

Post Apartheid South Africa: Still a Dictatorship of the Rich

Here are some articles and facts about what happened in South Africa after apartheid was abolished in 1994, with URLs to pursue:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/marikana-massacre-untold-story-strike-leader-died-workers-rights>

Marikana massacre: the untold story of the strike leader who died for workers' rights

In 2012 a strike at the Marikana platinum mine in South Africa ended when police opened fire, killing 34 miners. Investigations have revealed one rebel leader died trying to broker a peaceful solution. Nick Davies uncovers his story



Striking miners brandish their pangas on the day 34 were shot by police. Photograph: Gallo Images/Getty Images

On 16 August 2012, South African police [opened fire](#) on a large crowd of men who had walked out on strike from a platinum mine at Marikana, about 80 miles north of Johannesburg. They shot

down 112 of them, killing 34. In any country, this would have been a traumatic moment. For South Africa, it was a special kind of nightmare, since it revived images of massacres by the state in the old apartheid era, with one brutal difference – this time it was predominantly black policemen, with black senior officers working for black politicians, who were doing the shooting.

In response, President Jacob Zuma appointed a [commission of inquiry](#), chaired by a retired judge, Ian Farlam, which eventually sat in public for a total of 293 days, hearing evidence from miners, their bosses and the police, and reviewing video, audio and paper records of the shooting and of the seven-day strike that preceded it. At the end of March this year, the commission delivered its report to Zuma, who so far has failed to publish its conclusions. Those who may find themselves accused of colluding in the police action include not only senior figures from the ruling African National Congress but also Lonmin, the British company that owns the Marikana mine.

In the evidence before the Farlam inquiry, one particular miner came to the fore. In videos of marches and meetings during the strike, this was largely because he wore a bright green blanket around his shoulders. Beyond that, it was because during those seven days of conflict, he came from nowhere as the leader, making passionate speeches through a loudhailer, negotiating with police, standing in the frontline as the shooting broke out. He died that afternoon, with 14 bullets in his face and neck and legs.

The name of the man in the green blanket was Mgcineni Noki. He was aged 30, and known to his family and friends as Mambush. This is his story. It may also stand as part of the story of what has happened in [South Africa](#) since apartheid was voted into the dust of history 21 years ago. Mambush – a rock-drill operator with no official rank – emerged from the mass of black workers as a rebel leader demanding justice, while some of those who were once the spearhead of the fight against repression acted as a shield protecting privilege, exploitation and extreme violence. It is a story about power changing hands and changing colour but failing, finally, to change the lives of those in whose name that power is held. [Go to the url for the rest.]

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/24/anc-faustian-pact-mandela-fatal-error>

How the ANC's Faustian pact sold out South Africa's poorest

[Ronnie Kasrils](#)

In the early 1990s, we in the leadership of the ANC made a serious error. Our people still paying the price



Lonmin mineworkers pay their respects to Mpuzeni Ngxande, one of the 34 miners killed by police on 16 August near the Marikana mine. 'The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 prompted me to join the ANC. I found Marikana even more distressing: a democratic South Africa was meant to end such barbarity.' Photograph: Rodger Bosch/AFP/Getty Images

Monday 24 June 2013 03.00 EDT

South Africa's young people today are known as the Born Free generation. They enjoy the dignity of being born into a democratic society with the right to vote and choose who will govern. But modern [South Africa](#) is not a perfect society. Full equality – social and economic – does not exist, and control of the country's wealth remains in the hands of a few, so new challenges and frustrations arise. Veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle like myself are frequently asked whether, in the light of such disappointment, the sacrifice was worth it. While my answer is yes, I must confess to grave misgivings: I believe we should be doing far better.

There have been impressive achievements since the attainment of [freedom in 1994](#): in building houses, crèches, schools, roads and infrastructure; the provision of water and electricity to millions; free education and healthcare; increases in pensions and social grants; financial and banking stability; and slow but steady economic growth (until the 2008 crisis at any rate). These gains, however, have been offset by a breakdown in service delivery, resulting in violent protests by poor and marginalised communities; gross inadequacies and inequities in the education and health sectors; a [ferocious rise in unemployment](#); endemic police brutality and torture; unseemly power struggles within the ruling party that have grown far worse since the ousting of Mbeki in 2008; an alarming tendency to secrecy and authoritarianism in government; the meddling with the judiciary; and threats to the media and freedom of expression. Even Nelson Mandela's privacy and dignity are violated for the sake of a [cheap photo opportunity by the ANC's top echelon](#).

Most shameful and shocking of all, the events of Bloody Thursday – 16 August 2012 – when police [massacred 34 striking miners at Marikana mine](#), owned by the London-based Lonmin company. The [Sharpeville massacre in 1960](#) prompted me to join the ANC. I found Marikana even more distressing: a democratic South Africa was meant to bring an end to such barbarity. And yet the president and his ministers, locked into a culture of cover-up. Incredibly, the South African Communist party, my party of over 50 years, did not condemn the police either.

South Africa's liberation struggle reached a high point but not its zenith when we overcame apartheid rule. Back then, our hopes were high for our country given its modern industrial

economy, strategic mineral resources (not only gold and diamonds), and a working class and organised trade union movement with a rich tradition of struggle. But that optimism overlooked the tenacity of the international capitalist system. From 1991 to 1996 the battle for the ANC's soul got under way, and was eventually lost to corporate power: we were entrapped by the neoliberal economy – or, as some today cry out, we "sold our people down the river".

What I call our Faustian moment came when we took an IMF loan on the eve of our first democratic election. That loan, with strings attached that precluded a radical economic agenda, was considered a necessary evil, as were concessions to keep negotiations on track and take delivery of the promised land for our people. Doubt had come to reign supreme: we believed, wrongly, there was no other option; that we had to be cautious, since by 1991 our once powerful ally, the Soviet union, bankrupted by the arms race, had collapsed. Inexcusably, we had lost faith in the ability of our own revolutionary masses to overcome all obstacles. Whatever the threats to isolate a radicalising South [Africa](#), the world could not have done without our vast reserves of minerals. To lose our nerve was not necessary or inevitable. The ANC leadership needed to remain determined, united and free of corruption – and, above all, to hold on to its revolutionary will. Instead, we chickened out. The ANC leadership needed to remain true to its commitment of serving the people. This would have given it the hegemony it required not only over the entrenched capitalist class but over emergent elitists, many of whom would seek wealth through black economic empowerment, corrupt practices and selling political influence.

To break apartheid rule through negotiation, rather than a bloody civil war, seemed then an option too good to be ignored. However, at that time, the balance of power was with the ANC, and conditions were favourable for more radical change at the negotiating table than we ultimately accepted. It is by no means certain that the old order, apart from isolated rightist extremists, had the will or capability to resort to the bloody repression envisaged by Mandela's leadership. If we had held our nerve, we could have pressed forward without making the concessions we did.

It was a dire error on my part to focus on my own responsibilities and leave the economic issues to the ANC's experts. However, at the time, most of us never quite knew what was happening with the top-level economic discussions. As [Sampie Terreblanche](#) has revealed in his critique, [Lost in Transformation](#), by late 1993 big business strategies – hatched in 1991 at the mining mogul [Harry Oppenheimer](#)'s Johannesburg residence – were crystallising in secret late-night discussions at the Development Bank of South Africa. Present were South Africa's mineral and energy leaders, the bosses of US and British companies with a presence in South Africa – and young ANC economists schooled in western economics. They were reporting to Mandela, and were either outwitted or frightened into submission by hints of the dire consequences for South Africa should an ANC government prevail with what were considered ruinous economic policies.

All means to eradicate poverty, which was Mandela's and the ANC's sworn promise to the "poorest of the poor", were lost in the process. [Nationalisation of the mines](#) and heights of the economy as envisaged by the Freedom charter was abandoned. The ANC accepted responsibility for a vast apartheid-era debt, which should have been cancelled. A wealth tax on the super-rich to fund developmental projects was set aside, and domestic and international corporations, enriched by apartheid, were excused from any financial reparations. Extremely tight budgetary obligations were instituted that would tie the hands of any future governments; obligations to implement a free-trade policy and abolish all forms of tariff protection in keeping with neo-liberal free trade fundamentals were accepted. Big corporations were allowed to shift their main listings abroad. In Terreblanche's opinion, these ANC concessions constituted "treacherous decisions that [will] haunt South Africa for generations to come".

An ANC-Communist party leadership eager to assume political office (myself no less than others) readily accepted this devil's pact, only to be damned in the process. It has bequeathed an economy so tied in to the neoliberal global formula and market fundamentalism that there is very little room to alleviate the plight of most of our people.

Little wonder that their patience is running out; that their anguished protests increase as they wrestle with deteriorating conditions of life; that those in power have no solutions. The scraps are left go to the emergent black elite; corruption has taken root as the greedy and ambitious fight like dogs over a bone.

In South Africa in 2008 the poorest 50% received only 7.8% of total income. While 83% of white South Africans were among the top 20% of income receivers in 2008, only 11% of our black population were. These statistics conceal unmitigated human suffering. Little wonder that the country has seen such an enormous rise in civil protest.

A descent into darkness must be curtailed. I do not believe the ANC alliance is beyond hope. There are countless good people in the ranks. But a revitalisation and renewal from top to bottom is urgently required. The ANC's soul needs to be restored; its traditional values and culture of service reinstated. The pact with the devil needs to be broken.

At present the impoverished majority do not see any hope other than the ruling party, although the ANC's ability to hold those allegiances is deteriorating. The effective parliamentary opposition reflects big business interests of various stripes, and while a strong parliamentary opposition is vital to keep the ANC on its toes, most voters want socialist policies, not measures inclined to serve big business interests, more privatisation and neoliberal economics.

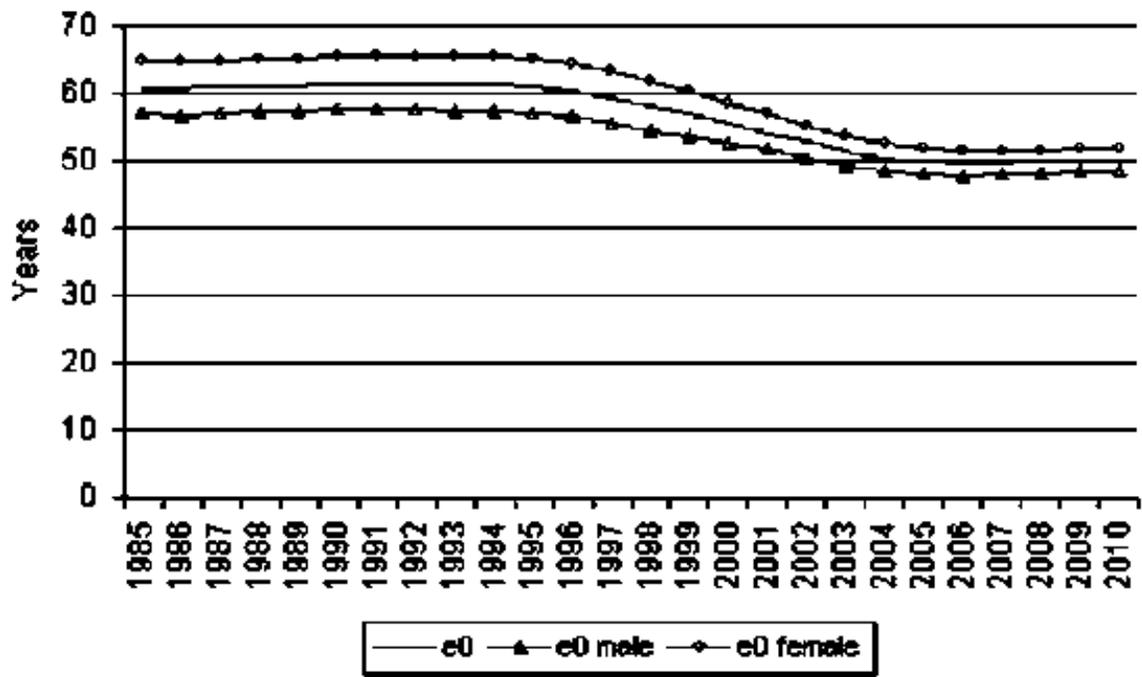
This does not mean it is only up to the ANC, SACP and Cosatu to rescue the country from crises. There are countless patriots and comrades in existing and emerging organised formations who are vital to the process. Then there are the legal avenues and institutions such as the public protector's office and human rights commission that – including the ultimate appeal to the constitutional court – can test, expose and challenge injustice and the infringement of rights. The strategies and tactics of the grassroots – trade unions, civic and community organisations, women's and youth groups – signpost the way ahead with their non-violent and dignified but militant action.

The space and freedom to express one's views, won through decades of struggle, are available and need to be developed. We look to the Born Frees as the future torchbearers.

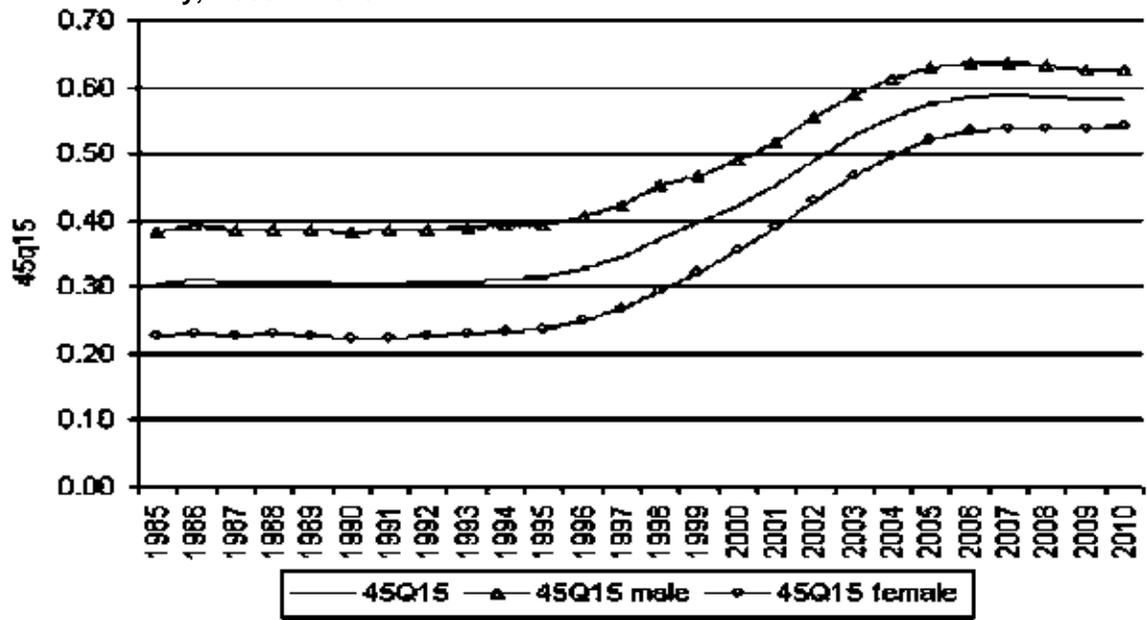
• This is an edited extract from the new introduction to his autobiography, *Armed and Dangerous*

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0442e/a0442e0v.htm>

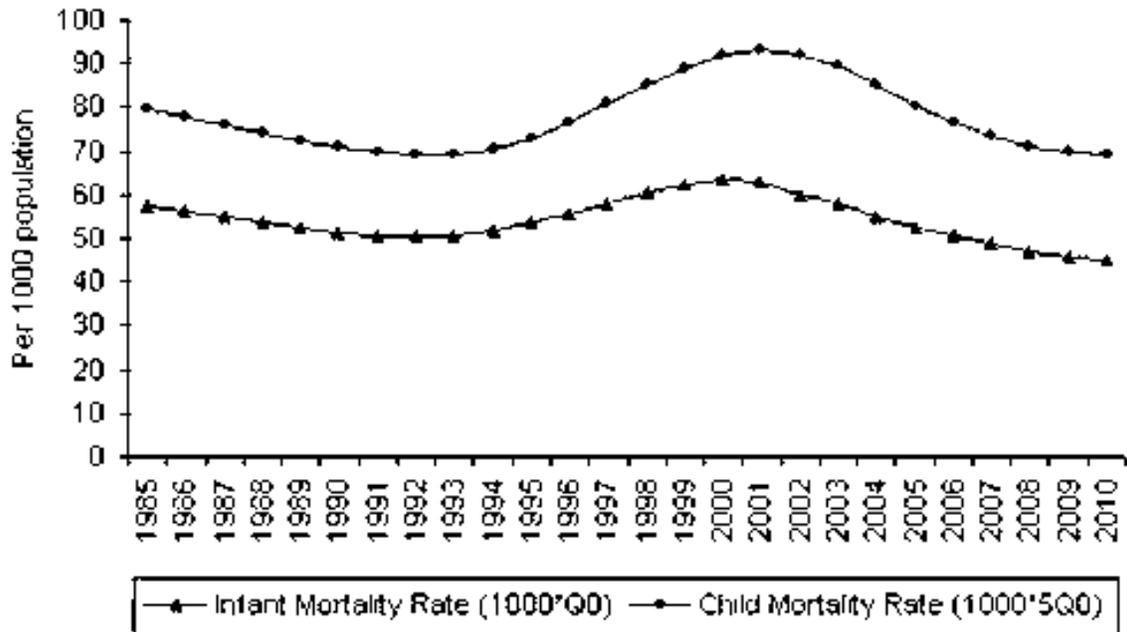
Average life expectancy at birth, 1985 to 2010



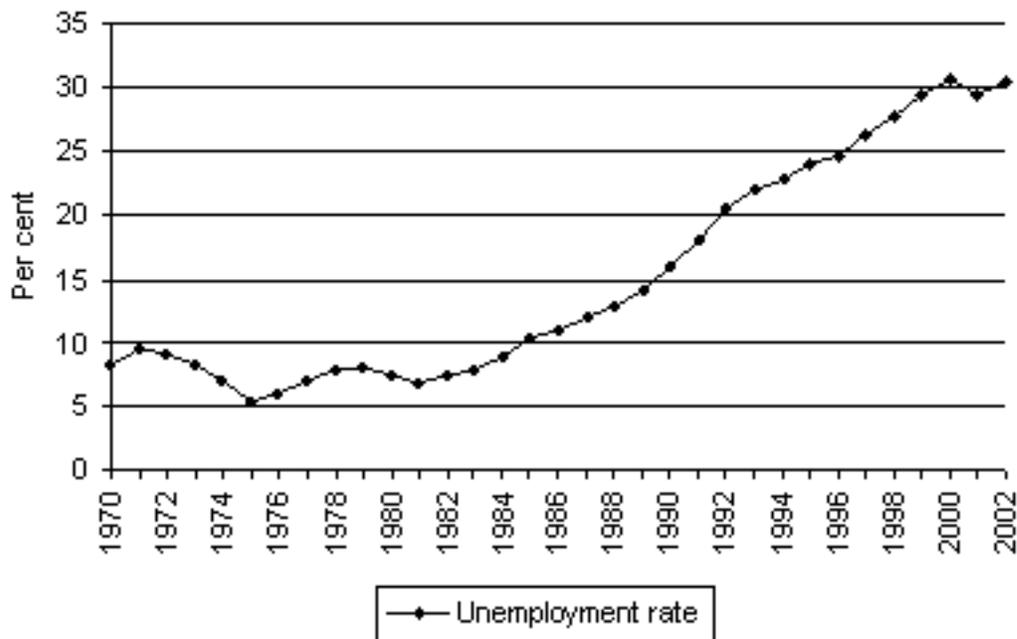
Adult mortality,¹ 1985 to 2010



Infant and child mortality rates, 1985 to 2010



Unemployment rates, 1970 to 2002



<https://www.uj.ac.za/newandevents/Documents/2016/Is-South-Africa-reverting-to-a-repressive-state.pdf>

Is South Africa reverting to a repressive state?

Jane Duncan

Inaugural professorial lecture, Council Chambers, University of Johannesburg, 13 July 2016

Introduction

Since the Marikana massacre in 2012, several journalists, academics and media commentators have argued that South Africa is reverting to a repressive state. They have interpreted violence at the hands of the South African Police Service (Saps) generally, and Marikana specifically, as signs that the post-apartheid social order can no longer be held in check through consent alone. They argue that the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and other powerful actors have concluded that naked violence is now needed to stabilise increasingly fractious social relations (McMichael 2014; Pithouse 2016: 1-5). Some have even used the term 'police state' to describe post-Marikana South Africa (Hlongwane 2014; Kasrils 2013; Essop, Eliseev and Grootes 2015; Bezuidenhout 2016). As a police state is one where the police act as a political force to contain social dissent using arbitrary force, it is an important manifestation of a more repressive state: a society that is ruled by its military is another.

How likely is South Africa to descend into a state of full-blown repression? How likely is it that there will be more Marikanas? Needless to say, being able to answer these questions will have a major impact on the future trajectory of the country's politics. In attempting to do so, I will move beyond arguments set out in my previous book 'The rise of the securocrats: the case of South Africa' (Duncan 2014). In this book, I assessed the significance of the growth in the strength of the state's repressive apparatus, but did not really consider limits on the state's capacity to repress. I do so in this paper, and in doing so, I draw on arguments set out in my new book 'Protest nation: the right to protest in South Africa' (Duncan 2016).

There can be little argument with the statement that South Africa's democratic government under its fourth president, Jacob Zuma, has strengthened the coercive capacities of the state, consisting of the police, the intelligence and the military and located in the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster. In fact, it would appear that this Cluster has become the praetorian guards of an increasingly embattled presidency (Duncan 2014: 2-4). The wellreported

growth in the levels of police violence against ordinary civilians and protestors and police militarisation are the most visible manifestation of this shift, as is the normalisation of the military in domestic policing functions, which suggests a growing militarisation of society (Nicholson 2015). However, the huge public controversies over police violence and police militarisation, mask the fact that there are fundamental shifts in the coercive capacities of the state, away from overt repression and towards less visible, more pre-emptive forms of repression. What are the indicators of this shift and why is it significant?

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/christopher-mcmichael/footsoldiers-in-social-war-police-south-africa>

Footsoldiers in a social war: the police, crime and inequality in South Africa

CHRISTOPHER MCMICHAEL 25 October 2013

What does it mean to declare a 'war on crime' in one of the most unequal societies in the world? And how does contemporary police violence in South Africa serve to maintain the status quo of spatial and economic fragmentation?

With allegations ranging from torture of suspects to involvement in extrajudicial executions, [endemic violence](#) has increasingly characterised the reputation of the national South African Police Service (SAPS), and the various supporting Metropolitan departments organised at the city level. A noted hardening of police attitudes towards the citizenry has been typified by an intensification of the force used against demonstrations, which in many cases has included fatal shootings by officers.

This normalisation of police shootings as a tactic reached its grim nadir on 16 August 2012 when, during a strike at Lonmin's Marikana mine, 34 miners were gunned down by a special SAPS unit. This police violence is often politically targeted, with groups that attempt to organise outside of the ANC and state structures, such as the shack dwellers movement [Abahalali baseMjondolo](#) and the strike committee at Marikana, being particularly open to attack.

These police actions do not occur in a vacuum. As one of the most unequal and socially fragmented societies in the world, post-apartheid South Africa is intensely [spatially and politically exclusionary](#), as recently argued by Richard Pithouse elsewhere on openDemocracy. While visible and visceral, police violence is part of a wider continuum of governmental strategies to manage and contain this social inequality, and protests of the poor against it. [Go to the url for the rest.]

From the book, *Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa*, by Jeremy Seekings and Nicolai Nattrass, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2005:

“Our central argument in this book is that the distributional regime in South Africa has long served to privilege one section of the population while excluding others, but the composition of the privileged group and the basis of privilege has changed over time. Initially, under apartheid, insiders and outsiders were defined primarily in racial terms. The apartheid distributional regime provided full employment for white people (by means of a combination of racially discriminatory labour-markers, industrial, and educational policies) while channeling cheap African labour to unskilled jobs in the mines and on farms. But the very success of this regime in advantaging white people allowed the basis of exclusion to shift from race to class: white South Africans acquired the advantages of class that allowed them to sustain privilege in the market and ceased to be dependent on continued racial discrimination. The consequence of this was that some classes of black South Africans could become insiders while others remained largely excluded from the benefits of prosperity. The distributional regime was never as nearly exclusive as apartheid discourse suggested; even under apartheid it extended some benefits to the poor, and since 1994 it has had more universalist ambitions. But the underlying bases of distribution remain fundamentally inegalitarian. The reason why extreme inequality has persisted after 1994 is, above all, that the distributional regime of the late apartheid period has been reformed (primarily through deracialisation) rather than transformed or rejected in favour of a more egalitarian one.” [pg. 6]

“What is striking about inequality in South Africa in the decade following the end of apartheid is the number of continuities from the preceding decade. The changes that took place were the continuations of changes that were evident before 1994. There continued to be rapid upward mobility into the upper classes and income deciles by black South Africans, and urban workers benefited from rising wages. But unemployment grew, the informal and smallholder agricultural sectors remained stagnant, and the ranks of the poor swelled. Inequality remained as high as ever, if not higher, even if interracial differentials declined. The expansion of opportunities at the top did not bring significant improvements for most of the people at the bottom.” [pg. 301]

by John Spritzler
PDRBoston.org