

## Introduction: Labour, insecurity and violence in South Africa

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## *Introduction: Labour, Insecurity and Violence in South Africa*

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&

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The police killing of scores of striking mineworkers at the Marikana Mines in 2012 triggered, as Beresford puts it, 'a period of national introspection' in South Africa.<sup>1</sup> This gave new urgency to persistent questions about state violence and worker repression – and more broadly about widening inequality (the highest in the world<sup>2</sup>) *within* the workforce, increasing levels of insecurity and deepening disaffection among South Africa's disenfranchised workers. The violence at Marikana was explicit and dramatic. But in the aftermath, as protest spread beyond platinum to other mines and other industries across the country, the more everyday forms of overt and structural violence that define conditions of work and life for South African workers came into view. Marikana became a watchword for a new wave of disaffection, defiance, and protest by South Africa's working and jobless poor, still waiting for the promise of economic liberation and social mobility to be realized.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, while Marikana was a catalyst for this special issue, it aims to go beyond the causes and outcomes of the violence at Marikana, to address those broader questions about the interrelation of labour, insecurity and violence in South Africa today. Many of these

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<sup>1</sup> A. Beresford, *South Africa's Political Crisis: Unfinished Liberation and Fractured Class Struggles* (Houndsmill, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> W. Gumede, 'Marikana: A Crisis of Legitimacy in the Institutions that Form the Foundations of South Africa's 1994 Post-Apartheid Political Settlement', *Social Dynamics*, 41, 2 (2015), pp. 327-343.

<sup>3</sup> As Peter Alexander notes (this issue), in diverse confrontations between disenfranchised workers and forces that seek to contain them – from the University of Johannesburg where security guards attacked striking cleaners, to the taxi ranks of Bekkersdal - these sites of struggle have taken the moniker of Marikana.

struggles are not unique to South Africa, even if the violence, inequality and insecurity are especially extreme. Yet the centrality of violence to South Africa's labour arrangements – both underpinning and feeding off them – is a striking feature of the country's history.<sup>4</sup> The 'precarious liberation'<sup>5</sup> of post-apartheid South Africa has produced its own vulnerabilities and frustrations, giving way to a new era of protest and claim-making. At the same time, Marikana focuses attention not only on the forms of violence and insecurity that are contested, but on those that are left unchallenged.

Building on a stream of panels organised for ASAUk 2014, the collection explores the broader canvas of labour insecurity, economic disenfranchisement, coercion, and the everyday enforcement of working conditions in South Africa. Older legacies of violent incorporation into workforces are joined by new forms of precariousness and vulnerability, produced by shifts in employment regimes and by increasing joblessness. The divide between job and no job, between the formal workforce and those without formal employment, often forestalls the possibilities for broader solidarities. At the same time, manifold relationships within particular workforces bridge divides, both producing and mediating structural violence – between permanent and temporary workers; those formally employed and those with informal livelihoods; those enforcing labour conditions and those subject to regulation. Yet, in some cases, the maintenance of hierarchies and loyalties continues to rely on explicit forms of coercion that are familiar from the past.

Featuring two keynote pieces on Marikana by Dunbar Moodie and Peter Alexander, this issue examines the violence of South Africa's labour systems at different scales – among workers, between workers and management, and at a wider, structural level. Violence, in its

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<sup>4</sup> On South Africa's exceptionally violent history within the region, and its relationship to urban labour dynamics, see G. Kynoch, 'Urban Violence in Colonial Africa: A Case for South African Exceptionalism', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 629-645.

<sup>5</sup> F. Barchiesi, *Precairous Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2011).

different forms, continues to define the working and domestic lives of millions of poor South Africans. The collection juxtaposes high-profile miners' struggles with longer-term patterns of harm on mines and elsewhere; with the remote and secluded forms of violence that characterise South African agriculture; with contemporary debt and dependency in and beyond work; with the prejudice and systematic marginalisation experienced by non-South African migrants; and with wider-lens analyses of labour history and politics. Together, the articles explore the nexus of labour, violence and insecurity in the round.

In this introduction we map the three central themes that drive the collection – labour, insecurity and violence – and their interrelation. We consider their significance as central but related tropes in understanding social and economic relations in South Africa, today and in the past. The discussion that follows falls into two halves. First, we explore the violence of labour regimes in South Africa from a broadly historical perspective. Attention to the specificities of labour and violence in South Africa illuminates long-term patterns of coercive incorporation for non-white workers, not least in the iconic setting of the labour compound. Incorporation into workforces occurred against a backdrop of extraordinarily fragile livelihoods.

While legacies of apartheid's labour landscape persist, the last two decades have seen a waning of the far-reaching control and violent discipline that previously characterised workplaces. As we discuss in the second half of the introduction, South Africa's labour market has come to look more like those of emerging market economies around the world, with the structural violence of extreme inequality looming largest. Existing labour regimes have to be renegotiated, while an increasing number of people are excluded from waged life altogether. Appreciating this, and tracking the orientations of recent scholarly research, means taking a more broadly comparative frame of analysis. Finally, we outline the individual articles, highlighting how each speaks to the themes that animate this special issue.

## **The Violence of Labour: coercive incorporation and its limits**

The events at Marikana underline the complex intertwining of labour dynamics with histories of violence and insecurity. The forms of violence playing out at Marikana were multiple, as recent analyses have demonstrated.<sup>6</sup> Peter Alexander's keynote in this issue highlights how the massacre itself was the result of the problematic use of lethal force by the state, in collaboration with capital. Dunbar Moodie's keynote, on the other hand, excavates a different side to recent Marikana history. He traces the role of Xhosa-speaking networks, rooted in a rural-based migrant culture. These networks coercively organised life in the workforce and the surrounding informal settlements – in organising the strike and opposing the regnant National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Others again have examined the enormous structural violence faced by mineworkers, including mounting debt, increasing precariousness, and the exclusionary processes of Corporate Social Responsibility that are targeted at ever fewer workers.<sup>7</sup>

This microcosm offers a helpful way into the longer relationship between South African labour regimes and the country's history of violence. Labour arrangements have themselves been extraordinarily coercive – from the tight control of workers in residential compounds, to the *sjamboks*<sup>8</sup> and guns of workplace policing, to quiet kicks in mine stopes or farm plantations, to the disciplining of domestic workers in the privacy of homes. They have also produced violent and racialised forms of masculinity,<sup>9</sup> whose effects have ramified well beyond the labour setting – not least in interaction with the mass incarceration of black men

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<sup>6</sup> See K. Breckenridge, 'Marikana and the Limits of Biopolitics: Themes in the Recent Scholarship of South African Mining', *Africa*, 84, 1 (2014), pp. 151-161

<sup>7</sup> D. Rajak, *In Good Company. An Anatomy of Corporate Social Responsibility* (Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Short whips.

<sup>9</sup> W. Beinart, 'Introduction: Political and Collective Violence in Southern African Historiography', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3 (1992), pp. 455-486; K. Breckenridge, 'The Allure of Violence: Men, Race and Masculinity on the South African Goldmines, 1900–1950', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4 (1998), pp. 669-693.

for 'bureaucratic offences' (especially pass law infractions).<sup>10</sup> In South Africa, labour conflict and tensions in work hierarchies have also been – and remain – disproportionately likely to lead to physical violence.<sup>11</sup> And work settings have reflected South Africa's broader history of structural and symbolic violence: highly unequal, racialised orders have been strikingly durable, while worker precariousness and vulnerability – notorious under apartheid – has deepened in unexpected ways.<sup>12</sup>

With such a brutal labour history, it is perhaps unsurprising that Frantz Fanon's analysis of colonial society recurs in the scholarship. For Fanon, racialised violence is central to the system. It is the means for oppressing and debasing the (non-white) colonised, yet the raw coercion of (white) settler societies – their undisguised viciousness – renders violence the vehicle both of change and of the reassertion of humanity.<sup>13</sup> Both dehumanising and affirming, therefore, violence has had a particular Fanonian allure, as Breckenridge argues of the gold mines in the first half of the twentieth century. Here, violent masculinities drew on broader gendered norms from black and white workers' rural origins. But the mines were themselves crucibles in which work hierarchy was expressed through the capacity for physical harm. Coercive relations were all-encompassing. In a context that rendered white miners literally 'unbeatable', violence nevertheless offered black workers avenues for self-respect, whether through physical prowess or the refusal to retaliate. And it produced forms of recognition between white and black workers, and even a degree of intimacy.

Overt violence has thus been socially productive as well as destructive. This is true not only between white workers and managers and black workers, but also among the latter. Historically, the prevalence of violence within black workforces was built on social and

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<sup>10</sup> Kynoch, 'Urban violence in colonial Africa'.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. K. von Holdt, 'Institutionalisation, Strike Violence and Local Moral Orders', *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 72/73 (2010), pp. 127-151.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Bolt, this issue.

<sup>13</sup> F. Fanon, 'Concerning violence', in *The Wretched of the Earth* (London, Penguin, 1967).

spatial dislocation in a migrant labour system. But it was about far more than distance from the moral regulation that pertained in rural homes. Mine workforces, in any case, had their *imiteto* – their own codes of behaviour.<sup>14</sup> Violence also expressed cultural meanings that have persisted over time, offering ways for black men to define themselves under circumstances with few possibilities.<sup>15</sup>

Such violence had important organising effects. It was often the result of competition among workers for opportunities, within the parameters set by white management.<sup>16</sup> The famous 'faction fights' of the apartheid era were the result of such struggles, in settings where ethnicity was given a particular reality through management strategies to divide workers, and through migrant associations.<sup>17</sup> Ethnically specific migrant associations – later part of the Marikana story – were cast in traditionalist idioms that evoked earlier military regiments. Conflict between them not only placed new recruits in harm's way, but also offered incorporation into the world of the labour compound.<sup>18</sup>

This institutionalisation of violence gained new meanings during apartheid's demise. Focusing on one gold mine in the 1990s, Donham dissects what appeared to be ethnically motivated violence, but in fact revolved around divergent constructions of citizenship – albeit among workers mobilising ethnically defined, traditionalist symbols. Groupings of workers refracted South African politics and conceptions of the future: the NUM, aligned with the ANC's anti-apartheid struggle, versus the Inkatha Freedom Party, supported by mine management as less oppositional, and striving for a future in which Zulus were not simply

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<sup>14</sup> T.D. Moodie with V. Ndatshe, *Going For Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Beinart, 'Introduction'.

<sup>16</sup> T.D. Moodie, 'Ethnic Violence on South African Gold Mines', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3 (1992), pp. 584-613.

<sup>17</sup> J.K. McNamara, 'Black Worker Conflicts on South African Gold Mines: 1973-1982' (PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Beinart, 'Introduction'.

subsumed in broader national belonging.<sup>19</sup> While the *amabutho* in Donham's account underpinned NUM support, similar networks and forms of coercion reappeared in a challenge to the NUM at Marikana.

Whether between black workers, or between them and their white counterparts, the mines represent the quintessentially South African workplace in their everyday brutality, but also the intimacy that came with it.<sup>20</sup> Violence set the terms for respect, self-respect, and defining roles in these total institutions. It organised meanings and hierarchies. The intimacy and organising effects of violence have equally been in evidence on South Africa's farms. In his focus on early-twentieth century sharecropping, Van Onselen shows that violence and protective paternalism were two sides of the same coin.<sup>21</sup> Black patriarchs were expected to secure labour, coercively if necessary, on behalf of their white landowners. White patriarchs exercised their own control by physical means. In each case, the idiom was one of family discipline. None of this ameliorated workers' experiences. It is telling that comparative scholarship on South Africa and the United States takes the lynching culture of the American South as the starting point for considering the extra-legal maintenance of a racialised order in the countryside.<sup>22</sup> What is striking in South Africa is that so much was hidden away on farmers' estates. The 'little republics', like the total institutions of the mines, incorporated people on violent terms into relatively closed worlds.

Marikana underlined the continued centrality of layers of violence on mines. But it also illuminated the continuing, complex relationships between paternalism and coercion, as Rajak explores in this issue. Meanwhile, as Bolt shows, the ambiguous relationship between physical harm and intimate workplace relations on farms has transformed while nevertheless

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<sup>19</sup> D. Donham, *Violence in a Time of Liberation: Murder and Ethnicity at a South African Gold Mine*, 1994 (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Breckenridge, 'The Allure of Violence'.

<sup>21</sup> C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinning of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5, 2 (1992), pp. 127-160.

<sup>22</sup> See Bolt this issue.



persisting. In both cases, violence is key to the terms of inclusion – whether in formal labour hierarchies or in alternative modes of association in the compounds.

But this is only a partial picture. While these worlds of work have been somewhat enclaved, enforcement always also relied on forces beyond the immediate labour setting. This, of course, was foregrounded at Marikana, and Peter Alexander's keynote in this special issue highlights precisely the collaboration between the mine and the state in controlling workers through physical – and lethal – coercion. The brutality with which official order has been upheld, on and off the mines, has a long history. And, while other forms of urban work have not relied on the same degree of workforce seclusion as on the mines, the tight control of township populations through state-sponsored violence was never separable from the precarious and vulnerable terms under which employees showed up to work.<sup>23</sup> Nor were labour arrangements separable from the extraordinary bureaucratisation of non-white South Africans' lives during apartheid.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Barchiesi argues in this issue, black workers' precariousness has been underpinned by their construction as redeemable only through labour, since at least the early twentieth century. Moreover, well before the late-apartheid state of emergency, the few occasions when factory workers managed to organise for better pay produced extraordinary scenes of police violence – characterised in one 1950s case by 'batons [on] bare heads'.<sup>25</sup>

In the countryside, the lack of a lynching culture was in fact the result of white people's trust in the state to uphold a racial order.<sup>26</sup> In any case, employment-related violence was never simply hidden away on farms. In the Transvaal of the first half of the twentieth

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<sup>23</sup> See S. Marks and N. Andersson, 'The Epidemiology and Culture of Violence', in N. Chabani Manganyi and A. du Toit (eds.), *Political Violence and the Struggle in South Africa* (London, MacMillan, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. I. Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> P.L. Bonner and R. Lambert, 'Batons and Bare Heads: The Strike at Amato Textile, February 1958', paper presented at the African Studies seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 October 1983.

<sup>26</sup> I. Evans, *Cultures of Violence: Lynching and Racial Killing in South Africa and the American South* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007).

century, illegal labour touts and state officials both recruited at gunpoint, the former operating near the northern border, the latter using migrants' lack of legal documentation to supply Eastern Transvaal farms with prison labour.<sup>27</sup> Earlier still, as Gavin Williams reminds us in his article in this issue, the shift from slavery to free labour in the Cape was underpinned by vagrancy laws that – like in the American South<sup>28</sup> – cast imprisonment as the alternative to inequitable terms of employment. The dependence and vulnerability of farm dwellers in the Cape were guaranteed by post-slavery Master and Servant Acts and the creation of a large landless rural proletariat,<sup>29</sup> as well as through the payment of wages in wine rations that Williams discusses. At the other end of South Africa, in parts of the northern Transvaal, war and the forcible recruitment of child 'apprentices' had their own dislocating effects.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, the most cloistered labour conditions of all – those of domestic workers – historically relied on a specific legal framework. As Jacklyn Cock describes, the vulnerability, everyday humiliation and extreme exploitation experienced by black women working in white homes were underpinned by exclusion from standard labour law.<sup>31</sup> In a manner comparable to farm workers, they were categorised as within the private realm of the household (and therefore also long covered by Master and Servant legislation). This, in fact,

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<sup>27</sup> R. First, 'Bethal Case-Book', *Africa South* (April-June 1958), pp. 14-25; H. Bradford, 'Getting Away With Murder: "Mealie Kings", the State and Foreigners in the Eastern Transvaal, c.1918-1950', in P. Bonner, P. Delius & D. Posel (eds.), *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962* (Braamfontein, Ravan Press, 1993), p. 115; M.J. Murray, 'Blackbirding at "Crooks' Corner": Illicit Labour Recruitment in the Northeastern Transvaal 1910-1940', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, 3 (1995), pp. 373-97.

<sup>28</sup> D.A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (London, Doubleday, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> L. Waldman, 'Monkey in a Spiderweb: The Dynamics of Farmer Control and Paternalism', *African Studies*, 55, 1 (1996), pp. 63-86; J. Ewert and J. Hamman, 'Why Paternalism Survives: Globalisation, Democratisation and Labour on South African Wine Farms', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 39, 2 (1999), pp. 202-221.

<sup>30</sup> P. Delius and S. Trapido, 'Inboekselings and Oorlams: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8, 2 (1982), pp. 214-242.

<sup>31</sup> J. Cock, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation*, revised edition (London, Women's Press, 1989).

mirrors agricultural and domestic employment elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> But what gave domestic work in South Africa a particular character was the acute dependence on employers that followed from the pass laws, the far-reaching bureaucratisation of everyday life, and the possibility of being 'endorsed out' of cities.<sup>33</sup>

Cultures of violence in turn had far-reaching social effects. Indeed, Kynoch argues that South Africa's exceptionalism was historically not simply a matter of the labour question, as Mamdani famously asserted. Equally exceptional in comparison to other African countries were extraordinary levels of urban violence. This was a story with labour at its heart. Mines were 'incubator[s] for violence', reinforced by a complex that included the prison system – large numbers of men circulated through this for statutory offences – as well as humiliation and co-optation by a powerful state.<sup>34</sup> The institutionalisation of violence and ethnicity through gangs was as much a feature of township life as it was of the mines. In both cases, such gangs organised lives and resources in a context of daily insecurity and material deprivation.

After all, if violence requires understanding as something internal to workforce dynamics – as part of the terms of inclusion – precariousness and the possibility of exclusion are equally important. The migrant labour system left workers 'permanently temporary', in an especially stark regional version of a wider pattern.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, women's material and

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<sup>32</sup> See e.g. S.M. Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013); E. Frantz, 'Of Maids and Madams: Sri Lankan Domestic Workers and their Employers in Jordan', *Critical Asian Studies*, 40, 4 (2008), pp. 609-638.

<sup>33</sup> Cock, *Maids and Madams*, pp. 4-6. See also B. Bozzoli with M. Nkotswe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (London, James Currey, 1991).

<sup>34</sup> Kynoch, 'Urban Violence', p. 644.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g., with increasing distance from South Africa, H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid', *Economy and Society* 1, 4 (1972), pp. 425-456; C. Meillasoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Economy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981); J. Breman, 'The Great Transformation in the Setting of Asia', Address delivered at the 57th Anniversary of the International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, 29 October 2009.

spatial dependence on men – especially in urban hostels – left them intensely vulnerable.<sup>36</sup>

Ongoing exposure to harm rendered gangs useful forms of incorporation for the young, and held in place arrangements characterised by extreme inequality, in terms of race and gender.<sup>37</sup>

And violent workplace arrangements set the terms of violent performances of masculinity whose effects were felt as far away as rural homes.<sup>38</sup>

Violence, overt and structural, was an effect both of state and capitalist arrangements, and of a tenuous foothold in those arrangements – it resulted from the violence of incorporation, and the violence produced at its limits. Today, the significance of viewing South Africa through the lens of labour, insecurity and violence has shifted somewhat. Workplaces have not disappeared, despite a marked shift in scholarly interests. But the direct control of workers by management, which shaped apartheid-era incorporation into labour arrangements, has receded. On the mines, management withdrew from compounds, leaving authority to migrant associations.<sup>39</sup> Farmers have left paternalism to their senior workers while adopting a corporate style to avoid unwelcome associations with the past.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, far more people are excluded from workplaces altogether, while nevertheless encountering forms of insecurity that are shaped by both abjection and interaction with institutions of state and capital. In the latter case, such interactions are now as often with financial service providers as with employers, with consequences explored by

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<sup>36</sup> M. Ramphela, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1993); G.S. Elder, *Hostels, Sexuality, and the Apartheid Legacy: Malevolent Geographies* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Marks and Andersson, 'Epidemiology'.

<sup>38</sup> C. Campbell, "'Going Underground and Going After Women": Masculinity and HIV Transmission amongst Black Workers on the Gold Mines', in R. Morrell (ed.), *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (London, Zed Books, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Donham, *Violence in a Time of Liberation*, p. 168.

<sup>40</sup> M. Bolt, 'Accidental Neoliberalism and the Performance of Management: Hierarchies in Export Agriculture on the Zimbabwean-South African Border', *Journal of Development Studies*, 52, 4 (2016), pp. 561-575.

Vally in this issue.<sup>41</sup> The decline of racial Fordism<sup>42</sup> has meant the shift to a post-apartheid economy in which discourses of empowerment and entrepreneurialism co-exist with mass-unemployment and attempts to reframe the informal economy as opportunity. While South Africa's history of labour and violence is distinctive, recent changes closely mirror those of other settings around the world. The forms of coercive incorporation that distinguished labour under apartheid are inflected by the forms of adverse incorporation characteristic of labouring under neoliberal globalisation. Our focus consequently broadens in the next section, situating this shift within a broader comparative literature. Yet, as we go on to show, the violence produced through incorporation and the violence produced at the limits of incorporation remain key to understanding labour and insecurity in South Africa.

### **The violence of insecurity: 'between job and no job'<sup>43</sup>**

A sense of the 'precarious present' permeates much of current writing on neoliberalism in the Global South, held up as a signifier of a new subjectivity and class position.<sup>44</sup> But while the notion of precariousness has become a buzzword in literature on poverty and marginality, it has lost some of its historical and cultural specificity. The concept of insecurity has received less consideration, confined largely to the nature of employment contracts. This special issue takes its lead from South Africa's labour history, retaining a breadth of approach to insecurity that analyses life conditions and how they are experienced – by those with and without a job. It also underlines the role of insecurity in producing structural violence – the conditions that render some people more vulnerable to harm than others.<sup>45</sup> Insecurity extends beyond the

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<sup>41</sup> See also D. James, *Money from Nothing: Indebtedness and Aspiration in South Africa* (Palo Alto, Stanford University Press, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> G. Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of Power in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> F. Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (Newhaven, Yale University Press, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> G. Standing, *The Precariat: the New Dangerous Class* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> P. Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004); Marks and Andersson, 'The Epidemiology and Culture of Violence'.

material and political economic dimensions of labour markets, to the psychological, emotional and social vulnerability – desperation, despair, and disenfranchisement – that this engenders. It requires understanding as a defining feature of life in and beyond work,<sup>46</sup> as a feature of livelihoods and of still broader vulnerability, and as a personal and collective condition. It is also not generic or simply global, but simultaneously rooted in particular historical trajectories and colonial legacies, and engendered by specific national and local forces. What require analytical attention are political struggles, government policies, and corporate and political action (or inaction), rather than just impersonal forces devoid of human agency (whether crashing commodity markets, the march of capital, or toxic waste dumps). And, crucially, new forms of insecurity continue to intersect with South Africa's distinct history of labour and violence.

As discussed above, insecurity in South Africa has historically been reinforced through a political economy relying on a reserve army of labour. But the meaning of such a reserve has changed with the contraction in jobs since the 1970s. While more than seven million people joined South Africa's formal workforce in the two decades following the end of apartheid, the unemployment rate rose still faster. A quarter of South Africa's working age population is unemployed, according to SA Statistics. Most analysts agree on a less conservative definition, according to which unemployment more than doubled in the same time period from 3.7 to 8.3 million, or from 31.5 to 36%.<sup>47</sup> Young people, particularly those without skills, have been hit the hardest (with the rate of youth unemployment double the national average<sup>48</sup>). For millions of young South Africans, unemployment is not a temporary situation, but a chronic one. *The National Development Plan: Vision 2030* grimly forecasts:

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<sup>46</sup> A. Sanchez, 'Relative Precarity: Decline, Hope and the Politics of Work', Unpublished manuscript, n.d., p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> See J. Herbst and G. Mills, *How South Africa Works and Must do Better* (London, Hurst, 2016), pp. 8-9.

<sup>48</sup> 'South Africa Unemployment is Worse Now than at the End of Apartheid', *Business Tech*, August 17 2015, available at <http://businesstech.co.za/news/government/95983/south-africa-unemployment-is-worse-now-than-at-the-end-of-apartheid/>, retrieved 7 June 2016.

'if youths fail to get a job by 24, they are unlikely ever to get formal employment'. It cites this as the 'single greatest threat' to social, political and economic security.<sup>49</sup> The areas of job creation are increasingly skills-intensive, leaving a dearth of employment for semi- and unskilled workers, as the ratio of skilled to unskilled labour grew by 10% between 2000 and 2014.<sup>50</sup> One resounding question we are left with then, as Makhulu asks, is how to conceive of human security in the context of a 'wageless life'.<sup>51</sup>

However, recent scholarship on both labour and joblessness warns against viewing employment as the simple counterpoint to insecurity.<sup>52</sup> The stark divide between 'job and no job', long entrenched at the heart of both policy and scholarship, has broken down. This is the result of pervasive precariousness, which has become a defining feature of life for those with work as well as those without. Mass job losses in the wake of economic liberalization ushered in by GEAR<sup>53</sup> have been accompanied by casualisation and flexibilisation of employment across virtually all industries. For example, Barchiesi puts the figure at 10% of manufacturing jobs lost between 1996 and 2000.<sup>54</sup>

Matters are more complicated still. As we have discussed, work under apartheid's racial Fordism never guaranteed security for black South Africans under apartheid, even before the advent of liberalization.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, within the liberalized economy, this has been exacerbated. Work now seems not even to hold out the possibility of an antidote to

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<sup>49</sup> National Planning Commission, cited in Herbst and Mills, *How South Africa Works and Must do Better*, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Business Tech*, 'South Africa Unemployment'.

<sup>51</sup> A-M Makhulu, 'Introduction', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, 1 (2016), p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> See A-M. Makhulu, 'A Brief History of the Social Wage: Welfare Before and After Racial Fordism', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, 1 (2016), pp. 113-125; D. James and D. Rajak, 'Credit Apartheid, Migrants, Mines and Money', *African Studies* 73, 3 (2014), pp. 455-476; C. Chinguno, 'Marikana: Fragmentation, Precariousness, Strike Violence and Solidarity', *Review of African Political Economy* 40, 138 (2013), pp. 639-646.

<sup>53</sup> In 1994 the ANC government initiated 'Growth, Employment and Redistribution' (GEAR) marking a move towards conventional neoliberal economic reform.

<sup>54</sup> Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation*, p. 75.

<sup>55</sup> See Bozzoli with Nkotshe, *Women of Phokeng*; Moodie with Ndatshe, *Going For Gold*; Makhulu, 'A Brief History of the Social Wage'.

poverty or precariousness.<sup>56</sup> For those in employment, wages too meagre to cover basic needs have failed to offer a palliative to insecurity, in what has come to characterise the 'core' of South Africa's labour market as much as the 'margins'.<sup>57</sup> Barchiesi explains, 'in the expanding middle layer of the "onion" therefore, is a precarious workforce comprising 30 percent of wage earners in casual jobs, "homeworking" or domestic services and a further 20 percent in informal, subsistence, or survival activities'.<sup>58</sup> The massive growth in the use of subcontracting has spread beyond those sectors previously associated with casual labour (such as farm work) to industries once seen as bastions of Fordist industrial labour, such as mining, which by 2008 was taking a third of its labour force from third party contractors.<sup>59</sup>

A proliferation of labour brokers and third party contractors accompanied the deregulation of the labour market after 1994.<sup>60</sup> These, ironically, are often used by larger employers (such as the mining houses) to fulfil the requirements of the Black Economic Empowerment scorecard. They introduce another layer of insecurity as they displace direct responsibility for workers and, as Chaskalson argues (this issue), serve to undermine worker organisation and collective bargaining by fragmenting the workforce. Weakness or dereliction of unions in the post-apartheid period (due to the loss of their leadership cadre to government or business and the attenuation of a collective bargaining framework) has left workers with a double vulnerability, 'at the very moment when [unions were] most needed to defend workers in the context of widespread restructuring'.<sup>61</sup> Of course, much of apartheid was characterised by the oppression of non-white unions, but union incapacity has new

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<sup>56</sup> See J. Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> M. Di Paola and N. Pons-Vignon, 'Labour Market Restructuring in South Africa: Low Wages, High Insecurity', *Review of African Political Economy*, 40, 138 (2013), pp. 628-638.

<sup>58</sup> Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation*, p. 77.

<sup>59</sup> A. Bezuidenhout, 'New Patterns of Exclusion in the South African Mining Industry', in K. Bentley and A. Habib (eds.), *Racial Redress and Citizenship in South Africa* (Pretoria, HSRC Press, 2008), pp. 179-208.

<sup>60</sup> J. Crush, T. Ulicki, T. Tseane, and E. Jansen van Veuren, 'Undermining Labour: The Rise of Sub-Contracting in South African Gold Mines', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, 1 (2001), pp. 5-31.

<sup>61</sup> Di Paola and Pons-Vignon, 'Labour Market Restructuring'.



significance under a democratic dispensation and after their prominent place in the struggle of the 1980s. Scholars of trade unionism during the period of economic liberalization reveal impotence in the mainstream unions over the fundamental issue of job security, as struggles have focused instead on the tangibles of pay and benefits for the shrinking portion of the workforce classified as permanently employed.

This has been heightened by the fallout from the financial crisis, and the mass retrenchments that came in its wake. As elsewhere, the connection between 'economic insecurity' and 'vulnerability to political violence' is rendered all the sharper.<sup>62</sup> The South African Reserve Bank estimates that almost a million jobs have been lost since 2008, 'most of these by black people with low or few technical skills, and little possibility of securing another job'.<sup>63</sup> The constant threat of retrenchment is a potent weapon with which employers can force through ever more flexible working conditions, using third party contractors to create a more 'mobile workforce'. Such job attrition and brokering are amplifications of earlier post-apartheid trends, as already described. In turn, the precarisation of the workforce serves to manufacture worker consent to declining conditions and repressed wages.<sup>64</sup> The desperation that such perilous conditions engender means that 'poorer black South Africans... are prepared to die for retaining a job... they will be willing to die for less'.<sup>65</sup> However, labour insecurity does not simply correlate with financial crisis. Against the grain of the common narrative, and to borrow the words of a Marikana mineworker: 'you will hear stocks are up but we get nothing'.<sup>66</sup> As Chaskalson points out (this issue), well before

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<sup>62</sup> C. Geertz, quoted in A. Muehlebach, 'On Precariousness and the Ethical Imagination: The Year 2012 in Sociocultural Anthropology', *American Anthropologist* 115, 2 (2013), p. 297.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Gumede, 'Marikana'.

<sup>64</sup> Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation*, p. 193.

<sup>65</sup> Gumede, 'Marikana'.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in P. Alexander, L. Sinwell, T. Lekgowa, B. Mmope and B. Xezwi, *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer* (London, Bookmark Publications, 2012), p. 91.

the onset of recession, at the height of the mineral supercycle as corporations were enjoying surging profits, workers' wages *fell*.

How, then, is insecurity in work experienced? It shapes the physical, social and emotional lives of workers as much as their political-economic realities. Scholars have noted how the macro level insecurity of the labour market is equally manifest in the increasing physical insecurity and perilous conditions that workers face on a daily basis. Both the accounts of mineworkers collected by Alexander et al<sup>67</sup> in the aftermath of Marikana, and the deep ethnographic study of work underground by Timothy Siswe Phakathi and Paul Stewart, highlight the incommensurability between the targets rock drillers must meet, in ever-longer shifts, and the health and safety protocols that companies claim workers must follow in order to ensure their safety.<sup>68</sup> Responsibility for ensuring safety at an unstable rock face is personalised; blame for inevitable accidents is individualised as failure to follow guidelines.

Recent scholarship also highlights the psycho-social turmoil of precarious lives lived under great pressure.<sup>69</sup> Workers have been robbed not only of an adequate living wage to sustain a household, but also of the sense of personhood, sodality, value, and citizenship tied to employment, replaced with the 'lingering feeling of being disposable'.<sup>70</sup> Thus insecurity is intimately linked to the fear and actuality of redundancy, loss and the foreclosure of expectations. This special issue therefore places particular emphasis on experiences of time – from declining health among former asbestos miners and mine residents in the Northern Cape, to the prospects of Marikana widows in the North West Province. Underlying the

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<sup>67</sup> Alexander et al, *Marikana*, see p. 56.

<sup>68</sup> T. Phakathi, "'Getting On" and "Getting By" Underground: Gold Miners' Informal Working Practice of Making a Plan (Planisa)', *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 2, 2 (2013), pp. 126-149; P. Stewart, 'The Material Basis of Worker Subjectivity: Rock Drill Operators on the South African Platinum Mines in Historical Perspective', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 51, 2 (2015), pp. 143-156.

<sup>69</sup> See for example E. Hull, 'The Social Dynamics of Labour Shortage in South African Small-scale Agriculture', *World Development*, 59 (2014), pp. 451-460; M. Samson, 'Accumulation by Dispossession and the Informal Economy – Struggles over Knowledge, Waste and Being at a Soweto Garbage Dump', *Environment and Planning D*, 33, 5 (2015), pp. 813-830.

<sup>70</sup> Barchiesi, *Precarious Liberation*, p. 205, 191.

physical insecurities of everyday life and the kinds of survivalism they demand, there is an existential insecurity that comes from radical uncertainty about the future.<sup>71</sup> For those who work and live in contexts of industrial capitalism (such as mines, plants, agribusinesses and free trade zones) this foreclosure of hope in future mobility is perhaps even more pointed as it runs counter to 'capitalism's own temporal registers of progress'.<sup>72</sup> The gap between expectation and reality is particularly potent for workers in post-apartheid South Africa. Here, high hopes on the back of the liberation struggle (and the great strength of the unions in overthrowing apartheid) have generated an even greater sense of frustration, disappointment and betrayal when 'the economically liberating stable employment most South African's aspire to' failed to materialize.<sup>73</sup> The sense of abandonment among workers, especially amidst occupational hazards, comes through in a number of the articles in this special issue.

Both intense material precariousness and accompanying psychic turmoil may be inflected by the sense that chronic transition has become a permanent state of affairs.<sup>74</sup> This produces a metaphysical insecurity as moral and ethical certainties collapse and 'norms formerly taken for granted cease to produce intended effects'.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps one of the strongest expressions of this has been seen in the sense of nostalgia for the brutal yet predictable certainties of the apartheid workscape, and even for a powerful state, noted by anthropologists over the past decade.<sup>76</sup> A similar sense of fragmentation finds expression in

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<sup>71</sup> See C. Dolan and D. Rajak, 'Banking on Time: Temporal Entailments at the Bottom of the Pyramid', unpublished manuscript n.d.; J. Guyer, 'Prophecy and the Near Future: Thoughts on Macroeconomic, Evangelical and Punctuated Time', *American Ethnologist* 34, 3 (2007), pp. 409-421; Muehlebach, 'On Precariousness and the Ethical Imagination'.

<sup>72</sup> A. Sanchez, 'Relative Precarity: Decline, Hope and the Politics of Work', Unpublished manuscript, n.d, p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Di Paola and Pons-Vignon, 'Labour market restructuring', pp. 628.

<sup>74</sup> N. Molé, 'Precarious Subjects: Anticipating Neoliberalism in Northern Italy's Workplace', *American Anthropologist* 112, 1 (2010), p. 39.

<sup>75</sup> M. Bolt, *Zimbabwe's Migrants and South Africa's Border Farms: The Roots of Impermanence* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.3-4; See also I. Niehaus, 'Maternal Incest as Moral Panic: Envisioning Futures without Fathers in the South African Lowveld', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 4 (2010), pp. 833-849.

<sup>76</sup> See for example, Makhulu, 'A Brief History of the Social Wage'; A. Reed, 'Nostalgia, Neoliberalism, and Democracy in Post-Apartheid South Africa', unpublished manuscript, n.d.; H. White, 'A Post-Fordist Ethnicity: Insecurity, Authority, and Identity in South Africa', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 85, 2 (2012), pp. 397-427.

mine and farm workers' expectations of paternalist protection, explored by Rajak and Bolt in this issue.

Economic insecurity is materialised in the domestic lives of poor South Africans, many millions of whom live in informal dwellings. The latter are now permanent features of the urban landscape and often bear names suggestive of a very different reality – Freedom Park, Sunrise Park – from the lives marked by physical insecurity of those who inhabit them. Crucially, such realities are not confined to people excluded from formal employment. In this special issue, Alexander, Moodie, Chaskalson and Rajak all explore from different angles the chronic insecurity of housing in the platinum belt's urban centres. The failure of mining houses to address their responsibilities with regard to worker housing was a major factor in exacerbating the worker disaffection that precipitated Marikana. Conversely, Maxim Bolt has shown how, for Zimbabwean migrants, even flexible work on South Africa's border farms offers an unexpected locus of relative security. In a context of 'temporal fragmentation and spatial insecurity', it anchors the transience of migrant lives.<sup>77</sup> Quite simply, 'workplaces and work relationships root people' even when the work itself is both grinding and conspicuously impermanent in comparison to settled core employees.<sup>78</sup>

All of this sits uneasily alongside post-apartheid aspirations. People are left suspended between the urgency of everyday survival and the distant vistas<sup>79</sup> of a remote South African Dream – upward mobility against all odds. For those at the so-called 'bottom of the pyramid', this rests on an aspiration of self-actualization that is as insecure as it is tantalising. As Seekings and Nattrass put it, South African society for the majority looks much like a

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<sup>77</sup> Bolt, *Zimbabwe's Migrants*, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> J. Guyer, 'Prophecy and the Near Future: Thoughts on Macroeconomic, Evangelical and Punctuated Time', *American Ethnologist* 34, 3 (2007), pp. 409-421.

game of snakes and ladders, on which the ladders are clustered at the top and the snakes at the bottom.<sup>80</sup> It is always easier to slip down than it is to climb up.

Insecurity is therefore not simply a feature of the degradation of work within a precarious labour market. It is equally tied to new cultures of consumption and credit, closely bound up with aspirations of mobility and the desire to realise the long-awaited fruits of economic freedom.<sup>81</sup> James notes that the growing crisis in personal debt (doubling since 1994) has not primarily been among 'the unemployed or the poorest of the poor' (as it is widely assumed to be), but rather among 'salary and wage earners in the middle of the scale... where stable pay packets are subjected to less-than-stable pressures'.<sup>82</sup> The result is that even those with a secure income face new levels of financial insecurity.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile the promotion of 'Bottom of the Pyramid' credit services – 'banking the unbanked' – appears to offer a way of coping with precarious or uncertain incomes. But rather than creating empowered and upwardly mobile financial citizens, it compounds existing insecurity through indebtedness.<sup>84</sup> With easy credit extended by corporate banks and store cards, the National Credit Regulator has estimated that nearly half of all consumers are three months or more behind on their payments.<sup>85</sup>

If much of this is familiar from other settings, South Africa departs from the stock narrative of 'neoliberal' social insecurity and economic precariousness among the working poor in important ways. These trends have been accompanied by an unprecedented extension rather than withdrawal of state social assistance – against the grain of structural adjustment and more recent austerity measures. This huge programme of social grants complicates any

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<sup>80</sup> J. Seekings and N. Nattrass, *Class, Race and Inequality in South Africa* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005), p. 336.

<sup>81</sup> James, *Money from Nothing*; See Also D. Posel, 'Races to Consume: Revisiting South Africa's History of Race, Consumption and the Struggle for Freedom', *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, 2 (2010), pp. 157-175.

<sup>82</sup> James, *Money from Nothing*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>84</sup> James and Rajak, 'Credit Apartheid, Migrants, Mines and Money'.

<sup>85</sup> James, *Money from Nothing*, p. 12.

analysis of liberalisation. But despite the massive rollout of social grants since apartheid, these failed to make up for mass job-shedding. For close to 44 per cent of South African households receiving social grants,<sup>86</sup> state welfare assistance represents the only source of a regular and reliable – if meagre – income mitigating chronic economic insecurity. Moreover, as Vally reveals in this issue, grants require understanding not simply as a refuge from precariousness, but in terms of the new forms of everyday insecurity that a grant infrastructure introduces into fragile livelihoods.

This distinctively South African story faces challenges that are familiar from elsewhere. The provision of social support is contested by a strong normative discourse that valorises work. Increasingly, the emphasis is now on entrepreneurialism and micro-enterprise. Both are peddled by donor and state agencies alike, not just to the jobless but also to those in wage labour, glossing survivalism as resourcefulness and precariousness as opportunity. As Prentice argues, the precaritization of work is reconfigured as an opportunity for 'empowerment' and self-actualization, in which the precariat are 'free to author their own destinies while negating the histories of struggle that have made this framing possible'.<sup>87</sup> Drawing on powerful ideals of choice and freedom, a discourse of self-sufficiency leaves the majority with the experiences of insecurity already discussed.

However, such discourses have limited reach. South Africa's history of extreme inequality, shaped by state and corporate domination, is also a history of challenge from below. In the post-apartheid era, this is manifest in thousands of public provision protests escalating across the country over the past decade (the Institute of Social Security estimates at

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<sup>86</sup> Herbst and Mills note that 'since 1996, the number of social welfare recipients has grown from 2.4 million to 16.1 million and the nominal value of welfare payments has grown from R11 billion to R113 billion', *How South Africa Works and Must do Better*, p. 143.

<sup>87</sup> R. Prentice, 'Microenterprise Development, Industrial Labour and the Seductions of Precarity', *Critique of Anthropology*, in press.

least five per day<sup>88</sup>). 'Unstoppable yet apparently unlinked',<sup>89</sup> argue Bond and Mottiar, they have amounted to a new tide of popular struggle and claim-making that represented the routine, low-profile seeds of Marikana.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the sometimes-violent insurgency of South Africa's citizens may hold out new political possibilities, with their potency most clearly revealed by the brutality of state response.<sup>91</sup>

For the violent order depicted by Fanon, with which this introduction began, has not disappeared. As von Holdt notes, contrasting Fanon with Bourdieu is useful for making sense of continuity in South Africa since the 1980s. Fanon imagines a settler-society status quo upheld by undisguised brutality, which is also an order whose hold is not absolute. Bourdieu imagines European societies in which people are pacified and arrangements sustained by the symbolic violence of naturalised hierarchy. In South Africa, what has pertained is somewhere between the two. Symbolic orders, today and at least since the protests of late apartheid, are distinctly fragile. Little in the status quo is simply taken for granted. In workforces and in protest settings more generally, physical violence creates spaces for alternative orders with their own rules. Yet, argues von Holdt, we may be watching a more sedimented order in the making. In the process, the physical and structural violence underpinning it are laid bare. Meanwhile, anti-state or anti-capitalist physical violence is revealed not just as liberatory, but also as open to manipulation by elites and as holding the potential to reinforce an emerging unequal order.<sup>92</sup>

The powerful-but-not-so-powerful infrastructure of state and capital continues to make South Africa distinctive, in the southern African region and beyond. It creates its own

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<sup>88</sup> Institute of Social Security, cited in Gumede, 'Marikana'.

<sup>89</sup> P. Bond and S. Mottiar, 'Movements, Protests and a Massacre in South Africa', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 31, 2 (2013), p. 291.

<sup>90</sup> See also Breckenridge, 'Marikana and the limits of biopolitics'.

<sup>91</sup> J. Brown, *South Africa's Insurgent Citizens: on dissent and the possibility of politics* (London, Zed Books, 2015).

<sup>92</sup> K. von Holdt, 'South Africa: The Transition to Violent Democracy', *Review of African Political Economy*, 40, 138 (2013), pp. 589-604.

violent possibilities, and these remain evident in current labour arrangements. The institutionalisation of labour disputes leaves unions and state officials central to the shaping of labour arrangements, but the limits to this institutionalisation also produce a disproportionate use of physical violence from both sides in strikes. Indeed, workers' use of violence can underpin alternative moral orders that call into question the state's very ability to set the broader terms of the social compact.<sup>93</sup> As Moodie shows in this issue, such bases of 'associative power' represent important continuities with the past. Key to understanding the mines and other workplaces today are forms of violent inclusion. These draw on 'migrant and occupational cultures, often embedded in rural networks, available to be drawn upon when necessary to confront management and/or union structures'.

The limits of inclusion and institutionalisation – and the violence at the limits of incorporation – have acquired new meaning in the decades since apartheid. The sharp spatial separations maintained by earlier legislation made dismissal from mine, farm or domestic employment catastrophic. These have given way to the proliferation of informal settlements that we described above. Indeed, as demonstrated in articles in this issue, the events at Marikana emerged from a different kind of geography from that made famous by apartheid: enclaves immediately surrounded by insecurity and networks of dependence, rather than enclaves held at a distance from rural areas to which workers could be 'endorsed out'.

Precariousness, partial incorporation and marginalisation were important parts of the structural violence of apartheid, and the everyday unpredictability of urban life continues and even intensifies.<sup>94</sup> What looms increasingly large, however, is a more radical form of exclusion from waged work. The violent masculinities of apartheid were often viewed in terms of subordination; those of the post-apartheid era are associated with a far-reaching

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<sup>93</sup> von Holdt, 'Institutionalisation'.

<sup>94</sup> See e.g. A. Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2005).



'crisis of masculinity'.<sup>95</sup> The limited and multiple incorporations of workforce and workplace – indeed forms of worker self-understanding that resisted pacification – are replaced by ever more desperate 'declarations of dependence'.<sup>96</sup>

If these 'declarations' have become key to attempts to avoid exposure to destitution, they expose people to harm in new ways. Unanticipated forms of exclusion have become salient since the end of apartheid. The expansion of South Africa's grant system amidst unemployment has created a new safety net, but possibilities for personal disaster are produced through the arbitrary cancellation of grants, as Vally shows in this issue. Waldman highlights a different kind of exclusion: the limits of state and corporate responsibility for bodily damage as a result of work and residence on asbestos mines. Provision is accompanied by stratified entitlements (workers versus residents), echoing a broader worker-centred discourse. And it is limited by an official position that casts asbestos contamination as a regrettable legacy that is consignable to a dark past.

Finally, insecurity and limited incorporation have had important and violent consequences for black non-South Africans.<sup>97</sup> During apartheid, black South Africans were conscious of sharing a predicament – oppression and exploitation at the hands of white state and capital – with their counterparts from elsewhere in the region. But after 1994, efforts to establish national unity and reimagine citizenship undermined this.<sup>98</sup> In a context of frustrated expectations, South Africans have regarded the social ills described above as exacerbated by

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<sup>95</sup> J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, 'Millennial capitalism: first thoughts on a second coming', *Public Culture*, 12, 2 (2000), pp.291-343; I. Niehaus, 'Maternal Incest as Moral Panic: Envisioning Futures without Fathers in the South African Lowveld', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 4 (2010), pp.833-849; T. Gibbs, 'Becoming a "Big Man" in Neoliberal South Africa': Migrant Masculinities in the Minibus-Taxi Industry', *African Affairs*, 113, 452 (2014), pp. 431-448; M. Hunter, *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender, and Rights in South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010).

<sup>96</sup> J. Ferguson, 'Declarations of Dependence: Labour, Personhood, and Welfare in Southern Africa', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 19, 2 (2013), pp. 223-42.

<sup>97</sup> See for example S. Morreira, 'Seeking Solidarity: Zimbabwean Undocumented Migrants in Cape Town, 2007', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36, 2 (2010), pp. 433-448.

<sup>98</sup> S. Jensen and L. Buur, 'The Nationalist Imperative: South Africanization, Regional Integration and Mobile Livelihoods', in L. Buur, S. Jensen and F. Stepputat (eds.), *The Security-Development Nexus: Expressions of Sovereignty and Securitization in Southern Africa* (Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007).

non-white foreigners, many of whom have come to work. As Landau argues, 'outsiders have come to be understood as a threatening obstacle to achieving justice and retribution for decades of discrimination and indignity'.<sup>99</sup> In their article in this issue, Alfaro-Velcamp and Shaw show how such antipathy shapes the treatment of foreigners by state officials. Migrants are treated as criminals far beyond their undocumented status, reproducing their vulnerability within the system and their marginality in South Africa.

As in the past, violence in South Africa also produces new social forms. As a number of the pieces in this collection show (Bolt, Rajak, Chaskalson), the precaritization of labour has brought new levels of fragmentation, division and vulnerability to the workplace. It has entrenched existing forms of workplace coercion, from public enforcement by *amabutho* and police on the mines to private enforcement by white and black patriarchs on farms. But it has also created new solidarities around particular rallying points – service provision, housing and jobs – at the base of which is the broader, pervasive condition of insecurity and constant vulnerability which crosses these boundaries. The articles in this issue engage with diverse contexts in which people in South African confront the insecurity of work or lack of it. Taken as a whole, the collection underlines how the locus of violence weaves between the workplace and beyond its confines, from the direct brutality of control, to the turbulence of violent insurgency, to the vagaries of structural violence.

### **Overview of the Issue**

The essays in this collection connect work and the workplace to the intricate tissue of human relations in which workers are embedded. They do so in order to explore in diverse contexts how the insecurity of work is part and parcel of the generalised precariousness of life, and

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<sup>99</sup> L. Landau, 'Introducing the Demons', in L. Landau (ed.), *Exorcising the Demons Within: Xenophobia, Violence and Statecraft in Contemporary South Africa* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2011), p. 3.

how the violence experienced by workers continues beyond the bounds of the workplace and beyond periods of employment.

Waldman explores an often-neglected temporal dimension of the violence that extractive capitalism inflicts on bodies and landscapes. She turns to the post-mining horizon of asbestos. Indestructible, even microscopic amounts result in 'enduring and intractable' suffering. The post-apartheid era has produced a climate of rights and redress. New forms of biological citizenship reconfigure the obligations of state and capital, as bodily damage during apartheid becomes the basis for post-apartheid entitlements. However, responsibility for the damaged bodies of the workforce is sharply circumscribed, by both companies and government. Workers are privileged at the cost of mine residents, some of whom are equally ill. And redress has sharp temporal limits. Bodily damage must have been incurred during years of active mining. Landscapes are regarded as permanently 'rehabilitated' once treated, even as asbestos reappears following erosion. All of this ultimately reveals the failings of the state to sustain its most vulnerable subjects.

The articles by Natasha Vally, and by Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp and Mark Shaw, similarly illuminate the vulnerabilities born of the state's actions and limitations. Looking beyond wage labour to the social wage, Vally investigates the on-the-ground effects of South Africa's first national-scale, privately outsourced, biometric grant payment system. Biometric technologies devised to ensure efficiency and standardisation in fact make the delivery of vital social grants less secure. Recipients experience unpredictability in the time taken up by waiting, and even more acutely by the possibility of grant withdrawal in the name of anti-corruption. What is more, recipients' cards connect accounts to new forms of debt. This 'financialisation' serves the interests of the corporation running the infrastructure, whose subsidiaries offer products and make automatic deductions. Such deductions bring possibilities for fraud, not merely routine technical failure, to what should be a safety net. All

of this has profound effects on people whose livelihoods are fragile. A supposedly neutral infrastructure offers up the government's central anti-poverty intervention to capitalisation and profit for companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

In Alfaro-Velcamp and Shaw's article, foreign migrants in South Africa encounter the violence produced by a powerful-but-not-so-powerful state. An unpopular and untrusted police force and a famously dysfunctional Department of Home Affairs have taken migrants as an easy target, thus diverting attention from wider failings. The latter mostly cross borders without documents. But the system of refugee documentation and immigration policing criminalises them in a totalising manner. Confusing and changeable arrangements involve such restricted access to offices that they force applicants to buy progress in a corrupt system. Criminalisation is also more deliberate. Brutal raids are justified by conflating undocumented status with broader forms of criminal behaviour, such as drug-dealing. Arrests, in turn, lead to illegal detentions. Echoes of South Africa's history of incarceration, blurring lines between bureaucratic and criminal offenses, are unmistakable.

Situated within this broader concern with structural violence and everyday coercion, a number of articles in the collection (Alexander, Chaskalson, Moodie and Rajak) confront the explicit physical violence of Marikana. The massacre offers a lens through which to consider developments in structures of exploitation, repression and resistance in industrial labour. The articles approach Marikana from different perspectives – whether that of trade unionism and competing forms of worker association (Chaskalson and Moodie), the mining companies (Rajak) or workers themselves (Alexander). But they also emphasise different temporal frames. Thus while Chaskalson and Moodie chronicle the long road to Marikana, tracing the slow decline or dereliction of the mainstream unions, Alexander addresses the immediate question of culpability by tracking forensically the events leading up to the killing and immediately following it. All four, in different ways, contest the simplistic argument that

labour insecurity is the result of financial crisis. They show how, long before 2008, the relationship between the ANC, mining companies and unions facilitated new modes of dispossession and disenfranchisement of workers through capital flight, wage suppression, subcontracting, co-option or abandonment. In exploring diverse trajectories that led to and from Marikana as the apogee of a new wave of violence against workers, they collectively highlight the chronic condition of insecurity and disenfranchisement that has come to define work and life for a large portion of the mine's labour force in South Africa over the past two decades. And they address the relationships between broader vulnerability and overt violence, including a new willingness on the part of those in authoritative positions (both government and private sector) to meet disaffection, desperation and insurgency with lethal coercion.

At the same time, Bolt and Rajak, within the contexts of border farms and platinum mines respectively, highlight how control of the workforce is achieved not only through physical violence (or the threat of it), but through its twin: the benevolent tyranny of paternalism and corporate responsibility. This is all the more powerful as discipline (both soft and hard) is mediated down through the hierarchy of farm foremen and shop stewards. On the Zimbabwean-South African border today, corporate-style export farmers maintain a striking distance from both overt coercion and idioms of paternalist responsibility. Instead, senior black workers lie at the centre both of workforce dependencies and webs of distributed coercion. But they are also reminded of their subordinate relationships with their white employers. The result is the reproduction of labour arrangements, including the continuing inviolability of racialised hierarchies. For mining companies, performance of both violence and largesse is critical to the story they tell their shareholders about their capacity to control all externalities (including a restless workforce) and ensure a continued revenue stream. One key question running through both contributions is: to what extent is this marriage of responsibility and violence different from the former regimes of apartheid or colonial era

capitalism, which also married the domestic paternalism of social control with the brutalities of physical violence?

Confronting the relationship between insecurity and violence at a larger historical scale, Barchiesi considers how the meaning and value of work is discursively constructed. Since the early twentieth century (Barchiesi focuses on the first three decades), such constructions have performed a structural violence built on racialised categories that enabled the subjugation of black South Africans, eliminating both the security and dignity of decent jobs. Barchiesi argues that today's pervasive insecurity is not merely the outcome of an unstable labour market and dwindling blue-collar sector, but is actively produced and determined by the government's normative commitment to the new ideology of self-sufficiency and individual responsibility. This ideology is cast, as in the past, in opposition to racialised black bodies characterised as lazy, and indeed only redeemable through labour. The discourse has been reproduced in both the CSR agendas of South Africa's largest corporations and the unions supposedly representing the interests of the poorest paid workers (as Rajak and Chaskalson note in their respective contributions to this issue), effectively devolving to the poor themselves the responsibility to end what Barchiesi refers to as the 'cycle of dependency'.