

SOUTH AFRICA'S ANC

The Beginning of the End?

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Thuli Madonsela might be the most popular politician never to have been elected in South Africa.¹ After her work for unions and as an anti-apartheid activist in the 1980s, Nelson Mandela asked her to run for Parliament in the country's first democratic election in 1994. She declined. She played a key role in drafting the post-apartheid Constitution two years later and has continued to play an active role in legal reform since, but has never actually served as an elected official. Two decades after the democratic transition, she was again nominated to run for an African National Congress (ANC) position. Again she declined.

After Jacob Zuma was elected president in 2009, he appointed Madonsela to the Office of the Public Protector, where she was tasked with investigating corruption allegations by public administrators — Zuma included. When in 2014 she found² that he had “benefited unduly” from the use of 246 million

¹ We wish to thank Robert Brenner, Vivek Chibber, and Niall Reddy for critical feedback that shaped the writing of this article.

² The full results of the Public Protector's investigation were published in a report on the office's website under the title “Secure in Comfort” (http://www.pprotect.org/library/investigation_report/2013-14/Final%20Report%2019%20March%202014%20.pdf). A subsequent report called

rand (about US \$23 million at the time) in taxpayer money for home renovations in the name of security, she was attacked by national ANC leaders.

Through these revelations of corruption, she became something of a hero for the left wing of the ANC and its aligned unions in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). After the textbook neoliberalism of Thabo Mbeki, there was a feeling in many quarters of the South African Left that COSATU and South African Communist Party (SACP) backing for Zuma, his archrival and former deputy president, would initiate a war of position to reclaim the soul of the ANC. The better part of a decade later, the left wing of COSATU finds itself on the opposite end of the spectrum from Zuma's camp. This is the problem with empty coalitional politics articulated to populist leadership: it has no necessary direction beyond criticism of the status quo. The king may be dead, but the coalition throws its weight behind a new king, then acts stunned when he invariably refuses to respond to its demands.

As the populist coalition behind Zuma begins to unravel, a desperate search for left alternatives to the flailing ANC has begun. Three major options have emerged. First and foremost, the expulsion of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) from COSATU has allowed it the freedom to constitute its self-proclaimed United Front (UF) as a viable alternative to the capitulatory rule of the Tripartite Alliance (ANC, COSATU, and SACP). Yet, as we argue here, the UF's misguided organizational strategies have reduced it to a public-relations organ without roots in shop stewards' networks, let alone the township-based organizations that were at the heart of the freedom struggle in the 1980s.

Second, there is South Africa's fastest growing party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), launched in 2013, which purports to blend some version of Marxism-Leninism with the thought of Frantz Fanon. The EFF was largely the brainchild of charismatic former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema. In an ironic use of post-apartheid hate-speech restrictions, Malema was convicted of publicly singing the old anti-apartheid song "Kill the Boer" (a reference to the Afrikaans word for "farmer" serving as a synecdoche for all whites). At the same time, Malema faced allegations that he had accepted multiple cars, diamond-encrusted watches, and even a mansion in Limpopo

"State of Capture" (http://www.pprotect.org/library/investigation_report/2016-17/State_Capture_14October2016.pdf) illustrates the clientelistic nature of the post-apartheid state over more than 350 pages. Most significantly, it reveals the extent to which the entire ANC party apparatus is both implicated in this arrangement and incapable of challenging the increasing centralization of state power.

during his time in office. Malema approvingly cites Robert Mugabe's program of militant land reform, but one of his first recruits to his upstart EFF party was businessman Kenny Kunene, known as the "Sushi King" for hosting parties in which guests eat sushi off the bodies of naked women.

The EFF's repeated references to Fanon and Mugabe and donning red berets (inspired by Hugo Chávez and Thomas Sankara) as its chief symbol brought in militant black nationalist groups, but it likewise drew in business-people and celebrity gangsters. Unable to make sense of this populist alliance, constant EFF references to party control over tenders distribution led critics on both the Right and Left to label Malema a "fascist." In this article, we resolutely reject this characterization. Malema is more accurately described as a populist whose base is in the emergent black petit-bourgeoisie and the unemployed proletariat. The EFF's populism is remarkably successful, with deep roots in townships across the country. Whereas NUMSA's United Front has limited organization at what we might call the point of reproduction, it is in the townships that the EFF flourishes. It is currently the third-largest party in Parliament.

Third, in addition to the UF and EFF, a mass student movement has emerged on most South African campuses over the past two years, described in shorthand as #FeesMustFall. In some cases this has even pitted radical leaders of the ANC-affiliated groups South African Students Congress (SASCO) and the Progressive Youth Alliance against their elected ANC leaders. But the hashtag moniker is deceptive, representing these movements as solely concerned with battling austerity. In fact, a major rallying cry of the student movement has been for the decolonization of higher education in South Africa. Race-versus-class debates on the student Left have resurfaced on a scale not seen since the early 1980s, and the movement has fractured into a handful of seemingly irreconcilable tendencies.

These emergent left forces are operating in a political context shaped by a rapid and very deep decline of the ANC's hegemony. Even ten years ago, it seemed as if the ANC might remain unchallenged for the foreseeable future. But today the government of President Jacob Zuma is synonymous with the crony capitalism at the heart of the state — and therefore at the heart of the ANC. Yet, even while local elections in August 2016 saw the ANC suffer significant setbacks, this has not been a boon for the Left or even the working class. Instead, the conservative Democratic Alliance (DA) has emerged

as the main opposition to the ruling party, increasing its share of votes from less than 2 percent in the 1994 national elections to more than 22 percent in 2014. While the ANC has rapidly morphed into a neoliberal party, the DA can lay claim to being the most authentically market-oriented party in the country, with the strongest ties to the traditional ruling class. The ANC runs on a market-oriented platform and implements neoliberal policies, to be sure, but it has also overseen the expansion of a peculiar configuration of state and capital, not to mention the consistent augmentation of the welfare apparatus, from social grant distribution to housing provision. The DA, meanwhile, is far closer to traditional understandings of neoliberalism, though it also supports some version of the ANC's social grants. On this platform, the DA won Cape Town from the ANC in 2006. More recently, in the August 2016 municipal elections, it did well in or won Johannesburg, Tshwane (Pretoria), and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth), meaning it now governs four of the six largest municipalities in South Africa. This is the organization that seems best positioned to step in as the ruling party's luster wanes. In what follows, we examine the dynamics of the post-liberation political economy to understand the component elements of the ANC's spiraling crisis, as well as the Left's inability to capitalize on this opening.

THE ECONOMY CHANGED BUT UNTRANSFORMED

The roots of the ANC's political crisis lie in its failure to address the massive regional and racial divisions that persist a full generation after liberation. South African income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, is the highest in the world. While money continues to flow into the pockets of the wealthy, the official unemployment rate remains well above 25 percent, with the real rate much higher. Many of those who are formally employed do not receive a living wage, and their labor is increasingly subcontracted, casualized, and precarious.

There have certainly been considerable changes in the class structure, most notably the emergence of a sizable black bourgeoisie and the substantial expansion of black middle classes. At the same time, however, household debt continues to grow, a product of the widespread availability of credit and debt-driven, consumption-led growth. This is also fueled by the low wages of

those who are actually employed. The unemployed — some 40 percent of the population in real terms — remain dependent upon income transfers from the employed. The consequence is that in addition to facing low pay and high levels of debt, workers are saddled with pressure to support many others. Far from tackling these problems head-on, the ANC has in fact exacerbated them. Indeed, through its program of deregulation, liberalization of capital controls, and labor flexibilization, the government has managed to deepen the economic patterns that characterized apartheid.

Capitalism in South Africa is often described as organized around a minerals-energy complex³ (MEC). The economy was fundamentally transformed by the discovery of minerals in the 1870s. Six powerful mining houses established a migrant-labor system in which workers drawn from across Southern Africa spent long periods in the mines and were housed in adjacent compounds. While workers often moved to the mines from rural villages, they retained ties to these rural homesteads. By sending food, clothes, and other supplies, unpaid women in these labor-sending areas essentially subsidized the wages of workers, cheapening the cost for the big mining houses.

English-speaking interests dominated the powerful mining-finance houses that developed. Mining industry needs were supplemented by state policy, particularly the provision of a cheap supply of coal-generated electricity for the mines provided by state utility Eskom (established in 1923). Today Eskom remains the largest producer of electricity in Africa. The state-owned Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR), formed in 1928, processed South African iron ore with the aim of providing cheap steel for industrial development. White workers at ISCOR were highly trained and received subsidized housing, generous pensions, and health insurance. Black workers, meanwhile, were accommodated in cramped and dirty hostels adjacent to the plants. They were separated from their families and so repeated the patterns of the mining migrant-labor system. ISCOR was privatized in 1980 and became part of ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel producer. SASOL, formed in 1950, pioneered the production of liquid fuels — oil and gas — from coal and was privatized in 1979. It remains a major energy and chemical company.

This MEC trajectory produced an economy dominated by a tightly knit group of capital-intensive, heavy industries with highly concentrated ownership. English and Afrikaner capital slowly merged to form powerful

3 Ben Fine and Zavareh Rustumjee, *The Political Economy of South Africa: From Minerals-Energy Complex to Industrialization* (Boulder: Westview, 1996).

conglomerates rooted in the mining-finance houses. These subsequently diversified into more broad-based industries. By the 1980s, they essentially controlled the entire South African economy, uniting mining, finance, and manufacturing interests.

When the ANC came into power in 1994, it inherited stewardship of the MEC-centered economy. The dismantling of white minority rule and the introduction of adult suffrage was, of course, an enormous victory for the liberation movement and all those who had supported it. There was widespread hope and expectation of positive change for the majority. The ANC had promised the sort of program for change elaborated in the Freedom Charter, which had demanded that the people shall govern, that they shall share in the country's wealth, that the land shall be shared among those who work it, and so on. Even if the ANC inherited the skewed pattern of economic development outlined above, much of the electorate assumed that the MEC could be restructured to support a more developmental and redistributive model of capitalism, certainly one that would generate greater employment for the majority. But instead of implementing the Freedom Charter, the ANC abandoned any semblance of social-democratic politics. Within two years of its assumption of power, there was an extraordinary volte-face with the ruthless and abrupt imposition of the Growth, Equity, and Redistribution (GEAR) program. Even the early policy programs contained in the ANC-funded Macroeconomic Research Group (MERG) Report and its first major policy platform, the broadly social-democratic Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), were abandoned with the turn to GEAR.

Its proponents represented GEAR as in the tradition of the RDP and promised a competitive, rapidly expanding economy that would create sufficient employment for all job seekers; the progressive redistribution of income and opportunities in favor of the poor; a social system in which sound health care, education, and other services would be available to all; and an environment in which homes would be secure and workplaces would be productive. In reality, however, GEAR was the ANC falling in line with the Washington Consensus, and it contained ideal-typical neoliberal policy recommendations including deficit reduction, accelerated tariff reduction, wage moderation, labor-market flexibilization, tax reforms aimed at "international competitiveness" and "minimizing the distorting effects of taxation on economic behavior," trade and industrial policies to promote an industrial economy "fully responsive to

market trends and opportunities,” and a program of “asset restructuring” for state-owned enterprises. If any government in the world had an opportunity to reject the neoliberal norm, given both the abhorrent history of apartheid and the global stature of Nelson Mandela, it was the newly elected ANC government. But the ANC capitulated before it even assumed office. Disarticulating itself from the popular movements that had propelled it into office, it actively worked to demobilize these movements, bolting instead into the cold embrace of capital. It is hard not to be reminded of the words of union leader Joe Foster, in a celebrated “workerist” speech in 1982: “Political movements are often controlled by the ‘petty bourgeoisie’ who fear genuine worker-controlled trade unions. They strive to dissolve worker-controlled movements into a mass political movement dominated not by workers, but by the petty bourgeoisie. According to them, the workers are only useful as a kind of battering ram they themselves seek to lead.”⁴ And this is precisely what happened with the rise of the ANC.

The political settlement of 1994 had already protected white capital, despite the more radical demands of large parts of the anti-apartheid movement. GEAR then presided over and facilitated the dramatic restructuring of the white corporate world, but not in the manner so many had envisaged. Instead, the ANC has overseen the structural transformation of the corporate sector, aiding it in its moves to streamline its operations rather than bringing it to heel, and rejecting nationalization out of hand. Since 1996, the ANC has reduced capital and exchange controls and allowed conglomerates to move their primary listings abroad, which they have combined with intensive unbundling at home. This has involved selling some of their less productive assets to the aspirant black bourgeoisie, who were regarded by many as a buffer against popular attacks on capital.⁵ The foreign listings and unbundling of the big productive capitals have meant a domestic focus on their productive mining core and an emphasis on internationalizing and financializing their operations.

As the financialization of the economy has intensified, this unbundling has led to the simultaneous emergence of distinctively financial corporate groupings with an increasing amount of domestic power. As big capital has

⁴ Joe Foster, “The Worker’s Struggle: Where Does FOSATU Stand?” Speech to Second COSATU Congress, Hammanskraal, South Africa, April 10, 1982, www.abahlali.org/taxonomy/term/joe-foster/joe-foster.

⁵ Sam Ashman and Ben Fine, “The Meaning of Marikana,” *Global Labour Column* (2013): 128.

internationalized and financialized, it has systematically offshored much of its surplus — partly to finance international operations, partly as a means of protection should radical demands emerge from the former anti-apartheid movement. This offshoring has taken place through both legal and illegal means, including widespread transfer pricing and tax evasion. Meanwhile, the demands of “shareholder value” have seen large payouts to overseas investors, facilitated by dual listings or primary listings abroad, particularly during the years of the commodity boom. As this transpired, greater mineral beneficiation, increasing rewards to labor, and general economic diversification were left unaddressed.

Tables 1 and 2 show the historic importance of the mining and finance houses to the South African economy, as well as their relative decline. Table 2 shows that from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the five largest conglomerate groupings controlled more than 80 percent of the capitalization of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). Four of these five are mining and finance groups. By the 2000s, these top five controlled 64 percent of capitalization on the JSE, but five years later this had declined to just over 35 percent. By 2010 it had fallen further to 26 percent, and two years later fell another 4 percent (Table 1). A large share of this “decline” is attributable to the substantial corporate restructuring tied to GEAR, as well as to the increased internationalization of the largest South African corporations. Four of the companies that were in the top five (in terms of market capitalization on the JSE) have moved their primary listings abroad, or else decided to list jointly in South Africa and elsewhere.

Yet control of these groups had not changed as much as the drop in their share of market capitalization implies. Economists Neo Chabane, Andrea Goldstein, and Simon Roberts find, “In the top 10 companies in 2002, only three — SASOL, originally a state-owned enterprise, and two foreign-controlled firms created by conglomerate restructuring (Billiton and South African Breweries, SAB) — were independent of the main conglomerates. Although listed separately, three of the top 10 (Anglo-American, Angloplat, and Anglogold) are still effectively part of the Anglo group. The other top ten firms — Richemont, Old Mutual, Goldfields, and Impalaplats — are all tied into conglomerate holding structures.”⁶

6 Neo Chabane, Andrea Goldstein and Simon Roberts, “The Changing Face and Strategies of Big Business in South Africa: More than a Decade of Political Democracy,” *Industrial and Corporate Change* 15, No. 3 (2006):549-577.

Table 1 also shows that the percentage of foreign control of the JSE has increased from 1.9 percent in 1991 to 10.1 percent in 2002 and to 30 percent in 2012 (having peaked at 33 percent in 2009). There have certainly been some acquisitions of local companies by foreign firms, but most of the change in foreign ownership is the result of the change in the structure of South African firms now listed overseas. Increased speculative short-term foreign-portfolio investment inflows also contributed to the growing levels of foreign institutional ownership. As a result, South African listed corporations are subject to both the volatility associated with shifting global portfolio capital flows and the demands for greater payouts to shareholders.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CONTROL OF JSE MARKET CAPITALIZATION

% of total

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2007	2005	2000	1995	1991
FOREIGN	30	29.8	27.9	33.1	20.7	14.2	3.9	4.1	1.9
INSTITUTIONS	19.4	17	17.6	14.4	12.6	13.7	6.7	1.7	4.9
DIRECTORS	9.2	8.9	8.3	7.7	9.4	8.2	8.9	11.4	5.4
SABMILLER	9.2	7.5	6.5	5.9	5.5	4.9	2.8		
ANGLO-AMERICAN CORP	8.9	11.8	13	10.6	20.8	17.3	23.6	37.1	42.4
REMBRANDT	7.2	5.2	5.1	3.8	6.7	7.8	11	7.8	15.2
BLACK GROUPS	3.9	4.6	5.4	7	5.5	5.8	5.7		
RMB/FIRSTRAND	3.9	3.1	2.8	2.5	3.1	5	2.9	1	
SAMUTUAL	3.3	2.9	2.8	2.8	4	4.5	11	11.2	10.4
SANLAM	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.6	13.2	12.7	13.2
LIBERTYLIFE / STANDARD BANK	1.1	2.4	3.9	4.3	3.4	4.3	5.2	7.3	3.7
BIDVEST GROUP	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.1	1		
INVESTEC	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9	1	1.9	0.9	
PSG	0.6								
STATE	0.1	0.2	0.3	1.5	1.8	2.5			
ALTECH	0.1	0.1							
ABSA						2.5			
SASOL	3.9	3.5	4.6	3.5	4.6	4.2	2.6	1.7	
ANGLOVAAL							0.7	2.9	2.9
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: *Who Owns Whom* from Ashman, Newman, and Mohamed (2013)

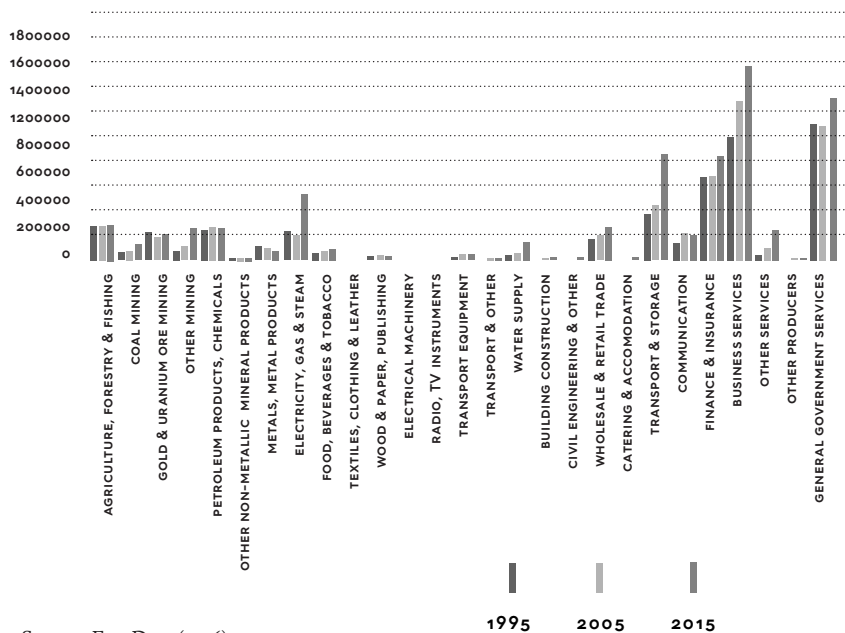
TABLE 2:

THE HISTORIC "TOP FIVE" CONTROL OF THE JSE

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2007	2005	2000	1995	1991
FOREIGN	30	29.8	27.9	33.1	20.7	14.2	3.9	4.1	1.9
ANGLO-AMERICAN CORP	8.9	11.8	13	10.6	20.8	17.3	23.6	37.1	42.4
REMBRANDT	7.2	5.2	5.1	3.8	6.7	7.8	11	7.8	15.2
SA MUTUAL	3.3	2.9	2.8	2.8	4	4.5	11	11.2	10.4
SANLAM	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.6	13.2	12.7	13.2
LIBERTYLIFE / STANDARD BANK	1.1	2.4	3.9	4.3	3.4	4.3	5.2	7.3	3.7
TOP FIVE GROUPS COLLECTIVELY	21.9	23.5	26	22.7	36.1	35.5	64	76.1	84.9

Source: *Who Owns Whom* from Ashman, Newman, and Mohamed (2013)

FIGURE 1:

DISTRIBUTION OF CAPITAL STOCK ACROSS SECTORS
IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 1995, 2005, AND 2015

Source: EasyData (2016)

Nationally, much of South African manufacturing remains tied to the capital-intensive MEC core of the economy, with manufacturing outside the MEC core relatively weak. This is demonstrated in Figure 1, which shows capital stock across the different sectors for 1995, 2005, and 2015. Figure 1 also shows the significance of finance, business services, and government services, with the latter driving job creation since the financial crisis, as we discuss in the following section. While there have certainly been important changes in the economy since 1994, including the expansion of the retail and telecommunications sectors, the ANC has not seized the opportunity to diversify. Macroeconomic policy, now firmly neoliberal, has facilitated the restructuring of large South African corporates and the offshoring of surplus as described above, despite its harmful impact on both investment and employment. Indeed, capital flight and the offshoring of surplus must be understood as components of corporate profitability strategy since the defeat of apartheid, and therefore as weapons in the class struggle from above.

Despite extensive changes in corporate ownership, the post-apartheid economy remains highly concentrated. The apartheid-era state-owned enterprises tell a story in themselves. Steel, currently in crisis, has — under ArcelorMittal — hit downstream industry hard by charging import parity prices and so abandoning the apartheid-era policy of cheap steel for industry. But at the same time, ArcelorMittal continues to use revenue from South Africa to subsidize its global operations. SASOL, privatized, as we saw above, was fined by the Competition Commission for charging excessive prices for plastic inputs into basic manufactured goods. The apartheid-era state-owned enterprises have grown up to be abusive private monopolies! Likewise, a 2007 energy crisis that resulted in rolling blackouts revealed how Eskom, under the threat of ANC privatization, had been completely unable to plan energy provision. Trade liberalization, which the ANC embraced, also hit much domestic manufacturing, resulting in the deindustrialization of important employment-generating sectors.

If the ANC has reinforced the contradictions of the apartheid period, the international situation is only intensifying them. Most significantly, the crash in global commodity prices has produced a deep crisis for mining, as well as for the stronger sections of manufacturing. This is because much of the demand

for metals and metal-fabricated products comes from mining. This collapse has seen further restructuring and mass layoffs by the mining houses. Steel is similarly in crisis, a direct result of China's "repositioning." As China's capacity utilization has dropped, there has been heavy dumping in world markets. Highveld Steel in South Africa's coal belt closed in 2016 as a result, with only a whimper of opposition, and the state has been left desperately trying to save the industry from complete collapse.

And so one flawed model has replaced another. The classic state-directed MEC that benefited capital and white workers has been succeeded by the financialized MEC: dominated by internationalized private corporations, disciplined by international capital markets, and exerting tremendous power over the state. As we demonstrate in the following section, this project of restructuring the MEC has also extended to organized labor, with the taming of the previously militant labor confederation. The ANC's alliance with capital meant overseeing the restructuring and streamlining of the conglomerate grouping that had dominated the economy under apartheid, as well as trying to change the color of capital without scaring off its older fractions. Central to this project was facilitating the rise of a black bourgeoisie and a new layer of black professionals and business owners for whom the ANC and the SACP have been veritable launching pads, giving rise to increasing levels of corruption.

Many members of this nascent black elite, particularly state managers and the corporate bourgeoisie, have benefited substantially from ANC policies, not to mention from their proximity to the party and the state. Indeed, as sociologist Roger Southall argues, ANC policies have promoted the development of a black middle class that is "centred on an increasingly powerful 'party-state bourgeoisie.'"⁷ The party has achieved this through a number of policy innovations. Foremost among these are Black Economic Empowerment — a tokenistic form of affirmative action — and cadre deployment, in which ANC affiliates fill key state positions at both provincial and national levels. The latter quickly became a source of cronyism (and thus factionalism) inside the ANC and led to the promotion of unqualified party members. Despite official recognition of limits of this patronage system, the ANC continues the practice.

7 Roger Southall, "The ANC: Party Vanguard of the Black Middle Class?" in *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today*, edited by Arianna Lissoni, Jon Soske, Natasha Erlank, Noor Nieftagodien and Omar Badsha (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 325–46.

In addition, the restructuring of both public services and public institutions via employment equity has also functioned to bolster the growth of a black bourgeoisie. Under apartheid, the public sector was predominantly staffed by whites, especially at the higher levels. Since 1994, the ANC has, quite rightly, abolished the separate administrations that existed in apartheid's "homelands" and sought to make the public sector more closely reflect the racial demographics of the country. More specifically, it established targets for the number of black and female employees in management. But given the clientelistic tendencies of ANC rule, with the party effectively running a party-state, this has yielded a small number of "tenderpreneurs" and others who have managed to accumulate high incomes and "rents" through the appropriation of state contracts and resources, which are then in turn distributed to friends and family.

The nepotistic way this project of black embourgeoisement has been executed is at the root of the recent spate of allegations of corruption at high-level state-owned enterprises and public institutions. Large numbers of public officials facing corruption charges can avoid them by getting redeployed by the party elsewhere in the country. These features are now integral to the ANC's clientelistic model of accumulation, encouraging many erstwhile critics of the ANC's naked neoliberalism to pine nostalgically for free markets devoid of corruption, with even elements of the Left defending the Treasury as a bastion of moral purity. Yet even the Treasury has not proved immune, with Zuma facing official allegations from the Public Protector's office that he engaged in a project of "state capture." These charges arose when he effectively allowed members of the billionaire Gupta family, his close allies in the private sector, to make Treasury appointments against all prevailing wisdom. While Zuma is frequently represented as a uniquely corrupt figure, these sorts of arrangements are likely to continue under his successor, as they are effectively built into the party-state system of patronage and are closely linked to different economic interests.

In all of this, labor is to be managed rather than brought on as a partner. Designs for any kind of cooperative arrangement between labor and capital have long been shelved. The corporate restructuring described in this section has yielded the massive fragmentation of the working class, not least through outsourcing, as well as wage depression, increasingly brutal workplace regimes, and skyrocketing levels of unemployment. Where does this trajec-

tory leave the working class politically? In the following sections, we provide the lay of the land, describing what we argue are two major phases of post-Marikana radicalization. Despite a political economy that is hardly favorable to struggles of workers and the poor, a number of conjunctural possibilities have emerged. The roughly contemporaneous emergence of NUMSA's United Front and Malema's EFF comprised the first phase, following waves of wildcats across the platinum belt and Western Cape farmlands. As this began to peter out, a second phase emerged, this time led by student-worker coalitions on university campuses across the country.

STATE OF STRUGGLE

This is, then, where the working class finds itself after two decades of failed transformations and the erosion of ANC hegemony without any substantial left alternative. If much of this class once viewed the ANC as the party of its own liberation, it is increasingly having to struggle against it. This struggle is particularly notable in light of a weak response by traditional labor organizations; in some cases, workers have even contested the purported leadership of these organizations in defense of their own interests. It is in this context that we must understand historic developments such as the wildcat waves following the Marikana massacre, the formation of the EFF, NUMSA's United Front, and the rise of a militant university student movement in universities across the country. These milestones, it is important to note, have occurred against a backdrop of rising community protests, as well as strikes and demonstrations by formally employed workers.

We begin with the weakness of organized labor. One major source of its frailty has been outsourcing, which has transformed the public sector into a funnel channeling public money into the pockets of the private sector. Its major consequences for workers have been layoffs, wage cuts, and erosion of benefits. By allowing workers in one workplace to be employed by different bosses and be recruited into different unions, outsourcing has undermined shop-floor organization and limited workers' legal ability to strike. It has likewise pitted formally employed workers against contract employees. For example, outsourced custodial workers typically earn less than half of the wages of their permanently employed counterparts.⁸

8 Department of Labour, "Sectoral Determination 1: Contract Cleaning Sector, South Africa," 2016, <http://www.labour.gov.za/DOL/downloads/legislation/sectoral-determinations/>

The outsourcing of cleaning, security, and other so-called “non-core functions” started in 1998 in universities and subsequently made its way to the public sector more generally. This was part of a larger state project of neoliberal restructuring tied to the ANC’s GEAR program.⁹ COSATU’s tame response to this frontal assault on organized labor suggests that its formal alliance with the ANC and SACP — the Tripartite Alliance — rendered it toothless. In 1994, the ANC’s social-democratic Reconstruction and Development Program was the condition for COSATU’s electoral support for the ANC in the first elections. Even after this program was abandoned in favor of GEAR two years later, COSATU leaders were reluctant to challenge their alliance partner. Rather than mobilizing member unions and other social forces against this ANC-led assault on organized labor, COSATU adopted a policy formally barring its affiliates from working with groups deemed hostile to the Tripartite Alliance.¹⁰

This is not to say that COSATU simply capitulated. The union confederation did call a handful of general strikes against GEAR, but it did so in the form of annual one-day actions with advance notice to employers, effectively reducing these strikes to symbolic protests. Even more, they refused a programmatic opposition to privatization, opting instead for a “case-by-case” approach.

Thus, as Devan Pillay notes, COSATU politics became “enmeshed in institutionalized forms of corporatist decision-making at industry, regional and national levels.”¹¹ The federation’s drift toward business unionism means that it has increasingly come to reach routinized agreements sanctioned by the national bargaining councils and mired in proceduralism and legalism. This approach stands in stark contrast to its militancy during the 1980s when Black unions had just been legalized by the state: then its strategy was based

basic-conditions-of-employment/contractcleaningwages2015.pdf (accessed February 21, 2017); Department of Labour, “Private Security Sector Minimum Wages,” <http://www.labour.gov.za/DOL/downloads/legislation/sectoral-determinations/basic-conditions-of-employment/privatesec2016.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2017).

9 Jonathan Grossman, “Renewed Organizing in the Outsourced Public Sector Workplace: The Experience of the Workers Forum at the University of Cape Town in the Struggle for Worker Unity, Organization and Mobilization,” paper delivered at ILRIG seminar, Cape Town, March 2009, 2.

10 Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), “On Emerging Social Movements,” Resolution No. 3, Resolutions of the 8th National Congress, Johannesburg, 2003; Devan Pillay, “Cosatu and the Alliance: Falling Apart at the Seams,” in *COSATU in Crisis: The Fragmentation of an African Trade Union Federation*, edited by Vishwas Satgar and Roger Southall (Johannesburg: KMM Publishers, 2015), 119.

11 Pillay, “Cosatu and the Alliance,”

on a clear identification of the class enemy and committed to dismantling the apartheid system. In this period, workers closely associated the racist oppression of the apartheid state with capitalism more broadly.

After apartheid, however, this conceptualization of politics was abandoned. Workers began to view the state as acting on their behalf, most notably in the case of the 1995 Labor Relations Act. Often represented as a victory for South African workers, the Act has been used by municipalities and the national government to prevent strikes and contain worker militancy. Elaborate and tedious procedures must be followed before a strike certificate can be issued, which would allow workers to go on protected strikes. It also gives legislative cover to outsourcing and allows for appallingly insufficient “minimum wages” to be set by national bargaining councils and ministerial wage determinations. In practice, however, these minimums are treated as maximums; bosses can pay starvation wages and claim to have complied with the law.¹² The national government’s new proposal for setting a national minimum wage illustrates this, with 50 percent of workers found to earn less than the suggested 3,500 rand per month for a forty-hour week, or twenty rand per hour.¹³ Furthermore, COSATU and its affiliated leadership have habitually reached policing agreements with bosses. These ensure that workers comply, limiting internal union democracy by threatening to expel dissenters.

This double-edged sword of “worker-friendly” legislation and the accommodationist politics of union leadership have together rendered South Africa workers toothless in the face of major attacks on their living standards and organizations. Even when workers have defied leadership to challenge the ANC, the 1993 Regulation of Gatherings Act has been used to deny them their right to protest.¹⁴ Where union leaders have been willing, workers have managed to organize major strikes despite these legal restrictions. There have been powerful protected strikes, such as the 2007 and 2010 public-sector strikes and the five-month 2014 platinum-sector strike — the longest in South African history. As early as 2005, workers, supported by students, scored a

¹² Grossman, “Renewed Organizing,” 4.

¹³ Cyril Ramaphosa, “Statement by Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa on the finalisation of agreements on labour stability and a National Minimum Wage,” speech delivered February 8, 2017, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/speeches/statement-deputy-president-cyril-ramaphosa-finalisation-agreements-labour-stability-and> (accessed February 21, 2017).

¹⁴ Jane Duncan, *The Rise of the Securocrats: The Case of South Africa* (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2015).

victory against outsourcing at the University of Cape Town (UCT) through consistent localized organizing inspired by a working-class politics of challenge and mobilization. UCT was pressured to adopt a code that required contract companies to pay workers substantially above the industry minimum wage.¹⁵ It is also noteworthy that police statistics have described most of the thousands of community and labor protests in South Africa “peaceful” and “orderly.”¹⁶ Increasingly, however, workers have had to break out of their legal chains and take action without following procedures.

This frustration with the labor-relations system broke into the open in late 2012 in a strike at the Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana, not far from Rustenburg. The state responded to the strike with naked repression, which reached its peak with the shooting of thirty-four striking miners by police on August 16, 2012. The strike was one of many across the platinum belt, which, in line with the high levels of capital concentration described in the previous section, is primarily controlled by the mining houses Anglo-American, Impala, and Lonmin. In February 2012, workers at Impala Platinum (Implats) had downed their tools and demanded a wage increase for all workers. This demand came from a grievance filed by rock-drill operators, who are key to the mining process but among the lowest-paid workers in the sector.¹⁷ Six months later, Lonmin workers struck, and the following month workers went on strike at Anglo-American Platinum (Amplats).

Significantly, all of these strikes were organized by workers’ committees and waged against the advice of the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Miners found this union, a loyal pillar of the Tripartite Alliance, too timid and legalistic to support their struggle for a living wage. Indeed, many union leaders were actively opposed to the strikes, actually trying to mobilize workers against it by pointing to the need to respect the wage agreement then still in force. Miners were dissatisfied with their call to wait for the next round of formal negotiations, and they certainly weren’t enthusiastic at the prospect of waiting through the legal process of applying for a strike certificate. Lonmin workers demanded a monthly wage of 12,500

¹⁵ Grossman, “Renewed Organizing,” 3.

¹⁶ Peter Alexander, Carin Runciman, and Boitumelo Maruping, “South African Police Service Data on Crowd Incidents: A Preliminary Analysis” (Johannesburg: South African Research Chair in Social Change, University of Johannesburg, 2015), <http://africacheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/South-African-Police-Service-Data-on-Crowd-Incidents-Report.pdf> (accessed December 4, 2016).

¹⁷ Luke Sinwell and Sphiwe Mbatha, *The Spirit of Marikana: The Rise of Insurgent Trade Unionism in South Africa* (London: Pluto, 2016), 29.

rand (US \$1,250), which represented a three-to four-fold increase in their income at the time. The demand was not based on “reality” or what the bosses could afford, as was normal practice; rather, it was based on workers’ needs. The same thing happened at Amplats, where miners demanded 16,050 rand per month.

However, at Lonmin, the bosses proved stubborn. Cyril Ramaphosa, founding secretary general of NUM and now a billionaire mining magnate and deputy president of the ANC, used his position to agitate for a harsher government response to the strike. It was his intervention, among other factors, that resulted in the massacre of thirty-four workers by police. Remarkably, the deaths of their comrades did not deter strikers, who continued with their action for three weeks before the bosses relented and granted wage increases of 22 percent for certain categories of workers. In 2014, roughly 70,000 workers at all three platinum companies united behind the demand of 12,500 rand in the name of the dead, launching a bitter strike that lasted five months.

Thus the Marikana massacre unleashed a protracted strike wave across the platinum, gold, coal, and diamond mines across South Africa. Strikes soon spread to other sectors of the economy, with workers taking inspiration from the defiant spirit of the Marikana strikers. This “Spirit of Marikana” then continued to radiate outward, spreading beyond organized labor into working-class communities across the country. In several cases, people in need of homes participated in mass land occupations in which they named their new settlements “Marikana.”¹⁸

This spirit of defiance was also discernible in the 2012 farmworkers’ strike in the Western Cape. As in the platinum belt, these were unprotected strikes, with the workers demanding wage increases based on their immediate needs. After five months of struggle, they won a 52 percent increase in the official minimum wage. This spirit likewise permeated the campuses. In 2015, university students and workers poured into the streets without applying for permission to march or strike, demanding a moratorium on university tuition fee hikes and an end to labor outsourcing. At campuses across the country, students were successfully able to block the fee hike and university administrations were forced to cancel outsourcing plans. Workers are now being

¹⁸ Trevor Ngwane, “Against All Odds: The ‘Spirit of Marikana’ and the Resurgence of the Working-Class Movement in South Africa,” paper presented at the Twentieth International Conference on Alternative Futures and Popular Protest, Manchester Metropolitan University, March 30–April 1, 2015.

insourced on most South African campuses. What is most significant about each of these seemingly disparate struggles is that success only came when the law was willfully ignored and disruption — wildcats, blockades, campus shutdowns, etc. — was the tactic of choice. This militancy by ordinary workers and students opened up a world of possibility.

In this respect, the Marikana massacre represented a turning point in the unfolding class struggle in South Africa. Rising determination and defiance served to counter the fragmentation, demoralization, and despair. This spirit pervades struggles at both the points of production and reproduction. In the case of the latter, community protests are increasing and becoming increasingly disruptive and violent.¹⁹

PHASE ONE: NUMSA AND THE EFF

It was in this context of an increasingly resolute working class that we saw the emergence of both “the NUMSA moment” and the EFF. In the case of the former, NUMSA — the largest union in South Africa, with more than 338,000 members — formally broke with the Tripartite Alliance at its Special National Congress in December 2013. Rank-and-file members and their stewards voted against continued political support for the ANC and resolved to form a working-class party rooted in socialist politics. During the course of this congress, workers raised more than a hundred thousand rand for the widows of miners murdered at Marikana, in part to recognize the event’s deep imprint on the working-class movement.

In a roughly contemporaneous break with the ANC, Youth League president Julius Malema was expelled from both the ANC Youth League and the party more broadly. He immediately resolved to form a new political party, officially launching the EFF on the site of the Marikana massacre on October 13, 2013. This fledgling party argued that black South Africans had won political power but that economic power remained concentrated in white hands. Without the nationalization of land, mines, factories, and farms, they maintained, black people would never be liberated from economic want and hyperexploitation. The EFF attracted a wide variety of supporters, from disgruntled ANC youth to former Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanist Congress militants, social-movement activists to local community organiz-

¹⁹ Alexander, Runciman, and Maruping, *South African Police Service Data* (University of Johannesburg: South African Research Chair in Social Change, 2015).

ers. Malema insisted that this was a party of the Left, and it quickly adopted Marxism-Leninism-Fanonism as its platform and declared socialism its goal.²⁰ Their strategy would be to topple the ANC at the ballot box and to gain a mass following by organizing protest marches, land occupations, and other militant actions.

Both the EFF and NUMSA tapped into the radicalizing mood of workers and youth. But how has each fared in relation to leadership, organization, and support base? The EFF appears to have bested NUMSA in this respect. In 2014, at barely four months old, it won a million votes in national elections — 6 percent of the national vote — becoming the third-largest party in Parliament. It dramatized its entry into government by coordinating the attire of its affiliated MPs, dressing them in red worker overalls (“boiler suits”) and domestic-worker pinafores and *doeken* (head coverings) for all official business. The EFF made Parliament a site of real politics again, unafraid to ask pointed questions or to make irreverent statements. It was the EFF that would directly accuse the ANC of murdering workers in Marikana. EFF MPs were repeatedly ejected — sometimes forcibly — when they homed in on Zuma’s use of state funds to remodel his Nkandla homestead, demanding that he “pay back the money.” These antics assured the EFF constant media coverage as it sought to project itself as a fearless, radical party that fought against corruption and for the working class and the poor. In the process, the party eclipsed the official opposition party, the DA.

More recently, in the August 2016 local elections, the EFF maintained its share of the vote, transforming it into the position of kingmaker in several crucial municipalities where neither the DA nor the ANC secured a majority. In Johannesburg, the EFF threw its support to the DA, allowing the latter to take power in South Africa’s largest city — to the ANC’s chagrin. The EFF has predictably come under fire for supporting a party to the right of the ANC — not to mention a party with a storied history of whiteness — and for seemingly abandoning its roots in protest politics in favor of electoralism. Yet there is no doubt that the EFF has entrenched itself in the imaginations of many working-class youth and many of their parents, establishing itself as a key political player. This success comes despite serious concerns from the Marxist left about the party’s true character as “populist,” “left populist,” “left reform-

20 Floyd Shivambu, *The Coming Revolution: Julius Malema and the Fight for Economic Freedom* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2014).

ist,” or even “proto-fascist.”²¹ These criticisms relate primarily to Malema’s dominant role in the party and his self-styling as “commander-in-chief,” but they also concern the social composition of the EFF’s base — disenfranchised youth and radical petit-bourgeois elements — as well as its militaristic and masculinist imagery.²² But these critiques notwithstanding, the party’s radical economic program and its willingness to publicly confront the ANC has won it public admiration.

In contrast, NUMSA quickly lost the momentum from which it initially formed the UF to bring together labor and community struggles. After forming an organization called Movement for Socialism intended to ready the terrain for a workers’ party, the project stalled. While some critics have blamed this on persistence of NUMSA members’ support for the ANC, it was in fact these same members’ frustration and anger with ANC rule that made the NUMSA moment possible in the first place. It was first and foremost the militancy of the Marikana miners that opened the eyes of millions of workers and thus the doors through which NUMSA could pass. The question is then how the leadership has passed through these doors: that is, how the NUMSA leadership has functioned from its Special National Congress in December 2013 through its tenth National Congress in December 2016.

As a trade union, NUMSA’s political character partly derives from its structural location in the economy. This is a contradictory location related to the role of workers under capitalism wherein they create the wealth but do not own or control it. The uneven development of capitalist sectors locates steelworkers in a position of enhanced (bargaining) power vis-à-vis other workers because of the importance of the steel industry in the MEC economy. But despite this centrality, they too have been subject to both neoliberal restructuring and the dynamics of global markets. The NUMSA moment represented an embryonic radicalization of steelworkers in which they began to catch a glimpse of a solution to their plight — and that of their class’s plight more broadly — in directly confronting capitalist power. This meant working-class mobilization behind a vision of transcending capitalism, rather than merely trying to negotiate better terms of exploitation.

21 Tasneem Essop, “A Study of Collective Subjectivity and Political Representation within the Economic Freedom Fighters in the North West Province,” Master of Arts in Political Studies dissertation (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2016); see also Achille Mbembe, “Juju Prances into the Gaps Left by ANC,” *Mail & Guardian*, July 31, 2014, <https://mg.co.za/article/2014-07-31-juju-prances-into-the-gaps-left-by-anc>.

22 Essop, “Study of Collective Subjectivity,” 39–40.

Yet the NUMSA leadership's implementation of their members' mandate has not been immune to the dominant politics of business unionism in South Africa. As sociologist Devan Pillay correctly argues, "SACP influence within COSATU affiliates became widespread over the last two decades, including within traditionally 'workerist' affiliates such as NUMSA."²³

The union's fixation on the stagist teleology of the SACP's "National Democratic Revolution" (NDR) theory²⁴ and the ANC's widely revered Freedom Charter have been defended on the grounds that they allow the union to win over supporters from the ANC base. But it has yet to proffer evidence that this strategy can succeed. Instead, NUMSA's insistence on the Freedom Charter has repelled Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanist layers who have long been opposed to this vision and nurse bitter memories of physical conflict with the "Charterists" during the volatile 1980s, when the ANC managed to get the upper hand in the battle for township support.

In the process of implementing its resolution to build a United Front, a Movement for Socialism, and ultimately a workers' party, NUMSA leaders have tended to introduce insulation walls between these three projects, rendering them as mutually exclusive stages. For example, this leadership insists that the UF cannot adopt a socialist vision and remains reluctant to put the idea of a workers' party on the agenda of the union's everyday practices. Nor has the NUMSA leadership encouraged its rank-and-file members to participate in the UF. Ordinary workers are not afforded the chance to play an immediate and direct role in the union's larger political project: that is, the search for real and lasting solutions to the problems of everyday life. This only fortifies the division between leadership and rank and file, marginalizing critical voices on the shop floor and privileging the politics of schooled stewards. NUMSA's strategic choices have appeared as political feebleness and a reluctance (or inability) to discuss questions of state power. This has in turn allowed accommodationist voices to fill the vacuum within the UF, and the EFF to project itself as the principal force critical of the Tripartite Alliance. Many NUMSA shop stewards are now joining and

23 Devan Pillay, "Cosatu and the Alliance." In Vishwas Satgar and Roger Southall, *Cosatu in Crisis: The Fragmentation of an African Trade Union Federation* (Sandton, South Africa: KMM Review Publishing, 2015)

24 For a brief critical assessment of the NDR in relation to the national question, see Gillian Hart, *Rethinking the South African Crisis: Nationalism, Populism, Hegemony* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014).

voting for the EFF. NUMSA and its UF did not provide any viable alternative in the August 2016 local elections.

It is possible to discern a retreat by NUMSA and other left forces after the COSATU Special National Congress held in June 2015. Amazingly, the twin issues that led to the calling of the congress — namely, the need to build unity inside COSATU and the expulsion of both NUMSA and General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi from COSATU — were apparently not even discussed.²⁵ This omission represented a victory for the leadership of the crisis-ridden COSATU. Since the congress, COSATU's leadership has been desperate to demonstrate its continued relevance, even going so far as opposing the government on the level of the new national minimum wage.

By late 2015, it had become clear that some NUMSA-funded initiatives in which Vavi was involved were taking the form of popular fronts that privileged middle-class voices at the expense of workers. NUMSA's corrective pullback was sharp and has seen Vavi concentrating on building the new union federation rather than on the middle-class-led anti-corruption Zuma Must Fall and Save South Africa campaigns. In the absence of a viable working-class alternative, the political vacuum left by the ANC seemed as if it might be filled by centrist and right-leaning forces. NUMSA had the social weight to arrest this rightward slide, but chose not to deploy it.

Of course, given its status as the largest union in the country and given that many of its members come from socialist traditions of worker control, NUMSA will remain a key player in any potential revival of the working-class movement in South Africa. Yet it is our contention that NUMSA can do more to harness and harvest the potential strength that often appears to lie dormant within it. This will require a mechanism for drawing in as many workers as possible in the building of the working-class movement along the lines stipulated by the Special National Congress: namely, the UF, the Movement for Socialism, and a workers' party. In the struggle against apartheid it was the civics, the street committees, and joint shop-steward councils that functioned as this mechanism. Until the NUMSA leadership abandons its top-down approach to movement building, rank and file workers will remain marginal to the building of any proletarian organization — which is, of course, a contradiction in terms.

²⁵ Pillay, "Cosatu and the Alliance," 269.

PHASE TWO: CAMPUS STRUGGLES

As NUMSA's UF foundered and the EFF aligned itself with the DA, the ANC found its primary challenger in a most unexpected place: on university campuses across the country. The student movement began when black students studying in universities that were white under apartheid demanded the full decolonization of higher education — and of society more generally. This movement made national news when UCT students demanded the removal of the iconic statue of Cecil Rhodes, colonist par excellence, from the lawns of this liberal English university. As the anti-Rhodes campaign grew, it captured the imaginations of students and workers even beyond the borders of South Africa, gaining coverage from the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, and other international outlets. The #RhodesMustFall campaign reached its peak on April 9, 2015, when the statue was triumphantly removed amid a large convergence on campus.

By October 2015, #RhodesMustFall had transformed itself into a nationwide student-worker movement in response to two major developments: a proposed tuition fee increase at all public universities, and the continued outsourcing of certain categories of university employees. Thus were born the three strands of the university movement: #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and #OutsourcingMustFall. It is important to note that the movement developed in the context of the neoliberalization of higher education, which simultaneously depressed workers' wages and hiked students' tuition fees. As such, we treat this movement as a conjunctural South African iteration of a larger project of capitalist restructuring in relation to the 2008 crisis of globalized capital.

The demands of the #RhodesMustFall campaign to decolonize the institutional culture, symbols, and curriculum of UCT should be understood as emanating from the alienation black students experience in liberal white universities. The roots of this alienation, of course, lie in the life circumstances of most South Africans. As black students and aspirant members of the middle class, they felt this alienation acutely, linking it with the failures of the national liberation movement and the idealization of the new South Africa as a "rainbow nation." In a country formally run by a black-led government but still largely dominated by white economic interests, questions of

whiteness, white privilege, and white domination became burning issues for students and workers on the campuses. Understanding their role as the generation tasked with completing the national liberation struggle, following Fanon, they developed a racialized discourse that embraced black scholarship and ideas and rejected everything white as colonial. In some cases, the latter included the rejection of white students, and staff as allies in their struggle.

The rise of this decolonization movement found an echo at other universities in the form of “Black Thought” discussion and agitation groups.²⁶ At its best the movement’s ideological challenge amounted to a substantial critique of the racism, patriarchy, and colonial legacies persisting in the universities as well as in knowledge systems and social practices more broadly. This stance posed a serious challenge to both campus administrations and to the status quo, since bureaucrats had little to offer that could placate this movement. Yet, despite its radical potential, we must point out that there was much in the ideological basis of the movement that served to undermine its potential.

The students rescued the ideas of Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness from dusty library shelves, attempting to render them relevant to contemporary struggles. They read the works of African struggle icons fervently in their quest to understand history and ideology, identity, and strategy. Yet their discussions tended to venerate and adulate rather than criticize and analyze. They were marked by an unreflective rejection of “European” influence and an attendant affirmation of an “indigenous” worldview associated with postcolonial theory. Class as an analytic category was replaced by race, with little engagement with decades of nuanced race-class debates in South Africa.

The exclusive emphasis on race at the expense of class — rather than devising an articulation of race and class — meant that elitist tendencies in the movement were not critically examined. Many black working-class students are now studying at universities. To recall an earlier South African student movement, the 1976 Soweto movement devoted much attention to mobilizing black working-class high-school students. By contrast, the contemporary student movement for decolonization has largely failed to organize

26 Leigh-Ann Naidoo, “Centring the Black Intellectual,” *Mercury*, December 9, 2016, <http://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-mercury/20161209/281827168394340>.

beyond the campuses, and in its initial phases it didn't even make connections with campus workers. Indeed, it only managed to do the latter in a limited way after it became the #FeesMustFall campaign, as we detail below.

#FeesMustFall retained a peculiar class character indeed. If tertiary education is largely viewed as a means toward upward mobility, many in the movement read this as a guarantee: those who have studied and worked hard deserve a better life — as opposed to their lesser-educated counterparts. Thus #FeesMustFall gained support from middle-class parents on this elitist basis.

The movement did not properly address these questions partly because of the reductive view of blackness in its prevailing analysis. Its uncritical reliance on upper-middle-class support left many students blind to the contradiction between the struggle against class privilege and inequality, on the one hand, and tying their fate to the upper classes and aspiring to join them in the world of privilege, on the other. Without a more nuanced understanding of race in relation to class, it grew increasingly difficult to expand the scope of the struggle. Rather than addressing the failures of basic education and the need to improve the school system as a whole, students focused on narrower struggles over hiring on campus. More generally, the movement did not explore the link between racialized alienation and multiple forms of capitalist exploitation and dispossession in the workplace, at home, and on campuses across the country. Without this sort of conjunctural analysis, we end up with a false choice between race and class — either/or instead of both/and.

The development of the decolonization movement into what became known as #FeesMustFall began to address some of these limits. Even if the movement was most widely covered by the media at the elite campuses of UCT and Wits University in Johannesburg, rather than in the less resourced former “black” universities, it spread to universities and vocational colleges across the country as students began to turn their attention to escalating university tuition fees. Parents, academics, and workers alike could relate to the demand for free education, which could, if won, change the lives of the majority. Support for the campaign and its militant and disruptive methods, such as university shutdowns and student-worker strikes, was overwhelming, and the government and campus administrations were caught unawares. It was this element of surprise that forced the national government to concede to the

students' demand for no fee hike in 2016. Broadening its impact, the student movement supported campus workers' struggle for an end to outsourcing; in turn, workers supported students' demands. On most campuses, outsourced workers won a commitment by administrations to end outsourcing and, in some cases, they secured top-ups to their meager wages. Thus the student-worker alliance and its use of disruptive tactics won significant victories both for students and for workers.

The EFF's student wing — its "Student Command" — has also played a major role in the movement; as with all party-affiliated student groups, it contests Student Representative Council elections on most campuses. Also like all party-affiliated activists, they were prohibited from acting as members of their party in the broader movement, because activists were wary of outside interference and the perceived opportunism of political parties. This meant that student leaders assume positions of leadership without declaring their party allegiance in a context where no proper structures exist to keep them formally accountable.

Sustained and violent state repression has substantially weakened the movement. From the militarization of campuses to restrictions on protest actions, students have witnessed the contracting of private security guards with little to no experience dealing with protests. The result has been the constant unleashing of rubber bullets and chemical agents on students and workers, leading to severe injuries. A student leader at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban was incarcerated for six months after being denied bail by the state. Hundreds of student leaders have been suspended and several of them expelled from universities across the country.

Without strong organizational structures, the movement was largely helpless in the face of this well-organized onslaught. At a base level, this meant failure to support one another and a lack of functional anti-repression committees. As administrations ramped up coercion on campuses, they isolated elements of the movement. A radical minority turned toward increasingly brazen guerrilla tactics aimed at the disruption of normal university activities. This predictably invited more repression, which yielded further isolation, and so on. Though the state has made some concessions, when analyzed in context these can safely be regarded as largely tokenistic, such as departments discussing decolonization approaches in closely

managed contexts. And while the government has increased its subsidies to tuition fees, these come at the expense of other university programs.

The workers' movement in the universities has generally subsided at this point. Various categories of workers like gardeners, security guards, and cleaners are now insourced, but at a pace and on terms unilaterally determined by management. This piecemeal transition means that some workers gain higher wages as others are not yet up to speed, which predictably fragments solidarity. More broadly, the unity of students and workers seems to have dissolved without any concrete campaigns to solidify their alliance. While community and union protests in support might help their cause, the failure of the student-worker movement to engage with the working class beyond campuses leaves it relatively isolated. NUMSA has certainly issued supportive press releases and even attended a handful of student events and provided sporadic resources, but union locals have tended to focus on more immediate issues: factory reports, wage negotiations, congress preparations, and the like. The UF has, with very few exceptions, largely failed to marshal worker and community support for students and university workers. With the student movement now in a phase of decline, the few links established will be hard to sustain.

If the EFF and UF together constitute a first phase of the post-Marikana radicalization — twin moments — then the campus movements make up a second phase, or what we here call the third moment. This second wave includes off-campus struggles inspired by #FeesMustFall, such as the March 2016 monthlong wildcat strike by four thousand Pikitup garbage workers in Johannesburg. This follows a first wave of class struggle across the platinum belt and farmland in the Western Cape, as well as escalating community protests across the country. The second phase of post-Marikana radicalization requires the conscious development of existing organizations and further mobilization of potentially aligned class fractions. Such a politics of class mobilization and challenge, rather than of inward orientation and containment, is the necessary precondition for any expansion of the latest wave of struggle — let alone its very existence. It will require boldness and belief in the organic capacity of workers to take their own struggle forward.

CONCLUSION

John Saul has repeatedly described the ANC in power as an instance of “failed liberation,” drawing upon Fanon’s account of “false decolonization” more generally.²⁷ In his telling, the ANC’s fiscal and social policies, in conjunction with the longstanding financialization of the MEC, spelled the beginning of the end before Mandela even assumed power. In a story now well rehearsed, Mandela abandoned the ANC’s platform prior to the 1994 elections. In one of his first post-prison speeches in 1990, Mandela now notoriously proclaimed, “The nationalization of the mines, banks, and monopoly industries is the policy of the ANC and a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable.”²⁸

Less than two years later, however, Mandela traveled to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum. As he told his authorized biographer and long-time confidant Anthony Sampson, “They changed my views altogether. I came home to say, ‘Chaps, we have to choose. We either keep nationalization and get no investment, or we modify our own attitude and get investment.’” The ANC subsequently modified its own attitude — that much is certain — but investment failed to follow. Instead, the 1990s were marked by capital flight, financialization, and the repatriation of MEC returns to foreign holders.

Longtime SACP leader Jeremy Cronin, currently the ANC’s Deputy Minister of Public Works, insists, “They used their vast media and ideological power to browbeat us into believing that reconstruction and development would be best served by implementing a macroeconomic package that put a premium on fighting inflation, and on sweeping liberalization and de-regulation measures.”²⁹ For Cronin and other defenders of the ANC’s early-stage capitulation, acting in a neoliberal world imposes inherent limits on any national liberation project. But now more than twenty years after the passage of GEAR, the opening salvo in the ANC’s project of deregulation, we know that, far from being an aberration, obsessive inflation targeting was at the core of the ANC’s platform and remains so to this day. We concur

27 John S. Saul, *A Flawed Freedom: Rethinking Southern African Liberation* (London: Pluto, 2014).

28 Allister Sparks, *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003):176.

29 Jeremy Cronin, “Address to the SACTWU 12th National Congress,” August 22, 2013, <http://www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=4071>.

with Saul's reading of Fanon: this is a false road to decolonization and has only entrenched South Africa's dependence upon European, East Asian, and American capital abroad. It has utterly decimated organized labor, which has begun to fracture formally over the last couple of years. Finally, the failure to integrate institutions of higher education, coupled with austerity measures and outsourcing campaigns, has provided an opening for resistance but also facilitated vicious infighting that has fragmented campus movements and student-worker alliances across the country.

We are left then with a paradox: the level of struggle is as high as ever when analyzed in quantitative terms, but the organized Left does not appear to be benefiting. As Peter Alexander and his colleagues have demonstrated repeatedly, struggles over access to housing and municipal services remain at an all-time high, and campus struggles rival any student movements since the demise of apartheid.³⁰ Likewise, the post-Marikana wave of worker militancy brought us the longest strike in South African history, contagious wildcat strike waves, and the rise of NUMSA's United Front. By the same token, however, while these service delivery protests may be frequent, they do not attempt to coalesce into a sustained force capable of making demands on state power. The student movements have begun to unravel, with the age-old race-versus-class debates returning to center stage, private security forces ramping up repression have turned campuses into veritable war zones. The wildcats are now long over, and the UF seems an empty shell by comparison with more successful opposition movements such as the EFF. In short, the large number of protest actions has not translated into a sustained left power base.

Without the articulation of these multiple forces — workers, unionized and nonaligned; intellectuals on the campuses; and residents living at the point of reproduction (the so-called "communities") — into an organization capable of representing the particular interests of each, the Left will continue to fail to make any impact whatsoever. This was professedly the project of the UF, yet so far it has failed to build substantial inroads in township-based community organizations (with a few notable exceptions), lacks any real basis in shop stewards' networks, and is dominated by professional activists and NGO workers rather than the students, workers, and residents we would

30 Peter Alexander, Carin Runciman, and Trevor Ngwane, "South Africa's Rebellion of the Poor," paper for Third International Conference on Strikes and Social Conflicts, Barcelona, June 16–19, 2015.

imagine would populate its ranks. A flagship left organization is useless if it doesn't have an actual base. If this was a major problem with the Democratic Left Front, it is *the* problem of the UF.

The time is long past for putting any of our eggs in the ANC's basket. The notion that a progressive developmental bourgeoisie will suddenly awaken is ludicrous, given that this class fraction has lain dormant for nearly a quarter-century. Besides, despite Mandela's flaws, his spirit represented the last residue of decolonial fight left in the party. While his death in 2013 precipitated a wave of internal criticism within the party, the ANC remains largely untransformed and certainly unwilling to represent proletarian interests. Perhaps the ANC was already beyond the pale when Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa ordered police to massacre dozens of striking workers at Marikana. This was why Marikana represented such a turning point: not only was it horrific in terms of a democratic state murdering its own citizens, this was a case where an alleged liberation party that remains nominally aligned with a Communist Party, one whose deputy president was the founding secretary-general of the most important miners' union in the country's history, ordered the mass murder of workers in the name of national interest.

Marikana provides a way forward for rebuilding the working-class movement because it revealed just how much material power workers possess. This was a rare and public instance of organized workers sloughing off the chains of class collaboration and containment. The Marikana miners created a center of authority for a workers' movement bereft of the will to fight. Their unsanctioned struggle exposed the limitations of the trade-union bureaucracy, swapping substitutionism for the leadership of workers who could finally trust one another. In this respect, we might understand Marikana as a forebear of the NUMSA moment. From the mines to the shop floors, the way forward for workers is to build on the foundations of the spirit of Marikana. Above all, this means reenergizing NUMSA's political project of building a militant UF and a workers' party.

With the limits of its initial attempt now well established, workers themselves at the points of production *and* reproduction must drive this effort. The alternative — a top-down mobilization rooted in leaders' lack of confidence in workers' capacity to advance their own struggle — has limited the content of the UF's politics, thereby impeding its growth. A stray intellectual or two

representing the unions is hardly sufficient; indeed, without workers and community leaders at the forefront of the mobilization effort, the UF will remain stillborn.

We wish we could end on a more optimistic note, but the entrenched trajectory of crony capitalism, austerity measures, further deregulation, and financialization means that the country is likely to shed decent jobs over the coming decade. The rand is worth around half what it was at the time of the Marikana massacre; far from being a holdover of the apartheid era, informal labor and attendant survival strategies are growing rather than receding. The paradox of the Left is perplexing: the number of struggles increases monthly, seemingly correlated with popular immiseration. But these fragmented outbursts fail to coalesce into a unified force capable of challenging the dominance of financial capital and its partisan handmaidens. Above all, this is because the movement of struggle and the turmoil it engenders are devoid of a center of leadership. The NUMSA moment provided just this, much as the Marikana strike wave did before it, but both now appear to be waning in influence. Perhaps our optimism is misplaced and this is wishful thinking — the superimposition of a coherent, aesthetically pleasing organizational form on contending insurgent fractions that refuse to be disciplined. But short of harnessing collaborative power, facilitating collective self-organization, and promulgating a socialist vision, radical outbursts will remain high in number but amount to nothing of any enduring consequence.✧