SOUTH AFRICA 20 YEARS AFTER DEMOCRACY: MISSING SOLIDARITY

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Within this selection of papers, the reflection on Arab transitions very much parallels South Africa’s ongoing and fledgling transition. This paper pays special attention to equality and solidarity, with a view to offer a narrative that would inform discourse and practice in the Arab world.

Hailed as the poster child for democratic transitions, this is a look at South Africa twenty years on after its democratic transition reveals a mixed fortune. Taken from the President’s Foreword for the Twenty Year Review (2014), we see a celebratory but honest account of the progress and challenges in contemporary South Africa:

South Africa is a much better place to live in now than it was in 1994. […] As a country, we have made remarkable progress in dismantling the oppressive apartheid system and we have created a thriving constitutional democracy […]. One of the most active arenas of change has been to shift the programmes of the state towards the reconstruction and development of our country, with a particular focus on the poor and marginalized […] Despite this remarkable progress, much more still needs to be done to address poverty, unemployment and inequality (Presidential Foreword, 2014 in The Presidency [2014]: Twenty Year Review South Africa, pp. i-ii).

Much could be said about South Africa’s transition, and even more about the current state of democracy in South Africa today. Indeed, there have been many successes, particularly in the provision of basic services to those in South Africa without them. Despite the many strides that have been made in lifting millions out of extreme poverty, the continued economic, social and political marginalization of the country’s black majority under apartheid has continued in a democratic South Africa. The spatial legacy of apartheid has meant that though there are services in areas with sub-standard infrastructure, there are still major backlogs, and townships (apartheid towns designed as labour towns) still suffer inferior provision of services, housing and education/health amenities. Provision of human settlements through subsidized or free housing has been made available, but these have been planned and placed next to former townships, which are far from economic opportunity and still require long travelling time to places of employment (GCRO QoL, 2013). In this way, spatial inequalities are reinforced and the standard of living of those in these far-flung areas are comparatively lower.

Unemployment over the past twenty years, despite an expansion in social grants, has increased. As the Twenty Year Review states:

Only 39.8 percent of working-age adults had a job in 1994. By the third quarter of 2013, 43.3 percent of working-age adults had a job. While the employment ratio has improved slightly since 1994, it is still far short of the international norm, which is around 60 percent (The Presidency [2014]: Twenty Year Review South Africa, pp. 91-92).
At the end of the 20 year period, official statistics note that 1 in 4 (25%) of people are unemployed (Twenty Year Review South Africa). Unemployment is particularly glaring seen from the perspective of youth. The rate of unemployment for youth aged 18 to 29 stood at 30% in 1994, and increased to 40% in 2013, with numbers doubling from 1.3 million to 2.6 million over two decades (Twenty Year Review South Africa, p. 93). Recent spates of violent protest and xenophobic-related vandalism and looting of foreign-owned shops in the most populous province (News24, January 2015) have been attributed to increasing unemployment and resultant anger by black African youth in townships (see Friedman, 2014). Twenty years on, the promise of freedom is still an ideal that has failed to materialize for the majority of South Africa’s youth. Most markedly, the inequalities that exist still mirror apartheid patterns where unemployment for young black African people is 40% higher than for young white South Africans (Statssa, 2014). Statistic South Africa, in a research brief looking at South Africa’s development context states: Systemically enforced divisions and institution-alised unequal development along racial lines resulted in inequality in all facets of South African life. The inequalities played themselves out in spheres such as education, health, employment, welfare, human settlement, access to infrastructure (Statssa, 2014).

Stark inequality, then, is still very much a part of the South African economic landscape. For this reason, building an inclusive society and redress measures are critical to transforming the economy and society as a whole. In South Africa the instrument of redress has been seen in hiring and work promotion practices – which predicates those formerly disadvantaged qualified individuals over those who were formerly advantaged. Representativeness in the workplace, then, is a key marker of a transformed South Africa where once there had been racialized division. There are a number of instruments used to encourage the advancement of those previously disadvantaged; it is unnecessary to go through them here. The principle of redress and affirmative action, as a means of addressing the imbalances and injustices within the labour force, is widely criticized by different sides of the social spectrum. (This is not to say that all black people agree with these measures, and all white people disagree. Indeed, many black people disagree with the instruments, but not the principle, arguing that these benefit an elite class of people anyway. Many white people agree with the principle but not with the form of redress, which often engenders exclusion.) A recent case of senior promotion within the Department of Correctional Services (DCS)
brought forward by a mainly white Afrikaans representative trade union (Solidarity) demonstrates this contestation in South Africa (except below). Put plainly, a senior white lieutenant was overlooked for promotion a number of times even though no suitable African candidate was found – leaving the post vacant. The woman was suitably qualified, and in line for promotion, and, having been denied the opportunity, lodged the matter with Solidarity, the aforementioned trade union. The case stated in its opening:

In these consolidated referrals the applicants seek an order declaring that the Employment Equity Plan (EEP) of the Department of Correctional Services (DCS): 1.1. Fails to satisfy the requirements of an employment equity plan within the contemplation of the [Employment Equity Act] EEA, in particular section 20; and/or 1.2. constitutes a contravention of the prohibitions on race, gender and/or sex discrimination within the contemplation of section 6 of the EEA and its application in respect of the individual applicants amounts to unfair discrimination.¹

The principle of redress, as a means of addressing the imbalances and injustices within the labour force, is widely criticized by different sides of the social spectrum.

The employment equity act, therefore, was brought into question as being tantamount to a form of racial discrimination. The trade union was reported to have stated:

The DCS’s current employment equity plan has expired and it must be superseded by a new one. Under labour legislation trade unions have to be consulted before the plan may be implemented (DSC want to enforce, 2015).

Speaking more generally, former South African president (and last president of apartheid South Africa) FW De Klerk stated in a similar vein:

He [Mandela] certainly worked successfully to promote reconciliation and to build a new multi-racial nation. We also witnessed a heartening resurgence of national unity and reconciliation during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. However, since then, the situation has deteriorated rapidly as a result of the aggressive implementation of race-based measures that are aimed against minorities in general and whites in particular (Phakathi, 2014).

The instruments and measures of redress, then, are critiqued heavily for being aggressive race-based measures by some. For others, transformation needs to proceed even more vigorously, an ideal espoused in the ruling party’s policies and rhetoric (see Munusamy, 2014). The Editor of the Daily Maverick attests:

The phrase ‘radical economic transformation’ has been trumpeted out repeatedly throughout the ANC’s election campaign, and now they are ready to implement it, says secretary general Gwede Mantashe. Do not ask for the term to be defined or specifics of what it entails, though. This is not the time for ‘conceptual clarity,’ says Mantashe. But like Christmas, it’s coming. Apparently.

The point of drawing out this argument is that this measure of equality is also the seedbed of contention. While of course the measure or instruments may need reform, the point is that the principle of equality does not hold strongly enough to convince.

¹. See http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZALCCT/2013/38.html
It is this principle of equality, and not the tool/measure/instrument of equality that is at issue here. If the principle is criticized, then the very spirit of social justice espoused in the South African Constitution is at stake. This potential loss of solidarity is what the rest of the paper focuses on. It argues that equality as solidarity was always the focus historically in the struggle for a free and democratic South Africa, and that form of equality-solidarity is what needs to be recovered. What is missing in contemporary South Africa is that overcoming inequality, particularly through the need for economic redress, is not tackled in a way that also engenders inclusion, thus gaining legitimacy. Solidarity is missing.

**SOUTH AFRICA’S STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY THROUGH SOLIDARITY**

Addressing inequalities was always a concern in the South African struggle, and fighting equality required a united front. The struggle for equality was rationalized by the principle of non-racial solidarity. In South Africa the history of non-racial cooperation and solidarity was not only a movement for change, but also itself an ongoing struggle. Long before the negotiated settlement, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) presented a struggle for unity through dialogue. It was in some ways the most important fight South Africa was facing toward a future equality. It was the creation of a non-racial cadreship of individuals (a group of people united beyond their racial classifications stressing unity) who were part of the African National Congress (ANC), and other racialized congresses or political formations such as the Transvaal Indian Congress, the Coloured People’s Congress, white trade unions, and democratic parties (see Everatt, 2009). Forming the congress under the broad church of the ANC, which became a home for all, was an enactment of non-racialism or non-racial solidarity. This must be stressed here, it was a struggle borne from all segments of South African society—all races—to lobby and fight for political change and justice for all, especially black South Africans. Thus there were white anti-apartheid activists alongside black, Indian and coloured groups (these terms are used as the racialized classification in South Africa).

Everatt (2009) details how, from the 1940s, there was a struggle for a non-racial unified political leadership of those oppressed peoples and those who were in solidarity with them. And this was not without vigorous debate and contestation. In the 1950s when the freedom charter was formulated – that being the progressive document which represented the will of the people – Africanist groupings broke away from the ANC-led liberation front. These groupings did not believe that a united non-racial future should be fought for, but rather that exclusively African people should fight for an exclusively African future. Within the congress, there remained a growing group of people recognizing that of course Africans suffer worse than other oppressed peoples in South Africa but on the basis of being similarly under the oppressive arm of the apartheid state, they would unequivocally unite. This was a show of unity and solidarity before the party was banned in the 1960s, so that in the years leading up to the leadership’s arrest in the mid-1960s, a People’s Charter was drawn up. Moreover, in the 1950s a massive twenty thousand women-strong march to the union buildings in solidarity with African women who had to carry pass books was held. Humiliating pass books, used to control the movement (read influx) of black women in white residential areas were burned by white, black, Indian and coloured women as a show of equality (see South Africa History Online).

The point here of this gathering was that there was a commitment to forging a united front against apartheid, within the non-racial struggle more generally. The forging of a non-racial pact and a unity of purpose of those activists and leaders in South Africa, those exiled, and those who would eventually be jailed. Practically, it also meant that there was a pool of financial support not for weapons, but for exile, training outside South Africa and for families of struggle leaders. Struggle leaders
suffered the same pressures as the people; they were all the people. Every resource was poured into the struggle. And there was little thought of accumulation or comfort. The quest for equality was a future ideal but also an immediate reality. Crucially, the struggle for unity was a united struggle. Within this struggle there was a common narrative of trust, and solidarity. Those were non-negotiable. Indeed, as history attests² the situation from all fronts had become untenable in South Africa during the 1980s. Sanctions, disinvestment, militants, an under-educated youth cohort, and rising anger was untenable. The leadership was increasingly concerned for the welfare of South Africa by rambunctious firebrand politics that had taken over the streets of South Africa. The negotiation worked because the situation was increasingly volatile.

The negotiations under CODESA (Mandela, 1991) worked because they had to work; the leaders in prison knew that South Africa needed its leadership, the new settlement would need to include the parameters for a shared future of oppressor and oppressed, it needed to rally a fearful and insecure people, living under brutality, under a united leadership. In the words of scholar Mahmood Mamdani (2013):

The great myth of the South African transition is that it was driven by the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission). The TRC was designed as a surrogate Nuremberg where the opponents of apartheid sat in judgment over its operatives. Like Nuremberg, the TRC’s claim to have granted amnesty for truth should also be seen as a performance. Even though Bishop Tutu in his introduction to the multi-volume report of the TRC publicly celebrated the TRC as evidence of the ethical and political magnanimity of the victims of apartheid, the real exchange took place before the TRC was set up, in the negotiations known as CODESA. It was not an exchange of amnesty for truth, but amnesty for political reform, that reform being the dismantling of juridical and political apartheid. It is not the TRC but CODESA that made for the real political breakthrough in the South African transition.

The ground for CODESA was prepared by an acknowledgement shared by both sides to the conflict. Both recognized that there was little prospect of ending the conflict in the short run. For the leadership on either side, this meant accepting that their preferred option was no longer within reach: neither revolution (for liberation movements) nor military victory (for the apartheid regime) was on the cards. The second best alternative was a negotiated end to the conflict. If South Africa is a model for solving intractable conflicts, it is an argument for moving from the best to the second-best alternative. The quest for reform, for an alternative short of victory, led to the realization that if you threaten to put the leadership on either side in the dock they will have no interest in reform. This change in perspective led to a shift, away from criminalizing or demonizing the other side to treating it as a political adversary.

The CODESA (1991) stated:

We, the duly authorized representatives of political parties, political organizations, administrations and the South African Government, coming together at this first meeting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), mindful of the awesome responsibility that rests on us at this moment in the history of our country, declare our solemn commitment:

A. to bring about an undivided South Africa with one nation sharing a common citizenship, patriotism and loyalty, pursuing amidst our diversity, freedom, equality and security for all irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed; a country free from apartheid or any other form of discrimination or domination;

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² See South Africa History Online, www.saho.org.za
B. to work to heal the divisions of the past, to secure the advancement of all, and to establish a free and open society based on democratic values where the dignity, worth and rights of every South African are protected by law;  
C. to strive to improve the quality of life of our people through policies that will promote economic growth and human development and ensure equal opportunities and social justice for all South Africans.

It was an agreement in spirit affecting the future, but it was also an immediate settlement for a unitary state. For the most part a result of the pursuit of national unity at the expense of immediate economic and social restitution (van der Walt et al., 2003, p. 251). This came with its own maladies. The period of transition was where “the political and ideological project became paramount” and essentially cast in unity terms meant “passivity toward addressing exploitative social and economic conditions,” thereby supplanting or overshadowing the socioeconomic features of the crisis (Marais, 2001, pp. 89–90). But with this, as noted by Marais, South Africa’s transition would also come with another consequence: that “social and economic restructuring would benefit narrow layers of society whilst the cost of that restructuring would be deflated on to the rest of the country” (2001, p. 96) at a later time. Whether this was a de facto or just a perceived situation, it would be, he argued, a transition democracy without absolute winners or losers, and with a prolonged period of contestation (Marais, 2001; Alexander, 2003). The negotiation did not foresee the nature of contestation.

Of course redress was envisaged. Historically, the Freedom Charter, which was a broad document literally authored by the people through door-to-door discussions with people in the 1950s, was an ANC-led initiative. Written into the Freedom Charter was the central issue of equality; having to do with dignity, legal rights/vote, representing the will of the people, share in the country’s wealth, land, work, jobs, security, peace and friendship. The National Democratic Revolution document, also authored by the ANC. It states that equality was meant to transcend political independence, a social compact where importance was placed on a creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. This in essence means the liberation of Africans in particular and blacks in general from political and economic bondage. It means uplifting the quality of life of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and women.

In literature on non-racialism, scholars suggest that while the non-racialism liberation struggle had defined contours, the way that a non-racial future would look, and how it would be wrought, was unshaped terrain (see Alexander, 2003; Everatt, 2009; Marais, 2001; Mare, 2003; Suttner, 2010). I argue elsewhere that the ambiguity about what South Africa(ns) would become was, ironically, to be its most persistent feature (see Abrahams, 2012). Marais (2001, p. 97) argues that “the nature of the South African settlement is that it constituted (and inaugurated) not a rupture but an increasingly ambivalent... series of reconfigurations that also extended far beyond the formal political agreements.”

Despite the principle of equality or non-racialism, equality as solidarity does not easily find expression in contemporary South Africa.

Although equality as a principle of social justice was written in to the negotiated settlement and the liberation struggle more generally, the future situation...
of economic redress was left instead to be implicit, but nonetheless ambivalent. Would it force a form of reparation, restitution or redress?

The point here is that despite the principle of equality or non-racialism taking root so strongly during the liberation struggle, equality as solidarity does not easily find expression in contemporary South Africa, and this is the particular challenge in South Africa twenty years after its democratic transition. The next section looks beyond how the question of equality is contested in legislative terms as we have shown above, to how the question of equality is invoked when it comes to social or cultural recognition, employment opportunities or visible measures of progress for groups of people in South Africa. The point of doing this is to demonstrate that everyday rhetoric of equality is still highly racialized and divisive. In addition to the contestations around measures of redress, these everyday discourses of equality happen as a quest for identity recognition for the interests of different groups. As a result there simply is no space for solidarity within these identity-based politics that pit certain groups’ needs against those of others (Abrahams, 2012).

EQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Even though equality is written in to every political and legislative document and rhetoric, its meaning is increasingly vague; the task of addressing inequality is also written into marketing and social development rhetoric. It has become a catchall for every problem that has beset contemporary South Africa. It is an ideal also pervasive in everyday conversation by ordinary people in South Africa. The difference in this everyday discourse as compared to the lofty ideals within the struggle for liberation is that here distinct interests are at play, and these interests are seen as racially defined. What we see next is a series of excerpts taken from a research project that considered the meanings and interpretations of non-racialism in contemporary South Africa (see Everatt, 2014); these were the reflections of ordinary South Africans:

Moderator: Just tell me one or two of these lies?
Respondent: That it is going to open up opportunities for us to be like Whites. That we are all going to be equal. They promise us, but do not deliver. (Focus group 1 on non-racialism. Ulundi suburbs, African female)

Blacks including our families are the real people of South Africa. They see themselves as South Africans though the most important thing that gives you life is to have money. Though we are poor it makes you wonder why you should be poor in your country South Africa when other South Africans have so much money. This won't stop us from being South African though. We will always be South Africans. (Focus group 2 on non-racialism. KwaZulu-Natal, Ndwedwe, African male, employed).

We feel like the lesser person, but on that same note, we are equal and they don't want to accept that we are equal (Focus group 3 on non-racialism. Western Cape, Paarl, coloured, male, employed).

I grew up under the oppression they say we should forgive and forget but how do you do that when you are standing in one place and they are moving forward (Focus group 4 on non-racialism. African female, Motherwell, unemployed).

In these excerpts, we see how equality is framed in ordinary ways as access to opportunity, services, economic issues, social mobility, and so on. We also see how economic realities, because they relate to issues of power and privilege, also profoundly shape identities and the manner in which people relate to each other, as we will see below. As Younge argues, “far from being neutral and abstract, our identities are rooted in material conditions that confer power and privilege in relation to one another” (Younge, 2010, p. 179). This means that our sense of who we are is not only a result of social histories, it is also the result of economic equality – or indeed our perception of our equality to others.
Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007, p. 42) argues that “the nation-builders thought that through education a democratic citizen was going to emerge in South Africa that was truly de-tribalised, de-racialised and de-ethnicised. The slogan that carried the day was that of non-racialism feeding into the romantic idea of an accommodative ‘rainbow nation’.” He [citing Maphai, 2004] terms this moment the “euphoria of equality and common citizenship” and “an idea all too quickly abandoned in favour of reverting to racialised identities” (Maphai, 2004, p.12). Here the rhetoric of a rainbow nation, so celebrated inside and outside South Africa, gets crowded out with more urgent demands on resources which are racially or identity-driven. Equality is very much linked to what people have and feel they deserve, according to identities. This sentiment is echoed by Taylor in his discussion about what non-racialism means in contemporary South Africa. He argues (2012, pp. 45-46) that

[I]n truth the gap between the ideal and reality remains vast. What has to be asked is: do all South Africans now have equal opportunities? Do Black people have as fair a chance as White people to make what they want of their lives? The answer, by any set of objective indicators, has to be negative (NPC, 2011a); in this regard it could indeed be claimed that the non-racial project as presently constituted remains too shallow to make a meaningful difference.

Taylor’s argument suggests as an ideal, non-racialism, or the project that seeks to tackle inequality, is shallow, lacking in impetus, and for all intents and purposes meaningless in the face of persistent poverty/inequality. This is echoed by others who argue that without a form of substantive equality that is demonstrable materially, the rhetoric of freedom would mean little (see edited collection, Everatt, 2014). Given these everyday and systemic discourses of (in)equality, but also deep contestation about the way forward and how to redress injustice, how do we balance the need for restitutive justice with the principle of equality?

EQUALITY AS DISTRIBUTIVE OR EQUALITY AS RELATIONAL?

In South Africa, a phrase that has become commonplace on race, non-racialism and social cohesion is that of ‘substantive equality’. The term, given significant currency by South African political philosophy scholar Daryl Glaser is taken to mean, at risk of oversimplification, that for a form of equality to take root, ‘something’ has to be distributed in an egalitarian way. In the South African context the term substantive equality has been used in legal terms, particularly, to debate the content of distributive justice, rights, power and material wealth (see Glaser, 2012). While these are still matters being debated in legal philosophy and elsewhere, the idea of non-racialism and social cohesion requiring – as a pre-requisite – substantive economic equality is a (popularly) pervasive argument outside of the these discourses. A similar argument is made when pursuing non-racialism in South Africa – that it cannot be achieved until there is a greater measure of substantive equality.

I use the commonplace usage of the term – or indeed what has become commonplace usage – to discuss the idea that in order to have a non-racial or cohesive society, there has first to be a measure of equality, felt or shown substantively in the material conditions of people, i.e., it must mean something materially or substantively. Without this, it is argued that these values will never take hold, or be pursued. Put another way, the vision for a truly equal, non-racial, socially cohesive society will never be realized while there are still stark inequalities and wealth disparities. This is a compelling argument. Indeed, as we see the majority of South African’s African population continue to live in dire poverty, the material gains of a democratic society failing to reach them, and the rising anger and dissatisfaction of these ‘forgotten’ parts of the population, we may become convinced that we need faster, more rigorous and radical economic redress/transformation before we even can conceive of social cohesion or non-racialism. In so doing we correlate equality with distribution.
Samuel Scheffler argues that there are two views of equality. One is that it is “essentially a distributive value” and that it requires people to have equal amounts of something – money, power, land, access, etc., (2003, p. 1) similar to Glaser’s liberal egalitarian arguments – and this view of justice means that redress needs to satisfy the demands of distributive equality. The second view that Scheffler postulates is a relational view of equality, where “equality is an ideal governing certain kinds of interpersonal relationship. It plays a central role in political philosophy because justice requires the establishment of a society of equals” (Scheffler, 2003, p. 1). In the former formulation, justice requires distribution, in the latter, the formulation of a value. This does not mean that the relational view fails to appreciate the substantive demands for equality. Instead, as Scheffler goes on to show, the relational principle or value informs the character of distributive necessity, asserting the important point that these are not the same. The distributive form of equality is a principle (often formulaic) for apportioning something. The relational is a “reciprocal commitment to treating each other with respect” (Scheffler, 2003, p. 6). It is within this second view – the relational view – of equality that I wish to develop the discussion of social cohesion.

The relational view is not just about equality, it is also about respect, recognition and responsibility, and within that pact, committing to the necessity of equitable distribution and practising it. Scheffler draws a parallel with a marriage to indicate the pre-eminence of the commitment first, and then the meeting of economic needs, or decision-making within that context. This commitment/pact is primarily about what he calls “egalitarian deliberative constraint”, the commitment of all parties to constrain their own demands or decisions for the purpose of maintaining the commitment and/or for respecting the other party’s needs/choices. It is not an action, or a one-off distribution, but rather a diachronic realization of this arrangement. It is “ultimately a form of practice rather than a normative pattern of distribution,” where the “attitude and dispositions must hold reciprocally. If anything, the egalitarian aim is not to equalise the relevant attitudes and dispositions but to maximize them: to ensure that both parties exhibit them to the fullest” (Scheffler, 2003, pp. 17-18).

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In political terms, Scheffler goes on to argue that the formulaic distribution of a thing or materiality in fact compromises the character of the relationship. In other words, any form of draconian distribution within a society of equals will disrupt the relationships within, but this is actually unnecessary. In a society of equals, each party is convinced of the value/needs of the other parties, and committed to the welfare of each. Forms of distribution, although possibly inconvenient, are agreeable. As Scheffler puts it “each member accepts that every other member’s equally important interests should play an equally significant role in influencing decisions made on behalf of the society as a whole,” and it also means “that the equally important interests of each of them constrain social [or economic] decisions to the same extent” (Scheffler, 2003, p. 24). In this society, there is not only a mutual commitment to respect, but also “a division of responsibility that all can accept, and [where] each member sees the other members as entitled to participate fully and equally in determining the future course and character of their shared relationship” (Scheffler, 2003, p. 32).

In this type of society, the necessities of distribution not only makes sense, but is agreed to by everyone, even those who do not stand to benefit – i.e., a form of distribution will be agreed to because of the egalitarian deliberative constraint wherein all concede that their demands may have to give way. The point
here is that the rule of distribution does not enforce certain decisions, or enforce constraint of some in order to create an equal society. It is the other way around; an equal society necessitates a form of distribution that maintains the relational aspects of that society. The task in other words is not how to regulate redress so that everyone is included, but how to convince everyone that none should be excluded. It is to create a society in which all members “expects the other to bear whatever responsibilities are assigned to a person in virtue of this status and, similarly, each sees the other as entitled to make whatever claims accrue to a person in virtue of this status” (Scheffler, 2003, p. 6).

In sum, this relational view of equality as outlined here, is ‘substantive’ in that it will necessitate a form of distributive justice so that it satisfies the essence of an equal society. At issue here, crucially, is not whether social cohesion is or is not about substantive distributive equality. The fact that distributive equality should take place is clear, but this imperative is not the business of social cohesion (if we take social cohesion to mean pursuing the ideal of a society of equals).

The quest for equality in contemporary South Africa does not lay in the measures of redress or the instruments for distribution. It is the pursuit of a society in which members are convinced of the principle of an equal society. In practice, it is one where the values of equality are widespread; where these principles are debated and accepted in popular discourse, and where deliberative constraints are understood, respected and agreed to. If this is meant to be a socially cohesive society, then distributive equality will not make it cohesive, it will in fact create divisions, mistrust and discontent. On the other hand, pursuing these values and principles, will meet the necessary and overwhelming demands of distributive justice while maintaining a cohesive society.

Thus, as a value, the quest for equality needs to be a consideration in different pursuits; for instance, that of education, labour transformation, human settlements and economic redress. Equality cannot be invoked to determine the distribution of materials, education etc., but essentially, as a value it must inform the practice of each of these spheres. These values need to be anti-racist in character, underpinned by a growing belief that all voices count, and that equality will demand a form of distribution.

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LEARNING FROM THE PAST; LOOKING FORWARD

What is missing from discourse – everyday and political – is the question of solidarity – or in terms we have discussed, the relational view of equality. This was the central ingredient in the united, non-racial liberation struggle, and it still offers a beacon of hope in contemporary South Africa. There needs to be recognition that the twin tasks of relational and distributive equality are important, and these must be seen as important to all South Africans. The principle alone, of course, is not a guarantor that society will be more materially equal. But where the value/principle exists, it is more likely for a form of solidarity to grow that will see, as we had seen during the liberation struggle, people of all races come together for the disadvantaged and downtrodden in society. Recapturing this form of solidarity will be crucial in taking forward the constitutional ideal of a non-racial, democratic society in South Africa.

With this form of solidarity that ‘means something’ and is not shallow in the way Taylor described earlier, real social integration can be a feature of contemporary South Africa. As Younge argues,
“As far as it goes, integration is a great thing. The more contact you have with different kinds of people, the less potential there is for stereotyping and dehumanizing those difference from yourself. The more one chooses a life that is voluntarily segregated from others and retreats into one’s own community, the less scope there is to explore, discover and engage with those common human traits that transcend identity” (Younge, 2010, p. 195). Economic equality – and equality of opportunity – and importantly the ability to access/take full advantage of employment possibilities is key to making this a cohesive society, but economic equality must follow in the wake of solidarity for it not to be divisive. This is both an urgent and a continuing task that requires all South Africans, young and old, black and white, civil servants and private sector employees, workers and bosses, students and teachers, disenfranchised and privileged, to commit to building a non-racial, socially cohesive, democratic South Africa. In much the same way that non-racialism meant cooperation and solidarity against apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s, it now must also be an attempt to muster and nurture inter-racial cooperation and solidarity around economic justice.

The discussion on South Africa offers a reflection of the ongoing need to pursue solidarity as a means of not only gaining legislative equality, but also securing a future that does not degenerate into ethnicist or racialized enclaves.

Finally, this discussion on South Africa offers the current volume a reflection of the ongoing need to pursue solidarity as a means of not only gaining legislative equality, but also securing a future that does not degenerate into ethnicist or racialized enclaves. Solidarity beyond ideological differences is key to pursuing a future that is not made socially tenuous or fractured by the very measures that seek to address injustice.
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