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# *The Worker*

**We Fight Ideas with Ideas**

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## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AN ABOMINABLE CRIME**

In South Africa the month of August has been set aside to focus on the achievements and plight of women. Sadly, the celebration of the attainments of women brings little comfort in the light of the statistics on Gender-Based Violence. In a still unapologetic patriarchal world, socialised to accept subordinate roles for women, the many attempts in South Africa to right the scales seem to bear little fruit.

The topic of Gender-Based Violence bears witness to an ongoing vexing and disturbing phenomenon in our society. This morally reprehensible crime of violence by males, perpetrated on females is a scourge that cannot be overlooked and left to continue unabated.

This ever-increasing crime against women is part of a stark picture of violent crime in the country, South Africa counting as the most violent country in Africa. But, one asks, why is interpersonal violence such a big and unsolvable problem? The social science experts tell us that people exposed to violence continuously and regularly, are prone to either allow or perpetrate violence themselves. If true, could it assist in understanding the high levels of violent crime in the country?

As a subjugated and dominated people, oppressed South Africans have had their share of physical violence over centuries of colonial rule by Dutch and British imperialists. Long after slavery had been abolished, the ill-treatment and abominable working conditions continued. This legacy of inhumane mistreatment and second-class citizenship continued under the racist National Party rule.

Violence is not only physical, but is also felt when people suffer the effects of doing without proper housing, without sufficient food and clothing, and all the needs to live safe, secure and fulfilling lives.

This does not excuse the daily violent behaviour of men on women, though. Male on female violent behaviour remains a monstrous and disgraceful crime which should be rooted out. It should be highlighted and treated as a most serious human rights abuse. However, in trying to



find solutions, we should take into consideration the present-day conditions of unemployment and poverty in our neighbourhoods that rob people of their agency, pride and humanity, which often find expression as violence and abuse. Children grow up being exposed to violence on a daily basis. This may lead to diminished sensitivity to and acceptance of aggressive behaviour, resulting in violence being perpetrated on physically weaker persons, who are often the women.

Research has proven a link between the chronic malnutrition of children stemming from food insecurity, and violent behaviour. (Defective brain development leading to impaired impulse control.)

The lack of hope due to poverty in embattled communities is a result of the failure of the capitalist system, an economic system which our current government and most politicians in parliament have accepted. Capitalism makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. And it is mostly the poor that must contend with violence in our communities.

Therefore, whatever else we do to fight Gender-Based Violence, we have to take hands to rid ourselves of this system which does not care for our well-being. Hope lies in knowing that an alternative system is possible.

### ***Inside this issue***

|          |                                                     |          |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Gender-Based Violence, an Abominable Crime</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Identity Politics – The Flavour of the Month</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>The Limitations of Identity Politics</b>         | <b>5</b> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Plunder and Pillage of Palestine</b>             | <b>7</b> |

## IDENTITY POLITICS – THE FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH

It is with a great deal of reluctance that we enter the debate of Identity Politics that is again rearing its ugly head. Social media is abuzz with race and ethnicity. However, social scientists state that race is not *"biologically grounded and natural"*; rather it is a socially constructed category used to oppress and exploit people of colour. Nevertheless, it is for this reason alone that this would be a fatal mistake to limit our purview to what is local and parochial, even though the temptation to do that is great in a country like South Africa.



In South Africa, the ruling class has ever since the middle of the nineteenth century followed a policy of divide and rule in which the nascent South African nation was herded into tribes, national groups and "races". Numerous genocidal events happened in this country. Apart from the brazen wars of conquests and dispossession, they engineered the Nonqhawuse cattle killing of 1857, the massacres at Bulhoek, Sharpeville/Langa, Boipatong and Langa at Uitenhage (Kariega). Other purely political activities led to the starvation and death of thousands of the oppressed.

In 1943 Ben Kies in his treatise, *Background of Segregation* wrote,

*"The fundamental class issue of owner and worker is overshadowed and blotted out by the crusade of white against non-white.... and they have almost finished with the non-whites. They have carved us up into three groups until today we look upon ourselves as either African oppressed, Coloured oppressed or Indian oppressed. They intend to reduce us all to the same low level of slavery, but to keep us segregated even in subjection. Each section is to be in the same chains as the other, but each group is always to think that its chains are somewhat different"* (Moreover, 82 years after Kies, we still do!)

What was Kies positing?

Throughout the writings of Kies, Tabata, Mqotsi,

Dudley, Jaffe and others, one traces the building of a single, undivided South African nation. It may be prudent to state that the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA) was the first organisation in the world to define nonracialism as currently understood by race scientists. It is assumed that all the above cadres were members of the WPSA. It was determined that there was only one race, the human race, *Homo sapiens*.

Why is the racial question so long-lasting and utterly damaging in the socio-cultural relations of people in this country even when racialism would appear to have lost its *"raison d'être"*? Edgar Maurice in his dissertation presented at the triennial A.J. Abrahamse Memorial Lecture held under the auspices of the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA), in *"The Colour Bar in Education"* (1956), denotes that the historical dividing line between people in society tended to run along the line of religion right up to the Middle Ages. Up to that time, European languages did not even have a word for "race". The arrival of the word in human language came together with the arrival of the capitalist system, firstly, in the Italian city-states of Venice, Florence and others.

Out of the Ancient world, political systems broadly evolved from the Kingdoms, slavery and bartering, to feudalism, thereafter mercantilism (early capitalism) and later to capitalism. To sustain this system, the destructive, divisive and discriminatory system of racism was propagated. This is why race was created: the propagation of the capitalist system and causing division amongst the working class.

Neville Alexander averred that it was the termination of social revolution in 1994 that actually constituted that



### Election Campaign in 1924 showing “White” fears.

ushered in the racial outlook of the ANC. One needs to add though that the Freedom Charter (Clause No. 2) in its provision for equality of “national groups”, “races” and customary usages actually denotes a state, not of non-racialism, but rather of multi-racialism in the democratic state of the future. Of course, the concept of a multi-racial democracy is a contradiction in terms. Nonetheless, this is not accidental. The Freedom Charter was predicated on the project of a mixed, Keynesian or social democratic economy in the society of the future.

South Africa illustrates and typifies the colour bar *par excellence*; whilst racially discriminatory legislation has been removed from the statute books very little has changed for the working class in this country. The situation in the townships of New Brighton, Zwile, Gelvandale, Katanga, Kwa Nobuhle and Rosedale has not changed one iota nor in any of the other townships across the country.

Spatial apartheid has been maintained. In Johannesburg, the vast townships (more than 25 townships) have been locked up into South Western Townships (Soweto). Coughing, asthma, sinusitis and tuberculosis are some of the health issues found to be prevalent by a survey conducted by the Bench Marks Foundation in Soweto. The research found that the residents blame mine dumps for these problems. All the communities live near tailings on the mine dumps.

In Cape Town, forced removals by the Group Areas Act of 1950, dumped thousands of residents into the dormitory townships on the Cape Flats. Socio-economic conditions made this an area of high prevalence for diseases, such as tuberculosis and meningitis including scourges such as gang violence. In every city, town and dorp these shantytowns are on the outskirts of the city limits.

Should the removal of these townships not have been prioritised as a primary task of the anti-apartheid movement? The colour bar exists in various forms and spheres and reference is made to segregation (apartheid) on the political front, the economic, social, residential, health and educational fronts.

The French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788) and the German anatomist Johann Blumenbach (1752–1840) were proponents of monogenism, the concept that all races have a single origin. In addition, some sixty-odd years after Kies and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), the non-racial ethic continues to be given credence. For example, J. Craig Venter (2000), founder and CEO of Celera Genomics, one of the two groups responsible for determining the sequence map of the Human Genome, declared in an article on *Race and Genetics* that “race is a social concept, not a scientific one” (p.1). Similarly, Lisa Gannett (2004) states: “[there is] widespread agreement among contemporary race theorists that race was an ideological invention of the late-eighteenth century science.”

The repealing of racially discriminatory legislation in South Africa in the 1990s did nothing to change the material conditions of the working class and the poor of this country. This should not be surprising, given that “race” and “capitalism” have always gone hand-in-glove, and that the 1994 settlement was all about securing the future of capitalism, not about eliminating poverty; *Racial Discrimination, Poverty and Capitalism* are indivisibly linked. The process of land and cattle robbery, the strangling of the economies of the indigenous people by foreign invaders, the humiliation of the conquered people, were all part of the process of worldwide capitalist expansion. A more devastating process – one of tremendous social upheaval to serve





**Shantytowns that dot the landscape in every city, town and village**

the needs of expanding mining capital from the late nineteenth century onwards, followed the land grabs and enslavement of local people.

Why is this necessary after more than thirty years of “democracy”? Let’s briefly look at the current situation.

- Toxic race relations exist all over the country as exhibited on the Cape Flats, Eldorado Park, Senekal and Brackenfell – also by the actions of the Sparrows, the Mombergs, the Jimmy Manyi’s (former Cabinet spokesperson), who had been concerned with the over-supply of “Coloureds” in the WC ) and the like.

Racism is systemic and racist attitude remains unchanged – domestic workers, as well as farmworkers, face racism daily.

People cannot continue to live in abject poverty. They will not allow their humanity to be trampled upon forever. The high unemployment rate (highest in the world), the resultant hunger and starvation as well as living on constant false promises will eventually boil over into violence. The twin (evil) forces of law and order cannot forever suppress the masses and keep them in subjugation when they continue to suffer desperate want.

Several outbreaks of “race” riots occurred in KZN over the years. Notably in 1949, then in 1985 and in 2021. An unhealthy sore has been allowed to fester in this, and many other areas in SA. It suits the ruling class to encourage these divisions amongst what SA terms “different races”. RO Dudley, the late former president of the New Unity Movement stated, “*tribalism (a facet of racism as well as xenophobia) has to die before we rise as a nation*”. The building of a nation should be para-

mount in resolving the problems in KZN, the Western Cape and Gauteng (Eldorado Park). Suppressing the upheavals by restoring “*law and order*” by invoking the might of the police and the defence force on the masses is not a solution to the underlying problems.

The core issue of eradication of landlessness, poverty and unemployment lies at the root of the problems in SA. To rise from the ashes in SA, we need to promote the scientifically proven truth that race is a myth – a social construct of recent origin, which currently remains an important ideological basis for the capitalist elites of the world. We need to build the South African nation. We need to promote the scientifically proven

fact that there is only one race, *Homo sapiens*, the human race.

Racialism that is driven by the needs of a rapacious capitalist system soon became the political twin of that system. These evil twins have lived together in society for centuries. Racialism in SA has become an aspect of both globalisation and neo-liberalism. The ‘democratic overturn’ in South Africa finds itself caught in the clutches of a racist phenomenon, thanks to the unconditional surrender to capitalism at Kempton Park.

**Only the eradication of capitalism can bring about a nonracial society.**

A critical task of the left is thus the building of class-consciousness among the mass of working people, so that collectively we can transcend the narrow perspectives of race, and decisively shift the balance of power in favour of the working class.

This is the struggle to which we have to re-dedicate our lives.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Just as 7 October 2023 is erroneously seen by many as the start of the Israeli genocide against Palestine, so 1948 is seen by many as the start of our woes in South Africa. That was when the National Party became the government and introduced “apartheid.” Following on from this, 1994 was then seen as the moment we achieved liberation, when we defeated apartheid, and became a non-racial democracy. The ANC had always espoused a commitment to “non-racialism,” and if many are now, some thirty years after its accession to power, decrying the party’s failure to transform society, it is because the divisions in society are no less stark than prior to 1994.

Today, most people accept the scientifically proven fact that there is no such thing as “race,” that there are no fundamental genetic differences between people, and that race is a myth, a “social construct” which has served ruling classes well, and that it has been instrumental in helping to highlight and exploit differences among people in order to divide and rule.

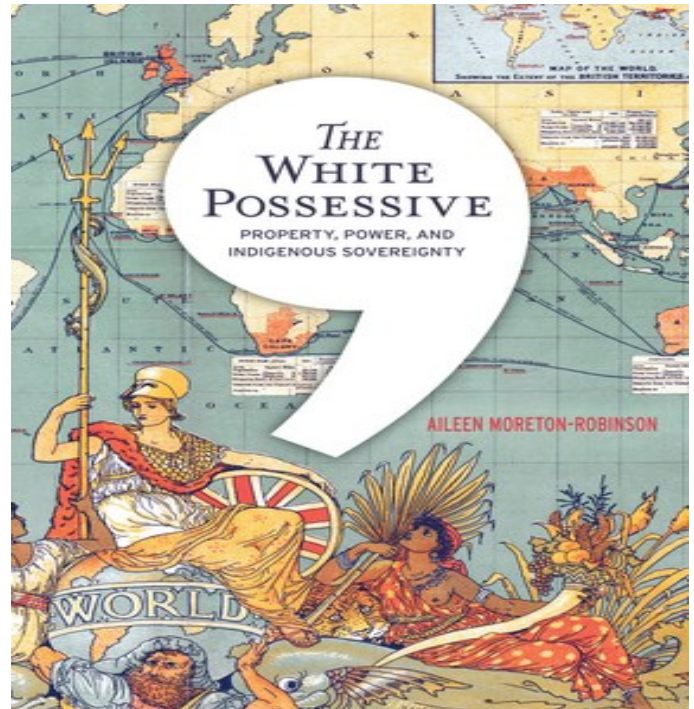
While race does not exist, racism certainly does, and the big question facing us is how to overcome it, how to rid society of this scourge once-and-for-all.

Ironically, there are many whose anti-racism boils down to *more* racism! This is particularly the case among many of those who object to being called “coloured,” and demand to be self identified as either Griquas, Nama, Khoikhoi, San, Korana and so on, in other words, a reversion to tribalism. One suspects that this game of “pick a race” starts to matter as pressure for land reform gains momentum. In other words, it’s about positioning yourself to benefit from the distribution of land and other booty which the rulers are likely to apportion based on racial categories as they define it.

How do you establish if you’re a this or a that? Take “white” If your father was French and your mother Italian, what does that make you? French? Italian? French-Italian? It becomes absurd.

Race, we repeat, is a social construct. As Sai Englert informs us in his book, “Settler Colonialism – an Introduction:”

In the Dutch and Portuguese colonial empires, the lack of available settlers . . . led to the stratification of Indigenous and enslaved populations. Dutch colonial authorities, for example, encouraged the intermarriage, first in Indonesia and then in the Cape, between Dutch and Indigenous as well as enslaved women . . . in the Cape Colony, while intermarriage with Indigenous Khoikhoi women took place, the settlers tended to marry imported slaves. Their children were considered part of the settler population and could ascend to high office in the colonies, despite attempts from the late seventeenth century onwards to limit these practices. Only in the latter years of the eighteenth century, especially



following the Cape’s incorporation into the British empire in 1795, did more sharp racist stratification between White and Black emerge. This tendency in Dutch colonialism should not, however, be read as a more progressive attitude amongst the settlers, but rather the expression of a different balance of forces between settlers, Indigenous, and enslaved populations . . . these different forms of racialisation were imposed by settlers as a form of social control, stabilisation of settler rule, and division.

This quote from Englert helps as a reminder to consider the question of race in the broader context of colonialism. In his book, he highlights the similarities in colonial rule across several countries. For example:

. . . in much of the Spanish-controlled Americas, Indigenous peoples’ forced labour in the mines and on the land would form the basis for the economy. This also laid the foundations for racialised forms of stratified social control, comparable to those developed in the Caribbean slave economies, which placed European settlers on one end, Indigenous peoples on the other, and an intermediary class of those racialised as

mixed (labelled *mestizos*) between the two . . . the term *mestizo* in both the Spanish and Portuguese Empire[s] reflects the kind of caste-like and racist social orders which evolved in the colonies.

This is the very template that was used in South Africa.

He refers to another writer (Aileen Moreton-Robinson) who says, 'from the sixteenth century onward race and gender divided humans into three categories: owning property, becoming propertyless, and being property.'

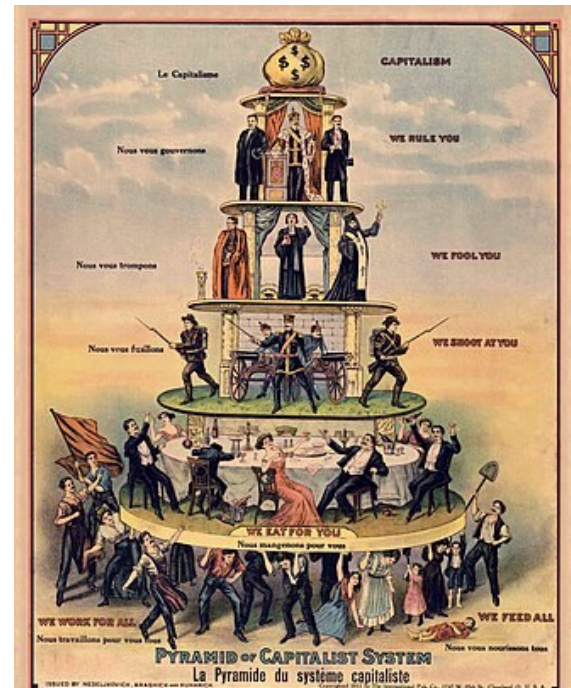
Because 1994 was a matter of changing the deckchairs on the Titanic, not a real revolution in which power shifted to the working class, this is what we have today, this is what our colonial past has bequeathed to us: a class of property owners (in the means of production) and a class which is both propertyless (having been expropriated in the colonial era) and "property" in the sense of being exploited wage labourers.

Is claiming the right to self-identification going to change this?

We will continue endlessly to spin our wheels in the morass of inequality as long as we allow ourselves to be distracted from the real question of our ongoing powerlessness as a class. As Marx had said, a necessary pre-condition is that we recognise ourselves as a "class for itself."

"A class for itself" is a Marxist concept for a social class that has developed class consciousness—an awareness of its collective identity and shared interests—and politically organizes itself to act in its own interest, moving beyond just being a collection of individuals with similar economic positions (a "class in itself").

In short, the route to freedom is via class struggle.



### **Pyramid of Capitalist System**

**Stratification by social class and economic inequality.<sup>1</sup>**



## PLUNDER AND PILLAGE OF PALESTINE

It is well-known that Jared Kushner is Donald Trump's son-in-law. It is also well-known that he had no scruples about suggesting Gaza be genocidally cleared of its inhabitants to make way for a "Riviera on the Mediterranean". This same low-life was also Trump's senior foreign policy advisor, responsible for preparing a peace plan for the Middle East. It should hardly be surprising that Trump himself endorsed the idea. According to Wikipedia (22 August 2025):

On 4 February 2025, U.S. president Donald Trump declared his intent for the United States to take over administrative control of the Gaza Strip. Trump expressed his vision to re-develop the territory into the "Riviera of the Middle East". The plan would call for the forced displacement of approximately 2 million Palestinians to neighboring lands. It would also require the removal of over 50 million tonnes of debris and unexploded ordnance. When asked how the territory will be acquired, Trump claimed the U.S. will "take it".

Even as we write, the Israeli Occupational Force (IOF) has initiated a major ground offensive against Gaza City; in line with its conduct throughout the genocide, it is sparing nothing and no-one in its murderous frenzy. To use the Israeli defence minister's term, "the gates of Hell" have been opened. Clearly, phase one of Trump's "Riviera vision" has been launched.

It might be worth noting that the idea of turning Gaza into a Riviera is not a new idea. It was first mooted way back in 2012. In other words, the current genocide is the action-part of settler-colonial-conquest, with 7 October 2023 having been the necessary excuse to kick it off.

Mainstream critics of Israel's assault on Gaza (and the West Bank) tend to focus on the horrors of the assault, seldom going beyond the existential barbarism displayed by the IOF. What should be equally highlighted is the deep, underlying motive driving the genocide, which, in a nutshell is brute capitalist imperialism.

To understand Palestine through the capitalist exploitation . . . Palestine needs to be grounded in an understanding of the Middle East and its place in an oil-centred global capitalism. After World War II, oil replaced coal as the most sought after fossil fuel, and the US became the world's leading super power. Against a backdrop of US interference in the region post-war, US support for Israel increased, particularly after June 1967. US support for Israel . . . is directly linked to the latter's settler-colonial character, with benefits for both. (from <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/authors/ramona-wadi/>, 22 August 2025)

Huge reservoirs of oil and natural gas wealth are locat-

ed in the occupied West Bank and the Mediterranean coast off the Gaza Strip. However, as UNCTAD warned in 2019, the occupation of Palestine by Israel continues to prevent Palestinians from developing their energy fields so as to exploit and benefit from such assets. Israel was "either preventing them from exploiting or is exploiting without due regard for international law." As such, the Palestinian people have been denied the benefits of using this natural resource to finance socio-economic development and meet their need for energy. The accumulated losses are estimated in the billions of dollars. The longer Israel prevents Palestinians from exploiting their own oil and natural gas reserves, the greater the opportunity costs and the greater the total costs of the occupation borne by Palestinians become. (*The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: The Unrealized Oil and Natural Gas Potential*. UNCTAD. 2019.)

In his illuminating new book, *The Fall of Israel*, Dan Steinbock directly identifies the driving force behind settler violence and expropriations in the West Bank.

The efforts at expulsions are not just a reflection of mob violence and nationalist hatred. They reflect the quest for power and property. Historically, material incentives have fuelled ethnic expulsions, which are not some sort of unplanned convulsions of society, but net effects of deliberate policy choices. Typically, it was the "lure of property and social mobility, as well as economic necessities" that shaped the course and consequences of ethnic cleansing in the wake of World War II and that also marks the efforts at population transfer in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli settlers benefit from extraordinary handouts, subsidies and tax breaks, while Palestinians cope with rampages, looting and occasionally war and devastation. With developers in the West Bank working intimately with the Likud coalitions, the racket has been lucrative. Property buyers in sought-after settlements have paid full price, while the developers are beneficiaries of state-subsidized land in less desirable areas. Prejudice, hatred and distrust play a major role in ethnic cleansing, but the latter cannot be explained away with psychology or abnormality. It is the political economy of ethnic cleansing that accounts for the genocidal atroci-

ties illuminating the dark side of democracy and the nation-state, or as Michael Mann has argued: "All cases of cleansing involve material interests. Usually, members of an ethnic group come to believe they have a collective economic interest against an out-group."

And there we have it. The Israeli plunder and pillage of Palestine has a precedent in Nazi Germany, no less. In his book, Steinbock reminds us that "Hitler won the allegiance of ordinary Germans by engaging in a campaign of theft and by channelling the proceeds into generous social programs. Hitler did not just force his people's consent. He "bought" it. While Jews and other citizens of the Nazi-occupied lands suffered crippling taxation, mass looting, enslavement, and destruction, most Germans enjoyed an improved standard of living. Reservations were swept away by tax breaks and government handouts.

Perhaps this helps us to understand why "ordinary white South Africans" voted the Nationalist Party into power with increasing majorities at every election in the apartheid era.

. . . and why the genocide in Gaza is supported by more than 80 percent of Israelis.

To end off with, we copy a quote supporting our opening assertion:

Adam Hanieh, Rafeef Ziadah, and Robert Knox speaking about their new co-authored book, *Resisting Erasure: Capital, Imperialism and Race in Palestine*:

[In our book] We spoke about the inadequacy of framing the question of Palestine and the Gaza genocide solely as a humanitarian issue and how the Israeli project of settler-colonialism has been part and parcel of the expansion of European and American capitalism.



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