

Review article:

The Delusion of Apartheid and the African National Congress: Sizwe's Mythmaking and South African Politics

Mpofu-Walsh, Sizwe. 2021. *The New Apartheid*. Cape Town: Tafelberg. 184 pp., Price (Inc. VAT): R 299.00/ \$10.49 (Softcover) ISBN: 9780624088547

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The book under review entitled *The New Apartheid* by Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh, is another contribution to the debate and critique of the so-called post-Apartheid dispensation. The African National Congress (ANC)-led post-1994 non-racial constitutional dispensation is evidently falling apart. The African majority faces the frustration of not being able to reconcile the idealistic liberal rights embedded in the final constitution and their daily existence of squalor, misery, and survival due to terrifying socio-economic conditions. In this book, Mpofu-Walsh aims to account for the dehumanising circumstances of the African majority, argues that Apartheid did not die, but was merely privatised. The book foregrounds the role of Neoliberalism in the worsening socio-economic conditions of the African majority. The vector of race in determining one's socio-economic condition as a member of the African majority is now overtaken by the market logic. Readers of this book can expect to be treated to several salient themes, such as law, space, wealth, technology, and punishment. The book is written in a succinct manner, thus ordinary readers can easily get the gist of the argument. The fundamental argument that Apartheid was not dismantled completely, but was transformed through a market logic of neoliberalism is proffered in a manner which suggests that Mpofu-Walsh is aligned to the Congress Tradition of the ANC. The detection of this ideological bias requires one to be a knowledgeable reader and student of South African history and politics.

The fundamental distinction between a civil rights movement such as the ANC and a liberation movement like Poqo lies in the status of white settlers and Apartheid. The mythologisation of Apartheid by promoting it as the main problem in liberation



politics and history in “conqueror South Africa” (Ramosé 2018,330), is the persistent intellectual obsession of the Congress Tradition. A trenchant contestation and rejection of Apartheid as the fundamental antagonism in the history of the struggle for national liberation is the defining trait of a liberation movement and intellectual liberation production. Due to the triumph of the civil rights movement of the ANC in 1994, the Congress Tradition as an ideological and intellectual paradigm, has attained a hegemonic status with the help of white liberals (Mafeje 1998). At the Congress Tradition’s very origin is the Freedom Charter’s embrace and propagation (Pheko 2012). This is why the Congress Tradition is premised on Charterism (Raboroko 1960). Adopted in reaction to the dominance of the so-called Afrikaner nationalism in 1955, the Kliptown Charter (Sobukwe 1957) is the core of Charterism which centralises Apartheid as the main problem. Liberal non-racialism (Dladla 2018; Soske 2017) as an antidote to the rabid and clumsy racism of the Apartheid regime, is encapsulated in the Congress of the People’s annoying fixation with the naïve fantasy of South Africa belonging to all who live in it, both black and white... Mpofo-Walsh is an organic product and a ‘bright’ example of the triumph of Tutu’s curse of blacks and whites belonging together in South Africa, literally. While the Congress of the People was preoccupied with the old Apartheid, Sizwe and his fellow Charterist intellectuals were obsessing about the new Apartheid in ‘post-Apartheid’ South Africa. Having written a book entitled *Democracy & Delusion: 10 Myths* (2017), in which he debunks what he considers to be myths about the so-called post-Apartheid South Africa, Sizwe is back again, only this time he is reinventing two myths.

This first myth is about the centrality of Apartheid as *the* problem in liberation politics and history, while the second myth is about the ANC being a liberation movement. This is how Sizwe (Mpofo-Walsh 2021, 178) reinvents the first Charterist myth “Defining a central social problem takes generations. In hindsight, the struggle against formal apartheid appears coherent and premeditated. *But identifying apartheid as the problem* took eternities of debate, struggle, and reflection” (author’s emphasis in italics). Within the Africanist Tradition as the opposite of the Charterist Tradition of Sizwe, Peter Raboroko has debunked Sizwe’s two myths in a piece called *The Africanist Case* (1960). The Africanist tradition, later called the Azanian Tradition, broke away from the civil rights logic of the ANC in 1959 due to the Charterists’ betrayal of the fundamental question of historic justice, namely to whom does the land belong? Anton Lembede (Lembede 2015) and Robert Sobukwe (Sobukwe 1957) later emphasised that Europeans are alien conquerors who dispossessed the Indigenous people of their land.

The land dispossession took place in 1652 and not in 1948, making the horrible date of 1652 fundamentally important in the Africanist and Azanian Traditions. This implies that the fundamental problem is not Apartheid, be it old or new, however, conquest in the form of land dispossession since 1652 in wars of colonisation (Ramose 2007).

Sizwe Mpfu-Walsh (Mpfu-Walsh 2021, 23) reinforces his second Charterist myth by stating the following; “Furthermore, when the liberation movement was nationalised, it assumed apartheid’s debts. These debts further constrained ANC policy choices and limited fundamental reform”. According to Sizwe, his book *The New Apartheid* posits that Apartheid did not die; it was privatised. The idea that the neoliberal market logic that is central to the current economic system in South Africa can be traced to the final stages of the Apartheid regime, has some element of truth. This is since F. W. De Klerk as a *verligte* (person of any of the white political parties who supported liberal trends in government policy) reformer of the regime met with Margret Thatcher to discuss economic reforms necessary to transition South Africa into the new neoliberal hegemony. The ANC’s inheritance of the Apartheid debts which were ironically incurred by the regime in its oppression and killing of the African majority, is central to the argument by for instance Julius Malema, that the figure of Nelson Mandela symbolises the achievement of political freedom without economic freedom. The privatisation of Apartheid as Sizwe (Mpfu-Walsh 2021, 12) posits, does not entail the “death of the State.” The provision of social security and welfare as embedded in many social policy documents on housing, for instance and the provision of social grants shows that the ANC-led government is still involved in its Keynesian macroeconomic role through fiscal policy. This, however, does not mean that the private sector which is dominant in the South African white settler economy does not determine to a large extent the direction of the economy. Proponents of ‘white monopoly capital’, such as Chris Malikane and Andile Mngxitama, are partially correct regarding the nature of the white settler political economy of South Africa. The problem with Sizwe’s analysis is that it uses abstract terms such as ‘privatised’ instead of the more slightly historically accurate terms such as ‘The Stellenbosch mafia’ and ‘white monopoly capital’ or what we prefer to call racial capitalism as postulated by Cedric Robinson in *Black Marxism* (2000). This is because given the nature of a white settler, colonial political economy as analysed extensively by Bernard Magubane in *The political economy of Race and Class* (1979), Sizwe’s so-called private actors or private sector comprises of white settlers who connive with Euro-American foreign owners of capital. Neo-leftist historians, such as Martin Legassick and Harold Wolpe, have discussed the relation between capitalism (in

the form of foreign and local capital owned by whites) and the Apartheid regime as early as the 1970s, something which Sizwe fails to discuss in this book. The literature on the nature of the South African political economy and the transition stage is dominated by thinkers such as Patrick Bond in *Elite Transition* (2000) and Sampie Terreblanche in *Lost in Transformation* (2012). Among others, these two books analyse the so-called negotiations which foreground the agency of the ANC, despite global structural constraints in making the economic concessions to fully integrate South Africa into the global system of Neoliberal fundamentalism. The ANC's abandonment of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) project and the embarrassing embrace of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) by Thabo Mbeki captures the 'economic soul' of the ANC comprising of 'civilised natives' who obsess about appeasing their white masters. The subjectivity of the founders and leaders of the ANC as the "New Africans" (Masilela 2013) is to a large extent responsible for the treacherous mess during the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). The economic concessions made by the ANC during the 'secret talks' are now absurdly justified by the myth of the so-called two-stage theory of the National Democratic Revolution, which will never get to the second stage of socialism despite the Marxist rhetoric of the elite leaders of the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance. The ANC's moderate liberal pragmatism captures the "soul of the ANC" (Gumede 2007,25). Sizwe's book fails to provide this extensive analysis of the South African political economy and the role of the ANC as comprising of 'civilised natives' with double consciousness deriving from their Amakholwa heritage since its founding moment in 1912.

The book investigates the afterlife of Apartheid, which was made new by being privatised through the market logic of neoliberalism. Sizwe argued that the dominance of private actors diminished the power of the State. In this sense, Sizwe's fellow Charterist intellectual comrade, Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, argues in the blurb of this book that it "explodes the myth that apartheid is a thing of the past". From an Africanist Tradition's position, this 'explosion' is pointless since apartheid was never the problem, however, a mere regime invented by Dutch settlers who, under the delusion of indigeneity, called themselves the Afrikaners. These delusional architects of the regime of apartheid merely reconfigured white settler colonialism, which commenced with conquest in the form of land dispossession and intellectual warfare (Carruthers 1999) in 1652 in wars of colonisation (Ramose 2006). Only Charterist intellectuals like Sizwe and Tembeka, and their ideological victims see the need to 'explode' the myth of apartheid being a thing of the past. White settler colonialism and white supremacy

in South African politics preceded apartheid and transcended it in the so-called post-apartheid South Africa. Apartheid, as a political regime of Dutch settlers, was a clumsy manifestation of white supremacy. This regime is not *the* problem; white supremacy is *the* main antagonism. White supremacy does not need apartheid. This is why white supremacy has outlived the regime of apartheid under liberal constitutional democracy in the current so-called new South Africa. White liberals (Mafeje 1998) like Hellen Zille and Merle Lipton (2007) know very well that, apartheid as a clumsy political regime was too costly for white supremacy, hence, they had to intervene ideologically in 1994 to secure the afterlife of white supremacy under a liberal constitutional democracy. The idea of white liberals intervening ideologically to reinforce white settler colonialism, entailed the reformation of white supremacy and not only Apartheid. The entire epistemological paradigm of the European conqueror in the form of law, politics, culture, and economics is what Sizwe fails to understand by narrowing the antagonism to a mere regime of Apartheid. Mafeje (1998) provided a critique of black nationalists in the ANC in terms of how they conceded intellectual leadership to white liberals. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) under Sobukwe and the so-called 'Gang of 8' under the Makiwane brothers, rejected white intellectual leadership and were expelled by the ANC leadership under Tambo and Slovo. The fundamental point which Sizwe, who is ideologically aligned with the Congress Tradition, fails to comprehend is that the ANC has a 'liberal soul' and only turned to the so-called arms-struggle when peaceful discussions with white settlers were not eventuating in the extension of democratic rights to the African majority. The ANC's moderate black liberalism accounts for the Nationalist Party's embrace of the ANC as the main discussant during the 'secret talks'. It is in this sense that many of the points advanced by the verligte/liberal members of the Nationalist Party in terms of constitutional guidelines and other economic reforms were readily accepted by the ANC, despite its rhetoric of radicalism ala two-stage theory of revolution and the so-called the Freedom Charter. The ANC, just like Sizwe, has always conflated white supremacy with Apartheid, and this is why it regards itself as an anti-apartheid movement. This is true since there is a distinction between an anti-apartheid movement and a liberation movement. An anti-apartheid movement confines itself to racial discrimination and oppression of blacks under the 'Afrikaner' nationalist governance, while a liberation movement like Poqo is concerned with white settlers and white settler colonialism in its entirety which commenced in 1652 with land dispossession, thus 'Izwe Lethu' as opposed to 1948 and the extension of civil rights to the excluded blacks. Sizwe does not seem to understand this fundamental disparity

between the democratisation paradigm of the ANC and the decolonisation paradigm of Poqo. This is why Sizwe obsesses about a regime of white supremacy, and not white supremacy itself. In promoting the two myths of apartheid as *the* problem and the ANC as a liberation movement, Sizwe indulges in Charterist delusions throughout the book. The book is divided into five sections: Space; Law; Wealth; Technology; and Punishment. The book also offers a relevant discussion of the so-called Apartheid spatial planning. The persistence of the disjuncture between the city and the township reflects the bleak reality of the African majority in ‘post-apartheid South Africa’. Sizwe provides a slightly different criticism of the current debate surrounding the constitution. Contemporary discussions on South African law are dominated by the debate concerning the final constitution. Sizwe does not seem to be blinded by the centralisation of law which comes with legal training. This gives the book a different angle about the nature of law. The section on wealth rehashes the bleak statistics regarding the miserable socio-economic conditions of the African majority. The lack of access to resources due to racial capitalism and the dominance of the market logic as discussed by Sizwe show that ‘the most liberal constitution in the world’ cannot save the African majority from poverty and inequality; if anything, it will continue to reinforce white supremacy and privilege. For someone who obsesses about apartheid, the section on Space is a well-presented summation of the racist production of social space by the apartheid regime. The section on Law is by far the most rewarding portion of this myth-making book. Sizwe’s criticism of the two schools of constitutionalism, namely the triumphalist, which is embraced by his fellow Charterist intellectual Ngcukaitobi (2018 & 2021), and the abolitionist as ‘forged’ by Ndumiso Dladla (2018) and Joel Modiri (2018), was indicative of Sizwe’s commendable yet shallow comprehension of legal philosophy. His critical point about the two schools’ naïve belief in the power of law was quite interesting. Sizwe’s legal and constitutional scepticism and its critique of the legalism of the constitutional abolitionists and triumphalists, is by far the only important aspect about the entire book. Sizwe (Mpfu-Walsh 2021, 68) states it as, “Both constitutional triumphalist and constitutional abolitionist overestimate law’s potential for transformative change. This belief in legal centrality is not uncommon among lawyers”. It was interesting to see a Charterist intellectual mythmaker like Sizwe engage with the Azanian Tradition honestly by citing the scholars and debunking the myth of legalism in these constitutional schools. Given the ideological flipflopping of Tshepo Madlingozi, we cannot classify him under the Azanian Tradition, however, we can credit him as an influence on Sizwe’s first myth of apartheid as *the* problem. As

Sizwe is familiar with the scholarship of Madlingozi, in particular his article on *Social justice in a time of Neo-apartheid constitutionalism*, he cites it. The transition from neo- to new is not a long journey to apartheid mythmaking.

Another interesting section is that of Wealth. This is the section, which foregrounds the privatisation of apartheid. It delves into the rise of market logic within apartheid and how it affected the governance of the ANC in the 'post-apartheid era' in terms of policy and debts. While in the section on Law, Sizwe demonstrated a shallow, yet commendable grasp of legal philosophy and the section on Wealth is a manifestation of his shallow comprehension of the history of economic thought. Sizwe's discussion of neoliberalism is not impressive, it does not show a solid grasp of the literature on the origin of neoliberalism. Merely quoting Von Hayek is not sufficient. Ludwig Von Mises, Mont Pellerin Society, Austrian School of Economics, German historical school, and the Chicago School of Economics and its second-hand dealers in ideas literature should have been given a brief exposition. Regarding second-hand dealers in ideas, Sizwe should have at least discussed books by Diane Stone called *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process* (1996) and *Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony* (1994) by Radhika Desai. These two books provide an extensive analysis and history of the intellectuals behind neoliberalism and the evolution of its hegemony. Sections on Technology and Punishment are important, however, mundane. Ironically, the Conclusion is quite significant. It is here that Charterist mythmaking reaches 'explosive' heights. The Conclusion is certainly Sizwe's 'brightest' moment of Charterism. The conceptualisation of the 1994 Civil Rights project of the ANC as the first republic is, however, a less sophisticated way of expressing the mythmaking of the Congress Tradition. Eddy Maloka (2022), a fellow traveller in the Charterist journey of mythmaking in South African politics, has called for a Second Republic in an awkwardly passionate fashion. Exhibiting the naïve and embarrassing integrationist double-consciousness of the ANC since its founding moment by 'civilised natives' confused by Cape liberal indoctrination, both Sizwe and Maloka refuse to trace (white) South African republicanism to the 1852 moment as a racist invention of the Dutch settlers who called it *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* or the South African Republic. Their dishonest Charterist South African republicanism refuses to acknowledge the two republics of 1852 and 1961, which preceded their myth of the 1994 first republic. Tired of the radical pretensions of his shallow grasp of legal philosophy, Sizwe 'Concludes' by celebrating the Constitution. As a typical Black liberal, Sizwe shamelessly flirts with Karl Klare's (1998) transformative constitutionalism. This

is how Sizwe (Mpofu-Walsh 2021, 163) confesses his proud flirtations “my argument, then, is not that the constitution should be entirely abolished but that it should be substantially transformed. I admit, and indeed celebrate the constitution’s achievements and advances. I believe in a constitutional democracy. And I do not take for granted the constitution’s role in extending the franchise and inaugurating the rule of law”. His Charterist fellow traveller Tembeka, accompanied him in this mythmaking journey of the Congress Tradition by stating that (Ngcukaitobi 2021, 226) “our forefathers were in a struggle so that we could have access to the law... They were fighting for the law. We cannot abandon the law”. Thus, we have displayed both radical and moderate black liberalism in jurisprudence in the form of the Azanian and Congress traditions. Like a typical flipfopping Coloured in South Africa, Sizwe, who absurdly regards English as indigenous and places it on equal footing with IsiXhosa, encapsulated why he is Mpofu-Walsh. This happens when you intellectualise the myth of South Africa belonging to all who live in it, black and white.

In conclusion, Sizwe wrote his first book (Mpofu-Walsh 2017) to debunk 10 myths only to write another one under review to reinvent two myths of Charterism, namely *the* (delusion) problem of apartheid and the ANC as a liberation movement.

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