

The Multifaceted Roots of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Persistent Economic Inequality

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December 20, 2021

In July 2021, civil unrest and mass looting erupted across South Africa, primarily in the cities of Johannesburg and Durban, marking the deadliest week of political turmoil in the country's post-apartheid history.¹ Some commentators narrowly attributed the violence that resulted in 337 deaths and millions of dollars in property damage to former President Jacob Zuma's supporters expressing anger over his imprisonment on corruption charges. However, though Zuma's imprisonment was certainly a spark, the protests were a manifestation of decades of post-apartheid inequality that provided ample kindling.² The protests' roots in inequality are evidenced by some of the mass looting that characterized them; children were seen grabbing everyday necessities such as basic clothing, items that have remained hard to obtain for large swaths of the country's predominantly Black population.³

Reflecting on these protests and their stark reminder that inequality persists in South Africa begs the question of why. Despite the impressive accomplishment of a liberal democracy that is characterized by regular free and fair elections, an independent judiciary, vibrant civil society, and a sophisticated media—institutions that are not commonplace across the continent—the post-apartheid ANC⁴-led government in South Africa has failed to meaningfully improve the lives of most (Black) South Africans, even while many of the ANC elites have grown wealthy.⁵ Sisonke Msimang, a South African activist and author, argues that “South Africa is only slightly more racially integrated than it was before the end of apartheid, and it is even more economically unequal.”⁶ Such post-apartheid economic inequality exists both between

¹ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

² Tafi Mhaka, “South Africa's Unrest and the ANC's Many Failings,” *Al Jazeera* (Al Jazeera, July 18, 2021).

³ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

⁴ “ANC” refers to the African National Congress, the political party in power in South Africa since the fall of the apartheid regime in 1994.

⁵ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

⁶ *Ibid.*

whites and Blacks, and among the Black population itself. In fact, South Africa is the most economically unequal country in the world (highest Gini coefficient), including with respect to the racial composition of wealth and income distribution.^{7 8} Since the end of apartheid, the inequality between races has only marginally changed (white incomes have grown the fastest since 1994) while the inequality among the Black population has skyrocketed, demonstrating how exclusion in South Africa is no longer solely defined by race.^{9 10}

Before introducing and outlining the argument as to why such inequality persists in South Africa, it is beneficial to provide additional context on the economic and political realities within the country today. Though the economic shortcomings of post-apartheid South Africa constitute the primary focus of this paper, it is important to recognize that the economic reality since 1994 has not been entirely dismal. The ANC government has made significant progress in reducing extreme poverty, including by expanding access to electricity, water, and other public goods.¹¹ In addition, for many years, the Black middle class expanded; in the past decade, however, this growth has slowed and perhaps reverted, yet the proportion of middle class Black people (~18 %) is certainly higher than it was under the apartheid regime.^{12 13} In recent years, economic growth in the country has stagnated, coupled with increasing unemployment¹⁴, a common

⁷ Brian Levy et al., “South Africa: When Strong Institutions and Massive Inequalities Collide” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 18, 2021).

⁸ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

⁹ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

¹⁰ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

¹³ *The Economist*, “South Africa’s Black Middle Class Has Prospered Under Democracy,” *The Economist*, January 7, 2021.

¹⁴ 29% in 2019, 34.4% in 2021.

challenge that has remained above 20% throughout the democratic period.^{15 16} Many Black South Africans also remain excluded from the formal market economy and face a precarious living situation, settling in squalor on land that they do not legally own.^{17 18}

Politically, the post-apartheid period has been characterized by de jure democratic freedom for Black South Africans as well as the domination of the ANC.¹⁹ The ANC has won every post-apartheid presidential race and invariably maintains a majority in parliament, an overwhelming mandate that is persistently buoyed by significant Black support.^{20 21} Despite this continued support, which has somewhat waned in recent years, many argue that the ANC's 27 years of governance have consisted of broken promises to the majority of the country's Black population, while helping to support its own elites and the minority white population.²² This dynamic manifests itself as persistent economic inequality in South Africa, a "product of continued division of the population into economic insiders who enjoy access to the benefits of the formal economy and outsiders who do not."²³ Thus, while post-apartheid South Africa has enjoyed some improvements in economic and political terms, persistent inequality both between races and among the Black population constitutes the greatest grievance, whose roots and dynamics demand exploration.

¹⁵ Sisonke Msimang, "How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa," Foreign Affairs (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

¹⁶ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

¹⁷ Sisonke Msimang, "How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa," Foreign Affairs (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

¹⁸ Peter S. Goodman, "End of Apartheid in South Africa? Not in Economic Terms," The New York Times (The New York Times, October 24, 2017).

¹⁹ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

²⁰ Tzion James, "Pre-Existing Condition: Scars from Apartheid Keep a Young Democracy Down," Democratic Erosion, October 17, 2020.

²¹ Sisonke Msimang, "How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa," Foreign Affairs (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

²² Ibid.

²³ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

Overall, this paper aims to explore and identify the roots and dynamics that cause economic inequality to persist in post-apartheid South Africa. While conducting research for this investigation, familiar themes arose. After sifting through numerous sources, I realized that all of the core arguments and elements of my three critical analysis papers this semester—which focused on the African continent more broadly—were evident and possessed explanatory power vis-à-vis the persistence of economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore, I will structure this paper around the three critical analysis papers’ core arguments (in reverse order) and demonstrate how the involved dynamics accurately explain the source and continuation of economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. A brief overview of the three papers’ arguments and how they will proxy in the case study of post-apartheid South Africa will subsequently be provided, followed by the main argumentative sections that expatiate the details.

The third critical analysis paper of the semester, entitled, “The United States of Africa and the Sources of Its Discontents,” discussed the role of post-colonial path dependency, conniving neocolonial interests, and nascent African leaders’ desire for the personal financial benefits attendant to sovereign political power in undermining the formation and implementation of a Pan-African political union.²⁴ These three components proxy in the case of modern South Africa as post-apartheid path dependency, white business interests, and the personal economic interests of ANC elites, all of which explain why economic inequality in post-apartheid South Africa has persisted.

The second critical analysis paper of the semester, entitled, “The Pernicious Pervasion of Ideology in the Colonization of Africa,” discussed how the ideological infiltration of European colonialism in Africa generated fractured resistance to and conceding acceptance of colonial rule, while also facilitating the continued imposition of exclusive institutions in post-colonial

²⁴ Mike Brodo, “The United States of Africa and the Sources of Its Discontents,” November 24, 2021.

societies.²⁵ These components proxy in the case of post-apartheid South Africa as a pro-ANC ideology generating fractured resistance to and conceding acceptance of ANC governance among Black voters, despite its failure to mitigate economic inequality and provide sufficient public goods. In addition, an ideology rooted in an desire to simply enjoy the benefits accruing to whites under apartheid instead of overhauling the system has contributed to the continued imposition of exclusive institutions in post-apartheid South Africa.

The first critical analysis paper of the semester, entitled, “The Role of Biased Historiography in Justifying the Continuation of the Great Divergence,” discussed how biased historiography has played a major role in justifying the continued global inequality in development, wealth, and income levels.²⁶ In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, this argument has less to do with the historiography of events. Despite the taught history on apartheid South Africa and its horrors not being entirely biased, the continued perceived preeminence of white and Western culture/‘civilization’ has created a deep-rooted aspiration among Black South Africans to become like white South Africans, with consequences that manifest themselves in economic inequality. As a result of this fierce desire to become and live as white South Africans do (referenced in one of the ideological arguments), the Black ANC elite focus solely on attaining such status, trampling over the aspirations that many other Black South Africans have for economic justice.

By employing the main arguments of this semester’s three critical analysis papers—which exemplifies how the involved dynamics in South Africa are evident throughout African history—and tailoring the specifics of their components to the case study at hand, this

²⁵ Mike Brodo, “The Pernicious Pervasion of Ideology in the Colonization of Africa,” October 19, 2021.

²⁶ Mike Brodo, “The Role of Biased Historiography in Justifying the Continuation of the Great Divergence,” September 20, 2021.

paper strives to illuminate the contributing factors of post-apartheid economic inequality and concludes that its persistence is the product of centuries of human history.

According to South African academic Steven Friedman, “Path dependence occurs when, after political change, the elites which shape the economy and society see a value in preserving the patterns of the past and are powerful enough to ensure this.”²⁷ Therefore, in contrast to path dependence simply being an inevitable and passive outcome of the march of history (which is sometimes the case), the path dependence that has contributed to aspects of the ‘old order’ in South Africa living on has been the result of active decisions made by the ANC government.²⁸ Central to the concept of path dependence is that staying on the path of the past constitutes the path of least resistance. For nascent ANC political leaders in 1994, overhauling the entire economic system was too ambitious and risky to the country’s development, as well as their own pockets. Though not to stipulate that personal greed was the main or only cause, since crucial international investors would have been turned off by overly ambitious economic reforms, the newly-in-charge ANC elites pursued economic policies that allowed them to benefit while also causing minimal disruption to the economic interests of white South Africans and international investors.²⁹ For example, the ANC passed laws mandating that all large financial transactions include partnerships with Black-owned firms; at the time, these firms were dominated by the relatively few ANC-connected Black elite (including current President Ramaphosa), and thus such policies further aggrandized them.³⁰ However, it would be false to propose that policies such as leaving significant land and other assets in the hands of white South Africans were

²⁷ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

²⁸ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

entirely the product of ANC elites' decision-making: white business interests played a significant and active role in ensuring these policies were implemented and followed.³¹

In 1994, despite the predominantly-Black ANC winning the reins of power following the country's first truly democratic election, the white South African elite maintained its firm grip on the economy.³² In order to maintain this economic dominance, white businesspeople cultivated personal bonds with the ANC political elite and agreed to accommodate their entry into the upper echelons of business and the economy.³³ This dynamic highlights that a significant source of power—economic domination—remained in the hands of white South Africans following the end of the apartheid regime. White South Africans, especially wealthy businesspeople, used such leverage to pressure ANC elites into unethical deals that allowed for the continued economic domination of whites. Though some characterize such a dynamic as white economic impunity being the price of Black political freedom, it is misguided to solely attribute these deals to white economic elites.³⁴ Such policies and deals—which contributed to the country's presently-high levels of economic inequality—satiated the desires of influential white South African economic elites, international investors, *and* the ANC elites themselves.³⁵ In other words, it was not white economic impunity that constituted the price of Black political freedom (though white business interests certainly played a role), but rather *elite* economic impunity.

Beyond simply pursuing formal economic policies that benefited themselves along with wealthy white South Africans, ANC elites also satiated personal economic interests through engaging in corruption, which reached the level of state capture under President Zuma. In a 2018

³¹ Peter S. Goodman, "End of Apartheid in South Africa? Not in Economic Terms," *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 24, 2017).

³² Sisonke Msimang, "How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa," *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

New York Times feature story, the authors write, “In the generation since apartheid ended in 1994, tens of billions of dollars in public funds — intended to develop the economy and improve the lives of black South Africans — have been siphoned off by leaders of the A.N.C., the very organization that had promised them a new, equal and just nation.”³⁶ For example, government money allocated to a project assisting poor farmers simply vanished, and zero ANC officials at any level of government have been held accountable.³⁷ Further, though less common since Cyril Ramaphosa’s ascension to the presidency in 2018, the Zuma government (2009-2018) was characterized by state capture, a situation in which “private interests effectively purchase the power to divert state resources in their direction.”³⁸ The role of these instances of corruption in facilitating economic inequality is rather conspicuous, but the ideological dynamics that explain how the ANC continues to maintain support from poor, Black South Africans despite these corrupt injustices require deeper inquiry.

The ANC’s reputation as the Black liberation party that eroded apartheid and ushered in the democratic era to a country whose fault lines were primarily racial is so strong that it constitutes ideological infiltration; in other words, it considerably frames how many Black South Africans (though less so among younger ones) view post-apartheid politics and society, evidencing itself in both fractured resistance to the ANC’s rule and practices, and even more so in conceding acceptance of such rule and practices. With respect to fractured resistance, the ANC’s historical ³⁹ ⁴⁰ emphasis on the racial problem over the interests of the poor has fractured

³⁶ Norimitsu Onishi and Selam Gebrekidan, “‘They Eat Money’: How Mandela’s Political Heirs Grow Rich Off Corruption,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, April 16, 2018).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Peter S. Goodman, “End of Apartheid in South Africa? Not in Economic Terms,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, October 24, 2017).

³⁹ This has changed slightly in recent years, demonstrated by the latest election manifesto.

⁴⁰ African National Congress, “African National Congress 2021 Manifesto,” African National Congress (African National Congress, November 1, 2021).

and reduced resistance to policies that maintain economic inequality.⁴¹ Friedman describes this dynamic by noting, “The antennae work far better to detect racism because they are attuned to discern the form of domination which is central to South African reality. While economic domination is an important feature, it is not the society’s principal cleavage and so not the one which most shapes people’s reactions to events.”⁴² One notable instance of the ANC pursuing such a strategy pertains to the Zuma government’s corrupt relationship with the uber-affluent Gupta family. In order to improve their image in the country, the Gupta family hired a consulting firm to devise a communications strategy; to deflect criticism of their outsized influence and state capture-style corruption within South Africa, the strategy focused on targeting white business leaders (in contrast to the Guptas, who are Indian) and the detrimental effects of “white monopoly capital” on the country’s inequality.⁴³ However, though fractured resistance plays a role in maintaining the ANC’s domination of South African politics, the conceding acceptance—which some would characterize as blind support—of such political domination is even more significant in allowing the ANC to continue its facilitation of economic inequality.

The ANC’s victory in every national election since 1994 is largely the result of the majority of the country’s predominantly Black population (~75%) continually voting for it.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ Understanding why chronically poor Black South Africans, which constitute over half of the Black South African population, still largely vote for the ANC despite their precarious economic situations requires examining the ideological connotations associated with the ruling party. The

⁴¹ Sisonke Msimang, “How Apartheid Endures: The Betrayal of South Africa,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 26, 2021).

⁴² Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

⁴³ Brian Levy et al., “South Africa: When Strong Institutions and Massive Inequalities Collide” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 18, 2021).

⁴⁴ Peter S. Goodman, “End of Apartheid in South Africa? Not in Economic Terms,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, October 24, 2017).

⁴⁵ Tzion James, “Pre-Existing Condition: Scars from Apartheid Keep a Young Democracy Down,” *Democratic Erosion*, October 17, 2020.

ANC's association with the anti-apartheid liberation movement during the 20th century and with Nelson Mandela's first post-apartheid government affords the party a great deal of legitimacy among South Africa's Black population.^{46 47} When surveyed as to why they support the ANC, most Black voters refer to the ANC's anti-apartheid history or its identity as the party of national liberation, evidencing the party's "strong historical symbolism" and "perceived moral and normative authority."^{48 49} However, the ingrained ideological belief that "opposing the ANC can be seen as opposing the national project" is not solely the result of Black voters' experience of history, but also stems from active ANC efforts to frame the political discourse as such.^{50 51} These ideological infiltrations have the effect of maintaining the ANC in power, thereby contributing to the economic inequality that it has continually failed to address, and at times even abetted.

In addition to the already-mentioned avenues through which the ANC facilitates economic inequality, the ANC's political domination also contributes to poor public goods provisioning, a key indicator and driver of economic inequality. By nature of being the dominant party which is unlikely to lose elections, the ANC generally lacks de facto⁵² accountability to deliver goods and services to South African citizens.⁵³ However, it is important to delineate where such a dynamic is evident. Zack Zimbalist's mixed methods study, "How Electoral Competition Shapes Local Public Goods Provision in South Africa," uncovers that there is

⁴⁶ Tzion James, "Pre-Existing Condition: Scars from Apartheid Keep a Young Democracy Down," *Democratic Erosion*, October 17, 2020.

⁴⁷ Toyin C. Adetiba and Lucky E. Asuelime, "ANC Accountability and Control of South African Parliament. In Whose Interest: The State or the Party?," *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 1 (April 2018): pp. 107-128.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Tzion James, "Pre-Existing Condition: Scars from Apartheid Keep a Young Democracy Down," *Democratic Erosion*, October 17, 2020.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Toyin C. Adetiba and Lucky E. Asuelime, "ANC Accountability and Control of South African Parliament. In Whose Interest: The State or the Party?," *Journal of African Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 1 (April 2018): pp. 107-128.

⁵² The lack of accountability is de facto and not de jure (such as in authoritarian countries) since citizens possess the right and ability to vote them out of power.

⁵³ Judith February, "SA's Electoral System Is Weak on Accountability," *Eyewitness News*, October 5, 2018.

statistically significant disparity in the quality of public goods provisioning between ANC-dominated municipalities and competitive municipalities.⁵⁴ Zimbalist argues that the ANC lacks serious political pressure to provide public goods (e.g., water, sanitation, trash removal) in municipalities that it politically dominates simply due to the non-existent electoral threat, but that ANC-dominated municipalities are also characterized by increased nepotism, which weakens the technical and administrative capacity to deliver such goods.⁵⁵

Though it is clear that the aforementioned ideological infiltration pertaining to the ANC's maintenance of Black support facilitated the persistence of exclusive institutions in post-apartheid South Africa, another form of ideology, one pertaining to how ANC elites initially viewed the post-apartheid project, has also contributed to the exclusive institutions that facilitate the economic inequality of today. Upon the attainment of political power, ANC leaders viewed the post-1994 project as an "attempt to ensure that what whites enjoyed under apartheid was available to all" and that such a view was characterized not by a strategy to open up new ways of creating wealth, but by shoehorning Black South Africans into the world of White South Africans.⁵⁶ This ideology among ANC leaders that the goal and purpose of the post-apartheid project was to reap the benefits that whites held meant that they pursued a strategy in which they sought to inhabit rather than change the patterns established by white rule.⁵⁷ However, the reality that not all Black South Africans could reap equivalent benefits in the short term given that white South Africans had derived benefits from a system dependent on egregious oppression meant that in the initial years after apartheid, only the ANC elites were transformed from outsiders into insiders, a transformation that was aided by their newfound political power and associated

⁵⁴ Zack Zimbalist, "How Electoral Competition Shapes Local Public Goods Provision in South Africa," *Democratization*, October 20, 2021.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

control over state resources to open up business opportunities and engage in corruption.^{58 59}

Therefore, this flawed ideology pertaining to the post-apartheid project constitutes an additional driver for the path dependence and personal aggrandizement referenced earlier, all of which explain and contribute to South Africa's extreme economic inequality, especially among Black South Africans. This ideology—which caused ANC elites to immediately pursue an equal status to that of white South Africans at the expense of the majority of the country's Black population—however, is rooted in Western cultural imperialism in the minds of ANC elites.

Unlike colonial-era textbooks that glorified colonialism in colonies, some of the accessible history vis-à-vis apartheid in South Africa is written by Black South Africans who describe the horrors of the unjust system and debunk its foundations. However, while the nature of the written historiography contrasts with that of the colonial era, the continued societal preference for 'Western civilization and values' is rooted in colonial history. Steven Friedman outlines this concept in his book, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, arguing that the dominant culture in post-apartheid South Africa is essentially a return to the pre-1948 past.⁶⁰ Friedman writes, "while the change of 1994 ended the apartheid framework" which explicitly denied rights to Black South Africans, "it did not replace it with a non-racial alternative. It prompted a change to values of older origin – those of the British colonialism which preceded the Afrikaner nationalist victory of 1948."⁶¹ Friedman later builds on this claim by arguing that "by the early 1990s, apartheid had been largely discredited ... but the ideas which underpinned British colonisation had not."⁶² Contrasting the ideological

⁵⁸ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

⁵⁹ Brian Levy et al., "South Africa: When Strong Institutions and Massive Inequalities Collide" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 18, 2021).

⁶⁰ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

foundations of apartheid and British colonialism, Friedman states that “apartheid assumed that Black people could never attain the ‘level of civilisation’ its architects believed whites had achieved” whereas though “British colonisation agreed on the superiority of white norms, it also believed that at least some Black people could be ‘educated’ to adopt them.”⁶³

Western cultural imperialism, whose roots are traced to the colonial era, has played a major role in framing the dominant values in post-1994 South Africa to be aspirationally Western. This strong aspiration to be like the West and white South Africans constitutes the final explanation as to why economic inequality, especially among the Black population, was initiated and persists. Despite the attainment of political rights and power for the Black population and the ANC, white South Africans—with their ‘civilizational’ connection to the West—continue to represent the standard of what a South African citizen should aspire to become. Such a deep-rooted aspiration to become like white South Africans, which extended to include their behavioral patterns, lifestyles, and wealth, drove the ANC elites to attempt to attain such status almost immediately after coming to power. In the end, this deep-rooted aspiration to become like white South Africans and the West seems to have won out over the aspiration to lift millions of other Black South Africans out of poverty. However, it is important to recognize that such a deep-rooted aspiration is the product of centuries of racial oppression, one that cannot be uprooted solely by overcoming the most egregious form of oppression that existed for decades. Thus, as evidenced by the numerous aforementioned explanations, it is vividly clear that the persistence of economic inequality in South Africa is not the fault of a single party, but rather the product of centuries of human history, which this paper has only begun to untangle.

⁶³ Steven Friedman, *Prisoners of the Past: South African Democracy and the Legacy of Minority Rule*, version Kindle (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2021).

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