

# MONDAY MONTHLY

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## REMEMBER MARIKANA

Two years after police gunned down 34 striking miners, the UCT community reflects on the massacre

PAGE 4&5

Photo by Greg Marinovich



**KHAYELITSHA COMMISSION:**  
A groundbreaking report on policing and democracy

PAGE 12



**TB DAVIE LECTURE:**  
Is our freedom shrinking? Max du Preez debates the point

PAGE 3



**DEALING WITH DISADVANTAGE:**  
What can be done about growing inequality?

PAGE 7



**STEVE BIKO LECTURE:**  
The world looks to South Africa for moral leadership

PAGE 8





Photo by Paul Weinberg



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Photo by Michael Hammond



Photo by Michael Hammond



UCT students relighting the torch of academic freedom at the 34th TB Davie Memorial Lecture, in 1994.

# IS OUR FREEDOM SHRINKING?

Story by Helen Swingler

Twenty years after democracy, there are alarming signs that our freedom is shrinking, a situation that must be reversed before South Africa “lands on the slippery slope to authoritarianism”, said veteran journalist Max du Preez.

Du Preez was delivering the 49th TB Davie Memorial Lecture in the Jameson Hall on 28 August, some 22 years after UCT awarded him an honorary Master of Social Science degree.

“Right now we need more freedom, more openness, more academic freedom and more tolerance,” said the author and activist, of what he sees as the steady corrosion of the country’s democratic values.

But the core of his lecture, titled *The Mediocrity of Intellectual Discourse: Misrepresenting South Africa in the academy and beyond*, was a call to academia.

In the transition to democracy, the role of the public intellectual has dissipated, impoverishing public discourse – and our understanding of society, he said. As such, academics had neglected that “other leg” of academic freedom and responsibility.

Another example is the Oscar Pistorius trial, for which law professors, lecturers and senior counsel went to “epic” lengths to explain what was happening in court and what it meant.

“Thanks to them, millions of people following the trial on television or radio know a lot more about the legal system and the courts’ functioning.”

A third example was the Marikana shooting.

“We all saw the TV footage and heard statements from the police, mine managers and trade unions. And then an academic from the University of Johannesburg took his team to Marikana and pieced together what really happened. It was a very different story from what the police and the mine management had told us. That was proper public engagement.”

The same could be done for education, social, health, and economic issues, creating a better-informed public.

“If you don’t live up to your responsibility, you run the risk of forfeiting some of your freedom ... society demands that universities produce public intellectuals who participate actively and visibly in public life.”

### Openness might not last

While democracy has provided free speech, the Constitution, and the public protector, there is currently a “disconnect” between these functions and the reality on the ground – warning signs that “this openness might not last”, Du Preez cautioned.

This has been reflected in attacks against artists and the press, the “brutal control” of the public broadcaster, “blatant manipulation” of the criminal justice system, and police brutality.

“The war of words between the ANC and the EFF [in Parliament] is a reminder of that. We have the

bizarre situation that the once-powerful liberation movement, with about 62% of the vote in the election, threatened strong-arm tactics – even riot police – inside our highest legislative body, after a simple verbal [EFF] interjection in Parliament.

“And we have the leader of a new party, after contesting a free and fair election in May, threatening to form a military wing and go underground. We seem to have forgotten about the 10 000 people who died in the conflict leading up to 1994.

“What we need is a greater stimulation of ... thinking and a decent exchange of ideas across the different sectors of society. As a society, we have not rid ourselves of the fears and prejudices and that lack of knowledge of ‘the other’.”

### Who will carry the baton?

With the exception of talk radio, the mainstream media have failed this challenge, Du Preez said.

“The public broadcaster could have and should have played a leading role in forming and stimulating public opinion, but it has become a tragicomedy ... Our investigative reporting is still good, but now seldom goes beyond unearthing scandal and corruption.”

The country’s highly regarded academics must step into the breach.

“Enter the public intellectual, that animal trained and equipped to think, to expand knowledge and national conversations ... to bring new insights to controversies. But where are our young bright sparks who can take the baton from Njabulo Ndebele and Frederik van Zyl Slabbert? Why could we never produce another Steve Biko?”

### The black intellectual

Part of that answer lies in the country’s poor education legacy,

said Du Preez, who in addition to his writing is also a senior research fellow at the University of Fort Hare, a former incubator of African leaders.

“Why hasn’t Fort Hare become a jewel in the crown of the liberated country? What does it say about us that Fort Hare, Venda and Transkei universities are not listed in the country’s top 10 universities? What does it say about us as a society that we knowingly perpetuate inequality by providing excellent schools for the white and black middle-class kids, but totally neglect education in townships?”

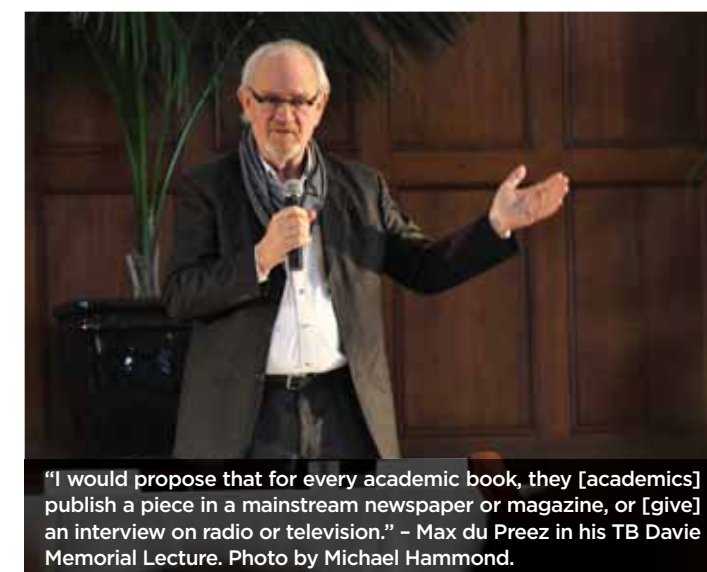
“Too often when we think we are talking about the public intellectual, we only talk about politics. I’ve been heartened by the

courage of a few black journalists – who initially had to fight for their space, because white intellectuals had been dominating it for so long.

“I have a lot of sympathy for young black academics asserting themselves and sometimes feeling the pangs of insecurity. Arrogance, smugness and ignorance can be an extremely alienating environment.

“They now have that space, that foothold, and will hopefully grow in confidence ... society desperately needs their voices.”

Du Preez ended with a challenge: “I urge you and the students at this university: for the sake of our freedom, fight the good fight for an open society and a deepening of our democracy.”



“I would propose that for every academic book, they [academics] publish a piece in a mainstream newspaper or magazine, or [give] an interview on radio or television.” – Max du Preez in his TB Davie Memorial Lecture. Photo by Michael Hammond.

The TB Davie Memorial Lecture is held in honour of Thomas Benjamin Davie, UCT vice-chancellor from 1948 to 1955. Davie was a fearless defender of the principles of academic freedom and university autonomy. He defined academic freedom as the university’s right to determine who shall be taught, who shall teach, what shall be taught and how it should be taught, without regard to any criterion except academic merit.

# NEWS IN PICTURES

## 1 Ties that bind

Sisters reconnect after 20 years of separation as a result of the apartheid removals, in Riemvasmaak in the Northern Cape. This image, taken in 1995 by Paul Weinberg – senior curator of UCT’s visual archive, and a lecturer in documentary arts – is on display this September at the London School of Economics and Political Science, as part of an exhibition of “treasures” belonging to UCT and the universities of Fort Hare and the Witwatersrand, *South Africa’s Democracy: Mandelas cherished ideal*. Exhibits include photographs by David Goldblatt, Jillian Edelstein, George Hallett and Paul Weinberg; documents relating to the political trials of South African freedom fighters; and a papier-mâché guitar made by Govan Mbeki, on which he composed pieces and sang to fellow prisoners on Robben Island.

## 2 Terminal conditions

Amanda Meke (left) as Delia and Bongive Nakani as Melibea in the UCT Opera School/Cape Town Opera collaboration of Rossini’s *Il Viaggio a Reims* (written to celebrate the coronation of King Charles X at Reims in 1825). In this updated production, fourteen fashion-loving B-list celebrities find themselves stranded in a chic airport hotel lobby – and the boredom of waiting in transit drives them to extremes. A story of flirtation, obsession and panic, this Baxter Theatre production was directed by Matthew Wild, conducted by Kamal Khan, and featured scenery and costume designs by Leopold Senekal. Known for creating opera stars for the world’s stages, the Opera School is also one of the university’s funding priorities, to which alumni and the broader UCT community can contribute directly.

## 3 Visualising big data

Dr Christopher Barnett, Dr Jahanshah Ashkani and Professor Kevin Naidoo experimenting with the new video wall in the Scientific Computing Research Unit (SCRU) visualisation studio. An essential facility within the Informatics and Visualisation Lab, the studio provides an environment in which researchers can visually analyse large chemical and genomic data sets or immerse themselves in high-resolution computer models that may not be able to be shown on conventional laboratory video displays. The first such facility of this kind at UCT, the studio will predominantly be used for the research being undertaken at the SCRU, but will also be made available to academic staff in the UCT community in the near future, to perform visual analytics of their data or analyse graphical models too large for conventional video displays.

## 4 Pedal-powered smoothie

Sello Mohlaphuli from Campus Protection Services gets his legs spinning and his heart pumping on a portable, pedal-powered smoothie-maker at UCT’s annual wellness fair. Hosted by the Human Resources Department under the leadership of Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo, the annual fair is in aid of improving staff well-being and lifestyle. Available at no charge over the three-day period were neck- and shoulder-massages, eye-screening, blood-pressure tests, and screening for cholesterol, diabetes, HIV and psychological distress – as well as a range of lucky-draw prizes.





## REMEMBER MARIKANA

Stories by Yusuf Omar  
Photos by Greg Marinovich

On 16 August 2012, police gunned down 34 striking miners at Lonmin's mine at Marikana near Rustenburg. While the Farlam Commission continues to debate who is culpable for the massacre, the UCT Marikana Forum led remembrances of the bloody incident. Hosted by the university's Centre for African Studies, commemorations included a screening of the documentary *Miners Shot Down*, a panel discussion on the causes of the massacre and its implications for UCT with Martin Legassick and Andrew Nash, and the inaugural Marikana Memorial Lecture, delivered by Professor Sakhela Buhlungu, dean of the Faculty of Humanities.

## ERUPTION OF A DORMANT VOLCANO

Two years after police mowed down striking mineworkers at Lonmin's Marikana mine near Rustenburg, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu – a widely cited scholar of South Africa's labour movements and mining industry – reflected on a system that marginalises the poorest workers at nearly every turn.

Police opened fire with live ammunition on striking mineworkers on 16 August 2012, killing 34 of the workers and injuring 78, in the denouement of a week of strikes that had already seen the loss of 10 lives (six miners, two police officers and two security guards). The massacre ignited furious debate about who was to blame; and at the time of writing, the Farlam Commission continues to dig for answers.

While Marikana shocked many, Buhlungu suggests that this kind of incident has loomed like a dormant volcano over the labour landscape of post-apartheid South Africa for ages.

"Could it be that we never saw this coming? It's now two years since the brutal killings of Marikana at Lonmin's mine near Rustenburg; and of course, as we are gathered here to remember that gruesome episode in the second decade of post-apartheid South Africa, it's important that we pause and think about [and] make sense of it. What does it mean?"

In his lecture, titled *Marikana 2012: Ghosts of the past and bitter fruits of liberation*, Buhlungu addressed the incident from four different perspectives: as someone who grew up with families of mineworkers (his own father worked in the mines); as an activist with a strong background in the trade unions; as a scholar; and as a citizen of South Africa.

### Mines, miners and miners' families

Growing up in a village where "every second household" had someone who left to work on the mines, Buhlungu recalled the impact of the mines on daily life being pervasive.

"[The mines] dictated the daily rhythm of life ... down to the spacing of the children," he said, explaining that most siblings were born about three years apart and had birthdays around September and October – aligned to times when migrant workers returned home to their families.

The mines' hold on his community felt "normal". Similarly typical was for mineworkers to return home disabled, or "as corpses". When a breadwinner was lost, schoolboys often abandoned the classroom to take his place.

Buhlungu stressed that mineworkers in South Africa die on the job regularly – they're either murdered or fall victim to the job's inherent dangers. Marikana simply compressed this hazardous lifestyle into one big, gruesome incident.

“The massacre, for me, presents the clearest depiction of the relations of state, capital and labour.”

Lungisile Ntsebeza

"Think of the impact [of this massacre] on the children who now have to leave school," said Buhlungu.

### History repeated

Some compared Marikana to the Soweto uprising of 1976 and the Sharpeville massacre of 1961, but Buhlungu digs further back in South Africa's history.

"For me, the comparison is [with] the white mineworkers' strike in 1922."

That year, said Buhlungu, the Smuts government "sided with capital". Mine owners had reneged on agreements with miners, and teamed with Smuts to "squeeze the mineworkers".

"The workers took up arms, and they were mowed down using the air force."

"For me, that's the comparison. Your Smuts of today is Jacob Zuma, and of course your capital of today is Cyril Ramaphosa and others at Lonmin."

### Cheap labour: here to stay?

But for Buhlungu, Marikana also represents something deeper and more systemic.

“South Africans are very polite towards their politicians in general, even when they mess up, even when they steal. And I say to students: you know what? There's a need for people to show – and I'm using this in a tongue-in-cheek way – contempt. We need to show contempt and we need to speak up, because this window where we can sit and talk, it may not be here forever.”

Sakhela Buhlungu

"The overarching story of Marikana – and this is the story we're not talking about – is that the cheap labour system has remained intact in this country. Completely intact. If you look at pay scales – it doesn't matter what industry – those of us who sit at the higher end of it all benefit from it, because there's just no logic that explains the gap.

"So, yes, it's to protect profits, but also because R12 500 [the salary that workers at Marikana were demanding] begins to question, head-on, the cheap labour system. And that's one debate that we really need to have – how do we get out of the cycle of the cheap labour system in this country?"

The massacre at Marikana, Buhlungu lamented, showed that we have a government saying "that the cheap labour system is going nowhere".

### Sold out

Cyril Ramaphosa co-founded the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in the 1980s, a decade during which it oversaw the then-biggest strike in South Africa's history. In 2012, said Buhlungu, Ramaphosa and NUM were another two festering wounds that made a massacre like the one at Marikana almost "inevitable".

NUM was growing increasingly aloof towards its constituency: its leaders were pocketing huge salaries (paid by the mining companies), while the workers they were meant to represent struggled to survive, said Buhlungu.

Lonmin's rock drillers at the Marikana mine only resorted to an independent and unprotected strike when NUM dithered after being asked to take workers' concerns to the mine's management. This alienation – of workers from their unions – can be seen throughout the present organised labour movement in South Africa, which Buhlungu described as "rotten to the core".

Ramaphosa, too, represents an underlying fissure in the post-apartheid structure that South Africa seems reluctant to talk about – with devastating consequences: that of the sell-out.

Ramaphosa, the former firebrand union leader – who in 2012 owned shares in Lonmin, and who continues to rise in the ranks of ruling African National Congress (ANC) – embodies the idea of struggle heroes who seem to have sacrificed the popular struggle for personal gain, said the dean.

"Marikana is, for me, quintessentially [about] the sell-out. Cyril Ramaphosa is part of that sell-out. It's not as simple as [saying] the nationalist movement sells out and the socialist movement doesn't sell out ... The sell-out is when the militarised section of the police force is used to mow people down in broad daylight."

### Dehumanising language

Buhlungu condemned some of the discourse around Marikana, including the idea that it was a 'tragedy' – only the "very, very cynical in our society" could still call it a tragedy, and not a massacre – as well as the inordinate number of column inches devoted to chatter about the miners using *multi* to protect themselves in the lead-up to the shooting.

"Some academics have questioned the *multi* thing. Good gracious me. Politicians use *multi* every day. It's part of the idiom in those communities – but when it's mineworkers, it's 'out there.'"

This mirrored a global trend to dehumanise workers and oppressed people, in an attempt to make their plight more palatable to an urban middle-class audience.

Mineworkers in South Africa bore the major brunt of this, and the intersection of class prejudices and abject working and living conditions renders them still the "most despised" workers in the country, said Buhlungu.

"In a way, I'm saying that there's a need for us to understand mineworkers as normal human beings."

### Deadly brew

This complex concoction of factors could have resulted in a Marikana-esque bloodbath earlier in 2012, said Buhlungu. Miners went on strike at Impala Platinum's Rustenburg plant in February that year, and Buhlungu said the clashes between police and the miners – riddled with rubber bullets – could easily have deteriorated into something deadlier.

Buhlungu reserved a word for scholars of the labour and mining fields.

"I've always been struck by and concerned about how little we as researchers – not only in terms of mining, but also of the labour movement – understand about that world: how we skim the surface, how we come up with this caricature of 'the worker.'"

Professor Dunbar Moodie, author of the seminal work *Going for Gold: Men, Mines and Migration*, was a scholar who knew the mining world deeply, said Buhlungu. The dean urged fellow researchers to aspire to a similarly deep understanding instead of settling for quick, "dirty" articles that are published in prestigious international journals largely because of their "novelty factor".

In the end, Buhlungu suggests, a first step to healing the sick system that produced the massacre at Marikana would be to re-read the work of Frantz Fanon, who wrote extensively about colonisation, decolonisation and the struggle for a just post-liberation society.

## MARIKANA: WHY? WHAT NOW?



Lonmin employees gather at the base of a hill called Wonderkop at Marikana, outside Rustenburg in the North West Province of South Africa, 15 August 2012. The miners were calling for the minimum wage to be raised from R4 000 a month to R12 500.

The deaths of 44 people near the Lonmin mine in Marikana in 2012, including 34 miners killed by police on 16 August, reflect a worldwide increase in state repression, symptomatic of global capitalism being in crisis. This was the argument of Martin Legassick, emeritus professor of history at the University of the Western Cape, at a panel discussion held at UCT on 19 August 2014.

"Let's not forget that Marikana was not isolated," Legassick said. "There have been other deaths at police hands in South Africa ... Around the world, we've seen an increase in violence and in barbarity."

Violence in Gaza, where hundreds of Palestinian civilians have been killed by the Israeli military and police fatally shooting black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in August – and the mass protests that followed – bore witness to this, said Legassick.

"All these things reflect an increase in state repression around the world."

Why was this so? Legassick offers an analysis.

"Because capitalism is in crisis. Because capitalism in 2008 went through what's called a financial crisis when banks went bankrupt. The root of that is the accumulation crisis – the inability of capitalists to make profit – and, as a result, they are clamping down on resistance and on protest, and trying to repress it."

When capitalism is in crisis, said Legassick, it loads the problems onto workers.

But there's another side to the protests, according to Legassick: they've gone global, with people in Gaza texting people in Ferguson to show solidarity with their cause.

Regarding Marikana, we should see the dead miners as martyrs and not victims, said Legassick.

"They didn't die in vain. Marikana was a turning point in the history of the country," he continued.

A few days after the killings, Legassick was in Marikana, and attended a meeting at which the names of the slain miners were read out.

"I remember at this meeting, this mass meeting, being hugely impressed by the determination with which those who were speaking and those in the audience who responded were determined to continue the fight for this minimum wage of R12 500," Legassick relates. "And it was that determination, despite the massacre, which sparked the strike wave, which sparked the persistence of struggle that led to partial victory this year in that struggle for R12 500, and which shook up the whole of South Africa."

Associate Professor Andrew Nash, of UCT's Department of Political Studies, shared the panel with Legassick.

Tasked with unpacking what Marikana means for UCT, Nash's answer was cryptic: "Everything. And nothing."

Nash argued that UCT management sometimes seemed reluctant to engage with such issues, suggesting that they don't have much to do with the university. "At the same time, it means everything, in the sense that [it shows us] just as the Soweto revolts of 1976 showed us, in a dramatic form ... two possible futures.

"It seems to me that Marikana is one of those turning points, a fork in the road to which no-one can turn a

blind eye: no-one can say, 'Oh, we're simply going down the middle.'"

Much of Marikana's significance lies in the subsequent "cover-up", said Nash.

"A few days after the massacre, President [Jacob] Zuma sent a team of ministers to Marikana to see whether they could get the survivors simply to forgive and forget, to agree that this had been an unfortunate accident. The Defence Minister [at the time] Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, spoke of how she said to the workers, 'Can you not find it in your hearts to give us forgiveness?'"

"This was the closest the government has come to taking responsibility for its actions."

This theme of taking responsibility was central to Nash's address.

"Once it became clear that they were not going to get forgiveness on the cheap – that this was not going to be forgotten – instead, the government and its allies (in a sense, all the ruling classes in South Africa) turned to trivialising the victims of Marikana. So the SACP [South African Communist Party] constantly stressed – as if *that* was the scandal of Marikana – the use of *multi* by the miners."

Nash described the depiction of the dead miners as "criminals and savages".

These discourses, along with the use of 'tragedy' as opposed to 'massacre', shifted blame not only away from the government, but onto the miners themselves – as evidenced by the surviving miners being arrested after the massacre, on charges of public violence that were later 'upgraded' to murder.

"One thing that neoliberalism cannot tolerate is a clear explanation of what they're actually doing. What they're doing is increasing economic growth, they're bringing about investment flows and so on, and it's just too bad that workers have to be laid off and take pay cuts and so on in order to improve the investment flows."

"But once you put the dots together and show what neoliberalism is doing ... it's burning the furniture to keep the house warm."

What do we do about it?

"We [the university] have a part to play, at least in remembering Marikana, but also in understanding there is an image of a future which applies closer to home. Within the university, there's a task," says Nash.

"And one can start almost anywhere ... In pursuing that prospect of a society that acknowledges the suffering of the past, acknowledges the shame of the past also, and looks forward to building upon it towards a different kind of future."

“It seems to me that Marikana is one of those turning points, a fork in the road, to which no-one can turn a blind eye; no-one can say, 'Oh, we're simply going down the middle.'”

Andrew Nash





It was telling that the front cover of *Mayibuye*, the African National Congress (ANC) journal from 1991 to 1998, triumphantly proclaimed 'free at last', but not 'equal at last' after Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first democratically elected president in 1994, said Jeremy Cronin, national Deputy Minister of Public Works.

This was because liberty was a state, while equality was a process, and political liberty from apartheid did not mean that everybody was finally equal, Cronin argued.

Cronin was speaking at a special session on inequality in South Africa on 15 August, as part of a three-day conference on social equality organised by UCT's Department of Philosophy. The conference featured a range of speakers exploring philosophical approaches to equality and inequality – all taking advantage of the fact that the philosophical debate about equality has become increasingly nuanced, concrete and empirically informed in recent years, organisers explained.

#### Call it what you may

*Mayibuye's* editorial, Cronin reported, was not quite sure what to call South Africa's democratic moment – was it 'liberation', 'real change', or 'national democratic revolution'?

"Call it what you may," resolved *Mayibuye*.

"What the editorial of *Mayibuye* should have said was that this democratic breakthrough and the inauguration of the new president had brought elements of freedom and elements of greater equality, if you wanted to use those words," said Cronin, who lectured in philosophy at UCT in the 1970s. "[It should have said that the democratic moment gave] more capacity to South Africans, but a long road to travel. It doesn't do that. It celebrates an event, a moment, and hypes it up terribly, and then drops it off the cliff, as it were."

This failure to articulate what South Africa's democratic moment meant would prove symptomatic of long-term problems, Cronin said.

#### Growth and growing criticism

Cronin's address, titled *The Bigger the Cake? Jobs, growth and equality*, challenged some fundamental post-apartheid discourses – from the notion of justice as redistribution only to the post-1996 policy that privileged economic growth over redistribution.

"The notion of how to develop is very often linked to the notion of growth," he said.

South Africa's National Development Plan 2012 (NDP) called for the "pie" to be grown so that there would be more to share, for instance. Growth was measured by a country's gross domestic product (GDP), but Cronin pointed to growing criticism of GDP's usefulness as a measure of development.

For one, money spent on gambling and education were weighted the same.

Cronin used Working for Water, a programme run by the Department of Public Works, as another case in point.

"People on small stipends of R71 a day are trained and then work to clear invasive aliens, and the figure quoted is something like 'R400 billion worth of water in a water-scarce country has been saved'. 'Two million hectares of grazing territory – 71% – has been rescued from irreparable damage,' and so on.

"That doesn't count. What *does* count in the GDP is the R71 paid to the participants."

So the battle of what growth [is], what we value and why we value it, is a big one, Cronin said.

"Unfortunately, part of the discourse in South Africa, in trying to move from 1994 to better social justice and equality and so forth, is compromised by the notion that we must just grow the pie, and the measurement of a growing pie is GDP. Hugely problematic."

#### The escalator of redistribution

As for limiting the idea of justice to redistribution, Cronin cautioned that this would condemn South Africa's "productive economy" to continue working within the

exploitative structure imposed by apartheid. The apartheid economy and the creation of Bantustans were largely a response to a crisis in the mining industry, argued Cronin, with the former homelands seen as reserves of cheap labour to service the economy.

"The productive system of South Africa locks us into the reproduction of poverty, inequality and racial injustice of all kinds. The spatial organisation of the productive system in South Africa, for instance, has these features.

"So what the redistribution state of which I'm part does is ... it's been redistributing quite significantly since 1994: three million free houses, basically for the poorest of the poor (not all of them, because the queue is endless), 60 million social grants.

"So there's redistribution, but the redistribution is going into a spatial reality and other realities that reproduce all of these problems. So it's a bit like the escalator is coming down, and we're sprinting up, but the escalator just keeps grinding along and reproducing the problems."

The people who received these three million houses and social grants are largely still confined to "the same distant locations, same faraway places, dormitory townships", as under apartheid.

#### Other "re-words" – like reconciliation

Another "re-word" that Cronin challenged was "reconciliation", as exemplified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"[I]t implies that we will reconcile, rather than calling for a construction of conciliation," says Cronin.

"All of these 're-words' tend to pull us in a direction which I think has hampered an understanding of what we're trying to do, and [of] how to achieve social justice."

Time cut short the conclusion of Cronin's address, but delegates also applied their minds to a range of other talks, including keynotes by Professor Charles W Mills of Northwestern University, who

spoke on racial equality; Professor Miranda Fricker (University of Sheffield) on epistemic inequality; and Professor Jonathan Wolff (University College London) on social equality and relative equality. "It would be naive to think that philosophy on its own could do anything to alleviate inequality," said

the conference organisers. "But it does have a role to play. Philosophy can articulate the various different forms of social inequality. By arguing for a particular conception of justice or the good life, it can show what is wrong with some or all of these forms of inequality."

“Reconciliation implies that we will reconcile, rather than calling for a construction of conciliation. All of these 're-words' tend to pull us in a direction which I think has hampered an understanding of what we're trying to do, and [of] how to achieve social justice.”

Jeremy Cronin



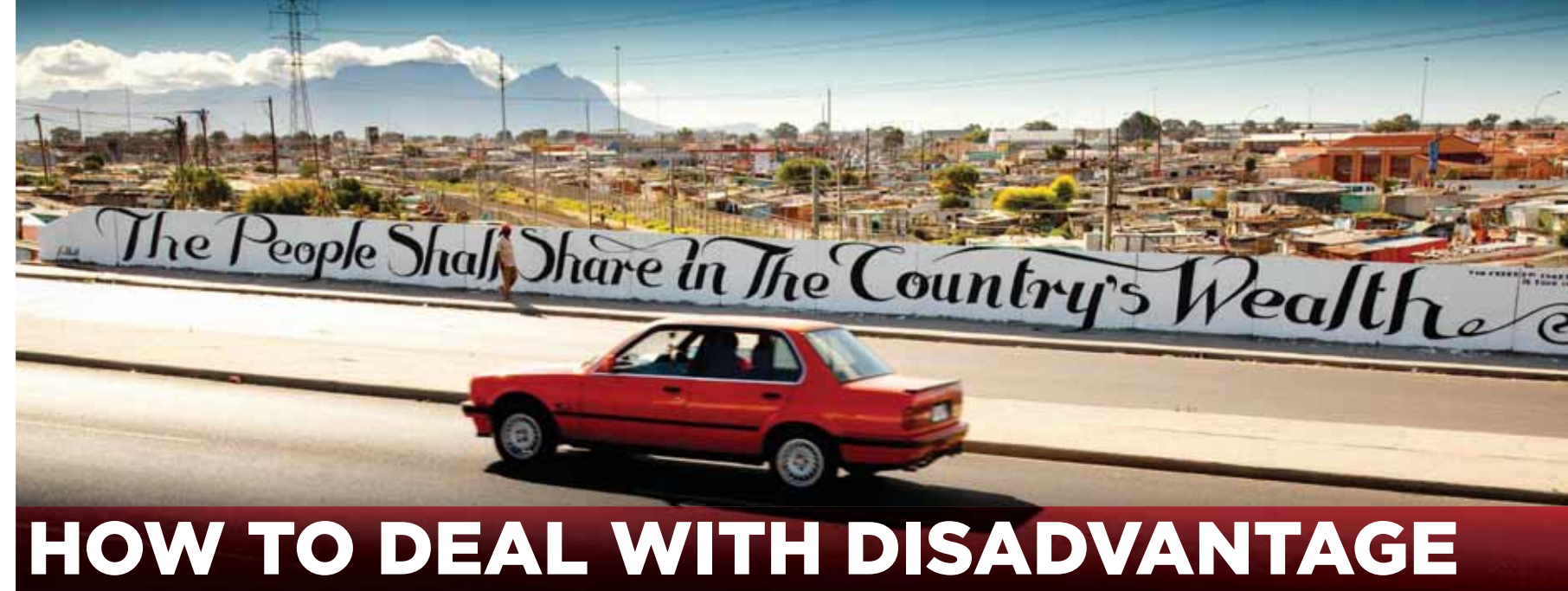
Image courtesy of the University of Cape Town Libraries' Special Collections

## LET THEM EAT CAKE?

Story by Yusuf Omar  
Photo by Je'nine May

How far have we come since 1994? Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin challenged national narratives of change, growth, redistribution and reconciliation at the Department of Philosophy's Social Equality Conference in August.

The people shall share in the country's wealth is part of Faith47's 2010 Freedom Charter series, as part of which she brought to life sentences from the iconic charter, highlighting the phrases that are still pressing within the context of modern-day urban South Africa.



## HOW TO DEAL WITH DISADVANTAGE

Story by Yusuf Omar  
Photo by Rowan Pybus

What does it mean to be disadvantaged – especially in the South African context? How, as a society, do we begin to address its manifold and intertwined causes and symptoms? Philosopher Professor Jonathan Wolff, former MP Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge and Dr Mamphela Ramphele tackle the definitions of disadvantage, its impact, and potential redress.

What used to be the connection between cold nights in London and heroin abuse?

On particularly chilly nights on the Thames, shelters for the homeless would open their doors. But patrons' dogs were not allowed in, so many decided to remain with their pets in the cold, and turned to higher doses of narcotics to help them make it through the night.

With this detail, gleaned during research for the award-winning biography *Stuart: A life backwards* – a story about how a young man ends up homeless – Jonathan Wolff began illustrating his argument that disadvantage is by nature plural and impossible to pin down to two or three 'key' markers, and that disadvantages tend to cluster.

The symptoms often intermingle: a poor person living in shabby accommodation might have little access to good education, limiting their chances in the job market, and might have an antagonistic relationship with the criminal justice system.

"Something else that's often ignored is [what it is] to be lonely, to be on your own," he added.

Wolff, dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and professor of philosophy at University College London, was speaking at a seminar and panel discussion on 18 August, hosted jointly by UCT's Poverty and Inequality Initiative and the Department of Philosophy.

He opened the debate by exploring what it means to be disadvantaged, and how it should be understood in the South African context. Wolff stressed that analysing opportunity only at the level of the individual was folly – one needs to keep the bigger structure in mind.

"Whatever your talents, a hostile social structure can limit your opportunities. If we make structural changes we can benefit very many people, and they may not even realise they've been helped."

The converse applies, too: a structural change can harm many people already worse off than others, he cautioned.

#### The Holy Grail of social policy

Wolff identified social structure as one of three core determinants of opportunity, alongside personal abilities (which can change) and external assets such as wealth and family support.

Being born on the shallow side of these pools often condemns people to a perpetual uphill battle that many lose, said Wolff.

"Disadvantage tends to cluster together. Those people who are badly off in one respect will very often be badly off in several other respects."

"For example, it's well known that disability [can lead to] a life of lower income. What's less well known – and these are figures from the UK – is that, if you start off with a lower income, you're more likely to become disabled. So the causation actually goes in both directions."

This kind of "corrosive disadvantage" can also be seen in downward spirals from drug abuse or imprisonment, which lead to people losing jobs, becoming unemployed, and finally being left at society's margins.

Then there were "fertile advantages", which Wolff called the "Holy Grail of social policy".

Think of education, good social and support networks, and soft skills as advantages that, if harnessed correctly, could propel the individual even higher up the social ladder.

#### What can be done?

"Employment, obviously." But Wolff alluded to a prejudice about what constitutes 'real' work these days.

"Real" work has to produce a material object," said Wolff, explaining a dominant perception. This, despite South Africa moving towards service-based industry.

Not that South Africa's service industry is where employment should necessarily be emphasised, says Wolff. The bulk of service providers are minibus taxi-drivers, private security guards ("there are more private security guards in South Africa than policemen"), and domestic workers.

"The wrong sort," said Wolff.

#### The (almost) invisible cost

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, a panellist who responded to Wolff after the seminar, noted Wolff's comment about domestic work being an example of the "wrong sort" of service.

The former MP acknowledged that South African women face limited employment opportunities, and that domestic service is often the only way to put bread on the table. But that is not necessarily 'case closed'.

"Should we not be changing the whole structure of society so that women have better choices?" she asked.

Prostitution was another case in point, Madlala-Routledge said, citing how people often argue that some women choose to enter the sex trade, and how some renowned global organisations are calling for prostitution to be decriminalised, ostensibly to slow the spread of HIV.

"But [these] organisations ignore the power imbalance between 'buyer' and 'seller,'" she argued.

Madlala-Routledge works for Embrace Dignity, a non-profit organisation advocating legal reform to end prostitution and sex trafficking, and support for women seeking exit.

She pointed to an almost invisible patriarchy that ignores women's needs when macro-economic decisions are made.

"When, say, environmental impact studies are undertaken when planning a new mine, what note is taken of its impact on women?"

The impact of the ongoing migrant labour system and the location of truck stops were also not taken into account, Madlala-Routledge said.

#### Build an inclusive playing field

Dr Mamphela Ramphele, former UCT vice-chancellor, also responded to Wolff, calling for a critique of our understanding of disadvantage.

"Disadvantage is often the result of unfair advantage," she argued. It was created by society, in particular by the "extractive" nature of the economy, which took a lot from the country's resources, both natural and human, but gave little back.

The 2012 Marikana massacre showed that the exploitative migrant labour system was still operating, 20 years into democracy, she said.

"The interests of those we are extracting from are not taken into account," said Ramphele. She called instead for an "inclusive" system that allowed all to participate in the economy, and all to benefit from its flourishing.

It barely matters whether the broader system is "capitalist or socialist", she argued. The institutions within that system, however, are what would really improve – or continue to disrupt – people's lives. Transforming the private sector's behaviour would be one place to start, as would stamping out state corruption.

#### Do what's possible now

An audience member questioned whether institutions themselves are the problem, or if the people running these institutions are simply exploiting them.

Wolff conceded that it is possible that the people are the problem, but pointed out that institutions could also corrupt people. Individual agency matters: but agency always operates within a structure that allows it to affect society for better or worse.

Wolff also acknowledged another point from the floor: that South Africa is the victim of an inherently unequal global economic structure. But he cautioned that we cannot wait for it to "reform itself". "We have to make progress in the face of the global economic structure as it is."



# “THE WORLD LOOKS TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR MORAL LEADERSHIP”

Story by Abigail Calata  
Photo by Michael Hammond

Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered the 15th Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture to a packed Jameson Hall on 11 November. In her view, South Africa has done much to promote human rights, but should not rest on its laurels.

South Africa has a “principled voice”, originating from its fight against apartheid, which influences the United Nations (UN) human rights agenda. It should therefore do more to uphold these fundamental rights.

This was the message from Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, when she delivered the 15th Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture to a packed Jameson Hall on 11 September 2014. In her speech, titled *Advancing human rights in South Africa and the world*, she reflected on her eight-year tenure as the United Nations’ highest official concerned with human rights.

She also served as a judge in the International Criminal Court, the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the KwaZulu-Natal High Court.

Pillay retired from her position at the UN a mere eleven days before delivering the lecture, in which she added her “voice to the worldwide acclaim for [Biko] and his courageous contribution to the liberation of South Africa”. She praised Biko for his part in dismantling apartheid and informing human rights norms and standards.

In a tribute to the struggle icon, UCT Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price explained in his welcome address that the lecture series not only commemorates Biko’s life and death, “[it] celebrates his bravery and leadership as an activist; and perhaps even more importantly, the substance of his thoughts as one of South Africa’s foremost political leaders and thinkers. For there have been many heroes and martyrs, but Steve Biko stands out because of the leadership he provided in the realm of ideas.”

## Voice for the voiceless

Pillay expressed concern that human rights are still not universally respected or “viewed as indivisible and interrelated”. She argued that this leaves the most vulnerable people – namely women, children, minorities and migrants – open to abuse.

“I am troubled by more and more countries passing restrictive laws curtailing the activities of NGOs. Today NGOs are facing unprecedented challenges, including these restrictive laws, reprisals and lack of funding. Human rights defenders, journalists and aid

workers come under attack and face imprisonment because of their work. These are disturbing signs of regression,” Pillay warned.

Describing her former office as the “voice of the voiceless”, she asserted that such organisations and individuals “inject the lifeblood into human rights: they are the promoters of change, the people who ring the alarm bell about abuse”.

## Human rights challenges

Her greatest challenge as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was to convince governments “to implement the legal framework they themselves set, and deliver on the undertakings they made to protect and promote the human rights of all”. During her time at the UN she travelled to 79 different countries to bring this about.

The ANC was founded on human rights and democratic principles. Pillay recalled that shortly after the ruling party came to power in 1994, a number of human rights treaties were ratified by the South African government. Furthermore, resolutions supported by South Africa included the one against

Israeli occupation of Palestine; another for economic, social and cultural rights that aim to eliminate poverty; and the first UN resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity. She pointed out that it is unfortunate that South Africa has not yet ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, one of two major human rights treaties.

“South Africa can do more and should not lend support to decisions that conflict with our constitutional values. This includes recent resolutions in the Human Rights Council on the right to protest, reprisals against human rights defenders, and protection of the family, to name a few.

“South Africa has sided with those who invoke the so-called non-interference in the internal affairs of a country to block scrutiny of serious human rights violations ... These positions recall the apartheid government’s response to criticism of its policy of institutionalisation of race. People – not only in Africa, but all over the world – look to South Africa for moral leadership,” she concluded.

## What part can the individual play?

Pillay urged her audience to emulate Biko when confronted with human rights violations. “The action that each of us can and should take against human rights violations wherever they occur is as Biko himself urged: not to be a spectator but a participant.

“Just as individuals around the world cared about anti-apartheid activists and human rights defenders, like Biko, and demanded that their governments support our struggle for freedom, so we should watch out for the safety and freedom of human rights defenders, journalists and NGOs who are facing arrests, detention and even death for their critical work,” she said.

She advised that it was imperative that South Africans pay attention to what is happening in the international arena, because “decisions are made in [their] name”. She encouraged students to concern themselves with what is happening in the rest of the world and to seek out information about human rights violations. She added that education is key in preventing such violations.



Urban farmer (and winner of the 2014 Female Entrepreneur Subsistence Award) Nomonde Kweza from Teenagers Not Curses – a programme established in Gugulethu to deal with the social and family problems that teenagers face, whether rape, abortion, substance abuse, suicide or bullying. Through the Knowledge Co-op, Dr Beatrice Conradie, Masechaba Makhura and Salome Kinyeki of the Department of Economics were paired with Teenagers Not Curses in a case study of the role of urban farmers in Gugulethu. For more details of available and completed Knowledge Co-op projects, go to [www.knowledgeco-op.uct.ac.za](http://www.knowledgeco-op.uct.ac.za).

# THE CASE AGAINST PRIVATISING KNOWLEDGE

Story by Yusuf Omar  
Photo by Michael Hammond

What is the role of universities in the ‘knowledge economy’? Is the way we produce knowledge both meaningful and contextually appropriate? What is the role of participatory research and local indigenous practices? Dr Rajesh Tandon tackled these key questions in his Vice-Chancellor’s Open Lecture.

“If universities get their knowledge-production function right in the contemporary context, they will be able to improve learning in their teaching, and that will be their most important contribution in terms of service,” said Dr Rajesh Tandon in his Vice-Chancellor’s Open Lecture at UCT on 26 August.

“For me,” Tandon said, “engaged scholarship is about co-construction of knowledge that is relevant to society’s challenges of our time, such as the four strategic initiatives that the vice-chancellor has presented to all of us at UCT.

“It is this pillar, I would like to propose, on which engaged scholarship rests.”

Tandon’s lecture, titled *Knowledge Democracy: Reclaiming voice for all*, proposed that society should interrogate the idea of the knowledge economy in a way that allows for democratic and equitable production, dissemination, and use of knowledge.

In his introduction, Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price had already alluded to the concept of knowledge the democracy saying: “We talk about knowledge economy, but is there something parallel to that which might be called knowledge democracy?”

## The contemporary context

Setting the scene, Tandon said that we live in an era of contradictions. In the midst of “incredible prosperity”, we continue to have “structurally embedded poverty”, with more than one billion people surviving on less than US\$1.25 a day.

There is plenty of food to go around, he added, yet 40% of children are malnourished.

Was the modern economy’s gospel doing as much good as it did harm? “We have been fed a concept of improvement based largely on growth,” he said. Typically, this growth is measured by a country’s annual gross domestic product (GDP), which is the sum of a country’s financial transactions over a year. Is this too narrow a definition?

China, noted Tandon, had recently caused many Western economies to shift uncomfortably as they watched the People’s Republic consistently swell its GDP over the past few decades.

“At the same time, we forget that you can’t walk in Beijing without a mask any more: the sunshine has disappeared from the skies in Beijing, it’s so polluted,” he said.

## The only race in town?

Growth’s dominance of the economics hierarchy suggests that the ‘TINA’ factor is at play, Tandon said. TINA stands for “there is no alternative”, a slogan former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher used to persuade nations of the folly of any system that wasn’t based on free-market capitalism.

Tandon was bemused that certain societies have uncritically accepted the World Bank’s 1999 declaration that only knowledge economies were advanced economies.

“It’s amazing how this race [to a knowledge economy] is something we have all bought into, as if this is the only race in town.”

It would be prudent, he suggested, to assess who gains and who loses from this knowledge economy.

## Privatised knowledge benefits few

Knowledge industries have workers and elites, Tandon argued. The rise of patents as a gold standard for universities and businesses has rendered knowledge a commodity.

“So you have propertied classes and property-less masses, when it comes to knowledge as a commodity. It creates the divide of the haves and the have-nots, and therefore it creates control over knowledge, in ways that [create] not just power ... but also wealth,” Tandon said.

Inequitable access to higher education, plus the digital divide, has exacerbated the problem of unequal access to the “means of production and dissemination of knowledge”, he argued.

Then there is language hegemony, which Tandon referred to as “Victorious English”. While learning English gives one access to global knowledge, he fears that this sometimes occurs at the expense of ideas best expressed in other languages.

“As languages die, world views die, because languages reflect a world view.”

## Towards a knowledge democracy

Tandon argued that diverse knowledge should be sought beyond academic boundaries – such as indigenous and experiential knowledge that may not have been published in peer-reviewed journals.

“Outside academe, disciplines don’t exist. Problems and challenges exist.”

## Rajesh Tandon

“Critical thinking is a natural human phenomenon,” he said, adding that opinions that are not ‘certified’ by postgraduate degrees are often unfairly dismissed, with damaging consequences.

Tandon also drew a distinction between “ownership” and “trusteeships” of resources. Pre-colonisation, indigenous people used natural resources as a source of nourishment, but now the commons are seen as a source of income to be exploited. It is the same with knowledge.

“In my view, knowledge commons as a public good is a source of nourishment for all humanity and if it is allowed to be captured by a few for the purpose of exploitation ... then we create this problem.”

## Where do universities come in?

“UNESCO, in its 2009 higher education conference, made – in my view – a somewhat provocative declaration when it said the function of universities is to produce ethical citizens of the future,” said Tandon.

This meant seeing research not only through the lens of the traditional disciplines, but also through the lens of the society that would ultimately benefit from new knowledge. Farmers in India had benefited from an arrangement made with a local university whereby they

sought answers to daily challenges, and master’s students tackled these questions as part of their degrees.

“Outside academe, disciplines don’t exist. Problems and challenges exist,” he said.

Pointing to UCT’s Knowledge Co-op, Tandon said this is another example demonstrating that the needs of society and academia are not irreconcilable.

Historically, and notably in the colonial period that began a few hundred years ago, universities were geared towards producing and maintaining elites, said Tandon.

“Surely in the 21st century we can have universities that play a role in producing active, informed and ethical citizens, as UNESCO’s call suggests. I want to submit to you that this will happen if we use the perspective of knowledge democracy as the fulcrum of our engaged scholarship.”

Dr Rajesh Tandon is the UNESCO Chair in Community Health Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education, and is president of Participatory Research in Asia.



“The action that each of us can and should take against human rights violations wherever they occur is as Biko himself urged: not to be a spectator but a participant.”

Navi Pillay



# BOOKSHELF

Recent releases by UCT staff, students and the university's extended community

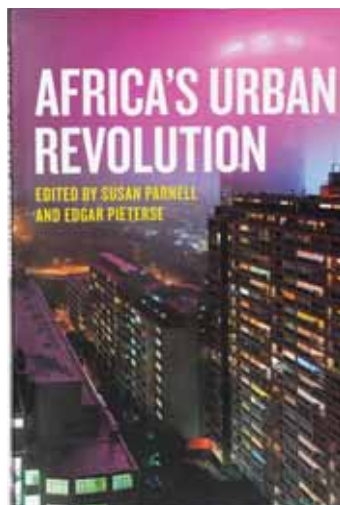
### Africa's Urban Revolution

Edited by Susan Parnell and Edgar Pieterse

The facts of Africa's rapid urbanisation are startling. By 2030, African cities will have grown by more than 350 million people, and over half the continent's population will be urban. Yet in the minds of policymakers, scholars and much of the general public, Africa remains a quintessentially rural place. This lack of awareness and rapid analysis means it is difficult to make a policy case for a more overtly urban agenda. As a result, there is insufficient urgency directed at responding to the challenges and opportunities associated with the world's last major wave of urbanisation. Drawing on the expertise of scholars and practitioners associated with the interdisciplinary research and teaching programme at the African Centre for Cities, and utilising a diverse array of case studies, *Africa's Urban Revolution* provides a comprehensive insight into the key issues – demographic, cultural, political, technical, environmental and economic – surrounding African urbanisation.



Merle Sowman, Sue Parnell, Sophie Oldfield, Rachel Wynberg and Maria Hauck at the launch of their books in the Environmental & Geographical Sciences building in August.

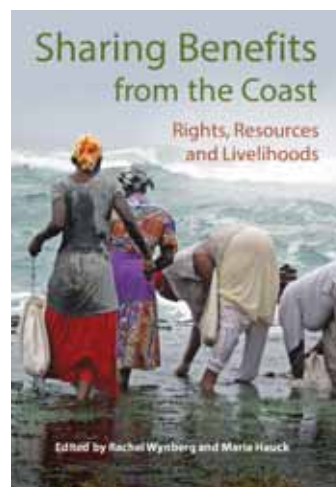


microbial. From these beginnings Africa's fossil record shows how life became increasingly complex and diversified into an array of forms. (Chinsamy-Turan's first book for a younger audience, *Famous Dinosaurs of Africa*, is now in its second edition.)

### HIV/AIDS and Psychiatry

Edited by John Joska, Dan Stein and Igor Grant

Infection with HIV is frequently associated with a range of psychiatric disorders. These disorders may place individuals at high risk of acquiring HIV, or they may be the result of HIV infection itself. The psycho-social context also plays a key role. Stigma, denial, access to care, and marginalisation complicate continuous care. Unique or 'special' populations such as injection drug users, men who have sex with men and women are vulnerable to developing a psychiatric disorder along with HIV. This book attempts to draw together the neurobiology of HIV, the overlap of psychiatric disorder, and the related psychosocial context. The epidemiology, pathogenesis, clinical features and treatment of HIV-associated brain disorders are reviewed expertly. Each review is followed by a series of brief commentaries which add different insights to these aspects of the problem. Successful management of the epidemic requires control of HIV disease, attention to the probability of a psychiatric disorder being present, and focus on the unique psychosocial context of every individual – a big but important challenge. The book is aimed at clinicians of all kinds who work with people living with HIV.



### Sharing Benefits from the Coast

Edited by Rachel Wynberg and Maria Hauck

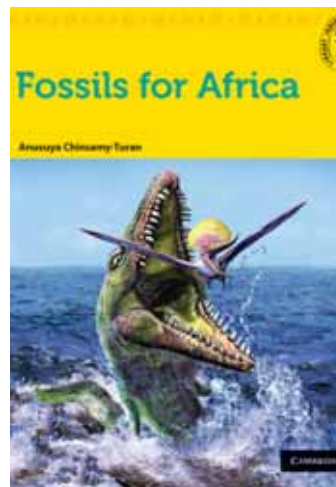
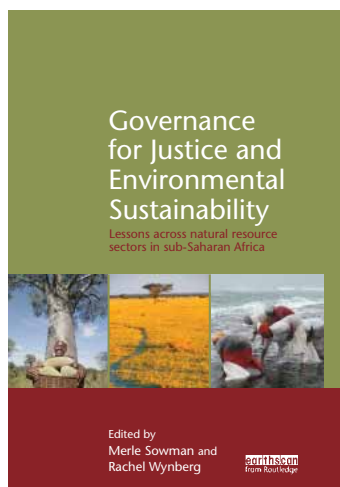
Coastal resources are vital for communities in developing countries, many of whose coastal-dwellers live in severe poverty. These resources also hold significant value for a number of different sectors of the economy, such as mining, fisheries, forestry and tourism, which supply expanding global consumer markets. Although these activities provide opportunities for economic and income growth, global patterns indicate growing levels of economic inequality between the custodians of coastal resources and those who exploit them, as well as an increase in absolute levels of poverty. Benefit-sharing has emerged as a popular term to describe interventions to redress inequalities and thus alleviate poverty. Drawing from empirical research in coastal communities across South Africa and Mozambique, this book provides cutting-edge analyses of and new conceptual approaches to these issues. It aims to enhance an understanding of why benefits are distributed in the way they are, the main blockages preventing greater equity, and strategies for more equitable benefit-sharing.



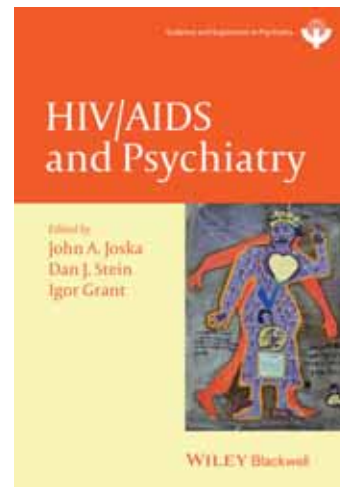
### Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South

Edited by Susan Parnell and Sophie Oldfield

The renaissance in urban theory draws directly from a fresh focus on the neglected realities of cities beyond the West, and embraces the Global South as the epicentre of urbanism. This handbook engages the complex ways in which cities of the Global South and the Global North are rapidly shifting. It works towards a geographical realignment in urban studies, bringing into conversation a wide array of cities across the Global South. With



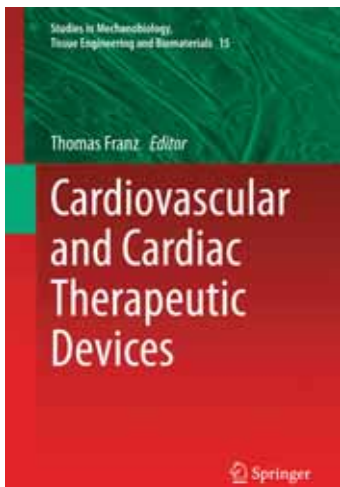
interdisciplinary contributions from a range of leading international experts, it profiles an emergent and geographically diverse body of work, and reflects on critical urbanism, the macro- and micro-scale forces that shape cities (including ideological, demographic and technological shifts), and constantly changing global and regional economic dynamics. Working with southern reference points, the chapters present themes in urban politics, identity and environment, engaging the 21st century city through a 'southern urban' lens to stimulate scholarly, professional and activist engagements with the city.



### Governance for Justice and Environmental Sustainability

Edited by Merle Sowman and Rachel Wynberg

Understanding the governance of complex social-ecological systems is vital in a world faced with rapid



### Cardiovascular and Cardiac Therapeutic Devices

Edited by Thomas Franz

Volume 15 in Springer's *Studies in Mechanobiology: Tissue Engineering and Biomaterials* series, this publication is a comprehensive look at the latest research into therapeutic devices for cardiovascular (ie vascular and valvular) and cardiac diseases. Aspects of vascular therapies covered relate to stent grafts for aortic aneurysms, endovascular stents for percutaneous arterial interventions, and small- to medium-diameter tissue engineered vascular grafts – one of the greatest persisting challenges in cardiovascular therapies. Contributions on valvular therapies focus on prosthetic heart valves with flexible polymeric leaflets and patient-specific simulation for open-heart and percutaneous implantation of aortic biological heart valves, including the challenges of prosthesis design. The section on cardiac diseases provides contributions on advances in therapies for myocardial infarction and infarct-induced heart failure, and on the in vivo biomechanics of implantable cardiac pacemakers.

different scales, and the reality and challenge of plural legal systems in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

### Fossils for Africa

Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan

*Fossils for Africa* explores Africa's rich fossil heritage and shows the importance of dinosaur fossils in unravelling the history of life on Earth. Published as part of Cambridge's *Indigenous Knowledge Library* series, this book is intended as a resource for senior phase and Further Education and Training (FET) learners and teachers. Written by authorities in the fields, the series reveals the richness of African indigenous knowledge across a range of topics. While Africa is known as the cradle of humankind, in terms of geological time the emergence of humans is a relatively recent event. In Africa there's evidence of life dating back some 3.8 billion years, when life on Earth was still single-celled and

# CLASSIFIEDS

## EVENTS

**Philosophy Society Meeting:** Tuesday 23 September @ 20h00, Speaker: Dr Dylan Futter (Philosophy, WITS). Title: Courage in the Face of Death. Venue: Lecture Theatre 1E, Leslie Social Science Building

**The Centre for Conflict Resolution invites you** to a public dialogue on "Combating Xenophobia in South Africa" on 23 September from 17h30 to 19h00 at the Centre for the Book. The three speakers are Mr Patrick Male Kawuma, Mr Tawanda Manyika and Mr Mohamed Aden Osman. Entrance is free. For more information or to RSVP contact public-dialogues@ccr.org.za or visit [www.ccr.org.za](http://www.ccr.org.za)

**The Centre for Conflict Resolution** is launching Justice Edwin Cameron's Book "Justice – A Personal Account" with the author as speaker, Judge Dennis Davis as chair and Justice Lee Bozalek as discussant, on 7 October from 17h30 to 19h00 at Spin Street Restaurant. Entrance is free. For more information or to RSVP contact public-dialogues@ccr.org.za or visit [www.ccr.org.za](http://www.ccr.org.za)

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**Rondebosch:** SELF CATERING GARDEN FLAT TO LET: Short term rentals. Double bedroom, bathroom, lounge/kitchenette. Serviced twice weekly. Pretty garden Call Alex 0722420266 / 0216893966

**SABBATICAL HOME NEEDED:** An academic couple on sabbatical leave at UCT seek housing in Cape Town for the period of January to June 2015. Please respond to [faranak@illinois.edu](mailto:faranak@illinois.edu) and [kensalo@illinois.edu](mailto:kensalo@illinois.edu) For local reference at UCT contact their colleague professor Merle Sowman <[merle.sowman@uct.ac.za](mailto:merle.sowman@uct.ac.za)>

**Kalk Bay:** Lovely fully-furnished 4-bedroom house available in Kalk Bay with fantastic views over the Bay. Small garden and pool. Available immediately until 12 December, with the possibility of further rental from 10 January 2015. R15,000 p.m. Please contact [rachel.wynberg@uct.ac.za](mailto:rachel.wynberg@uct.ac.za), ext. 2865

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**Rondebosch:** Quiet Art deco block in residential Rondebosch area has two first floor flats available, both with off street parking. One flat is completely stylishly renovated (R6000 per month) and the other is recently upgraded, cosy and sunny (R5500 per month). Both are suitable for single professionals or a couple. Call Roland 0735039308

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## OPINION

# POLICING AND DEMOCRACY IN KHAYELITSHA

John Cartwright, Guy Lamb and Julie Berg  
Safety and Violence Initiative and the  
Centre of Criminology

The Khayelitsha Commission of Inquiry recently handed over its groundbreaking report on policing and community-police relations in one of South Africa's largest and fastest-growing townships. What are its findings and implications?

In late August 2014, Justice Kate O'Regan and Advocate Vusumzi Pikoli officially handed over the voluminous final report of the Commission of Inquiry into policing and community-police relations in Khayelitsha to senior SAPS officials and the political leadership of the Western Cape province. The venue for the handover was Lookout Hill community hall, which was packed to the rafters with Khayelitsha residents, community activists and journalists.

There was a sense of excitement and celebration in the air, as this was a report from the first post-apartheid commission of inquiry of its kind, which not only has important implications for policing in South Africa, but also for the manner in which provincial governments could hold national government to account. In addition to this, the job of the commission had teetered on the edge of oblivion before the work had even begun. Intense party-political skirmishes and legal wrangling over its lawfulness besieged it for almost a year. The Minister of Police even took the matter to the Constitutional Court in an attempt to invalidate the commission.

Despite these challenges, the commission undertook its work fastidiously and professionally in order to produce its report. It heard the evidence of 87 witnesses; received statements from 170 complainants; called on 40 experts; undertook site visits; and scrutinised a bewildering array of documents from various sources. It drew on the report of the SAPS's own task team, together with standing orders, protocols and national instructions promulgated and issued by SAPS, which were used at times by the commission as a benchmark against which to consider the actual record of the three police stations under review.

## A thorough investigation

While making the important point that "SAPS cannot on its own prevent crime" (page 326), the commission undertook an exceptionally thorough investigation of what SAPS – or any police service in a democracy – can

and should be expected to do in its daily operations. In other words, what does it, would it and should it mean for SAPS to provide a thoroughly professional service, specifically in the challenging conditions of Khayelitsha?

It is noteworthy that the report, while mercilessly illuminating muddled or self-serving arguments, and at times expressing dismay at what is revealed, does not descend to personal blaming or political point-scoring. It observes deficiencies, but looks for solutions, also noting that "there are members of SAPS who perform their duties daily in difficult circumstances in Khayelitsha" (page 393).

The commission found that the greater Khayelitsha area has some of the highest rates of violent crime in South Africa, including murder and aggravated robbery. However, alarmingly, most of the police stations in Khayelitsha have the lowest police-to-population ratio in the province. This allocation of police resources was based on the SAPS national Theoretical Human Resources Requirement (THRR), which is currently not in the public domain. The commission suggested that there may be a systemic bias within the THRR against poorer areas; hence the policing problems experienced by the residents of Khayelitsha may not be unique.

In the context of under-resourced police stations, the commission indicated that the SAPS in Khayelitsha did not generally appear to conduct regular patrols of informal neighbourhoods; answer telephones reliably; or conduct adequate detective work, with only an estimated 1% of cases resulting in conviction. With regard to this last point, the commission highlighted the untenable position of most detectives in the area, each of whom is responsible for close to 200 dockets at any given time. The testimony of Brigadier Dladla from SAPS was used to emphasise this point: "You know in the movies ... you see a team of detectives descending [on] a crime scene attending to a docket; but here in Khayelitsha, you have a team of dockets descending on a detective." (page 434)

The commission also pointed to

serious and persistent management problems and inefficiencies within SAPS, with there being no strategic management plan to target these inefficiencies. Of great concern, given the high levels of violence against women and children in Khayelitsha, was that the commission deemed the responsible unit (the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit) to be dysfunctional.

The commission also determined that there had been a breakdown in relations between Khayelitsha residents and the SAPS members in the area, for a variety of reasons. These included a widespread perception that the police were disrespectful to members of the public, were generally unresponsive to calls for assistance, and undertook shoddy detective work; that the community policing forums were ineffective; and that complaints against SAPS members rarely resulted in disciplinary action. Nonetheless, the commission concluded that good relations had the potential to be restored, but required concerted efforts from all parties.

## The report's significance

This report is one of the most important documents on policing and public safety in South Africa to have been published in the course of the last twenty years. It is also a landmark in the development of our constitutional democracy, and of direct interest to any nation-state that is grappling with the challenges of balancing unity and diversity, or centralism and regionalism.

Moreover, both through explicit argument and through the force of its own example, the report makes a brilliant case for the importance of independent oversight of the operations of state agencies:

"The Constitution does not provide oversight of state agencies to make difficulties for those state agencies. Rather it provides oversight in order to strengthen and improve state agencies by identifying problems and failings within the state agencies that have not been noticed or addressed." (page 434)

The aim of such an approach

is "to warn those in government of the need for steps to be taken to address the problem before all is lost" (page 55). While the particular material for this enquiry is the operations of three police stations in Khayelitsha and their relations with the community, the point is widely applicable and extremely well-timed – one thinks, for example, of school textbooks, pharmaceutical supplies to clinics, teachers' capacity to teach mathematics, and the maintenance of national roads.

## Recommendations for SAPS

The commission makes a series of recommendations that constitute a clearly articulated and attainable set of benchmarks for professional policing, which – if taken seriously – will transform the experience of safety and security of the people of Khayelitsha. Below are a select number of summarised recommendations from the report:

- Each police station should adopt a community policing commitment to facilitate improved community-SAPS relations.
- An oversight and monitoring team should be instituted to ensure that inefficiencies are sufficiently dealt with.
- A strategic review of detective services in Khayelitsha should be undertaken, and backlog teams should be allocated to Khayelitsha police stations.
- The Theoretical Human Resources Requirement should be reviewed, and then made publicly available.
- A memorandum of understanding should be created between the Western Cape Government and SAPS to facilitate the former's constitutional mandate to monitor police conduct and oversee police efficiency and effectiveness.

Many of the recommendations are relatively simple and commonsensical matters, familiar to any person who has had dealings with the police. However, these observations are given massive weight by the comprehensive, systematic and transparent way in which the detailed evidence has been collated and analysed, and the conclusions have been drawn.

## A 'whole of society' solution

However, SAPS cannot do it alone, and should not be expected to. One of the many strengths of this report is the way in which it has identified the particular and unique role of SAPS and what can and cannot reasonably be expected of it, while pointing to the essential complementary roles of civil society and the different levels of the state.

The commission lays down a sober and constructive challenge to SAPS, the national government, the Western Cape Government (who established the commission, and to whom the report is addressed), the City of Cape Town, the people of Khayelitsha, and all those who have at heart the aims and values that were articulated at the birth of our democracy.

The commission's report is a welcome and timely assertion of the enduring strength of those values, and an exemplary prescription of how those values may be embodied in practice. The main challenge that now lies ahead is the practical implementation of the recommendations; but also, keeping the momentum and spirit of the commission alive, using this opportunity to contemplate the state of democratic policing in a national context.

As a starting point, the Centre of Criminology and the Safety and Violence Initiative will be hosting a panel discussion towards the end of the year involving the commission members, in order to provide an opportunity to reflect on the commission, its findings and its recommendations.

“This report is one of the most important documents on policing and public safety in South Africa to have been published in the course of the last twenty years.”



Light changing over Enkanini, on the far south-east side of Khayelitsha. Photo by David Harrison.