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HISTORY MATTERS

South Africa, 1994 + 30: A Conversation About History After Apartheid

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Abstract
In this wide-ranging conversation, six scholars of South Africa detail threads of continuity and change in the historiographies, popular memories, archives, research agendas, methodologies, and within the South African academy and historical professional since the end of formal apartheid in 1994.

Keywords: Southern Africa; South Africa; historiography; apartheid; research

Editors' Introduction

April 1994 was a momentous month across the African continent. In the Great Lakes, civil war evolved into genocide into Rwanda, while in South Africa civil war resolved into the country's first one-person, one-vote democratic elections. Thirty years on, Rwanda is a stable, economically vibrant autocracy, under the same government that emerged from the maelstrom of violence. Its elections are farcical exercises, while in South Africa, democracy is strong, with the country's seventh national election imminent. The rest of the record — on economic transformation, on service delivery, on civil society, on race — is a bit more mixed.

Thirty years is a big chunk of time; it is the distance between the 1994 elections and the Rivonia judgement; or between the whites-only election that inaugurated apartheid in 1948 and the influenza that swept through the then-Union of South Africa at the end of the First World War. Three decades are enough for generational transition, and ample distance for reflection. To mark the occasion, The Journal of African History invited six historians of South Africa – four based there and two overseas – to reflect on the "history of South African history," three decades after April and May 1994. Based in formerly Afrikaans-medium, elite-English, and Bantustan academic institutions, Thula Simpson, Chris Saunders, Janeke Thumbran, and Laura Phillips all specialise in twentieth century South African political, intellectual, and social history. They are joined in conversation by two prominent South African scholars who now work in North America: Jacob Dlamini, a leading historian of apartheid, and Shireen Hassim, who, although a political scientist by training, has contributed mightily to the historiography of gender and politics in South Africa.

The Editors asked the contributors to consider broad questions about how the historical profession and historical scholarship has evolved since 1994. Their reflections cover vast territory — from how the academy has (or has not) been transformed since the advent of democracy, to how newly available archives and innovative methods have informed the stories historians tell about the past.

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The contributors consider what lacunae remain, what transformations have yet to take place, and how history can inform (and has informed) twenty-first-century South African political discourse, sometimes for the better, and other times not.

The contributors do not agree about everything, which is itself a welcome and revealing fact. In 2024, South African history is a vibrant, expansive field; these scholars' own work is clear evidence of this fact. The country's future is unclear — who can say what South Africa's next thirty years will bring? At the very least, we look forward with anticipation to what its historians will say about whatever is to come, and to their new interpretations of what has been. Happy anniversary, South African democracy. And many more.

South Africa, 1994 + 30

Thula Simpson (TS): I entered academia in the first decade of the century. The changes at the University of Pretoria since then have been significant, reflecting broader changes in the sector. When I arrived as a postdoctoral fellow, the institution was bilingual (English and Afrikaans), and instruction in the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies was dual medium.

The department under Professor Johan Bergh was smaller and more closely knit than I had known in Britain. But consistent with his inaugural lecture in 1987, Bergh strove to strengthen research culture within the department.[1] In this, he was following his immediate predecessors in the chair, namely F. J. du Toit Spies and Floors van Jaarsveld. The growth of the Afrikaans university was shaped by the notion of the *volksuniversiteit* ("people's university"), in which advancing the broader Afrikaner nationalist cause was foregrounded as a central activity. Nationalist themes had provided a powerful initial impetus for scholarship in Afrikaans. Crucially, however, the scholarship was not insular, being influenced in its methodological approach by connections with continental Europe, particularly Germany and the Low Countries. From its fountainhead at Stellenbosch University, which boasted the first fully-fledged Afrikaans history department (and was thus able to train graduates who filled positions elsewhere), an empirically rich, Rankean ("objective scientific" as practitioners put it), but nationalistically-oriented scholarship emerged, and became the dominant mode of doing history in Afrikaans.[2] In the process, a powerful historical-industrial complex developed (involving prestige publications, prizes, awards, access to funding streams) to stimulate knowledge production. Alex Mouton has noted in his brilliant biographical essay that Spies warned that the focus on nationalism was closing Afrikaans historians away from trends that were transforming the discipline internationally.[3] Meanwhile, Van Jaarsveld used various formats including articles, lectures, and his column in the Pretoria newspaper *Hoofstad* to question whether the nationalist orientation of public history remained in the volk's interest. His objection was that it risked diverting attention from addressing emerging social strains that were rooted, essentially, in the rise of new majoritarian nationalisms.[4] The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) sought to silence Van Jaarsveld when it tarred and feathered him in 1979 for calling for a different approach to commemorating the battle of Blood River,[5] but the questioning didn't disappear.

[1]Johan S. Bergh, "Uitdagings vir die Afrikaanse Historikus," *Historia* 3, no. 2 (1987): 14–26.

[2]See Albert Grundlingh, "Social History and Afrikaner Historiography in a Changing South Africa: Problems and Potential," *Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, Vol. 45 (London: University of London, 1993), 1–10; Chris Saunders, '"South African Historical Writing to the End of the Apartheid Era," *Oxford research encyclopedia of African History*, ed. Thomas Spear (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1189; and Thula Simpson, "Towards a school of their own: the varieties of South African Historiography," *History Beyond Apartheid: New Approaches in South African Historiography*, ed. Thula Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023), 11–12.

[3]F. A. Mouton, "F. J. du Toit Spies, Afrikaner Nationalism and Volksgeskiedenis at the University of Pretoria," *South African Historical Journal* 51, no. 1 (2004): 103–4

[4]F. A. Mouton, "FA van Jaarsveld (1922–1995) — a flawed genius?," *Kleio* 27, no. 1 (1995): 7.

[5]*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, Vol. 6, Section 3, Chapter 1 (Cape Town: Juta, 1998), 460–61.

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Bergh's inaugural has been little cited (no doubt partly because it exists only in Afrikaans) but it touched on this debate, which has themes of enduring importance. Central among them is what is the greater good, and how might the university and the professional historian best serve it? Bergh flagged the insularity that he detected in Afrikaans historiography in terms of hiring, publication, collaboration, and networking. Like Spies, he warned of the intellectual ossification that had resulted, and the cleavage this had created with the country's English-speaking universities in terms of productivity and prestige. He called for the initiation of various initiatives.

Janeke Thumbran (JT): I started my first academic job in South Africa in 2018 and soon realised that, despite the demographic changes taking place in universities, my experience of teaching as a black woman was not vastly different from those that came before me.[6] It became quite clear that black academics, and black women in particular, are seldom seen as intellectual authorities and are often on the receiving end of dismissive and disrespectful speech from students, parents, and even their colleagues. Students often perceive black women academics as overly harsh or strict markers (graders), with unrealistically high expectations for students' work.[7] These are often the comments made in course evaluations, which as we know in the context of "client-based" education, casts academics as product suppliers who are expected to cater to students' expectations. What I do find rather surprising is that this was my experience in the wake of the 2015/2016 student protests in South Africa. This was where students called attention to their own racialisation within the university (and its relationship to gender, class, and nationality) but somehow failed to recognise that black academics were vulnerable to the very same thing, especially in the space of the classroom. What's more is that junior academics, who are often students themselves (postgraduate), have far more in common with undergraduate students than they do with senior academics: both are really at the mercy of these powerful institutions.

Chris Saunders (CS): Transformation of the demographics of the academic staff of history departments (a number of which changed their names to historical studies to reflect a broadening of the discipline) had begun before 1994, with more women and people from the minority Indian and Coloured communities being appointed, and these trends continued after 1994. Well before today there was no longer any statistical gender inequality in new history appointments. Some departments of history that had been almost entirely male before 1994 are now majority female. This transformation encouraged a great growth of work on gender and on topics such as the history of children or sexuality.

At the same time, there has been a decline in student interest in history at a number of universities and to increase enrolments some departments of history branched out into heritage studies or linked up with anthropology and other cognate disciplines.

Jacob Dlamini (JD): Since 1994, there has been a change in the context in which the study of history and the undertaking of historical research are taking place in South Africa. There has also been a change in the professional composition of the discipline, something that thinkers have been fretting over for more than a century. In 1919, for example, educationist and political activist John Dube said: "If there were Native historians surely we would be reading a different history to

[6]See Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela and Zine Magubane, eds., *Hear Our Voices: Race, Gender and the Status of Black South African Women in the Academy* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2004) and Cheryl Potgieter, *Black Academics on the Move: How Black South African Academics Account for Moving Between Institutions or Leaving the Academic Profession* (Pretoria: Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2002).

[7]A resource on this topic is the text, Michelle Harris, Sherrill L. Sellers, Orly Clerge, and Frederick W. Gooding Jr., eds., *Stories from the Front of the Room: How Higher Education Faculty of Color Overcome Challenges and Thrive in the Academy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017). Although written from the academic context of the US, it bears a striking similarity to the South African context.

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what is doled out to us."[8] In 1952 Z. K. Matthews, also an educationist and a political activist, said: "I do not know if it is possible to approach history without bias. But if it is necessary to accept that all history is biased, the important thing is that all biases be represented, and it is high time that African history, written from the African point of view, takes its place on library shelves."[9] In 1977, historian Rodney Davenport lamented the absence of black historians in South Africa.[10]

In 1988, Iain Smith, another historian, noted the "peculiar absence of a major contribution, as yet, from African South Africans to the historiography of a country which is the most developed and urbanized in Africa."[11] Smith predicted that when black historians did show up eventually, they were likely to upset the apple carts of a fair number of white historians. In 2006, historian Cynthia Kros also pointed to the absence of black historians from the discipline.[12] Kros predicted that social history's translation of ordinary voices was "likely to become complicated and enriched by the greater influx of African language-speaking historians into the profession." By 2010, another historian, Jane Carruthers, was also drawing attention to the absence of black historians from the discipline.[13]

Laura Phillips (LP): But it is also worth considering South Africa in its regional context: in particular, I am referring to the cohort of Zimbabwean scholars who have studied and now work as postdoctoral fellows in South Africa. As living in Zimbabwe has become increasingly difficult, larger numbers of Zimbabweans have enrolled in South African universities in recent times, particularly at the University of Stellenbosch and the University of the Free State, often attracted by programmes focusing on environmental history and economic history, respectively. Thus, not only has the day-to-day work of historians changed and not only has the profession racialised and gendered in noteworthy ways, but it has also developed a distinctive national flavour. However, despite the numbers of Zimbabweans studying in South Africa, xenophobic policies in universities and South Africa's Home Affairs office have made it very difficult to hire non-South Africans in many (though not all) institutions. The result is that there are large numbers of Zimbabweans with PhDs in South Africa, but they exist in the university system primarily as postdocs and contract lecturers.

CS: While a few black Africans from Zimbabwe obtained posts in South African history departments after 1994, relatively few black Africans from South Africa itself did (some leading black African historians took posts in government instead). In 2024 there are still relatively few black African historians in the academy. Some of those who were appointed were overwhelmed by teaching and administrative responsibilities (which were greater than ever before, despite the digital revolution and use of online means of teaching) and produced little original scholarship, though there are, of course, significant exceptions to this generalisation.

JD: There are certainly many more people who identify as black (African, Coloured, Indian) doing history today. Many are doing excellent work and infusing the discipline and the profession with new blood. However, I am not persuaded that we have started asking different and new questions

[8]John Dube, *Ilanga lase Natal*, 21 Mar. 1919.

[9]Z. K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People. The Autobiography of Z. K. Matthews: Southern Africa 1901 to 1968* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1981), 59.

[10]Rodney Davenport, "The Tiger in the Grass," *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 9 (1977): 3–12.

[11]Iain Smith, "The Revolution in South African Historiography," *History Today* 38, no. 2 (1988): 9.

[12]Cynthia Kros, "Considering the Legacy of Radical/Social History in South Africa," *African Historical Review* 39, no. 1 (2007): 41–58. See also, Cynthia Kros, "Editorial on the Occasion of the 60th Issue of the *South African Historical Journal*," *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 1 (2008): 3–6.

[13]Jane Carruthers, "The Changing Shape and Scope of Southern African Historical Studies," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 2 (2010): 384–93.

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about our past; I am not certain that we have gone beyond that necessary but age-old obsession with how many professional black historians there are in South Africa. I am not sure either that we have bothered with the question of what, in material and conceptual terms, it would mean to have more black historians in South Africa. I am all for more people doing history professionally; I am suspicious of the implicit assumption that more black historians will translate automatically into better, richer black histories. To his credit, when in 1988 Iain Smith lamented the relative absence of black historians in South Africa, he made it clear that he was not calling for a narrow approach to history-writing: "One does not have to believe that only blacks can write black history to acknowledge that a crucial dimension is still largely missing from South African historiography without which it is greatly impoverished."[14] But the jury is still out on what new dimension black historians have introduced to the historiography.

CS: The end of white minority rule in 1994 did not usher in any fundamental new development or approach in South African historical scholarship. Most historians of South Africa had abandoned Eurocentric/Albocentric approaches decades before, and in the 1970s and 1980s radical historians had introduced their own highly critical approaches to the study of the South African past. Criticisms of the liberal and radical traditions as racist,[15] and calls for an Africanist approach to South Africa's past to be pushed further,[16] have not led to any serious historical scholarship.

The social history approach to the past that developed from the 1970s, and was associated with the work of Charles van Onselen and others, and rejected the structuralism of non-historians writing about history, was continued through the South African political transition into the postapartheid era and remains dominant to the present.[17] At its best it combined detailed empirical research with analysis of broad socioeconomic themes. The flirtation some historians engaged in with postmodernism in the 1990s proved short-lived.[18] Within social history, there were new emphases on culture and identities, reflecting trends in the discipline as a whole and global intellectual currents.

LP: History, like many disciplines, has been heavily shaped by the calls to "decolonise" South African universities. Decolonisation has been a clarion call for some time, but it was in the aftermath of #Rhodesmustfall that it gained particular urgency. While decolonisation has come to mean many different things to different people, perhaps one of the most coherent efforts at decolonisation has come out of a critique of the traditional source-base underpinning much of South African historical writing.[19] In an attempt to address this, the Mellon-funded "History Access" programme at the University of Cape Town has supported the development of students working with so-called vernacular sources.[20] Though not the first to use non-English or non-Afrikaans source

[14]Smith, "The Revolution," 10.

[15]Bernhard Makhosezwe Magubane, "Whose memory – whose history? The illusion of liberal and radical historical debates," in *History Making and Present Day Politics The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, ed. Hans Erik Stolten (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2007). Eddy Maloka, a historian who continued to write historical work while not being a member of the historical profession, had earlier voiced criticisms of the radical school on similar grounds. See also Eddy Maloka, *Friends Of the Natives: An Inconvenient History of South African Liberalism* (Durban: 3MS Publishing, 2014).

[16]Most notably Ndumiso Dladla, *Here is a Table. A Philosophical Essay on History and Racism in South Africa* (Stellenbosch: SunMedia, 2020). Dladla teaches in a Philosophy Department.

[17]A key article was Alan Cobley, "Does Social History have a Future? The Ending of Apartheid and Recent Trends in South African Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2001. Cf. Stephen Sparks, "New Turks and Old Turks: The historiographical legacies of South African social history," *Historia* 58, no. 1 (2013): 215–39.

[18]See e.g. Clifton Crais, "South Africa and the Pitfalls of Postmodernism," *South African Historical Journal* 31 (1994).

[19]See Hlonipha Mokoena, "Who owns 'Black?' Decolonization and its Aporias," *Current History* 122, no. 844 (2023): 193–95.

[20]University of Cape Town, "Rethinking Historical Knowledge Production in terms of Social Transformation," https://humanities.uct.ac.za/history-access/about-history-access.

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material for the writing of South African history, that there is a cohort of students doing this kind of work suggests potential for historiographical shifts and new debates in the field. In particular, there is a rich seam to mine by working with the black presses, the writings of educated elites, and "aspirants to elite status,"[21] opening up new insights into the colonial encounter and elite cultural and political histories.[22] While fluency in African languages will not automatically teach us about lesser explored aspects of South Africa's past, the academy's privileging of this skill set may very well lead to transformations in both history departments and historical writing.

JD: In 2012 Shula Marks spoke of the revisionist history that, from the 1960s on, challenged what she called the "white version" of African history.[23] But, as she pointed out, this revisionist history was researched and written almost exclusively by white historians. To the question why this was so, Marks answered: "Inevitably, the deliberate stunting of Black education by Nationalist party governments before 1990 meant that the country produced far too few black scholars in general and even fewer black historians in particular." Marks called history a "much-hated discipline with few black takers."

TS: As a consequence of the historiographical revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the English-language literature on South African history had a recognisable research agenda in the years before 1994. Inquiry centred on exploring the role of race and class in the making and unmaking of segregation and apartheid. Many shades of opinion existed within that frame, and there were famously sharp debates between liberals and neo-Marxists, social historians and structuralists, and various fragments of Marxist thought. But for all the differences, there was unity on the problems requiring solution, and the participants shared a common opposition to minority rule, and in centring the experience of the country's black populations.

The various debates in the Anglophone literature ended indecisively, not least because while the theoretical dispute was framed in "either/or" terms, the empirical evidence pushed in a "both/and" direction. Differently put, in pressing their case liberal historians offered plentiful examples of racial cooperation in South Africa's past, while the neo-Marxists provided chapter and verse on class conflict. But in the process they both cast doubt on whether "cooperation" or "conflict" could stand alone as an explanation for the entire unfolding of South African history. Clearly, both were — to adopt the discourse of the debate — "central" and "key," so why elevate one and not the other to the "real" or "true" history of the country?

JT: By 1994, much of what can be described as the antiapartheid scholarship "provided an historical materialist analysis of South African society, with an inflection that gave primacy to experiences of the underclasses" – or "history from below."[24] The History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand became well known for this approach and yet it was at this workshop that Windsor Leroke questioned how this very scholarship (and the discipline of history by implication) reproduced the very same relations that it sought to challenge. Leroke highlighted the objectification of the black research subject in which white researchers remained the intellectual authority with black researchers relegated to the position of "research assistant" or "interpreter."[25] This meant

[21]Karin Barber, ed., *Africa's Hidden Histories. Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[22]For example, Hlonipha Mokoena, *Magema Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011); Natasha Erlank, *Convening Black Intimacy. Christianity, Gender, and Tradition in Early 20th century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022).

[23]Shula Marks, "SA ignorant about its land struggle," *Mail & Guardian*, 2 Mar. 2012.

[24]Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley, and Ciraj Rassool, *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 4.

[25]Windsor Leroke, "Koze Kube Nini? The Violence of Representation and the Politics of Social Research in South Africa," (paper presented at the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 13–15 July 1994), 20–21.

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knowledge production remained the domain of whites who sought to capture "hidden" histories and yet simultaneously silenced the authors of those histories. Jon Soske has suggested that this reproduction of "apartheid relations" has resulted in the continued domination of white South Africans in the field of South African history well into the postapartheid era — raising important questions about gatekeeping in the discipline over who gets to be called a historian and what kind of scholarship is placed at the centre.[26]

In *Deaths of Hintsa,* Premesh Lalu has taken the critique of South African historical scholarship a step further by questioning the very premises of the discipline itself, and the disciplines' dependence on the colonial archive in particular. Lalu takes a highly publicised event from 1996 — namely the claim that Xhosa king Hintsa's skull had been recovered — to demonstrate how the colonial archive is depended upon to make truth claims about colonial violence. The archive — as the foundation of the discipline — thus functions as an apparatus that can reproduce the very forms of subjection that historians seek to uncover.[27]

Shireen Hassim (SH): Many wondered what history-writing would look like when it was the pursuit of people who were intimately involved in navigating the effects of the large and unjust systems that shaped South Africa. But, although access to higher education expanded rapidly after 1994, history as a discipline did not initially feel its effects. Black scholars flocked to other disciplines, most notably sociology, political studies, and literature. This may have been the result of the awful, rote-learning model used to teach in secondary schools. In history, there were of course scholars documenting the less political and more intimate parts of black lives but political-national themes dominated.[28] Perhaps that is just my bias in reading, as I am located in the discipline of political studies not history. At Wits the political studies department was strongly rooted in history — several colleagues were trained as historians, such as Tom Lodge and Sheila Meintjes. My own work was more deeply influenced by historians than by conventional political science. The political studies department even offered core courses in comparative colonialism and histories of nationalism in Africa when I arrived as lecturer in 1999. We dropped those courses so that more students would be channelled directly to the history department which had declining numbers (by contrast political studies was oversubscribed).

A common refrain from the graduate students during the Fees Must Fall heyday was that earlier generations of scholarship did not take experience seriously and did not centre race. Although this is true of the general Marxist-oriented scholarship that focused on structures and systems, it is not uniformly the case — there was good research on affective relationships in mine hostels, for instance, and works such as Shula Marks's *Not Either an Experimental Doll* or Charles van Onselen's *Kas Maine* could hardly be deemed to be "cold."[29] But we have yet to come to terms

[26]Jon Soske, "The striking minority of black contributors: why does South African history continue to be written primarily by white scholars?", *Africa Is a Country*, 29 Nov. 2012, https://africasacountry.com/2012/11/why-does-south-african-history-continue-to-be-written-primarily-by-white-scholars.

[27]Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the shape of recurring pasts* (Cape Town: HRSC Press, 2009).

[28]Examples include Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, Cynthia Kros, and John Wright, "Conversations with Sekibakiba Lekgoathi," in *Archives of Times Past: Conversations about South Africa's Deep History*, eds. Cynthia Kros, John Wright, Mbongiseni Buthelezi, and Helen Ludlow (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2022), 104–26; Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, "'Sikhuluma Isikhethu': Ndebele Radio, Ethnicity, and Cultural Identity in South Africa, 1983–1994," *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 2, no. 2 (2015); Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, "'Colonial' Experts, Local Interlocutors, Informants and the Making of an Archive on the 'Transvaal Ndebele,' 1930–1989," *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009); Daniel Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968 – 1977* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010); Daniel Magaziner, *The Art of Life in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016).

[29]On mine relations see, Keith Breckenridge, "Love Letters and Amanuenses: Beginning the Cultural History of the Working Class Private Sphere in Southern Africa, 1900–1933," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000), 337–48; Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's

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with the full effects of racism. It is not clear to me that the emergence of the discourse of coloniality — understood ahistorically as a uniform system of oppression that transcends time and has essentially the same features regardless of location — will enable us to get any closer to that knowledge. Indeed, the decolonial turn has provided binary language that only marginally understands the complexity of interlocking (intersectional) systems of inequality and power and directs young scholars away, too often, from the nitty-gritty work of historical research. Instead, we seem stuck in broad-sweep theoretical interventions that derive from debates elsewhere rather than from precise research on South Africa. The promise of decoloniality is that large questions of how apartheid was experienced might be theorised differently (and with fresh insights and idioms) as a result of the linguistic capabilities and cultural knowledge of black scholars is an important one, but its impact will rest on careful use of ethnographic and oral history methods on specific events and processes.

LP: The South African university — and the discipline of history — has not been shaped in a silo from broader developments across the rest of the country. On the one hand, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) has allowed for a larger contingent of poor South Africans — often black — to enter university at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In turn, South African history departments have had a larger pool of African candidates to accept into postgraduate programmes and appoint into departments. But on the other hand, universities in South Africa have been in crisis for many years, particularly epitomised by the massification of higher education without concomitant allocation of resources. This has meant that the work of academia has changed for many staff in history departments across the country. While the changes have not been uniform, increasing numbers of lecturers find that their time and energy is spent teaching and marking the work of large classes.[30]

TS: Academic scholarship in Afrikaans has suffered a painful, perhaps terminal decline post-1994. A prime reason is that it has lost all its institutional bridgeheads at the university level. What remains are Anglicised institutions that operate intellectually within the consensus described above. However they lack the institutional traditions, supporting structures (in terms of chairs and centres), inter-institutional networks (I am thinking of the "research quadrangle" that once connected London, Oxford, Cambridge, Johannesburg, and Cape Town), or even the English language-proficiency of the established centres. They nevertheless seek, with greater or lesser success, to insert themselves into the value chains of knowledge production that the historiographical revolution established. The degree of their success in inserting themselves informs external perceptions about their quality. In many instances, the very transformation of the sector — for these institutions have in many ways taken the heaviest administrative toll in that process — has resulted in internal research culture actually declining.

JT: The racialisation of black academics and the gendered nature of this work goes hand in hand with staff demographics at South African universities. At Rhodes University, where I work, there are only seven black women at the rank of associate professor (out of 131) and no black women at the rank of full professor. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in

University Press, 2013); T. Dunbar Moodie with Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Donald Donham, *Violence in a Time of Liberation: Murder and Ethnicity at a South African Gold Mine, 1994* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). Lily Patience Moya, *Not Either an Experimental Doll: The Separate Worlds of Three South African Women*, ed. Shula Marks (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Charles van Onselen, *The Seed Is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894–1985* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

[30]For more information, see Laura Phillips, Rebecca Swartz, Laslo Passemiers, and Abraham Mlombo, "Roundtable on 'Teaching Texts,'" *SAHJ Podcast*, 13 July 2023, https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-iw3du-14571b8.

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South Africa, the numbers of black and women academics are growing in universities, but many black women are still often "the 'only one' or part of a small minority" in their field or department.[31] While the presence of black women in universities is a step towards normalising black women as intellectual authorities, it is really challenging the way in which power and knowledge are constituted in the university and in the discipline that can shift the experience of racialisation.

TS: The issue of the connection between representation and knowledge production was raised in a different way by the Fallist movement from 2015 onwards. I would argue that the movement's impact on the discipline has as yet been limited, and necessarily so, because the establishment of a new academic school requires a number of preconditions, few of which have been met. The journey begins with a thoroughgoing apprenticeship within the existing paradigm. As an undergraduate you have to engage extensively with the existing paradigm's texts. Then you must pass assignments informed by the paradigm's premises. Why would anybody endure this if they found the curriculum devoid of merit? At the graduate level, there are supervisors that must be found, and external examiners whose approval must be sought. This activity all occurs within the existing paradigm. After that, references must be obtained, hiring committees appeased. Likewise, publication requires passing muster with peer reviewers and editorial boards. These are a lot of guardrails, a lot of gatekeepers, and a lot of sunken costs. For all practical purposes, these selection-level pressures contribute to loyalty to the existing paradigm and its definition of its problems. It is from within that any historiographical reconstruction must be expected to come. Translating it into the language of the Fallist movement, a revolt against the "colonial" canon would have to come from scholars who had been raised in and largely accepted the premises of the canon, though with reservations.

The Fallists are nowhere near having achieved that preparatory work. The necessary work towards an overthrow of disciplinary knowledge has barely proceeded beyond the odd manifesto, typically authored by non-historians. Hence I would say we have hardly begun to consider how the decolonisation of South Africa today would differ from its predecessor two generations ago: what it would offer, in other words, beyond calling for centring African experiences, amplifying voices from below, critiquing capitalism, and lionising black popular politics and resistance movements?

The transformation of the discipline in terms of gender has made more progress along the road that would need to be followed. In other words, in that sphere there exists a critical mass, a corpus of works, a cadre of scholars.

SH: South African academics have always been obsessed with the local (some would say parochial); there is a long and deep tradition of studying colonialism and apartheid and the ways in which these large systems shaped public and private institutions. People say that in an accusatory way, but it has produced rich scholarship and is I think more a strength than a weakness. I think here of the magnificent work of Carolyn Hamilton, John Wright, Jeff Guy, Phil Bonner, and Peter Delius — perhaps the high point of work on ruling and rulers, and on the details of specific chieftaincies in the precolonial period in Southern Africa.[32] Similarly, South African scholarship on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is remarkably strong, thanks to the inspirational leadership of people like

[31]Department of Higher Education and Training, *Report of the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics* (Pretoria: DHET, 2019), 31.

[32]Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Power of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); John B. Wright and Andrew Manson, *The Hlubi Chiefdom in Zululand-Natal: A History* (Ladysmith, South Africa: Ladysmith Historical Society, 1983); Philip Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-Century Swazi State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Jeff Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom: The Civil War in Zululand, 1879–1884* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1994); Peter Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996).

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Shula Marks. The full extent of this work has not been tapped into for contemporary research on states and systems of ruling in Southern Africa.

CS: Much South African historical scholarship does remain parochial and inward looking. There is plenty of scope for much more work to be done on regional, continental, and global issues. Relatively little has been written on the big questions in South African history, such as the evolution of poverty and inequality over time.

All too little work has been done on South Africa's relations with its neighbours, during the apartheid era and subsequently.[33] The second volume of the *Cambridge History of South Africa* was rightly criticised for ignoring South Africa's occupation of Namibia from 1915 to 1990.[34] Few historians have yet worked on the related topics of, say, the role of the South African Defence Force in southern Angola in the 1980s, or the history of Umkhonto weSizwe in Angola in that decade. Many other topics remain relatively unexplored: these include, for example, the history of corruption under apartheid and the role of the state-owned enterprises (the recent book by Faeeza Ballim being a notable exception).[35] Despite the great growth in environmental history since 1994, in line with increased global concern about climate change, much work remains to be done on the impact of environmental change over time, despite the important contributions by William Beinart, Jane Carruthers, Nancy Jacobs, and others. There are great gaps in our knowledge of the intellectual history of South Africa and, say, the history of the development of its science and technology.[36]

TS: One urgent need is to extend scholarship within the region geographically beyond the limits of Southern Africa. To clarify, it is a huge asset that institutions beyond the region have sufficient expertise on Southern Africa to support more than one top-quality Area Studies journal focused on the subcontinent. I am saying that institutions within South Africa need to develop a similar capacity to extend their focus towards the history of other regions (North America, East Asia, Latin America, Africa north of the Zambezi, even turning the lens on Europe — how about that for a decolonial project?). The universe that our universities contemplate needs to be more universal. Adding some transnational connections to a Southern African focus is not enough. To translate it into one of my areas of research expertise, adding the liberation movements in exile, or anti-apartheid solidarity to a history of the ANC won't do.

CS: With the ending of apartheid much new archival material was released, most notably at the University of the Western Cape and the University of Fort Hare, to which papers of the South African liberation movements were sent, not without some weeding of sensitive material along the way. Historians from other countries — leading names include Vladimir Shubin of the Russian Institute of African Studies in Moscow and Hugh Macmillan from the United Kingdom — as well as from South Africa itself — Andre Odendaal being a prominent example — have exploited these archives, along with new archival material in other countries.[37] Such new material includes, just to give two examples, the large archive of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement in Oxford in the United Kingdom and the voluminous records of the Portuguese Secret Police now open for

[33]Charles van Onselen's recent *Three Monkeys*, 3 vols. (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2023), which explores South Africa's relations with Mozambique, is an exception.

[34]See Dag Henrichsen, Giorgio Miesher, Ciraj Rassool, and Loreno Rizzo, "Rethinking Empire in Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 3 (2015): 431–35.

[35]Faeeza Ballim, *Eskom: Power, Politics and the (Post)apartheid State* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2023).

[36]Exceptions include, say, the work of Saul Dubow, and essays such as Carolyn Hamilton, "Recalibrating the Deep History of Intellectual Thought in the KwaZulu-Natal Region" and Luvuyo Mthimkhulu Dondolo, "Elijah Makiwane and Early Black South African Public Intellectualism" in *Public Intellectuals in South Africa: Critical voices from the past*, ed. Chris Broodryk (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2021), and Ballim, *Eskom*.

[37]Andre Odendaal, *Dear Comrade President* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House, 2023).

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researchers in Lisbon. Both contain much of interest to South African historians, yet to date have been little exploited.[38] While Russian authorities have been slow to open the archives of the Soviet Union, a number of East European countries have opened their archives.[39] On the other hand, the archives of most of the liberation movements that have come to power in the region (SWAPO, the MPLA, ZANU, and Frelimo) remain firmly closed to researchers.[40] Some archives that were opened after 1994 have subsequently imposed new restrictions on access.[41] Many local archives in South Africa remained in a disorderly state and difficult to use.

TS: Apartheid's end occasioned a massive declassification of records, including not only those of the liberation movements, but also an apartheid state whose dirty secrets the incoming government felt little interest in preserving.

The last category is worth mentioning given a widespread assumption that everything of interest in the apartheid state's archives must have been weeded out prior to the handover of power. Many factors explain why this was not the case. For a long time, even after the March 1992 whites-only referendum endorsing negotiations, President F. W. de Klerk insisted that the talks would lead to some form of power sharing short of majority rule: in the words of the National Party's slogan in its closing pitch to white voters before the referendum: "If you're scared of majority rule, vote 'Yes.'"[42] Under those circumstances, there was no cause for the state to launch a mass purge of its institutional memory. But even as the likelihood grew that the outcome of the process would be majority rule, there were reasons to leave the shredder in storage. For example, documented proof of secret agents within the ANC might serve as useful kompromat. And there was no good reason to risk criminal prosecution for disappearing such secrets as Israel's proliferation of nuclear secrets to South Africa, or Pretoria's campaign to rig Namibia's independence elections, to mention just two explosive revelations that have appeared in the postapartheid literature.[43]

I myself have been involved in declassifying records from the late-apartheid archive in the course of my research. I can testify to the richness, which remains largely unexplored, of what exists. But many important records *were* purged. Important initiatives — most notably the Truth and Reconciliation Commission — were launched to repair this void. In addition, various oral history projects were launched to inform perceived lacunae in the liberation movement archives.[44]

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[38]I have used both archives. Cf. the remarks by Helder Adegar Fonseca on the PIDE records in Lena Dallywater, Chris Saunders, Helder Adegar Fonseca, eds., *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East': Trasnational Activism 1960–1990* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

[39]For example, Tom Lodge used the archives of the Czech Republic for his *Red Road to Freedom* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2022) on the history of the South African Communist Party.

[40]Cf. what Tycho van der Hoog says about Namibian archives in, "A New Chapter in Namibian History: Reflections on Archival Research," *History in Africa* 49 (2022): 389–414.

[41]For example, the archives of the former Department of Foreign Affairs in the O. R. Tambo building of the Department of International Relations and Co-operation in Tshwane. For relevant information see, e.g., Sue Onslow, "Republic of South Africa Archives," *Cold War History* 5, no. 3 (2005): 369–75; Mattie C. Webb, "Research Note: Mayibuye Archives and the Cold War in Southern Africa," *Cold War History* 22, no. 3 (2022): 369–73; Robin Moser, "Researching the Global Cold War in South Africa's Archives," *Sources and Methods* (blog), Wilson Center, History and Public Policy Program, 16 May 2017, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/researching-the-global-cold-war-south-africas-archives.

[42]"If you're scared of majority rule, vote 'Yes,'" *Sunday Times*, 15 Mar. 1992, and "As jy bang is vir meerderheidsregering stem 'Ja,'" *Rapport*, 15 Mar. 1992.

[43]Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 118–53; Thula Simpson, *History of South Africa: From 1902 to the Present* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2021), 313–15.

[44]Among the most notable are the Oral History of Exile Archives at the University of the Western Cape's Mayibuye Centre; Howard Barrell's interviews which have been deposited at Rhodes House at Oxford University; the Raymond Suttner Collection which is part of the Aluka Project; Padraig O'Malley's interviews which informed his biography of Mac Maharaj and are available at https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv00017.htm; the University of Durban-Westville Documentation Centre's Oral History "Voices of Resistance" project; and numerous collections in the Historical Papers Research Archive at Wits University.

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The archival tumult in South Africa has been supplemented by finds obtained from more sedate processes elsewhere. This includes relevant records from national archives in Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. Whereas the declassifications within South Africa permitted the writing of the secret war within the country's borders, the external archives facilitated the writing of a wider, transnational account of the struggle for liberation. These resources have barely been tapped, while important finds continue to materialise. I see that the archives of the Organisation of African Unity's Liberation Committee have been digitised and made public.[45]

The evolution of the postapartheid denouement will continue to reshape interpretations of the archive. The ANC archive was vetted at the organisation's headquarters at Shell House prior to its release in the mid-1990s. The organisation justly praised itself for a virtually unprecedented act of transparency among liberation movements. The premise was that the records contained nothing to hide, but the movement has had cause to reconsider this. In 2010 the media were invited to visit the archive at its home at the University of Fort Hare. They were given free rein. This enabled them to trace the birth of a series of networks that would become central to the country's post-1994 corruption crisis. That is my point: there was quite simply no way those who weeded the archive in the 1990s could have anticipated the connotations that the instruction to Schabir Shaik to "contribute to the ANC as a patriotic member" by establishing a business empire to transact with the post-apartheid democratic state would assume two decades later. In response to the revelations, the ANC promptly closed the archive, and engaged in a fresh round of weeding — a historical reinterpretation of sorts — before reopening the collection to researchers.

JT: A "new" archive that I've been thinking about in my own work is the genetic archive — a socially-constituted archive derived from biological material.

The use of genomic testing emerged in South Africa in 1999 when it became one of six priority areas of research in the Medical Research Council (MRC). In 2002, the African Human Genome Initiative (AHGI) was launched to ensure that South Africans "keep up with, contribute to and benefit from revolutionary advances in genetic knowledge" but it to also put that knowledge to use as a nation-building tool by arguing that South Africans share much in common genetically and should therefore transcend their perceived racial differences.[46] More recently, however, medical researchers, identity activists, and members of the South African public have turned to DNA testing as an archive that can revise the making of racial categories. This revision is particularly concerned with the "Coloured" category in South Africa — one that emerged in the late colonial period to describe people of mixed ancestry. Under apartheid, Coloured was defined by the state by what it was not: neither white nor black, making it a residual category with little cultural and political legitimacy. DNA testing — whether through medical research, museum initiatives, or at home tests — are now used to reveal the Khoisan ancestry of those previously classified as Coloured. The identification of Khoi ancestry means that Coloured as a category can be rerouted and replaced with one that enjoys the status of "indigeneity." While claims to indigeneity form part of larger movement described as "Khoisan revivalism" and are thus tied to a political subjectivity, the self-identification as indigenous is not totally independent of "blood" — translated as biological descent. As such, many Khoisan activists also mobilise around recent findings in population genomics to underline their claims for recognition as indigenous people.[47]

[45]See the searchable database of the African Union's Community Repository at https://archives.au.int/.

[46]Trefor Jenkins, "Foreword," in Himla Soodyall, *A Walk in the Garden of Eden: Genetic Trails into Our African Past* (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2003), *x*.

[47]See Katharina Schramm, "Casts, bones and DNA: interrogating the relationship between science and postcolonial indigeneity in contemporary South Africa," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 39, no. 2 (2016): 131–44.

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This is one way in which DNA becomes an archive from which new claims about the past can be made, and through which future claims on resources, such as land, can be staked. This archive also shapes historical knowledge by broadening our understanding of the multiple sites in which the production of historical knowledge resides.

CS: The digital revolution has meant that a vast array of new sources for historians of South Africa have become available to use without historians leaving their offices or homes. Topics that were not possible to research previously can now be researched. The full implications of the digital revolution for South African historical scholarship, especially with the ongoing development of artificial intelligence, remains unclear in 2024.[48]

A new concern with the nature of "the archive" since 1994, and especially its colonial bias, helped in the development of a more critical approach to source materials and, among some historians, an increased awareness of the importance of using the widest possible range of sources.

JD: There is no doubt that there has been, since 1994, a profound change in the context in which the study of history and the undertaking of historical research are conducted in South Africa. With that change has come the promise of new archives and a new culture of asking difficult, searching questions about the past. I call this a promise because I am not sure that it has been realised. I am not persuaded that we have started asking different and new questions about our past; I am also not sure that we have enjoyed the kind of archival access promised by the end of apartheid. The ANC has yet to share its security archive with the public; the old South African Security Police (now known as the Crime Intelligence Division of the South African Police Service) maintain firm control over the apartheid-era police archive; the bulk of the truth commission archives, nominally housed in the National Archives in Pretoria, remains uncatalogued and therefore unusable; South Africa's foreign affairs archives are an opaque and impenetrable fortress; and the military archives are nothing more than a crap shoot — you never know what you are going to get — and, if you find something, there is no guarantee it will be made available to you.

SH: Sadly, we may look back at the past thirty years and see that more archives were lost than were gained. The arson that destroyed part of the Parliamentary Library which apparently remains waterlogged a year later, the fire that resulted in considerable losses in the Jaggar Library at the University of Cape Town, endless problems with the materials at the National Archives — all these are depressing signs that at least part of the profession's work will have to be a rearguard preservation project. But against those losses, new private materials are beginning to be lodged with various libraries and those will shape new ways of thinking about political developments from the perspectives of the foot soldiers rather than the generals. Some signs of the value of these archives is evident in feminist work on women's biographies and memoirs.

TS: We need more temporal depth. We are too clustered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The discussion raised a couple of generations ago, as a component of the historiographical revolution, about exploring the precolonial past in cooperation with sister disciplines, needs to be revived.[49] The range of those sister disciplines has continued to expand — the exchange would no longer be limited to entering into conversation with anthropologists and archaeologists and

[48]Digital projects being undertaken now that were not possible before include, say, the Five Hundred Year Archive project. For more see Carolyn Hamilton and Grant McNulty, "Refiguring the Archive for Eras before Writing: Digital Interventions, Affordances and Research Futures," *History in Africa* 49 (2022): 131–58.

[49]For contributions to the discussion, which prefaced some of the classic essays on the topic, see Arthur P. Newton and Ernest A. Benians, "Preface," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. 8, eds. Arthur P. Newton and Ernest A. Benians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), *v–vi*; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, "Preface," *The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol 1: South Africa to 1870*, eds. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (Oxford:

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linguists. That discussion can and should be renewed by historians, for the capacity now exists to extend it all the way to the Pliocene.

The move to expand beyond the focus on political economy to embrace all aspects of human experience in Southern Africa needs to be affirmed, encouraged, and backed. This will require considering activity in the other spheres — intellectual, women's, medical, military, geopolitical, and other histories — not just as dim refractions of supposedly core race/class divides, but as terrains worth consideration in their own right.

In short, a shift towards a more total history. This will entail decentring apartheid. In that regard, it is worth remembering that from the time apartheid was first proposed as a solution to the country's race problem, it faced the criticism that it failed to address the issue that had led to the failure of earlier efforts at segregation. We need to start conceptualising and researching "postapartheid" as a stage of white supremacy, with elements distinctive to apartheid. That work has barely begun, but when it commences the study will quickly reveal that much more than white supremacy is going on in this latest chapter of the South African story.

JD: South Africa remains a veritable tower of Babel. Yet, it is not clear to me that we are doing enough to make this show, either in the histories we write or in the training we offer. How many of us, for example, insist that our graduate students know more than Afrikaans and English for their research? In fact, how many of us insist that our students (especially those working on twentieth-century topics) gain some competence in Afrikaans? Very few.

JT: An important question that I think deserves far more attention is the way in which race has become the primary explanatory framework for the history of social relations in South Africa, and how scholarship often takes that for granted. Crain Soudien explained this very well in a review essay, "New Accents on the Social" (2018), where he questioned the dominance of race in explanations of the social in South Africa. He suggested that race has provided South Africa with the ontological template for what it means to be human and with the essential elements for explaining itself. The social, as a discourse, he suggests, "has supplied South Africa with its frameworks and templates for distributing rights and privileges, managing social relations and for laying out the discursive horizons for thinking about the human."[50] Debates about the social are not unusual in the histories of many countries around the world. They do, however, take up an inordinately large place in the social sciences in South Africa. This does not mean that we remove the idea of race but that we spend more time asking how it has been constituted as a totalising framework of explanation. For South African historians, this question calls for scholarship that can explain the social outside of that framework. Apartheid, of course, rested on certain understandings of race, even if those understandings were not stable and were subject to different shifts at different moments. However, if race is often used as the totalising framework for apartheid and its consequences, what would it mean to offer an explanation of the social (of apartheid) in which race was not the default framework for that explanation? In addition, scholarship that tracks the historiographical preeminence of "race" should question when race asserted itself against existing alternative ways of describing South Africa in the historiography. More work on the rise of race in the histories of social explanation (as it relates to apartheid) would be valuable.

CS: For all the work that has been done on the history of apartheid, its impact at the local level remains too little explored. To date only some of the major new work on the history of the

Oxford University Press, 1969), *v–xiii*; Leonard Thompson, "The Forgotten Factor in Southern African History," in *African Societies in Southern Africa*, ed. Leonard Thompson (London: Heinemann, 1969), 1–23.

[50]Crain Soudien, "New Accents on the Social: Thinking on South Africa's History at UWC," *South African Historical Journal* 70, no. 3 (2018): 603–18.

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Bantustans by Laura Phillips and others has appeared in print. There is much more to be done on the history of collaboration, following Jacob Dlamini's pioneering work, and on, say, internal resistance under apartheid, following the recent books by Rory Riordan on the Eastern Cape in the 1980s and by Franziska Rueedi on the Vaal Triangle revolt of 1984.[51] The role of violence under apartheid has still to find its historian. How land was seized from blacks has been little explored in depth, across time and throughout the country. In sum, our knowledge of apartheid remains fragmentary and incomplete.

SH: One odd development after 1994 is that the theorisation of race flattened out rather than deepened. Where earlier studies of apartheid problematised simplistic identitarian notions of race and showed the operations of race thinking as forms of power, there is still too little work in this area. How do we understand the black people who worked within the apartheid system? What kinds of class formation took place in the Bantustans and with what effects for how different groups of people understood the nature of rule, of sovereignty, or of representation? How does conceptualising race as a shifting historically-shaped category, not simply a matter of black and white but including the racialisation of Indian and Coloured people, and including different forms of extraction of labour, change how racial capitalism is understood?

Research on gender in South African history is remarkably robust even if not cited by male historians.[52] I think we need more work on the gendered underpinnings of work, family, and care over the longer durée. How did "life-making" and intimacy take shape in the context of violence and poverty? Helen Bradford's work on reproduction opened up questions of bodily autonomy and abortion, and Catherine Burns and Julie Parle have shaped our understanding of institutional responses to health needs of women as well as other marginalised groups.[53] The bulk of Marxist historiography was weak on gender but gender systems underpin the rural-urban nexus and they shape how urban socialities formed.[54] New scholarship offers some productive material here.[55] Equally, the new work in queer studies will help us to think beyond the heteronormative assumptions that continue to drive research.

[51]Rory Riordan, *Apartheid's Stalingrad* (Auckland Park: Jacana, 2022); Franziska Rueedi, *The Vaal Uprising of 1984 & the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2021).

[52]Cherryl Walker, "Gender and the Development of the Migrant Labour Systems c. 1850–1930," in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, ed. Cherryl Walker (Cape Town: D. Philip, 1990), 168–96; Jo Beall. "Women under Indentured Labour in Colonial Natal, 1860–1911," in Walker, *Women and Gender,* 146–67; Julia C. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1993); Nafisa Essop Sheik, "Customs in Common: Marriage, Law and the Making of Difference in Colonial Natal," *Gender & History* 29, no. 3 (2017): 589–604; Nafisa Essop Sheik, "African Marriage Regulation and the Remaking of Gendered Authority in Colonial Natal, 1843–1875," *African Studies Review* 57, no. 2 (2014): 73–92.

[53]Helen Bradford, "Herbs, Knives and Plastic: 150 Years of Abortion in South Africa," in *Science, Medicine and Cultural Imperialism*, eds. Teresa Meade and Mark Walker (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 120–47; Catherine Burns, "Controlling Birth: Johannesburg, 1920–1960: Sex and Secrecy," *South African Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2004): 170–98; Catherine Burns, "From Bantu Gynaecology to the Birthsuit: Medical Science in South Africa," in *The Politics of Knowledge in the Biomedical Sciences*, eds. Jonathan Jansen and Jess Auerbach (Cham: Springer, 2023), 45–72; Catherine Burns, "In Tandem: Breastfeeding Knowledge and Thinking from Southern Africa," in *Epidemiological Change and Chronic Disease in Sub-Saharan Africa: Social and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Megan Vaughan, Kafui Adjaye-Gbewonyo, and Marissa Mika (London: University College London Press, 2021), 276–97; Julie Parle, *States of Mind: Searching for Mental Health in Natal and Zululand, 1868–1918* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007).

[54]Anne Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945–1959* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999). Belinda Bozzoli, "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1983): 139–71; Erlank, *Convening Black Intimacy*; Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886–1914* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982).

[55]Athambile Masola, "African Women's Letters as Intellectual History and Decolonial Knowledge Production," in: *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*, eds. Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso and Toyin Falola (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77030-7_163-1.

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LP: Unfortunately, the development of the subdiscipline of political-economy inspired economic history came to an abrupt halt in the 1990s. The debate between the Liberals and the Marxists so dominated scholarly writing on and about South Africa that the collapse of economic history was perhaps not mourned by as many as it influenced, pleased as they were by the space opened to have new debates and discussions about the nature of South Africa's past.[56] That being said however, the petering out of the Marxist and Liberal debate left many questions about the nature of South Africa's economy unanswered by historians, though sociologists and political scientists took up the mantle within the boundaries of their disciplines. For example: how did global economic shifts play out in South Africa? What changed about South Africa's economy over the course of apartheid? How did the relationship between labour and capital reconfigure?

Historians' failure to answer these questions has meant not only is there relatively little understood about the complexities of South Africa's economy particularly in the latter half of apartheid, but also that the significance of South Africa's democracy in 1994 is primarily conceptualised through a political lens. Though some newer work has paid attention to the ANC's economic policy in the early 1990s,[57] for the most part scholars still explain South Africa's and the ANC's turn to "neoliberalism" as the product of an "elite pact."[58] Historians have done little to engage with the financialisation of South Africa's economy, global forces shaping national developments, and shifts in monetary policy.

In the space left open by the absence of political economy in post-1994 historiography, a more cliometrically inspired approach to economic history now dominates the scholarship. Scholars working in this tradition spend significant time with large data sets to quantify issues such as slave rebellions in the Cape, African livelihoods and living conditions, and educational differences under apartheid.[59] While much of this is important work illuminating historical economic trends, divorced from the kinds of political economy questions of an earlier generation of scholars, it holds little explanatory power for understanding the economy as a social and political force in South Africa.

SH: South African historians have always been involved with the projects of national history-making, whether in relation to state initiatives or those of the liberation movements. In both those contexts, there were scholars that "produced" official narratives as well as those that challenged "the line." More directly, in the postapartheid period historians were involved in the production of various museums including the Apartheid Museum which were, after all, narrative acts of memory-making. These projects should be up for debate (and are, among historians) but all too often the deeper critical work is overshadowed by the need to fight to *preserve* the museums. Oddly, for a nation desperately needing to have some kind of public process of convening itself as a collective, very few public resources have been invested in these efforts.

JD: The past thirty years have seen the development of deep and rich connections between the historical profession, public history, and memory studies in South Africa. One only has to think of the local histories (funded often by provincial governments and municipalities) undertaken by the Wits History Workshop; the Five Hundred Year Archive project, as well as recent collaborative publications by South African and US scholars on heritage politics in South Africa specifically and Africa

[56]Two paradigmatic works that defined the debate are: Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–56; Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (London: Wildwood Press, 1986).

[57]Vishnu Padayachee and Robert van Niekerk, *Shadow of Liberation* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

[58]See Patrick Bond, *Elite Transitions: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000).

[59]Johan Fourie, ed., *Quantitative History and Unchartered People: Case Studies from the South African Past* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2023).

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generally to realise the depth of these connections.[60] The past three decades have also seen an efflorescence of the greater institutionalisation of public history, with the subject subsumed largely under the umbrella category "heritage studies." A number of history departments have rebranded themselves as departments of historical and heritage studies, and the idea seems to be to make history look attractive to students who see a future in tourism. Contemporary memory studies in South Africa owe their existence to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and their fortunes wax and wane, depending at any given time on the relative standing of the TRC's legacy in the public sphere. To be fair, there are certainly places doing excellent public history and memory work; I am thinking here of the Wits History Workshop, the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town, the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, and the University of Western Cape. All these are doing excellent work but we need more than a few nodes to do the kind of history (deeply-researched, multilingual, public-facing, rigorous) that South Africa needs.

JT: Public history in South Africa took shape around the academic "popularisation" of history. The Wits History Workshop, for example, was on the forefront of producing popular histories, largely with social history bent. Drawing on the notion of "history from below," they made oral history methodologies and attempted to produce histories in an accessible form, often in the format of newspaper articles, video productions, and so on. In essence, this was an attempt to make academic histories accessible to the broader public, which left little room for recognition of the multiple (non-academic) sites in which history is produced. After 1994, "heritage" became the term used for public and/or popular histories and although it democratised the authorship of South African history, it become increasingly associated with postapartheid nation-building and tourism, giving rise to Heritage, with a capital "H." The emergence of Heritage created a disconnect between popular history and academic scholarship precisely because of its relationship to nation-building and commercial ventures. However, the field of heritage studies in the space of the university has also created linkages to Heritage by operating as the primary space in which Heritage can be critiqued. Some of the more critical scholarship on Heritage recognises that there are a range of historical genres and producers of history which cohere and compete with each other. Ciraj Rassool, Leslie Witz, and Gary Minkely — three prolific scholars in this area — argue that the possibility of contestation in the public domain warrants an engagement with Heritage.[61]

TS: Public Education is a key transmitter of historical consciousness between generations. Books, documentaries, and heritage sites meanwhile represent key channels for the production of public history. Our protestations to the contrary, we academic historians inform the content of the output in all these spheres. This occurs either indirectly, in having our scholarship used as reference, but also often directly, as advisers or reviewers.

Therefore, though I am certain that this is a minority view, I believe the profession is intimately involved in the production of public history. I believe furthermore that the present national discourse testifies to this closeness. Note, for example, how many supposedly authentic, organic expressions of historical consciousness actually only reproduce the orthodoxies of the radical

[60]See, for a sample: Noor Nieftagodien, *Orlando West: An Illustrated History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012); Noor Nieftagodien and Philip Bonner, *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008); as well as Philip Bonner's and Noor Nieftagodien, *Kathorus: A History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001). See also Natalie Swanepoel, Amanda Esterhuysen, and Philip Bonner, *Five Hundred Years Rediscovered: Southern African Precedents and Prospects* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008); Peter Delius, Tim Maggs, and Alex Schoeman, *Forgotten World: The Stone-Walled Settlements of the Mpumalanga Escarpment* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2014); as well as Peter Delius and Michelle Hay, *Mpumalanga: An Illustrated History* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009). On heritage see also, Derek Peterson, Kodzo Gavua, and Ciraj Rassool, *The Politics of Heritage in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), and Witz, Minkley, and Rassool, *Unsettled History.*

[61]Witz, Minkley, and Rassool, *Unsettled History.*

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historiography produced a generation ago. And I fear that to the extent that the redress of problems requires diagnosing them correctly, our prevailing history habits have become dysfunctional.

After the fires that killed 77 people in ripping through the Johannesburg's central business district on 31 August 2023, Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu declared: "like it or not, this is the result of apartheid that kept people apart in these conditions, and we are expected to change these conditions in 30 years."[62] A couple of days later, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Thembi Nkadimeng echoed her, blaming apartheid spatial planning for backlogs in service delivery to black South Africans.[63] After numerous specialists noted that the existing racial composition of South African cities reflected decades of rapid demographic change accompanying the *demise* of apartheid urban planning, Zulu stated that she meant to say that apartheid's architects never planned for mass urbanisation on the scale witnessed after segregationist laws were repealed.[64] This is true as far as it goes, but it plainly needs to go much further, to encompass the many other regions of our popular discourse where the history of apartheid is invoked to explain quite complex postapartheid realities. By the same token, the walled, securitised, suburban enclaves that South Africa's increasingly multiracial middle classes have retreated into, are a post-1994 phenomenon.

This matters in ways that can be illustrated as follows. My University of Pretoria colleague Jeanne van Eeden has written extensively about the ideologically driven tendency in much apartheid-era visual culture (maps, postcards, and the like) to render quite densely populated areas as uninhabited.[65] Whole areas of Black settlement would simply disappear. Consider the havoc that would ensue if a census with the same lacunae were ever to inform government legislation. Our history habits consign us to a similar blindness as to what is happening, where, thus fettering our capacity to address that which ails us.

The situation recalls another Tukkies historian, Floors van Jaarsveld, who, as noted earlier, warned his fellow Afrikaans historians in the 1970s of the danger of "frozen" images of the past. Specifically, he feared that the prevailing focus on the "blood and tears" rise of Afrikaner nationalism risked rendering Afrikaans historians incapable of responding effectively to contemporary challenges rooted in the emergence of new nationalisms. To be clear, Van Jaarsveld was no radical — his call was a war cry for his peers to commit themselves to making the world safe for the kind of top-down reforms to forestall violent revolution that the ruling National Party was then undertaking. For that he was tarred and feathered.

The most notorious episode in the South African historiographical tradition carries important messages for the present-day, where analogous tasks of historiographical reconstruction await. Hardly one contemporary historian would recognise him or herself in Van Jaarsveld, but I wonder whether, were he alive, Van Jaarsveld would recognise his earlier self in them.

[62]Kyle Zeeman, "'Whether we like it or not, this is the result of apartheid' – Lindiwe Zulu on Joburg CBD fire," *The Citizen*, 1 Sep. 2023, https://www.citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/results-of-apartheid-lindiwe-zulu-on-joburg-cbd-fire/; Thandeka Kathi, "The vilifying of victims in the aftermath of the Johannesburg fires," *Housing after Grenfell* (blog), University of Oxford, 13 Feb. 2024, https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/housing-after-grenfell-blog/blog-post/2024/02/vilifying-victims-aftermath-johannesburg-fires.

[63]Luyolo Mkentane, "Cogta minister blames 'evil apartheid' for service delivery dearth," *Business Day*, 5 Sep. 2023, https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2023-09-05-cogta-minister-blames-evil-apartheid-for-service-delivery-dearth/.

[64]SABC News, "JHB CBD Fire | Social Development Minister on hijacked buildings," YouTube video, 1 Sep. 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0beFWQs5ikc.

[65]See Jeanne van Eeden, "Surveying the 'empty land' in selected South African landscape postcards," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 13, no. 6 (2011): 600–12.

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