

## BOOK REVIEWS

*From protest to challenge: A documentary of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1990. Volume 4, Political Profiles 1882-1990*

(Jacana Media 2017, 649 pp. ISBN 978-1-77009-883-1)

**Gail M Gerhart, Teresa Barnes, Antony Bugg-Levine, Thomas Karis & Nimrod Mkele**

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This book is the fourth volume in a series covering African politics in South Africa from 1882 to 1990. It presents the work done by 571 carefully-selected individuals that were critical in forging a way to emancipate African society from colonial and apartheid oppression. The culmination of the profiles of each of these individuals is how they contributed immensely to the making of present-day South Africa.

Although the book clearly identifies its focus to be on African politics, it shows how colonial oppression was experienced by people of different racial profiles such that it was also challenged by individuals from across the broad spectrum of South African society. It covers resistors to the establishment of early colonial systems such as Chief Bambatha, early African nationalists such as John Dube and Sol Plaatje, academics such as Professor DDT Jabavu and Dulcie September, trade unionists such as Clements Kadalie and Lilian Ngoyi, student activists such as Tsietsi Mashinini and Ongkopotse Tiro and representatives of different political formations such as Nelson Mandela, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Fathima Meer, Joe Slovo and Robert Sobukwe.

The characters that are in the book are of various profiles regardless of race, gender, age and political affiliation. While the already well-known historical characters such as Nelson Mandela are in the book, their profiles are not necessarily accorded more space than those of lesser known characters.

It should be stressed that the book does well to put women at the centre stage of shaping South African history, especially by highly recognising their role in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. Examples of the featured women are Winnie Mandela, Ruth First, Helen Joseph, Mamphela Ramphele, Florence Matomela, Charlotte Maxeke and Ruth Mampati. While all these names may be famous, there are other unsung profiles such as Jacqueline

Sedibe who was “the highest ranking woman in Umkhonto weSizwe (MK)” (p. 476) and Elizabeth Mafekeng who is described as an “outstanding trade unionist” (p. 216). Admittedly, there are more male profiles than those of women in the book, yet the authors make it clear how women from different backgrounds and structures played a pivotal role in South African history.

In terms of style, the book presents a strong sense of authenticity. It demonstrates evidence of thorough research on the particular individuals, painting not just convincing, but very fascinating profiles. Each of the characters has all their full names, including their aliases and maiden names (for those who had them). Also provided are dates of birth and death (where applicable), places of birth and careers. None of the profiles is over-elaborated, so no character seems obviously more prominent than others. However, while the profiles are all brief, they are very detailed.

I would recommend this book to readers who are keen on history for both academic and leisure purposes. This means that History teachers can also use this book as a reference as they prepare for their lessons. Furthermore, all enthusiasts of freedom from all around the world may find this book to be a very rich resource.

*The Black Consciousness reader*

**(Jacana Media, 2017, 354 pp. ISBN 978-1-4314-2578-5)**

**B Ndaba, T Owen, M Panyane, R Serumula and J Smith**

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The book is about the history of blackness and what it means to be black. It is a philosophical account about Black Consciousness (BC) which draws the narratives from interviews, opinions of authors and secondary data. The book recognises Steve Biko as significant within the BC movement history but also identifies other personalities such as Nkosi Albert Luthuli, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, Ongkhopotse Tiro, Vuyelwa Mashalaba, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Assata Shakur, Neville Alexander, Thomas Sankara, Walter Rodney, Lefifi Tladi, and Ready D who played an important role in the history of the philosophy. Themes that come into play in explaining the philosophy are politics, land, women, power, art, music and religion. The

book is important in this dispensation in education as we grapple with the topical issue of decolonisation of the curriculum as it posits what it means to be black which is the cornerstone of what decolonisation has to focus on – a redefinition of the entire outlook of blacks from their own context and not from a western lens.

But the drawback of the book is that it does not do justice in drawing black consciousness from the perspective of African philosophy. In fact, nothing in the book is mentioned on African philosophy as the ideal underpinning BC. The philosophy of Ubuntu (what it means to be human = love, respect, dignity) are missing in the entire book. Hence, this is clear when the book concludes with the chapter on land in the sense that nothing is discussed on what land means to black people. That is, for Africans, the concept of land is not only based on a western perspective of just property over which one has title deeds, but it is religion, history, and affirms one's humanness. Thus, providing the indigenous lens would have made the book perhaps a much more interesting BC reader.

The chapters from 1 to 7 explain how blackness is constructed using religion, art, music, politics, writing, dreams and cohesion of those who developed it throughout history. But the essence of the book is that BC is black pride and not emulation of whiteness. The key concepts defining BC in the book are emancipation, restoring black culture, freedom from white liberalism and anti-black racism, the battle against neo-liberalism, Azania as a name for South Africa and the commandments of BC. The chapter focuses on diverse themes to explain the pride embedded in BC and the authors grapple with the issue at hand, which questions if black people are truly free in the new dispensation of democratic South Africa? The book traces the history of BC from Steve Biko in 1946 when he was born to 2009 when AZAPO earned a seat in the post-apartheid National Assembly. Similarly, throughout these aforementioned years, authors trace significant people who developed the philosophy on BC and how it was used throughout the history of BC. The reader shows how Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe in 1958 led a breakaway from the African National Congress to form the Pan Africanist Movement in 1959 because of his BC standpoint, which opposed the liberal, multiracial ideological slant of the Freedom Charter. It also covers the applications of BC through the march against passes in Sharpeville in 1960, and the Rivonia trial in 1964 where people like Nelson Mandela used BC in court to argue their case are significant. In 1969 the South African Students Organization

constitution formed on BC philosophy with Biko as a leader and strikes like the Soweto Uprising in 1976 occurred. The BC philosophy also led to the death of many people who believed and spread it like Onkgopotse Abram Tiro in 1974 after a speech that focused on BC ideals at Turfloop graduation in 1973. Biko followed in 1977. The authors also show how, due to BC movement parties like the Azanian People's Organisation in 1978, Azanian Students Organization in 1979, the London Based BC Movement in 1980, were formed. BC is seen by the authors as a state of mind not an ideology, hence they argue that, until today there are still fights by adherents of the philosophy like the PAC and AZAPO, especially on issues like land that the new constitution does not address from a BC perspective.

In Chapter 1, Biko is defined as the hero of the BC but other people who have played major roles in the establishment of the BC movement such as Hendrick Musi, Barney Pitso, and Nengwekhulu are also mentioned. The chapter also describes the impact of the American Black Panthers who fought for civil rights in the United States and political activism in other countries as was the case with student protests in Sweden, Brazil, Mexico, Poland Italy and Yugoslavia in moulding Biko's views about BC. Also given credit is the Jamaican community which in October 1968 fought against their government's banning of Black Power, thus inciting leaders like Biko to form a similarly radical and black issues-driven student organisation. The role of migrant workers who were politicised in order to spread the BC philosophy is also identified.

In Chapter 2, the author depicts the roots of BC in terms of who sowed it and how the philosophy blossomed. It is argued in the chapter that global influence ensured the success and flowering of the movement. People like Malcolm X and the Black Panther socialist students, socialist workers in France, Spain, Mexico and Yugoslavia were militant and virtually shut down their countries fighting for equal rights. Also noted is how, in Africa, from Cape to Cairo, indigenous people were fighting for decolonisation in their countries. Philosophers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Carlos Cooks, Julius Nyerere, Phumla Gqola, Assata Shakur are mentioned among others as key in the prospering BC movement. Similarly, Robert Sobukwe, Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, and Samora Machel to mention but a few are seen as key influencers of the movement as their beliefs and writings focused on an anti-colonialist agenda. Some of the philosophies that are seen to be fundamental in BC are those that affirm the liberation from oppression of black people like

the Africana existentialism, Black feminist existential philosophy, Paulo Freire and Negritude.

Chapter 3 reveals how Christian leaders spread the BC movement and that the Bible offered activism for Christians to play a role in fighting against injustices. Christians are applauded for their contribution to the birth of the movement interracially – as is illustrated of Afrikaner Beyers Naude and Lutheran Manas Buthelezi, who used God as their cover to support and fund the liberation movement.

In Chapter 4, the Soweto massacre is depicted as being the most horrendous event in the history of South Africa in terms of the massacre of school children. The Soweto uprising is noted as the event that brought a turning point because it was led by brave teenagers who were influenced by the BC elders and teachers. Youth politics under students' organisations like the South African Student Movement, and South African Student Organization, are depicted as having played a major role in the eradication of apartheid. Diverse student leaders' history is thus depicted like that of Tsietsi Mashini, Kgaotso Seatlholo, and Seth Mazibuko among others.

Chapter 5 focuses on the significance of art, acknowledging writers, poets, painters, musicians, photographers and filmmakers within BC. The authors show us the history of some of the arts that was sympathetic to and helped in spreading BC.

In Chapter 6, the role of women in BC is depicted through the actions of Mamphela Ramphele, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and other unsung heroines like, Manku Noruka, Zulaikha Pate, Sibongile Mkhabela among others. The stories of these heroines are outlined in the chapter to explain the significant role they played in promoting BC. The author argues that, as in other organisations, the role of women in BC has been undermined, but through interviews and communication with BC students a list of heroines of the movement has been drawn.

The book concludes with Chapter 7, which is on land and how important it is in the BC movement. Land is depicted as the key issue of struggle for the current BC in the sense that land segregation is informed by class. Land is also seen by the author as key for BC because it is at the heart of black people as it is about the loss of their birthright. The chapter narrates the history behind landlessness of blacks by referring to different Acts like the Native Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950. It then moves to

discuss the Democratic government constitution of 1994 through Section 26 on Housing where it is stated that all South Africans must be given shelter and are protected from illegal evictions. The Act supports land restoration and the book uses different views of BC people like Julius Malema, Abahlali baseMjondolo, Andile Mngcithama and the Black First Land First Movement to support this.

The book is an excellent reader for teachers and students who want to understand the history behind blackness and black consciousness. It conceptualises black consciousness very well and in simple terms which can be understood by students. In this dispensation of decolonisation of education the book can assist in the understanding of who a black person is and teach students about nation-building through the eyes of black people. The authors used interviews to narrate stories about BC to give context to the BC movement. Examples of different historical figures both famous and not so famous are used in the book to explain the importance of the movement. The book's drawback lies on some western lens of conceptualising BC which could be strengthened by inserting a black lens of looking at BC. For example, the background of Steve Biko was helpful in understanding BC yet his indigenous Xhosa roots, how he was raised and the values he followed are crucial ways of understanding him better. Even Chapter 3 which focuses on Christianity and BC would have been more interesting if it gave more space to diverse religions including African religion. Such weaknesses illustrate how writing through a western lens can overshadow narratives Africanist writers try to explain.

*Exploring decolonising themes in SA Sport History: Issues and challenges*

**(African Sun Media, 2018, 144 pp. ISBN 978-1-928357-94-0, e-ISBN: 9781928357957)**

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The notion of decolonisation has always been acknowledged – many works on decolonisation have been published, but not much has been written on the decolonisation of sport from both an international and South African perspective. Historically, the concept of decolonisation focuses on political

independence from colonisers. The legacy of colonialism and the impact of colonial projects cannot be ignored. As I read *Exploring decolonising articles in SA Sport History: Issues and challenges*, I was confronted by the notions of racial inferiority and superiority in sport as a result of colonial subjugation and exploitation, as well as the impact of colonial apartheid on black inferiority and white superiority. The book reminded me of how colonialism, especially within the apartheid context, affected the progress of black people in sport. This book resonates with the importance of history in trying to redress the inequalities of the past in sport, and to rediscover our own history, culture and identity.

The title of the book alone provides the reader with an idea of its content, which evoked my curiosity. It articulates the effects of post-colonial history in sport and brings together a most valuable body of knowledge which is necessary to rewrite the history of sport in South Africa and introduce new sport narratives. In the post-apartheid era in sport, this book seems very appropriate. The book broadens the debate on the decolonisation of sport in a South African context and provides a contextual theoretical framework so as to understand South African history in sport.

The introduction by Prof Andre Odendaal, *Reflections on writing a post-colonial history of a colonial game* (p. 1), highlights how black players contributed to the game of cricket in nineteenth century South Africa. He further reflects on how colonial and apartheid ideologies have been used as an excuse to discriminate against black people.

The chapter on *Decolonising sport: some thoughts* by Prof Lesley Le Grange (p. 15) deliberates more on the meaning of decolonisation and the implication of decolonisation in sport. Le Grange argues that recognition should be given to indigenous sports because of the connection between indigenous sports and South African cultural traditions. The narratives in this book present opportunities to deconstruct the notion of white dominance in the history of sport, as well as reconstruct the history of sport in South Africa.

Dr Hendrik Synders (p. 23) puts forward a well-considered and relevant argument on the historical significance of sport fans in South African sport history. The story of Gasant Ederoos Behardien reveals different forms of racial stereotyping.

The subsequent chapters in this book narrate the historical accounts of

black people in sport, the exclusion of women in the history of sport and contestation, which Muslim women encountered as they navigated their way in the public space of sport. Venter (p. 55) presents the complexities which existed within non-racial football during the late 1970s. This chapter illustrates the complex process of integration between football structures and constant tension amongst the professional football clubs and administrators.

Dewald Steyn (p. 141) presents his experiences with black athletes, providing insight around remarkable achievements and the history of black athletes as far back as 1863. In doing so, he dispels the myth that black athletes had no significant contribution in sport. The conclusion by Robin April (p. 147) illustrates the impact and legacy of apartheid; people had limited options of what they could become in life and could not fulfil their hopes in the process.

The historical narratives in this book are well articulated and based on accurate relevant research in South African sport history – giving voice to personal experiences. *Exploring decolonising themes in SA Sport History: Issues and Challenges* offers a deeper historical sport understanding and insight on hidden South African sport history. Most of the chapters reflect on Western Cape narratives, however the sport historical narratives in this book reflect the effects of colonisation in South Africa. Ultimately, this book has the potential to contribute towards the decolonisation discourse in South African sport. Dr Francois Cleophas and the contributing authors have foregrounded the concept of decolonisation in sport. The book is engaging and very informative, definitely worth reading.