

Editors' Introduction

In 1990 *Radical History Review* (*RHR*) published a double issue (nos. 46/47) devoted to South African history.¹ By the time the journal appeared in subscribers' mailboxes, the world it described had irrevocably changed: on February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela walked out of prison; the South African Communist Party, the African National Congress (ANC), and the Pan Africanist Congress were "unbanned"; and the long, painful process of dismantling the apartheid state and overcoming the legacy of centuries of white supremacy in South Africa had begun.

That issue of the journal, produced primarily by radical South African scholars associated with the University of the Witwatersrand's History Workshop, focused on bringing the exciting developments in South African historical practice, and their links to popular struggles, to a wider audience outside of South Africa. This issue, appearing on the twentieth anniversary of the first free elections held in South Africa (on April 24–27, 1994), an event that elected an ANC-led government after more than eight decades of struggle, looks instead at the history of the truly global campaign against apartheid of which issue 46/47 of *RHR* is, in fact, an artifact.

If the previous South African–focused issue of the journal looked inward to the struggle's academic auxiliary, now we seek to look outward from as wide a perspective as possible. For the history of liberation in southern Africa—colonialism's last redoubt—was anything but provincial. John S. Saul, a central participant in the cosmopolitan African solidarity projects emanating from Canada, reminds us in his opening reflection that this particular struggle "marked the last major battleground of a much broader struggle waged across the globe for the overthrow of Western colonialism and white racist hegemony." As Ryan M. Irwin argues in his recent book *Gordian Knot* (reviewed in this issue by Piero Gleijeses), caught between the competing poles of the Cold War "the fight against apartheid gave form to the political project known as the Third World."²

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In the foreword to the pair of thick volumes of the South African Democracy Education Trust's (SADET) comprehensive study of the antiapartheid movement devoted to its international dimensions, Essop Pahad notes that it was "a social movement of a very special kind: it stood simultaneously in opposition to apartheid and in solidarity with the oppressed people of South Africa. It drew heavily on the historical tradition of opposition to slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. . . . [And] it demonstrated that collective action in solidarity with the victims of injustice can be a very powerful force for social change on a global scale."³

Accordingly, in seeking contributions to this issue, we made a deliberate effort to give the truly *global* nature of the movements in solidarity with southern Africa their due. This meant considering work that went beyond the usual narrative of Western—especially US and British—antiapartheid campaigns. These movements loom large in the scholarship for good reason, of course; after all, investment from the West extended apartheid's lease on life, as did diplomatic and political support for the Afrikaner nationalist regime dictated by Cold War geopolitics, especially in the Reagan-Thatcher era. Given the long colonial intertwinement of Great Britain and southern Africa, and after 1948 the presence of many South African exiles in London, English-language radical scholarship on South Africa has its own history, as Rob Skinner's historiographical essay demonstrates. Still, as the work in this volume suggests, without attention to other Western European countries, to the global "South," to Australia, to the Soviet bloc, and to transnational conceptions like human rights and antiracism in the African diaspora, the account of the antiapartheid moment remains incomplete. Moreover, as the contribution by Teresa Barnes attests, "antiapartheid" never remained about South Africa alone. The South African state was the anchor for late colonial regimes able to resist transformation—in Angola and Mozambique, Namibia, and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, in particular—until the bitter end. Solidarity activists rarely supported one of these liberation struggles without awareness of the others, for they were indeed linked, as were the white regimes themselves. Finally, we tried to acknowledge the sheer diversity of the meaning of *solidarity*, which might focus on sports, women's liberation, international law, or the arts, to name but a few significant areas touched on by the articles in *RHR*'s "The Global Antiapartheid Movement" issue.

Nevertheless, there was much that could not make it into this issue. A great deal more could be said about the role of postcolonial African nations in facilitating freedom in South Africa, especially since the ANC's mission in exile maintained an important presence in Lusaka, Zambia; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and, eventually, Maputo, Mozambique (where the South African security services murdered Communist ANC stalwart and human rights activist Ruth First in 1982). In the "North," the Scandinavian countries proved especially willing to provide aid to the ANC and forged productive long-term links (including archival collection and preservation) with southern African liberation struggles. Another important area deserving more

incorporation into the history of antiapartheid is the Indian subcontinent. As the debate on Afro-Asian solidarity between Dilip M. Menon and Antoinette Burton in our “(Re)Views” section suggests, there is a long, interconnected (and fraught) history, dating back to Mohandas Gandhi’s pre–World War I South African sojourn, between Indian anticolonialism and struggles for freedom in South Africa. In the 1940s and 1950s, in the wake of violence between Indians and Africans in Durban, South African Indians like Yusuf Dadoo (buried in London’s Highgate Cemetery right near Karl Marx) played an instrumental part in building nonracialism, bridging the Indian Congress and the ANC, with the Communist Party as the frequent connecting span. Meanwhile, on the global stage during decolonization, Indian nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru and E. S. Reddy helped make apartheid an international issue in the halls of the United Nations Organization.⁴ Nevertheless, Burton, in her critical feminist reevaluation of these connections, contends that “people of South Asian descent . . . used Africa and Africans as referent points for imagining and consolidating a distinctive Indian identity in a Cold War context.”⁵ Menon, in his review, rejects this assessment as “premature in its skepticism regarding the possibilities of cross-racial solidarities” in the post-Bandung world. We have provided space for Burton’s spirited defense of her effort to “rethink brown-black relations outside a US paradigm of race” and “through a feminist historical lens.”

Turning away from specifically national questions, the labor movement—in the United States, in Western Europe, and in its international bodies—played an instrumental role in pressuring the regime, both through the power of boycotts and by direct international solidarity and support for labor struggles inside South Africa. In the context of the Cold War, however, organized labor often found itself internally divided over the proper stance to take toward a South African labor movement with a strong communist presence in its ranks. Yet relationships with the anti-imperialist bloc were by no means simpler. Certainly, much more could be said about the role of the Communist world—whether in the East or in Cuba—in providing military, material, and moral support, as well as training and a safe haven for ANC fighters. Moreover, as Jerry Dávila shows was the case for Brazil, consideration of antiapartheid support in national contexts may tell us a great deal about their domestic politics as well. As his contribution suggests, when international condemnation of South Africa reached a fever pitch even a military dictatorship like Brazil’s sought to demonstrate its global antiracist stance by forging partnerships with decolonized African nations and distancing itself from the apartheid regime. At the same time, as he notes, “in the climate of Brazil’s military dictatorship, state opposition to apartheid did not imply recognition of black civil rights at home.” Similarly, in our “Curated Spaces,” Heike Hartmann and Susann Lewerenz compare antiapartheid posters from both sides of the Berlin Wall and illustrate how “the history of German solidarity with the South African antiapartheid struggle is deeply embedded in the ideologies of the Cold War and the entangled conflict between the two postfascist

German states.” We might further ask how other Eastern European states relied on a discourse of Third World liberation to burnish their own waning claims to revolutionary praxis. Similarly, how did the Cuban government deploy its solidarity with black Africa to address race relations on the island? These and other questions surely deserve more research.

In the same fashion, antiapartheid and liberation solidarity organizations both contributed to southern African freedom struggles and wrestled with their own dilemmas of radical and racial politics. As Barnes shows, for example, while forging national and transnational conjunctions radical feminists in the United States did not always recognize the needs of Zimbabwean women. As she suggests, when examined together the Zimbabwean liberation movement’s “desire to use African women’s bodies to wage war for national liberation” and the radical reproductive rights movement’s “aspiration to use women’s bodies as a means of feminist empowerment” reveal “mutual unintelligibility and blind spots in both camps.” Nicholas Grant’s article about the making of the 1951 film *Cry, the Beloved Country* illustrates how at the height of the Cold War a previous generation of radicals sought to reconcile the struggle for justice at home with their overseas commitments, not always with success. And in our public history section, Sarah Melton argues that the inclusion of the antiapartheid struggle in the narrative of Birmingham’s Civil Rights Institute, while to be welcomed, presents South African history through the lens of the very different North American struggle for racial justice.

Melton’s essay is one of several elements designed to encourage readers to grapple with various methods of incorporating the history of the antiapartheid struggle into our existing knowledge of both local and global histories. Peter Limb, Richard Knight, and Christine Root offer a definitive account of global archival resources that can be used to explore this history; William H. Chafe and Lauren Kientz Anderson discuss ways that recently available documentary films about the international dimensions of the antiapartheid movement can serve as teaching tools; and coeditor Alex Lichtenstein’s interview with veteran Dutch antiapartheid activist Sietse Bosgra touches on those struggles and their frequent overlap with other political commitments, including Palestinian liberation. Bosgra’s account also recalls the close working alliance between radical activism and archival preservation, an important theme illustrated by this issue of *RHR* and one that will feature in future issues as well.

Although much of this issue seeks new ways to understand South Africa’s global history, we hope that when readers engage this issue of *RHR* they will contemplate the future of southern Africa, as well as its past. The record of postapartheid South Africa has been mixed. Since the end of apartheid, per capita income has increased by 40 percent, and millions of black South Africans have gained access to electricity, running water, and improved housing. A recent study claims that the country’s black middle class has doubled over the past decade to 4.2 million people and now outspends their white counterparts. At the same time, however, official

unemployment hovers at 25 percent, and millions of South Africa's people remain trapped in poverty and "informal sector" labor—two-thirds of the population (36 million people) lives in households surviving on less than \$500 a month.⁶ The shocking massacre of thirty-four striking platinum miners by South African police at Marikana in August 2012 touched a nerve, suggesting that poverty, migrant labor, and the state's violent defense of enormous profits from mining capital still define large parts of South African life, as they did under apartheid. This combination of rising expectations and a large group of people left behind by neoliberal models of economic growth is potentially explosive, as it has been, for example, in Brazil (as demonstrated by widespread protests in June 2013). Indeed, Brazil and South Africa remain two of the most unequal societies in the world, as Dávila notes. It is disappointing to observe that postdictatorship Brazil has perhaps done a better job than postapartheid South Africa of redressing social inequality (though South Africa seems to have done a better job of racial redress). As Saul's opening essay reminds us, full decolonization of South Africa's economy and the liberation of its people remain incomplete, notwithstanding the historical factors that lent themselves to popular mobilization and potentially mitigated domination by a nationalist bourgeoisie so prevalent in other anticolonial struggles and first warned against by Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral. Appropriately, Richard Pithouse's obituary that closes this issue cautions us against allowing the "historical weight" of Mandela's recent passing "not to become an ideology serving to legitimate ongoing injustice." As the Mandela era begins to pass into history, clearly much must still be done to secure the promise of the liberation movement's 1955 Freedom Charter that South Africa "belongs to all who live in it." *A luta continua!*

—Lisa Brock, Van Gosse, and Alex Lichtenstein

Notes

1. The articles were published in book form as *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices*, ed. Josh Brown et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).
2. Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.
3. Essop Pahad, foreword to *International Solidarity*, vol. 3 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, by SADET (Pretoria: Unisa, 2008), pt. 1, ix. This series is the place to start for any study of the global antiapartheid movement.
4. On Reddy, see, e.g., E. S. Reddy, "Behind the Scenes at the United Nations," in *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century, 1950–2000*, ed. William Minter, Gail Hovey, and Charles Cobb Jr. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), 74–76. See also E. S. Reddy, "The United Nations and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa," in SADET, *International Solidarity*, pt. 1, 41–140; and Vijay Gupta, "Solidarity: India and South Africa," in SADET, *International Solidarity*, pt. 2, 1255–1318.
5. Antoinette Burton, *Brown over Black: Race and the Politics of Postcolonial Citation* (Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2012), 5.
6. Janice Kew, "Black South Africans Throng Malls as Income Rises," *Bloomberg News*, June 21, 2013, www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-06-20/black-south-africans-throng-malls-as-income-rises.html.

