel energy ➤

projects and prioritise commercial farming, especially agribusinesses. It is on this basis that we turned to the specificities of the Zimbabwe crisis.

Chiponda drew attention to how electricity generation based on coal mining is deeply implicated in the climate and energy crisis. While there is a global trend towards renewable energy, Zimbabwe is expanding fossil fuel-based energy dependence with new investments in coal. Despite the devastating drought, which has disproportionately affected the poor, coal mining and power plants continue, even though they draw on significant water resources. The Sengwa coal plant investment of \$3.2 billion is going to exacerbate the water scarcity problem. The debt being incurred as a result of this project is a multi-generational justice issue. The paradox is that Zimbabwe is utilising only one percent of its solar energy potential. Meanwhile, coal investments are being pursued aggressively, causing the displacement of thousands of people in Sengwa. Even with increased energy capacity derived from coal, the urban bias of the distribution of electricity is striking and will further consign the rural poor to energy poverty.

Underlying this is a modernisation agenda that presumes that the only developmental path requires large-scale, top-down interventions and the displacement of communities and smallholder producers as an essential precondition. However, there is a significant body of evidence that shows smallholder producers, especially farmers, play a significant role in production in our economies. The Fast Track Land Reform programme, discussed by Moyo, Jha and Yeros,⁷ was identified as “...the most important land reform after the Cold War”.

Beddowes, from the Zimbabwe Communist Party (ZCP), reflected on the history of the national liberation movement and the significance of the

different positions held on the land question in Zimbabwe. The divergent interests of the white settler minority in Zimbabwe and British imperialists had a bearing on the land question. The former, similar to their counterparts in South Africa, sought to protect their nationalist interests by building their own economic power on the basis of an autonomous economy. Meanwhile, Joshua Nkomo, the leader of the opposition Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), took a firm position on the land question with a focus on support for reorganising productive capacity with provision for smallholder producers’ organised cooperatives in agriculture, commerce and industry.⁸ Nkomo happened to be Ndebele and although prior to 1963, ethnicity did not matter in Zimbabwe, divisions on the basis of ethnicity and race were exploited by imperialists who did not want to see an independent Zimbabwe based on an autonomous economy.

Sanctions against Zimbabwe began in 1999, before the War Veterans-led land occupations. The process of expropriating land under the Fast Track Land Reform programme set farmworkers (who included migrants who could not claim entitlements to land), against the War Veterans. The brutal form that land expropriation took put farmworker-trade unions and white farmers on the same side, and pitted them against the implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform. There have been mixed results from the implementation of the land reforms in the last two decades.

On one hand, there is a policy bias of government support for large-scale farmers, but these farmers have not been as productive. The fairness in allocation of large-scale farm plots has been questioned since it appears that well-connected elites have taken over those lands. Meanwhile, despite this bias, there is empirical evidence that smallholder farmers are diversifying

their investments and expanding their productivity, largely on their own initiative. Significantly, the government has decided to specifically compensate white farmers with \$3.9 billion which has been questioned since, not only are some of the farmers in question no longer in Zimbabwe, but also no compensation has been offered to the farmworker victims of the land reform, and to the victims of the Gukurahundi massacres carried out by the Zimbabwe army between 1983 to late 1987.

Dr Muswere described the harsh conditions facing farmworkers. He emphasised the disruption of the livelihoods of migrant workers in particular by the imposition of the Fast Track Land Reform. As the lowest waged workers in Zimbabwe, farmworkers struggle to access food amid precarious employment. Those who had the legal status of aliens in Zimbabwe had to either return to their countries of origin, or remain in Zimbabwe as stateless persons, or migrate to South Africa.

Dr Munakamwe, from Wits University, explained that those who remained in Zimbabwe without the entitlements ascribed to citizens were excluded from the formal sector, and had to resort to informal work such as artisanal mining. Farmworkers also had to contend with a lack of social protection. A rise in sex work and HIV/AIDS cases exacerbated the problems. Workers do not benefit from social security, social protection or access to quality health care which has further eroded their living conditions. In this context, the coronavirus pandemic is a deadly threat. The Zimbabwean Farmers’ Union, who represents employers, recognises that the need for “ensuring social distancing and hygiene on farms will increase production costs”. It was further emphasised that there is a need to consider what has happened to workers in the midst of these land conflicts and what the relationship is between smallholder

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Africa needs to be strengthening its production capacity, especially in agriculture where smallholder farmers continue to be marginalised in support programmes.

farmers and workers, which includes women smallholder farmers.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

The meeting concluded that there is a need to advance just economic alternatives to the crisis facing Zimbabwe based on the principles of climate and energy justice. Nonetheless, the country must be careful not to take up corporate-driven models for renewable energy. This has bearing on reliance on independent power producers in South Africa.⁹

There is also a need to critically assess the manner in which the industrial focus of economic policy-making is biased towards largescale production, to the detriment of smallholder producers. This must take into account how economies in Africa are largely informal and where women smallholder farmers play a critical role. Women perform this work largely on their own initiatives and develop informal networks of exchange and trade that support food systems within and across borders.

Zimbabwe needs to strengthen



its productive capacity by prioritising smallholder farmers, especially women. Decent work and a living wage should also be a crucial part of economic planning for a consumption-driven wage economy with investment for a transition to a renewable energy economy. At this historical juncture, there is an urgent need to back demands for radical Pan African feminist responses to the crisis which simultaneously address the just transition agenda on the basis of the creation of decent work, gender equity and investment in social infrastructure.¹⁰

What remains to be addressed is the kind of industrial policy frameworks that can complement this process in a manner that integrates smallholder producers as a ‘component’ of a broader national development planning processes that is oriented to domestic economies,¹¹ breaking from the dominant extractivist export oriented model. The extent to which an environmentally sustainable path can be created for economies that are likely to depend on low-end labour-intensive technology is also of concern. The deliberations on clustering in South

Africa, and industrial parks in Ethiopia and Kenya, provide empirical evidence that can be critically assessed. This is a topic that requires dedicated and robust deliberation.

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The solidarity economy can free workers to take command of their lives

By Dr Ibrahim Steyn

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This article argues that the solidarity economy can empower self-employed workers in the informal part of the economy, many of whom are women, who have been pushed out of the mainstream labour market. It has the capacity to provide not only alternative means of securing a livelihood but does so in the context of workers' shared values and in a way that is rooted in people's local conditions.

Many workers in South Africa's informal economy, especially Black women,¹ lost their jobs during the national shutdown due to the Coronavirus epidemic. For example,

according to Michael Rogan and Caroline Skinner, "32% of self-employed women and 36% of women in informal wage employment did not work in April."² Studies on the informal economy focus on, inter alia, the structural drivers of informality,³ the size of the informal labour market, the nature of informal employment, and the government's response to the informal economy.⁴

The informal economy literature sheds light on the economic activities of Black working class people, especially Black women, who were pushed out of the mainstream labour market by racial and gendered neoliberal capitalism. The debate on the informal economy, however, ignores collective forms of work that fall outside the purview of paid labour. In contrast, the solidarity economy embodies disparate collective livelihood strategies that liberate the meaning of work, and that challenge the fictitious boundary between production and reproduction.

The feminist and socialist philosopher, Grace Lee Boggs, argues

that jobs in a capitalist economy are characterised by fragmentation and dehumanisation.⁵ The Turkish academic, Aslihan Aykac, draws a distinction between work and labour. She suggests that, in the context of the solidarity economy, work is a liberating space in which the worker exercises control over her/his/their time and social activities, whereas labour in accordance with capitalist values subordinates human beings to the dictates of capital.⁶ The solidarity economy provides a platform for creating "forms of work that create community; that expand our humanity".⁷ According to a survey on cooperatives in Sao Paulo, cooperativists will not give up their work in cooperatives for jobs in the labour market.⁸

Moreover, the solidarity economy injects social and political content into the meaning of work, and it challenges the culture of racial and gendered neoliberal capitalism. There are many local and international examples of collective livelihood efforts that are

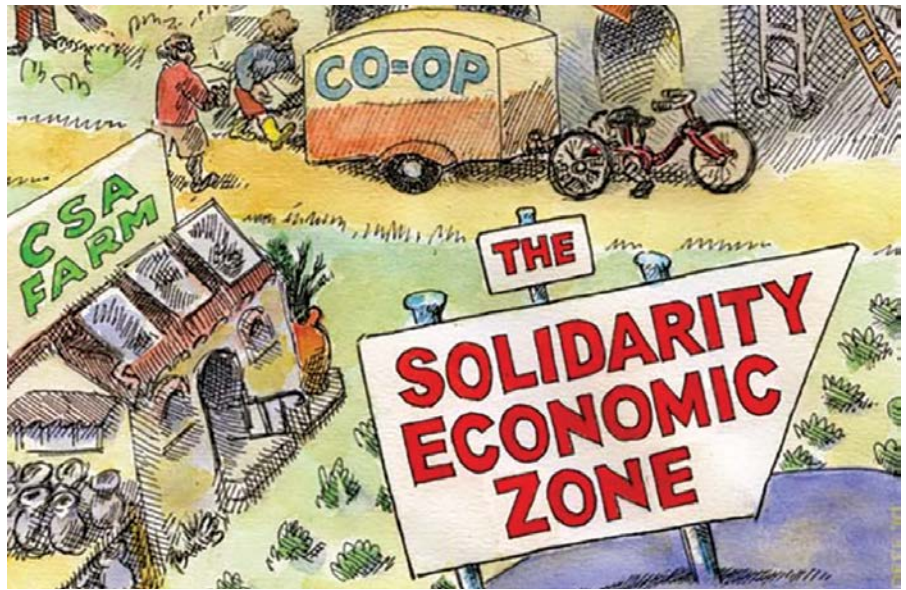


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The solidarity economy provides a platform for creating ‘forms of work that create community; that expand our humanity’.

grounded in communities. These are undergirded by shared values of solidarity and reciprocity that provided social support to communities during the coronavirus epidemic. For example, members of a vegetable garden cooperative in Khenana informal settlement in Durban used money from the savings of the cooperative to buy masks and sanitisers for the whole community.⁹ In the solidarity economy of Ecuador, indigenous farmers made food baskets that were delivered to all households.¹⁰ In Canada, cooperatives provided food and income support to working class communities.¹¹

Between 2013 and 2016, under the aegis of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), I managed two women’s cooperatives projects which developed 12 worker cooperatives anchored to the values of the solidarity economy. These projects – in South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini – show that a solidarity economy approach to livelihoods can produce relationships of cooperation and solidarity among those who operate at the periphery of the capitalist economy, especially Black working class women. In addition, as the Colombian sociologist, Cesar Rodriguez Garavito, points out solidarity economy enterprises such as worker cooperatives can increase the livelihood outcomes of poor, self-employed workers as incomes in cooperatives are generally higher than



those workers generate when working alone.¹² The projects also threw into sharp relief the transformative effects of informal learning processes in the solidarity economy.

The projects assisted 282 self-employed women to develop worker cooperatives anchored to the values of the solidarity economy. The project participants included street traders, informal cross-border traders and home-based garment workers. The ages of the participants ranged between 24 and 60 years. Most of them were poor, and they had low literacy skills.¹³ The cooperatives were registered between 2013 and 2014 in the different countries. Their economic activities included poultry farming, sewing, catering, beadwork and waste picking. Many of the women who participated in the projects were the sole breadwinners in their households.

WHAT IS THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY?

The solidarity economy has historically been an integral part of the struggle for Black liberation as reflected by the principle of self-determination. For example, the plethora of socioeconomic initiatives of the Black community programmes, which were an organisational component of

the Black Consciousness Movement between 1971 and 1977, were spaces for cultivating collective empowerment and resilience in Black communities ravaged by legalised structural racism and racial and gendered capitalism. In the context of the United States of America, Sacajawea Hall observes, “Black people would not have survived the brutality of chattel slavery and Jim Crow apartheid without practicing solidarity and cooperation in organized formal ways”.¹⁴

Definitions of the solidarity economy abound. Scholars and activists agree that the values of the solidarity economy – social solidarity, self-reliance, reciprocity, autonomy and collective ownership – subvert the culture of capitalism. Kali Akuno defines the solidarity economy as “a process of promoting cooperative economics that promote social solidarity, mutual aid, reciprocity, and generosity”.¹⁵ Definitional differences, however, exist in terms of the solidarity economy’s relationship with the capitalist economy and the state.

The Brazilian philosopher and educator, Euclides Mance, views the solidarity economy as an evolving alternative economic system that will eventually replace the capitalist economy.¹⁶ This is not the view of ➤

the centrist International Labour Organisation (ILO), which has used the term “social and solidarity economy” (SSE) to refer to entities such as cooperatives and social enterprises whose values are aligned with the solidarity economy, even though they may exist within the capitalist economy.¹⁷ Carlo Borzaga, Gianluca Salvatori and Riccardo Bodini, in an ILO paper on the SSE, describe the SSE as a shock absorber in the wake of the automation of production and services. The authors argue that the SSE is a source of employment in the social sector, as this sector includes “social and emotional” tasks that cannot be automated.¹⁸ While recognising that these are primarily non-standard forms of employment characterised by low wages and precarious working conditions, the authors nevertheless feel that the “care economy” is an avenue for creating decent work for the inclusion of women into the labour market, and for the incorporation of informal enterprises into the mainstream of the capitalist economy.¹⁹

The problem with this position on the solidarity economy, as Mondli Hlatshwayo explains in relation to poorly paid community healthcare workers in South Africa, is that labour in the social sector is reflective of the way the neoliberal state externalises social services on to non-state actors without assuming any responsibility for the exploitation experienced by workers, especially Black women.²⁰ What is generally ignored is the way employment practices in the social sector are shaped by patriarchy and racism. Moreover, as Jean-Marc Fontan and Eric Shragge observe in their study of community economic development organisations in Montreal, social enterprises that are funded by government risk being assimilated into capitalist economic agendas.²¹

In the South African context, protagonists of the solidarity economy draw a distinction between the social



[S]olidarity economies ... create “maneuvering space” within the belly of the beast by challenging the culture and ideology of capitalism.

economy and the solidarity economy. For example, Michelle Williams argues, “[t]he social economy is about social inclusion, while the solidarity economy is about social transformation”.²² Williams and others who are aligned to this position, consider the solidarity economy as an alternative to the capitalist economy. They argue that by linking cooperatives to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) the government is exposing them to competition and corruption, which undermine democracy and autonomy in cooperatives.²³

Regarding the solidarity economy’s relationship with the state, Aslihan Aykac suggests that solidarity economy actors prioritise autonomy and self-reliance over relations with the state. Some scholars argue that the state should not play a role in the solidarity economy as it is not “a source of change”. They argue that change and transformation can only come from the autonomous capacities of solidarity economy actors to build social power.²⁴

Ethan Miller is a US-based academic and activist. His work on the solidarity economy offers a more nuanced perspective on its relationship with the capitalist economy. He describes the solidarity economy as a process involving different relationships, practices and strategies for the maintenance of livelihoods that are

linked together by shared values and that are rooted in people’s local conditions.²⁵ He argues that the solidarity economy is “an empty signifier” whose content is determined by people’s livelihood practices in different local contexts.²⁶

Miller uses the term “householding economies” to highlight that the social productive work of women contributes towards the maintenance of livelihoods, and, thus, should be considered an economic practice linked to the solidarity economy.²⁷ The term is useful for making visible the economic and social value of social reproduction, and for collapsing the fictitious dichotomy between production and reproduction. For example, Asanda Benya observes that “in the absence of wages”, after the mass arrest of workers at the former Lonmin mine, women in Marikana tapped into stokvels to attend to the household needs of their families.²⁸ She observes that even when the wages were available stokvels continued to be a source of livelihood.²⁹ The benefit of belonging to a stokvel exceeds the monetary gain, as it serves as a platform to build stocks of social capital – solidarity, trust and social networks – within a community.

Miller argues that purist positions on the solidarity economy obscure the ways in which forces that are not explicitly anti-capitalist may contribute towards constructing an alternative economic order. He contends that solidarity economy actors are constructing alternative economic relationships from within the capitalist system.³⁰ The widely studied Mondragon Cooperative Corporation in Spain is an example of the complexity of the solidarity economy. While the cooperation is embedded in the capitalist economy, its activities are undergirded by the values of the solidarity economy.³¹ Aslihan Aykac argues that solidarity economies operate as a countervailing force within the capitalist economy. They create



“maneuvering space” within the belly of the beast by challenging the culture and ideology of capitalism.³²

Moreover, international experiences of the solidarity economy suggest the need for developing tactical approaches towards the state that help to build and sustain the solidarity economy, and that assist in subverting the hegemony of the capitalist political economy. For example, shortly after the election of Lula da Silva as Brazil’s 35th president, social movements engaged with the government on the creation of institutional infrastructure for the solidarity economy, including the establishment of a solidarity economy National Secretariat in the Ministry of Labour and Employment. In Ecuador, indigenous governor, Yaku Perez, is using his political power to support the solidarity economy. In the context of the solidarity economy in Jackson, Mississippi, Kali Akuno observes, “[w]e have learned through our own experiences and our own extensive study of the experiences of others that we cannot afford to ignore the power of the state”.³³

In South Africa, as Mazibuko Jara argues,³⁴ a solidarity economy approach to land justice is a transformative strategy for democratising land policy, and for developing an alternative framework for resolving the land question that centres the land needs of rural and urban Black working class communities through effective systematic support for cooperatives that are not assimilated into neoliberalism. In addition, the solidarity economy is an effective organising platform for building a grassroots movement for land justice and food sovereignty.

TRANSFORMATIVE INFORMAL LEARNING IN THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Workers’ education is generally considered in relation to traditional trade unions, and the focus on education in the informal economy

tends to be on structured education. For example, Chris Bonner makes a compelling case for collaboration on workers’ education for informal workers between traditional trade unions and informal worker organisations, based on several international examples of structured educational activities that make use of participatory methods. She argues, “[t]he sheer size and reach of the informal workforce in developing countries ... indicate that organizing and workers’ education in the informal economy is something that will assume even greater importance in the future, especially for traditional trade unions”.³⁵ Bonner admits that most informal worker organisations are struggling to sustain structured educational initiatives, mainly due to a lack of financial resources.³⁶ However, she does not take into account the general lack of political will and capacity within most traditional trade unions to organise informal workers. As Aykac points out, the failure of traditional unions to move beyond employment, which is the concrete location of capital-labour relations, is reflective of the dearth of capacious perspectives of the working class within the trade union movement. In addition, workers’ education in traditional trade unions is often hierarchically structured, which increases the risk of exclusion in the learning process.

The focus on structured education obfuscates informal learning processes in informal workplace settings such as worker cooperatives. Very little is known about the transformation potential of informal learning in worker cooperatives, especially in cooperatives that are anchored to the values of the solidarity economy. Critical adult educational scholar, Daniel Schugurensky, draws a distinction between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning. Formal education refers to the formal education system and non-formal education includes the educational programmes

of NGOs, trade unions and other civil society organisations. Schugurensky argues that both formal and non-formal education are institutionalised and structured. In contrast, informal learning does not require experts; it is grounded in practice, and it extends beyond the workplace.³⁷

Marcelo Vieta used Schugurensky’s conception of informal learning in his empirical study of worker cooperatives in Argentina, and while his research does not specifically focus on the solidarity economy, the findings resonate powerfully with the outcomes of the two projects on solidarity economy cooperatives with which I have been involved. Vieta refers to the cooperatives that were formed by employees to take over the running of failed businesses as “sites of transformative learning”.³⁸ Not only did the former employees require new skills to manage the cooperatives, they had to transition from being employees to being cooperativists, in other words, from being individual workers to being collective owners of the business organisation.³⁹

Similarly, the self-employed women who participated in the two projects I was associated with required new skills, values and attitudes to operate the cooperatives in accordance with the principles and values of the solidarity economy. The projects combined non-formal education with informal learning. Learning took place in the educational activities organised by the NGO that supported the women’s cooperatives, in the cooperatives and in the interactions between different cooperatives. Informal learning in the women’s cooperatives was both collective and collaborative.

Vieta found that informal learning processes in the worker cooperatives produced transformation at different levels. At a personal level, the workers learned skills and values that resulted in them seeing each other as cooperativists and comrades.⁴⁰ At an interpersonal ➤

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Moreover, the solidarity economy injects social and political content into the meaning of work, and it challenges the culture of racial and gendered neoliberal capitalism.



level, they developed decision-making skills that horizontalised “the workplace from the bottom-up”.⁴¹ At a community-level, the cooperatives started educational, health and art initiatives that addressed the “social, cultural, and economic needs” of the communities in which the cooperatives operated.⁴²

Participatory skills training, political education and on the job learning in the women’s cooperatives produced several important transformative outcomes. In the day-to-day running of the cooperatives, the women workers

learned solidarity, collective ownership, and collective responsibility. For example, in Lesotho, *Selailai-sea-Titima* bought cattle and equipment for poultry farming that were collectively owned by the 10 members of the cooperative. One member of the cooperative, Lucia Konyana, said, “[w]e are now working as a group. There are others who want to join our cooperative, so that they will be part of our cooperative.”⁴³

Learning to work in a cooperative that is anchored to the values of the solidarity economy transformed the meaning of work for informal workers who participated in the projects. They expressed views that subverted the individualistic values of capitalism embodied in entrepreneurialism. They saw social solidarity and collective empowerment as an important part of their work in the cooperatives. For example, Jasmine Page from the Women of Good Taste Cooperative said, “[t]he catering cooperative has played a meaningful role in the upliftment of the socio economic conditions of our members ... the cooperative has given us the opportunities to raise our incomes and empower us to own our own solutions. ... We own Women of Good Taste Catering Cooperative, [and] control and benefit from the business.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, informal political learning in the cooperatives cultivated new social consciousness, resulting in the development of a strong bond of sisterhood among women in the different cooperatives. For example, Nomsa Motza from *Akuhlali Kunje* said: “In Swaziland, we live in a patriarchal society, which always perceives women as second class citizens, and this has caused women to lose confidence in their potential to succeed. Hearing that there are other women doing the same thing, and are successful really changed our mind set of believing that men should always take a lead.”⁴⁵ The cooperatives created safe spaces for women workers to reflect on the intersecting forms of oppression and

discrimination that they experience in their homes and society. As a result, in Lesotho and Eswatini, the women’s cooperatives resisted attempts by men leaders of informal worker organisations to sabotage the projects. Considering that in these two countries women are generally marginalised in informal worker organisations, this response could not have been anticipated prior to the formation of the solidarity economy cooperatives.

However, as Vieta observes, learning in worker cooperatives, like in other organisations or structures, is a process that is fraught with contradictions. For example, some participants had difficulty internalising the values of the solidarity economy. They struggled to take up a cooperative identity. The situation was compounded by the lack of financial support for production in the cooperatives. This means that learning in solidarity economy enterprises is shaped by the conditions under which the enterprises are built and developed.

Notwithstanding the contradictions and challenges, the solidarity economy is a meaningful and effective strategy for maintaining livelihoods. It avoids disadvantages that can accompany the full incorporation of informal workers into the capitalist economy. Moreover, as I indicate above, solidarity economy organisers need to critically consider the ways in which the state can contribute towards the survival of cooperatives. As Garavito argues, local authorities should develop specific plans to support cooperatives in working class and poor communities. Cooperatives that are socialised into the values of the solidarity economy should be able to exercise vigilance against dependency, cooptation and the bureaucratisation of cooperatives without rejecting state intervention out of hand. Finally, it is vitally important that solidarity economy actors such as cooperatives build networks for collaboration and mutual support.⁴⁶



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Setbacks and partial victories for community health workers

By Dr Mondli Hlatshwayo

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Mondli Hlatshwayo outlines how the working conditions of community health workers employed by the government to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic has inspired organised protest action. They are calling for an end to decades of exploitation during which these frontline carers for those afflicted with TB and HIV (AIDS) have been marginalised as outsourced ‘volunteers’ and paid a minimal stipend by subcontracted non-governmental organisations.

INTRODUCTION

Community health workers (CHWs) can be regarded as precarious workers, who Guy Standing refers to as the “precarariat”.¹ They perform crucial functions in the public health care system of South Africa. These workers

tend to be black women who are single parents, earning low wages, working under poor working conditions and without job security. Campaigns and struggles waged by CHWs before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent national lockdown have been documented extensively by various scholars.² However, the pandemic has turned the spotlight on the role of CHWs as part of the core health workforce that has been neglected by the state in its pursuit of neoliberal policies, which have had disastrous effects on the public health care system, its workforce and infrastructure.

Firstly, this article provides an overview of the working conditions of CHWs and their struggles before the pandemic. The argument here is that CHWs are generally black women who carry most of the social and economic burden by subsidising the public health system through their cheap labour. They also conduct unpaid social reproductive labour by looking after their own children and families in their households. Despite their deplorable conditions of work, they have managed to highlight their plight by working with progressive non-governmental

organisations (NGOs), some trade unions, and the Treatment Action Campaign, a national organisation struggling for treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)-positive people in South Africa. Their demands include the need for permanent employment by the state, increased wages and better working conditions.

The main section of the article examines how CHWs responded to their working conditions during the lockdown and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Paradoxically, the pandemic, which destroyed lives and the economy, presented CHWs with the rare opportunity to intensify their struggles for permanent employment and better wages. This is partly because the state saw them as a strategic workforce in the battle against COVID-19. Mainstream unions that did not lend full support to CHWs before the pandemic were compelled to incorporate the demands and issues of the CHWs into their agenda. There is now a possibility for building a national movement of CHWs and winning justice for people who are keeping life going through the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Community Health Workers carry most of the social and economic burden by subsidising the public health system through their cheap labour.

CHWS' STRUGGLES BEFORE THE NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced South Africa's national lockdown on 23 March 2020. The lockdown began on 27 March 2020 and was on-going at the time of writing, albeit on level one with fewer restrictions.³ It became clear right from the start of the lockdown that the CHWs were to play a crucial role in the struggle against the spread of the coronavirus, as they had done in contributing to active campaigns against diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) and HIV.⁴

The role of CHWs in the public health system dates back more than 50 years. Public health systems in Africa, Asia and South America used health workers as part of a progressive agenda in post-liberation contexts. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s in China, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, CHWs serviced poor communities who urgently needed primary health care services and helped to combat diseases. Under conditions of neoliberalism, which entailed budget cuts for public health services, the burden of care tended to shift to CHWs.⁵ In South Africa, budget cuts led to shortages of nurses and health care equipment, and the increased use of home-based care. All these factors led to CHWs taking on more responsibilities



in the health care system, as they had to compensate for staff shortages in the public health sector. For example, in 2018 there were 38,000 vacant nursing posts due to austerity measures, leading to chronic shortage of health employees in state facilities.⁶

CHWs are those health workers who are involved in providing health care services to all who are vulnerable and need health care in communities.⁷ While CHWs provide core health services — like administering HIV testing, counselling, health education, home-based care, looking after the elderly, and are now part of initiatives to combat the spread of COVID-19 and support those infected with COVID-19 — these workers earn low wages and work long hours. They tend to have no permanent employment and no benefits. All health workers, including the nurses, have been negatively affected by COVID-19,

but the CHWs are at the bottom of the employment hierarchy. Their employment relations are defined by extreme forms of precariousness, as their working conditions have always been deplorable compared to the nurses who are their counterparts.⁸

In 2019, Oxfam South Africa revealed that although CHWs were trained to perform crucial duties in the health care system, they earned 5.5 times less than nursing assistants who were immediately above them in the ranking system. In actual amounts, the CHWs earned R42,000 per year and nursing assistants R227,965 per year. What they earn is nowhere near a living wage. As mostly black women who are single parents and also conduct unpaid work in the form of social reproduction, looking after their children and other family members, they have to use the little income they earn to purchase ➤

food and cover transport, housing and schooling costs. Oxfam South Africa described the working conditions of CHWs as appalling even before the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown restrictions. A recent report by Oxfam South Africa on health workers confirms that the black women are the overwhelming majority of CHWs. Thus, their struggles are about challenging the cheap labour system, structural racism, and patriarchy, which tend to undervalue the work carried out by women.⁹

Statistics on CHWs are not generally available or reliable. However, in 2014 it was estimated by Maregele that there were 70,000 CHWs in South Africa, employed by NGOs, private companies and the state.¹⁰ According to the South African Nursing Council (SANC), in 2020 South Africa had more than 400,000 registered nurses. Therefore the CHWs make up almost a quarter of the registered nurses, and that means CHWs have a significant presence in the health sector.¹¹

AUSTERITY AND CORRUPTION

The public health crisis has been caused primarily by chronic underfunding of the public health system, which is driven by the state's commitment to austerity measures. Before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute for Economic Justice and SECTION27 showed that the budget proposal delivered by Finance Minister Tito Mboweni in February 2019 was R0.7 million less than what was approved in the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement adopted by Parliament in October 2018. This was despite the fact that the White Paper of 2015 on the proposed National Health Insurance system called for the state to invest more resources into the public health system to improve the health outcomes of South Africans, especially those who were from working class and poor communities.¹²

At least R20 billion was promised by the President in April 2020 to fund the health system. Commenting on the Supplementary Budget presented by Minister Mboweni in the middle of the lockdown, the Budget Justice Coalition, a coalition of NGOs, said, "... only R2.9 billion of the R21.5 billion that the health sector is projected to spend on coping with COVID-19 is extra funding from the Treasury. Provinces must find about R15 billion from within their existing 2020 budget baselines, which made no provision for dealing with this pandemic".¹³

Even in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2020, the state continued its austerity measures. Provinces that were already facing funding problems were asked to somehow find funds within the existing budget constraints. Orders placed by the Gauteng Department of Health (GDH) for personal protective equipment (PPE) may have seen taxpayers being ripped off to the tune of at least R500 million. To add salt to the wound, it was unearthed through the investigation conducted by investigative journalists Scorpio that the GDH's officials procured health products and equipment from suppliers whose mark-ups exceeded 200% in some instances. The taxpayer and the state paid close to R500 million too much.¹⁴ What was even more disturbing is that eight doctors employed by the GDH, whose responsibility was to save lives, succumbed to the virus at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health workers put the blame for their deaths squarely on the poor quality PPE provided by the department.¹⁵

THE CONDITION OF CHWS DURING THE LOCKDOWN

The CHWs were ready to assist the state in making sure that the spread of the virus was curtailed. However, what was worrying was that there was no proper sharing of information or training of CHWs to ensure that they

were equipped to minimise the spread of the virus. Access to PPE for CHWs and the sharing of standard operating procedures were other major concerns for CHWs.¹⁶

Without responding seriously and directly to the demands and concerns of CHWs during the lockdown in April 2020, the Department of Health stated that it would use CHWs as its core workforce in the fight against COVID-19 because these workers were directly in touch with communities. In concurring with the position of the Department of Health, in April Professor Salim Abdool Karim, who chairs the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19, stated that the role of CHWs would be increasing the tracing and testing of community members as well as providing medical support and care of those who are positive with COVID-19. It was also reported by the Department of Health that 28,000 additional CHWs were to be used in the campaign to minimise the spread of COVID-19 by visiting households for screening and testing, as articulated by Karim.¹⁷ Yet the Department of Health and Karim said nothing about the inadequate working conditions of CHWs, their "foot soldiers" in the fight against COVID-19.

CHWS' RESPONSES TO THEIR CONDITIONS DURING THE LOCKDOWN

The struggles of CHWs — which took the form of active protests led by black working class women and several court battles, among others — compelled the GDH to announce, in the middle of the lockdown, that 8,500 CHWs were to be absorbed as employees of the Gauteng department by 31 July 2020.¹⁸ Subsequently it was reported that the signing of long-awaited permanent contracts was taking place in clinics to ensure compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Under the new dispensation, CHWs in Gauteng were to earn R8,544.50 per month, with medical aid, a housing allowance and pension.

This was an important victory welcomed by all CHWs.¹⁹ Many CHWs were earning R2,000 per month before 2018 and this amount was increased to R3,500 just before the COVID-19 outbreak.²⁰ It was organisations of CHWs like the Gauteng Community Health Care Forum, led by black women and health workers, that achieved this victory.²¹

However, the process of absorbing CHWs into the GDH was not smooth because close to 40 CHWs were not paid full wages in July and August. It was also reported by Right2Know (R2K), an organisation campaigning for access to information in South Africa, that despite the announcement by the GDH, some CHWs were still receiving R3,500 per month and some had not received their wages for two months.²²

The state responses to the conditions of CHWs were not uniform, creating a challenge for the harmonisation and the standardisation of the working conditions for all CHWs in South Africa. CHWs and organisations supporting them responded again by organising protests in support of their demands. The National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (NUPSAW), a union that organises CHWs, and Masincedane, another organisation of CHWs, were part of a protest of about 50 CHWs in Khayelitsha, Cape Town in September 2020. The protesters wanted to be paid an additional R2,000 per month as “danger pay” (remuneration for working under risky conditions imposed by the pandemic) as they were in the forefront of the state’s attempts to curtail the spread of COVID-19. The union welcomed the decision of GDH to employ CHWs in that province as permanent workers, and called for all provinces to follow suit.

During the same protest, a leader of NUPSAW in the Western Cape, Cynthia Tikwayo, indicated that the Western Cape government was far behind in terms of absorbing CHWs, most of whom were still employed by the NGOs contracted by the provincial department

of health.²³ The protesters also demanded safer working spaces and PPE to protect themselves from contracting the virus. Tikwayo, who is also a CHW, told the protesters that she contracted COVID-19 because the government did not provide CHWs like herself with PPE. She further indicated that they were earning R3,600 per month and had to spend R500 on transport, leaving them with little money to support their families. Other CHWs also indicated that as women they were vulnerable as they tended to be robbed by thugs when conducting their duties to save lives.²⁴

Similarly, CHWs in the Eastern Cape protested against their working conditions, health and safety issues, and wages. As part of a response to COVID-19, the Eastern Cape government allocated R175 million for CHWs who contracted the virus. Unlike Gauteng, where the response to CHWs involved in the fight against COVID-19 was to make them permanent employees of the department, in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape provincial governments largely continued to source the services of CHWs from NGOs. Representatives of CHWs in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan municipality in the Eastern Cape reported that about 80 of these workers contracted COVID-19 due to lack of PPE.²⁵ CHWs in the Eastern Cape were concerned that the Eastern Cape government spent millions on expensive “ambulance scooters” that were supposed to reach isolated areas in the Eastern Cape. CHWs argued that they were able to reach those isolated areas, but the department did not spend money on them to ensure marginalised citizens in these areas were taken care of, especially in the context of COVID-19.²⁶

According to journalist Mkhusei Sizani, in August 2020 CHWs in the Nelson Mandela Bay area, led by Young Nurses Indaba Trade Union which also represents CHWs, protested outside the Eastern Cape department of health district offices in Port Elizabeth and in

Bisho, the headquarters of the provincial government. CHWs in the Eastern Cape embarked on a provincial strike to highlight the fact that they were earning low wages (R3,500 a month), had inadequate PPE, had been infected with COVID-19 in the process of managing the virus due to poor supply of PPE, and that their integration into the department of health in the province as employees had not yet materialised. The union indicated that the bargaining council, which also includes the CHWs, had agreed that these workers had to be employed as permanent employees in 2018, and this resolution was to have been implemented on 14 June 2020. What was really worrying, according to the union, was that there were CHWs who had been working as volunteers and as contract workers for more than two years and still had no pension fund or other benefits.²⁷

What COVID-19 and the lockdown have done, to some extent, is to compel the National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (NEHAWU), the largest public sector union in the country, to respond directly and publicly to the needs and aspirations of CHWs. Towards the end of September 2020, NEHAWU members embarked on a nationwide protest calling for adequate PPE for frontline workers, wage increases, “danger pay” for health care workers involved in the struggle against the virus, and the employment of CHWs directly by the state.²⁸

NEHAWU issued a statement in which the union stated that since the 11th of November CHWs have engaged in national strike action to compel the national Department of Health to hire CHWs as permanent workers with benefits. CHWs in various districts and provinces have been protesting and delivering memoranda of demands to health authorities, despite widespread intimidation by the employers, according to NEHAWU.²⁹ The union also emphasised that in the townships, informal settlements and rural areas, ➤

CHWs are part of the core of the public health system and have also been leading the fight against the virus. However, the state continues not to employ these workers and they still earn low wages. The union said, “The national union will do anything in its powers to ensure that Community Health Workers are employed permanently and that they are paid at salary level 3 with all other benefits that are enjoyed by other public servants”.³⁰

CONCLUSION

CHWs play a major role in the public health system of South Africa as they are in direct contact with communities and patients. During the pandemic and the lockdown, CHWs have been in the frontline conducting tracing, testing, screening and taking care of those infected by the virus. The state has failed these workers over decades by not remunerating them fairly and not employing them like other health workers who enjoy other employment benefits. In their campaigns for improving their working conditions, these workers scored some victories, especially in Gauteng. Strategically, workers in other provinces are demanding that they also be granted employment contracts similar to or better than those of workers in Gauteng. Another positive development which emerged in the context of COVID-19 is that CHW organisations, unions and progressive NGOs are united in demanding permanent employment, improved working conditions, and better wages. COVID-19 has forced the state to appreciate the importance of public health and the role of frontline health workers like CHWs. Justice demands full recognition of the contribution of CHWs as a permanent and integral part of the future national health system.

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Inequality Studies from the Global South

David Francis, Edward Webster, Imraan Valodia

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BOOK SYNOPSIS

This book offers an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to thinking about inequality, and to understanding how inequality is produced and reproduced in the global South.

Without the safety net of the various Northern welfare states, inequality in the global South is not merely a socio-economic problem, but an existential threat to the social contract that underpins the democratic state and society itself. Only a response that is firmly grounded in the context of the global South can hope to address this problem.

This collection brings together scholars from across the global South to address broad thematic areas such as the conceptual and methodological challenges of measuring inequality; the political economy of inequality; inequality in work, households and the labour market; and inequalities in land, spaces and cities. The book concludes by suggesting alternatives for addressing inequality in the global South and around the world.

The pioneering ideas and theories put forward by this volume make it essential reading for students and researchers of global inequality across the fields of sociology, economics, law, politics, global studies and development studies.

EXTRACT

The Crisis of Social Reproduction in Petty Commodity Production and Large Scale Mining: A Southern Perspective on Gender Inequality by Dr Hibist Wendemu Kassa

The increasing concentration of women in the informal sector, in the aftermath of economic liberalisation, has drawn attention to deepening gender inequality in the global South. While the persistence of the gender segmented nature of the labour market is widely recognised, the challenge has been understanding the manner that the intersection between production and reproduction is both ‘...cause and consequence’ of gender inequality (Braunstein, Bouhia and Seguino 2018: 3). Integrating the informal sector, a distinctive feature of the global South, provides a better understanding of how social reproduction is integral to the accumulation process (Mezzadri, 2019).

This chapter explores how the erosion of social infrastructure, shrinking formal sector employment and pervasiveness of precarious work has had direct bearing on the emergence of non-formal mining¹ operations in Africa. It draws attention to how the state has essentially left a gap in terms of social provisioning but also in providing support for petty commodity producers and petty capitalists. These

circumstances do not only have bearing on petty commodity production and petty capitalist mining operations, but also on Large Scale Mining (LSM) operations. The latter are developing policy innovations in the form of public private partnerships (PPPs) in response to the gap left by the state. I suggest that the above has had a bearing on the contradictory manner that social reproduction and production relations reproduce gender inequality in the cases investigated in this study. The chapter draws on empirical evidence from Obuasi, a mining town in Ghana, and KwaThema a township in South Africa.²

The challenges with formalisation of artisanal and small-scale mining are discussed in Kassa (2018) *Formalising Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: Problems, Contradictions and Possibilities in The Future of Mining in South Africa: Sunrise or Sunset?*. Editor Salimah Valiani. Johannesburg: Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection.

ENDNOTES

1. I deploy the concept non-formal to capture part of the complexity surrounding categorisation of these operations. Particularly in Obuasi where non-formal operations are criminalised can also include financiers who hold licenses in other areas.
2. The chapter draws on empirical data from a broader PhD study on the political economy of artisanal and small-scale mining which compares cases in Ghana and South Africa. **NA**



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