

Recent Politics and Current Affairs - July 2014

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SA POLITICS UNSPUN / Grootes, Stephen

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240 p.: ill.

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South African politics is a murky, convoluted, complicated, cut-throat world that not many people fully understand.

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South Africa's Suspended Revolution : Hopes And Prospects / Adam Habib

WITS University Press, South Africa 2013

307p.;

9781868146086

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South Africa's Suspended Revolution engages with the country's transition into democracy and its prospects for inclusive development. It is an antidote to many descriptive and voluntarist explanations in which leaders and other actors are treated as unfettered agents whose choices and behaviour are merely the result of their own abilities or follies. In contrast, Adam Habib explains the story of how South Africa arrived at this point by locating these actors in context. He tries to understand the institutional constraints within which they operated, why they made the choices they did, and what the consequences are. The book also explores what other policy options and behavioural choices may have been available, and why these were forsaken for the ones that were eventually adopted.

In essence, the book is about how South Africa got to its present state of affairs, what the country's current challenges are, and how these could be transcended. It is deeply historical in the sense of understanding what possibilities may have existed in one moment, but not another. The narrative recognises that societies evolve and as a result the potential for political and socioeconomic advances themselves change.

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THE ZUMA YEARS: South Africa's changing face of power / Calland, Richard Cape

Zebra Press, South Africa 2013

xxii, 505 p.

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Calland offers insight into how the Zuma presidency exercises its power and the people who control that power. He mixes research with anecdote and interviews to present a picture of who runs South Africa today, and how.

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Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa : Essays and Interviews on Higher Education and the Humanities / John Higgins

WITS University Press, South Africa 2013

xvi, 272 p.

9781868147519

\$ 49.00 / HB

How do we understand academic freedom today? Does it still have relevance in the face of the managerial and ideological pressures which are reconfiguring higher education institutions? And what about the humanities? In an increasingly market-driven world, what do the humanities have to offer society? These two sets of questions provide the guiding threads of related enquiries that make up this hard-hitting and controversial study. *Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa* argues that the principle of supporting and extending open intellectual enquiry is essential to realising the full public value of higher education, and that in this task, the humanities and the forms of argument and analysis that they embody have a crucial role to play. The book examines the troubled history of academic freedom in South Africa starting with key debates raised by the 1987 O'Brien Affair through to post-apartheid government policy where it figures as an inconvenient ideal, that is paid lip service to but is neglected in practice; questions received ideas of institutional culture and managerial authority; and argues for a better understanding of the critical thinking arising from advanced forms of literacy made available by the humanities. Discussion of the place of the humanities in furthering democracy is deepened and extended in a series of interviews with three key figures from the critical humanities: Terry Eagleton talks about the deforming effects of managerial policies in British universities, Edward W. Said argues for the democratising potential of the humanities, and Jakes Gerwel discusses the importance of the humanities in both the anti-apartheid struggle, and for contemporary South Africa. The volume as a whole ends with a consideration of the most recent challenges facing academic freedom and the humanities.

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We Need To Act / Jonathan Jansen

Bookstorm, South Africa 2013

296 p.;

9781920434588

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'I believe that citizen action is vitally necessary as we come out of the heady days of post-apartheid euphoria.' Professor Jonathan Jansen has become a trusted commentator on the state of South Africa -- reminding us of our past and asking citizens to leave their comfort zones and contribute to righting the wrongs of our society. Why should we get involved? Jansen gives seven compelling reasons: If ordinary citizens do nothing, we face even greater social instability in the light of stubborn unemployment and crises in the poorest of schools. If we do nothing we become part of the narrative of hopelessness. Without our action, millions of marginalised people could be doomed. If we do nothing we fail to demonstrate to the next generation how to live full lives. We must serve to compensate for the wrongs of our shared past. We must give back once we have been able to move ahead. We must take our places in the long chain of activists who have over centuries opposed poverty, illiteracy, government and gangs to give us this tender young democracy to work with. The articles in this collection, previously published in *The Times*, focus on education and the social realities of South African society. Jansen by turn horrifies us, inspires us and reminds us of the power of individual action.

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