Editorial: South Africa: Re-imagining the Rainbow Nation

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The human capacity of imagination is a very powerful human ability, and the social or collective imagination, even more so. This is the case especially with regard to the rainbow metaphor chosen by our late founding and former President of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to provide some system of meanings to South Africans as a then emerging nation on the world stage. In context, a brief selection of these meanings could be summarised in a binary way, as follows.

- ➤ The arrival of peace and calm after the storm of the militarised apartheid police state;
- ➤ The arrival of social justice, signalled in the equity amongst the colours of the rainbow, in distinction to the inequity founded in notions of racial privilege and racism, of the apartheid state;
- ➤ The arrival of freedom, in distinction to the unfreedom, restrictions, and incarcerations of the apartheid state;
- ➤ The opening up of a common ground of opportunity and promise, derived from future vistas of unity, inclusivity, cooperation, and collaboration in distinction to the systems of exclusion and oppression of the apartheid state; and
- ➤ The founding of the metaphor in a natural, if not divine phenomenon, which signals natural and divine approval and blessings, in distinction to the judgements and international condemnations of apartheid.

As protagonists of the rainbow nation metaphor, it was also highly symbolic that two of the leaders in the twentieth century of South Africa who not only suffered extreme atrocities under apartheid but also symbolically, if not iconically, lead the struggle against the evil racist system that was apartheid. Both were also religious people in themselves – one from Methodist and the other from Anglican persuasion. This also added and strengthened the religious ideas associated with the rainbow symbolism in African indigenous knowledge systems, religions generally, including the common Bible of the Abrahamic faiths, amongst others.

The rainbow metaphor also resonates with the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who delivered his iconic 'I Have a Dream' speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, in August 1963. In this speech, he envisioned an America where people would 'not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'. This dream for equality between all people inspired thousands around the world who suffered under oppression, including those living in South Africa. Like Dr. King, Mandela, and Tutu envisioned a unified nation, where race and gender no longer defined individuals.

25 Years on, South Africa is marred by state capture, a hollowed state, rife corruption, maladministration and failing public services. Unemployment, reported at 29.1% by Statistics South Africa in the third quarter of 2019, is at its highest, with youth unemployment being the largest contributor to this statistic. From Penny Sparrow and Steve Hofmeyr, to Dianne Kohler-Barnard; and in statements from the Freedom Front Plus (FF+) to AfriForum, we have witnessed the rise of open racism. Social and economic upheaval has also been demonstrated in various instances including the HIV/ Aids pandemic, the massacre in Marikana, the abuse and corruption within state owned enterprises, the criticisms and discontent related to the #FeesMustFall movement, the debates around appropriation of land without compensation, the focus on decolonization, and the widespread scourge of gender-based violence. These, are all compounded by the ever broadening of the inequality and wealth gaps, unemployment, and poverty, amongst others. They are indicative of the fact that the envisaged romance that South Africans have had with the realisation of a vibrant, successful, prosperous rainbow nation have arguably fallen short of these aspirations. In fact, they are reflections of everything that goes against rainbow idealism.

Some of the realities that have unfolded in South Africa over the last 25 years, at various levels of government, have only recently begun to be

exposed in greater detail, and unpacked in the public sphere, through a variety of commissions of inquiry, and via an increase in civil society participation and activism by citizens, demanding accountability and action, particularly from the government and law enforcement officials. This has resulted in huge debates within various societal sectors, around whether the rainbow ideal that was originally espoused by Mandela and Tutu, is even conceivably possible, given the vast political and socio-economic divides that exist within South African society. Perhaps the most difficult for the nation to come to terms with, are the recent revelations around the extensive corruption that took place under the Zuma presidency, given the significant negative, if not destructive impacts this has had, on the capacity of the state to provide services to its citizenry, for it to function efficiently, effectively and transparently, and most devastatingly, on the thwarting of the hopes and expectations of the poorest of the poor.

Globally, in addition to the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), climate change and the need to reconsider the sustainability of our environment in relation to the threats of global warming, have found a space in international dialogues. In response to this, there have been growing calls for finding local solutions to local problems, where indigenous ways of doing things are increasingly finding significance again. These warnings around damage to the environment and the need for more sustainable solutions that include indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), first found significance at the Rio conference on Sustainable Development, in 1992, at a time where South Africa was concentrating on the dynamics of transitioning from a racist system to an inclusive, rainbow nation system.

In 1993, Vandana Shiva wrote a book, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Diversity and Biotechnology*, in which she warns against the reduction of alternative local solutions to local problems, and also raised questions over the threats to the planet's biodiversity and the environmental and human consequences of its erosion and replacement by monocultural production, evidenced by the effects of the Green Revolution, and disruption of the social systems that provide people with security. With the rise in global temperatures, the rise of oceans, droughts, and floods, these are no longer warnings but realities. Within the context of South Africa, the increasing prevalence of droughts and other natural disasters are having detrimental impacts on communities, especially the poor. As part of becoming a more responsible government, and nation, more active measures are necessary to combat climate change. In this light, the recognition of indigenous knowledge

systems offer opportunity for finding solutions to local climate issues.

There is also a growing disillusionment with the idea that bigger is better, giving a renewed interest in Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful,* which paved the way for twenty-first century books on environmentalism and economics, including *The End of Poverty*, by Sachs. Schumacher presented a radical challenge to globalization by focusing on creating more effective, more capable smaller elements of production in order to allow people more control over their lives and the choices that they make. This growing realization globally is compounded by the discourse of the fourth industrial revolution which is predicted to change every facet of our work and life over the coming decades. It is predicted that the number of jobs available will shrink, there will be much workplace automation, and new diseases and super bugs will prevail. Some economists (Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee among others) predict that there will be greater inequality and a shrinkage of the labour market. In addition to responding to the effects of apartheid, the South African government is challenged to be more responsive to global challenges and thus needs to become more competent in its ability to deliver to the nation.

It is at this juncture that one is forced to reflect on the idea of what constitutes a competent state or a capable state. Ideally, a capable state requires the adoption of the elements of morality, good values, efficiency and effectiveness, optimum service delivery, and transparency, as key factors for the achievement of quality government. This could provide the impetus for ethical governance, where professionalism provides the mechanism of enhancing the capacity and moral disposition of government officials, whose functionality is driven towards effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency. This in turn, creates the basis for building a capable state by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the state apparatuses in their service to the citizenry. However, the notion of a capable state ultimately rests upon the idea that there is a willingness to act and take responsibility for the powers bestowed upon one. This requires that a state deemed to be 'capable', recognises the importance of having the ability to act, to respond towards correcting situations where there is a need for effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, and to be optimally responsive to the citizenry. South Africa was no doubt on the path towards developing a 'capable' state in the post-1994, the commitment to which is demonstrated through the myriad of public policies, aimed at improving the social economic conditions of all its citizens, and rated as the best in the world. There is sufficient evidence that the potential of these policies

is severely limited by the capacity of the state to act, partly due to limited human resource capability, the system of incompetent cadre deployment and the prevalence of maladministration and corruption. The question must then be asked: Is there any evidence to suggest that the dream of the rainbow nation still prevails, and is there enough good left to fuel the ideal?

Currently, the *National Development Plan 2030* provides the overall driving policy towards an ideal South Africa, where there is reduced poverty, improved access to effective and efficient government services, and a favorable economic environment for investment and jobs. The policy speaks directly to enhancing the capacity of the state and ethical leadership. Hence, there is an overarching policy driving the idea of quality government and developing a capable state. Simultaneously, the voices for greater accountability, raising the ethical values in governance and administration, and the cessation of incompetent and unaccountable cadre deployment, are getting louder. Citizens are increasingly expressing support for ethical, capable governance.

In 25 years, a global economic crisis, followed by an emerging climate crisis, combined with a history of deprivation, which has been difficult to break free from, are compounded by state capture, and an increasing gap between the rich and poor, all reveal that while the democratic system has delivered political freedom for black South Africans, the economic legacy of apartheid still endures. When reflecting on the notion of re-imagining the rainbow nation, we must therefore ask ourselves whether there was even a rainbow to begin with, or was it largely a mirage. Various commentators (Lodge, Bond, Du Preez, Mathekga, Matshiqi, Mashele, amongst others) have written extensively on the political, socio-economic and cultural realities that bedevil the South African political landscape. These are often hard-hitting and harsh critiques of what shape the nation and could possibly lead one to believe that the country has not really made much progress at all in a post-apartheid context.

However, the situation has not been all bleak over the last 25 years, and in fact has shown and illustrated the resilience that defines the South African populace. This becomes evident when one begins to look outside of the obvious political and socio-economic frameworks that shape the nation to uncover the multiple layers of a very complex and nuanced society, which has much to offer and indeed has offered much to the world and continent of Africa since the end of apartheid.

In this context, 2019 was certainly a very momentous year for the country. Two very profound events (amongst many others) brought South

Africans back from the edge of a dangerous precipice that threatened the national morale. The South African rugby team won the Rugby World Cup for the third time (being one of only 2 countries to have done so), and Miss South Africa, Zozibini Tunzi, won the Miss Universe pageant. In these two events, citizens sought to rediscover the spirit and magic of the rainbow idea, that which united diverse communities across race and class and enabled the expression of a shared experience of joy and happiness that may have been lost in the heaviness of the revelations of things like state capture and statistics on crime and violence.

The reality is that the complexities of apartheid have been, and continue to be too much for simplistic solutions. Perhaps, the challenge is to change the way in which we see the metaphor of the rainbow. Instead of seeing the child-like notion of the perfect symmetry of colours blending, in the rainbow, it might rather be the symbol of transition, the new beginning(s) that was 1994, and the opening up of a playing field for equal, and socially just and equitable systems to be introduced into South Africa, for the benefit of the well-being, transformative, and upwardly mobile movement of the citizens. The road towards the pot of gold, or dream of a fair and equal society, should be seen from the angle of taking the path upwards over the rainbow, to the other end, towards success. The upward trajectory requires finding ways to make it over to 'the other side', towards success in achieving South Africa's goals. Given the current climate of uncertainty, it is time for government to focus on improving the capacity of the state to deliver more effectively on policies and programmes, services, and to build a capable state on the foundations laid by the Mandelas and Tutus of South Africa. This will require an unflinching departure from unethical practices, and unqualified, non-expert, cadre deployment among other issues, towards improved accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency. And where there has been some wrong doing, such characters must be severely reprimanded, and in some cases, brought before courts of law, to stand trial, if need be.

Finally, those employed within the public service, need to imbue a public service ethos, and continuously seek upskilling and personal and institutional capability and capacity training, while in their practices, they add to the capacity and capabilities of the state. They need to advance and come to embody the key transformative principles of the Constitution, for the general well-being of all.

For this issue of *Alter*nation, we have invited critical scholarly contri-

butions that would reflect on some of the notions, and the associated expectations, that they have generated among the people of South Africa. As expected, the articles that we received, engaged the realities that followed the birth of the rainbow nation, in critically, and analytically-interpretive ways. Not only did they reflect on the distinctions between expectations and reality, but also the complexities of the South African political-economy. Of the many articles received, which will virtually all form part of a larger book publication in 2020, we only offer a small sample of these critical, as well as constructive reflections. To re-imagine the rainbow nation, might mean that we most foundationally critically and honestly reflect on what has gone right, and what wrong over the last 25 years. It is only then, that we shall be able to start to re-imaging, to re-plan, and re-strategise, for the next 25 years.

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In '**AIDS and Health in South Africa: Making the Best of a Bad Situation**', **Alan Whiteside** and **Alison Reiszadeh**, focus on the AIDS pandemic in South Africa. They point out that South Africa's first survey of HIV prevalence in Antenatal Clinic attenders was carried out in 1990. This found just 0.8% of pregnant women were HIV-positive. A mere four years later, in 1994, when the African National Congress (ANC) took power, prevalence stood at 7.6 percent. In 2018 it was estimated that 13.1 percent of all South Africans were living with HIV, a total of 7.52 million (STATS SA 2018). The article traces the course of the epidemic in South Africa, asks why the country has 'the worst epidemic in the world', and what the underlying causes are. It concludes by noting that the epidemic has had some benefits. The public health service has been strengthened, and there has been an appreciation of the value of lives. AIDS has also had political impact, although it has been different from that predicted in the late1980s and 1990s. The authors ask whether we can make the reality of 7.9 million infections work for the nation, as we imagine a future with AIDS.

The current challenges related to notions of corruption and state capture, are addressed in 'Corruption: Consequences for Socio-economic Well-being in South Africa' by **Evan Mantzaris** and **Pregala Pillay**. The article begins with the hypothesis that high levels of corruption can self-perpetuate on occasions, as the phenomenon of corruption is perpetrated through all societal levels and sectors. The loss of ethical standards, lack of

honest and cohesive leadership, organisational gaps and weaknesses and individual or group greed, coupled with political, or organisational opportunities, and immunity of offenders, are some of the fundamental roots leading to corruption. High levels of corruption have serious negative repercussions for the present and future of any country especially when it occurs in the public sector. The authors list and review a number of the consequences that corruption have on the country. Finally, they argue, corruption increases inequality as it is instrumental in lowering employment opportunities, deters fixed investment from outside South Africa, as well as constitute a serious hurdle in the establishment of new businesses. The focus of this contribution is on public sector corruption.

Anand Singh's 'Medical Personnel in Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Nexus between Political Change and Migration' is based on research that provides an overview of the factors that encourage international migration among medical personnel from Sub-Saharan Africa. Through a brief insight into Sub-Saharan Africa and an in-depth view of working conditions in one of South Africa's cities' hospitals (Durban) we may appreciate what spurs on the urge to migrate northwards. The choice of these two categories rests with how the dynamics of transformation and equity policies are manifesting more than two decades after the country's first general election. Singh argues that the negative experiences of medical personnel in South Africa's hospitals, are opening the door for them to emigrate, based on perceived positive social and political conditions in other countries. To turn this situation around would require more progressive steps than are currently the case.

Monique Emser and **Marcel van der Watt**'s '#Stillnotfound: Missing Children in South Africa', puts children in South Africa in the spotlight. In the year following South Africa's first inclusive democratic national elections, Nelson Mandela (1995) famously proclaimed that: 'There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children'. Despite expansive child protection laws, which seem to have had little impact on the prevalence of crimes committed against children, they remain objects of exclusion. Much violence against children remains unreported and unrecorded, due in part to the culture of silence that pervades our society. Using the recent spate of child abductions and missing children cases, which have caught popular attention and sparked moral outrage, the authors examine the issue of missing children in South Africa within the wider phenomenological framework of violence against children. They conclude that

missing children cases are intricately intertwined with the layers of violence that have become embedded in South African society in the democratic era. They offer a series of policy recommendations to address this complex issue.

'*Without Blood*: Reconciliation as a Shared Experience in South African Hybrid Artistic Practice', the contribution by **Janine Lewis**, addresses the issue of reconciliation. She says that national healing and reconciliation have come to represent a new vision of democratic action by being imbedded in the constitution, *and* by playing such a prominent role both locally and internationally via the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the late 1990s. Both these facts, have made the challenges related to reconciliation a constant fact of life in South Africa. As example, President Cyril Ramaphosa admits that 'we must ... recognise our own wounds, we must acknowledge that we are a society that is hurting, damaged by our past, numbed by our present and hesitant about our future. This may explain why we are so easily prone to anger and to violence'. The executive director of the Centre of the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, and clinical psychologist, Nomfundo Mogapi, emphasizes that we should find ways to speak to our pain. And former President Thabo Mbeki challenged that to achieve national unity and reconciliation, as South Africans, we should confront our racist legacy as a historical challenge that faces all South Africans, black and white. More generally, philosopher, Paul Ricoeur averred that reconciliation lingers as an unfulfilled need for all, and speaks of a 'poetics of existence' as a human ideal that lures us towards endeavours and achievements not yet realised.

Against this brief background, Lewis's article details the South African hybrid staged adaptation of Alessandro Baricco's novel, *Without Blood* (2010), to explore the themes of reconciliation and forgiveness. Opposite to the commissions where stories are told and witnessed, this production sought to include spectators through experience, incorporating them into the action by appealing to their senses and memory through visceral responses rather than only cognitive (re)actions. As *ex-post facto* research, achieved through using a performative lens to illustrate the dialectical mode of doing and being in the research process, this article also intersperses portions of personal narrative with academic writing to enable a juxtaposed appreciation of the various layers of interpretation. Further, through reflexive and reflective processes, the article includes a delineation of the hybrid live-multimedia and physical theatre storytelling creative practice; including the observed, yet subjective, perception(s) of the audience's response to the performances of *Without Blood*.

The objective of the production was never to instigate catharsis towards a rosy solution. Rather, it aimed to provoke discourse and challenge viewpoints. Experience, whether lived or imagined, relates to culture and memory; it is influenced by and simultaneously determines both. The physical performer and sentient spectator, together, are dependent on this experiential performance for meaning-making. The theme of reconciliation, exposed further by guilt and forgiveness, was conveyed via a shared experience through memory. Memory is not just an individual, private experience, but is also part of the collective experience. Guilt was addressed through forgiveness as transformative justice, brought about by the two main characters making amends.

Buhle Mpofu addresses the matter of migration and xenophobia in his 'Migration, Xenophobia and Resistance to Xenophobia, and Socio-economic Exclusion in the Aftermath of South African Rainbowism'. He says that recent statements by South African political leaders tend to draw a stark distinction between citizens and migrants, or refugees. Such a politics of exclusion and populist politics, is a far cry the ANC's Freedom Charter statement that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it', and the designation given to South Africa with the advent of democracy in 1994, as the rainbow people. The article maps the changing fortunes of migrants in South Africa during the last 25 years of democracy. Many migrants moved to South Africa because it presented itself as container of democracy, civil protections from ethnic division, and a land of opportunity and inclusion. It examines the different articulations of South African Rainbowism through interrogating the place of migrant in the various structural or economic development policies since the first democratic elections in 1994. From Mandela's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), through Mbeki's Growth, Employment and Redistribution project (GEAR), and more recently, Zuma's Radical Economic Transformation (RET), the opportunities and recognition of migrants remained elusive. In addition to the examination of policy shifts, the article also examines the representation of migrants, as cause blaming migrants for the country's poor economic performance, in recent South African party political manifestos. Finally, the article employs the notion of marginality (Messiou 2012), and in particular bell hooks' concept of 'marginality as a site of resistance' (1990), to argue that despite the constitutional provisions that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity', the socio-economic privileging of its citizens over migrants impede on the realisation of a just post-apartheid

society. It then engages religion, as a lens for the conceptualization of marginality. Through religion, it is argued, a just and inclusive socio-economic transformation in South Africa is possible – i.e. if the religious concept of justice informs public policy design, and implementation within the framework of human rights.

The next article is by **Anders Göranzon**. It is titled, '*Thuma mina! Who sends Whom? How South Africa as a Rainbow Nation has been Perceived in the Church of Sweden*'. Göranzon points out that the Church of Sweden (CoS) has a relationship with South Africa for almost 150 years. From the start, focus was to do mission work through the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM). Due to the rise of apartheid, the church also became one the most significant international ecclesial institutions that worked and lobbied against apartheid. The relationship has however, also been described as mutual, in so far as South African dynamics also impacted Swedish society. The article unpacks this focus, while it more specifically, analyses views from within the CoS, on South Africa, post-1994. Importantly, it points out that in recent years, CoS on national level, has put the emphasis on aid and development and have shown less interest in Church relations, while it still encourages the twinnig of individual churches between South Africa and Sweden.

Opening the scope of the focus on the rainbow nation to some reflections on the broader field of the humanities, **Rajendra Chetty**'s article is titled 'Reflections on a Decolonial Humanities and the Lived Experience of the Subaltern in South Africa'. The aim of the article is to reflect on the imperative for a decolonial humanities in the context of social inequality and neo-colonialism, in post-apartheid South Africa. The article leans on the emancipatory lens of Fanon's revolutionary humanism that positions the role of the scholar 'inside' the struggle of the people, and views practice/ activism/ civil society resistance, as a product of philosophy, and the human rights discourse of Mignolo (2000) and Spivak (1999). Chetty raises the issue, of whether the humanities are standing outside the 'real' struggles of the disenfranchised masses.

Finally, in his 'Between Ramaphosa's New Dawn and Zuma's Long Shadow: Will the Centre hold?' **Ashwin Desai** informatively reflects on the transition from the presidencies and leadership provided by former state president Jacob Zuma and now President Cyril Ramaphosa. Ramaphosa was sworn in as South Africa's President in February 2018 after the late-night resignation of Jacob Zuma. His ascendency came in the wake of a bruising

battle with Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma that saw him become head of the African National Congress (ANC) by the narrowest of margins. Ramaphosa promised a new dawn that would sweep aside the allegations of the looting of state resources under the Zuma Presidency and restore faith in the criminal justice system. Desai's study is a conjunctural analysis that, as Gramsci points out, focusses on 'political criticism of a day-to-day character, which has as its subject, top political leaders and personalities with direct governmental responsibilities', as opposed to organic developments that lend itself to an understanding of durable dilemmas and 'give rise to socio-historical criticism, whose subject is wider social groupings – beyond the public figures and beyond the top leaders' (quoted in Morton 1997: 181).

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