

# PATHWAYS

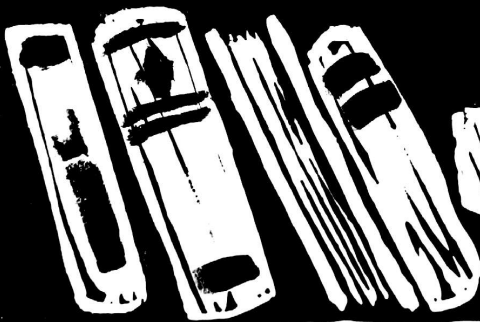
TO FREE  
EDUCATION



VOLUME III



THIRD  
WORLD  
EDUCATION  
AND



SOCIAL  
WELFARE  
PROGRAMMES

# On process

The origin of an idea is almost impossible to trace however the sparks that help concretise, or allow ideas to emerge in clearer form, are often easier to trace. In the case of Pathways to Free Education the work of this popular education collective emerges out of the challenges in the mass student-worker action in South Africa in 2015 in particular. After a conversation with anti-apartheid activist and committed journalist Zubeida Jaffer where she reflected on the role of publishing and “writing where you are” in the struggle, the idea of a more targeted effort to engage in the processes of pamphleteering to tease out, open discussion and debate around issues facing the movement at a time began to flower across many independent contexts across the country.

Ours is merely a drop in the ocean of the work being conducted across the city, region, country and globe amplifying the urgent needs to address the roots of oppression and in particular the devastating impacts of colonialism.

This booklet has been put together explicitly for the purposes of facilitating discussions, reading groups and the hosting of independent popular education spaces.

The content has in some sense been collaboratively developed but due to many factors, not the least of which being time, energy and resources, much of the work that has been done here without as much communication across chapters and pieces as we might have liked. The intent, as seen in a number of the chapters, has been to raise discussion within the booklet itself to undermine the very notion that because “it” is written or published “it” is valuable or “true” knowledge. Instead this booklet makes no claim nor aspiration to providing “true” knowledge as such but opens up conversations, contests terrain and demonstrates that by “writing where you are” and intentionally building on community we are able to look beyond what each of us can see individually.

This booklet contains several prepared critical essays, many interviews and a timeline piece. This aspect of the process came about fairly organically.

Open calls to our networks were made to talk on a variety of issues arising out of Pathways to Free Education Volume 2: Strategy and Tactics. From the open calls contributors then offered to participate in their own ways. Where it was difficult to solicit a planned essay that would address specific points we used interviews to approach topic areas. Interviews were conducted via email in some cases or through recorded interviews done simply using cellphone devices and transcribing conversations. The hope here, by demonstrating the use of different types of sources, and by using self publishing (both online and in paper form) we are adding our voice to growing calls to encourage more writing and sharing of ideas. This volume, as an experiment, has also been designed using no maximum word limit to encourage the authors to use freely the space they need to discuss an idea or concept.

Finally “on process” is a crucial theme to consider when going through this volume. Imperfect as it may be, the different, sometimes divergent Pathways, presented here hopefully will go some way to “spark”, encourage or at the very least raise interesting points for your journey and the collective work to end all exploitative structural systems and the everyday practices they produce.

This publication is not applicable for the soliciting of any financial profit and can at most be sold by third parties for no more than the cost of paper upon which it is printed.

# On printmaking as Protest

## Leila Khan

**Greetings Leila Khan, I just want to start off by appreciating the artworks you contributed to this volume 3! How long have you been using this form of print artwork, and what inspired you to get involved with it?**

I started making linocuts about two years ago, but became interested in this form of printmaking in high school Art, after learning about the Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre and other spaces for black artists that produced these kinds of prints during apartheid. Rorke's Drift's fine art section trained artists such as John Muafangejo, Azaria Mbatha, and Dan Rakgoathe, who produced really beautiful linocut prints during the 60s, 70s and 80s. Linocutting is a relatively inexpensive medium in that not many tools and materials are required, and is therefore a much easier form of art to experiment with. The ability to produce multiple prints from one linocut means that it is a more cost-effective way for artists to create art to sell, and is an ideal medium for resistance art in the form of posters and pamphlets. This accessible nature of linocut printmaking, which is specifically known as being a 'democratic' medium, is what I find most appealing about this technique. Beyond this, I am also drawn to how aesthetically striking linocuts are, which again shows that this medium lends itself to forms of protest art.

**Can you explain the process that you went through to make these prints?**

I usually start by creating a plan of what I want the print to look like by sketching and putting together different source images to figure out composition. The final image then needs to be transferred onto a linoleum

block in reverse, so that when the you flip the linocut over to create your print, you do not create a mirror-image (this is especially important where a print contains words). There are multiple methods of transferring, and I am still experimenting to find what works best with the supplies I have.

For some of these prints, I 'transferred' the image by drawing onto the linoleum directly with a marker. With others, I printed the design onto baking paper using a laser printer. The ink sits on top of the paper and is easily transferred by placing the image against the linoleum and scratching on the back of the paper using something sharp. Once the image is on the linoleum, I cut out the parts of the image that I do not want to be printed (i.e. the white parts) using lino or woodcutting tools of various sizes. Again, this requires thinking in reverse. When this is done, the ink is rolled onto the linoleum block and can be printed onto paper multiple times. From there, I try to choose the print where the ink has transferred most evenly, and then use a paintbrush to touch up any gaps.

**Are there any particular artists who influence your work style and if so, what about them do you like or appreciate?**

In trying to discover what my printing style is, I like to look through the work of those Rorke's Drift artists I mentioned earlier. I appreciate that they each have very strong styles of their own, which shows the versatility of this medium. I find Muafangejo's work particularly impactful because of how he used prints as way to make sense of his political context - specifically apartheid in South Africa and the liberation struggle in Namibia. He also incorporated text alongside his images, further allowing him to use prints and posters as a form of story-telling. I also look to the work of art collectives such as the Medu Art Ensemble and the Community Arts Project (CAP), specifically their posters, and try to imitate some of the aesthetics and symbolism of that era of resistance art.

**Many people in this volume and before have highlighted the importance of art in its many forms in activism and radical politics more generally. What do you think about the role of artists in both popular education and movement building?**

I think generally, artists who offer political and social commentary through their work engage in a form of knowledge production and knowledge sharing, particularly when this occurs outside of formal academic and gallery spaces. This work also plays a role in archiving these struggles, by creating a historical documentation of resistance. Political posters have been critical in mobilising masses around protest action, and in making the work done by social movements visible to an international audience. Medu, which operated from Gaborone, is a good example of the critical role creative resistance can play within broader social movement and education work.

Medu 'cultural workers' (the term 'artist' was rejected because it was seen to reflect elitism and individualism, and so that members would see themselves as part of a cultural community working within a context of struggle) took a collaborative approach to the production of art, involving all its members as well as the surrounding community in discussions around the imagery used to translate political messages. Medu also engaged with South African cultural groups doing similar work across the border, such as CAP. So both their process of creating art, as well as the art itself, played a large role in popular education and developing political consciousness. I think these histories show the importance of social movements cultivating artists within their own ranks where possible (as opposed to relying on outside artists and designers who are less connected to the movement's ideals) who can do the work of decolonising how information is shared and who can push how movements operate within communities in creative directions.

*The original prints produced by Leila in this issue are available for purchase. She also offers printing lessons. She can be contacted at [leilakhan.lk@gmail.com](mailto:leilakhan.lk@gmail.com).*



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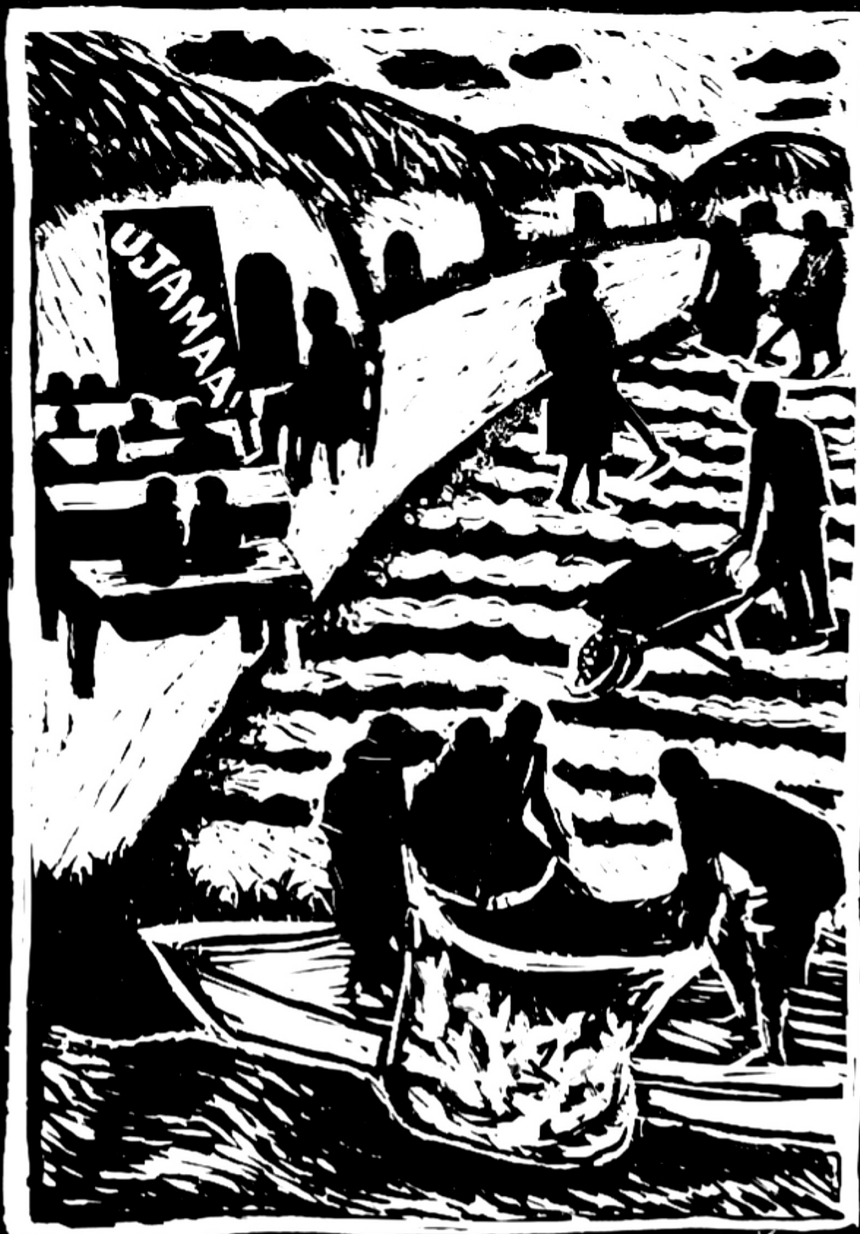
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# TANZANIA



# Azimio la Elimu - A Reflection on Education for Self Reliance

Noosim Naimasiah

The end of last November found us huddled around warm talk in a backroom somewhere on the toes of the Ngong Hills. Thoughts on pan-Africanism, our various political struggles, disenchantment with the university, and redemption songs defined the conversation amidst food and big laughter. After a gruesome year, exhausted from fighting the leviathan that is University Bureaucracy and living through the death of a dream at the Makerere Institute for Social Research (some of us), we were in urgent need of political solace. And so we had planned, with friends and comrades from Ghana, Burundi, Ethiopia, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda to have a meeting in Ngong (Kenya) to think through, as many others have before us, what is to be done? Our planning was located in the debris of our political devastation. We refused to seek for donor funding. We refused to make it an academics meeting. We refused to have a structured programme. Instead, we contributed kwa hali na mali (we gave what we had). Our space and talk was intimate. We were workers, technical professionals, academics, artists, political activists, social movement

stalwarts. We were also Pan-Africanists, Black, Marxists, Feminists, Queer, Africanists, Socialists, in ways that were cohesive and antagonistic at the same time, deliberating on what we have and what we are. Thinking together on what should be done. We spoke about our personal brutal encounters with the system. Our fatigue with endless critique that did not produce direct action towards emancipatory politics. And even our elitist encounters with alternative politics.

Because it was the beginning of a very long journey together, we realized in the course of our debates that no grand political strategy was to be immediately forged. And so after four days, of fierce debate, debilitating laughter, deep introspection, eating and dancing, we decided. That we would go back home and reinvigorate or indeed create a forum that would pursue these deliberations with serious political intent. The urgency was real, and we did just that.

A number of us in Kenya, all involved in community organizing and social movements decided that a practical way to begin these engagements would be by reflecting on Azimio La Arusha (Arusha Declaration) 50 years on. We met weekly and planned around the anniversary dates (the last week of January). We read through it, in Kiswahili and English, and planned to facilitate discussions on self-reliance and socialism in the context of our political history and current reality in Kenya. We read the Sessional Paper no. 10 on African Socialism (1965), which contrary to its title was highly conservative and upheld colonial class privilege. We also read Milton Obote's Common Man's Charter (1968) that seemed more invested in the creation of a strong state that would undermine ethnic kingdoms. The reflections took place in the course of one week in three different spaces. The first was Mathare Social Justice Center, a community organization located in one of the biggest informal settlements in Kenya whose main campaign is against extrajudicial executions. The community meetings held every Saturday formed the basis of the reflections. The second one was at Pawa 254, an NGO located in an uptown location near the city center that holds, amongst other things, a session on Tuesdays dubbed 'off the record'

discussing matters of social and national concern. The third was held in Ziwani, also another informal settlement in Nairobi at Single Mothers Association, an organization concerned with the social well being of young single mothers, facilitating their education, vocational training, health and child care. Ziwani is incidentally the place where Julius Kambarage Nyerere lived when he was in Kenya in the late 1950's. After the session, we visited his former residence, which neighboured Tom Mboya's and Milton Obote's houses. As it happens, these three men wrote the blueprints (Tom Mboya wrote Sessional Paper No. 10 for Kenya, Milton Obote wrote the Common Man's Charter, and Julius Nyerere wrote Azimio la Arusha) that would become fundamental to the political and economic systems of post independence east Africa. Even though we reflected on Azimio la Arusha and also Education for Self Reliance with reference to the Kenyan history and context, the person of Nyerere loomed large, punctuating every other debate and proposition.

Kambarage Nyerere, more fondly known as Mwalimu (the teacher) was born in colonial Tanganyika, and had continued to teach there after his undergraduate degree at Makerere and Masters at Edinburgh University in Scotland. He was consequently well acquainted with the oppressive dynamics of colonial education as both a teacher and a student. After becoming the president of Tanganyika, and forging a union government with Zanzibar to form Tanzania in 1964, he authored the Azimio La Arusha and a month later, a paper on Education for Self Reliance. His intention for post-independent Tanzania went much further than protest actions that characterize deeply necessary decolonization efforts. He declared the purpose of education to be for self-reliance. Self-reliance, not in the lifestyle anarchist sort of way that is premised on the supremacy of the individual, or even the idea of democracy as the tyranny of the majority, but rather self-reliance within the political ideology of Ujamaa, articulated in the nationalist frame of the modern state. Nyerere's treatise on Education for Self Reliance was written one year after

the University College of Dar es Salaam students went on strike against a national service law requiring graduates to work for national service for six months and contribute forty percent of their salary to the state for eighteen months. All three hundred students were expelled from the university by a furious Nyerere who was enraged by their class privilege, which was clearly a product of the education system. A system that created an exploiting class premised on inequality and accumulation. Education for Self Reliance was in many respects, a response to this kind of education, an education for exploitation, individualism and inequality.

At the time of writing *Education for Self Reliance*, Nyerere felt that decolonization in education had not interrogated the fundamental basis for its existence; its capitalist and colonial underpinnings which determined its purpose. For certain, the quest for high salaries in the modern sector of the economy seemed to him to be one of the main reasons why education was pursued, premised, as illustrated by the striking students, on inequality and individualism. It is true that Tanzania had endeavored to systematically decolonize education. To start with, the racial and religious distinctions within education were abolished immediately and complete integration of the separate racial and religious systems was established. There had also been a great expansion of schools everywhere including the tertiary levels that had only been intended for the white minority students. Decolonizing the curriculum by making the curriculum content Tanzanian and African rather than imperial had been vigorously implemented in history, the arts, but most especially in language. The civics classes were used as a way to present the organization and aims of the newly independent Tanzanian State.

Even then, in Nyerere's reflections on education, he acknowledged that these changes though crucial, only served as modifications of the inherited colonial system. For education remained elitist; inducing a sense of inferiority and superiority as well as a fundamentally class structured society. Education was inflationary; with one level of education intended

mainly to lead to another where the price of acquiring education would increase in inverse relation to the value added. His critiques on the nature of the school as an institution meant to delink learning from the community, present books and school teachers as the only sources of knowledge with the classroom becoming so abstract as to isolate even the events happening within the school compound remain radical even today. The school concretized the conception of the expert, an individual who would spend most of their childhood and young adult life not working, or accumulating skills necessary for social and economic survival, but rather acquiring a particular technical skill that would ensure a job and a high salary in the modern economy of the city.

In contrast, Education for Self Reliance would be modeled on the governing ideology of Ujamaa articulated in the Arusha Declaration. It would use what there already was, that is, people and land, most of whom and which respectively, were to be located in the rural areas. In a way Nyerere was critical of a particular kind of modernization. A kind of capitalist one that was centralized and grew from the towns, drew people into cities and focused aspiration, growth and resources around them.

Instead, the intimate social relations that governed many cultural structures were to be expunged from their tribal colonial restructurings to an 'African' socialism that emphasizes equality, cooperation, the primacy of the rural context and direct democracy. And education would be restructured to integrate the social and productive lives of the community into the school system. Nyerere envisioned schools that would be Self Reliant. They would have their own farms and productive units and members of the community would be integrated into the system, teaching and learning with the students. They would be radically democratic, with students deeply involved in creating the policies and participating in the everyday running of the schools. He saw exams as a crude and even oppressive method of assessment, meant to 'assess a person's ability to learn facts and present them on demand within a time period' and imagined a system of assessment that would gauge the power to reason, the willingness to serve

the community and the character of the student.

The wave of student protests for decolonization internationally articulated so intensely by the Rhodes Must Fall movement are making similar assertions that Nyerere did, nearly 50 years before. In fact, I would argue that Nyerere's ideas of decolonizing education were far more radical as they effectively presented a completely new system of education rather than a reformation of the one that currently exists.

One of the major differences of course, is that unlike the agitating students, Nyerere was the head of state with the resources and power to implement his nationalist decolonization agenda. In my thinking, this gave him incredible agency but simultaneously severely limited his capacity to formulate the kind of education that he envisioned precisely because it could only be envisioned for the people, rather than with the people, perhaps the only method available within the institutional confines of power of the modern state.

Unlike many post-independence heads of state like neighbouring Kenya which was ruled by a political elite intent on amassing huge tracts of land, Nyerere was without doubt a great visionary. But his ideas and intentions for the future were not a function of democratic negotiation from the bottom up, nor could they be counterpoised to other visions conceived in the local villages through which he sought the implementation of Ujamaa (shivji). Rather, they were a deeply hierarchical in nature, entangled in bureaucracies that successively drained out any assertions from the people. The power of the modern state was designed to be effected with astounding force, providing only certain designed possibilities for direct public participation like the ill fated electoral democracy, and serving exponentially the agenda of capitalist modernity.

The hierarchical nature of the modern state, its centralized bureaucracy and its legal framework were developed within the systems of imperial and colonial law. The problems experienced in the colony were abstracted and formulated into the legal charters characteristic of the sovereign modern state. Its premise of appropriation of surplus, racism, patriarchy,

dispossession and subordination of all groups into nations that undergirded imperialism fused old structures of state formation and new and old nationalisms together in a quest for capitalist modernity. The school, where one is required to spend most of their childhood and young adult life was a fundamental way of enforcing the methods and consciousness needed to establish the political and economic hegemony of the modern state. It predictably followed, that the powers inherent in inherited colonial state positions were used by their new managers to accumulate vast wealth. In Tanzania, they were named the Wabenzi (a localized version of the Mercedes Benz as a symbol for the new rich).

As Issa Shivji argues in his paper on Nationalism and Pan-Africanism, Nyerere responded to the expanding capitalist regime that the nation state seemed to automatically enforce by producing a different version of the state. Through the Arusha Declaration, Education for Self Reliance and later on, and more radically, Mwongozo he called for the nationalization of the means of production, the legal curtailment of accumulation by the political class and the democratization of political structures that encouraged political decision making from below. However, these changes were met with structural hostility; the system fought back. Major strikes began to plague the public sector, so much so that they 'stagnated' the economic 'stability' of the state. Nyerere responded by calling for an end to these strikes. The Ujamaa villages that were to facilitate collective ownership of the means of production had been initially intended to be voluntary. However, by 1973 the directive changed and the process was declared compulsory with the resulting exploitation by state monopolies devastating the villagization process. The seeming opposite of free market capitalism as nationalization was instead churned out as state capitalism.

It is clear from these examples that the prospects of direct democracy from below that would include direct and voluntary participation as well as immediate political accountability were undermined, precisely by a capitalist, hierarchical political system that was inherently incapable of facilitating economic and political equality.

When Nyerere, through Ujamaa and Self Reliance tried to steer the country away from capitalism, he was accosted by internal fractures and external economic and political wars. There was a mutiny in the army, which he decided to disband and form a new one, establish a single party and trade union affiliated to the state. Furthermore the war in 1979 with Uganda drained the already fragile economy.

The internal implosions that accosted Nyerere's attempts at creating an African state were further compounded by the African economic crisis that was the legacy of colonization. Tanzania was not spared the wrath of the Washington Consensus resulting in the Structural Adjustment Programmes that corroded the already flailing public sector. Privatizations, fiscal austerities, deregulation, debts and political conditionalities modeled on neoliberal policies dealt a fatal blow to Nyerere's politics of Self Reliance and Ujamaa.

Reflecting on Education for Self Reliance in these times, one contemplates on what kind of society Self Reliance must be modeled on. In our neoliberal context, we bear witness to the generations that were fed from the very beginning on the aspiration diet; on the idea that anyone can make it if they have dreams and are ambitious; if they work smart and network in the right circles; that education would catapult them into material success; that it would make them competitive in a world limitless with possibility. A generation that was placing these desires on a university that was shaping their courses around the requirements of corporates that were in turn automating many functions and needing fewer students, and consequently inflating education so that more qualifications become increasingly necessary to secure employment. As for the majority who flood the market with no prospects for employment, there is always entrepreneurship a recourse that weathers badly in a context without startup capital. Or free labour also known as serial internships that stretched the hope that work was on its way, sometimes for years. Or even NGOs, that deepen dependency and usurp all the youth passionate against injustice into placid, donor pleasing, aspiring middle class depoliticized selves. All this

taking place where the nationalist project has refused to produce a viable decolonization agenda, shrouded as it is in the ambit of the modern state. But the realities of oppressive colonial education, unemployment, debt, unaffordable education, autocracy, finite resources and opportunities reserved for the affluent have punctured the aspirations and desires that refused stubbornly to materialize. Like the student movement of the undercommons, my firm belief is that the university as we know it, was never historically intended to facilitate knowledge production and learning for the purposes of creating a just, inclusive or radically egalitarian society. Instead, it was always implicated in colonial practice and slavery, constantly using and then subjugating the knowledges it encountered through the most violent forms to produce a capitalist modernity stratified at every level. The inequalities of class and gender, race and sexuality are incorporated in its special, pedagogical, textual and structural apparatus and eschew communal potential, radical democracy and equality that are contained in an education for Self Reliance.

With neoliberalism, the structure of the university, like all other institutions of the modern state, conspired to produce market actors and transform every aspect of the institution and the human to an economic one. Notions like democracy, learning, shared and redistributed resources and even the imagination are converted to economic registers and understood in a context of competition, individualism and economic aspiration that make them abstract and incoherent.

But. Resistance has reared its head once again; so much for the end of history. If the student protests and social movements sprouting anywhere are anything to go by, it feels like the world had come to, confronting the political deceit that had captured the imagination so fervently.

One thing became clear during our sessions at Mathare, Pawa 254 and Single Mothers Association. That the Self-Reliance that Nyerere spoke about could never grow in 'the system'. The system that reinforced the deep poverty in Mathare and Ziwani and with it the attendant horizontal violence

like sexual and physical gendered violations, alcoholism and drug abuse, extrajudicial executions of young men and increasingly young women, murders, recruitments to al-shabaab, the historical land injustices and continued dispossession and speculation. That elective democracy was farce and it was never going to change our lived realities, as we see it in Kenya.

As we saw it, Education for Self Reliance was a fundamental way to shift our understanding of our own histories, and to address the deep injustices that capitalism continues to inflict. The very existence of Mathare Social Justice Center, Single Mothers Association of Ziwani and even Pawa 254 are testament to the growing arena of resistance to the violence of the market and the state. But what kind of world would education for Self Reliance be based on? If it is not the Ujamaa of Julius Nyerere, then what could it be? Could Kwame Nkrumah's idea of Pan-Africanism as an anti-colonial struggle have led us to a different political future, released from the vagaries of modern nation state? What ideas could be collected from Nyerere's philosophies of Self Reliance and Ujamaa placed within Nkrumah's hope of Pan Africanism in our social movements built on the debris of nationalism and neoliberalism? What kind of education could be imagined and for what purpose?

In his speech given during the Ghana's 40th independence in 1997, Nyerere expressed clearly his misgivings of the post-independent nationalist African project. He stated that 'once you multiply national anthems, national flags and national passports, seats of the United Nations, and individuals entitled to a 21-gun salute, not to speak of a host of ministers, prime ministers and envoys, you would have a whole army of powerful people with vested interests in keeping Africa balkanised'. He also went on to say - 'I reject the glorification of the nation state [that] we inherited from colonialism, and the artificial nations we are trying to forge from that inheritance. We are all Africans trying very hard to be Ghanaians or Tanzanians. Fortunately for Africa, we have not been completely successful'.

And it is from these fortunate failures that our movements are finding

traction. Social movements as I see it, are the most viable political spaces to forge education for Self Reliance, based as they are on direct democracies and our concrete realities. That is, only if the imagination of our future is Pan-Africanist, built from the ground horizontally and if it enforces Communal Reliance based on many of our still existing cultural practices and radical **REDISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES**; If it is modeled on Radical Love and Empathy and continuous deliberation; if it is intersectional and does not thrive on the suffering of one group for the freedom of others; where our differences are as source of challenging and expanding our political community.

To replace pedagogies of the oppressed with education for the practice of freedom and to implement education for Self Reliance, we have to seek to alter radically the political organization of the modern state of capitalist modernity.

I end with Nyerere's final words during his speech at Ghana's 40th independence commemoration in 1997.

'My generation led Africa to political freedom. The current generation of leaders and peoples of Africa must pick up the flickering torch of African freedom, refuel it with their enthusiasm and determination, and carry it forward'

# Critical Reflections of Ujamaa's Education for Self Reliance

-  
A  
response to  
Noosim Naimasiah

After nearly 40 years since the Arusha Declaration, initially published in Kiswahili, was declared on 5 February 1967 it feels as though before levelling any critique or disagreements one might have it is difficult not to simultaneously acknowledge the sheer optimism, ambition and ingenuity in its underpinning that now seem dreams away from what could be expected from a present day government. The declaration described the social and political policy for the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) under the leadership of the then president, Julius Nyerere.

“Ujamaa” or in a version of its English translation “Family hood” formed the synthesis of Nyerere’s proposition for an “African socialism” which was articulated in the essay “Ujamaa – The basis of African Socialism” in April 1962 in a TANU pamphlet. The formulation of Ujamaa suggested in this pamphlet, as I understand it, essentially seeks to lay a philosophical

basis for TANU's conception of African socialism at that particular historical moment. In reading the aforementioned essay I identify the following key points:

- Socialism is an ideal determined by an attitude of mind and a socialist society is categorised by the processes and extent through which wealth is distributed.
- That it is conceivably possible to transition from largely peasant based society, without transitioning through industrialisation and "developed" capitalism, to a socialist society.
- Traditional African Communal values demonstrate practices of collectivism and communalism which foster the kinds of egalitarian attitudes necessary for a "socialist" society to function.
- The people of Tanganyika, at the time, were largely agrarian and had not undergone industrialisation. "Capitalist ideals" and individualism arrive through colonialism and strongest in the metropolis.
- While differences in wealth exist between people, they had yet to consolidate into classes hence TANU's African socialism attempt to distance itself from the models of the Soviet Union, along with the Capitalist individualism of the West.
- The colonial state can be transformed to guide the society towards extending "family hood" and by extension existing communal values to foster an "African Socialist" society which operates beyond the nuclear family, tribe and race.

These points are taken from my understanding of the essay and are not intended to foreclose other readings, I list them above in point form as these will form my underlying assumptions for the conversation going forward around Ujamaa and "Education for Self Reliance" more specifically. In response to Noosim Naimasiah's earlier contribution in this book titled "Ujamaa – Essays on Socialism" I will seek to engage with the important reflections on the collective engagement she highlights. I will also seek to emphasise and extend the deeper point she makes as she encourages us to look at Ujamaa and more specifically the "Education for Self Reliance"

section as being the product of dynamic conflicts that were underway within the region as opposed to the notion that these emancipatory ideas were appearing as if from the ether from enlightened individuals somehow separate from society – as often we are led to believe. From this point forward we will consider the post-independence union Tanzania which is formed through a union of Tanganyika under TANU and the movement that overthrew the Sultan governing Zanzibar.

In a book written by influential African scholar, Mahmood Mamdani, titled “Define and Rule” as part of a series of arguments he interrogates the legacy of Nyerere’s contribution to decolonisation in Tanzania taking special interest in the role of the law and legislature in colonial and post-colonial contexts more broadly. As far as I can understand it he appears to be tracing the trajectory of the categories of political identity particularly in the case of indirect rule. Settler populations, native elites, wage workers and early industrial proletarians existed under “common law” which was given authority and philosophic basis through the colonial powers and “customary law” was used to govern the natives. “Natives” often through dispossession and some form of relocation were often constructed as “authentic” and “indigenous” through fixed parameters controlled by traditional authorities installed and propped up by the colonial regime. Mamdani credits Nyerere’s government with abolishing the traditional authorities and extending common law to all “citizens” on the basis of an African National identity, Tanzania, which related to residency and a commitment to the values and work towards the prosperity of its people. Nyerere himself expresses liberal conceptions of how “race” operates emphasising inter-personal dynamics of racial intolerance that can be resolved by addressing attitudes, ideals and values instead of simultaneously considering race as structural. This approach led to conflicts within nationalist elements within the country which were eventually able to persuade him to implement an affirmative action policy as redress for the historical inequalities due to the privileges allocated by the colonial regime in the stratified society.

Following from this what might be interesting to think through is to put the above ideas in conversation with the work of Cedric Robinson, more specifically that which is presented in his book *Black Marxism*, which outlines the notion of racial capitalism. In my understanding this term proposes the idea that race is constitutive of the capitalism and not simply coincidental, that is to say capitalism necessarily produces racialism. If we accept that Nyerere's African socialism was unable to defeat capitalism, to the extent that this is uncontroversial, then it necessarily implies that while the Arusha declaration called for desegregation and an end to racist attitudes, the structural regimes that exist and reproduce racism could not be abolished but are instead left to at most mutate during and after Nyerere's regime. This is not to endorse the notion that somehow ending capitalism automatically ends racism, patriarchy or other forms of structural oppression but to reaffirm the point that to the extent that capitalism continues the defeat of any of those interlocking systems is impossible. The impact of this assertion is potentially immense for how we might reflect on the legacy of the Education and Self Reliance section of the Arusha declaration and its implementation in the physical world. This particularly relates to the question of the real ability for this programme to address the legacies of colonialism, slavery and historical dispossession all of which are ultimately necessary to open up the radical potential of the emancipatory aspirations within the masses of the people at large. It is important for us to reconcile with these issues as they lay bare the supreme difficulty of transforming in the colonial apparatus in the face of very real divisions and inequality within the society at the point of formal takeover.

In a paper written by Walter Rodney, the radical public intellectual from Guyana, titled "Tanzanian Ujamaa and Scientific Socialism" an attempt is made to provide a charitable critique of Ujamaa from the perspective of scientific socialism. In my limited understanding Rodney affirms the position that there is a structural impossibility for capitalism in Africa to "develop" to the extent to which it has in Europe due to the proposition

that the development of Europe through capitalism is made possible, in part, through the “underdevelopment” of Africa. This position was expanded by Rodney in his book “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa” which was written during his time working at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Rodney, like many others at the time, considers Nyerere’s articulation of African socialism a “utopian socialism” which hinges heavily on two main pillars:

- An idealised conception of the nature of the communalism found in existing agrarian societies
- A belief that the state could act to “prevent” the formation of classes from the top down

Rodney and others of his ilk in contrast to Nyerere advocated for class struggle in Tanzania in pursuit of scientific socialism while at the same time levelling criticisms against the rigidity of some Western Marxists who saw the only path forward through the lenses of their particular historical development.

The Arusha declaration describes an economic policy, which included aggressive nationalisation, charted the development of the nation through the “collectivisation of villages” organised under what were termed Ujamaa villages. These Ujamaa villages which were intended to be state supported cooperatives which would foster a productive agricultural sector whose surplus would be redistributed fairly to the nation through Ujamaa (family hood) and used to acquire foreign exchange to strengthen the economy and increase the capacity for the country to import resources and goods such as more advanced machinery. This system ultimately, as Noosim describes, has a low take up and devolved into a scenario where people were forced into the Ujamaa villages in an effort to realise the project. With this in mind it is important to understand the economic project of Tanzania is explicitly linked to the policy of “Education for self-reliance”.

In the face of incredibly low levels of access to primary and secondary education across the country at the moment of independence, Nyerere who has a background as a teacher, proposes a system of education anchored

in relevance to the realities of the communities in which they are located. The policy describes the ambition of democratising the classroom space through use of school gardens/community gardens which learners as collectives would co-create and maintain as part of their education under the facilitation and guidance of the teacher. The idea is that this system of education would foster self-sufficiency but also would work alongside and as reinforcing institution for the village collectivisation process outlined by the Ujamaa village's programme.

Nyerere asserted the role of educational institutions under formal colonialism as being sites that reproduced individualist ideals and responded with a policy that sought to create a space where public education would be extended to all citizens, not simply the elites, but through the philosophical lenses of the broader emancipatory project guided by TANU's policies. He criticised the hegemony of examinations as a universal marker of understanding and assessment and along with the expanded definition of what a school do and look like he called on creative approaches of assessment that emphasised learning as opposed to only standardised proficiency tests. The approach for making this transformation in the education space was defined somewhat differently in the urban and rural cases given their different roles in the economy and society at the time. Nyerere prescribed a national service requirement for all university going students (who benefited from free education) as a means of reinforcing the point that the objective of education was towards the ends of the collective freedom.

One of the first serious challenges in the urban elite sectors of society was outlined in Noosim's article by a massive strike at University of Dar es Salaam where students opposed the implementation of national service and were subsequently expelled en masse.

The Tanzanian left intellectual Issa Shivji in an article "Walter Rodney in Tanzania" reflected on the Rodney's time at the University of Dar es Salaam by contextualising it within the broader debates and historical conflicts of the time. Shivji's account lifts and emphasises the atmosphere of debate,

disagreement and engagement with issues around emancipatory politics in Africa and across the world. What is significant for us to reflect on in relation to his account is that it is important for us to then trace and engage with the dynamic forces and ideas which exist during the time of Ujamaa and not simply take for granted totalising representations of history that present us with the story of ideologues (whether they be Shivji, Rodney or Nyerere in this case) but rather as being the product of the forces shaping society as a whole.

In 1966 democratic socialist intellectual, Jitendra Mohan, published an article titled “Varieties of African socialism” through which he traces the different contending interpretations for socialism in Africa in that period as divided largely in two groups those identifying with scientific socialism and the pursuit of class struggle and those who proposed African socialism leveraging of traditional African communal practices and values while in practice adopting mixed economies. I cite this article, mostly as point of reference which offers very interesting critical perspectives on the various interpretations of socialism at that time, but also to emphasise the broader point that the moment that the Arusha declaration is declared over and above the global conflict revolving around the US and allied forces against the Soviet Union there were a sea of contending interpretations and conflicting views around the paths to socialism and the conditions for unity in Africa and beyond. By consequence we have to then see the Arusha declaration and even the education project it defines, in the context of its historical moment with all the opportunities and challenges there were unique to the national liberation era and the impetus it provided.

To further emphasise the point above I will point to the petition submitted by James Ngugi (later Ngugi wa Thiongo’o), Henry Owur-Anyuma and Taban Lo Liyong calling for the abolition of the English department submitted at the University of Nairobi in September 1968. This petition among several other key demands calls for the abolishing of English department and the establishment of a Department of African Literature and Languages in an attempt to undermine the hegemony not simply of languages brought by

colonialism but also to call into question the very modes of understanding and reasoning that had developed within the English department as an instantiation of the colonial apparatus. Their proposal did not call for a rejection of engagement with European literature but instead, demanded to shift the terms under which that content would be engaged with while repurposing the educational space to incorporate an engagement with other forms of knowledge production such as the oral tradition. Locating itself firmly with East Africa, by responding to context, it draws specific attention to the need to encourage and foster engagement with Swahili literature although not exclusively. This proposition, is one in a sea of disruptions that lead to and bolster a cultural wave across that region, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania that saw Kiswahili enter into formal academic educational spaces and to a limited extent within the transforming state apparatus itself as evidenced the delivery of the Arusha Declaration in Kiswahili. The question of language, among many of the issues raised in the petition and in the broader discussion, have historically been of great importance for thinking about public education institutions, if there is one thing that is clear, for those of us located in South Africa the present debates around “Free Education” and the education crisis more generally demand urgent reflection on the impact, challenges and trajectory of Kiswahili in educational institutions in Tanzania and the East African region as a whole.

In thinking through Noosim’s account of the collapse of Nyerere’s regime what comes to surface is the extent to which, if we are being charitable, the class forces (or emerging class forces) within Tanzania’s were underestimated by TANU’s vision. Extensive webs of bureaucracy and rising privileges allocated to civil servants along with the structural adjustments imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) eroded the early gains and social welfare schemes fashioned in post-independence Tanzania. By consequence even the prospects for the realisation of Nyerere’s vision for education for self-reliance, however we might feel it about it, seem perhaps more challenging than they have ever been in a present age of almost

permanent austerity and relentless privatisation. In closing, Education for Self Reliance offers us today many interesting and important things to think about as a philosophy but more importantly, I would argue, if we are to seriously tackle the challenges of tomorrow a rigorous debate and interrogation of the historical context and forces that shape the contours of the society in which this idea was attempted, can open up possibilities within public debates that are increasingly limited to the machinations within and on the periphery of the United States and Europe. Popular education discussions, organised on a non-sectarian basis, such as those reflected on in Noosim's essay offer us a tangible starting point into how we can practically embark on a process to engage with ideas and history from a time and place that have consistently been ignored and overlooked in spite of its rich and significant contribution to the pursuit for collective emancipation.

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# GHANA



LK

# On the Historical Development of Public Education in Ghana

Brian Kamanzi in conversation with  
Akwası Kwarteng Amoako-Gyampah

**BK:** Thank you so much for agreeing to discuss with us the topic of this discussion is going to be the historical development of Education, with a specific preference to public education, in Ghana. So before we get into things would you like to start by sort of briefly introducing yourself?

**AK:** My name is Akwası Kwarteng Amoako-Gyampah, I am currently studying for the completion of my doctoral degree in Historical studies at the University of Johannesburg. I am currently researching on public health with a focus on sanitation and hygiene in colonial and post-colonial Ghana. I have been involved in the study of economic and labour history. In my master's programme I conducted a comparative historical study of teachers' unionism in Ghana and South Africa which is interdisciplinary work that involves labour, economics and history of education. Before embarking on my doctoral studies, I was lecturing at a University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. The University of Education is dedicated solely to the training of teachers for all levels of education in Ghana and for the West African sub-region.

**BK: Great thank you, I think already in your own personal history there are many tangents we could go into relating to the influences of those particular schools on public education in Ghana and South Africa more generally but let's see how this will fit into our discussion. In terms of the public education system, how does this begin to emerge in the Ghanaian context?**

AK: [Western] Education generally dates back to the early 16th century. The earliest Europeans to have had any contact with Ghana were there Portuguese dating back to 1471 and it is believed that they started what was known as the "castle schools". As early as 1529 there was a castle school in Elmina and when the Dutch later drove out the Portuguese from the Gold Coast they continued with the practice of "castle schools" but essentially what these schools did was to provide basic education, teaching reading to the pupils, but also served as a means of proselytizing the African population to the Christian faith. For example the Portuguese, in 1529, taught Portuguese, basic arithmetic and then taught religion. The Dutch then did the same; they taught the Dutch language, basic arithmetic and religion. Now you would know that by the 18th century there had been several other European countries on the coast of Ghana and on the West Coast generally trading in what they called "legitimate trade" and later the slave trade. So, there was the Royal African Company which was an English merchant company which had also began to open schools in the Gold coast some time in 1712 with the aim of educating what was called the mulatto population. When I talk about the mulatto population, I mean because of the early contact with the Europeans there had been what is called "miscegenation" where often European men having had children with African women who were regarded as neither "white" nor "black" but had come to be known as "mulatto". The basic thing was to give education to the mulatto population as well as some of the African population who lived within the precincts of the castles and forts on the coastline of what was then the Gold Coast.

## **BK: Were those two groups economic elites at that time?**

AK: Most of the Africans who had attained some of the earlier forms of [western] education were the children of economic elites. But also remember that it was also just limited to the basic form of education that a person could access and later most of the people who become the early elites in the Gold Coast are people who have travelled outside to study but these were the children, sons and daughters - well let me say there were few daughters at the time allowed to study - of the economic elites who after benefiting from the "legitimate" trade and the Atlantic slave trade could afford send them off either to study in Britain but the majority of them were sent to Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone. By the mid-18th century we had the missionary societies providing some forms of education again geared towards proselytizing, teaching basic reading and writing. For example, in 1752 we had the missionary society for the propagation of the gospel, what we call the SPG who sent Rev. Thomas Thompson to the Gold Coast who would engage in some forms of educational activities. The only time that the British would become actively involved in the provision of education in the Gold Coast was some time around 1850 which has its own history. By the mid-19th century the British had become the dominant power across the coastline and most of the other European countries had either abandoned their trading fort or had left for one reason or another. By 1844 the British had concluded an agreement with the prominent chiefs along the coast - what they called the bond of 1844 and with this agreement the chiefs ceded their judicial power to British crown. At this point we find the beginnings of some kind of formal colonization forming in the Gold Coast. It was in 1850 that an attempt would be made to pass some form of Education ordinance, of a sort, and this would begin the active involvement of the British officials in providing education in the Gold Coast. But of course this had its own dynamics. Formal education, or western style education, would not become properly constituted till the late 19th century where you see conscious efforts and this was also because by 1874 the British had declared the Gold Coast a crown colony. This was

followed by attempts to formalise the provision of education and to expand the provision of education to wider sections of the population in the colony.

**BK: From the labour perspective when do we start seeing trade unions emerging in the then Gold Coast and what were the - I assume there were some sorts of education infrastructure to inform their or perpetuate their organisations**

AK: Well, you would not have a formal educational structure for which the trade unions would have used in the early stages but the trade union organisations actually emerge within the broader context of protest actions in the Gold Coast. You know the Gold Coast was the home of protest action as early as one can think about, as early as the mid and late 19th century we see pockets of protest action against attempts by the British to impose poll tax. So you would find organisations like the Aborigines Rights Protection society, the Fante Confederation, the National Congress of British West Africa among several other organisations emerging. So within the broader context of protests and growing protest movements you also find workers organizing. It's interesting to note, I don't know how you want to define workers but most of the earliest protests actually arise from people who you would not consider as formal workers but from farmers. This came from the fact that some of the farmers felt that merchants in the Gold Coast who purchased their produce were cheating them in terms of how much they paid. So there are pockets of some of these things until the mid-1900s where you see some forms of formal trade unionism emerge in the Gold Coast. This would be properly constituted in the 1940s when the trade union ordinance passed. Interestingly there are also cases, I read in a study unfortunately I can't recall who did the study, where fisherman and canoe men who worked to transport ashore the goods and other things the Europeans needed to the coast. At that time we did not have the kind of shore where boats could anchor close by to the castles and forts so you had to anchor somewhere and then the canoe men would actually

go and bring the items and passengers from the boats to the shore. We have instances of some of these canoe men having engaged in one form of protest action or another to demand for fair remuneration for their activities. We have an instance in the 1920s where the Prince of Wales had to visit the Gold Coast and the canoe men would make use of that opportunity to demand for an increase in remuneration or else they would refuse to ferry them to the shore.

**BK: So now with the later formation of the CPP and the push towards independence, does education or perhaps the promise of a more democratic education become some sort of mobilising force as it does in other countries in the anti-colonial era and if so what were some of the promises and visions around what a “new” education could look like in “Free” Ghana.**

AK: Okay, that’s an interesting question, before I start let me just say there were several demands put forward by the Gold Coast nationalists for expansion in the education system as early as the 1900s. If you look at the records you see that the national congress of British West Africa which was of course some kind of Pan-African organisation would make demands to the effect that they wanted the expansion of education and basic infrastructure in the Gold Coast and in fact they would make demands for some form of higher education. It is these demands which would eventually culminate in the setting up of what was then known as the Prince of Wales Secondary School established in 1925, which later became Achimota college which became one of the earliest sort of higher education institutions in Ghana with counterparts existing and emerging in the region in Sierra Leone, Gambia and Nigeria. By the 1940s there are growing corpus of “educated” nationalists who begin to make demands for social reforms and other kinds of reforms. In fact in the 1950s the colonial government had put together a document called the Accelerated plan for Development. Now remember this was the time when the CPP and Nkrumah had begun

to rise in popularity after the organisations founding in 1949. Their activism eventually culminates in Nkrumah rising to the position of the leader of government business in the 1950s. When he became the leader of government businesses there already existed this plan, the colonial regime's accelerated plan for development, which was then retailored by the CPP and Nkrumah which then came to include the accelerated plan for education which was very important. This took place around 1951, in this plan the CPP and Nkrumah envisaged Free Education at least at the primary level for every person of school going age. They also envisaged an expansion in the school infrastructure and teacher education, because you must remember teacher education was quite limited. So this would include an expansion in teacher colleges as well as technical education but of course the most important thing is that there was, at the time, an advocacy for a Free Education which was given life by the accelerated plan for development. In fact when Ghana became independent in 1957 that demand already started to bear fruits, education at the elementary level was already free by independence. I think that after 1957 there was an attempt to actually provide Free Secondary education for at least tuition as far as I can remember. At the primary level books and all other kinds of things were supplied, however it's important to note that university education after independence until the 1990s remained largely Free funded by government. In fact at universities it was funded to the extent that people were fed three times a day.

**BK: So what about the number of university institutions post-independence were they spread across the metropolis or had they been extended to the rural areas as well?**

AK: We did not have university education in the rural areas when Nkrumah's assumed power, I mentioned we had the Achimota college which later was upgraded to the University College of the Gold Coast initially aided by an affiliation to the University of London before becoming a full

blown university in the early to mid 1960s then becoming the University of Ghana located in Accra. Then during the same period Nkrumah established the University of the Cape Coast which had a mandate to provide higher level education for teachers. That was located in the central region of Ghana, at Cape Coast, one of the most important towns in Ghana, and in fact up until 1877 it was the capital of the colonial administration until it was moved to Accra. Then he also set up a University of Technology called the Kwame Nkrumah Institute of Science and Technology it was called the college of technology located in the Asante regional capital which is Kumasi which is also the next biggest city in Ghana. So in terms of spread these universities were located in the most significant urban centers at the time.

**BK: You mention the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for Science and Technology, now I know that one of the main pillars of his party's plan was a rapid industrialization project, so was the intent to do this large parts of the actual design done within Ghana or perhaps in partnership with other countries who were perhaps had more experience and access to "modern" industrial technologies?**

AK: The idea was to industrialize but remember that Nkrumah was quite eclectic in his approach to politics so he embraced all forms of radical and progressive ideas, I know there were instances of collaboration with some European countries and Russia at some point but also the British at some point became involved again with the educational and infrastructural development. So, yes I would say they were seeking to do it locally but there were also very much receptive to foreign support in whatever form. One thing which is interesting about Nkrumah is that there was a deliberate attempt to actually "Africanize" knowledge and that was the reason he set up what we call today the Kwame Nkrumah Institute for African studies at the University of Ghana and here all sorts of knowledge, African based, were studied. It could be technology, it could be history, it could be history or philosophy or anything - all forms of knowledge - as long the knowledge

production, the processes of production, was African based. I think he envisaged that with time it would expand to other institutions as well.

**BK: Thank you for that insight, and what about the profile of students going into the universities, were there many students from the broader region or perhaps other parts of Africa?**

AK: It was largely Ghanaian based at the initial stage and later we found that peoples from other African countries coming to the University of Ghana and some of the others.

**BK: Okay, if we now fast forward to the structural adjustment period and the fall of Nkrumah's regime and the CPP more broadly how does this impact or transform the developments beginning to emerge in the education space?**

AK: You see a clear decline in the educational developments in Ghana during the structural adjustments and even just before Nkrumah was overthrown there were cracks beginning to emerge and challenges in the system. Some of them had to do with over subscription, quality of teaching, infrastructure and a number of other factors. After Nkrumah was overthrown the situation kind of worsened. Remember that directly after this takes place what followed were a succession of Coup d'état's, military interventions, which all had negative consequences for education delivery in Ghana. Up until the 1980s were we have Rawlings' intervention which also had it's own very negative impact, many of the universities were facing closure and all of those things even up to the 1990s. You see it's in the late 1980s and early 1990s where you see a clear decline not just in university education but also in secondary education as well. This is what actually informed the reorientation of the educational system. A new policy was introduced some time in 1987 with Rawlings attempting to reform Ghana's education system trying to reduce the number of years spent

studying the in secondary schools which was about 9 or so years down.

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free - at least in theory, so they have what is called the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education which theoretically all citizens have access to. Now the current government says it's going to extend that to the secondary level but I don't trust politicians so [Haha].

**BK: Let's hope so! In terms of today, what are some of the most hotly contested issues within the education space?**

AK: Some of them have to do with what is described as a disjuncture between the kinds of education available at university and the needs of the job market. People feel that the kind of graduates that are being produced are not relevant to the job market, that is one issue that is hotly contested. People are talking about infrastructure, I mean we still have people studying under trees in some rural areas. We still have a challenge with the teacher education in terms of quality and quantity. I mean some of us have had problems with the kinds of knowledge being passed on and how it is passed on pedagogically, we don't see teachers passing on critical thinking. There is a hierarchical pedagogy encouraged where if you are taught you simply recite back the given answers. Even now, remember teacher education used to actually be free and the students training to be teachers were actually paid some sort of stipend. They used to be in 3 year certificates now they are diploma awarded programmes and now government actually scrapped off the allowances which became a very contested issue because it would then be difficult to attract people to the teacher training colleges because teaching is not one of people's first employment choices in Ghana and this would worsen without support. The current government suggests they want to reinstate the stipends but I'm not sure how that is going to play out. I think also the teacher-student ratio is also a problem at all levels but this is a problem commonly shared across Africa.

**BK: Are people opposing the gradual pushing of fees onto the students?**

AK: Yes, well it used to be hotly contested in the 1990s but now not that much, and I'm not so sure why but people are not so pushy on the question of the full recovery but in the past there were a number of demonstrations that actually came to head with violence but now things have become quite.

**BK: Things have normalised?**

AK: Yes, actually I think that's the right word.

**BK: Great, thank you much there are a lot of themes here that speak to what we have been looking for. Cheers.**

AK: Thank you, Cheers.

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# Reflections and Discussion points on the Historical Development of Education in Ghana

By Hibist Kaasa

*The following points are written in dialogue with the piece “Interview with Akwasi Kwarteng Amoako-Gyampah on the Historical Development of Public Education in Ghana” and are intended to spark critical discussion and debate on the issues raised:*

**Reflecting on the following quote from Akwasi Kwarteng Amoako-Gyampah's (AK) interview:**

**AK:** "Well, you would not have a formal educational structure for which the trade unions would have used in the early stages but the trade union organisations actually emerge within the broader context context of protest actions in the Gold Coast."

**Hibist Kassa (HK):** It is true this is a high point for the nascent unions but railways and mines had unions which were initially not recognised as legitimate organisations by the colonial administration were organising in those conditions. Of course by the time they were getting that recognition the British ensured they were disciplined into an apolitical position which has been a critical posture undermining unionism until to date.

Furthermore,

**AK:** "It's interesting to note, I don't know how you want to define workers but most of the earliest protests actually arise from people who you would not consider as formal workers but from farmers. This came from the fact that some of the farmers felt that merchants in the Gold Coast who purchased their produce were cheating them in terms of how much they paid."

**HK:** This is an important point to make an important point to make. I think they form more of a nascent petty bourgeoisie. Chiefs also played an important role here...Biney, the communist railway workers union leader would organise alongside a chief who was also a clerk in organising the 'positive action' campaign.

**AK:** "A new policy was introduced some time in 1987 with Rawlings attempting to reform Ghana's education system trying to reduce the number of years spent studying the in secondary schools which was about

9 or so years down the line.”

**HK:** Well education is specifically not my area...but as a lay person there tends to be attention on the changes on the structure yes but also the renewed focus on vocational training in the new system. It would be good to get some perspective on this as it relates to the previous focus on industrialisation. What is this content directed to in terms of national development strategy? Is it building a layer of semi-skilled labour? How different is it from the previous approach and focus?

**AK:** “Well it used to be hotly contested in the 1990s but now not that much, and I’m not so sure why but people are not so pushy on the question of the full recovery but in the past there were a number of demonstrations that actually came to head with violence but now things have become quite.”

**HK:** Not so distant past though. I recall a rather bloody encounter with police and teacher trainees...sometime in 2012/3.

# Education Struggles in Ghana: Reflections on the past, Visions for tomorrow

by Hibist Kaasa

## Introduction

Ghana was sub Saharan African country to gain independence from British rule in 1957. The demand for access to education can be traced to the colonial period. The expansion of education in the post-independence Nkrumah era was therefore an early attempt to address inequality and restore dignity.

This policy also worked in the eyes of technocrats and politicians for whom a skilled workforce was key to drive the vigorous state led industrialisation program. At the very early stages of independence, tensions with labour which had been a key social force which spurred the national liberation struggle, exposed the limits of industrialisation project.

After the overthrow of the Nkrumah regime, the expansionist policy was heavily criticised on the basis that it had compromised on quality. As working people and the poor contended with overcrowding and the quality of public education system, private schools beyond their reach had been providing the nascent middle class a gate way to quality education. Additionally, the cost of secondary education was also another barrier that limited the aspirations of many young people.

This reflected the inequality that the education system was perpetuating. These problems had their roots in a history of dispossession and exploitation of wage labour. Nonetheless, it is also in this context that in 1960s and 1970s Universities in Africa provided the space for reflection and debate on alternatives. The lessons from this period remain relevant to date.

### **The Contradictions of the Nationalist Project**

Generally, a key prerequisite for the expansion of capitalist production is wage labour. This was a primary concern for the colonial government which had to contend with the persistence of subsistence production. The colonial government had to preserve the existing social order which was based on communal land tenure. Wage labour existed alongside subsistence agriculture. The paradox is explained by the need to preserve the social order upon which colonialism was based.

This is in striking contradiction to what unfolds in South Africa, which offers

an extreme case of dispossession and super exploitation. The emergence of the diamond industry, led to a convergence of interests between finance and mining capital and Afrikaner agrarian capital. There was a shared interest in creating a stable supply of Africans as cheap wage labour.

In West Africa, however, the violence required to displace labour from the subsistence sector, in addition to, the regulation of wage labour on a large scale was beyond the capacity of the state. To respond to these possible sources of social and political instability, the state would have had to invest in social infrastructure and law enforcement on a scale that was beyond its capacity. As a result, the subsistence production and communal land tenure system were tolerated.

The distribution of cocoa, the major export of the then Ghana (then the Gold Coast) on the world market was dominated by British firms, while production remained under the control of a nascent petty bourgeoisie class. Volatilities in commodity prices fed protests.

A successful cocoa hold up was held from 1937- 1938. The support of the chiefs was critical to ensure this hold up had the broad support it required to be successful. The cocoa farmers' agitations, posed a grave threat to the sustainability of the colonial economy which was the source of cheap raw materials for the European market. The agitations were a major factor leading to the establishment of the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) in 1947-1948. CMB was created to enable price stabilisation, but it was also used by the post independence regime for the redirecting part of the surplus for provision of public goods especially education.

The cocoa hold up occurred alongside a series of labour strikes when the colony did not have a highly organised labour force. Few labour

unions existed. However, radical sections of the labour movement, which supported the nationalist drive for independence, also had other concerns. In this regard, the railway and dock workers of Sekondi and Takoradi have historically demonstrated a high level of organisation.

By 1950, the railway and harbour workers could call for a 'Positive Action' strike without the backing of the official union executives, under the leadership of Pobee Biney, a communist trade union leader. There was an alliance of sections of labour and the broader urban populace in which market women played a critical role. The leadership role played by the railway and harbour workers to their relatively higher level of education and heightened consciousness around inequality and a vision for social change.

However, soon after independence, the Nkrumah government passed the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) Act 299 which introduced changes to the structure of the Ghana Trade Union Congress which brought the existing unions under a single centralized structure and set up an intimate relation with CPP. The IRA also virtually criminalised strikes.

As the black star of Africa, Ghana led by Kwame Nkrumah held within it the hope to advance the struggles for liberation. This is to undo the colonial legacy of divisions, distortions and erasure from history, knowledge production and pursuit of development. The latter entailed contending visions of what that alternative may mean and thereby facing the contradictions which were emerging sharply. Debates around this came together particularly in University of Dar Es Saalam.

Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana who taught at Dar Es Saalam shares his reflections.

*... Dar Es Salaam was an interesting place in the early 60's. I gather it was quite rather like Nkrumah's Ghana's in many respects. Newly independent country charismatic leader with great intellect. And the University was just starting. In fact our faculty was the first department of law that began in the University so we a emerging University but who brought together interestingly young bright scholars all over the world. Peace Corp volunteers from the USA, ... Canadian Volunteers, all of them young and bright, in a country which was then extremely progressive intellectually...*

*The leader President Nyerere himself was a scholar, a writer and so on, and he saw himself as a scholar and he gave ample leadership and space, for the University to play its role because in Tanzania at the time, the political tone was such that all played a role in national politics. It was a one party state so if they invested a role to playing an advancing political judgements going forward. Openly it wasn't taught.*

Sawyer clarifies that this was not a coerced role.

*...I liked it very much because we felt attracted to a debate, not just Tanzania, but also the continent because that was also the home of other movements. We also had students right from Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, we had ANC, PAC, FRELIMO living it there with us. So it was we were living and teaching in an environment which embodied the African struggle: culturally, politically, intellectually and so on. And so there was a whole school of Dar es Salaam school, as you should know, of history which generated an alternative vision which was something like what had been developed in Ghana in the early 60s, Nkrumah's time. So to move on, I was in Dares Salam for my first job, a real incredible transformation but from there I came to Ghana in the 1970s, and the experience couldn't be bigger.*

*... There had been the overthrow of Nkrumah four years earlier and the military regime which I missed. I came into [University of Ghana] Legon*

*when Busia, was a Prime Minister, a civilian government. What struck me about the campus, was, on the relativity of the debate, it was so sterile. The debates were so flat when I compared it to Dares Salam where there were real contentions over fundamental questions. I saw none of that on campus. That was partly I think because of the proscription of the left progressive thinking. So the debates were mainly among the right intellectuals, and that maybe why I found it totally sterile. They were still going over the same old rubbish which we were supposed to be going beyond. It didn't last very long, interestingly because within about two/three years of my coming, we began to take on a few of the right intellectuals in all fields. There were only a few of us at the time, two or three of us, who had some standard, but interestingly as the years went on, we found that the balance of strength in the debating sides shifted in our favour. Despite our lack of numbers, we were able to engage very effectively the current debates. We didn't do it only at Legon. We had allies from Cape Coast and University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, who joined us, in taking on...of course Legon was the real bastion of the right so the national debates were focused on Legon...'*

The military regime which overthrew Nkrumah with support from the Central Intelligence Agency had handed over power to a right wing civilian government. This regime led by Busia was in turn overthrown by the military in 1972. After these events,

*...the military tried to co-opt the left, having overthrown the government they were going to work with the students and they did work with the students and that brought onto campus a more urgent progressive political discussion. But the point was that you could not control the content of the discussion. Once you open the discussion up, it follows its own logic, and soon enough it became clear that the military government had a problem. What was emerging on campus was against them. So from the middle 70s, it was very clear, that there was a much more life on campus, much*

*more political discussion on the campus and they were mostly against the regime. So the stage was set for regime and University confrontations.*

By the 1980s, the state institutions and structures were crumbling with the collapsing economy. The state led industrialisation program was falling apart. Reforms of the education system became one of the key policies of a military regime, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) that emerged in this period of turmoil. The education reforms sought to reduce the number of years students spent in school and orient their education towards more vocational and technical training. Secondary schools were therefore to provide the youth with skills they could use as self-employed persons in the informal sector or in lower level positions in the workplace. Workers in the education sector were laid off in the thousands, and struggles over unpaid end of service benefits were at the core of labour struggles in public sector. It was in this period when unions were weakened by these layoffs.

This period of turmoil therefore marked a shift in policy from state led industrialisation, which depended on higher skilled labour, towards the attraction of foreign direct investment, based on a cheaper low skill labour force.

### **The Neoliberal Turn**

In the early 1990s, Universities (which were all established and funded by the state) came under increasing scrutiny. Up until then, University education was virtually free. The World Bank stressed on the need to cut back on public financing for Universities, in a bid to reduce state expenditure on public services. The argument was that those who access University education benefit from the qualifications as individuals, and therefore, should bear the full cost. It was also argued that the more the government spent on University education, the less it could do to improve

and expand education at the basic level. This was also framed within the idea that an urban coalition had appropriated majority of the state resources at the expense of poor rural people.

However, by the time the reforms of the public Universities were being pushed through, the character of University communities was changing. Now, more than ever students from working class and poor families could access University education. Larger numbers of young people were graduating from public secondary schools and were eager to access University education. The government pressed Universities to increase the admission.

In the meantime, the also government forcibly pushed through academic facility user fees and reduced public financing. More young people were completing secondary schools and gaining admission into public Universities. Alongside, reduced public financing and increasing strain on the University facilities, conditions for work and learning were also gradually declining. This was a contradictory process that fed into the resistance from the student and labour movements.

The reduction in public funding of higher education created conditions where University management boards have sought to reduce overall expenditure on salaries of workers. Universities themselves were in the last decades required to develop corporate plans and envisage themselves as business entities and source for funds from corporations. The commodification of education is erasing education as public good.

Since the 1990s, Students Unions, Associations and groups have therefore agitated regularly over continued and increasingly harsh fee increases and deteriorating facilities. At every turn, the refusal of the state to fund University education has provided the basis for fee increases, privatisation

of halls (and dollarization of some blocks) and other services. The World Bank (and their allies in government) has been a key actor driving this agenda. This also fits within the emphasis on the creation of a cheap labour pool. The current drive to introduce full fee payment for all students in the University is an attempt to complete this process of ensuring that University graduates will be the preserve of the well-to-do.

In 2012, during a strike by nursing students, they made the point that most of them could not afford University education and were now confronted by a 100% increase in their tuition fees. Thus, most of the working class will most likely be able to aspire for Senior High School education.

On the labour front, in 1993, the Teachers Educational Workers Union (TEWU) could make important strides against this policy. During strikes, TEWU went to the extent of blocking roads in the University of Ghana campus and even threw rubbish in lecture rooms. They ensured increases in salaries were graduated according to the income levels of workers. Thus, higher wage earners had lower percentage increases, while low wage had higher percentage increases. This change in policy, won by the TEWU worked to close the gap in inequality.

It is against this context that the call for free education in high schools by the right-wing party, New Patriotic Party (now in government), struck a chord. It promises to open the doors to education to youth who are looking to build a better life.

In principle, free public education must be supported. However, will this be a repeat of compromising on quality and focus of education itself on building critical thinking? Is this to entrench education that focuses on supplying the labour market or creating a space for critical thinking that is

connected to broader political project of social change? If so how can this be developed as a priority of public policy?

## **Conclusion**

The contradictions which emerge very early in the independence period highlights tensions around the development project itself. Framed in the vision of the progress and modernity as framed in the colonial project, labour is the first to come up against its limits. These deepened with volatilities in commodity prices and brought the nationalist regimes to their knees with a series of coups. Interventions in education in the neoliberal era draws our attention to the shifting priorities away from the pursuit of state led industrialisation and diversification. It also draws a focus on the thorny question of what an alternative political project would mean concretely and how to piece this together. The past provides lessons and insights into what is possible, but also the constraints which we must confront.

# SOUTH AFRICA



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# Radical education histories i:

## Sached and some others

(Koni Benson and Asher Gamedze)

Imagine: Three years ago, in March 2024, REC (Radical Education Collective – a continent-wide collective with cells of revolutionaries based at colleges, technikons, and universities) successfully took control of the finances and the pedagogical projects of most of the higher education institutions in southern Africa. Since then there has been increased interest in histories of alternative education. These largely unknown histories are being used to inform the future educational agenda of the liberation movement which the revolutionary forces now have immense scope to shape. We locate this piece – an open, unfinished history of SACHED and some other alternative education initiatives under apartheid - very much within this forward movement. There is not a lot of existing writing on SACHED but many people hold and know the history because they were there. The piece's unfinished character is an invitation to collectively help us all fill in some of the gaps. So if you were part of SACHED and have any information on its history, or if you know someone who was and can interview them, please get in contact ([konibenson@gmail.com](mailto:konibenson@gmail.com); [kingasher11@gmail.com](mailto:kingasher11@gmail.com)) ! The other sense in which this piece is unfinished is that our history ends around the transition to neocolonial (in)dependence in the early 1990s. What happens to SACHED in that period is tied up with a broader narrative of demobilisation of progressive movements that took place across the spectrum – sports, arts, armed liberation forces, publishing, politics, community projects etc. We are planning to write something on how the popular progressive movement, which reached its height in the mid-late 1980s, was demobilised by/through/during the 'democratic transition', so, again if you have stories on demobilisation/incorporation, please get in contact!

But for now, let's cast our minds back and take another look at one of South Africa's most significant alternative education projects/spaces...

↑  
RADICAL MOVES  
IN EDUCATION

↓  
CONSERVATIVE  
MOVES IN EDUCATION

1949: Eiselen Commission  
ON AFRICAN EDUCATION  
RECOMMENDS RADICAL  
MEASURES TO REFORM  
THE NEGLECTED + MOSTLY  
MISSION RUN 'BANTU  
SCHOOL SYSTEM.'

1953: Bantu Education  
Act closes down most  
mission + night  
schools and cements  
segregated government  
controlled education  
to 'REBUILD Bantu  
culture' as defined  
by the APARTHEID  
state.

## SACHED:

The South African Committee for Higher Education was founded in 1959 by a group of academics, church people and educationists. It was established as a response to the 1959 Extension of Universities Act which segregated universities by 'ethnic' identity and 'race'. Some of

SACHED's Foundational impulses were to mitigate against "ethnic education" and the associated stigma of inferiority, and to plug the gap of lack of Black ~~and~~ tertiary educational opportunity since Black students could no longer enter the white universities.

Sached's  
first  
project

## Bursary Project:

The Bursary Project (BP), SACHED's first initiative, ran from May 1960 until 1994. Through BP, students who had matric could do GCEs and then enrol and study for degrees at London University (LU) via correspondence. SACHED set up an extensive support system for students and established a relationship with Britzus Tutorial College (BTC) in Johannesburg where BP students got correspondence support. The government refused to register SACHED as a school so students couldn't meet together for tutorials, they could only have one-on-one meetings with tutors. By May 1970 there was 81 students on the Bursary Project, in its first ten years only four students completed degrees.

1959: The Extension of Universities Act sets up separate 'tribal/bush colleges' for black university students who are now barred from attending white universities.

## Yu chichan Club

YCCC was a militant study group of 9 members founded in Cape Town in 1962 by expelled members of the African Peoples Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA). Amongst other things, the group studied and wrote on the politics and prospects of guerilla warfare in SA at the time. In the same year that they founded YCCC, the members disbanded it and founded the National Liberation Front (NLF). After exile and imprisonments, many original YCCC members were central to Sached's education work in SA and Namibia in the 1980s.

### **turret correspondence college**

BTC sold the academic tuition section of the college to SACHED in 1969 and in 1970 SACHED opened Turret Correspondence College (TCC) on the premises. TCC provided support to second-language English speakers at secondary level by creating a conducive learning environment and developing educational materials which were "pioneering in a number of ways. They were learner-centred,

developed by course-teams, and also sought to draw on the learners' experience. They 'always aimed to develop the students' ability to think critically.'

1963: Coloured Person's Education Act  
Seperate + compulsory education  
system set up under  
Dept. of 'Coloured Affairs.'

1964: Indian Education  
Act. Seperate  
education system  
for Indians under  
a Dept. of  
'Indian Affairs.'

The Study Centres Project was set up in the early 1970s to provide TCC students with contact-based support, motivation and academic assistance. The six Centres were set up at schools in Soweto, and one at a farm school in Bignaston. Local tutors were appointed and trained to teach in ways "which would avoid chalk-and-talk methods and would encourage group discussion, problem solving and learning skills development."

## SASO:

From 1968-1971 the black consciousness South African Student Organisation (SASO), ran Leadership Schools for high school students and Formation Schools for university students. The Formation School program included critical reflection on a range of topics through discussions. Trainees had to go through these discussions by the time they were attending the SASO annual conference in their third year of study. The schools were part of wider Black Consciousness Movement educational initiatives like study groups, leadership seminars, newsletters, and Black Community Programs.

-To cut or put in?

"Until 1969...most people in the liberation movement...wanted...an education that was equal to the education of Whites...And it didn't strike them until the BCM came into being that that education was an education for domination, that it was a racist education that prepares people for an oppressive and exploitative position in society." Neville Alexander (1990, p.106)

1967: National Education Policy Act.  
Sets out the principles of  
CNE: Christian Nationalist)  
Education for white schools.

1972: Youth Preparedness  
Programs for white  
youth to teach skills  
values + history for  
defending 'western  
civilization' against  
the black South  
African majority.

"We want no mixing of languages, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religions, and no mixing of races. The struggle for the Christian and National school still lies before us." - Afrikaner Volkstongres pamphlet, 1971.

## Bophuthatswana Teacher Upgrading Programme

The BTUP was the outcome of negotiations between three quite unlikely parties: SACHED, The Bophuthatswana Cabinet, and the Chairman's Fund of the Anglo American Corporation.

It was set up as a response to the chronic shortage of under-qualified teachers in the Bop. homeland. BTUP aimed to train 1000 un/under-qualified teachers over five years and it was planned as a potential model for other regions facing similar difficulties. When launched in 1975, BTUP took in 500 learners.

After three of the scheduled five years, the Bop. government terminated the programme, refusing discussion with the other parties. It is suspected that it was terminated due to its supposedly 'pro-communist' curriculum which included the Russian Revolution.

## Newspaper Project:

From the mid to the late 1970s SACHED was looking for alternative channels of education. They established relationships with a number of newspapers which then carried educational supplements for adults as well as supplementary material for high school students. Some of these publications were: "The Study Mail" in the Rand Daily Mail, "Weekend World School" in Weekend World, "Operation Catch Up" which was established in 1976 in the midst of student uprising, and "People's College" which accompanied Weekend World until the newspaper was banned in 1978.

1976: The South African Indian Council takes over certain educational functions for Indian education

1979: Education + Training Act, replaces the Bantu Education Act making the Dept of Education + Training (DET) responsible for African education.

South Africa -  
Radical Education histories i

This meant that more money was spent on African education = teacher upgrading and more schools were built, but curriculum runs on the same basis as Bantu Education.

As SACHED expanded regionally in the 1980s - opening centres in Port Elizabeth, East London, Pietermaritzburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Newcastle to add to those already in Joburg, Cape Town, Durban and Grahamstown - it also expanded the scope of its educational activities.

Giving rise to projects like:

## UPbeat Magazine:

"UPBEAT is a progressive, educational magazine for today's teenager.

UPBEAT is one of several projects of SACHED, a non-profit making educational organisation.

UPBEAT comes out seven times a year. It costs R3 to subscribe for a year, and 30c per copy.

UPBEAT covers issues of crucial importance such as unemployment, housing, trade unions and child labour. It also takes up student concerns such as corporal punishment and school uniforms. UPBEAT encourages debate on political and educational topics. In addition, UPBEAT carries vocabulary lessons, short stories, quizzes and articles on health, African history education, sport and music. All this in very easy English. UPBEAT may be educational but it is also fun to read. It takes the sting out of reading.

Readers are encouraged to send in their poems and short stories for publication in UPBEAT. Teachers use UPBEAT in the classroom with teachers' notes provided by UPBEAT. They say that there is a noticeable improvement in the English reading skills of students who read UPBEAT regularly.

If you would like to subscribe to UPBEAT, send a postal order for R3 to UPBEAT, PO Box 11350, Johannesburg."

(UPBEAT Calendar 1987: A history of education in South Africa)

## LACOM:

LACOM was the Labour-Community Subcommittee of SACHED. LACOM educators adopted popular education methods to build on participants experiential knowledge in learning about working class politics for a socialist society. Educational activities were organized and planned together with mass-based organisations. For example, LACOM supported the establishment of cultural 'locals' in unions. This period, the 1980s, was characterised by labour and community education programmes which included music, theatre, art, and the production of creative materials.

1980s: Apartheid Minister of Education + Training pushes for a greater emphasis on technical education, pushing industries to train + 'upgrade' black workers.

1981: The De Lange Commission does an in depth study of national education + recommends major reforms.

1981: New policy passed on free + compulsory education for all.

An experimental bridging college, established by SACHED in 1986 to enable and Black students who had finished high school to enter university. With branches in CT and Jhb they ran first year courses accredited by University of Indiana in USA. Some of these courses were recognised by UWC, UCT and Wits which enabled students to enter those institutions at 2<sup>nd</sup>-year level. Khanya developed alternative teaching practices to large lectures and individualised learning for exam performance. They also challenged power dynamics in the classroom and got students to learn in and with communities as interns as part of their coursework.

Some Khanya graduates went to Jakob Mofengo to teach

## Jakob Mofengo High School:

Named after the leader of a 1904-8 Nama and Herero alliance against German colonists, this school was founded as an alternative to Bantu Education in Namibia in 1985. The school continues to run in Katatura, Windhoek today. SACHED fundraised and sent people to teach there during the first year of its operation after it was opened by Otillie Abrahams. Abrahams had been part of Unity Movement student organizing in the 1950s in

CT, and other political movements, including the YCCC and SWAPO before she went into exile in Zambia, Tanzania, and Sweden, and returned to Namibia in the 1980s.

1983: Government White Paper accepting the principles of the De Lange Commission Report but rejecting the major recommendation of a single education system for all.

At this point teacher to student ratio for white schools is 1:30  
black urban schools is 1:60  
black rural schools is 1:90.

# Radical histories of radical histories!

## khanya oral history project

This was a curriculum project run by the African history coordinators at Khanya College from 1986. Its impulse was to challenge educational and historical practices that were seen as professionalized, elitist, and removed from the realities of struggle. The course started by locating South Africa in a history of Africa, and Africa within world history. Students learned community histories and learned how to write those histories. The Center for Documentary Photography and SACHED's audio-visual department led photography workshops as part of the course on the relationship between media and historical narratives.

## the history workshop

Started in 1978 and continues to run today. Dedicated to counter apartheid state and male-centred nationalist versions of SA history. Provided historical materialist analysis of South African society, taking what they called 'a history-from-below' approach which meant prioritizing the experiences of the working class. The workshop had an organizing committee at Wits university but wasn't limited to the university. They were interested translating academic histories into accessible formats for people who are marginalised by the university.

1984: National Policy for General Education Affairs Act passed to bring education structures in line with the new 1983 Constitution.

1985: State of Emergency. Congress of South African Students (COSAS) banned.

There would now be a 'General Affairs' Education Dept set up to oversee finance, teachers salaries, registration and curriculum, and an 'Own Affairs' Department of Education and Culture, set up for white, colored, and Indian people. African education remained under DET. Education in the 10 'homelands' fell under their own departments.

According to the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee, People's Education was for challenging "capitalist norms of competition, individualism and stunted intellectual development." Instead it promoted "collective input and active participation by all, as well as stimulating critical thinking and analysis," (Soweto Parents Crisis Committee, 1985).

### people's history program (php), uwc

In 1985 the UWC history department put out a manifesto to adopt a 'radical left' philosophy.' This initiative was in part of a broader movement including the establishment of the National Education Crisis Committee and the takeover of UWC by activist academics. As part of this approach they launched the PHP which linked history with politics. Undergrad students were sent into communities to recover "people's histories," and mobilize against apartheid. It became part of the core history curriculum in 1987, sending thousands of students into the streets, communities, and factories of Cape Town to research and write "hidden histories."

### national education crisis committee (nec) and the people's education movement

In 1985 the NECC brought together students, parents and teachers to address the education crisis. This marked a shift of strategy from 'Liberation before education' (which was key to the schools boycott and mass insurrection in the first half of the 1980s), to 'Education For Liberation' - using schools as places of organising and developing a vision, plans and materials for **People's Education**. The radical content, visions, and principles of the People's Education Movement were blunted when incorporated into the new Department of Education in the 1990s.

1986: PRIVATE SCHOOLS ACT passed. Officially allows MIXED-RACE PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

1987: People's Education materials banned from DET schools.

# Know Your Continent (KYC)

A series of African history education programs running out of SACHED's Cape Town office in the 1980s. KYC was made up by a small team who scoured libraries and acquired banned materials on African history to do the following: produce materials for high schools; run a semester seminar for post-matric youth and students who had dropped out of school during boycotts; host an in-depth seminar for research and debate; and support a monthly lecture organised by COBERT (Council for Black Education, Research and Training). COBERT was a radical Black activist education network in Langa based at the Grassroots Education Trust office.

## buchu books

An important educational materials intervention, Buchu Books was started by SACHED in 1987 to publish non-fiction and research books as radical alternatives to the Charterist views that began to dominate the publications of other 'progressive' presses in the 1980s. Buchu Books shut down in early 1990s because their funders said that they should go be commercial business now that apartheid censorship was over. Their archives are at the National Library Archive in Grahamstown.

1990: Government puts forward the 'CLASE Models' which sets up conditions under which white state schools could admit black students

1993: Buchu Books closes.

↳ In 1989 at the 4th congress of the NECC it was noted that in escalating states of Emergency programmatic work had stopped, student organizing was weak, teachers were feeling threatened & demoralized, and parents were not playing the role expected of them. But this exhaustion is not what led to depoliticization of the education movement...

Buchu Books closes as funders pull out in the 1990s because now (radical) education "projects" were said to be "free" to join the market economy. Books were no longer banned. Books could be bought and sold. The buying and selling logic of the negotiated settlement was one of the ways that these radical alternative education initiatives were demobilized- collective liberation was displaced by individualized rainbownationism. In all sorts of ways, over the next few years, the most radical and collective elements of many movements were dismissed- seen as in-the-way or deemed no-longer-necessary, because now we were "free." The Radical Education Collective (REC) and others would beg- no, demand- to differ.

And then?

What happened to the visions and practices of SACHED and these other alternative education projects in the 1990s? How did we get from mobilisation for 'education for liberation', to demobilisation and a discourse of performance outcomes, cost effectiveness and economic competitiveness of the 1990s/2000s, to remobilisation and the renewed collective education projects we are building today?

1993

?

?

What happened to the NECC? To debates and practices of People's Education for People's Power? To trade union education? To cultural locals and community, worker, student links made in and through the various SACHED and other education initiatives in the struggle for liberation.

Where are the tools developed for collective debate, and collective study?

The films, the newsletters, the music, the plays, the poetry that drew on struggle experiences from across Africa and Latin America?

What did the negotiated settlement and formalization of many of the strands of activity on this map come to mean under neoliberal democracy? How were these organizations built and maintained? And how has the post1994 stifling been challenged in recent years? Where are the counter-curriculums, or awareness programs, that continued to define critical as being able to study to intervene, that drew on history, created alternative learning spaces and continued to engage community, worker, and student collectives as part of education practices that re-imagined society?

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2023

This is an open, unfinished history of SACHED and we invite readers, whether you were there and part of these and other initiatives in the past, or want to be part of creating and using learning spaces as a central part of the ongoing liberation movement, to add to this conversation. Where are these materials? Where are the collectives that grew out of these collectives?

What happened to SACHED & these related politics + projects from 1990 onwards?

Your thoughts + questions:

What's missing on this map?



# Clements Kadalie, the ICU and the Black Labour Movement

by  
Khwezi Mkhize

On the 17th of December, 1919, a day after Dingaan's Day (now Day of Reconciliation), black workers assembled in the docks of Cape Town. They had resolved to strike against the high cost of living and the export of food in the aftermath of the First World War. In the following days the strike swelled in number. The South African government subsequently sent troops and the police in addition to baiting the strikers with a bogus wage increase. It was only during Christmas week that the strike began to lose momentum.

Some scholars consider the strike as a failure as by the end of the year work had resumed. In any case, there are a number of things that make the Dock Workers' strike of 1919 a watershed moment in South African labor history. The hesitations and downright racist dismissals of the strike by white laborists and unions significantly compromised any sense of a multiracial labor moment in South Africa. The strike launched the body that had organized it, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), into the national political scene. The ICU, a black union, had organized the first major black strike in the early twentieth century. This marked a moment in which labor organizing and race work were a unified political undertaking in South Africa. The ICU was moving harmoniously with radical black politics on the global post-First World War stage.

In the 1920s the ICU became the largest political organization in South Africa. It was, in fact, the first black mass movement in the country. Its membership and labor organizing spanned the urban centers and rural reaches of South Africa and beyond. Its history, successes and complications is a story that cannot be told without Clements Kadalie. Kadalie was a founding member of the ICU and one of the principal organizers of the Dock Worker's strike. He is undoubtedly one of the most significant figures in the labor, anti-colonial and Pan-Africanist histories of South Africa in the 20th century. Yet he is largely unknown in South Africa's landscape of memory. Who was Clements Kadalie and why did he matter so much in early 20th century South Africa?

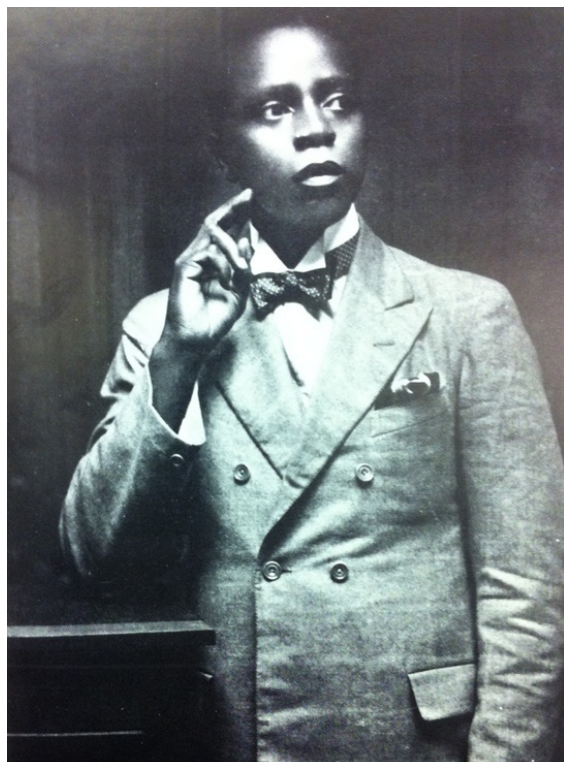
If one were to begin to answer this question, we would have to begin by making South African history a *problem* rather than a self-evident narrative. All of the major figures that form the narrative of South Africa's struggle history are *South African*. Indeed, the history of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle seems to have been a history *for* South Africa. This narrative has made it difficult to recuperate or tell South African history in more complex and nuanced ways. One of the significant aspects of discussing Kadalie is how he complicates and opens up South Africa's struggle history to its lesser known Pan-Africanists dimensions.

Clements Kadalie was born in Malawi in 1896. As with many political figures of his generation, he received a missionary education. At the time of the First World War, he had become something of an itinerant, traveling across Southern Africa in search of professional work equitable of someone with his education and ambition. He travelled to Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe before ending up in Cape Town early in 1918.

His time in Zimbabwe exposed him to the sharp iniquities of the racialized labor economy, but he faced its racism with a degree of resilience. Of course, South Africa had more racism to give and, after the War came to an end, Kadalie turned his attention toward union organizing. He was elected as the ICU's general-secretary. As he would reflect in his autobiography *My Life and the ICU* (1970), while the new union gained its notoriety for organizing black workers in South Africa, the scope of its vision was Pan-African. Kadalie had envisioned and spoken of an Industrial and Commercial Worker's Union *of Africa*. It is not surprising that in the 1920s, the ICU had branches in various parts of South Africa as well as Namibia, Zimbabwe and was familiar to Malawians and in the black diaspora at large.

Kadalie's vision of union building was, then, deeply inflected by the currents of Pan-Africanist movement building that swept the globe after World War I. He envisioned himself early on in his political career as "the great African Marcus Garvey." Like Garvey, he was known as a powerful orator, and one of his remarkable achievements was leading a complex, linguistically and ethnically, labor movement solely in English. He was also a newspaper editor, an essential occupation for black intellectuals at the time. The first newspaper that he was involved with, *The Black Man*, worked both as the official mouthpiece of the ICU but it also publicized the unfolding history of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. When the ICU's headquarters moved from Cape Town to Johannesburg, *The Black Man* had folded and the ICU was publishing *The Worker's Herald*.

While the ICU was laboring to grow the black labor movement Kadalie was often battling numerous government efforts to have him deported from South Africa. This was an evident effect of the racist state's exploitation of citizenship and the borders of belonging; much like today's anxieties in South Africa about the presence of 'Othered' Africans. Kadalie was unique, then, because his radical politics and origins gave his blackness a particular visibility that was also the source of his vulnerability. He was located, by circumstance, as an interlocutor within South Africa's body politic but not of it.



The ICU lost a great deal of its political momentum and clout in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Yet, Kadalie remained as active on the political scene as he could. When he looked back on his political career and the beginning of the ICU in his autobiography, he remembered the black cosmopolitanism of Cape Town as what enabled the ICU to develop as it did. Cape Town was, after all, a major port city that assembled people from far-flung parts of the black diaspora. Kadalie was one of these itinerants and, as such, someone who's political sights were always in excess of national borders or the affinities of nationalism.

# Women in Trade Unions and Popular Education Challenges

Interview  
with  
Kashiefa Achmat

Kashiefa Achmat (KA): Hello

Nombuso Mathibela (NM): Hi Kashiefa how are you? You are speaking to Nombuso and I am calling you from Pathways and just wanted to get a sense from you about the role of popular education in your experience having been in the trade unions.

KA: I'm fine man haha

NM: Initially I just want to aske which trade unions have you worked with?

KA: I was a shop Steward within the SETAWU union, so they fall under the umbrella of Cosatu

NM: How long where you there for?

**KA:** Oh my god, it was over 20 years, I almost worked 30 years for Pick'n Pay, for 29 and a half years I worked in a retail store at Pick'n Pay

**NM:** In terms of organising popular education as a shop steward how did you find that?

**KA:** I think popular education has a more interaction education with workers because I feel that they find it not so intimidating and its where they can share their experiences you see, so it is not just something standing and talking all the time, I think they appreciate popular education more because of the interaction. Sometimes you can say something that does not translate the same in the work place, once you bring different issues you will then have different experiences from workers.

**NM:** From what you are saying you have worked in trade unions before post-apartheid South Africa, have the challenges changed in anyway under the new constitutional democratic dispensation? What would you say are the current challenges and opportunities specifically as it related to popular education in your organising?

**KA:** I think it is easier now, not in all companies though because obviously you must have 50 plus members also it is easier now to organise but it is not really that easy because what you find now is that the companies are using these outsourced companies, so this week they will employ this amount of people , just to make an example with the retail sector its very popular there where the outsourcing companies are using labourers from the community now if they find those workers difficult, they will get rid of those workers and then they will employ different people and when you go back there it is totally different people. The ones you organise as a union are not there anymore because that is what companies are doing but if you had your 50 plus within the company then it is much better to organise those workers you see, s that is the challenge with outsourcing.

**NM:** So Outsourcing has made is quite difficult

**KA:** Yes, because some of the workers are very afraid to join unions, you will have the militant ones who will join the unions but the bosses will get rid of those ones who are talking too much. Sometimes they will work on these contracts monthly till month contracts – you still have those who still operate like that, so workers are very scared to join up with unions but you will find the ones who are tired of bosses and they will join the unions. So Unions must just do follow ups and service those members because what you find is that unions are not doing what they are supposed to, servicing members is very important because you will find that people will join a union but at the end of the day they will not get the service and the support from that union, that's one of the issues, when the worker needs you need to be there and at times unions just do not follow up.

**NM: In terms of running popular education sessions who is that usually conducted?**

**KA:** We will have a programme laid out but we will have discussions in that workshop also and people can contribute what they want to add to the discussion. Sometimes, it is areas that you do not touch and challenges in in the workplace, so popular education also gives them a space to air these things and talk about them. It also helps others realise, oh I am facing the same thing, so it is good when you have popular education amongst workers where they get to share their experiences, that where they learn that their issues might be shared by others. For instance, with sexual harassment, when you talk about it, it's very huge some people will think urgh he is just whistling at me that this something that is normal but that's also forms of sexual harassment. So, when we have these workshops and talk about these things people will then understand and know that there are policy documents that you can go check what is the way forward when something like that happens in the workplace.

**NM: Who would be facilitating these workshops?**

**KA:** It is mostly shop stewards, we get training from our unions they also run workshops with us they have their educators that will do this training with us and then there is train the trainer and we will go to the workplace and have our own workshops

**NM:** And what have been the opportunities for trade unions in relations to popular education in the constitutional democracy

**KA:** Within the unions, I think shop stewards are more educated and concenscenced about the issues in the workplace, they can face challenges and face management because you will find that it is very difficult for some managers to work with them, where there is a popular education, by debating and having discussions it becomes easier for them to speak up and open up their mouths in meetings. You will find that in meetings you will sit in meetings quite because you are too scared but once you sit in those meetings and you will see no but we had a discussion on this and it is supposed to be like this, then you are confidence and clear that this is what the Labour Relations Act is saying and this is what the Basic Conditions of Employment is saying. So, you have the confidence to speak on the things you know because you had these discussions in your workshops. It gives shop stewards and workers the confidence to face issues in the workplace.

**NM:** In terms of the workshops, what are some of the issues that come out as the focus of popular education, issues that stood out as the most important for popular education in the unions

**KA:** I think it's the gender issues, because you know the unions are male dominated, positions and oh my goodness, that is always the challenge and you know when they talk about the need to have capacity, we need to empower the women but gender issues will always be a secondary issue on the table, that is one of the challenges. If you look into the unions you won't find much chairpersons, they all have this treasury position or a

secondary position that is what they will have but the gender issue is a major issue in the unions.

**NM: and materials and resources that speak particularly to the issue of gender in the workplace, how are they received by workers in the training programmes?**

**KA:** The materials?

**NM: Yes, the discussions around gender**

**KA:** I think a lot of them appreciate it because we have a lot of violence and drug abuse so they appreciate these discussions because there are a lot of women who have also been abused and they don't talk about it, but once you open up the space you will see a lot of emotion and all those types of things come out in that meeting oh my god. Sometimes, you can see that they feel better once they talk about it and I think that is one of the things that workers really appreciate when we have these discussions because it is close to the heart and very personal. I think popular education on this is very good because you don't stand in front talking alone about these things but you haven't gone through it so why you talking about it? You need to have people with their experiences and you know some people don't open up but once you talk about it they see someone else talk and that is when they come out to talk

**NM: What do you think is the future of popular education in relations to the current worker struggles, looking at the issues of gender and outsourcing?**

**KA:** I don't think that there are enough workshops on this, people need to be contenscised. It is not only in the workplace but it is the community as well, there aren't enough popular education spaces where you can say people are familiar with popular education, it is only some companies that allow meetings where you can talk about these things. For me I worked in the retail sector, we have our weekly meetings, if we don't have issues of

the unions to discuss we have personal popular things we can talk about, things happening in the community, the basic conditions of employment and even these agreements and things like that, those are the things we talk about, things like maternity leave that affects workers that is where you can talk about it but this is not all companies where workers have the privilege to meet and discuss issues.

**NM: and then the other point to note, you said that there is a gendered dynamic within the workers and amongst unions, what where the challenges you faced as a woman in becoming a shop steward?**

**KA:** We faced difficulties but you know you need to stand your ground when you become a shop steward, as a woman you find that you have to work double the amount because you will find that a guy will say one thing and you will say something that makes sense but it's like they don't take note of that but when a guy says it everybody applause, so women always have to work harder than men and you will also find that it is women who are bringing other women down because some of these women appoint these guys, so that is the kind of pull down syndrome you have in these unions.

Workers need to be contenscised about this popular education because many workers just do not know, there needs to be more workshops and resources available for workers where they can go and this is a space to talk about these things. You find that there are a lot of women working in the retail industry, there are no child care facilities and that is also one of the areas that is really one of the problems. So you are an outsourced worker, you are insecure, you are the lowest of the low in the work place at the end of the day you don't have a space you can go to – to just talk to someone. In meetings you can have a space for a group of women, I mean not even just women but men too where you can talk about things and share because that will assist many people. A few people will know about popular education we need wide spread education.

**NM:** You just mentioned the issue of working mothers and household to tend to, families and responsibilities, most of the time during the week they are at work and come home later with more responsibilities at home, so now how do you reconcile tight and difficult schedules for workshops and meetings? In the student movement(s) at the university level, we found that we could have the highest number of attendance if we had meetings for workers and students, it always worked best on Saturdays

**KA:** yes, it's the same in my experience too, they work totally different hours so you need to work around those changes and check this week who is working which shift because you need to make sure you know who is able to attend meetings and not end up having the same people attending sessions you need to get to all the people. For that, you need to check and it also is a challenge because of the hours that they are working it makes it very difficult to organise, sometimes you will actually find that the husband is too problematic and the woman won't come back because her husband does not want her to attend those meetings.

**NM:** Okay, thank you so much for your time we really it

**KA:** It's a pleasure, it is nice talking to you too.

# ZIMBABWE



# Perspectives on Agrarian reform and education in Zimbabwe

By Nokuthula Mayaba

With Francisca Mandeya  
and Sothemba Tshuma

## Introduction and Context

The relationship between Agrarian reform and Education can be viewed as complimentary as they are both critical pillars in terms of attaining economic and development goals for any nation. The land is the basis of livelihoods as it has the soil on which cultivation, mining as well as flora and fauna thrives. Education is critical to national and economic development and is meant to liberate people so that they enjoy peace and prosperity. Life on the land and quality education are among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In Zimbabwe, the relationship between Agrarian reform and education has had a negative impact on the economy and livelihoods. Rather than develop as expected, Zimbabwe has regressed. Agrarian reform was meant to address the inequitable land distribution

between the white minority who owned over 70% of land and the indigenous majority who were and are still landless. What went wrong in the case of Zimbabwe? This paper discusses agrarian reform and education within the prevailing economic conditions in post-independence Zimbabwe

## **The Lancaster House Agreement**

Prior to Zimbabwe gaining its independence from colonial rule in 1980, the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979, whose main agenda item was 'Land' as a prerequisite to signing the agreement; was deemed the blue print that would see 'sons of the soil' reclaiming the soil. It was based on a willing buyer willing seller basis. This agreement came about between the British government and the then political leaders of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front, ZAPU, and ZANU and the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government. The Lancaster House negotiations of 1979 could be compared to CODESA in South Africa. Both sought to address the land question and were envisaged to bring peace and reconciliation.

The British government contributed funds into the willing buyer willing seller project, but as corruption slowly crept into the government, most of the money ended in the pockets of the politicians, who also acquired land for themselves. Mugabe and his government had close ties with Margaret Thatcher and the British conservative party. Mugabe was always seen as one of the more 'educated' of the political leaders and the British conservative party had then chosen him as Zimbabwe's 'golden boy'. It became apparent that the anticipated agrarian reform was not happening. Nothing had changed in land ownership for the disenfranchised black majority and yet liberation was based on the return of land to native Zimbabweans. So the benefits of the Lancaster agreement were being questioned by Zimbabweans who had participated in the liberation struggle and anticipated ownership of the means of production.

## Pre and Post-Independence Education

The colonial Rhodesian government had made European education compulsory and universal, and spent as much as twenty times more per European child than the African child (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). The new government had inherited a system of education that was racially biased and unequal in both governance and quality. So the colonial remnants in the education system still manifested in group A and B schools with a few black elites in the predominantly white A schools and the black majority in group B schools; that ranged from built up boarding schools, day schools, farm schools and under the tree schools. The new government did little, or nothing to change the educational infrastructure or curriculum. For many years post-independence the Zimbabwean education system was sustained by the Rhodesian economy and infrastructure. A continuation of the British based curriculum with all examinations marked and moderated in Britain and certificates done there clearly demonstrated the influence they still remotely had in shaping mind-sets. Although the education received by the Black Zimbabweans was not on par with that received by the British, it was still somewhat a good system compared to the rest of Southern Africa. Unlike the Bantu system in South Africa for instance, students were still able to study and become teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, etc.

A critical look at the role education plays would leave one convinced that the colonial education system was designed for blacks to serve as they were never exposed to innovation. Those in the white elite schools overtly and covertly learnt to perpetuate their supremacy. The white children were either children of farmers or corporate executives, so the elite still owned the means of production while the black majority continued to be domesticated through being taught to reproduce book knowledge as opposed to being educated to liberate themselves from serving the white minority, and pushing for social equity and equal opportunities in terms of access to land for agriculture and mining.

When Zimbabwe gained independence, there was still a majority of the people who did not have the opportunities and facilities for equal access to formal education. The education system was very restrictive for the black population and most only finished six or seven years of primary schooling.

Post- independence Zimbabwe made some efforts to increase participation in education and had attempted to invest in education as the government perceived education critical to national and economic development. New policies were introduced at independence to redress the past. The most significant outcome was the unprecedented increase in student enrolments in the first two decades of independence. Over the first 20 years of independence, Zimbabwe saw massive strides in school expansion, teacher training, and resource improvement. Primary schooling was made tuition free, and this resulted in excellent admission rates. By the end of the first decade of independence, Zimbabwe had achieved an almost universal primary education enrolment (Moyo,2011) (Shizha & Kariwo,2011), but this expansion also produced other consequences to the system such as reduced levels of resources at educational institutions as well as overcrowding. There were shortages of books and other necessary educational materials. Nonetheless, Zimbabwe still had one of the highest literacy rates in Africa. Mandeya (2010) noted that the literacy rate of Zimbabwe was at about 94%. However, despite the commendable growth in education; social, economic and political factors undid the gains that were achieved in the first two decades of independence. The education system of Zimbabwe failed spectacularly to address the social and economic issues that saw the poverty of many and the prosperity of a few.

### **ESAP as the blueprint for Zimbabwe's Economic woes**

The Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) launched in 1990 were meant to herald a new era of modernised competitive, export-led industrialization (Sanders 1996). Despite the public outcry and criticism on

its predicted negative impact, the government accepted the blue print that would see mass retrenchments and massive cuts in welfare expenditure, reversing the once marked achievements of Zimbabwe's post-colonial period, popular education and health services. The reforms were not about transforming the well-being of the masses, but about protecting big capitalist industries.

With the government quietly reverting to a fee paying system at the primary and secondary levels, due to an inability to financially maintain the running of the education system in this way, the gains reaped from making education free at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels were corroded as the underfunding of education due to the ESAP impacted on the poor. Tertiary education continued to be free as long as individuals had the required grades to enter a tertiary institution, and could pay the government back after they were employed.

While all this was happening the implementation of the proposed Agrarian reform was at a standstill as the focus was on modernization of industries. With more pressure coming from the wars veterans the government was forced to put out the fire regarding land questions by awarding war veterans with \$50000 each in pay outs. This came with a huge impact on the already ailing economy and was exacerbated by Zimbabwe's stubborn engagement in war in DRC. The land was still the Achilles heel for the government and the economic quagmire was fast driving Zimbabwean people to vocalize their discontent.

### **Internal and External Political Fallout**

Some Zimbabweans felt that when ZANU-PF came into leadership, they made little efforts to address the issue of land redistribution. Many felt that the ruling party had forgotten its primary agenda and focused solely on maintaining power. When the cry for land became louder the War Veterans

put pressure on the government as poverty and unemployment rates soared.

The rise of the opposition saw the people as having an alternative. Threatened for the first time by strong political opposition with valid and convincing reasons for change, the land was the only political currency left to convince the masses to retain the government, which by 1999 had proved to fail its citizens and war veterans in many ways. The unemployment rates proved to be problematic and the labour movement pushed for democratic change. The Lancaster House agreement stipulated that land would be handed over in the years following the first democratic elections and that it would be handed over on a willing-buyer, willing-seller basis. The black majority were still landless as their social and economic profiles were clearly not eligible for acquisition of land under the willing buyer willing seller agreement. Land redistribution and reform was a central demand of the nationalist movement as well as the armed liberation struggle, which sought majority rule, including control over land, natural resources and the economy. (Moyo, 2011) In the face of opposition, ZANU PF touted the land as their Pan African trump card. Many argue that the political reason for land reform was a desperate party seeking political relevance, as bad policies, and other corrupt activities within the government had resulted in economic meltdown.

The political fallout was not only internal in Zimbabwe. Beginning 2000, the Labour party in Britain had gained power and Tony Blair as Prime Minister decided that he was no longer going to fund the resettlement project as Zimbabwe had now been an independent nation for 20 years. Reasons cited included corruption and unfairness, if compulsory acquisition was implemented. The Land Donor conference in 1998 reneged on promises to the continuation of the Lancaster Agreement. The ruling party retaliated by subsequently organising disorganized land grabs under the name the Third Chimurenga (FTLRP - 3rd Chimurenga), with a target redistribution

of 8 million hectares of land. The FTLRP was built upon two decades of lacklustre land reforms which eventually entailed the mobilisation of both popular direct action for land reform and an expropriation policy, and that the state sought to meet both the popular demands for land and those of the middle class, the bureaucracy and national elites(Moyo). There was no research done into how land would be assigned. Politicians obtained lucrative farms while ordinary people in Zimbabwe remained landless. In addition, of the few farms that had been handed over to new owners, only a fraction of them (and its beneficiaries) were actually productive.

One can hardly refer to the FTLRP as Agrarian Reform. It was an ideal that is still to be realized hence the Zimbabwean Government are trying to remedy the failed land reforms. Targeted Command Agriculture has been introduced to ensure food security. One may opine that as a party, ZANU-PF did very little. The political leaders of the party knew what the people's agenda was, and they knew what to do, but were often enticed by the capitalist monopoly, and many of them benefited from ESAP at the expense of the majority.

### **Impact of Agrarian Reform on Education**

The agrarian reform had many economic, political, cultural and social implications, with education having one of the worst impacts. Zanu-PF, having been the ruling party, seemed to focus its efforts on the FTLRP and not on education (Chicano et al). Zimbabwe, a country once revered for its post-colonial education policies by most African countries could now barely keep its own school doors open. The government's declining investment and inadequate financial support undermined the quality of education in Zimbabwe, and its re-imposition of school fees denied access to education for many students from poorer households.

The dignity of teachers was undermined as they were accused of being supporters of the opposition. Many Zimbabwean teachers were offered teaching posts in other countries. Some resorted to working menial and underpaid jobs to sustain themselves, and the teaching profession eventually lost its allure.

### **The direct implications of FTLRP**

#### The right to education

The FTLRP has had a massive impact on the realisation the right to education. International standards on the right to education provide that education should be made available to everyone (Muyengwa, 2013).

The FTLRP resulted in farm school closures, displacement of children who depended on the owners of land for their need for education. The change in ownership also meant changes in the use of buildings which had been previously used as classrooms, and in some cases, classrooms were burnt or destroyed during the violence that ensued during the FTLRP.

The emigration of many teachers out of the country made education in farm communities difficult to run. Some of the teachers were victimized as colluding with white farmers and were chased away from farms. In the few schools that they remained, there was a lack of educational resources.

The rights to health were also violated as livelihoods were affected. Hyperinflation, job loss and a struggling economy also meant that many pupils were denied access due to their parent's inability to afford school materials or fees. The farm owners had provided food and medical care for the children. The instability meant that the general quality of life went down.

## Quality of Education

The content of education, including the curricula should be acceptable. During the process of the FTLRP it was noted that the individuals affiliated with Zanu-PF, including war veterans, youth and the militia took over the teaching of the political history and patriotism (Muyengwa, 2013), and it is common knowledge that affiliates of Zanu-PF benefitted from the land reform programme, hence the party's influence in education was no surprise. These political acts further solidified the already existing tensions within the country. Parents had no say about the kind of education that was being taught to their children, and consequently, anyone who tried to oppose what was being taught to children may have been labelled an enemy of the state. The Zimbabwean paradox of an educated citizenry with a high literacy rate but inability to tackle development challenges point to the quality of education and deeper political root causes for maintaining the status quo.

## Relevance of Education

The failings of the FTLRP are that the education system did not adapt to the socio-political climate, and there wasn't enough emphasis on the need to educate pupils about what was happening in the country in terms of educational, or agrarian policies, and in addition no programmes put in place to educate and train pupils to adapt or work towards a reformed state. Education should be flexible so that it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings. The brainwashed youth militia who had no analysis of the social, economic and political root causes of the country's problems and were used to perpetrate violence on the white farmers.

## Education and other social services

Social services are essential to human development and access to quality services is not only essential to the well-being of farm-workers and their families, especially in the post-FTLRP landscape, but is also a necessity in creating well developed and economically productive communities. Farm worker communities manifested some of the worst nutrition, health, education, housing and sanitation statistics in the country. The Sentinel Survey for Social Dimensions of Adjustment (1995), showed that only 59% of children on farms attended primary school and less than one percent of these sat for grade seven examinations. In comparison to rural and urban areas attendance rates were calculated at 79% and 89% respectively. Commercial farms were run as a business entities, and therefore profit considerations often outweighed the need to provide social amenities for farm workers.

## The loss of respect for Teachers

Economic downturn also saw the introduction of money-making activities which had little respect for education, hard work or the good work ethic that was traditionally known in Zimbabwe. Zanu-PF became known for ruling based on patronage and patrimonialism, and that was one of the main reasons for coming up with the land reform project, to please their members, who were no longer happy with how their party was being ruled.

## Community participation in Education

Several community initiatives in places such as the Shamva district (Tom, 2015) saw farming communities working together to raise funds and convert their farm buildings in order to provide these services, but the lack of government support made it difficult for these communities to sustain these projects. And although this has often been attributed to the failure

of government and its ministries to plan appropriately and accordingly, some felt that it was also the responsibility of all stake holders in the communities and nationally (private sector, government, non-government organisations and other community based organisations) to collaborate on social services delivery in these new farming communities and in Zimbabwe at large.

## Conclusion

Zimbabwe still has many unresolved issues, both in terms of land reform and in terms of education. Moeletsi Mbeki has called some African leaders 'Architects of Poverty'. Further, the economic reforms were prescribed by the World Bank and accepted by the corrupt political elites despite mass outcry, and caused the fast regression of Zimbabwe and threw it into a poverty rut that has made real development elusive. Education suffered a blow, with farm schools being the most vulnerable. Paradoxically the high literacy rate that Zimbabwe was renowned for, did not liberate them, bringing about serious doubts about the efficacy and relevance of education. Perhaps the system of education needs overhauling so that it may be relevant to the Zimbabwean reality. A framework for land reform that is based on the ability and capacity to utilise the land for the benefit of all and addresses social inequity is needed. While one may disagree with the approach taken by the Zimbabwean government its decision is also commended as being the bold step that many ex-colonies are reluctant to take.

*Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories*  
- Amilcar Cabral

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# Perspectives on Agrarian reform and education in Zimbabwe

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By

*Khanyisa Booii*

## Introduction

Prior to the land reform programme, the Zimbabwean commercial sector occupied 56% of the total arable land while the subsistence sector had 44%. However, the land reform programme saw an increase by area and numbers in smallholder subsistence agriculture (74%) versus commercial agriculture (26%). This meant the rise of the agrarian reform.

It is critical to look at how the education system of Zimbabwe evolved (if it did) to meet the needs this reform. This article seeks to delve into how Zimbabwe's education system has handled agrarian reform using a very wide lens. Has it been able to move from catering education to Zimbabweans as labourers to catering to Zimbabweans as regional and world traders? Living in a technologically survey world, had the education system progressed such that beneficiaries are able to innovate the agrarian space? Are those coming out of school interested in being a functional part of the reform?

## **Equipping New Farm Owners with Skills and the Role of Institutions of Learning**

Training colleges of agriculture were established to meet the increases in demand for trained agricultural personnel. The Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Zimbabwe was established to provide support to the Department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services (AGRITEX). The land reform programme with its bias on smallholder agriculture created demand for human resources in the sector. There was an increase in agricultural training colleges and, while existing ones were expanded in capacity, course durations were reduced to fast track training of agricultural personnel to adjust to emerging situations. Currently agricultural training is classified under three major learning levels; universities, colleges and other farmer training institutions. This meant smallholder farmers or those in the smallholder farming families could gain education on the business of farming and how to access markets.

Before the Agrarian reform, agricultural education used to benefit from support by commercial farmers through various forums and organizations towards research, industrial placements, manpower development assistance and scholarships to students. These private public partnerships assisted economic growth and development. This support was significantly halted when the scales changed with majority of arable land belonging to subsistence farmers. With this decrease of support from commercial farmers to public institutions and organizations, agricultural education was disadvantaged of much needed assistance. Research activity slowed, students could no longer get industrial exposure and there were minimal scholarships available for student training. The education sector was affected as the economy had to rely on limited resources, and external institutional linkages that facilitated education and training in agriculture were limited. Similarly and overtime, employment opportunities for agricultural graduates have significantly lessened as business has weakened at all levels of agricultural and agribusiness sectors since land reform.

Most relocated farmers are semi commercialized and subsistence farmers.

They need education and extension to help them embrace the concept of commercial agriculture for their benefit and the benefit of the economy, or most of the farmland availed to these farmers will remain underutilized. There is a need to develop entrepreneurial skills among these farmers to ensure that commercial agriculture (which formerly contributed immensely to the economy, through input supply to industries, and export earnings) will prosper in the future. The concept of entrepreneurship needs to be encompassed at all levels of education to ensure that farmers, extension agents and other professionals providing services to the farming community embrace such vibrant ideas in their various endeavours. Many tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe, have introduced an entrepreneurship course though it is generally not compulsory hence there is no guarantee that every student would do a course on entrepreneurship before graduation. There is strong evidence from the results that entrepreneurship education is still in the early stages of development. According to International Research Journal (2011) Zimbabwean tertiary institutions still “predominantly adhere to traditional teacher- centred methods of delivery and assessment” and not practical exposure which would benefit both students and ‘new’ farmers. Zimbabwe Open University offers a myriad of short courses including small scale mining which runs a 3 day Entrepreneurial leadership skills course, but that is hardly enough to set a state of mind.

#### Unintended Consequences and Responding to Political Setbacks

Most of the western economies were not in favour of the land reform programme for political and economic reasons, and as a result, they instituted policies in the form of economic sanctions against Zimbabwe to punish the economy for this policy implementation. Areas such as foreign investment, foreign aid, human movement, exports and imports from and to the west were greatly decreased, limiting local production, resource flows and external partnerships between Zimbabwe and the west. This resulted in resource limitations to governmental fiscal capacity that translated into limited resource outlay to all public services including the educational sector.

This meant the agrarian reform was starting at back foot with a limitation in market trade. The education system no longer had access to first work institutions of learning and skills trade. This has also made agricultural qualification undesirable as the pay is not attractive to those looking at these careers.

Impacting knowledge on agricultural education and training is not the responsibility of the training institutions alone. A number of partners have to collaborate to ensure that education and training is effectively transferred and applied by intended beneficiaries. Besides universities, colleges, skill development centres and farmer training institutions, collaborative inputs are needed from other stakeholders in the agricultural sector such as farmers, agro processors, research institutions, government to facilitate resources (e.g. finance, industrial exposure, counterpart learning) needed for effective training. To sustain education amid constrained resources, government policy should consider commercialization and privatization of agricultural training. The government has to create a conducive environment for private and public partnerships that will see collaborative inputs by all parties in successful delivery of agricultural education and training.

### **What can be done to move forward? – Solutions for the Future**

In recent years Zimbabwe has challenged young people to innovate the agricultural space so that the industry is able to sustain itself using new technologies that are not resource intensive and result in more produce turn over. These innovations which have also offered communication and information solutions at documented by TechZim. Innovation Baraza as the challenge is known has innovators that come from Queen Elizabeth High School showcasing in it. From Harare Institute of Technology, Clive Nyapokoto a Software Engineering developed a Vermi-Aquaponics system. It is a combination of Vermiculture and Aquaponics in a looping ICT technology controlled environment currently used by 800 farmers.

To survive with a reduced revenue base and consequently lower governmental outlays for agricultural education institutions, new ways to generate

supplementary resources should be explored to ensure that agricultural education will prosper post land reform. These include income generating programmes by training institutions such as using the current experimental farms partly for commercial production, parallel programmes, cost recovery, commercialization and privatization of agricultural education to generate additional revenue.

Finally, in order for agricultural education in Zimbabwe to successfully maintain its relevance in the post land reform era, there is a need to develop an agricultural education policy to guide implementation of changes. This entails enhancement of coordination of policy and monitoring, and programmatic interventions by public and private actors in agricultural training and a synchronised, regulated and quality assured education system.

## **Conclusion**

The structural changes brought about by the land reform programme have implications for agricultural growth and development in the country. The collaboration and interdependence of various drivers of agriculture in the economy implies that the land reform programme alone cannot yield desired benefits to the people of the nation if it is not adequately supported by complementary adjustments in other factors such as education, institutions and technologies among others.

For agricultural education, these changes implied; increased demand for human resources to provide supportive services (extension, training and research), a need for curriculum review to integrate emerging issues such as environmental management, business development skills and gender relations, a need for more resources, and a need for strengthening of Private Public Partnerships to enable successful delivery of agricultural education for economic development. That Agriculture is a compulsory subjects in school has positive effects for those in urban area who may not be farmer to have ambitions to grow the agrarian economy. . Worth considering is indigenous ways of farming being part of the curriculum.

# Lessons from Treading Unforgotten and Familiar Paths

By Simon Rakei

Reflections on working with the contributors to the Zimbabwe Chapter of this 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Pathways to Free Education

## Introduction

Perhaps more than any other place on the planet, the African continent is the one most besought with cautionary tales and experiences which invariably have tragic outcomes.

One may question the value or worth of sharing these tales and historic experiences – especially if the processes that led to those outcomes are to some extent necessarily unavoidable within our unfolding times – or even inevitable. Yet, it stands to reason, that the reason we look to examples of similar contexts is not for shallow hopes, empty platitudes of drawing lessons from the past so as to avoid similar trappings, or planning differently, more effectively and better. Instead, it is for the cognisance that beyond everything else; come what may or the best laid plans: there is

value in acknowledging those experiences – seeing them as they are, and, in understanding the causes fundamentally.

Our choices thereafter; whether or not they are affected, how, or why, become irrelevant in so far as it relates to simply acknowledging historical realities. And as with any other instance in life, the decisions we make in moving forward given this awareness, are up to each one. Ours, as with this third edition of *Pathways to Free Education*, is to help open ourselves and others up to that awareness, and to bring to the fore content that may be useful in deciding what the next steps are for the Free Education movement.

You will have noticed from the preceding two essays in this chapter that education is inextricably linked with the social and economic reality of any society, its effects far reaching and unending. In Zimbabwe, after the land reform program, school fees in primary and secondary schools were silently reintroduced. Just towards the end of June this year, 600 Medical Students at the University of Zimbabwe were evicted out of university residences both on and off campus grounds for protesting a 30% increase in fees<sup>1</sup>. As calls and support for decolonisation grow louder, these events are not only a bitter pill which serve as a reminder of what potentially awaits, but also give rise to a serious question pondering what is to be done.

This part of the chapter will not attempt to give answers, rather, it is intended to be reflexive in nature: offer a few thoughts, feelings and insights on the preceding two essays, and provide countering ideas to those views espoused therein, particularly as they relate to answering what is to be done. As we think deeper about the ways to tackle the challenges ahead, this piece attempts weighing up what is expedient and urgently needed to remedy pressing harms against ideological approaches; longer term strategic objectives and tangible tactical gains. Therefore, this essay will by and large look at different positions and approaches as they have

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pindula.co.zw/news/2017/06/26/uz-orders-students-vacate-premises-feesmustfall-protest-30-increment-fees/#.WVeYVmiGPIU>

been challenged, how they evolve or remain unchanged over time and if the related points of contestation can be resolved or reconciled.

There are three central themes which form the basis of this contestation and are the subject of reflections:

1. Underutilisation of Land, Commercialisation and Food Security
2. Sacrificing Education for Land
3. Sustaining Agricultural Teaching Institutions and the Role of Institutions of Learning

### **Underutilisation of Land, Commercialisation and Food Security**

At the heart of the fast tracked land reform program in Zimbabwe was the problem of commercial farmers dominating the food production sphere, and in a standard economic sense this resulted in barriers to entry for primarily subsistence farmers who had no strict interest in commercial farming and simply wanted to produce food for livelihood.

Concerns in Zimbabwe continue to grow about how the land is being underutilised. Increasingly popular solutions are geared towards encouraging an entrepreneurial mind-set amongst farmers, and reintroducing commercial agriculture for its apparent benefits: prior to the land reform the agricultural sector was considered to be a critical constituent in the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy, responsible for jobs and food security. There therefore remains potential for the agricultural sector to be a source for job creation and food security, to ensure people do not go hungry. To this extent various programs at university faculties in Zimbabwe are already offering entrepreneurial courses, and agricultural training colleges and facilities are following suit.

#### The issue

The central point of contention is whether it is sensible to reintroduce

a policy whose harms are intrinsic – that is to say commercial farming by definition will result in larger farming interests, whose existence will necessarily consume small scale farmers because it is cheaper and more economically efficient – and it is the same harms which were driving the need to have a land reform program in the first place. More than that, whether or not these harms can possibly be avoided in so far as it relates to ensuring that the commercialisation will be advantageous to the majority of the indigenous people.

Whilst one could argue that commercial farming before land reform in 2000 was predominantly skewed along racial lines with whites owning the majority of the land, today in Zimbabwe this will only be skewed along class lines, the burgeoning middle class elite and those with connections to the political elite. Such are the trappings of neo-colonialism and it would be folly to make a nationalist argument devoid of meaningful structural change. Commercialisation therefore by its nature will favour those already at the top of the pecking order with resources to upscale and grow quickly. This will automatically exclude poor farmers.

### Contending Ideas

The first argument as alluded to in the introductory paragraph of this section is that the agricultural sphere needs to be utilised to the extent of its capacity to help eliminate hunger and create jobs. Part of that means upscaling the existing farms and the vehicle for that is to commercialise. Furthermore, one could also argue that with good regulatory laws and bodies the harms which would exclude poor farmers can be mitigated, and, also ensure that the produce is used for the direct benefit of the people.

This argument's main weakest points however, are: one, assuming that commercial agriculture is perhaps the only, if not the most effective vehicle for upscaling or ensuring that land is not underutilised. Secondly, it also relies on government administration which is prone to bureaucracy, risking ineffectiveness and corruption as often these channels and individuals

therein are not directly involved or simply have no vested interest in the process.

On the other hand, in a dense rural population like Zimbabwe whose farming traditions span decades and still form the basis for living particularly in rural areas, there is a strong argument to be made for community-based-farming and the forming of local cooperatives as it relates to the ownership of land. Most rural homesteads in Zimbabwe from Murehwa running to Buhera with some of the most arable land in the country still live on communal land: in most cases neighbouring homesteads are just under 200 meters from preceding ones. It therefore makes sense that these farming communities collectively farm together as a means of upscaling, and move away from traditional or custom based forms of land ownership and how it's passed down from generation to generation amongst clans. Alongside investments in agriculture this could be a model which doesn't disadvantage those it seeks to benefit.

Very importantly, in weighing up this issue we must also consider what the role of commercial farming ought to be in relation to food security, especially in a context where growing food industrial companies like Monsanto are patenting the majority of the world's seed, suing farmers who save seeds or don't farm using certified seeds – as is with recent cases in Tanzania where local farmers face a 12 year prison sentence for not being able to prove their seeds are not an infringement of Monsanto's intellectual property<sup>2</sup>. Essentially the debate is who should have the power over food production and what farmers can plant. The ramifications are far reaching ranging from diet and nutritional effects to environmental conservation and sustainability.

There is the much simpler argument that food is so necessary in order for you to live it makes no sense commercialising it – as one needs air to live so too one needs to eat, and you shouldn't have to go hungry because you

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2 <https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20170103/05344436390/tanzanian-farmers-face-12-years-prison-selling-seeds-as-theyve-done-generations.shtml>

don't have money to buy food (or more crudely the money to live).

Food is fundamental to life, and as Thomas Sankara once said, the one that feeds you controls you. Food security is much, much more than ensuring people go to sleep with a full stomach. When this power with the potential to govern all the actions of our lives is not within the ambit or control of the individuals whose lives are affected by it, then the idea of self-determination and self-actualisation, or decolonisation, is a pipe dream.

In addressing these challenges one must assert that we should not be treated as callously as to be rendered unthinking beings to be controlled. Food security is security for your immediate livelihood, socially and economically, and it is preserving a future worth living.

### Reconciliation

Only an attempt at reconciling the above ideas; because the author of this piece is clearly biased.

On the one hand, when all the arguably lofty ideas about how food production ought to occur and who should have control or power over that process are said, it all (also arguably) boils down to people simply needing food to eat, and certainly those who exist and live at the margin do not necessarily have the luxury to worry about which big commercial interest is directing their lives. On a question of immediate need I imagine this is a point many would be happy to concede to despite the overarching harms associated with that.

Certainly, only a few have the luxury to be able to look through the ingredients list at the back of products whilst shopping at Shoprite, fewer still can walk amongst Woolworth's food isles of organic sections with richly labelled pictures of how the food is grown in non-exploitative 'environmentally sustainable' ways. So alternatives are limited.

One would therefore suppose, that it simply means that these limiting

options should only be accepted as temporary conditions. An argument could be made that these are conditions which we shouldn't accept, for the status quo does not address the plight of the poor, provide justice to the marginalised or fairness to those looking for a fighting chance at life or simply living. That said, it also means those on the other side of the fence so to speak should still aim to strive towards a better state of being.

To begin with, by highlighting for example the deadly effects of powerful commercial interest over food security, one could move those of us dependent on them to begin thinking of ways to meaningfully self-determine and oppose the hegemonic hold. And crucially, and for the rest of us, it means it is time to begin the work of building alternatives which speak to our aspirations.

### **Sacrificing Education for Land**

Unmistakably from the preceding two essays, one gets a sense that the land reform program was at the expense of education in Zimbabwe. As but a simple example, after the land reform many primary and secondary schools were forced to impose school fees – thereby immediately excluding students who could not afford to pay from basic education.

Similarly, the higher education system reintroduced fees, and multiple training colleges designed to produce output for teaching, nursing and artisan fields all lost their funding as there was decreased investment from government in the higher education sector.

#### The issue

Frantz Fanon once famously said that, for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity. Land has been at the heart of any liberation struggle on the continent – and to be clear, the word land isn't strictly limited to agriculture, but encompasses natural and mineral resources which are abundantly found on the continent, and

also extends to “key industrial and economic sectors” such as mines banks and a significant bulk of the corporate sector which enjoys enormous power and influence.

Education on the other hand is and has not only been integral in driving any liberation movement, but as Paulo Freire once said in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, education is the means by which the oppressed will liberate themselves.

At the crux of this is an examination of a fundamental relationship between land and education as the two are interdependent ideas for their meaningful realisation. In that sense one cannot be meaningfully achieved without the other. Or, it is either that one precedes the other (in this instance land first then education), but this too would be folly because it limits education to an anachronistic and fixed meaning of learning only in classrooms.

### Contending ideas

Whilst it’s easy to throw around phrases like “you cannot eat ideas or your books” or likewise, “there is no oil well or gold mine on this earth that will ever be worth what your mind can contribute”, it seems that as the debate unfolds, it increasingly locks itself in a dichotomy; where the aspiration for land is viewed as a common good for the benefit of the majority, and education is interpreted as individualism – wanting to enrich the self and maximise individual wellbeing and growth at the expense of others. But as we know in fact, especially given the context of African post-colonial trajectories, both land and education are collective aspirations. #FeesMustFall and the resurgence of decolonisation as mostly driven by university students clearly demonstrates this.

Fortunately the contributing writers of the essays in this chapter had very nuanced and well balanced views in their essays so that makes the scope of the reflection on this particular section somewhat easier. Both writers assume a position whereby land and education are not mutually exclusive

as targets or goals, and acknowledge that the redistribution of land in Zimbabwe ought to have occurred in a manner which did not negate correlating social goods and services. Ultimately though, what remains unclear is whether the land question necessarily has a prerogative over education.

It's difficult ascertaining whether or not an overriding interest exists, or rather, using a hierarchy of rights as a framework e.g. the right to education and the right to housing/shelter or the right to food, one cannot definitively assert the value of the competing interests even in a legal sense which isn't an ideal framework to begin with. But in combination the interests can be balanced out better. For example, many farm workers lost *both* their housing and ability to send their children to the farm schools as a result of the land grabs, thereby losing both rights to education and housing. This essay does not intend to debate which rights ought to be prioritised, rather by writing this the hope is that space for that conversation is opened up. One of the big questions when it comes to possible funding sources for free education in a country like South Africa, is, that there are prevalent social issues needing immediate attention – from housing to healthcare – so even if the money to fund free education is found (which it can) how does one begin to justify alleviating a ticking bomb in higher education as opposed to the countless service delivery protests? Or perhaps asked differently, whose rights are more important?

Naturally, this debate cannot only occur in a legal and rights based framework as that is inherently limiting, and our understandings of which rights are important are not ideologically neutral. But more than that, the language of human rights and the specific invocation or appeal to a universal construct of what ought to be or how the world is stifles room for meaningful contestation as there is assumed legitimacy in the claim of “human rights” for example.

Nonetheless a meaningful rights-weigh up would locate itself within the context within which those rights are being debated, and determine which

of those are historically valued as of greater weight or importance by the people in that locale. In Zimbabwe, land played a foremost component in both the first and second Chimurenga and liberation struggle. Juxtapose that to South Africa whose liberation struggle is largely accredited to the ANC, was centred more towards advancing civil liberties – education being chief among them, and prominently so during the struggle as 1976 was a pivotal point. Therefore as one can see the argument can be made differently depending on context, where in South Africa for example education has historic value or at least in terms of which struggles are popular, that for education was ahead most.

Of course, outside a rights based framework, the idea of using rights or civil liberties as proxies in deciding what many would argue is a liberatory question, can easily be rubbished if you are arguing for decolonisation. The next possible approaches would be those driven by political or ideological convictions.

There's already a strong case to be made for why these issues must be addressed simultaneously, thus necessarily making arguments for either/or dichotomies (land or education first) pale in comparison; because any cost-benefit analysis would indicate that the socio-economic impact of negating education outweighs the immediate and medium-term gains of land reform, and the long term goals are threatened with a dysfunctional education system. And without the land it's difficult to meaningfully educate people to understand themselves or "invent their own souls". Arguably the fact that many of our education institutions remain Eurocentric and of no relevance to the contexts within which they find themselves in is an example of the effects of not addressing the land question.

Unfortunately theory doesn't often match with praxis, as the Zimbabwe case study shows. After independence Zimbabwe had one of the most aggressive funding schemes in education, its importance was apparent to them and within a decade Zimbabwe had almost universal enrolment at primary education level and abolished related school fees. In another

decade they had one of the highest literacy rates on the continent. Why then despite knowing the value of education as critical in nation building was the land reform program carried out to the detriment of it?

The authors in the preceding essays point to political expediency as the most likely accurate explanation. As with many other decisions taken by most governments vested political interests often direct the outcome of events. In which case the best scenario is to ensure the power to make the decisions lies with the people – unlikely, but still possible.

### Reconciliation

The fact of the matter is we are in a crisis – one seemingly common to the trajectories of post-colonial states 20 years after independence. As the cracks reveal themselves and if the argument holds that those in power will first and foremost act to preserve it, then the caution to those calling for Free Education would be not to unwittingly let that demand be instrumentalised as a tactic to otherwise maintain political security. This would mean that the struggles have to be linked together, not be viewed in isolation, thereby making it impossible for the state to ignore the social ills and forcing government to respond to the problem in its fullness.

It would mean an insistence that remaining social issues are not overlooked nor sacrificed because they are ‘competing interests’.

Regardless, you may have picked up on this but just as in the previous section of this essay, there’s a slight bias coming through.

Simply, there are many things to fight and seemingly few avenues to follow. From experience, sometimes one of the few things you can do is to just speak, write, engage the world as it is and learn. Whilst it’s not enough on its own, our ability to learn, to teach and educate ourselves, to think for ourselves, is one that must be nourished. The act of creating this pamphlet is one such example of an act of resistance within most of our everyday reach. Education I think is about dispelling ignorance, which when removed

people begin understanding the cause of their own suffering and how to end it.

There is no question that the tide of suffering and inequality must be turned, to that effect we must build capacity and organise. To conscientise ourselves and others, prepare for the conditions to bring about change, and build alternatives.

Without this, we risk gaining power with no direction, gullible to manipulation, and acting in narrow self-interest.

It therefore should be obvious that education, and our minds, are our most valuable resource<sup>3</sup>.

### **Sustaining Agricultural Teaching Institutions and the Role of Institutions of Learning**

Khanyisa Booi's essay demonstrates the need for sustained agricultural education and this brings into question how sustainability can be maintained. Invariably, the methods are up for contention. Moreover it is no lie that many of us have no interest in agriculture or the hard laborious work of farming, therefore in terms of sustainability there is also a need to educate young people about the importance of agriculture in our livelihoods.

#### The issue

There are clear and direct possible solutions posited in the essay referenced above. In particular are privatising and commercialising agricultural teaching institutions. As usual, without government funding these institutions are forced to in order to keep their doors open. Secondly, agricultural teaching is currently limited to designated institutions and not broadly included or integrated in the curriculum of the education system at a primary and secondary level. Therefore in attempting to sustain agricultural education the question becomes what role public institutions

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3 <https://abernathymagazine.com/mental-means-production/>

and schools play.

### A few thoughts and ideas

Commercialisation and privatisation have been discussed at length in the first section of this essay. Fees will automatically excludes those who are poor or cannot afford to pay from acquiring agricultural education. Furthermore privatisation makes it inaccessible to most people as admission can be restricted by the owners. To understand the contentious points here you may refer to that section, although I think there easily is agreement pertaining to that education as a bare minimum must be accessible and affordable.

To sustain agricultural education in Zimbabwe, it must be fed into the school system and made mainstream, taught alongside nutritional development.

In so doing, young people are also equipped with tools to tangibly look after themselves on a material level and to meet their material conditions independently. It's important too that agricultural education be integrated with other disciplines, and there are great examples of technological innovations in the farming sector in Zimbabwe. Agricultural education must not necessarily be made synonymous with back-breaking labour thus otherwise dissuading interest in it. New technologies and innovative thinking must be used. That said, the necessity of agriculture for food security and ultimately survival must be impressed, and a willingness to do the work necessary cultured.

We need to create a culture where we understand where our food comes from, who makes it, how it is made. This is important to create a food system that can be held accountable, but more so allows for the holistic development and growth of learners. It follows as a natural conclusion that our schools, where our children are educated, play a role in imparting this knowledge.

## Conclusion

The intention of this essay was to reflect on the preceding two essays of this chapter and see how different viewpoints and positions have moved or evolved given countering considerations.

Whilst one attempts to be open to change whilst in a process of reflection, one also invariably develops a better understanding and awareness of different positions without necessarily embracing a change in view. This I think is a sufficient outcome. Perhaps more importantly, whilst there is no single way of moving forward, we can at least be guided to some extent, and know where to look for direction.

There were three focal issues at the heart of this reflection, and each had differing points of view and approaches in addressing the points of contention. The room for debate and conversation has been opened as we grapple with the multiple considerations. And we can continue to move forward as we engage ourselves and others critically, openly and honestly, guided by our common aspirations, and a genuine love, selflessness and commitment to good and justice.

# BRAZIL



**CONTRA OS CORTES  
NA EDUCAÇÃO!  
VAMOS LUTAR!**

LK

# Bolsa família and the rise up and down of Brazilian social policies:

The erosion of  
democracy and  
the imposition of  
neoliberal oppressive  
states

Dr Felipe Gustavo Koch Buttelli <sup>1</sup>

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## Bolsa Família – what it is?

Bolsa família is considered one of the biggest social programmes of direct income transfer in the world <sup>2</sup>. It was created in 2004 by the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010). Lula started his first term in 2003 and one of his main objectives was to reduce poverty. As a worker coming out of poverty, Lula represented the progressive Brazilians struggling for social justice. Brazil is a rich country, but considered – as South Africa – one of the most unequal countries in the world. The challenge he faced was, then, to bring the majority of the population out of the abject poverty situation and to develop the country, reducing inequalities. During his term and of his follower, Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), the administration of the Worker's Party (PT) managed to take more than 36 million people out of the poverty zone. One of the most important tools that reduced the abject poverty, as other social aspects related to health and education, was the Bolsa Família Programme.

The Bolsa Família Programme reached more than 14 million families (more than 50 million people) and offered different levels of remuneration, according to the income per person of the families. In one of the basic formats of it, it offered R\$ 77,00 (Reais – between 300 – 350 Rands) and, depending on the family's circumstance, it can offer R\$ 35,00 per child (0 to 15 years old), summing up till R\$ 230,00 (R900-R950). It also offers a specific benefit for up to two young persons (16-17 years old), of R\$ 42,00 per person (R170)<sup>3</sup>. An important impact of Bolsa Família is related with the Brazilian states economy, as the State used it as a way to enable the poorest people to become consumers, helping to create jobs and leading to a considerable economic growth of the country. Together with Bolsa Família, other government programmes, the policy of increase of the National Minimal Wage and the investment in infra-structure resulted in job creation

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/dec/17/brazil-bolsa-familia-decade-anniversary-poverty-relief>

<sup>3</sup> According to the official site of the programme: <http://www.caixa.gov.br/programas-sociais/bolsa-familia/Paginas/default.aspx>

and reduced the overall inequality between the poorest and middle class, a significant historic gap. At the beginning of President Dilma's second term (2014), Brazil had a constant growth rate and an average of 5-7% of unemployment<sup>4</sup>. Brazil became a target country for people running away from European economic crisis, migrating to Brazil, looking for a job<sup>5</sup>.

### **Further effects of the Bolsa Família Programme**

One of the distinctive aspects of this direct income transfer programme is its demanding of the following three things from all beneficiaries<sup>6</sup>:

- 1) To register in social assistance platforms, documenting children and allowing the social assistance system to know the conditions of poor people, amplifying the reach of many other social programmes. One of the pre-requisites is that children up till 15 years are not allowed to work, reducing consistently the historical reality of child labour in Brazil – a former slave driven economy;
- 2) All children (0-7 years) have to be registered in the health system, having public permanent medical accompaniment and complete vaccination. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers have to be supported by public health system by receiving treatment, care and information regarding reproductive health, among other benefits. This measure reduced largely the level of child mortality in Brazil, making the country progress considerably regarding the Gini coefficient or human development index.
- 3) At education level, the programme demands that children from 6-15 years have to attend to school and proof at least 85% of presence in class, while students from 16-17 years old have to proof minimal 75% of presence in class. This increased the social conditions of poor families considerably

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4 <http://en.mercopress.com/2011/09/22/brazil-s-august-unemployment-stable-at-6-in-tight-labour-market>

5 <http://thebrazilbusiness.com/article/european-job-hunt-in-brazil>

6 Informations from the official site of the programme, quoted above.

and reduced child labour, one of the main reasons of social abandonment and exclusion.

Bolsa Família, as a central tool of the social inclusion programme of Brazilian government, was not the only measure on stake to promote, as the President Lula used to say, the inclusion of the poorest as consumers in society. Economic growth related to other policies and, especially, education policies helped to give more substance to this social change.

The education policies<sup>7</sup> at the federal level included the creation of hundreds of top quality “technical” or “professional” schools in Brazil, known as Federal Institutes. This enabled many young people to finish their secondary education with a job oriented to the characteristics of a growing Brazilian market. Other education policies were also significant in changing educational scenery in Brazil. The first was the creation of hundreds of public universities – granting free education – in areas relatively distant from the urban centres, which allowed students from rural areas to have access to higher education oriented to their own reality of work. The second was a policy of scholarship and grants for poor students to access private universities, as the public universities were unable to offer access to the majority of people – especially to the poorest. A third and noteworthy policy is the racial and economic quotes system that, on long term, democratized the access of historically unprivileged and excluded population to higher education. The above mentioned measures, allied with the extensive reach of Bolsa Família accelerated the process of social inclusion in Brazil.

However, the contemporary economic crisis reached Brazil and created a serious political crisis that resulted in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff (2016), without sufficient evidence of any mistake or crime committed<sup>8</sup>. This political change was the opportunity for extreme

7 For more information, see: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140710115554910>

8 <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2016/08/31/brazils-political-and-economic-crisis-threatens-its-democracy>

neoliberal to take political power in Brazil and start a process of deconstruction of the social inclusion policies for the sake of the externally imposed notion of austerity existent within Brazil.

### **Limits of Lula-Dilma's development project and the neoliberal assault on Brazil**

It is common knowledge that during Lula's term Brazil was going through a period of economic stability due high prices of commodities<sup>9</sup>. At that time, Brazilian government invested in exportation policy and invested hugely in Petrobrás (Brazilian state oil company). In fact, during Lula's term, Brazil discovered one of the largest oil reserve called "pré-sal", more than 5000 km under the sea level<sup>10</sup>. The great merit of Lula's and, later Dilma's governments was the implementation of the above-mentioned policies, which helped to create a cycle of growth and inclusion. However, the international economic crisis of 2008 and the subsequent reduction of the prices of commodities created political instability and, most recently affected Brazil in 2014. At that moment, when money was scarce internationally, the mistakes of Lula-Dilma's development project became clearer. The following are examples of this reality:

- 1) Although this *neodevelopmental* project found the State as responsible and its policies as a tool to lead economic development<sup>11</sup>, Lula-Dilma's administration did not attack a speculative capital system. In fact, together with the poorest population, who mostly benefitted from both governments was the banking system<sup>12</sup>. Money was available for everyone and the

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9 [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/other/eb201601\\_focus01.en.pdf](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/pdf/other/eb201601_focus01.en.pdf)

10 <http://www.petrobras.com.br/en/our-activities/performance-areas/oil-and-gas-exploration-and-production/pre-salt/>

11 <http://www.fairobserver.com/politics/india-and-brazil-pioneers-new-development-agenda/>

12 [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/business/dealbook/in-good-times-or-bad-brazil-banks-profit.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/business/dealbook/in-good-times-or-bad-brazil-banks-profit.html?_r=0)

economic interests of Brazilian aristocracy were never challenged. Meaning, including socially and economically a large portion of Brazilian population into the market, Lula-Dilma's government had not intervened in order to reduce the economic inequality between the richest and the poorest. On the contrary, this gap grew<sup>13</sup>. For that reason, there was no need for the economic elite of the country to suggest any intervention. They were in fact benefitting from the Worker's Party neodevelopmental project. Bolsa família and other projects were aligned with the neoliberal capitalism. However, the abundance of money and resources finished, challenging Dilma with the following decision: to keep the social programmes or to adopt austerity measures and maintain the economic privilege for the economic elite of the country? The first mistake was, then, not to promote a deep economic reform and a progressive tax reform that would, in the long term, create a sustained reduction of inequalities;

- 2) Lula-Dilma have not used the chance – living under political and economic stability – to reform the political system<sup>14</sup>. The Brazilian political system and the power relations established in the country are part of Brazil's colonial heritage and history – both major contributors to Brazilian identity. The system is made out not to have political renewal. Besides that, the electoral system, especially in which it relates to the campaign financing system - gives too much power to the economic lobby. Without a serious and deep political reform, that would include guaranteeing more access to power to the so-called minorities (black, indigenous, women, youth, LGBTI, and so on), the political system is unbalanced and therefore of “low democratic intensity”, as

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13 <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/Real-brazil-inequality-behind-statistics-May-2012.pdf>

14 There is a large number of civil society organizations struggling for comprehensive, democratic and participatory political reform in Brazil: <http://pad.org.br/content/public-note-elections-and-political-reform-brazil>

referred to by Boaventura de Souza Santos<sup>15</sup>. The way the political system is established following the financial elite, the business lobby and the agribusiness representatives have the power to determine what can and cannot be regarded as government policies. Therefore, in an international atmosphere of economic crisis, when the economic interests of the plutocratic elite is threatened, a political crisis was created in Brazil. Dilma was not able to govern anymore. In the context of political corruption under serious investigation, the political and economic elite arranged an impeachment – truly a *coup d'État*<sup>16</sup> – to defend economic interests, despite the social transformation being lead by the Worker's Party policies, and further the political class of mass investigations that have not been stopped by Dilma's government.

For these reasons, the neodevelopmental project has failed in Brazil. In summary: 1) the international crisis that affected the prices of commodities, enabled a medium term economic growth in Brazil, as much as the massive social inclusion through programmes like Bolsa Família; 2) Promoting social inclusion without deep reforms that change the very unequal structure of the colonial society is an incomplete process that gives space for the easy deconstruction of social policies under the neoliberal austerity policy, imposed by the political and economic plutocratic elite.

### **Neoliberal coup d'État and the contemporary struggle against capitalism**

Left oriented governments – such as in Brazil and South Africa – have lost the chance to promote deep, structural, and long term oriented changes when decided to promote economic and social change without challenging the neoliberal rule that is controlling the international political

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15 Souza, Boaventura de Souza (ed.) (2017), *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the liberal democratic canon (reinventing social emancipation)*, Verso, New York.

16 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/dilma-rousseffs-impeachment-was-led-by-the-white-wealthy-men-who-now-make-up-the-brazilian-cabinet-a7030761.html>

order and the global market since the fall of the Berliner wall (1989). The economic crisis came as a permanent crisis that is threatening the political stability of national democratic systems. As Giorgio Agamben<sup>17</sup> says, we are entering a time of permanent “state of exception”, because the global economic system will just prevail without democracy to create economic instability. This is what Žižek calls “capitalism with Asian values”: neoliberal capitalism surviving alongside totalitarian regimes<sup>18</sup>. That is why we see so much protest against and repression by state forces. There is no space for contestation. At the end, it affects us on a human rights level, through the progressive deconstruction of social policies, as the Bolsa Família Programme, that suffered its biggest setback under the illegitimate government of Michel Temer, as many other social policies. In fact, the Brazilian *coup d’État* is rapidly promoting deep reforms (which were not promoted by progressive governments), implementing the notion of minimal State, passing the administration of the social system to the private initiative (Health system, pension system, and so on). People’s rights, constructed during a long time of struggle for rights and recognition, have been deconstructed, being the poor people always the most vulnerable. It is time for all the resistant movements, for the workers of all the corners to break out of the life denying economic model for the construction of new forms of economic relationships against the forceful imposition by national states contributing to failed economic and political order.

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17 Agamben, Giorgio (2003), *State of Exception*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London.

18 Žižek, S (2015), *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism*, Penguin Books, London.

# Reflections on Dr Butteli's discussion on Bolsa Familia and Unpacking Social Grant schemes with Natasha Vally

Transcription:  
Fadlah Gassiep

Interviewer:  
Brian Kamanzi

Brian Kamanzi (BK): Hi Natasha, thanks so much for agreeing to speak with us today. Uhm, so we're gonna be reflecting a little bit on some of your questions on Dr Butteli's article and sort of explain some of the context of Bolsa Familia. But also some general points that you might want to make about how we can contextualise Bolsa Familia within the schemes of, sort of social welfare systems globally but with a specific interest in the global south which the broader publication's sort of taking an interest in. And just to sort of frame things - we are trying to make some sort of comparison,

or develop some sort of understanding about the way the different post-revolution/ post-independence organisations, sought to tackle this questions of inequality. So Bolsa Familia very much falls in the category of other post-independence reforms, social reforms, and, ways of interpreting, uhm...means of resolving social inequalities. So I think it's interesting to think about a place like Brazil which has, you know, one of the highest inequalities in the world, but at the same time one of the most larded social welfare schemes. So maybe also hopefully through this conversation you can help us unpack about you know, where those narratives come from and how we can think about...what possibilities do they either open up or foreclose or where we are situated because we are situated in South Africa at the moment. So could you start us off just...couple of sentences about who you are and what you do, and what interests you in relation to this discussion.

**Natasha Vally (NV):** okay, so my name is Natasha Vally. I'm a researcher at the Centre for Humanities Research University of the Western Cape, and my research for the past 5years has been looking at South African social grants. But particularly the shift to the national privatisation of social grants from 2012, uhm... and how that privatisation of grants has worked – so what it looks like in practice in terms of uhm... relationships between private companies of the state, but also how uhm...people who receive grants - and we'll talk a little bit about the terminology I'm sure in a bit – how people who receive grants uhm, come to interface with the grant system in uhh... it's particular guides as a privatised payment scheme.

**BK:** Great. So I think that, that may be even sort of, pre-leads us into some of the conversation points about particularities of the case in Brazil. So maybe...you know, just as a follow on, could you talk about some of your impressions on Felipe's account of Bolsa Familia?

**NV:** Yea, I think Felipe gives us uhm...an important overview of uhm...Bolsa Familia of welfare in Brazil, particularly from 2003... And I think it's also particularly important as part of avoiding South African exceptionalism to look at welfare systems uhm, across the global south. South Africa often pitches itself as one of the...the only, welfare systems in the world but it certainly isn't. uhm... and yet there's something that we need to think about...uhhh, about the similarities and differences with these programmes in the global south and what they do uhm, for the majority of the population, and what they fail to do. Uhm...I think the other thing that Felipe does is that he...he begins to situate Bolsa Familia in uhm, the global economic milieu...uhm, within which it operates. And I think that's useful for thinking about how these systems uhm, don't work in isolation and uhm... how they connect to - not only global economics but also to - power plays within uhm...within government and the states.

**BK:** So could you speak a little about...uhm, you made an interesting comment about what social welfare systems do and what they don't do. Could you please explain further?

**NV:** okay, so I think the most important point that I want to get across - and I think that maybe some of the things that I talk to will be uhm... just textures of this - is that in your opening comments to me, you said that what you wanted to talk about was uhm, how post-independence organisations, nation states - you didn't say that, I'm adding that - chose to tackle inequality. Now the very important thing here is that these programmes don't address inequality uhm...these programmes are there to address poverty. Uhm... and this is a fundamental difference, and one that kind of needs to be held central. Uhm, that's because poverty is... randomly determined uhhh...lower...uhhh...randomly determined flaw. Whereas inequality has to do with...gaps, right? ...the differences between the rich and the poor. And like Felipe says - in passing...and I think that maybe more attention could be paid to this...uhm, in this piece, but also

in how we generally talk about welfare – is that often these programmes don't...uhm, pressure...look at, uhm...address, or...in material ways, affect the rich at all. Uhm, and that's fundamental. So...in considering somewhere like Brazil and even somewhere like South Africa, you might want to ask yourself why there isn't more pressure against social grants. Why in a country where there is such a big gap between the rich and the poor do we not hear more kind of complaints about social grants, I mean we hear some of them...we hear about...the undeserving welfare uhm, claimant... uhm...we hear about people wasting their money, but you would expect quite a big push back. Uhm...but the reason you don't get it is because it doesn't actually threaten uhm, the rich. It doesn't threaten those uhm... who own...uhhh, the wealth in the country, at all. Uhm...and I think this is where...this is the...the important difference between programmes that tackle inequality and poverty. But also...where the programmes begin to fail - in terms of uhm...addressing structuring inequalities. Uhm, this isn't to say that these programmes – both in the short and the long term – don't uhm...lead to a better quality of life for the people receiving them. Now, the thing to consider is that a better quality of life here is often...the difference between life and death, right? So a better quality of life doesn't mean a good quality of life. Uhm, often it means the prevention of death uhhh...but in some instances...in almost all instances uhm, people with public health have shown that children receiving the grants are more likely to...complete primary schooling, are more likely to reach growth metrics, are more likely, uhm...mothers who...so, teenage mothers who've had children and receive the grants are much less likely to have second uhm, children in their teens uhm, and various other kinds of developmental factors. So the argument here is not that grants don't work. Its that grants are effective uhm...at... uhhh...

**BK: ...providing relief sort of?**

**NV:** yea, at providing relief you know...in the medium term. But certainly the idea that money can be saved for entrepreneurship is a complete

fallacy. And certainly the idea that grants decrease the gap between the rich and the poor is a fallacy. So it does neither of those and I think Felipe brings those up. Uhm, the other important point about uhm, grants is that uhh...we really have to consider what the state promises and what they provide. So... Felipe says right at the beginning that uhm...grants enable the poorest people to become consumers. Uhm... and I think that this is something we should think about. But, what are people consuming with regard to money and in South Africa...invariably, its services that the state promised to provide for free anyways so... Housing, healthcare, food, electricity, uhm, and transport...are what people spend their grant money on. So this isn't money that's used over and above state provision, this is money that's been given to people that they're using instead of the state providing uhm, services that it had promised.

**BK: okay so...in a sense..uhm, are you sort of suggesting here that the grant scheme is another way of the state pushing the burden of providing basic services back onto...the working-class in general?**

**NV:** I think that's one of the things it does, like I don't think that it can be fully encapsulated but yes, that's one of the things it does. Uhm...it also allows the state to escape from uhm being held accountable...for providing the services in the first place. So it not only pushes the – I mean I think that maybe calling it a burden is exactly the problem...so we should be thinking of this kind of sharedness as...as part of our...as part of being – uhm, so it pushes providing the services back on to people. It hyper-individualises the act. So pushing it on to people is one thing, but pushing it on to people...individuals is a different thing. And one saw this in the... uhm...in the fights against water meters - pre-paid water meters - where it wasn't necessarily that people were saying...that...what the problem now was, was about...uhm, that I'm gonna have to pay for electricity and before, uhm...I didn't have to pay for electricity. It was that the...the site of payment fell on the individual right? Responsibilisation got...put in the

hands of individuals, post-apartheid. And I think that's what this grant system does...uhm... So, direct cash transfers...it situates responsibility at the site...of the poor...and the site of the responsabilised citizen who makes choices around...uhm...based on kind of individual gain, whether or not you have the money to make those kinds of choices.

**BK: So, on the one level you're saying that, you know...the grant system individualises the question but then the term...sort of, Bolsa Familia, sort of alludes to the family and the family structure. So could you maybe expand a bit about...what it is that they were trying to do and how it either overcomes or doesn't overcome the question of individualising.**

**NV:** I mean...so, again I think that on Brazil, specific things it would be better to speak to Felipe. Uhm...if I can just maybe shift that to a South African context – so to talk about how these programmes always presume family right? They always presume certain kind of...subject, uhm...certain kind of citizen. So for example, no uhm...males over the age of 18 uhm and...younger than the age of 16 are abled-bodied males, receive any kind of grant because the presumption here is that...abled-bodied adult males should be doing work. Uhm...and therefore only dependents of the state – and these are lots of inverted commas here – characterised as women, children, and those with disabilities receive the grant. So it's already presuming a kind of family. Uhm, sometimes this can be pretty radical so for example in South Africa – child support grants follow the child...they don't go to the quote parent of children and this is understanding that the family structure in South Africa uhm...and uhm, increasingly and arguably uhm, around the world is not the nuclear heterosexual family uhm... So yea, it follows the child which means that if you're a grandparent whose the primary caregiver of the child, the grant will go to you. So it does presume family and uhm connectedness, but in a very uhm...in a way that doesn't think of family uhm...in a way that doesn't think of the different permutations of family? But also in a way that doesn't think of family as

uhm...non-biological. Uhm, as family as community. Yea... I mean what it also does is that it... like I was saying...le Bolsa Familia looks at the family income right? So, it's also basing itself on a means-test which is exactly that problem I was telling you about – about a poverty flaw as opposed to an inequality gap.

**BK: Great. And now uhm...so if you could maybe make some – even if they're sort of loose comparisons across different contexts, and it doesn't necessarily have to include either South Africa or Brazil. Uhm, but then how...can you think of some positive examples of where the social grant comes in conversation or dialogue with other gains that are fought for.**

**Like uhm, free public health or...or things like that. Uhm, and sort of what possibilities then do grants open up in a space where there is more subsidization with services provided by the state.**

**NV:** I mean the thing to remember is that uhm...these...that, that grants were fought for. Uhm... They didn't happen out of the goodness of...of the hearts of capital and the state. Uhm, and some of the ways that we get them...uhm, some of the more progressive ways that we get grants are because they were fought for. So for example in South Africa grants are... what is called unconditional. Uhm... this means that there's no formalised behavioural requirements for grants uhm so...in Felipe's piece on page 2, he lists the...what he calls the further effects of le Bolsa Familia. But, I think the first three points are about conditionalities – and I mean we can talk about this in a while – but the argument that people made in South Africa...so grants...so state subsidies have been given to people in South Africa since the 1920s uhm...it was just to white people at the beginning but from very early...from the 1940s, it was provided to uhm...there was an old-age grant provided to black South Africans. Uhm, so it's got a very long history and overtime uhm, a lot of the gains were won and one of them was this unconditionality, and what this unconditionality does is that you're not required to behave in a certain way in order to get a grant. The

only requirements is the means-test so is proving poverty. And this means that for example uhm...if you are an undocumented parent...you're uhm... formally – according to the law ostensibly – not required to uhhh register your...you're not required to go into the hospital and show that your child's had all the vaccinations. Which might put you in a precarious position in terms of being arrested or checked for documents. Uhm, you're not required to present yourself at state bureaucracies that often uhm... You're not required to for example – like in the US do a temporary systems for needy families where women have to prove that they've been looking for work, and sometimes that takes them away from their children for days at a time uhm...in really horrible conditions uhm...to, to like fulfil these behavioural requirements. And these were things that were fought for and so...we really have to maintain those benefits - the benefits of not needing an ID document necessarily to get a grant, that there are alternative arrangements that can be made uhm... That uhh...young students who happen to not be going to school – there are lots of complex reasons about why they might not go to school. And so while that might be illegal, it doesn't foreclose the possibility of getting a grant which is fundamental. Uhm...the things like this...these are victories uhm...

**BK:** So in terms of in thinking about the present day and while keeping in mind – or I don't know if you'd agree – but the necessity of unemployment for...in order for capitalism to function then puts the question of social grants in an interesting position because...you know we exist in the global south where we are consistently being deindustrialised. So is there a way in which the fight for social grants becomes maybe more intensified or in some way different to what we are seeing in...in empire, or would you describe what is being fought for as being articulated as being something similar or...

**NV:** So, uhm...

**BK:** So I mean if we take countries like England for example - the way that the fights for basic income for example - is that contest shaping differently because they still have industry...as opposed to how its evolving maybe here for example?

**NV:** I think there's still the kind of rhetoric - you'll often hear it uhm... during budget speeches uhm, and in the media about how people should be looking for work and this is a temporary arrangement uhm, but the reality is...there are no jobs, like you say. So all the work-seeking behaviour in the world uhm...is not going to make there be more jobs. And so...Felipe on page 3 talks about...I mean, I think he's talking uhm, in a positive way about the creation of these technical and professional schools in Brazil. But the point is that...the problem in South Africa...the problem is not the lack of technical knowledge or skills uhm...the problem is that - well maybe not the problem - the reality is that there are no jobs. And so we need to think about how grants are not a stop gap measure. That grants are...basically, the only income...will be the only income for many of these individuals. Uhm, likely forever right? Uhm and so...and, also here as a parenthesis - but a very important parenthesis - also need to qualify what jobs are...that if the only jobs that are available are casualised, insecure, uhm...temporary jobs then...then are they what we're considering jobs at all if they're two-hundred rand more than a grant. So I think the point is that...there are no jobs, there are certainly no quality...or growth of quality jobs and in that context then how do we think of grants as uhm...as a way of starting uhm...a conversation about...redistribution. Uhm, and a conversation about a society of real social inclusion. So perhaps not the kind of social inclusion that Felipe talks about here...in terms of the education schools...the education...in terms of the education programmes and professional schools. But about uhm...social inclusion that's how do we build a society of sharing - that's not just about financial sharing but also about care - uhm, and how do we truly then formulate and situate social inclusion.

**BK:** I just wanna maybe pick up on some of that a little bit more and to

think about the question of what counts as a job as being...maybe we can look at maybe a pre-grant situation where a lot of the work that women who are forced to be at home are doing of course not wage work. Uhm, so is there perhaps...just thinking about...is there perhaps a way in which...a grant system like Bolsa Familia - which gives money to women - then maybe taps into some of that or...how would you comment on that question?

**NV:** Yea I think that's an important comeback to my point uhm...yea, so it does do the...well on the one hand it considers...it replaces women as dependent on the state. On the other hand it can be seen as uhm... payment for work that women have been doing...uhm, in the home... And you know there's so many...there's examples, and really important examples of...of strikes funds, but also welfare funds where uhm...women are paid for their work and you know...so okay, yea...

**BK:** Great so uhm...

**NV:** I mean I didn't actually respond to that because I dunno how to respond...because how can one...pay women...without it being part of the system?

**BK:** Now I'm just thinking about...just in the fact that...or thinking about if Bolsa Familia's giving the grant to women...is there a way in which it changes the dynamics of the household?

**NV:** Oh yes, that definitely does. Oh, was that the question? Oh no, that does for sure... So there's some interesting work that comes out of South Africa by Tessa Hochfeld and Leila Patel. Uhm, Tessa worked in both Soweto and Sophiatown about changing gender dynamics in the home because of the grant. Uhm...and it just speaks about how women uhm...are more able to leave in situations of domestic violence and more able to articulate their demands in terms of uhm...space in the household uhm...are...feel

more connection to the state so for example when my grandmother first got her grant card it was the first time she had any kind of material uhm... kind of acknowledgement of her relationship to the state separate from a man, or without an interlocutor of a man. Uhm, so it plays those really, both material uhm...emotional, and psychological roles and its, yea...very important.

**BK:** and so, sort of in closing...uhm...what do you think...we now exist I suppose post-2008 but maybe even before the structural adjustments and this era of austerity uhm...and now with the new Temer government in Brazil, but also all the happenings in South Africa...it seems like that language is now almost a permanent fixture. So, you know...while keeping in mind what you've mentioned that grants offer...are fought for, where do you see uhm, social grants fitting in and maybe a comment on universal basic income or something. Where do you see these kinds of reforms fitting in...in this consistent wave of privatisation that seems to be...the global north at the moment?

**NV:** I mean, I think...firstly we shouldn't, we should be cautious about thinking of neoliberalism and social grants as uhm...as binaries, as opposites. They can certainly be co-present uhm...and moreover they can be co-constituting. Uhm, Felipe mentions in passing the role of the banks – role of the banking system and I think that's also been a key uhm... example in South Africa of how capital and...of how neoliberalism and grants coexist uhm, and co-bolster. So for example Grindrod Bank – the bank that pays out social grants in South Africa – used to be a bank pre-apartheid that was focused on high net-worth individuals and companies. They realised that where the profit was to be made was actually in banking with the unbanked. So uhm...roping poor people – people who didn't have any formal connection to the banking system – into the banking system. And so post-apartheid – after 1996 – they uhm...they shifted their business model from these high income individuals to paying social grants. And that

just shows you how uhm...I mean the World Bank is pro cash transfers as well uhm, World Economic Forum uhm...these are...these are programmes that the left has been pushing for a long time but there's a reason why uhm, neoliberal think tanks transnational institutions and ideology uhm... finds it acceptable and is able to work with it. Now that being said uhm... this doesn't mean that uhh...there aren't places to go with the grant. The point is just that...the grant can't be the beginning and the end of the imagination of uhm, a sharing society. Uhm, we need to take - from the grant - the idea that there's uhm, a societal responsibility for all uhm... who...who live in a place. And we need to rid it of, ideas of national citizenship uhm, which is fundamental in South Africa so that uhm...grants are not connected to...where you were born or how you were born. We need to then uhm...think about making grants an actual redistributive act - so not just an act of pushing people above a flaw of poverty - but really addressing why some people are rich and why others are poor. And then as an additional level to that why - thinking about how possibly through taxation and tax reform, possibly through some other kind of mechanism uhm...we can...lessen that gap. And then we need to think about uhm... whether...direct cash transfers are the way we want to do grants uhm... or whether there's some kind of other model that builds on cash transfers in addition - like you were saying - to services uhm, and to other kinds of resources...or whether there's a better way. Because the one of the things I wanted to say was what that unconditionality does as well is that it gives people cash which means they have...choice over what they wanna spend their money on right. It's not food stamps. So it means that if you - that month in particular - need to pay hospital fee uhm, you're able to use all your money for that. And that's pretty radical as well and that's one of the demands people have made but of course, it's also pretty effective for capital...for you to be getting cash because yea...well because it means that they get to individualise purchases and things like that.

**BK: Great, thanks so much**

# Challenging Brazil's so called “racial democracy” with Brunata Mires

Brunata Mires &  
Brian Kamanzi

**Brian Kamanzi (BK):** Greetings! thanks so much for agreeing to speak with us we look forward to engaging! Could you perhaps start us off by telling us a little bit about yourself?

**Brunata Mires:** I appreciate your invitation and your stimulating questions very much.

It is my pleasure to share some of my thoughts with you and with other brothers and sisters engaged in promoting transformations towards equality and social justice for African and people of African-descent. I hope it is the beginning of further conversation and collaboration.

I am currently a Doctoral student at University of Brasilia, pursuing a PHD in Sociology. At the same university, I coordinate the Black Women Study

Group. As a researcher, my primary interests are the intellectual works of Black Women and the intertwining of race and gender hierarchies in Brazilian society. I am also one of the organizers of Latinidades Festival, which celebrates every year Black Women's intellectual work, activism, cultural and artistic production.

**BK: Could you explain, in your view, how the notion of the “racial democracy” of Brazil comes into being and why some people refer to it as a myth?**

**Brunata Mires:** White intellectual are very keen to underline the high levels of race mixture in Brazilian society. They also refer frequently to fluidity and ambiguity in our racial classification, since it relies mostly on one's appearance – and not on bloodline. If you look white/whitish, it does not matter that you have a black father or mother, you are white. Therefore, someone like Mariah Carey would hardly be considered black according to Brazilian standard, as she 'pass as white'. That is the reason why I will use “blacks” instead of “Afro-Brazilians” mostly when discussing race relations in Brazil.

Briefly, although we have had different versions of those ideas before, it was by the 1930s that the notion of racial democracy grew stronger and became a mainstream narrative on Brazilian race relations. Revisiting colonization, canonical social scientists sustained that, in comparison to what took place in the United States, Brazilian slavery had never been so harsh on the African captives and their descents. Brazilian culture had evolved from a tolerance of the Portuguese and the Portuguese culture towards people of color (indigenous people and people of African-descent) and towards mixedness. Their argument were reinforced by mentions of one or two well-known, wealthy or recognized black persons – if they could do it, anyone could. This version of moderate race relations in Brazil was repeated overtime by scholars, state agents, at schools and by the media, and gradually gained ground amongst ordinary people, to the point that

non-whites would be ashamed to refer to racism. Bringing up racism would be taken as a weakness of character, as a will to play the victim and to obtain undue advantage.

Thus, the myth of the racial democracy is very efficient in both concealing racial inequalities and at delegitimizing Black Brazilians denounces of racism. For instance, a white professor will discourse for hours on the amenities of Brazilian race relations, will highlight that we have never had official segregation such as in the US or South African. He will state that for a classroom filled with white students and one or two black students, in a country where black people are the majority of population. (In the 1990s, approximately 2% of students in university were black, although blacks were almost half of population.) One of the black students will point out the contradiction; the professor will be offended, since 'there are no such thing as blacks and whites in Brazil', because 'we are all mixed-race', and he himself had a 'black great grandmother'. Indeed, were I to summarize the notion of racial democracy in two sentences, they definitely would be the following: 'There is no racism in Brazil because everyone is mixed-raced', and 'I cannot be racist, since I have a black friend (girlfriend/boyfriend/relative/grandmother)'.

Although the notion of racial democracy is the mainstream narrative on Brazilian race relations, it has been consistently challenged by Brazilian black intellectuals such as author Lima Barreto, lawyer and abolitionist Luiz Gama, activists and scholars Abdias Nascimento, Beatriz Nascimento, Lélia Gonzalez, Hamilton Cardoso, Sueli Carneiro, and Jurema Werneck. Along with many other black intellectuals and activists who engaged in anti-racist struggle, they have argued that racism structures strong, enduring social hierarchies and inequalities in Brazilian society; that mixedness has been largely promoted by governments with the aim to whiten Brazilian population – therefore the incentive for European immigration to Brazil in the late 19th-early 20th century –; that rights and citizenship have never been assured to black population; that blacks are disproportionately exposed to state violence. By stressing structural differences between blacks and whites, and the racist dynamics in which daily face-to-face

interaction are embed, they could uncover the idea of racial democracy to be a myth, and to develop an important counter discourse, a narrative that has historically kept black resistance to the hegemonic imaginary alive.

**BK:** After reading Felipe's contribution on how the Brazilian social welfare system "Bolsa Familia" operates (please see file attached), I wanted to gain some of your perspectives on the relationship between Afro-Brazilians and the state education and social welfare systems in recent times, particularly in light of the legacy of slavery and all that comes with it.

All children (0-7 years) have to be registered in the health system, having public permanent medical accompaniment and complete vaccination. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers have to be supported by public health system by receiving treatment, care and information regarding reproductive health, among other benefits. This measure reduced largely the level of child mortality in Brazil, making the country progress considerably regarding the Gini coefficient or human development index.

At education level, the programme demands that children from 6-15 years have to attend to school and proof at least 85% of presence in class, while students from 16-17 years old have to proof minimal 75% of presence in class. This increased the social conditions of poor families considerably and reduced child labour, one of the main reasons of social abandonment and exclusion.

**Brunata Mires:** The issues you address here are very important. Lula-Dilma terms played a crucial role in reducing poverty, which represented definitely an achievement and a consistent change in the orientation of politics. As the majority of the population in extreme poverty is black, this group experienced significant improvement in their life conditions – and that is not to be underestimated. Nonetheless, Felipe's remarks could not be more accurate. If we take into consideration whites exclusively compose our economic elites, we realize that avoiding tackling economic inequalities also meant maintaining the distances between blacks and whites.

Racial inequalities in Brazil are sharp, and deeply entangled with socioeconomic inequalities. It is evident in the scarcity of blacks in representative politics, in our lower rates of school completion, higher vulnerability to violence, higher unemployment rates and lower incomes, when compared to whites. Disrupting a structure articulated as a legacy of slavery demands, first, the recognition that our society was deeply conformed by slavery and succeeding negligence on black population and politics aiming to eliminate our culture, our knowledge and even our bodies. And that is yet to be done. Next, we would need a change on government's perspective on who are the blacks and what a social welfare system is supposed to do.

What does it mean to condition the access to a program of income transference to children's attendance to school and registration in public health? Of course it played an important role in increasing education levels and health of the poorest. But why is it supposed, in general, that poor black people are not able to take good care of their children, the we do not wish our children to have better lives and that we do not put efforts into reaching it? On the other hand, I wonder if the focus should not have been in providing more and better public schools and health facilities in poor regions and neighborhoods.

By that, I mean that conceiving black Brazilians as citizens demands a shift in the perspective governments historically adopt towards this population. Instead of being considered as a group yet to be civilized, as a problem, it is necessary to acknowledge that we have been persistently exploited and deprived of opportunities. Only a welfare system that take our history seriously will be able to promote social justice in the long run.

**BK: Institutions outside of the formal education spaces that engage with religious, spiritual or cultural activities like music or dancing are also forms of education could you perhaps discuss some examples of these types of institutions and highlight the roles that they play in community building and engaging with histories particularly in Afro-descendant and indigenous communities**

**Brunata Mires:** We have historically produced and transmitted knowledge through various cultural expressions. From the use of plants as medicine and in food preparation to Afro-Brazilian religions and their connection to samba – the most famous Brazilian music genre –, non-academic expressions have been relevant in preserving Afro-Brazilians and indigenous memory and in strengthening our permanent resistance in our struggle against white supremacy. Poetry, literature, dance, hairstyle and clothing are territories of preservation and reinvention for black Brazilians. Indeed, Brazilian scholars and activists argue that cultural expressions are important political tools for black social movements here.

**BK:** Lastly for someone thinking of reading up further some of the key figures and social movements that have fought and centered the problems particular to Afro-Brazilians what or who would you recommend they look out for?

**Brunata Mires:** Most of the literature is not available in English – indeed, I believe translating South African authors into Portuguese, and Afro-brazilians into English is a very interesting future plan. But I will list some interesting books and articles that I would recommend:

**Negras in Brazil**, by Kia Lilly Caldwell - which describes and examines the black women’s movement in Brazil;

**Black Women against the Land Grab**, by Keisha-Khan Perry - focused on urban social movements against forced land evictions;

**Genocide: the Social Lynching of the Black in Brazil**, by Abdias Nascimento;

**Orpheus and Power: Afro-Brazilian Social Movements in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988**, by Michael Hanchard;

**Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil**, by Edward Telles:

**Diploma of Whiteness**, by Jerry Dávila, which addresses how Brazilian authorities conceived the project to whiten the population through European immigration, in the first half of the 20th century.

# CUBA



# A critical reflection on Education, Land reform and Nutrition in Cuba

Michell Mpike

## Introduction

The Cuban education system is considered to be among the best in what is referred to as the global South, and is highly regarded across the world. The country has achieved this, with no assistance from the World Bank or the IMF, as a result of the regimes comprehensive commitment to education for all. In this, Education reforms in post revolutionary Cuba will be outlined, followed by a critical analysis of the escuela de campo and circulos de interes. Thereafter, the relationship between the education system, nutrition and land will be discussed.

## Education reforms in post-revolutionary Cuba

The political, economic and social spheres of Cuba were completely transformed as a result of the Cuban revolution and education was a central part of the revolution itself. The new revolutionary government of Fidel Castro (1959) had health and education as their priorities, thus universal and free quality education and healthcare were important outcomes of the revolution. The year of education was 1961 and armed with more than 200 000 facilitators, the campaign was aimed at eradicating illiteracy in the country. The campaign crossed the rural-urban divide and the countryside was specifically targeted. As a result, after one year the country was declared a territory free from illiteracy by UNESCO. The literacy campaign and the establishment of universal and free education and healthcare were factors that contributed positively to the improvement of the lives of those people who had been oppressed by the previous regimes. In fact, the targeting of the marginalised and the ending of any kind of gender and racial discrimination, which had been rife since colonisation, was an important objective of the campaign. Furthermore, The obligation to serve society was taught by example in the literacy campaign. The revolution was a sharp break with the past and it was thus essential for the process of education and re-education to encompass all sectors of the population, including the middle-aged and the elderly. Effective channels for education were developed outside of the schools through labour organizations and the armed forces, through participation in mass organisations and through direct political education at political events. Within the formal schooling system, the revolutionary government introduced the *escuelas de campo* (“the school that goes to the country”) programme. Most upper secondary schools in the country are boarding schools in the countryside where learners divide time between theoretical work and manual labour on plots of arable land attached to the boarding school. This initially begun, in 1966, as part of the revolutionary government’s drive for equality which was expressed in an ongoing ideological push to unify rural and urban populations.

Approximately 20 000 basic secondary education students and their teachers from urban lower and upper secondary schools moved to the countryside during their school holidays to work with farmers and agricultural workers. In 1971, this practice was institutionalised in the form of boarding schools in the countryside as a result of this ideological push, as well as concerns about the performance of learners in the lower secondary schools. Each of these schools had 500 students and large numbers of urban lower secondary learners attended these schools. In the 1980s and 1990s, upper secondary school enrollment expanded and lower secondary school children were deemed to be too young to go to boarding schools. Thus, the schools in the countryside became upper secondary schools. Upper secondary schools in the urban areas are still required to travel to their countryside during their holidays in order to participate in agricultural work. As part of the institutionalised arrangement, practical knowledge and classroom materials are integrated into a single curriculum focused on observation and problem solving. The schools in the countryside had a positive effect on student achievement; failure rates went down and grades went up as a result of putting a significant number of students into a boarding environment where teachers had close control over student academic work around the clock. The schools were also a means through which young people could learn the educational and societal value of productive labour. In addition, the schools contributed greatly to transforming the social relations of work by eliminating the distinction between manual and non-manual work. The communitarian morality promoted in the schools also emphasized solidarity, which proved important for Cuba in times of crisis, and there was an attempt to create an atmosphere of commitment, collective effort and mutual support.

The revolutionary government believed that no social equality is possible without equality of education and culture, and in fact, the Cuban education system has reputation for quality education and equality of opportunity. Although the budget for education has decreased since the collapse of the USSR, which brought about an economic crisis in Cuba, the government

still devotes a significant amount of funding to education. The state has systematically supported the education system over time and is proactive in trying to create a good learning environment for all, irrespective of ethnicity, class, gender and location. The government has made incredible material, ideological and psychological investments in education, with free education for all and a conscious attempt at bridging the rural-urban educational gap. The centralised resourcing of education thus ensures that there are no disparities in opportunities based on the resources available at the local level. This is an important factor in relation the schools in the countryside. In a system where the funding of education is the responsibility of the regional or local government, the resources that schools have will likely differ according the financial resources of that governing authority. Thus, in an environment where schools in a rural area depended on local funding, it is possible that a programme such as the schools in the countryside would pose the danger of turning schools in rural areas into training camps for manual labour in the absence of resources that ensure quality education in the classroom and the proper implementation of a work-study curriculum. Furthermore, in addition to ensuring a quality learning environment in these upper secondary schools, the Cuban government has ensured that they are attended by both rural and urban populations by placing the majority of upper secondary schools in the countryside as well as by banning private schools (with the exception of international schools). This means that children from urban areas or children of higher socioeconomic status cannot opt out of the public education system and the programmes that are a compulsory part of it. In a system where school choice existed, despite their positive intentions, schools in the countryside could in practice become schools for rural and other marginalised communities, possibly to their detriment as compared to peers who are able to opt out of the system. Another aspect of this system that is of concern is the fact that learners are being used to augment the agricultural labour supply, without compensation. In addition, while generally all forms of schooling inscribe normative principles and

regulate modes of reasoning and what is perceived to be acceptable behaviour, the problematic aspect of the

Cuban system is the forceful imposition of the hegemonic discourse, leaving almost no space for alternative discourses. The idea of collecting nearly all secondary school students in boarding school away from their parents has social and ideological implications, creating an ideological space relatively undisturbed by other influences.

A third major route for the transformation of Cuban education were the *circulos de interes*. These “interest circles” are similar to extra-mural activities but are oriented exclusively around productive activities. Animal science, soil chemistry, and oceanography are typical interest circles. The circles are intended to be a bridge between the school curriculum and the student’s later life of productive activity. While the school itself functions as a productive unit engaged in agriculture, the chemistry class will focus on soil analysis, reflecting both the wholeness of the educational experience and the real contribution being made to the productive capacity of the nation. The *circulos de interes* then provide a means of informing young people about the content of various occupations, while at the same time stimulating interest in careers that are likely to make a major contribution to national development. By tying the educational experience more closely to the economy, the *circulos de interes* are seen to perform the very important function of encouraging young people to enter particular occupations, especially in a country that has foregone wage incentives. An interest in the process of production rather than in the monetary reward is stimulated in the *circulos de Interes*. Taking into the account both the *circulos de interes* and the *escuela de campos*, the Cuban education system has been criticised for having an apparently instrumental nature, despite the focus on ideas, solidarity and equality. Thus on the surface, the rationale behind schooling appears to be preparation for being part of the workforce, rather than the inherent value of education. Despite this, the

opportunities for Cuban learners after secondary school that are expressed through the different tracks in the free higher education system, enable them to pursue their own interests and choose their contribution to society within an apparently instrumental education system.

## **Education, nutrition and land**

By 1989, about 75% of all agricultural land was devoted to state-run farms, whose primary purpose was the production of sugar for export. The collapse of the USSR in 1989 dealt a catastrophic blow to Cuba's economy because the USSR was Cuba's primary trading partner. Imports from Eastern Europe fell to a third of their former value by 1992 and at the same time, the U.S. embargo against Cuba was strengthened, making it illegal for foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies to trade with Cuba and shipment of any medicinal or food items to Cuba was forbidden. Cuba's sophisticated, high-input agricultural system faced an 80% drop in pesticide and fertilizer availability, and access to fuels and irrigation also fell sharply. Machine parts for transportation and agricultural devices became unavailable, rendering many mechanized processes useless. Imports of food for human consumption decreased quickly and extensively which led to the average caloric intake per individual declining by 30% from 1989 levels. Nutritional deficiencies led to the outbreak of new diseases and despite having eradicated hunger, Cuba was faced with widespread malnutrition and food shortage.

Cuba was faced with the challenge of simultaneously increasing food production and reducing or eliminating inputs in order to ensure food security. To this end, Cuba adopted an alternative agricultural model, known as Low Input Sustainable Agriculture, as national policy. Cuban scientists had for many years already been exploring alternative agricultural techniques and were thus well prepared to face the challenge of nationwide conversion to sustainable Alternative Agriculture. Central

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Cuba -

A critical reflection on Education, Land reform and Nutrition in Cuba

planning now helps to determine research and education programs, disseminating the knowledge needed to employ alternative agricultural techniques. Economies of scale are exploited and scarce resources directed to where they're needed most. At the same time, the units of production are kept as small as possible, empowering individual growers and drawing upon their specialized knowledge of local agronomic conditions. Additionally, such small-scale units of management have created numerous small research centers, allowing farmers and scientists to interact more frequently and effectively. Urban agriculture has also become a significant source of fresh produce for the urban populations. Urban gardens in Havana and other major cities have emerged as part of a grassroots movement response to the food crisis and have helped to stabilise the supply of fresh food to the urban centres.

More than thirty years after the revolution and the historic Year of Education, guided by the state, Cubans responded as best they could to the food insecurity that the country was facing. Rather than excluding the populace, the new model in Cuba integrates all areas of society in a common struggle for food self-sufficiency. One can argue that the education system has been an integral part of Cuba's ability to respond to the crisis that ensued after the collapse of the USSR. The Cuban government worked to ensure that technical and scientific capacities needed for production and the society at large were developed through the education system.

The literacy campaign, universal free education as well as the interest circles were important aspects of this drive to equip the Cuban population with the necessary technical and scientific capacities. Thus, when faced with the crisis, the country had the skills required to help it respond the best way possible, with the resources available. The discourse that was produced in schools was important in getting Cubans to band together to respond to the crisis. The communitarian morality promoted in schools made Cubans more receptive to the solidarity and self sacrifice required

from all Cubans during the period of the crisis. In addition to technical capacities as well as communitarian values, the Cuban education system attempted to instill an equal appreciation of manual and non-manual work. During this crisis, Cubans have been engaged in agricultural work, a form of productive work that many have engaged with as part of their schooling. The social relations of labour were blurred through the schools in the countryside and agricultural work is an activity that most Cubans have taken on where needed, as part of the response to the crisis, rather than it being reserved for certain sections of society. The urban and small holder farms are an indication of this.

Land reform has also been an important part of Cuba's ability to respond to the crisis. Prior to the revolution, 9% of farmers held 73% of all agricultural lands, and the sugarcane monoculture of sugarcane relied on peasant labour. Land reform was one of the most important priorities of the revolutionary government, and under Castro, all land holdings greater than 67 hectares were repatriated as state property. Thus, having most of the land under state control meant that the state could utilise the land available to it to respond to the crisis, rather than having to negotiate with private landowners or entrusting the food security of Cubans to the market.

## **Conclusion**

Education, nutrition and land in revolutionary Cuba may not be explicitly linked however the relationship between the three in achieving food security during the crisis of the early 1990s is important to consider. Without access to land and a qualified workforce, Cuba's story following the crisis, may very well have been different.

# Responses to Education, Land and Nutrition in Cuba

Kopano Maroga

The current and ongoing question of education in South Africa is, arguably, more pressing than ever in the present moment. The civic unrest due to poor service delivery and lack of radical transformation insofar as education (and other factions of society) is concerned is becoming increasingly more volatile as time goes by. The reasons for this civic unrest are multiple, including but not limited to:

- Poor service delivery in publicly owned schools, most particularly those situated in rural areas and outside of/on the fringes of the metropolises.
- Formal education (of some degree) is almost always a prerequisite for non-labour intensive employment. This category of employment generally offers a significantly higher wage than labour intensive work and comes with more benefit incentives.
- Education is presented as offering one of the most effective means out of poverty.
- Education is presented as offering long-term social benefits (such as increased opportunities for a higher standard of living).

However, the discourse on the benefits of education does not always contextualize these benefits within a race, class and gender stratified society. That is to say, education is not a cure-all for the difficulties faced by a society and, in some cases, can further entrench the oppressive and restrictive structures of a society by replicating these structures by virtue of who does and does not have access to them. Furthermore, the correlation between members of a society who fit into the dominant social category and experience a higher standard of living is an important metric to consider. In the context of a white supremacist, capitalist and patriarchal society- people who are white, cisgender, male, middle class and above have a higher propensity of achieving a higher standard of living. This is without even necessarily factoring in their level of education. In the context of contemporary South Africa where economic inequality is separated along racial, class and gender lines with black and brown indigenous peoples facing the brunt of socio-economic inequity which the white minority experience the benefits thereof this discrepancy in the education discourse becomes quite clear. Particularly in the wake of educational reforms post-apartheid that have increased the number of black and brown indigenous people receiving education. For this reason if an education system is going to be used to achieve some kind of social, transformative and restorative justice it needs to be critical in its implementation as well as in the conceptions of its structure. Simply put, education needs to be radically re-imaginative in the context of a social need for radical transformation. The case has not been such in the South African context and insofar as radical, structural re-imagining is concerned South Africa can learn much from the post-revolution, Cuban educational system and its radical social restructuring that is responsive to questions of racial discrimination, class discrimination and the urban/rural divide. The following are some thoughts generated from reading “Education, land and nutrition in Cuba”.

## Imagining education outside of a utilitarian framework?

The stand-out prerequisite for a revolutionised education system in the Cuban example is that it evidences clarity on the kind of society the education system is involved in creating. The focus on the rural areas, as evidenced in the *escuelas de campos* (“the school that goes to the country”), is an effective and direct mechanism to tackle the urban-rural divide. By making it an educational necessity that students participate in rural life and gain a tactile understanding for where the necessary raw materials that compose their lives come from (eg. food and water) one creates the conditions for a more integrated society that shares a common focus and appreciation for each others labours. Accompanied by the *circulos de interes* (“circles of interest”) that offer specialized attention into particular and productive facets of society it would appear that students are well equipped to be able to pursue their interest with conviction in their abilities by the time they enter into the higher education system. The critique here is that this model of education is highly utilitarian, in that the focus of the education system is as preparation for being a productive member of the workforce as opposed to education for the potential socio-psychological benefits it may offer outside of a socio-economic, utilitarian framework. It would appear that, though effective in restructuring and equalizing access to education, the underlying epistemic focus on creating “productive” members of society has remained somewhat unchallenged and unchanged. In fact, one could argue that this epistemic framework has been intensified with the focus on creating individual members of society that are, on the whole, directly beneficial to the “good of the populace” by focusing particularly on sectors where there is a need for a strong unified workforce (eg. agriculture). This is not necessarily a bad or good thing. In terms of ensuring fair and equitable access to education and work this approach is clearly effective. My question, however, lies in the implications of an education system that prioritizes creating a labour-centric populace. Does this potentially reinforce the same production-centric philosophy

under which capitalism has achieved its traction? What then does it mean to have a populace who are educated and employed but, effectively, indentured to their ability to produce? This is not to negate the undeniable benefits of the comprehensive welfare system that Cuba offers (free education, healthcare and social security) but rather to ask what are the potential ramifications of a state that is centrally planned but still answers to the global free market system of production and consumption and imbues that ethos into its schooling system.

### **De-privatization a step toward decolonization?**

In the Cuban example the necessities of production are still espoused. The rhetoric having shifted from an individual centered one to a communal one. The most effective mechanism, it would appear, to achieving the dismantling of a neoliberal economics in the education sector is de-privatization. The removal of all private schools (with the exception of international schools) allows for a centralized resourcing of education that ensures a lack of disparity of the opportunities available to learners at different schools. This proves an enormous structural shift that answers the question of accessibility quite directly. However, in the South African case the private sector has gained significant prominence insofar as education is concerned. Private institutions form a large bloc of the educational spectrum from pre-school up to tertiary education, filling in demand for a diverse array of schooling systems where the public sector has not. Within this private sector bloc of the education system one finds schools that are specifically catered to lower-income families, though even these schools seem to be geared more toward the lower-middle class. This is not to aggrandize the necessity for these types of schools or to advocate for the benefits of private sector schooling but rather to give context to the extent of private sector dependency that has been fostered in the education system in South Africa. It would appear that without a radical strategy to deprivatize the education sector whilst offering an effective schooling

mechanism in its place that promotes access and addresses discriminatory access by virtue of race, class and gender the South African education system is in danger of collapse (though maintaining the current trajectory bodes the same fate).

### **Education and the crises facing South African society**

In the Cuban example education was used as a tool to tackle socio-economic problems holistically. Education was not transformed superficially by changing course content alone but by re-strategizing its implementation and making structural adjustments to directly address social discrimination by race and class. This was majoritively made possible by the advent of the revolution which allowed for a complete socio-economic paradigm shift. South Africa is unique in that the transfer of power postcolonialism and post-apartheid was not accompanied by a radical, socio-economic, structural realignment and revolution. Though there have been attempts made by the state to address the education problems that face South Africa faces (such as making education a fiscal priority year after year) these attempts have not addressed the root causes of social inequity: the social and structural remnants of colonial and apartheid separatism and capture by the private sector. In the absence of a sweeping, radical and revolutionary engagement with the socio-economic inequalities barraging South Africa it is inconceivable that we will ever experience the possibilities that a free, decolonized education could hold.

# Critical Reflections on emancipatory education from Cuba, Bolivia and South Africa

Interview with  
Laura Effron

Brian Kamanzi (BK): Greetings comrade Laura! Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with us today, in this discussion we hope to reflect on Michell's contribution on aspects of the Cuban educational system but also hopefully engage on broader related issues. To start us off could you tell some of your background and some of the "work" you are interested in doing?

**Laura Effron (LE):** Hi Brian! Thanks for giving me the chance to participate in such an important project. I'm an Argentinean living in Cape Town for the last two years. I'm a history high school teacher and assistant professor at University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina, where I teach African and Asian history of colonization and de-colonization (and we should still discuss to what extent de-colonization has succeeded or not in both continents). I decided to come to South Africa as part of my own personal and professional search for wider answers related with the South historical experiences and current realities.

I'm interested in promoting the links between Africa and Latin America as I believe we have a long common history of oppressions, Northern economical and knowledge domination, etc. So since I came to South Africa I have been working as a Spanish teacher, making translations and I also tried very hard to put the concern about Latin American-African links in the political discussions. Nevertheless, I found it very difficult as South Africans do not speak Spanish nor intend to learn it, and as it seems the historical links from the 60s-80s had disappeared from the local collective memory. So a concern that used to be very common in both continents during the 60s-80s became obsolete nowadays...

**BK: What are some of your immediate reflections on Michell's account of the Cuban Education system?**

**LE:** I believe Michell's article has a specific aim, and it is to try to understand a revolutionary experience and reflect on how it could help thinking the South African reality from wider perspective. In that sense, the article shares an example of free revolutionary education that could help to think possible alternatives and also possible problems for the South African future.

The Cuban education system is known internationally as one of the best ones. It is free, public, open for everyone and very successful from primary to university level. And what seems more important, it has been taking

place in a Third World country. In that sense, in the current South African context where the discussion for free education is taking place the Cuban example brings up a real and concrete case of study that could enrich the local discussion. And as Michell explains, we cannot look for free education on its own, but linked with food and land redistributions.

An old South African comrade once asked me: “Laura, what do you understand as popular education? Because for me, popular education cannot be separated from land and food redistribution... popular education is a holistic project that takes under consideration the fact that we cannot involve in a teaching/learning relationship if the kids are hungry”. And I agree completely. So yes, Michell’s article brings up a key issue to the South African discussion on free education. But I would like to also include other cases in this discussion, as for example the Bolivian one... but we can talk about this later on.

**BK: In earlier conversations I understood that you taught in Argentina some years back, how would you contrast the system there post-independence to the Cuban reconstruction project as it relates to education?**

**LE:** Well... this is a difficult question... to be honest, I have never thought about that comparison before in my life. I guess we can try to make it by reflecting on the concept of nationhood building. Argentina, as most of the continent, achieved independence from the Spanish in early 19th Century (1810). Since then, the main question was how to build a national state. One of the things we have to understand is that the idea of nationhood most of the independent Latin American countries had in mind was a Eurocentric one. So during the 20th Century we can see how all over the continent there were wars and expropriations of lands from indigenous communities in an intend to control the territory, workforce and impose specific values and believes based in European ideas of progress and civilization.

Taking that under consideration, the Argentinean educational system,

as the Cuban one, should be understood as part of that nation building project. This is a very complex issue as if we simplify it; it will look like we are criticizing those educational experiences for being influenced by Western ideas. Yes, both educational systems have that. Both systems were created as a way to “educate” society in a particular way, based on specific values, one main language (Spanish) and the idea of nationhood. Even if Cuba went through a radical revolution, it did not question those main ideas coming from the West.

So once I made this problem explicit, I still believe both experiences are valuable and enriching for the South African discussion. Argentinean educational system became compulsory, free and secular in 1884 under the 1420 Act for Common Education. But it was only in 1918 that the university system got democratized after the students’ uprising at University of Córdoba. Since then, universities began to have a co-government with representation of students, professors and graduates and a democratic system of universities decisions and election of new members. The 1918 reform became very important all over the continent and inspired students in other cities to claim for their rights to be part of the university government. There was still one main issue... universities were not free yet. That only took place in 1949 under Juan Domingo Perón’s government (also known as a populist government or welfare state). Perón promoted the redistribution of wealth and opportunities in favor of workers and lower classes. His political project is known internationally as it had a big impact in the socio-economical composition of the country. Since then, there was a big growth of middle class and historically marginalized sectors of society began to have equal rights, better working conditions and salaries and better education as well.

So while the Argentinean and Cuba educational systems are in fact one of the first and only free, public and open (and by open I mean no exam is needed to get in) educational systems from primary to university level in the continent (and probably in the world), none of them discussed yet the

issue of language (in both cases the official language is Spanish) or how Eurocentric their contents still are. Those two questions are crucial and show how the colonial legacy still has influence on both countries. Probably there is much more to think, reflect and discuss about both cases.... But as I believe the conversation we are having now is related with South African concerns... maybe this little info could bring new ideas or reflections to the current local context...?

**BK: In prior conversations you have raised critical questions around language, education and emancipatory movements and governments could you expand some of those ideas using regional examples?**

**LE:** I have been thinking a lot about how South Africans tend to look at Cuba as an example... and even though I understand why, I believe there are other examples and realities that should be taken under consideration. One of them, and I think it's a crucial one, is Bolivia. Bolivia has been under a system of oppression that can and should be understood as a local Apartheid. Bolivia is the country with more indigenous population in the continent (the national census of 2001 shows that 62.2% of its total population is indigenous) and nevertheless only got indigenous political representation in 2005 when Evo Morales won elections. Since 2006 Bolivia entered into a new phase in which for the first time in its history, indigenous populations had their political, economical, cultural and social rights been recognized. Morales himself compared Bolivia's history to South Africa's and quoted Mandela in his opening speech. Since then, the country began a long journey of decolonization (even though it gained independence from the Spanish in early 19th Century). In 2006 the new Constitution was voted by referendum and Bolivia became a Plurinational state. What does that mean? It means that from that moment onwards, all the indigenous nations (about 40 different indigenous populations) were recognized as constitutive parts of the

the country, gaining rights and autonomy, which promoted indigenous presence in legislative boards and the preservation of traditional law, education, languages, etc, while at the same time intended to build up the bigger Bolivian community. Defining the state as a plurinational one was a radical political decision that opened the door to discussions over land, language, culture, knowledge, etc. Since then redistribution measures as well as nationalization of companies and educational reforms took place. The new educational system was defined as a bilingual system (the two teaching languages are based on regional population features, which means that it is not completely fixed by the national state but decided by local communities). At the same time, contents and methodologies were rethought, trying to promote encounters between local and traditional knowledge (based in communal organizations and the relationship with the environment) and western ones (based on science). Bolivia managed to make education free, secular and compulsory until high school level included (before 2006 only primary school was compulsory). Nowadays around 96% of its population is literate, making the country one of the most successful cases in the continent.

Bolivian reality is much more complex than what I just shared with you... In the last national census of 2012, 69% of the population declared they do not identify with any of the official indigenous populations. So after a long struggle to decolonize the nation, after years of working hard for it, suddenly most of the population denies its historical and traditional roots... how can we understand this? Would this people identify themselves as “mestizos” (a colonial concept used to speak about mixed race people, the concept is not included in the census as for the State it does not represent a nation or culture in itself)? Is it a problem related with an existing gap between speaking a native language and feeling part of a culture? I’m not sure what the answer is... But I do believe the Bolivian reality brings up questions that should also be asked in South Africa...

**BK: Building common understanding is said to be crucial for forging long lasting solidarity across contexts in the present day what do you see as being some of the obstacles and challenges for reviving and re-imagining transnational solidarity against exploitation and oppression?**

**LE:** The main obstacle/challenge is language. And by language I do not mean only which languages we speak/read/understand/are willing to learn but also a general cultural background that comes with it. Yes, it is true that we need to focus on local problems and struggles as a way to change local realities. But the main concern I see in nowadays movements is how local and narrow they are turning to be... To be able to change that local reality, movements need to engage with others and other realities... that's the way in which people are able to read the local from another perspective, a more critical and sharper one... And at the same time, that is the way to also understand that there are common oppressive structures, mechanisms and strategies developing all over the world. Maybe we should rethink the idea of "Foquismo" for our current realities? How can we engage in local struggles taking under consideration the bigger picture and stretching links with other similar struggles around the world? I believe the first step is to be interested on it and realize how important other realities are for our local battles.

# U.S.A



# PUERTO RICO



LK

# Radical education as the Black Panther's legacy

A conversation with Professor  
Donna Murch on Liberation schools,  
Pedagogy and women's involvement

Khadija Khan &  
Donna Murch

Khadija Khan (KK): Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today!

...

We are hoping to talk through radical social welfare and education programmes across the globe and this is why I contacted you today!

...

So the first question, is The Black Panther party has become an iconic movement and reference point for the call for self defence for Black movements in particular all over the world, but what is often less talked about is the close relationship of the party to education and progressive social welfare schemes. The most discussed of which is the Breakfast programme. In your own understanding how did the breakfast programme come about, how was it funded and what was the rationale for this initiative in the broader scheme of their stated ideology?

**Professor Donna Murch (DM):** Okay! First up, before I answer the question about the breakfast program I just want to provide a little bit of context because you had said political education is important. One of the things that speaks directly to the “no fees” question, in relation to FeesMustFall as you say, is the pre-history in the context of the Panthers party’s formation is that in 1960 the state of California passed the California masterplan which meant that all forms of higher education were free. All the way from the university of California to the community colleges. So the very origins of this movement which had been rooted, the Panthers had actually formed on Merritt college campus which was a small community college situated just on the border between West Oakland and the city. Just on that border between where black migrants had settled and the city of Oakland. So the very genesis of the Panthers partially came from this expansion of higher education and that’s very important because the way that the party is talked about it often starts with armed self defense once they had already left the college campus. I just wanted stress that to make people think about real importance of access to education, the formation of study groups and that at the very origins of the Black Panther party was political education. They start in study groups at a small public community college and it’s out of that space that the party was formed, I thought that this might have a lot of meaning for your readers about how important it is to fight for access to education and state resources and how that is connected in to many other things.

So that’s the precursor, in terms of looking at the Breakfast programs, so the party is formed in October 1966 and it’s initially formed using police patrols. The idea was to force a change in police behaviour and trying to take on this idea that the state possess the only legitimate means force, the idea of police patrols was that the state does not only posses the legitimate means of force. Following the urban rebellions, the Watts rebellion in 1965 and a whole series of rebellions in the United States really between 1965-71, the Black Panther Party with Huey Newton and Bobby

Seale decided they wanted to attempt a new tactic in organising. So what happened in Watts was you had people following the police with notebooks and tape recorders, very similar to today's activism with cellphones to record police behaviour, but to be honest the police have become much more repressive so I think those tactics had more of an effect in the 1960s than today, we didn't see the same levels of criminalisation. What we are seeing in the United States today is the criminalisation of people even recording the police, which is significantly worse, but the Panthers took this to a whole different level by finding the statute in California saying it was legal to carry a loaded unconcealed weapon. So they practiced this form of activism really for about 6-8 months from about October through perhaps till about May when the statute was overturned. Within less than a year of the Panthers being formed all the major leaders had been thrown in jail, some of capital murder charges, Bobby Seale was incarcerated in '68 for charges of conspiracy. And Eldrige Cleaver was forced into exile. So the breakfast programs are formed at a moment when really the Panther party had tried this direct confrontation with the state and had been decimated by it. So they emerge out of that crisis and they products partially of the party trying to figure out how to serve the people and to continue it's process of revolution.

They called it "Survival Pending Revolution", you know they were a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party so the shifting from direct confrontation with the state to services, maybe service provision in the modern sense as an anachronism. This is and idea we usually associate with the state and not for profits but they had the idea that they were going to shift to a position were they would be able to meet the needs of the people not only in terms of fighting police brutal but through providing services for other people however they did this through the lens of "survival pending revolution" which is important because they didn't want it to be understood to be reformist. The argument was that in order to continue the process of revolution they needed to reconnect with the people. What

I can say about the breakfast programs is that they have their origins in the liberation schools, so because the Panther's cared so much about political education and saw it as absolutely essential to their survival as a party, and to the liberation of black people, they started their programs with political education. When they set up the liberation schools what they saw was that a lot of the children were hungry and malnourished, children who were malnourished couldn't learn. They started feeding the children who came to the liberation schools and out of that came the idea for the Free Breakfast programs. Another important thing to add here is the shift in gender politics which fits in to some of the themes you were talking about the contemporary movements in South Africa. The initial leadership of Panther party was male and even the very nature of the police patrols attracted more men than it did women but in 1968 after they faced so much repression with leadership being thrown in jail and you just had constant harassment, prosecution and incarceration of rank and file members particularly in the Bay area (where they started). And you began to see the numbers of women in the party begin to rise. Now while the male leadership is being incarcerated and Huey Newton sees the tactic of direct confrontation is resulting in incredible repression, according to the founders it was Bobby Seale's idea to start the breakfast programs as a way to reconnect with the community but I think there's still a broader history to be written about the role of women in this because it seems very important that women's membership starts to rise at just the moment that the breakfast program becomes an idea and it's a bit of a "chicken or egg", which came first? However it's clear that women were an important part of staffing the liberation schools and the breakfast programs. My guess is that the Panthers practiced "democratic centralism" and the breakfast programs are more of a product of, not only ideas from leadership, but also a result of many men becoming incarcerated.

**KK: Do you have any information on how the Breakfast program was funded?**

**DM:** The Panther party funded the program, 1 important contrast to today is that the Panther's were a party based organisation and the main that they funded the party was through selling their newspaper. In order to keep funding the breakfast program later down the line they ask for donations from local business, from black businesses, and the core infrastructure that was used came from churches. So it's really interesting, so the Panther's are in one way this really radical Marxist sort of party based organisation, you know, but the infrastructure for where they held the breakfast programs were the churches! And in my book "Living for the City", I talk about that and how some of the reason for that has to do with the nature of the community from which the party emerged which was a Southern migrant community - largely a first generation migrant community from the South. So that tradition of mutual aid was core within the black community, people were coming from the South and they are used to creating parallel institutions after all during Jim Crow African Americans couldn't get access to schooling and other state services and hence there was this tradition of creating those parallel institutions. In many ways I think the Panther party coming out of Oakland, which is in California in the North West, but it was founded by people coming from the segregated South and so the idea for doing these things came as having to do, in some way, with that tradition. The church was and is the central kind of social meeting place, and one of the major ways of moving economic resources within the black community. What is important to mention is that not all churches participated in this, these were radical churches, now the first breakfast program that I found was at St Augustine's which was headed up by a radical pastor who had been a member of SNCC (student's for non-violence coordinating committee).

**KK: Wow, thank you! Next we want to talk a little bit about the role of teachers and radical educators during the time of the black panthers.**

DM: Well one of the wonderful things is like the longest running institution of the Black Panther Party was the Oakland Community School named the Huey P Newton Intercommunal Institute. It was founded in 1973 and ran through the early '80s and it was a fascinating form of education. Part of what inspired it was that there are Panthers many of them as I mentioned were Southern migrants and they had a very brutal time in the Oakland public schools. Much of the response of the state of California to shifting demographics as black people migrated to the west coast was to criminalize its children. So Jim Crow as we think of it in the South didn't exist in California the legal segregation laws on the books were against Mexicans of Indian descent. So California is an interesting place because it's actually as black people begin to migrate as March numbers during World War 2. I would argue you see a system of anti-black segregation. It was ad hoc. Prior to that but it really codifies them grow stronger after World War 2. So as the black population increases prior to that the black population is very small. So given the history of California as having been part of Mexico the primary segregationist impulse was directed first at Mexicans of Indian descent and then the Chinese. So in terms of understanding the origins of the Panther school many of these the children that migrated in became members of the party because Black Panther Party people were very young. Most of them were teenagers. Some in their early 20s and the leadership just a few years older than that. So they had these terrible brutal experiences in school you know being demeaned being told that Africa didn't have a history, the use of racial epithets. Incredible disciplinary actions being taken towards students in some cases corporal punishment in one school. In one school, they didn't allow the students to meet in the auditorium because they felt that having that concentration of black youth could lead to the "fever". That word was used to actually getting the "fever" and becoming violent. So for the Panthers, it's very interesting they were deeply deeply intellectual. And these were working class kids but who've been terribly traumatized by school. So the Panthers school was an attempt to take some of the new ideas of pedagogy that

came out of the independent schooling movement in the 1970s, that some in some cases they were grassroots efforts, but these were, I think, less punitive and less elite visions about how to allow children to develop critical thinking versus the very disciplinary authoritarian role models of our schools for poor children and children of color.

So they did things like they didn't allow any form of corporal punishment or even chastising children. They would often have children and yoga poses in order to create you know in order to take to instruct children. They focused on critical thinking. They had a number of musicians and arts artists that roll through the school including the great jazz musicians Sun Ra. Oh and it was really built on trying to make education creative. And the argument that you know low income and poor children deserve an education that allows them to think and not just be forced to work through rote learning and disciplinary action.

**KK: Wow that's incredible. That's why just side note that's why learning about the educational routes of the black and the hurting bringing those out and accentuating those is just so moving you know to hear about in detail when so much of it isn't talked about so often.**

**So anyways thank you. That kind of addresses a lot of what my next question was about which was the school to prison pipeline in the way that it's conceptualized today. But the question asks what might some of the lessons be learned from the educational disposition of the Black Panther Party for the fight against the school to prison pipeline today and other modern manifestations of oppression ailing affected communities.**

**DM:** I think one of the lessons we learned from the Black Panther Party Schools is first of all on learning the what's become commonsensical about the privatization charterization of public education that you know cynically some people, supporters for charter schools, actually cite the

Panthers as a charter school. Now that's just absolutely not true. They were, you know what people call the independent schools of the 70s. They weren't funded by the state. However they accepted all children. In fact they were most interested in children who were or at least served or had been mistreated by public schools. And they allowed children from all backgrounds. So I think the lesson to be learned is about different visions for education and alternate you know rather than going to rid of charterization of privatization. Figuring out how to set up independent schools that focusing most on the children who are in the greatest need of education. And I think in the moment in which we live in which, you know, it's the people who most need all kinds of services who are the most restricted from them. So I think that that's really important, the institutionalization of testing and meritocracy and you know providing resources to very few, the fact that charter schools actually use lotteries you know which create you know the story of that those few great students who are both lucky and smart who get access whereas the Panther vision was just the opposite. It was to say that we want the children who have been shut out kept out news by public education.

I think that going back and looking at some of their alternate methods for teaching critical thinking and being comfortable and talking about politics and ideology as important in young children's education. Yeah. So I think you know that is a sensitive subject. I'm a historian and I teach at a university level. I often wonder how we would teach some of the topics of university levels you know to K through 12. How do you teach the history of slavery and how you teach the history of imperialism without imperiling children's sense of safety. And I think going back you know to other precedents for political organizations and looking at non-state histories education. So I would say that. And what else. The Panthers as a whole, their organizational is a complicated organization because it did many different things and it all throughout its history. But I think that you know it's very much a reflection of the era in which it emerged which was

the era of decolonization, state socialism and liberation movements. So for the Panthers it wasn't a contradiction to talk about armed self-defense in the same breath as talking about feeding children and dividing them with education. I think the final thing is the importance of women in the Black Power movement and Black liberation, we are talking about the schools which were in fact largely staffed by women. I think about the schools as being part of the Panther's most important legacies and it's not been given a lot of attention because I think that the kind of scintillation about black men with guns and in paramilitary uniforms is really the way the party was covered by the mainstream media and to this day there's still that focus on the first six months of the party. So I think of the school as its most important legacy one way as a tactical way to learn about the school is I have a long account of it in my book in Chapter Six. There's also a new book that's come out by Robert Spencer called "The Revolution has come", it really details history of that and the other thing would be looking at the Black Panther newspaper and finding out more about the school itself.

**KK: OK great. Thank you. We will definitely look into that. Just a quick technical question. How often did children come to this school.**

**DM:** Every day every day I can you of two different things. Liberations schools which were formal schools that were once a week but in Oakland they had up they actually found it actually state school in 1973 in 1981 functioned like a regular complex.

**KK: Thank you. And so then the last question is about the establishment of free clinics and the Black Panther Party was said to have been working on the establishment of these free clinics in your understanding how did these practically work and do any of these clinics still exist today?**

**DM:** You know I know less about the clinic someone else, Alondra Nelson, has written a wonderful book about this called "Body and Soul" which can

tell you more. I think some of the clinics are still around. But yeah the medical clinics were very very important part of the party and actually one of the heads of psychiatry at UC Berkeley when I was a student there was had participated in the clinics. So yeah they were important and Alondra's probably the best source, check out "Body and Soul".

**KK:** OK great. And then I just want to ask about how you addressed context in the context of the Black Panther Party you know coming up during times of decolonization and socialist liberation and all of that. So that is striking because it's in such contrast to the world that we live in right now which is like rapid corporatization and you know everything that's happening in our country. Who would like your president and everything happening in South Africa with high level of corruption and kind of a lack of change since apartheid ended.

And so it just feels to me when I hear that that make it kind of just feel like damn, like we're in such a different social context, but at the same time there is so many more different and more intense levels of violence that might have manifested in perhaps different ways during the '70s. I'm just wondering about what you think about that and what you think about our current historical moment in terms of pursuing something like free education in pub or public education for children in this country and in South Africa. Just if you have any musings or thoughts on that.

**DM:** Well you know it's I just feel that we are in a very very difficult time. I was born at the tail end of the black power movement in the late '60s and came of age under the Reagan era. So in that sense it was also a very difficult period. But one of the most daunting things today is the scale of retrenchment of the state away from core functions of the liberal state. So the idea of the liberal social contract people pay taxes and those taxes the state is expected to provide infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, public education, social safety net and regulation of workplace violence.

And one of the differences today versus then is that the core idea of a liberal social contract has been eroded. Many of us know the limitations of liberalism. Nevertheless the liberal state was expected to provide services. And what we're seeing today is this real deconstruction of the liberal state. So in the United States the expansion of the police state, and I think it's not an exaggeration or polemical to call it that, the actual policing apparatus, the size of a municipal police forces federal, state law enforcement system of jails, different forms of detention the federal portion of this with the national security state and the intelligence divisions we're facing something where those kinds of policing and surveillance functions of the state have vastly expanded at the same time but we've seen immense cuts in both the quality and the funding of public infrastructure. So I think that this is a real challenge.

One of the biggest challenges it presents is the loss of faith in public institutions. So in the United States there's a sense that "oh well you don't this is a typical response you don't throw money is a problem", but it's actually not true, defunding and privatization has seriously damaged these institutions. So I think it requires fighting on multiple fronts you know and I think that that's where the Panthers are useful because they made claims on the state. They didn't just fight the state. They also made claims on it simultaneously. So you know they used the strategy of armed self-defense which today would be an impossible to prosecute under anti-terrorism law. What we've seen happen with with the animal rights movement which is really has everything to do with corporations. You know people simply trying to get into factories and take pictures of factory farms or you know experimentation on animals has been sentenced essentially under one of the subsets of anti-terrorism law. So you can imagine like the kinds of armed self-defense practiced by the Panthers. It's just a dream really. But that said, that simultaneously making a confrontational charge that the state does not have that right in their case they weren't focused on police killings like today. They were focused especially on harassment of

black drivers. And you know police brutality. It says something. But today our focus now is on police killings because of the scale of violence has increased not decreased since the 1960s and 1970s. So I think the challenge in multiple areas be it social welfare provision or public schooling is that you know we're in a moment of dismantling and what makes me hopeful is that I've been teaching for almost 25 years now. And I see a real interest in socialism among young people.

Every year the students seem to become more radical. And there's a real awareness that they are not getting that. There's an anxiety about their future that they are not likely going to live economic lives that are as secure or satisfied as their parents and that makes younger people much more interested in the distributive state as well as mobilizing against racism. And you know the profound misogyny and homophobia and transphobia of our current administration.

# Seize our right to live, seize our right to survive:

South African Struggles & Lessons  
from the Black Panther Party  
Breakfast Program for School  
Children

By Dominic Brown

## Education and Malnutrition:

#FeesMustFall was a moment that permanently changed the South African political landscape. The struggle for free tertiary education that began in 2015 is an essential part of the struggle for social justice. But is free tertiary education a panacea to South Africa's social and economic ills?

Many would argue that free tertiary education and moreover a functioning education system, however important, will not be sufficient to rid South African society of extreme unemployment, inequality and poverty. Poverty is one of the leading underlying causes behind malnutrition and undernutrition in South Africa and these conditions are serious impediments to education.

## **Poverty and Malnutrition:**

After HIV/AIDS (15.5%) and TB (12.4%), lower respiratory infections (8.3%) and diarrheal diseases (5.7%) were among the leading causes of premature mortality in South Africa in 2013. Premature mortality are deaths that occurs in children younger than 5 y/o)

Lower respiratory infections and diarrheal diseases occur much more frequently and more seriously in the presence of under nutrition, which is a major underlying cause of premature mortality (60% of cases)

Causes of malnutrition are related to inadequate dietary intake or infection. Inadequate dietary intake relates to:

- insufficient food access
- inadequate maternal and child care practices
- poor water/ sanitation and inadequate health problems

At a recent Amandla! Forum, agro-economist Tracy Ledger noted that in 2015, 1852 children died from starvation in South Africa and over 20 000 children are rushed to hospital for severe malnutrition each year (Amandla Forum: 2017).

## **Malnutrition and Stunting:**

As a result of malnutrition 25% of children in South Africa suffer from stunted growth (when a child is too short for their age). There has been an increase in the level of stunting in South Africa from 23.4% to 26.5% between 2005 and 2012.

The process of stunting is not just a physical problem, as it also hinders intellectual development. A child who is malnourished conserves energy, explores their environment much less and therefore has less opportunity for experiential learning.

## **The Constitution:**

South Africa has a chronic problem of dietary inadequacy. Many South African's do not always have the means (physical and/or economic) to access sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs to live a healthy existence.

All this begs us to move beyond the standard liberal idea that formal equality will lead us to a more free and fair society. Rare amongst national Constitutions, the South African Constitution explicitly acknowledges this limitation by guaranteeing the right to basic nutrition (Constitution 28 (1) (c)).

## **School Feeding Program:**

Consistent with this constitutional guarantee the democratically elected South African government introduced a school feeding scheme to address the large number of children who come to school hungry. The purpose of the National School Nutrition Programme was to “foster better quality education by improving children’s cognitive capacity through enhancing children’s active learning ability; reducing short-term hunger; as well as by providing an incentive for children to attend school regularly and punctually”. Alas, the large amount of money that was set aside for the program was often stolen by an aspirant black bourgeoisie to feed themselves, instead of impoverished children (Corruption Watch: 2013)

## **The Black Panther Party:**

Last year Amandla Magazine commemorated the 50th year since the inception of the Black Panther Party. Many mistakenly remember the Black Panthers simply as the radical movement for self defense.

When the Panthers formed, they, too, faced similar problems of hunger and impoverishment. In his book, "Seize the Time" (1970), Bobby Seale (co-founder of the Panthers) noted: "There are millions of people in this country who are living below subsistence". The Panthers decided to make good what the State chose not to see.

They felt that the role of revolutionary movements and revolutionaries is to educate the masses of the people to the politics of changing the system. The politics are related to people's needs, to a hungry stomach" (Seale, 1970: p226).

### **The Breakfast Program:**

So, the Panthers responded by setting up community programs. One such program was the Black Panther Breakfast Program. The Free Breakfast for School Children was initiated in 1969 and soon the program was established at each chapter and branch of the Panthers, mushrooming around the United States.

The program was set up to ensure that impoverished children (mostly from African-American decent) were provided a nutritious breakfast before school every morning, because they argued that children cannot get a good education if they are hungry. The children received balanced diets including cereal, eggs and fruit.

The program had humble beginnings, the first breakfast fed only 11 children, and by the end of 1969, the Panthers Free Breakfast Program fed between 10,000 and 20,000 school children around the US everyday. The fact that there programs addressed people's essential needs made these programs even more powerful.

### **Reform vs Revolution:**

The Panthers breakfast program is too easily seen as a reformist program

for it is impossible to create islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism. In some ways this is correct, if the idea is to create dependency or to appease disaffected communities, keeping people quiet whilst an oppressive system continues unabated. But, if the program is implemented to meet a callously neglected need and, thereby, to highlight the need to change the existing system, then it is radical and revolutionary. It is additionally essential that, through the program, the community gets an increased sense of their agency.

In the South African context – with huge unemployment and high levels of food insecurity – a community feeding program could be extremely valuable in addressing mass joblessness and hungry stomachs.

This of course raises further questions with regards to redistributing land both rural and urban. But this, like free quality education, is not the solution to all our problem, we also need to encourage new forms of agriculture and food production among many other ‘reforms’.

This may sound little different from church and charitable soup kitchens. The Panthers, however, transformed this possibly reformist campaign into a revolutionary one. In Bobby Seale’s words:

Our free health clinics, Liberation Schools, and Breakfast for Children programs are ... a means to serve, educate, unify, and organize our people, to organize the youth, and let them know that in this time, in our time, we must seize our right to live, and we must seize our right to survive (Seale, 1970: 233).

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Amandla Magazine book launch Tracey Ledger - *“An Empty Plate”*: <https://www.mixcloud.com/dominic-brown5/tracy-ledger-an-empty-plate-book-launch-pt-1/>

*Amandla Magazine celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Black panther party*: <http://aidc.org.za/power-people-remember-black-panthers-50th-anniversary/>

*Black Panther Party Breakfast for School children Programme*: <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/>

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USA & Puerto Rico -

Seize our right to live, seize our right to survive

# Thinking through education and radical politics

Interview with

██████████ Tiana Alexandra Reid

**BK:** Greetings comrade Tiana thank you so much for agreeing to be discussant with us! If it's alright with you would please introduce yourself to our readers in terms of some of the "work" you do

**TR:** Perhaps this is too revealing of who my friends are, but I don't know if I've ever been called a comrade in earnest before. I like it. My name is Tiana Reid (you might know that already) and I have only ever lived in big cities: Toronto, where I was born, Montreal, and New York City. I say this because it makes a difference to my self-fashioning and self-actualization, how I see myself and how I live in the world. Cities are infinite texts and they provided my Bildung.

I am a student first. That was my first job and it will probably be my last

(contemporary official schooling both and is not a job in the sense that it is compulsory and unpaid). I am a PhD candidate in English and Comparative Literature where I study literatures of the African diaspora, marxism, and feminism. I don't know if I'll ever be authority on anything, or want to be, but if I ever stop wanting to study, I hope I die.

I also write--essays, reviews, poetry, notes, and most recently, my dissertation--and edit other people's writing. I'm currently a senior editor at *The New Inquiry*, a New York-based online magazine with burning desire and a cold heart. I also do some more academic journal work as an editorial assistant with *Small Axe: Caribbean Journal of Criticism*.

**BK: Often in political discussions on black liberation movements from the North America that I've been around dualities between the late Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and contesting legacies of the Black Panther party have taken center stage, what are some of other movements you would encourage young people eager to learn to investigate in the US historically and why.**

**TR:** I'm interested in the edges of the black radical tradition. Some of those edges might overlap with other struggles. In broad strokes, feminism and marxism/communism/socialism come to mind. Feminism being, in my mind, a mind shaped by experience, the most transhistorical and transnational of all. Like my teacher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak said in Amman, Jordan in 2013, "Both capitalists and communists are children of mothers."

That's why I'm interested in race, gender, and class not only as discrete nodes of a spatialized intersectional analysis but also as a meeting of discursive frames and politics of liberation. I've been reading a book called *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* by historian Erik McDuffie. "Black

left feminism” is a term that comes from literary scholar Mary Helen Washington and it encapsulates exactly that attempt at producing an encounter between supposedly different struggles.

Oddly enough, W. E. B. Du Bois is a thinker who helps me think through these vexed problematics, the meeting of marxism, feminism, and black studies. I don’t look to anyone for the answers but when I think of encounters between movements as an ethical conundrum, I am driven to Du Bois’s life and work, or what he might call “life-work.” You will see how reading teaches us not to think via a single issue, but across.

**BK: Radical emancipatory politics has always involved education whether it be for use within movements that advocate for this change or with broader structural reforms to institutions like public schooling. Could you cite any examples of movements in the US or perhaps North America more broadly who stand out to you as having made use of education for radical change and comment on how some of those actions have shaped activism in the US today if at all.**

**TR:** I’ll give some examples from Canada here.

When I was visiting the University of Cape Town, at lunch Professor Gopal Guru, who teaches social and political theory at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, asked me--and I’m paraphrasing here--if it was true that Canada has the most successful multicultural campaign in the world. I said, well, Canada has the most successful multicultural public relations campaign in the world.

That got a big laugh.

But what I also mean is that education is intertwined with so many things. Education is contested ground, it must be. Right now, there are Black Lives

Matter and other folks in Toronto protesting the presence of armed police officers in public high schools. They're prompting a discussion that touches on so many things: for example, the idea of a "public" (whose public?), Canada's ongoing denial of anti-black racism, the militarization of schools, prison abolition, and state violence.

**BK: Universities have always played a role in contesting, contributing and even repressing radical ideas since their inception. Today in an age of austerity and incredible tuition debt statistics in the US what do you think are the opportunities and challenges facing those who seek to nourish the radical possibilities of university spaces (assuming you consider that such a space could even exist!)**

**TR:** Start a reading group.

Last year, Robin D.G. Kelley wrote a piece in the Boston Review called "Black Study, Black Struggle." It's online. It's a good place to think about the limits of the university, a neoliberal university. The university does not hold any kind of special place when it comes to social change or imagination. He writes about different models of study, like the Mississippi Freedom schools in the 1960s. He also writes about Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. There, they talk about debt in a fascinating way. Let me find a quote:

The student is not home, out of time, out of place, without credit, in bad debt. The student is a bad debtor threatened with credit. e student runs from credit. Credit pursues the student, offering to match credit for debt, until enough debts and enough credits have piled up. But the student has a habit, a bad habit. She studies. She studies but she does not learn. If she learned they could measure her progress, establish her attributes, give

her credit. But the student keeps studying, keeps planning to study, keeps running to study, keeps studying a plan, keeps elaborating a debt. The student does not intend to pay.

I love this quote. I think it describes a bit of what I was trying to get after in my answer to your who-are-you question. I love this quote, and yet: Why is the student gendered here? What does it mean to gender an example? Is this a feminist statement, turning the historically polluted pronoun of “He” into a “She”? Who is this “she?” This stages gender (wrongly implicitly meaning “woman”) without an analytics of what gender presumes, what violence gender produces, etc. We cannot rely on law. Perhaps I’m going a little off track here but I’m interested in that political difference between gender and feminism as modes of analysis. But these are the questions I ask when I’m reading with others.

**BK: The Standing Rock protests have made news all over the world as yet another example of fierce resistance against Imperial expansion. What appeared interesting from afar were the solidarity efforts between organisations from within the Movement for Black lives towards the protest as well as reports of university student involvement. Could you comment on the importance and dynamics around that campaign?**

**TR:** A report recently came out about how the Standing Rock Sioux and other demonstrators including non-Native ones were targeted by a hired private security company. They were called “jihadists.” I was watching Democracy Now the other day and Nick Tilsen noted how these forms of violence were a contemporary example of the Counterintelligence Program of the FBI aka COINTELPRO, which targeted anti-Vietnam War organizing, the Civil Rights Movement, communism, the Black Panthers, Young Lords, among others (including the KKK!). Can you tell I read Tupac’s FBI file when I was a teen?

So what I mean is that the connections aren't merely about some romantic vision of alliance-building and solidarity (words that must be rooted in practice) but about a shared knowledge of the way the state attempts to shut down resistance with guns and other technologies.

This kind of associative politics that does not draw a line between, say, Flint and Standing Rock are also connected. Indigenous women organizing in North Dakota draw a link between violence against women and violence against the land. "Rape of the earth" is not a metaphor, it is about how boundaries are plundered.

**BK: Finally movements like the Black Panther party are cited as having achieved tremendous social impact through breakfast programmes and the establishment of free clinics (some of which are said to still exist today).**

**Could you perhaps discuss some key social programmes that have been implemented by emancipatory movements in the region?**

**TR:** I suspect you mean present ones. I am probably being very presentist in my answers, but I far am too much in the world today. I am reading China Miéville's new book, *October*, on the Russian Revolution of 1917 and it begins with a note on dates because of the mismatch between the Julian and Gregorian calendars. Here Miéville alludes to Hamlet: time is out of joint.

I'm attracted to and learn from those small-scale activities that see time as out of joint, those movements that are not necessarily fully-fledged programs but still imagine incipient forms of being in the world and relating to others. I've been energized by these things that might have been called micropolitics in the early 2000s: people stockpiling medications in response to the rollbacks to Obamacare; teenagers sharing resources about sex on Tumblr; writing letters to prisoners; encouraging people, especially black people, not to call the police. There is nothing "micro" about this.

# Anti-colonialism and Discontents in Freedom Struggle for Puerto Rico

by  
Natasha Himmelman with  
María Hernández

Puerto Ricans have this quit-witted way of shutting down certain kinds of colorism – ‘Y tu abuela, donde está?’ / And your grandmother, where is she? And yet, there’s a way in which this retort upholds colonial racial hierarchies. Consider, for instance, Fernando Fortunato Vizcarrondo’s ‘¿Y tu aguela, aonde ejta?’ / ‘En Yo Granma, Where She At?’:

Tu coló te salió blanco  
Y la mejiya rosá;  
Loj lábioj loj tiénej finoj . . .  
¿Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?

[...]

¡Y bien que yo la conojco!  
Se ñama siña Tatá . . .  
Tu la ejconde en la cosina,  
Po’que ej prieta de a beldá.<sup>1</sup>

Color yo skin is white;  
yo cheeks is rosy red;  
the lips yo got just so fine . . .  
en yo granma, where she at?

[...]

I know ‘er real well, yu see!  
Her name’s Missus Tata. . .  
En yu hide ‘er in the kitchen,  
‘cause she black as black can be.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Fortunato Vizcarrondo, Fernando. (n.d.) ‘¿Y tu aguela, aonde ejta?’ *El Boricua*. [http://www.elboricua.com/Poem\\_Y%20tu%20abuella.html](http://www.elboricua.com/Poem_Y%20tu%20abuella.html)

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2 English translation by Roberto Márquez. See *Puerto Rican Poetry: An Anthology from Aboriginal to Contemporary Times*. 2007. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, pp 195-197.

There's a kind of 'racial outing' that is used to aggressively confront claims of whiteness, racial aggressions and slurs. Vizcarrondo's poem is a contejtá, an 'answerin' back' to '[a]yé me dijite negro' / '[y]esterday yu called me nigger.' Referring to the title, editor and translator Roberto Márquez explains that the phrase 'grew into an apt, pithily automatic response to any premeditatedly evasive *performance* of "whiteness," *passing* pretention or haughtily disingenuous claims to a spurious racial purity.'<sup>1</sup> Decades later and long after Ricardo Alegría's institutionalised, nationalist invention of Puerto Rican identity with its claims to acknowledging and celebrating our 'three roots' – indigenous, African and European – the sociopolitical and economic hierarchy of those 'roots' is undeniable.

However, perhaps we can productively hijack and twist 'Y tu abuela, donde está?' while keeping its razor-sharp tongue, using it as a tool to unmask and signify a kind of generational difference. Within the context of radical politics, especially those centered on nationalist, anticolonial projects, the 'old(er)' generation comes to us with heavy baggage, ranging from colorism, ethnocentrism, misogyny and homophobia. While some of us generously acknowledge significant, if not exceptional, normative differences in generational sociopolitical and economic upbringing, many of us simply cannot afford to risk or indulge such highly dangerous and violent terrains and understandably opt to disengage, leaving those who came before to their respective historical moments.

And it is within this context that we experience the release of Oscar López Rivera. On the one hand, despite the fact that we have heard from and seen our comrade in Leavenworth federal prison, the horrors of torture are deeply imprinted in our collective memories. In his reconstruction of the horrors of Pedro Albizu Campos' imprisonment and torture, Nelson Denis' recent *War Against All Puerto Ricans* (2015) powerfully reminds us of the inhumanity of the US penal system, its boundless and uncompromising disregard for human life. And therefore, on 09 February 2017, we exhaled, relieved that our comrade had made it home. And on 17 May, when he emerged from house arrest, we exhaled again. And, despite ourselves, our exhale started to resemble something looking like hope, for Don Oscar had returned to us full of life.

In the last two months, despite intensive US media push back and blatant villainising as well as swift and focused corporate opposition, Oscar has

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<sup>1</sup> Márquez, Roberto. 2007. *Puerto Rican Poetry: An Anthology from Aboriginal to Contemporary Times*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, p 194.

made us smile, reinforcing a nuanced, loving anticolonial comradeship and praxis, one that speaks to the interventions being made by *Artistas solidarias y en Resistencia*. Explaining the collective's purpose, one member says:

Nuestro sentir es de lucha, de resistencia, más fuerte que antes pues ya el golpe lo cogimos hace rato. No queremos repetir los mismos errores y ese es el mensaje que nos interesa promover. Una lucha desde nuestros hogares, nuestras comunidades, pues el cambio comienza por uno mismo, por nuestras acciones diarias, por cómo me expreso hacia los demás sin odio, por trabajar incansablemente, por luchar contra la desarticulación, la desinformación, el miedo y la frustración. Siempre que nos amemos y nos valoremos a nosotros mismos la esperanza existirá.<sup>2</sup>

Our sentiment is one of struggle, resistance – stronger than before, because we received the fatal blow quite some time ago. We do not want to repeat the same mistakes, and that is the message we want to promote. It is a struggle starting from our own homes and our communities, since change begins at home, through our daily actions; through how I express myself to others without hatred; through working tirelessly to fight disarticulation, misinformation, fear and frustration. As long as we love and value ourselves, there will be hope.<sup>3</sup>

In crisp solidarity with the artist collective, Don Oscar is undistracted by political and corporate antics, reminding us that we must also stay focused and showing us that it is our communities, our neighbors, our families and how we care for one another that is most important. Rather than standing out in contrast to current anticolonial and decolonial struggles, his praxis echoes with us in solidarity, a boon to our respective and collective resistance.

Radical politics might seem relatively commonsense in this particular moment in Puerto Rican history. After all, one would be pressed to find a single Puerto Rican who supports the United States' current economic and

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2 Muñoz Alvarado, Julieta Victoria. 2016. 'Monoestrellada blanca y negra: "No es luto, es Resistencia.'" *80grados*, 25 July 2016. <http://www.80grados.net/monoestrellada-blanca-y-negra-no-es-luto-es-resistencia/>

3 English translation by Repeating Islands. See: <https://repeatingislands.com/2016/08/02/single-starred-black-and-white-flag-its-not-mourning-is-resistance/>

political domination, its far reaching heavy handedness over the islands' already minimal and marginalised autonomy. In 2014, the islands' bonds were downgraded to 'junk status' and in 2015, it defaulted on bond payments. The collapsing economy resulted in the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA), an Obama-imposed oversight board, consisting of problematic members who maintain blatant conflicts of interest. Some members have overt self interest in bank repayment, making any claim to prioritising economic stability farcical. The board represents such extreme predatory policies that it is locally known as the junta de control fiscal. As Luna Olavarría Gallegos explains in her recent *Fader* contribution, 'Reimagining Freedom in Puerto Rico,' in the last twelve months, 'People have experienced cuts to pensions, the lowering of the minimum wage, a drastic rise in electricity and water costs, the closing of public schools and the privatisation of public services and land – all while 46% of the population lives below the US poverty line.'<sup>4</sup>

And yet, while there is a consensus against 'La Promesa,' politicians seem incapable of thinking outside of or imagining possibilities beyond the status question. Focusing on the 1998 plebiscite Frances Negrón-Muntaner considers and suggests that Puerto Ricans have voiced their discontent with and lack of good faith in the political status options on offer. As she explains in *None of the Above* (2007),

On 13 December 1998 [...] over 70 percent of Puerto Rican voters participated in an island-wide referendum to decide what the island's future relationship to the United States should be. To the surprise of many, the inhabitants of the 'oldest colony in the modern world,' as former chief justice José Trías Monge once famously put it, selected not independence, statehood or even the current commonwealth, but a dark-horse column dubbed *ninguna de las anteriores* or none of the above.<sup>5</sup>

Last month, the majority of Puerto Ricans boycotted the \$10 million plebiscite. And while the 1998 and the 11 June 2017 plebiscites demonstrate Puerto Ricans' knowledge of and engagement with and perhaps rejection of island politics, they also reflect potential 'political burnout' or worse, skepticism and pessimism.

4 Gallegos, Luna Olavarría. 2017. 'Reimagining Freedom in Puerto Rico.' *Fader*, 07 July 2017. <http://www.thefader.com/2017/07/07/reimagining-freedom-in-puerto-rico>

5 Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. 2007. 'Introduction.' *None of the Above: Puerto Ricans in the Global Era*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p 1.

However, as the UPR Student Movement, Artistas solidarixs y en resistencia and organisations like La Jornada demonstrate, Puerto Rico is not the status question. On 15 July, we will celebrate two years of marriage equality and in October, we look forward to recognising two years of the implementation of perspectiva de género ('gender perspective') curriculum in the public school system. These are the Puerto Rican communities that Don Oscar has claimed in the last two months, sometimes overtly and at times through unspoken action. As Jossie Valentín highlighted in her Holyoke speech and introduction to Oscar López Rivera, one of the first places he visited after his release from house arrest was the new LGBT monument, which memorialises the victims of Pulse, at Parque del Tercer Milenio in San Juan.<sup>6</sup> During his Democracy Now interview, after lambasting the junta de control fiscal as 'a criminal [...] act on the Puerto Rican people,' he recognised the student movement:

Now, there are other things in Puerto Rico that I see being positive. For example, I see the students at the university struggling. I see the university – the students at the university trying to do something to preserve or at least protect the university. That is positive. The youth, the Puerto Rican youth, represent the future of Puerto Rico. And as long as they are struggling and doing something for the economy, doing something for themselves, doing something for Puerto Rico, there is hope.<sup>7</sup>

And at the 11 June Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City, Oscar wore a t-shirt with la monoestrellada blanca y negra (a black and white Puerto Rican flag), a gesture in clear solidarity with Artistas solidarixs y en resistencia.

As radical queer Puerto Rican women, it is with pride that we claim Don Oscar as our freedom fighter 'abuelo' – a comrade who fortifies and strengthens us with his unwavering support, but who also demonstrates a clear commitment to learning and moving beyond the normative, though at times radical, structures that bound his generation. We welcome him as an active comrade whose activism seems timeless, existing in past, present and future. We commend his multifaceted, anticolonial praxes and eagerly look forward to learning from and with one another. And as 2017 marks 100 years of the Jones Act,<sup>8</sup> as tensions continue to mount in Puerto Rico, reminding us of

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6 See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUh\\_W3nhzaM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUh_W3nhzaM)

7 González, Juan. 2017. 'After 35 Years in Prison, Puerto Rican Activist Oscar López Rivera on Freedom and Decolonization.' *Democracy Now!*, 08 June 2017. [https://www.democracynow.org/2017/6/8/oscar\\_lopez\\_rivera\\_speaks\\_out\\_on](https://www.democracynow.org/2017/6/8/oscar_lopez_rivera_speaks_out_on)

8 A bill that imposed US Citizenship onto Puerto Ricans.

Operation Bootstrap and when Don Pedro's words<sup>9</sup> sound eerily relevant to current circumstances, we are grateful for a freedom fighter who can tune out the misinformation, the noise, all the distraction tactics, who possesses and models a deep commitment to an activist dynamism, continuously imagining and reimagining anticolonial strategies and possibilities.

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9 'Cuando los adultos de la patria tienen que salir despavoridos de sus Lares y no tienen siquiera salida a países extranjeros distintos del poder enemigo que nos ofusca. Tienen que ir a Estados Unidos, a ser los esclavos de los poderes económicos, de los tiranos de nuestra patria, son los esclavos que van a Michigan por necesidad para ser burlados y ultrajados, y pateados.' / 'While the adults of our homeland must leave Lares (their hometown) in fear and don't even have exit to foreign countries different from the enemy power that binds us. They must go to the United States to be the slaves of the economic powers, of the tyrants of our country, they are the slaves who go to Michigan out of need, to be scorned and outraged and kicked.' See Albizu Campos, Pedro. 1971. 'Albizu Campos Speaks: The Historic Speech of September 23, 1950, Commemorating the Rising at Lares.' *Habla Albizu Campos*. Paredon Records: New York, p 4.

# REFLECTIONS

Simon Rakei

# Reflections on process

The process of working with Nokuthula and Khanyisa in editing the Zimbabwe chapter was deeply enriching, informative and insightful.

One of the great things was the extent to which the content was well researched and I was made aware of extensive and in-depth analyses and case studies in various journal articles, dissertations and other news sources.

What I found particularly useful was the approach adopted in generating the content of the essay, largely dialectic in nature and based off of multiple conversations, questioning and interrogation. This resulted in a final work which was deeply rich and robust in view points and considerations. As a consequence the level of engagement was elevated.

Somewhat paradoxically, or perhaps in the sense of a double-edged sword, the process in compiling this chapter was not necessarily academic in defining what constitutes valid sources of knowledge generation, but simultaneously however I think more work could have been done in increasing the ease of readability of the text and by extension the reach or target audience – at least that’s the sense I get from my piece in the chapter. But that said I also think there are many nuances and considerations those involved in activist circles aren’t aware of.

It was originally intended that the final piece in this chapter would be an interview with an expert or someone knowledgeable on Agrarian reform in Zimbabwe. This interview would have been based off the essays submitted by Nokuthula and Khanyisa by having a discussion on some of the issues raised therein and points of contention. I was really looking forward to having this conversation, particular as it relates to discussing posited alternatives and solutions for a future trajectory. Unfortunately this did not come to be and instead we opted to have a reflective essay instead.

Writing the reflective essay was hard, but it opened room to question and try move differing positions to a point of conversation.

# Editor reflection: Brazil chapter

I appreciate the new socio-political lens this piece has offered in its explanation of the rise of revolutionary Brazilian social policies. Editing however proved challenging in beginning stages due to the very clear language barrier between myself and the writer, trying to first understand his ideas and then somewhat translating them into coherence for an English mother-tongue took time and clarification on my part. (In further reflection I think perhaps this may be an explanation for the lack of experiential knowledge used in academia – it proves exceptionally difficult understanding clearly an experience or narrative as it is was experienced or as told by those to which the experience belongs.) Furthermore after basic editing of the piece itself, giving understandable feedback and new suggestions on the article proved challenging because of the very same language barrier. I do believe however that the article’s main points came through and my feedback and suggestions were received regardless. Nevertheless I appreciate the experience for challenging my forms of articulation and teaching me the value of language in understanding.

I found it very interesting being given a somewhat Brazilian history lesson on the rise and fall of political, social and economic changes. Further learning through this history of the similar struggles faced between South African and Brazilian leaders and polities – such as worker resistance in forms of protest against unequal and inequitable economic relationships defining the lived experience of the vast majority of middle or lower class

poor as consistently vulnerable. I drew other appreciated parallels between the rise and symbolism of political figures throughout the article, what these figures meant in the broader nationalist scheme and what these leaders did with the power they had over the masses.

It remains difficult to read these articles with sustained inspiration as the successes achieved prove highly unlikely to be efficiently applied in the South Africa context, therefore in my opinion articles like these can only ever be kept in an advisory capacity to the struggles and proposed solutions from different contexts.

# A short note reflecting on the process

A few years ago we started a series of interviews/conversations with people who had been involved in struggles against colonial apartheid in the past, and who remained involved in various ways, since 1994. These interviews were set up as conversations about what happened ‘then’, what they were involved in, and how they came to be involved; as well as about the demobilization period (what we understand the ‘democratic transition’ to be); and about how and why they chose to remain involved. We were trying to get at the question of how ‘now’ grew out of and might be similar and different from ‘then.’ These conversations, that we called Living Histories, also included or were often started or centered on discussion on student organizing now and various responses to that.

At the time, we were also involved in developing educational materials, we were designing and running Know Your Continent (KYC), a popular education series on African history. Some of the materials we used in KYC were developed by a team lead by Neville Alexander in the 1980s while he was the Cape Town director of SACHED. We wanted to know more about the context of that work which had been developed for a number of different spaces - for high school students in and out of school, for activists, for

teachers and community discussion sessions; we understood this work to be important, urgent and radical both then and now. So it was through these conversations with people involved in various ways then, as well as through research for KYC, and for a section of a UCT course on histories of race and education, we were exposed to many radical education initiatives and the important work of SACHED.

We also became aware of how big and wide SACHED was and the range of political orientations and approaches taken under its banner at different historical moments. By the 1980s, SACHED had 250 staff working in at least 9 cities and towns across South Africa. Not all, but many of these initiatives were committed to establishing participatory, non-discriminatory and non-authoritarian learning practices. It was interesting to learn about creative and flexible approaches to education which allowed them to respond to the ongoing crisis in education; with various people taking initiative and being given space, with relative autonomy and a minimum of bureaucracy, to use resources and to create projects and spaces of learning and building.

We were/are interested in where this orientation to education work is now and what tactics/strategies/approaches from then remain important for us today. In this line, it seems important to think about how SACHED worked across so-called formal and informal spaces - doing educational work in schools, colleges, universities, community organizations and trade unions - and took on various publication and arts initiatives to produce and make available and accessible alternative resources to state-authorized education.

Ultimately, we wanted to know both about the range of projects but also about the political debates, which in some ways have fallen off the map of our timeline. There were, in many ways, many SACHEDs. There was a reluctance on our part to attempt to learn or piece together and write a

conventional history of SACHED (that has partly been done by EP Nonyongo whose 1998 piece we draw on heavily for ours). Instead, ours attempts to sketch out the changing context over time and the various initiatives involved in challenging and building anti-colonial cultures of resistance that can contribute towards a more radical imagination of education today.

Conversations with people lead to reading articles and articles lead to speaking to people. We researched a time line, although we know that history is far from linear. And then it was time to narrow it all down, and select what to put in and what to leave out, this was difficult because there is soooooo much! But we wanted to make space for what Paulo Freire calls the creative practice of reading. So while much more can and will be said or written, the piece intentionally tries to make space for more to be written and heard by others and by us. In and between the details, the debates, and the what's-nexts, many of the moments on this map are here as dots to spark conversations about the ongoing history of Radical Education Collectives. This can only happen in conversation with the future, and hence the ideas of writing from an imagined future and of leaving space- as an imaginative invitation, for people to fill in what we are missing from then, and where these stories land now.

Kashiefa Achmat, Akwasi Kwarteng Amoako-Gyampah, Koni Benson, Khanyisa Booi, Dominic Brown, Felipe Gustavo Koch Buttelli, Laura Effron, Asher Gamedze, Fadlah Gassiep, María Hernández, Natasha Himmelman, Lorna Houston, Hibist Kaasa, Leila Khan, Khadija Khan, Brian Kamanzi, Kopano Maroga, Nombuso Mathibela, Francisca Mandeya, Nokuthula Mayaba, Khwezi Mkhize, Brunata Mires, Michell Mpike, Donna Murch, Noosim Naimasiah, Simon Rakei, Tiana Alexandra Reid, Patrick Schuster, Sothemba Tshuma, Aaliyah Vayej