

Columbia University  
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*Where To Go From Here?*

*Addressing Broken Promises and Actualizing Equality in South Africa: Born  
Free Perspectives on Reconciliation, Race, Transition, and Peace*

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## **Abstract**

*Where to go from here? Addressing Broken Promises and Actualizing Equality in South Africa: Born Free Perspectives on Reconciliation, Race, Transition, and Peace*

Through the use of qualitative research with South African youth and subject matter experts, this paper seeks to highlight a diverse spectrum of youth centered perspectives regarding South Africa's first free generation and its post-Apartheid transitional process. This thesis begins by establishing the importance of youth and transitional justice when attempting to build forward-looking sustainable peace and furthermore, situates this notion in broader human rights scholarship and literature. Subsequent chapters provide qualitative analysis of interviews conducted in 2023 with 3 South Africans aged 18-29 and 2 experts in the field.

The findings and analysis of previously conducted interviews reflect an array of opinions with three main themes: racism and failed past accountability; the lack of implementation and intuitional trust; and grave need for economic restructuring. This research and its findings aim to thicken the already vast knowledge regarding South Africa's transition by providing qualitative and inductive analysis focused on youth who are often under heard.

**Keywords:** *South Africa, Transitional Justice, Apartheid, Redistribution, Youth, Reconciliation, Post Conflict, Peacebuilding, Race, Africa post-colonialization*

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## PART ONE

### Chapter I. Introduction

Africa has long struggled with the colonialization and enslavement of its people and countries by the Western world. Whilst the continent has been freed from official colonial ties for decades, the lingering effects of colonialization and other racist practices remain deeply engrained in many countries. Notably, South Africa's Apartheid system created by white settlers had a significant effect on South African society, leaving a clear need for apology, reconciliation, and reparation. Accordingly, after the fall of Apartheid came the creation of numerous developmental and transitional policies aimed at moving the country forward from its racialized history. Transitional justice emerged as an opportunity to rehabilitate communities post-conflict and create lasting democracy. The field incorporates a wide array of mechanisms which "when used in conjunction with one another, enable and empower the mass healing of societies. Its end goals include nonrecurrence, long-term reconciliation, and stabilization of new democracies, thus making intergenerational change embedded in the transitional process."<sup>1</sup>

This paper begins with a close examination of human rights perspectives that relate to reconciliation, youth, transition, and peacebuilding. Through this, youth are situated as significant in building successful and strong institutions, highlighting the importance of forward-looking peacebuilding. While additionally providing contextually relevant information

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<sup>1</sup> Akuoko, Akosua "Thesis Proposal" *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar. Columbia University*. May 2023, 1.

concerning the origins and literary landscape of transitional justice as well as its interaction with broader development goals.

Subsequent sections investigate and highlight contemporary youth perspectives and themes present in post-Apartheid South Africa. Considered in this paper are the lasting effects of Apartheid on Black youth, as well as their current actions, opinions, and recommendations. Although this research only consists of 5 participants, the narratives and unique perspectives provided reflect the complex landscape of this topic. While this research is not a reflection of statistical significance, the attitudes of some can be extracted through the fruitful unraveling of these perspectives.

#### A. Importance of Trans-generational Assessment of Transitional Mechanisms

Although many cite the Nuremberg trials as the inception of transitional justice, TJ is a series of practices that largely boomed around the 1980s in Latin America. As numerous countries emerged from past corrupt governments and human rights abuses, human rights leaders urged the use of transitional justice to provide a “vital course correction to recurrent cycles of violence and impunity.”<sup>2</sup> For many, it was understood that dealing with the past was imperative in a future of nonrecurrence, and calls for accountability and structural change quickly cemented TJ as a major pillar in long-term peacebuilding.

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<sup>2</sup> Adler, Nanci. *Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice: Crimes, Courts, Commissions, and Chronicling. Genocide, Political Violence, Human Rights*. Rutgers University Press, 2018, 1.



Even though TJ has been touted as a field that can produce powerful outcomes and reach big picture peace objectives, the broader themes TJ addresses are developed over long spans of time post-transition and are often difficult to measure. Consequently, and frequently argued as a fundamental problem of TJ during the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some practitioners voice a lack of clearly articulated theories of change or use of mechanisms “unsubstantiated by evidence.”<sup>3</sup>

Now, a few decades after the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century wave of transitional justice operations in places such as Latin America and South Africa, practitioners are presented with a fruitful moment in time- “one in which [they] are well positioned [to] scrutinize the processes as well as the products of the age of transitional justice.”<sup>4</sup> With more than 20 years past, post-transition countries are able to be explored through generational assessment, helping human rights practitioners gain new knowledge on how countries react long-term to transitional mechanisms, including but not limited to truth and reconciliation commissions, judicial justice, and structural and institutional changes.

With two decades between the end of Apartheid and now, South Africa’s next generation is largely in their adult years, with over 50% of South Africa’s population containing young adults, 18-34.<sup>5</sup> These perspectives are key to understanding where transitions fit in the greater picture of sustainable peace and reconciliation.

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<sup>3</sup> Gready, Paul and Simon Robins. “Transitional Justice and Theories of Change: Towards Evaluation as Understanding.” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14, no. 2 (2020): 280–99, 281 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijaa008>.

<sup>4</sup> Adler, Nanci. *Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice: Crimes, Courts, Commissions, and Chronicling Genocide, Political Violence, Human Rights*. Rutgers University Press, 2018, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics South Africa, “SA Population Reaches 58,8 Million.” 2019. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12362>.

South African young adults encompass a generation born post-Apartheid, most of whom have little to no lived experience with South Africa's transitional period. Alternatively, they are shaped largely by collective memory and personal experience. Highlighting South African young adult views on reconciliation as well as how their lives are still shaped by race and Apartheid can provide nuance and deepen statistical information that shows lingering inequality within the country. Furthermore, allowing this community to speak for themselves can add lived experience to the pitfalls of the South African transitional process as well as what is now politically and socially needed to continue down a path of reconciliation, peace, and post-Apartheid equity. This can also provide human rights leaders with an understanding of how transitional justice mechanisms can have a multigenerational effect and the importance of this consideration before and after initiating movements to peace and reconciliation.

## **Chapter II. Human Rights Perspectives<sup>6</sup>**

Human rights and transitional justice are deeply interdependent. Key human rights covenants address TJ mechanisms and highlight the importance of redress and justice in the ability to secure long-term peace. For example, an international human rights law that applies to this research is Article 8 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states, "everyone has the right to effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law."<sup>7</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines the significance of state-sanctioned effective remedy for victims.

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<sup>6</sup> This section is an exact quote: Akuoko, Akosua "Thesis Proposal" *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar. Columbia University*. May 2023, 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 217 A (III). December 1948

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination has also been ratified by South Africa. ICERD touches on effective remedy as well, stating something in a similar vein. Article 6 reads,

States shall ensure effective protection and remedies, through the competent national tribunals and other State institutions, against any acts of racial discrimination... as well as the right to seek from such tribunals just and adequate reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of such discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, ICERD and the UDHR are not the only international frameworks that include transitional justice mechanisms. TJ is mentioned in a plethora of human rights instruments including article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; numerous articles within the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Unusual, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; articles 23 and 24 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.<sup>9</sup> Except for the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Unusual, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, South Africa is a signatory of all previously mentioned conventions and covenants.

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<sup>8</sup> UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 66021. December 1965

<sup>9</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “International Standards: OHCHR and Transitional Justice.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/transitional-justice/international-standards>

The United Nations has further established the importance of transitional justice within peace and stability-building practices. The 2016 Resolution S/RES/2282 places emphasis on the importance of holistic TJ stating the United Nations Security Council “stresses that a comprehensive approach to transitional justice... [is] critical to consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, rule of law, access to justice and good governance, further extending legitimate state authority, and preventing countries from lapsing or relapsing into conflict.”<sup>10</sup> This is only further expanded on in 2019 when the United Nations Human Rights Council goes deeper into describing the relationship between TJ and long-term reconciliation, noting its importance for Sustainable Development Goal 16;

Acknowledging... the implementation of transitional justice processes, including the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, can prevent the recurrence of past atrocities or similar violations, and contribute to sustainable peace and development.<sup>11</sup>

TJ responds to human rights violations using a unique combination of mechanisms to create a process aimed at securing sustainable development goal #16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. SDG16 is primarily aimed at ensuring development through the enforcement of non-discriminatory policies, the creation of institutions trusted by the public through accountability, reduction in bribery, violence, impunity and more.<sup>12</sup> *On Solid Ground: Building Sustainable*

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<sup>10</sup> UN Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 2282*. S/RES/2282. April 2016, 5. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/118/51/PDF/N1611851.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>11</sup> UN Human Rights Council, *Human Rights and Transitional Justice*. A/HRC/42/L.20. September 2019, 2. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G19/282/29/PDF/G1928229.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>12</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Sustainable Development Goal 16” 2023. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>

*Peace and Development After Massive Human Rights Violations*, a report written by the working group on transitional justice and SDG16+ who focuses on prevention, states locally led TJ initiatives and justice is key to prevention and sustainability, “given that it can penetrate into core structures and habits that allow for mass violations to happen.”<sup>13</sup>

## **Chapter III. Literature Review**

### **A. Foundational Literature on Transitional Justice**

In order to understand South Africa’s current relationship with its transition, as well as the importance of temporal assessment of TJ efficacy- there must be a holistic picture painted regarding transitional justice’s mechanisms, goals, measurability, and more.

In 2004 the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed transitional justice practices in the United Nations report titled *The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies*. In this report, Secretary-General Annan notably provides a working definition of transitional justice that is still often utilized today.<sup>14</sup> The report states:

the notion of transitional justice... comprises the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past

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<sup>13</sup> Working Group on Transitional Justice and SDG16+. “On Solid Ground: Building Sustainable Peace and Development After Massive Human Rights Violations.” *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 2019, 9. [https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/files/ugd/90b3d6\\_d993cf5e7b4f494a9ae96edaa2b962a3.pdf](https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/files/ugd/90b3d6_d993cf5e7b4f494a9ae96edaa2b962a3.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Akuoko, Akosua “Thesis Proposal” *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar. Columbia University*. May 2023

abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation. These may include both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement and individual... or a combination thereof.<sup>15</sup>

This definition proved to be influential<sup>16</sup>, providing scholars with a generally agreed upon definition of the practice with broad goals of reconciliation, peace, and justice. This definition reflects the wide range of mechanisms and the individualized nature of transitional justice, a sentiment many other scholars share within their own definitions of TJ.

Numerous transitional justice mechanisms have been broadly written about within the academic human rights sphere. Within literature, it has largely been agreed upon that transitional justice consists of two foundational frameworks which have continually been seen as in tension with one another. “TJ engages in both restorative justice, focused on peacebuilding mechanisms, and retributive justice, known for accountability and often associated with legal court processes. Between these two schools of thought, states moving towards democracy routinely utilize both methods to balance justice verse reconciliation and grapple with how to move all parts of society forward,”<sup>17</sup> while simultaneously addressing issues of the past.

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<sup>15</sup> UN Security Council, *The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies: Report of the Secretary-General*. S/2004/616. August 2004, 4. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/transitional-justice#:~:text=Transitional%20justice%20aims%20to%20provide,the%20prevention%20of%20new%20violations.>

<sup>16</sup> Walker, Margaret Urban. “Capturing Transitional Justice: Exploring Colleen Murphy’s *The Conceptual Foundations of Transitional Justice*.” *Journal of Global Ethics* 14, no. 2 (2018): 137–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2018.1506997>.

<sup>17</sup> Akuoko, Akosua “Thesis Proposal” *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar*. Columbia University. May 2023, 4.

Authors such as Payam Akhavan take a strong leaning towards retributive justice, arguing the importance of punishment and accountability mechanisms. Akhavan's intellectual camp argues that deterrence is best produced through conscious punishment of those involved in human rights violations, including leaders. Although this author largely writes about former Yugoslavia, he still makes a generalized case for retributive justice and its link to peace in new democracies. Akhavan cites numerous reasons, including marginalizing leaders in support of crimes against humanity by public trial and deterring vengeance through the consistent reminder of the importance of accountability.<sup>18</sup>

To continue, Wigglesworth's examination of retributive transitional justice processes in Sierra Leone is similar to Akhavan's, and calls for the use of trials as a form of deterrence. For Wigglesworth, not only is trial at the International Criminal Court a major deterrent for recurrence, long-term reconciliation should also be achieved through domestic trials of lower-level criminals, which frequently can work quicker than the International Criminal Court due to locality and other reasons. Wigglesworth makes clear her perspective stating, "peace without justice can never be justice."<sup>19</sup>

"Restorative justice, on the other hand, in some ways redefines what usually is considered as justice. Laurel Fletcher and Harvey Weinstein are able to effectively criticize retributive

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<sup>18</sup> Akhavan, Payam. "Beyond Impunity: Can International Criminal Justice Prevent Future Atrocities?" *The American Journal of International Law* 95, no. 1 (2001): 7–31, 9. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2642034>. This paragraph is a full quote from Akuoko, Akosua "Thesis Proposal" *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar*. May 2023, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Wigglesworth, Gillian. "The End of Impunity? Lessons from Sierra Leone." *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-84), no. 4 (2008): 809–27, 827. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25144877>. This paragraph is a full quote from Akuoko, Akosua "Thesis Proposal" *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar*. May 2023, 4.

mechanisms such as trials while making a strong case for restorative justice as a vehicle or instrument for societal reconciliation and restructuring. Retributive justice often fails to address society as a whole and enable a mass healing process within the community.”<sup>20</sup> Rather, trials identify and single out high-level individuals who have facilitated or largely been complicit in human rights violations. Therefore, the authors argue that although retributive justice is important, these practices must be integrated into the larger framework of restorative reconciliation such as “humanitarian assistance, democracy building, and economic development” which are placed with the “task of resuscitating a ‘sick society.’”<sup>21</sup> It is important that equal weight is placed on structural attempts at change such as nation rebuilding and socioeconomic development within transitional frameworks.

## B. Holistic Transitional Justice

Fundamental to this thesis is understanding how far and wide transitional justice can reach in practice. This cannot be done without recognizing the socioeconomic backdrop of vast inequality that frequently fuels violence, corruption, and greater conflict. Often inseparable are the ways in which movements to peace and democratic transition must address both civil and political rights violations as well as socioeconomic barriers that have enabled their growth.

Although this can differ in practice, TJ should use its various mechanisms to address the overarching themes of transition such as the root causes, democratic paths to acknowledge

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<sup>20</sup> Akuoko, Akosua “Thesis Proposal” *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar, Columbia University*. May 2023, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Fletcher, Laurel E, and Weinstein, Harvey M. “Violence and Social Repair: Rethinking the Contribution of Justice to Reconciliation.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2002): 573–639, 580 <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2002.0033>.



problematic pasts, and structural change efforts such as redistribution. The theoretical alignment of transitional justice and the broader conception of transition is clear, implying shared trajectories and expected outcomes. Thus, if various transitional justice mechanisms were implemented robustly, TJ would encompass larger transitional goals including socio-economic and positive rights which regularly fall outside of transitional justice processes used in practice.

Much of academic literature regarding transitional justice shares some of this sentiment. A truly holistic approach to post-conflict transition must trace issues to the original catalysts of violence which often is socioeconomic inequality known to “pre-date, run concurrently with and follow episodes of political violence.”<sup>22</sup> In *Transitional Justice and Peace Building: Diagnosing and Addressing the Socioeconomic Roots of Violence through a Human Rights Framework* by Lisa J. Laplante, she highlights the importance of transitional justice’s ability to go beyond its focus of civil and political rights. Rather it should truly become comprehensive in nature, using its tools to address additional aspects including structural issues through interweaving developmental policies and transitional tools. Laplante stresses this ideology throughout her paper, making a strong argument for transitional justices’ ability to envision long-term political will and commitment.<sup>23</sup> This newer imagining of the transitional model is much needed, and similar to other arguments made in the field. For example, René Urueña and María Angélica Prada-Urbe writers of *Transitional Justice and Economic Policy*, argue that transitional justice and its

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<sup>22</sup> Laplante, L. J. “Transitional Justice and Peace Building: Diagnosing and Addressing the Socioeconomic Roots of Violence through a Human Rights Framework.” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2, no. 3 (2008): 331–55, 333. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijn031>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

practitioners risk weakening “its objective if it fails to address the fundamental causes of conflict.”<sup>24</sup>

Whilst the argument for a more expansive idea of transition is clear, some arguments indeed question the importance, need, and desirability of a more holistic transitional framework.

Heavily debated is the line between broader development goals and TJ, leaving René Urueña and María Angélica Prada-Uribe to acknowledge the existing argument; “[transitional justice mechanisms] are already overstretched and underfunded and have a timing problem: Whereas transitional justice mechanisms are supposed to have a short life span, socioeconomic justice is a long-term political project.”<sup>25</sup>

Although the entirety of societal reconstruction and development cannot rest on equitable TJ practices, TJ nonetheless is an apparatus that is implemented as the dust settles on violence. Thus, transitional justice has the ability to set the tone for national rebuilding. With one of TJ’s primary goals being nonrecurrence, these early moments in reconstruction schema are key in establishing non-repetition as a pillar of rebuilt society. Rather than transitional justice absorbing long-term development issues, they instead must work in tandem with one another, as “both fields complement and reinforce each other in pursuit of shared long-term goals—especially goals directed at transforming society.”<sup>26</sup> René Urueña and María Angélica Prada-Uribe reference arguments made by Roger Duthie, ICTJ senior research expert, in *Toward a Development-Sensitive Approach to Transitional Justice* where he states;

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<sup>24</sup> Urueña, René, and María Angélica Prada-Uribe. “Transitional Justice and Economic Policy.” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 14, no. 1 (2018): 397–410, 398 <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-101317-031259>.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 405-406

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 403

By directly addressing development issues, transitional justice measures may play a role in drawing attention to such issues, in contributing to development, and in shaping development policies in such a way that they become more sensitive to the causes and consequences of past human rights abuses.<sup>27</sup>

### C. Young South African Perspectives and Research

There has been previous research regarding South Africa's move to peace as well as their relationship with transitional justice and their reconciliation process. The term "Born Free" has been given to people born after the 1994 end of Apartheid. Both Vanessa Malila, author of *Being a Born Free – the Misunderstandings and Missed Opportunities Facing Young South Africans*<sup>28</sup> and Nadine Bowers Du Toit et al., authors of *Born Free? South African Young Adults, Inequity, and Reconciliation in Stellenbosch* describe the complex relationship Black youth have with this title, as many born free people feel a disconnect from the peace and freedom this word references.<sup>29</sup> Although born post-Apartheid, young South Africans are still faced with many issues stemming from the Apartheid regime. Alarming, South Africa has been deemed one of the most unequal regions in the world by the World Bank<sup>30</sup>. With young adults many of whom

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<sup>27</sup> Urueña, René, and María Angélica Prada-Urbe. "Transitional Justice and Economic Policy." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 14, no. 1 (2018): 397–410, 403 <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-101317-031259>.

<sup>28</sup> Malila, Vanessa. "Being a Born Free - the Misunderstandings and Missed Opportunities Facing Young South Africans." *Rhodes Journalism Review* 2015, no. 35 (2015): 126–35. <https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC175765>

<sup>29</sup> Du Toit, Nadine et al, "Born Free? South African Young Adults, Inequality, and Reconciliation in Stellenbosch." *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 2 (2021): 200-210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393211010747>.

<sup>30</sup> World Bank Group, "New World Bank Report Assesses Sources of Inequality in Five Countries in Southern Africa." 2022.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/09/new-world-bank-report-assesses-sources-of-inequality-in-five-countries-in-southern-africa>

are born post-Apartheid making up 63% of the country's population,<sup>31</sup> most youth 18-34, "fall within one of three categories: uneducated, unemployed, and unemployable."<sup>32</sup>

Although young adults within South Africa are still dealing with the historical and present implications of Apartheid there has only been a handful of academic research studies that highlight their voices. Frequently this demographic is included in relevant reconciliation analysis, but their nuance perspectives are not highlighted independently.

*Born Free, but Still Chained*, a report produced by the South African Institute of Race proves to be a significant and supported document that delves into the issues born frees face post-transition through using a wealth of statistical information, including demographics, family life, employment, education, living conditions, political participation and more. Though this report is statistically comprehensive, there is a lack of lived experience and qualitative research within this report, and furthermore was released in 2015.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, *Born Free? South African Young Adults, Inequity, and Reconciliation in Stellenbosch* provides qualitative information from South African youth regarding their societal position, reconciliation, and inequity. This study engages in a similar question to this thesis but has a narrow focus on the youth Christian community and how their religious views intertwine with reconciliation. This research consists of a qualitative approach to three case studies of 12

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<sup>31</sup> Statistics South Africa, "SA Population Reaches 58,8 Million." 2019. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12362>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Kane-Berman, John. *Born Free But Still In Chains: South Africa's First Apartheid Generation*. South African Institute of Race Relations, 2015. <https://irr.org.za/reports/occasional-reports/files/irr-report-2013-born-free-but-still-in-chains-april-2015.pdf>.

people in congregations who live in Stellenbosch, a town in the Western Cape Province. Researchers found reconciliation remains a “hot button [issue]... eliciting conflicting yet nuanced responses” across races.<sup>34</sup> Notably, Black respondents explained that the burden of reconciliation was placed on their ability to forgive and move forward rather than their white counterparts’ ability to recognize harm. This research provides some insight into the general opinions of Black South African youth, but nonetheless is still narrowly defined to one community.

## **Chapter IV.           Apartheid and the South African Transitional Process**

### **A. Historical Overview of Apartheid**

The official implementation of South African Apartheid happened in 1948 after the Afrikaner Nationalist Party came into power. The draconian institutionalization of racial segregation legally marked Black Africans as inferior to their white counterparts. At its core, Apartheid fought to maintain white supremacist norms that pervaded South Africa decades before 1948.<sup>35</sup> What followed the Nationalist Party’s rise to power was numerous policies that separated nearly every aspect of Black South African life. <sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Du Toit, Nadine Bowers, Dion Forster, Elisabet le Roux, and Shantelle Weber. “Born Free? South African Young Adults, Inequality, and Reconciliation in Stellenbosch.” *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 2 (2021): 200–210, 204 <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393211010747>.

<sup>35</sup> Perry, John and T. Debey Sayndee. *African Truth Commissions and Transitional Justice*. (Lexington Books, 2015), 16. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=987145&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>36</sup> Finchilescu, Gillian, and Colin Tredoux. “The Changing Landscape of Intergroup Relations in South Africa.” *Journal of Social Issues* 66, no. 2 (2010): 223–36, 224. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2010.01642.x>.

South Africans were prohibited from interracial marriage, educational institutions were separated, additionally the Group Areas Act and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act forced and legitimized segregated living areas.<sup>37</sup> The policy implementations of the Afrikaner government suppressed POC South Africans in a multitude of ways- embedding itself in many aspects of day-to-day life. Apartheid “dictated where a person could live and work as well as the degree of political involvement he/she could enjoy. Maintained by the countries minority class of white South Africans, the system often depended on state sponsored violence.”<sup>38</sup>

Created in 1912, the African National Congress was key in the formation of anti-Apartheid movements.<sup>39</sup> Yet, even with a strong anti-Apartheid opposition led by the ANC and its leader, Nelson Mandela, dissenting communities faced extensive human rights abuses, racist governmental policies, police brutality and more. Resistance movements such as the student Soweto March quickly turned deadly with a reported “451 deaths and 3,907 injuries, of which 2,389 were directly caused by police [brutality].”<sup>40</sup> The abuse and human rights violations that POC South African communities faced was extensive. Nonetheless, by the 1980s resistance efforts united around peaceful opposition to Apartheid through maximizing support in all nonwhite communities and calling for a mixed-race government more representative of the South African population.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Finchilescu, Gillian, and Colin Tredoux. “The Changing Landscape of Intergroup Relations in South Africa.” *Journal of Social Issues* 66, no. 2 (2010): 223–36, 224. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2010.01642.x>.

<sup>38</sup> Perry, John, and T. Debey Sayndee. *African Truth Commissions and Transitional Justice*. (Lexington Books, 2015), 16.

<sup>39</sup> Kurtz, Lester. “The Anti-Apartheid Struggle in South Africa (1912-1992).” International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2010. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/anti-Apartheid-struggle-south-africa-1912-1992/>.

<sup>40</sup> Finchilescu, Gillian, and Colin Tredoux. “The Changing Landscape of Intergroup Relations in South Africa.” *Journal of Social Issues* 66, no. 2 (2010): 223–36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2010.01642.x>. [page?](#)

<sup>41</sup> Kurtz, Lester. “The Anti-Apartheid Struggle in South Africa (1912-1992).” International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2010. <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/anti-Apartheid-struggle-south-africa-1912-1992/>.

The anti-Apartheid movement opened the doors for negotiation after the release of formally incarcerated Nelson Mandela. It was during the negotiation period when the dismantling of Apartheid began, the damages of the past decades were reflected upon, and a path to move forward was shaped. An excerpt from the interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993 reflects on the importance of creating transitional measures to address the many decades of Apartheid in the country.

The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society. The adoption of this Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge. These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimisation.<sup>42</sup>

After South Africa's first democratic election gave power to the African National Congress in 1994, the country began to reckon with its past of racial discrimination. As seen in the interim Constitution, rehabilitation of citizens and respect for all people were foundational ideas woven into the temporary constitution as well as the official constitution instated in 1996. During this

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<sup>42</sup> The Republic of South Africa. *Interim Constitution of South Africa*. Act 200, Chapter 15 1993. <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/constitution-republic-south-africa-act-200-1993#GENERAL%20AND%20TRANSITIONAL%20PROVISIONS>

time of political transition, the African National Congress announced various restorative and developmental policies to aid people in moving forward and provide them with essential needs. This included but was not limited to the creation of one of the most notable transitional justice mechanisms, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SATRC) in the Promotion of National United Act of 1995. The SATRC relied on restorative processes to help the country rebuild and heal the deep wounds created during the decades of Apartheid, human rights abuses, and crimes. "The state used conditional amnesty as a way to move towards reconciliation while also allowing victims and their families to receive *some* justice through state facilitated perpetrator truth telling and acknowledgment."<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, various developmental policies enacted by the ANC, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RPD) and the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan, "declared that attacking poverty and deprivation would be the first priority of the democratic election."<sup>44</sup> Yet, these policies were unable to provide communities in need with extensive economic relief. Although significantly more South Africans were able to receive better living standards such as housing, education, and health, the pace of development had been insufficient in making any significant dent in addressing the vast amount of inequality Black citizens faced.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Akuoko, Akosua "Thesis Proposal" *HRTS G6990 Human Rights Research Seminar. Columbia University.* May 2023, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Makino, Kumiko, and Chizuko Satō. "Public Policy and Transformation in South Africa after Democratisation." *Institute of Developing Economies*, 2013, 1-9, 3 <https://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Reports/Spot/33.html>

<sup>45</sup> Nowak, Michael. "The First Ten Years After Apartheid: An Overview of the South African Economy." Essay. In *Post-Apartheid South Africa the First Ten Years. International Monetary Fund*, (2005): 1–10, 2. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/nft/2006/soafrica/eng/pasoaftr/>.



This has had long-term effects on South Africa as well as South Africans' perception of the transitional process as time has moved on. The South African Reconciliation Barometer Survey is a national representative and highly respected temporal assessment of peace and reconciliation within the country, created by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation. Although this report is not exclusive to young adult viewpoints, the Reconciliation barometer does reflect issues caused by the lack of transitional mechanisms aimed at addressing systemic socioeconomic factors of Apartheid. The 2021 report reveals general public agreement on Apartheid's legacy, stating, "more than two-thirds of all respondents agree that many Black South Africans, broadly defined, are poor today due to Apartheid's legacy (72%)...Conversely, many white South Africans are still well-off because of the lasting effects of Apartheid (71%)."<sup>46</sup>

## PART TWO

### Chapter V. Research Design and Methodology

#### A. Approach and Method

Central to this thesis is the research question, *what are the perspectives of some Born Free South Africans regarding the transitional process, peace, and the current state of reconciliation?* Through the utilization of qualitative research and inductive reasoning, this study

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<sup>46</sup> Moosa, Mikhail. "SA Reconciliation Barometer Survey: 2021 Report." *The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation*, (2021): 1-50, 46. [https://www.ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/IJR\\_SA-Reconciliation-Barometer-2021.pdf](https://www.ijr.org.za/home/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/IJR_SA-Reconciliation-Barometer-2021.pdf).

captures narrative attitudes regarding current reconciliation. The use of semi-structured remotely held interviews with South Africans between the ages of 18-29 proved to be the best course of action for this study. In addition to youth focused interviews, semi-structured remotely held interviews were also conducted with South African based experts regarding issues of post-transition.

Both inductive reasoning and qualitative research were central components to the methodology of this preliminary research study. This was an intentional choice aimed at highlighting frequently overshadowed South African voices. Thus, ensuring that participants felt heard and comfortable during the research process was of utmost importance. The onus placed on inductive reasoning within the methodology process allowed interviews to be unrestricted by preconceived constraints and notions.

Bhangu et al. highlight the importance of qualitative research for a similar reason. Although researchers are often aware of socioeconomic and political factors that shape issues, constructing arguments and policies on what is deemed as “common sense deductions” of statistical information makes assumptions regarding populations rather than inquiring about their perspectives, behaviors, opinions, and needs.<sup>47</sup> Rather, it is the open-ended inquiry of the research question that is imperative. Accordingly, commitment to inductive research allows the participants to educate the researcher through extracting meaning from interview responses.<sup>48</sup> A qualitative research approach was initially chosen to accurately capture the breadth of

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<sup>47</sup> Bhangu, Shagufta, Fabien Provost, and Carlo Caduff. “Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods – Part I.” *Perspectives in Clinical Research* 14, no. 1 (2023): 39–42. doi:10.4103/picr.picr\_253\_22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

experiences and perspectives of research participants. Interviews created a relationship with the participants and arguably felt less extractive when compared to other methodologies that also could have potentially been used within this research.

### B. Sample Size, Limitations, and Scope of Study

The study was conducted between September 14<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Research was conducted remotely; this choice was a result of practical constraints such as not being able to travel to South Africa during the appropriate time frame. Even through remote means, interviews still served as a space where educational and fruitful conversation thrived.

This study includes 5 interviews in total; 3 in-depth youth-based interviews and 2 professional interviews with South Africans whose education and work history reflect deep commitment to topics reasonably surrounding this research. Prescreening was deemed necessary for this study to ensure that primary criteria for participation were followed. Prerequisites for everyone in this study included the following, a) participants must be over the age of 18 at the time of the interview, and b) participants must have had previously lived in South Africa or currently reside in the country. Additionally, youth-based participants must be born during or after 1994, whilst experts must have clear understanding of South African youth trends. Both the age requirement as well as the geographical requirements ensured adequate suitability for this study. Recruitment for participation included reaching out to individuals over social media platforms and email.

Within the total interview sample size, only one identified as male while the other 4 identified as

women. Additionally, all but one currently lived in South Africa and all interviews were conducted with individuals who identify as Black.

Considering the geographical limitations of this study as well as the achievable sample size within the given time frame, perspectives and opinions written within this thesis cannot and should not be taken as a statistically accurate representation of South African perspectives. Rather, the information and analysis provided throughout this paper should be considered as a representation of *some* viewpoints regarding reconciliation, through the illumination and examination of a few individuals from largely underrepresented communities.

The decision for remote interviews did affect research and participants due to digital inaccessibility and unstable connectivity. Although when considering travel constraints, remote interviews proved to be a great alternative, it is important to acknowledge that strong internet and video were not always feasible for all participants. Additionally, due to this limitation technical difficulties, internet glitching, and distractions from in-person environment surely caused disruption during interviews at times hindering communication between participant and primary researcher.

Each person was given the ability to consent to the voice recording of their interview, with the clear exclusion of identifiable characteristics to ensure the comfortability of each participant. This choice was given both a few days prior and immediately before starting the recording for each interview. 4 interviewees consented to having conversation recorded a few days prior to scheduled interview. One participant on the other hand originally denied consent to recorded

conversation, but later changed their mind due to internet stability issues affecting both our ability to effectively communicate. Due to internet issues, the author and said participant had to switch from a video conversation to a phone interview in order to complete initial conversation, thus pushing the interview from taking around one hour to taking over two hours when factoring in all internet issues faced during that time.

## **Chapter VI. Findings and Analysis**

The next chapter of this thesis focuses on the overall findings, themes, and analysis of the qualitative data gathered. Central to this research is understanding the viewpoint, priorities, needs, and opinions on the transitional process to democracy and the current needs of South African youth to ensure the strength of the democratic state and its ability to truly create generational longevity. Through academic analysis, the perspectives and opinions of those interviewed can illustrate and/or add to current South African discourse regarding the state of the nation.

The findings and analysis below represent three themes which emerged from a data-up perspective; identifying meaning, commonality, and differences between what each participant said throughout conversation. Questioning was largely based on open-ended directives, allowing for participants to feel wholly comfortable in what they share on record, and have directive control, as opposed to a more probative framework for interview participation.

A. South African Youth are heavily affected by Inequality.

*"We're sick of not being able to access jobs. We are sick of lacking opportunities."*<sup>49</sup> –

***Participant 1***

Young South Africans find themselves in the throes of economic insecurity, understandably becoming more and more agitated by growing inequality. Within this research, all respondents recognized the deep effects this has on the population. The most common response references the acute joblessness, houselessness, and high education fees that currently plague the country.

This perspective is illustrated by **Participant 3** who affirmed, “we believe that education is one of the tools that we can use to equalize the society but as things stand now in this country a lot of young Black people don't have access to education due to lack of capital to finance their education.”<sup>50</sup>

As highlighted by all individuals, the socio-economic human rights fulfillment for Black youth within South Africa has been largely inadequate and many have not had the right to work, housing, and education progressively realized.

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<sup>49</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

**Participant 2** echoes this narrative stating, “I think if you were to ask an ordinary South African what is the most present need? It would be to solve the unemployment challenge, [...] which is the most pressing and the most urgent for many young people who are needing to survive.”<sup>51</sup>

The urgency to correct unemployment, housing, and education conveyed during interviews supports the 2023 report released by the World Bank regarding socioeconomic rights within the country. The World Bank expects economic growth to decrease by .5% in 2023 compared to the rates in 2022. Coupled with the reported half a million fewer jobs in the country which primarily affects the employment of women and youth,<sup>52</sup> socioeconomic development has failed to produce broad rights fulfillment due to the inability to protect and produce an adequate number of jobs for its citizens. <sup>53</sup>

**Participant 3** explains, "the issue of joblessness, this one tops the list. It is destabilizing families; it's destabilizing the country [...] it's something that the government needs to look into and try to address as soon as possible but it's not an issue we can be simplistic about. [...] It's very concerning because it affects mostly young people.”<sup>54</sup> This participant's statements echo common sentiment regarding inequality in South Africa by Black youth.

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<sup>51</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>52</sup> World Bank Group. “Macro Poverty Outlook for South Africa Brief.” April 2023. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099550204132331586/idu0f2bdab130c9c904ff40bd3f0d5cf3cf3b775>

<sup>53</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, “BTI 2022 Country Report — South Africa.” 2022. <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/ZAF#pos9>

<sup>54</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

## **Theme One: Lingering Racial Issues and Addressing the Past**

### **A. Lack of Racial Cohesion**

All participants acknowledged racial issues and undertones as a current hindrance to achieving actualized peace and reconciliation within South Africa due to the extreme inequality that is still present.

**Participant 3** states, "this conflicted relationship between whites and blacks, I say that it creates a stalemate- a political stalemate which affects the economic growth of the country and even the social cohesion. The idea is that there is no problem in South Africa that can be explained outside of this race relations indeed can be a framework to explain everything that is happening within the country."<sup>55</sup>

**Participant 3** focused heavily on what they describe as a total lack of racial cohesion, arguing that although the transitional period in South Africa has come to an end, many of the underlying racial tensions have persisted within the country. Frequently throughout conversation with four out of the five participants, they cited previous inadequate handling of Apartheid issues within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as other transitional mechanisms and policies as reason for the lack of racial reconciliation and cohesion within the country. In a similar vein, other participants cited settler colonialism within the country as another unsolved issue greatly affecting racial cohesion and equity within South Africa. Upon analysis, it became

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<sup>55</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.



clear that there was a mixed emotional sentiment from participants regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission specifically. While some acknowledged the achievements made during the reconstruction period, everyone considered past transitional and developmental mechanisms/policies to have fallen short of its goals.

**Participant 3** continued further, stating, “what we need is meaningful societal cohesion, we need meaningful reconciliation and how do you achieve that? The mistake was that after the collapse of Apartheid we didn't have a restoration of relationships between the two conflicting races so the social fabric of this country is fractured.”<sup>56</sup> To illustrate this, this participant continues to explain the persistent “degradation and subjugation” that Black individuals face at the hands of the South African white community.

Through these statements made by **Participant 3**, it is understood that racial issues still plague the country, and furthermore act as a foundational system for present-day inequality that consistently affects the everyday lives of its citizens. Those who partook in this research acknowledge the implications of what they deem as a piecemeal approach to reconciliation.

**Participant 2** spoke at length regarding what she considered insufficient handling of the TRC,

I think the definition of politically motivated crime is also very broad, wide, and lacks clear and concise meaning. What is not politically motivated? My father, who was never a political activist in no way or another, found himself arrested several times during Apartheid for simply being Black... You had to have been arrested under one of the

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<sup>56</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

political crimes, but it is such that ordinary Black people in going about their lives were continuously facing violence and torture... So the definition of politically motivated is not concise and it's not clear what is and what isn't, but in the cases that finally made it to the TRC it seemed to be defined very narrowly...Even if we don't look at the substance of [the TRC], just in its makeup [and] its framework, it was always going to pose a great limitation for [reconciliation].<sup>57</sup>

**Participant 2** is not alone in her perspective. This individualized model of conditional amnesty that the TRC used to determine justice proves to have lasting effects on the country. Author Mahmood Mamdani identifies the central issue of the TRC stating, “if the ‘crime against humanity’ involved the targeting of entire communities for racial and ethnic cleansing and policing, individualizing the victim obliterated this particular – many would agree central characteristic of Apartheid.”<sup>58</sup>

Even though TRC created the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee to report adequate recommendations for reconciliation and rehabilitation including individual community and institutional reparations, it is clear that the individualization of the definition of victim negatively affected some of the Black community and hindered true reconciliation. Those who suffered at the hands of “everyday” Apartheid such as unwarranted arrests as well as employment and land ownership restrictions fell outside of the deemed definition and thus were not able to receive

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<sup>57</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>58</sup> Mamdani, Mahmood. “Amnesty or Impunity? A Preliminary Critique of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC).” *Diacritics*, vol. 32, no. 3/4. (2002): 33–59, 34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1566444>.

compensation for their experiences.<sup>59</sup> Allowing the onus of the victim definition to rely on gross violence human rights crimes “necessarily neglects the violence and oppression committed since the beginnings of settler colonialism in South Africa.”<sup>60</sup> It is this inequity which ASJ Park touches on that acts as the foundation for the inequity young adults are facing today within the country. Park writes, “structural and systemic injustices fell outside of the mandate of the TRC but continue to be the chief sources of interracial discord as most Black South Africans continue to live in poverty while white South Africans have not been required to surrender any of the privileges that they amassed under Apartheid.”<sup>61</sup> Without this community component to the reconciliatory process, the governing state largely ignored systemic racism and settler colonialism that greatly shaped the history of the country. The national fumbling of the reparations process is clear both Park, Mamdani and **Participant 2** would argue.

#### B. Reproduction of Apartheid Through Economic Means: Neocolonialism

*“Apartheid never ended; it was privatized.”<sup>62</sup> -Participant 5*

In speaking about the ways the South African government has inadequately addressed racial relations, participants described the transformation of racial conflict rather than its conclusion post-Apartheid. The hoarding of wealth by the white community persistently was stated as a dire

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<sup>59</sup> Park, ASJ, Santos, M. “The counter-reparative impacts of South Africa's reparations gap: victims as reparations ‘experts’ and the role of victims’ organizations.” *Journal of Law and Society*. (2022): 635–657.

<https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/doi/full/10.1111/jols.12400>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

issue in South Africa and furthermore constitutes the recreation of Apartheid systems within the country.

**Participant 1** expressed issue with Apartheid reproduction through economic means, identifying the heavily skewed distribution of money within the country; "they have generational wealth set up for them, I don't see them struggling anytime soon. It's insane how the white children in South Africa thrive and they can afford to buy houses because their parents help them out. Whereas Black children, we have to start from the ground up. Their parents' own properties, *plural*, that they can pass down to their children. They have legacies because of the system that was before them."<sup>63</sup>

**Participant 1**'s opinion is consistent with greater research regarding inequality in South Africa. According to South Africa's Gini coefficient, a ratio aimed at accurately gauging inequality within country borders, the country produces a number of .65 as of 2018 thus making it the highest Gini coefficient in the world as well as the most unequal.<sup>64</sup> The major differences in lived experience between white and Black South Africans makes it clear that the international community who supported the end of Apartheid, should be greatly concerned by the repetition described, and furthermore should actively advocate for an economic shift within the country.

**Participant 2** expressed concern regarding Apartheid reproduction within their interview, "the state has transformed, the economy has not and largely Black South Africans [...] are not owners

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<sup>63</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>64</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, "BTI 2022 Country Report — South Africa." 2022. <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/ZAF#pos9>

of industries, they exist as laborers in them, and to the large extent that is through the perpetuation of inequality. In the immediate, what people want are jobs, right? But that's also very telling, because that is how people relate to the economy; as laborers."<sup>65</sup>

**Participant 3** followed suit with a similar narrative, stating, "we know that this country is also unequal. White people in this country own the means of production so it's always easier for them to shut Black people out of the labor market." page 1

**Participants 2 and 3** spoke about Black South Africans' relationship to the labor market during their interviews. Both identifying white people within the country as the owners while Black individuals are left as the laborers within the system and additionally not benefiting as extensively as their white counterparts. The more subtle reproduction of previous systems rooted in racism and inequity through the use of the economy by the settler power is akin to neocolonialism.

**Participant 2** focused extensively on the issue of neocolonialism, putting it perfectly within conversation she states:

I mean, if you think about colonialism and the concept of it is that generally it is to take over resources and wealth and control of countries. So almost the political part is a vehicle towards controlling the wealth and the resources, which were almost always the most important part... So, almost political control is the [least important part] of the colonial conquest because what is truly important is the control of the resources. What

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<sup>65</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

has happened in the past a hundred years, I think in the anti-colonial movement, is that there's been a great deal of political control, almost in all African countries, and very little of the control of wealth, power, and resources.<sup>66</sup>

Participant identification of neocolonialism within the country is of huge importance when understanding issues prevalent in African transitional processes in particular, who have faced lengthy colonial eras within their history. If transitional justice and other field such as development want to truly make a positive and profound impact in previously colonized countries, there must be a decolonial lens applied. Decolonization in this context includes the focus on socioeconomic rights acknowledgement and meaningful redistribution of wrongfully obtained wealth through colonialization and other racist practices.

## **Theme Two: Implementation Gap and Lack of Accountability**

*“How do we measure KPIs (key performance indicators) for government officials? Because we are not seeing anything, for example, the unemployment rate just keeps on increasing though there's literally quite high numbers of graduates in the country.”<sup>67</sup> - **Participant 4***

What was produced during the South African transitional process still brought a great deal of change to the country, although it fell short of socioeconomic change in the Black material condition. Furthermore, how the state came to be known for its high inequality also surrounds issues regarding the implementation of what otherwise looks like strong policies and promises on

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<sup>66</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>67</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

paper according to some citizens. Notably, South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, the South African constitution, and foundational policy frameworks such as the Reconstruction and Development Program created an initial expectation of economic empowerment, equality, and fulfillment of both positive and negative human rights for the South African people.

#### A. SATRC, Policy Plans, and the Constitution

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission centered its decisions on creating accountability and fostering a sense of justice and initial reconciliation through the storytelling and acknowledgment of crimes committing during 1960 to the end of Apartheid in 1994. Within this framework, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee (RRC) released various recommendations for the implementation of equitable policy and reparatory action. Detailed in this report are 5 principles which guide the Committee's framework: **redress**, "the right to fair and adequate compensation"<sup>68</sup>; **reinstitution**, "the right to the restoration, where possible, of the situation existing prior to the violation"<sup>69</sup>; **rehabilitation**, the right to adequate and appropriate care on both the individual and community level<sup>70</sup>; **restoration of dignity**, the right to receive appropriate acknowledgment of crimes committed<sup>71</sup>; and **reassurance of non-repetition**, "the right to a guarantee of nonrecurrence, by means of appropriate legislative and/or institutional intervention and reform, that the violation

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<sup>68</sup> Reparation & Rehabilitation Committee. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report: Findings and Recommendations." Vol. 6(2). (1999): 92-180, 93-94.

[https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/vol6\\_s2.pdf](https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/finalreport/vol6_s2.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

will not be repeated.”<sup>72</sup> The five pillars of this framework align with radical transformation in South Africa, including the robust implementation and actualization of Black rights. However, the SATRC and more specifically the RRC were not charged with the ability to implement any of the recommendations given within their report. Still, the 5 pillars stated above created reasonable expectation for the realization of policy that would ameliorate the position of Black South Africans to a great extent.

While all participants did speak about the issue of proper policy execution within their interviews, **Participant 2**, in particular, addresses the issues she has with the SATRC, stating "for all intents and purposes, it really was a partial truth telling process which also had no capacity to act on its own decisions. In that, [...] none of the reparations recommended were implemented by the state. None of the policies that were recommended were implemented by the state. It was this big show and tell which largely had no consequences for the perpetrators.”<sup>73</sup>

Although the SATRC and more specifically the RRC had no capacity to truly implement its recommendations, the South African government did create the Reconstruction and Development Program to provide socioeconomic redistributive policy aimed at navigating how to move forward from Apartheid-era discriminatory economic policy. Aligning with the RCC’s pillar of reinstitution the RDP plan states, “it seeks to mobilise all our people and our country's resources toward the final eradication of Apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.



and non-sexist future.”<sup>74</sup> Although the RDP detailed a vigorous plan to address inequity and restore South Africa to a situation where Black individuals were not subjected to Apartheid; it ultimately fell short, leaving the current South African youth to exist in largely unreformed systems in the country. Since the initial creation and later abandonment of RDP in 1996,<sup>75</sup> South Africa has implemented numerous additional economic reform plans based in neoliberalism such as Growth and Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, the National Development Plan (NDP) aimed at reducing inequality by 2030, and more.<sup>76</sup> Yet, throughout the aforementioned plans of socio-economic change high inequality still manages to not only persist, but rise.

Most importantly, South Africa’s Constitution has frequently been praised by the international community for its progressive nature.<sup>77</sup> The South African constitution enshrines positive human rights within its borders.<sup>78</sup> Written in the early lines of South Africa’s preamble, the constitution places responsibility on the state to ensure that human rights are upheld and that inequity originating from the past Apartheid system is actively dismantled in the state. The preamble states, “we therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based

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<sup>74</sup> African National Congress (ANC). “The Reconstruction and Development Programme: A policy framework.” O’Malley, 1994.

<https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02103/05lv02120/06lv02126.htm>

<sup>75</sup> Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37, 26 <https://doi.org/10.2989/ccr.2021.0013>.

<sup>76</sup> Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37, 27

<sup>77</sup> The Republic of South Africa Official Information and Services. “The Constitution.” South African Government. <https://www.gov.za/constitution>.

<sup>78</sup> Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37

on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.”<sup>79</sup> Mark Heywood attributes this statement within the constitution as a “direct causal connection between the supreme law and the state’s socio-economic objective to ‘improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.’”<sup>80</sup> Additionally, the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights in 2015 after the country’s initial signature in 1994,<sup>81</sup> only further gives rise to a positive obligation to materially fulfill these rights, and creates an expectation amongst the state’s citizens that these rights will continue to be progressively actualized.<sup>82</sup>

**Participant 3** emphasizes youth perspectives on broken promises stated within the constitution specifically. He affirms "a lot of young people are starting to question the constitution of this country; they state that this constitution needs to be examined especially because we are told every day that [it] is the best in the world but [...] [it] is failing to serve the people of this country, particularly young people."<sup>83</sup> He continues by asserting, “concepts that we see in the constitution, for example, the idea that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it, are concepts that young people are beginning to want to test. [...] For example, the high levels of

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<sup>79</sup> The Republic of South Africa. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, Preamble, 1996, <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-preamble>, Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37, 27 <https://doi.org/10.2989/ccr.2021.0013>.

<sup>80</sup> Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37, 5 <https://doi.org/10.2989/ccr.2021.0013>

<sup>81</sup> UN Treaty Data Base, “Ratification Status for South Africa.” Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=162&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=162&Lang=en).

<sup>82</sup> Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37, 22-23

<sup>83</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

inequality in this country clearly show that South Africa does not belong to everyone who lives in it."<sup>84</sup>

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the state's various economic policy plans, and the South African Constitution all outline and set expectation for extensive socio-economic policy frameworks that lead to Black economic liberation for all South Africans including the youth who are frequently the most affected by these issues. Yet, youth have become acutely aware of the incredibly slow implementation of beneficial policies within the country.

Overall throughout all interviews, participants referenced the problem of implementation, but consensus regarding the topic was somewhat mixed. **Participant 3** reflected greatly on the implementation gap within the country, citing it as one of the root causes for the lack of materialized socioeconomic rights for Black Africans.

**Participant 3** comments, "I guess its implementation not necessarily that there is no political will. There is political will, but the government is not... I don't know if whether it's not well capacitated or its not empowered enough to execute and implement all these policies in the right way because South Africa has some of the best policies indeed, even regarding the reform or redress of past injustices. I think the reason I'm tempted to believe this government is not capacitated or empowered enough to undertake this reform is because the ruling class still controls everything in this country."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>85</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

The testimony provided by **Participant 3** reflects some of the confusion young people face when trying to grapple with the country's policies on paper versus their lived realities. Furthermore, **participant 3** draws attention again to the continuing cycles of Apartheid noting the current ruling class, white South Africans, remain at the top of society thus reproducing Apartheid power differentials.

On the other hand, **participant 5** and **participant 2** are hesitant to fully rely on the implementation gap as the reason why South Africa remains in its current state.

**Participant 5** articulates her thoughts, "I don't agree with it but there's a big ideology in South Africa that it's not policies that are broken, it's the execution. [...] Someone has thought about something, hence the National Development Plan, hence your Freedom Charters, hence your RDP, all these fancy programs that I keep on referring to."<sup>86</sup> The participant continues by stating, "so, there is a school of thought to be like this is really an implementation issue, if you change the heads and just execute, even on these average policies, you'd actually get there. And that might take us up to a point, [but] I don't know if it'll take us to substantively lifting like half of the population that's in poverty, completely out, but it could take us somewhere."<sup>87</sup>

**Participant 5** continues in another part of our conversation, "there's a strong sense that the ANC was always formed by the elites. And that their agenda was never like broad scale emancipatory

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<sup>86</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

program. It wasn't a decolonized agenda, [...] and so there is a sense that ideologically, the ANC was probably not as radical [...] from an economic standpoint.”<sup>88</sup>

In a similar vein, **Participant 2** states, "what most people are attributing all South African ills to is corruption to a large extent and not that there's something fundamentally structurally wrong with the way in which the government has organized itself or its priorities. I would argue that corruption is a symptom of an untransformed economy, which is the reason why people are suffering. As opposed to, I think a common narrative, that corruption is the only cause and the only reason why we're here that the state has simply been mismanaged and not that the content of the state in itself and how it functions requires revision. So, I think most people will be like every policy in South Africa is fine, the laws are great, everything is fantastic we just need a different set of politicians to be implementing the same things and you're going to see a difference.”<sup>89</sup>

The implementation gap proves to be a huge issue in South Africa, and heavily impacts Black youth. Undeniably, the execution gap citizens experience is a violation of its constitution which declares in section 237, “all constitutional obligations must be performed diligently and without delay.”<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the ANC, who has been in power since the first democratic election of South Africa has failed to fulfill their domestic obligations set out in ICESCR as the implementation gap remains largely unaddressed and the Black economic situation worsens. Nonetheless, the 2018 concluding observations from the Committee on Economic Social and

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<sup>88</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>89</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>90</sup> Heywood, Mark. “Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why Don’t They Talk to Each Other?” *Constitutional Court Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–37, 26 <https://doi.org/10.2989/ccr.2021.0013>.

Cultural Rights provide some guidance on how to address this gap in materialized rights. This includes but is not limited to, “[allocating] sufficient financial resources to the South African Human Rights Commission;”<sup>91</sup> ensuring equal minimum wage across all races, genders, and sectors;<sup>92</sup> and reviewing various financial policies such as property and corporate income taxes that currently do not “enable it to mobilize the resources required to reduce such inequalities; and [thus]... are not sufficiently progressive.”<sup>93</sup>

## B. Government Distrust

*“They’re called Rise Mzansi, and they say that they are political party for the youth.”<sup>94</sup> –*

### ***Participant 4***

Although the country has made strides towards a more equitable future post-Apartheid, much of the policy available within South Africa has been left unfulfilled- leaving feelings of distrust lingering within the youth community. **Participant 1** speaks extensively about the distrust she and many others feel about the government as well as the difficulty these feelings bring when attempting to create real change.

**Participant 1** states “it’s my first time voting in the [presidential] election [...] And so, for me, honestly at this point, I don’t see any candidates for president this fall a political power in South

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<sup>91</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. *Concluding observations on the initial report of South Africa*. E/C.12/ZAF/CO/1. Nov. 2018, 2. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1654223?ln=en>

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>94</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

Africa that are worthy of my vote. [...] I think that the core of the problem in South Africa, is there's no accountability in government. They're not being held accountable for giving people false hope and lack of service delivery [...] And so, for me, I think about who am I going to vote for? What kind of party do I want representing my country?"<sup>95</sup>

Within a later segment of the interview, she continues by stating, "in politics it's just a struggle because there's already such a grand intricate system of making sure people don't take accountability. And so, I want to believe my vote would be able to kind of push the new system where people are held accountable, but it's kind of difficult when people have been so used to lack of accountability for ~80 years. So yeah, it's a huge struggle right now for me as a voting Citizen in South Africa."<sup>96</sup>

This interview participant seems to be not alone in their struggle with the upcoming election due to distrust in South African institutions, according to the Afro Barometer 2021 round 8 survey, citizen trust in political parties is only continuing to decline, with only 27% trusting the African National Congress and 23% trusting other opposition parties.<sup>97</sup>

A prominent finding that emerged during various conversations with interview participants highlighted the rising agitation of the youth and consequently, their growing plans to take action regarding their dissatisfaction with the African National Congress. 2 participants acknowledged

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<sup>95</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>96</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Moosa, Mikhail, and Jan Hofmeyr. "South Africans' Trust in Institutions and Representatives Reaches New Low." Afrobarometer, 2021, 2.

[https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south\\_africans\\_trust\\_in\\_institutions\\_reaches\\_new\\_low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf](https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south_africans_trust_in_institutions_reaches_new_low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf)

the current influence of Rise Mzansi, a political party formed in 2023, which has attracted some of the youth demographic for the next election. Chiefly, the party focuses on securing more than just civil and political freedom. Rather, its goals include but are not limited to; securing equality in public and private institutions as well as building integrity and maintaining trust for leadership.<sup>98</sup> Considering what has previously been expressed by participants regarding their views on implementation, the appeal to Rise Mzansi is clear. Rise Mzansi addresses issues that the youth have been vocal about according to participants. In regards to economic reform, the party states,

Achieving economic justice will require a combination of structural policy levers: wealth redistribution (including through taxation); land reform; targeted economic development programmes for Black people and women; use of competition policy to deconcentrate economic sectors; employment equity; among others. We are unapologetic, bold and pragmatic about pursuing economic justice.<sup>99</sup>

The bold pursuit of economic justice and reparation in the country has been a highlighted need for South Africa, thus the party's bold declaration regarding economic reform and sparked interest in some youth, including those who may have shown voting apathy towards the ANC.

**Participant 4** states, "there is a certain disgruntlement from the youth with regards to the ANC as the ruling party, the ANC needs to be voted out. Rise Mzansi has a slogan that [... ] basically

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<sup>98</sup> RISE Mzansi. "About RISE Mzansi." 2023. <https://www.risemzansi.org/about>.

<sup>99</sup> RISE Mzansi. "Our Policies: Resetting and rebuilding South Africa towards Freedom, Justice and Prosperity." 2023, 16. [https://assets.website-files.com/6512abc58b1468c2e0784360/651e9f4c749c60cb41ed0117\\_Our%20Politics.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/6512abc58b1468c2e0784360/651e9f4c749c60cb41ed0117_Our%20Politics.pdf).



says 2024 is our 1994,"<sup>100</sup> 1994 representing the end of Apartheid and the formation of South Africa's democratic government. **Participant 4** continues later in the interview, providing her perspective on youth action during the next election, "So as a Born Free myself, I think many young people have really been quite vocal about the dissatisfaction of the way things have been happening in the country and they aren't necessarily looking forward to more like, moving on with the way things are right now. [...] They would actually want the ANC to be removed from power."<sup>101</sup>

**Participant 1** also speaks about the possibility of the youth removing the ANC from office, stating, I think now the push for the youth is to vote the ANC out [...] I'm actually happy that the way forward right now is to put in a ballot and vote. But I don't see this whole peaceful defiance lasting long, especially if the election brings a result that no one wanted. I could see something bigger happening. So back to your question, [...] [the youth] are not just talking about the situation, they are planning to take action."<sup>102</sup>

The participant continues by articulating how she and other youth would feel if the ANC were to win again, "if the ANC wins again, I totally believe that this will be the last straw for the youth and they will do whatever it takes to make sure that the ANC is empowered; they'll either hold them accountable or kick them out of government completely. That is something that I have a feeling is brewing right now in South Africa. The disillusionment of [the ANC thinking they are] creating change in the country when you haven't brought change since the 90s or the early 2000s

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<sup>100</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>101</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

and all you've done is breed corruption and more economic issues in the country without really trying to make efforts to fix those things of the past.”<sup>103</sup>

Likewise, **Participant 5** states, “there's a sense that a transition like this without war, will have always meant that. No one comes out of it completely, satisfied and that's just part of the negotiation and compromise. But for me, 30 years later, you can't have the best constitution in the world, a pragmatic constitution. And then have absolutely dire social economic indicators almost on every level, be the highest on inequality in the world, have the highest youth unemployment, have the highest racial inequality. Actually, so there's something fundamentally wrong with our transition and I think this is not going to go away. I think it's fertile grounds for a revolution as far as I'm concerned.”<sup>104</sup>

The negative sentiment regarding the 2024 election and the ANC sheds light on the profound effects of distrust within the country. The ANC, with Nelson Mandela as a leader, in many ways became the face of radical change for Black liberation, yet now many are calling for a complete overhaul of those who currently run the government. This feeling spoken about by numerous participants is especially important because of transitional justice's close link to SDG#16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. As stated best in the *UN/DESA Policy brief #108: Trust in Public Institutions: Trends and Implications for Economic Security*, the creation of inclusive societies and just institutions is deeply connected to the relationship of trust between government

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<sup>103</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>104</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

and its citizens.<sup>105</sup> Without trust in political institutions, political discontentment of citizens can lead to violence as well as high political apathy. While transitional justice has been acknowledged as a vehicle to achieve SDG16 by the United Nations, the current high distrust of the government reflects the inadequate use of transitional justice and development post-Apartheid to create forward-looking unity and consideration for future South African generations that is imperative for lasting positive peace.

**Participant 4** states “I think many young people are quite disengaged, because they feel as if there is no justice in this country, even though South Africa came to be a democracy.”<sup>106</sup>

Although some opinions categorize youth as totally detached from the political sphere,<sup>107</sup> the statements gathered during the interview process argue otherwise. Generally, participants seem to take a relatively radical stance against the African National Congress, a once highly trusted government according to previous ratings by the Afrobarometer.<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, 2 participants agreed that the lack of implementation from the current ANC government plays a role in the disengagement of youth, who already feel as if they’re not often heard or represented adequately within the political sphere and are increasingly disgruntled by the lack of appropriate rights fulfillment.

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<sup>105</sup> Perry, Jonathan. “Policy Brief #108: Trust in Public Institutions: Trends and Implications for Economic Security” *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, 2021. [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/08/PB\\_108.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/08/PB_108.pdf).

<sup>106</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York, September- October, 2023.

<sup>107</sup> Malila, Vanessa. “Being a Born Free - the Misunderstandings and Missed Opportunities Facing Young South Africans.” *Rhodes Journalism Review* 2015, no. 35 (2015): 126–35. <https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC175765>

<sup>108</sup> Moosa, Mikhail, and Jan Hofmeyr. “South Africans’ Trust in Institutions and Representatives Reaches New Low.” Afrobarometer, 2021, 1. [https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south\\_africans\\_trust\\_in\\_institutions\\_reaches\\_new\\_low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf](https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south_africans_trust_in_institutions_reaches_new_low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf)

## Theme Three: Restructuring and Economic Transformation

### A. Lack of Participation in Government

There seems to be contention regarding where South Africa should go from here. South African youth are calling for more radical approaches to addressing the issues mentioned throughout this thesis. With lower trust in government than the former generation,<sup>109</sup> the youth call for the total restructuring and economic reformation of their country.

This aligns with youth around the world, who are all calling for rapid radical change in their countries as they're no longer willing to tolerate government inaction and reliance on old ways of thinking.<sup>110</sup> Millennials and Gen Z consistently call for vigorous action to solve the issues that preside in their countries. Lead author of the United Nations Security Council's 2018 progress study on youth peace and security underlines the mistreatment of youth calls to change, stating, "many young people are frustrated by the tendency of their governments and international actors to treat youth as a problem to be solved, instead of as partners for peace."<sup>111</sup> Reassessing South African young adults as individuals who can provide powerful recommendations to solve the problems they are affected by should be a priority for the country, yet participants describe a lack

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<sup>109</sup> Moosa, Mikhail, and Jan Hofmeyr. "South Africans' Trust in Institutions and Representatives Reaches New Low." Afrobarometer, 2021.

<https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south-africans-trust-in-institutions-reaches-new-low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf>

<sup>110</sup> Medina, Alison, and Marcie Merriman. "How Gen Z around the Globe Is Reshaping Societal Norms?" *Ernest and Young*, September 2022. [https://www.ey.com/en\\_us/consulting/generational-dynamics/how-gen-z-around-the-globe-is-reshaping-societal-norms](https://www.ey.com/en_us/consulting/generational-dynamics/how-gen-z-around-the-globe-is-reshaping-societal-norms).

<sup>111</sup> Simpson, Graeme. "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth" *UN Security Council*, S/2018/86 March 2018, 3. [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Progress\\_Study\\_on\\_Youth\\_Peace\\_Security\\_A-72-761\\_S-2018-86\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Progress_Study_on_Youth_Peace_Security_A-72-761_S-2018-86_ENGLISH.pdf)

of governmental interest in youth participation. Although the South African government has moments where it centers young opinions, it is described as inadequate for some participants.

**Participant 1** states, it is not okay that they only include the youth when it's [youth month], and then we highlight the youth by its problems. [...] The youth in South Africa, to me, are not adequately heard, giving one month to talk about our problems- it's so insulting in my opinion to only want to hear our perspective once a year, when we will be the ones running the future. [...] It's ridiculous that we only have once a year to address these issues instead of discussing them [during] consistent conversation.”<sup>112</sup>

This is also echoed by **Participant 4** who explains the government’s relationship with the younger generation, “youth aren’t necessarily put at the forefront and especially when it comes to giving opinions on various things and so forth. I think youth are brought in and not necessarily made part of the discussion to reach certain policies or whatever decisions that are needed.”<sup>113</sup>

Alternatively, Rise Mzansi has caught the attention of youth by advocating for their welcomed participation, declaring,

at their best, young people have energy, new ideas, impatience for positive change, and the biggest stake in the future. Young people must be a part of shaping our national agenda, have seats at the table and play a leading role in resetting and rebuilding South

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<sup>112</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>113</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

Africa. This is why Rise Mzansi will have a single leadership collective, in which young people play a central role.<sup>114</sup>

As the next generation voting block moves further into the political sphere their wishes should be listened to. Working in collaboration with the youth and giving them tangible access to collaborate with the government is an important step in creating change that moves across generations. The calls for inclusive government and politics are necessary, and the fruitful change it may provide is clear. Building trust with the youth creates the foundational confidence necessary for successful governance and legitimacy.<sup>115</sup> As a government with high distrust amongst all its people, not only young adults- rebuilding trust with its people should be of high priority.<sup>116</sup>

## B. Redistribution

Participants stressed the need for vast structural reform. Aligning with previous themes regarding voting the ANC out of governmental power, there is more change to be done than a simple overhaul of the political figures currently in power. This is highlighted during conversation with **Participant 2** who states, “I think the bigger change that needs to happen, is structurally how our

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<sup>114</sup> RISE Mzansi. “Our Policies: Resetting and rebuilding South Africa towards Freedom, Justice and Prosperity.” 2023, 22. [https://assets.website-files.com/6512abc58b1468c2e0784360/651e9f4c749c60cb41ed0117\\_Our%20Politics.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/6512abc58b1468c2e0784360/651e9f4c749c60cb41ed0117_Our%20Politics.pdf).

<sup>115</sup> Simpson, Graeme. “The missing peace: independent progress study on youth” *UN Security Council, S/2018/86* March 2018, 12. [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Progress\\_Study\\_on\\_Youth\\_Peace\\_Security\\_A-72-761\\_S-2018-86\\_ENGLISH.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Progress_Study_on_Youth_Peace_Security_A-72-761_S-2018-86_ENGLISH.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> Moosa, Mikhail, and Jan Hofmeyr. “South Africans’ Trust in Institutions and Representatives Reaches New Low.” *Afrobarometer*, 2021. [https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south\\_africans\\_trust\\_in\\_institutions\\_reaches\\_new\\_low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf](https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/migrated/files/publications/Dispatches/ad474-south_africans_trust_in_institutions_reaches_new_low-afrobarometer-20aug21.pdf)

economy is designed. Almost that unemployment is not the problem, but rather the result of the problem of any economy that is saturated [and] run by oligarchs.”<sup>117</sup>

According to participants in this research, what entails total structural reform is clear: redistribution. Redistribution proves to be a keyword within every conversation had with interviewees. **Participant 2** continues, “restructuring for me is far more important, that the government actually take control of the key resources of the country and that they do not continue to be in the hands of white people in South Africa who have less than ~10% of the country but enjoy and control almost ~98% of the world. So that fundamentally has to be transformed.”<sup>118</sup> Yet, the spoken need for urgent redistribution is in tension with the heavy distrust that currently resides within youth groups, who would like a government that takes control and redistributes resources but also does not trust the ANC to handle those resources appropriately. The concept of taking away from those who wrongfully acquired wealth and resources and giving them back to people of color is spoken about in depth by **Participants 3** and **5** as well as briefly touched on by others. Fundamentally woven within the narratives presented throughout these conversations is the urgent need for successful implementation of an economic plan that reasonably lifts a majority of the Black population out of poverty. Along with the importance of economic restructuring in this way, the participants named placed emphasis on the importance of the inclusion of land and landlessness within the restricting conversation, as robust land redistribution could create a great shift in the current environment in South Africa.

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<sup>117</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>118</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

**Participant 5** explains her perspective using a conversation she had with Roelof Meyer, former parliament member. “There's absolutely no way with the current legal framework, with the current pro policy posture that we have, that we will lift majority of Black people out of poverty or out of landlessness without doing something drastic. I said to him, my concern is that we need to actually reopen the transition negotiations from an economics standpoint and really recraft the different vision and he said he would agree. But the thing is, he just wants to caution as young people not to create perfect histories and focus on the future.”<sup>119</sup>

Additionally, **Participant 3** states, “the issue of land is very pressing in this country, the government is not able to do land distribution effectively as a huge percentage of land is still sitting with white people who don’t rightfully own the land.”<sup>120</sup>

South Africa’s land back movement is greatly intertwined with the total economic restructuring that the youth call for the improvement of the country. Yet, attempts from the government to address the issue of land redistribution prove to be unfavorable, according to interview participants. Much of South Africa’s land back policies have been in the spirit of willing seller and willing buyer, a concept that proved to be a source of frustration for **Participants 3** and **5** who spoke about land restitution in their interviews.

**Participant 5** explains during our conversation, “the problem with restitution today is that the obligation to pay for land lies with the state. So, the state must buy from majority white landowners and predominately at market value. Any instance that has been made to adjust

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<sup>119</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.



market value has not been successful. So, they must buy. A state that is already fiscally constrained must buy land from landowners who unjustly acquired it - like that does not work for me and there are real complications with this."<sup>121</sup>

**Participant 5** identifies the contradiction between the lengthy history of Apartheid in South Africa, which afforded the white minority with majority of land through immoral means such as the stealing and the dispossession of land from the Black population in South Africa; and the current land back protocol which buys back the land from the white population which initially acquired it through theft and violence.

**Participant 3** takes his own stance on the issue of land as well, feeling similarly to **participant 5**. This interviewee highlights the irony regarding the willing buyer willing seller policies in South Africa, describing it as a very embarrassing policy.<sup>122</sup> He proclaims, “in terms of returning the land back to the dispossessed people, [willing buyer, willing seller] is not going to work. [...] How do you take something away from someone by violence, by conquest, and then when the time comes for you to return that [land] you are saying that you will only return [what] you stole from that person on your own terms, and you basically want [it to be bought] back from you. If you are unwilling to sell, that means [they] won’t get it back.”<sup>123</sup>

Participants’ distaste for the willing buyer and seller policy is in opposition with Afrobarometer research, which in 2018 found that 53% of all South African citizens believed the willing

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<sup>121</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>122</sup> Interviewed by Akosua Akuoko, New York. September- October, 2023.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

buyer/seller policy should be maintained.<sup>124</sup> Nonetheless, the ideology that the ANC, who play a massive role in securing the freedom for oppressed South Africans, in some way does not want to take robust steps to create tangible change for people of color living in the country, even whilst having deep understanding in the corrupt acquisition of Black land is prevalent with communities.

The yearning for and importance of restructuring and redistribution still remains decades after Apartheid and the subsequently implemented transitional and developmental mechanisms. There has yet to be the true radical change that the youth and others residing in the country are looking for. Whilst creating real promises for change through the country's constitution, development plans, TRC recommendations and signed Human Rights conventions, the government has fell short on its goals, lacking current genuine attempt to remove resources from the wealthy and redistribute them for the progressive realization of Black citizens' human rights and dignity.

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<sup>124</sup> Nkomo, Sibusiso "AD254 Land Redistribution: South Africans Prioritize Land Taken in Forced Removals, Support 'Willing Seller' Approach" Afrobarometer, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2018. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad254-land-redistribution-south-africans-prioritize-land-taken-forced-removals-support/>

## **Chapter VII. Conclusion**

The goal of this thesis is to deeply examine the perspectives, beliefs, and recommendations from Black youth and scholars. The testimony delivered from all 5 participants provide vital perspective on transition within South Africa and how that is affecting the next generation of free Black citizens. It is important for both transitional justice and development to be examined in this light, with nuance and understanding.

Even though this preliminary research cannot and should not be extracted as general opinions of South Africans due to its small sample size, they are nonetheless still reflective of the vast landscape of beliefs that young Black South Africans may have. Although there may not be definitive answers provided by the participants in this study, the illumination of their voices still hold immense value which can shape greater discourse. Undeniably, the young people of today will play a huge hand in how society will be shaped tomorrow, thus making the themes and views reflected in this thesis truly valuable.

As seen throughout this paper, the examination of transitional mechanisms urged for a more holistic approach when dealing with previously colonized states, whose history of inequality runs much deeper than the immediate violence at hand. Transitional justice should be guided by the complicated thickness of racialized history, thinking forwardly about the next free generation.

Through this analysis, the primary researcher sought to understand where the youth would like to go from here, considering they are often the most effected by the issues above. Although much

research has been done regarding South Africa's transitional process, there should be a closer look taken at youth and their ideals for the future. By providing this assessment, the author hopes to give context and add to greater discourse by acknowledging the youth as agents of change and markers for transgenerational assessment.

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