

**A post-apartheid nation in chains?  
Relevance of Lucky Dube's *Mickey Mouse Freedom*  
in reconfiguring forms of oppression in South Africa today**

*Ndikho Mtshiselwa*

Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies,  
University of South Africa, Pretoria

*Abstract*

The year 2014 marks South Africa's twentieth year of democratic rule. Nevertheless, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid – in the form of socioeconomic injustice – continues to haunt the post-apartheid South Africa. In view of this injustice, particularly in terms of poverty and economic inequality, the claim that all black South Africans have been free since 1994 might be unfounded. As such, the main purpose of this article is to probe the conspicuous forms of oppression still present and, subsequently, to determine whether the country has indeed achieved freedom. Firstly, the contrasting stories of liberation since the transition to democracy are explored. Secondly, the tenor of liberation of Africans that is echoed in Lucky Dube's song, *Mickey Mouse Freedom*, is employed as a lens to inquire whether the post-apartheid South Africa is still in chains or is truly free. As part of such an inquiry, the chains and effectiveness of the Christian church's prophetic witness in the country are articulated. Finally, the author concludes that South Africa still needs to be liberated from certain forms of oppression.

**Introduction**

As South Africa celebrates twenty years of democracy, the emerging rhetoric is that the country is a free and democratic state. Such rhetoric calls for some reflection on the history of South Africa in terms of its political economy and ecclesiology. The ANC-led government claims that South Africa has achieved freedom and democracy. This claim has subsequently become the narrative of the country's history, and that narrative articulates the end of constitutionalised oppression, namely apartheid. Moreover, the picture that is being painted is that South Africans, particularly black people, are better off today than they were in 1994. In other words, the lives of those who benefit

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from social grants and from the houses built by the government have improved.

Plausible as the stories of success in the past 20 years appear to be, there is nevertheless evidence of perpetual oppression, socioeconomic injustice, ill-treatment of women, as well as an apparent silence on the part of the ecclesiastical community on issues of social justice. Based on these noticeable forms of oppression in South Africa today, the author questions whether the post-apartheid South Africa can be viewed as a free nation. If there is not much merit in the claim that South Africa has achieved freedom, as will be probed below, a quest for holistic liberation will require a clear articulation of the present forms of oppression and how the task of articulating such oppression is carried out.

In the article, "Towards an Indigenous (Xhosa) South African Biblical Scholarship", Mtshiselwa examines how indigenous songs can be used to unlock or interpret an ancient text.<sup>1</sup> In line with that approach, the author will employ a historical struggle song to unlock the reality of the struggles in South Africa today. Specifically, Lucky Dube's song, *Mickey Mouse Freedom*, will be employed to reconfigure the chains binding the present post-apartheid South Africa. The following outline will serve as a methodological guide for this discussion:

- the historical narrative(s) of liberation in South Africa – which one is reliable?
- Lucky Dube's *Mickey Mouse Freedom*
- reconfiguring the chains of a post-apartheid South Africa

#### **Historical narratives of liberation in South Africa – which one is reliable?**

South African literature reveals that the country has two narratives of liberation. The first is that the country attained liberation from apartheid rule in 1994, that is, as a result of the first democratic elections that ushered into power a party that was long oppressed, the African National Congress (ANC). In other words, the transition to democracy is viewed as a point of liberation for the country. The second historical narrative claims that the country attained liberation in 1994, but that it is not yet truly free, that is, in terms of holistic liberation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ndikho Mtshiselwa, "Towards an Indigenous (Xhosa) South African Biblical Scholarship," *Old Testament Essays* 24/3 (2011): 668-689.

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One would expect that after a long struggle for liberation, which was marked by severe loss of life, South Africa would indeed be a free country. In many circles, the scourge of apartheid *is* viewed as over, and Africa is deemed to have attained freedom, but in another sense it appears that the post-apartheid South Africa is yet to attain holistic freedom. Some scholars such as Modise and Mtshiselwa have outlined the legacy of apartheid, and the concept of the “demise of apartheid” has found acceptance among some South African authors.<sup>2</sup> However, in the present article, the author will argue that apartheid is far from over.

In certain quarters, it is deemed that the narrative of liberation is complete, that is, liberation has been attained. Some scholars claim that the transition from apartheid to democracy has unveiled the liberation that the black community envisioned, struggled for and attained. As such, the demise of apartheid is applauded in such circles.<sup>3</sup>

A book by Sonneborn, entitled *The End of Apartheid in South Africa*, strongly points to the demise of apartheid. Such an end, Sonneborn suggests, marks the liberation of South Africa. So what are the issues that ended, according to Sonneborn? For example, the “schools’ curricula that focused on moulding black children into compliant, productive workers who would never question or make demands to (*sic*) their employers” ended with the demise of apartheid.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the elevation of human rights in South Africa marked the demise of apartheid.<sup>5</sup> Although Sonneborn’s points appear to be valid at first glance, they do not take into consideration the perpetual poverty that was induced by the apartheid rule, which left many South Africans disadvantaged. Given the persistent reality of poverty in the country, a critical question to ask is: has apartheid been completely defeated?

In spite of the historical narrative that articulates the demise of apartheid in South Africa, the most recent rhetoric of the ANC, *Yinde lendlela esiyihambayo* (The walk we have embarked on is long), which is borrowed from Nelson Mandela’s *Long Walk to Freedom*, points in a different direction. It implies that the ordinary citizens of South Africa, who are the members of the ANC as well as the ANC politicians, recognise that South Africa is not completely free. That recognition is in line with the second

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<sup>2</sup> See Leepo Modise and Ndikho Mtshiselwa. “The Natives Land Act of 1913 Engineered the Poverty of Black South Africans: A Historico-Ecclesiastical Perspective,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39/2 (2013): 359-378.

<sup>3</sup> Liz Sonneborn. *The End of Apartheid in South Africa*, (Chelsea House, New York: InfoBase Publishing, 2010), 46. Wilson also makes this point. See Richard Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-apartheid State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 223.

<sup>4</sup> Sonneborn. *The End of Apartheid*, 48.

<sup>5</sup> Sonneborn. *The End of Apartheid*, 46.

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narrative of the history of South Africa. Jacob Zuma, the president of the ANC and of the Republic, often chants the song:

*Yinde lendlela esiyihambayo*  
(The walk we have embarked on is long) (4x)  
*Watsho uMandela kubalandeli bakhe,*  
*wathi yinde lendlela esiyihambayo*  
(Mandela told his followers that the walk we have embarked on  
is long) (2x)

This struggle song, which was uttered when the ANC was campaigning for the 2014 elections, presupposes that complete freedom has not yet been achieved in South Africa. Therefore, in view of the tenor of liberation yet to be realised that the struggle song suggests, the author is understandably sceptical about the argument that 20 years after the 1994 independence, South Africa has attained freedom in a holistic sense. However, such scepticism cannot be validated without evidence of oppressive socio-economic injustice(s), which will be discussed below.

The second narrative, namely that South Africa is not yet a free country, has been expressed by the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Ziphozihle Siwa. Building on Finca's conceptualisation of "a time that is between times",<sup>6</sup> Siwa remarks:

We have left the land of institutionalised oppression, but we have not reached the Promised Land. Some of us made the mistake of thinking that 1994 had delivered us to the gates of the Promised Land, only to learn that there is a journey with many detours and no one knows how long it will take. This is evidenced by the many attempts in putting together some plans and roadmaps – the National Development Plan being one of the latest.<sup>7</sup>

If I understand Siwa correctly, the demise of apartheid, which was an institutionalised oppression, does not mean that South Africa is completely free. Therefore, some form of liberation is missing. Also, Siwa's remark

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<sup>6</sup> Bongani Finca. "The Challenges of the Theological and Ethical Principles of Mfundisi Tiyo Soga to a Nation Living in a Time between Times." Paper read at the Tiyo Soga Memorial Lecture at Centane on 9 September 2011. Page 1. <http://www.thabombekifoundation.org.za/Pages/Tiyo-Soga-Memorial-Lecture-Delivered-by-The-Reverend-Dr-Bongani-B-Finca---8-Sept--2011.aspx> (19 February 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Ziphozihle Siwa. "Transforming Prophetic Actions in Changing Landscapes." Page 1. <http://www.methodist.org.za/news/02042014-1312> (19 February 2014).

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implies that South Africa has been portrayed in the first historical narrative as a country that is completely liberated. Therefore, in my view, a historical narrative that articulates perpetual elements and forms of oppression needs to be conveyed. In fact, Edozien's view of South Africa as a country that still needs to end economic apartheid resonates with the views held by both Siwa and Finca regarding the country's present situation. Therefore, it is important to express the need to liberate South Africa from the current oppressive socioeconomic injustice by offering a balanced documentation of history. In other words, the country needs to be liberated from a distorted and incorrect historical narrative that claims that the country obtained liberation in 1994. To buttress the point that South Africa still needs to address other forms of oppression, I will now consider the song by Lucky Dube entitled *Mickey Mouse Freedom*.

**Lucky Dube's *Mickey Mouse Freedom***

On 19 February 1992, one of South Africa's musical icons and a composer of reggae music, the late Lucky Dube, released an album entitled, "House of Exile". A revised version, entitled "House of Exile (Remastered)", was later released on 14 September 2012 by Gallo Record Company. The album presented a critique of the South African political economy, which one can argue is still relevant for constructing the realities of the post-apartheid South Africa. On the album, "House of Exile (Remastered)", the song, *Mickey Mouse Freedom*<sup>8</sup>, captures both the realities of the post-apartheid South Africa and Lucky Dube's ideology of freedom:

Put his coat on his shoulders and slowly he walked away  
Behind him, he could hear  
Those innocent voices  
Crying out so bitterly, saying  
We did not start the war

But we fighting now  
We did not start this fire  
But we burning now

They were told many years ago that their country is free  
But they didn't understand  
that it's not real  
They never knew

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<sup>8</sup> The song is available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jOem\\_FjLY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jOem_FjLY).

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It was a Mickey Mouse freedom, yeah (3x)  
It is a Mickey Mouse independence, yeah (3x)

Me come in a you country, he (that) is said to be free (x2)  
Me sight corruption  
Me sight starvation  
Walking like a millionaire, 'cause you think your country is  
free.  
One thing you don't know, your country, he is being remote  
controlled

It was a Mickey Mouse freedom, yeah (3x)  
It is a Mickey Mouse independence, yeah (3x)

The line, “We did not start the war, but we fighting now” alludes to the perpetual legacy of colonialism and apartheid. How could such an allusion be validated? Given the context in which the song was articulated, that is, the apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, such a claim becomes warranted. For example, the “born frees”, that is, those born after the 1994 independence, are currently experiencing unemployment and poverty, which are universally understood as legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Fighting a war that has been started by others seems to fit in perfectly with the view that many South Africans currently experience various forms of socioeconomic injustice that they have inherited from the colonial and apartheid past.

Modise and Mtshiselwa have argued that the system of colonialism and apartheid engineered the injustice. For example, poverty in South Africa was engineered by the Native Land Act of 1913.<sup>9</sup> Their claim serves as a basis for the author’s submission that Dube’s line, “We did not start the war, but we fighting now” alludes to the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. In other words, it is highly likely that Lucky Dube had the legacy of colonialism and apartheid in mind when composing the song, *Mickey Mouse Freedom*. The song also strongly confirms the persistence of socioeconomic injustice, which both the black church and the black people grapple with in the country.

The statement in the song that, “They were told many years ago that their country is free. But they didn't understand, that it's not real,” presupposes that not only is the South African narrative of freedom questionable, but it also misleads people to view South Africa as a country that has achieved complete freedom. If justice and equality define freedom, one cannot rate South Africa as a state that has achieved freedom. Also, if Klein’s

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<sup>9</sup> Modise and Mtshiselwa, “Native Land Act,” 359-378.

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concept of “Democracy Born in Chains: South Africa’s Constricted Freedom”<sup>10</sup> is credible, as I am inclined to believe it is, South African should not be viewed as a free country in a complete sense. In fact, the conspicuous presence of socioeconomic injustice points to the fact that South Africa’s so-called freedom is incomplete.

Two other lines that are also critical in Lucky Dube’s assessment of the socioeconomic reality in South Africa are: “Me sight corruption” and “Me sight starvation.” For Lucky Dube, the evidence of corruption in a state that is regarded as free discredits the very nature of such freedom. In fact, if his observation of corruption in the country has any credence, it would be superfluous to argue that South Africa is free. The fact that corruption prejudices fairness and justice is also worth noting. Therefore, while it is true that South Africa is not one of the most corrupt states in the world, the level of corruption in the country still places it poles apart from the least corrupt countries.<sup>11</sup> As such, the latest Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index places South Africa in the 69th position out of 176 countries, with a score of 4.3 out of 10.<sup>12</sup> That index provides evidence of the perturbing reality of corruption in South Africa.

Furthermore, in a situation where South Africans are trapped in a poverty cycle, Dube’s observation would be considered valid. A disturbing reality is that, according to the latest statistics, 61.4 per cent of black South Africans are poor, compared to 4.35 per cent of white persons.<sup>13</sup> Thus Lucky Dube’s rendition of poverty and the incredibility of the so-called freedom is appealing. If poverty continues to be a challenge in the post-apartheid South Africa, it would be unreasonable to argue that the country is free.

From the four critical lines extracted from Lucky Dube’s *Mickey Mouse Freedom*, it seems that the post-apartheid South Africa remains a nation in chains. First, the perpetual legacy of colonialism and apartheid is an evidence of such chains. Second, the misleading narrative that portrays South Africa as a liberated country is questionable. Third, the evidence of cor-

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<sup>10</sup> Naomi Klein, “Democracy Born in Chains: South Africa’s Constricted Freedom,” in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (ed. Naomi Klein. New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2007), 194-217.

<sup>11</sup> According to *Corruption Watch*, “corruption is an abuse of public resources and it is people who rely on public education, on public healthcare, on public transport and on public security who pay the price. People living in poor conditions, with no jobs, and facing ill-health are among those who are most vulnerable.” See *Corruption Watch*, “Annual Report 2012: Turn up the Volume,” Page 2. [http://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/sites/default/files/2013/CW\\_AnnualReport2012.pdf](http://www.corruptionwatch.org.za/sites/default/files/2013/CW_AnnualReport2012.pdf) (20 February 2014).

<sup>12</sup> *Corruption Watch*, “Annual Report 2012,” 1.

<sup>13</sup> Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). *Social Profile of Vulnerable Groups in South Africa 2002–2011*, (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2012), 71. Also see Modise and Mtshiselwa, “Native Land Act,” 359.

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ruption in the so-called liberated state discredits the very nature of such freedom, as well as its young democracy. Fourth, if poverty continues to be a disturbing challenge in the post-apartheid nation, then one cannot justify the claim that the country is free. However, it may be helpful to probe and reconfigure the chains of the post-apartheid nation and its so-called young democracy.

### **Reconfiguring the chains of a post-apartheid South Africa**

In a remarkable article, "The (De)construction of Religious Identity in Oral History Research in South Africa", Landman argues for a process of constructing religious identity that is not through stories of oppression and failure alone.<sup>14</sup> Instead, she proposes a process that she describes as resilient, which ought to present victims of social injustice as actors in the contexts and as agents in social change towards justice.<sup>15</sup> In my view, being an actor means refusing to be silenced and made redundant. It also means being attentive to the oppression that is evident in the post-apartheid narratives. In other words, instead of focusing on how apartheid rendered people victims, they could assume an identity that would enable them to articulate the elements and tendencies that are oppressive in the present context. As they do so, the reconfiguration of the chains of oppression in the post-apartheid South Africa would be relevant.

Also, being an agent of social justice entails a public criticism of socioeconomic injustice. If the victims of social justice are to assume a role of resilience, that is, as agents of transformation, as Landman rightfully proposes, first and foremost, there is a need to spell out the nature of the oppression in South Africa today. However, owing to the limited scope of the present article, I may not be able to outline all the forms of oppression that constitute chains to the present post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore, I will focus on the issues relating to the education system; women and patriarchy; the imperialism of masculinity in South African politics; and an economy in chains as a limitation to change. The focus is also on Lucky Dube's *Mickey Mouse Freedom*, which inspires one to probe whether the country is indeed free.

#### *Education system*

Regarding youths and the education system in the post-apartheid South Africa, a critical question to ask is: does the South African education system

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<sup>14</sup> Christina Landman, "The (De)construction of Religious Identity in Oral History Research in South Africa," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39/1 (2013): 247-259.

<sup>15</sup> Landman, "The (De)construction of Religious Identity," 253.



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discriminate against poor young black people? At this point, it is worthwhile to draw your attention to the recent student protests over the National Student Financial Scheme (NSFAS). Ntuthuko Makhomboti, the president of the South African Students Congress (SASCO), is reported to have said, "The financial aid scheme's lack of funds prohibited poor prospective students from gaining access to higher learning".<sup>16</sup> For example, about 2170 qualifying students at the University of Johannesburg, who needed R113 million from a government financed NSFAS,<sup>17</sup> could not receive the funds to study. The funds could have elevated those black South African youths from poverty. However, the possibility of poverty alleviation was restricted by the unavailability of funds from the state to the young people to advance their education. In addition, NSFAS could only fund 20% of the first-year students of Mangosuthu University of Technology.<sup>18</sup> If chains are understood as obstacles to the development of a person, then it is clear that the unavailability of funds has become an obstacle to the education of many black youths in South Africa. Thus the notion of a post-apartheid nation in chains is warranted.

Furthermore, the "Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools", which is included in the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 is worth mentioning. In the Act, section 34(a) stipulates that "preference must be given to a learner who lives in the feeder zone of a school or who resides with his or her parents at an employer's home in the feeder zone".<sup>19</sup> Also, as stipulated by the DE,<sup>20</sup> section 34(d) provides that the preference order of admission be as follows:

- i. Learners whose parents live in the feeder zone, in their own domicile or their employer's domicile;
- ii. Learners whose parents' work address is in the feeder area;
- iii. other learners: first come first served.

In view of that provision, the present legislation restricts certain learners from being educated in certain schools. What this mean is that a learner, whether black or white, who resides in a rural area or on a farm, whose parents are unemployed or employed in the rural area or on the farm, might not be

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-01-26-sasco-calls-for-mass-student-protests>.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/coutrywide-protests-over-nsfas-funding-1.1637716>.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140130121433345>.

<sup>19</sup> Department of Education (DE), "National Education Policy Act, of 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996)," *Government Gazette* 400/19377(1998): 4.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Education (DE), "National Education Policy," 4.

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granted admission to a school in the suburbs, according to South African law. In other words, if the parents of a learner do not stay in the suburb, for instance because they are unable to afford a house in the suburb, that learner will be unable to benefit from the facility and the quality of education that a school in the suburb offers. Therefore, the policy on admissions disadvantages certain children, based on demographics and class, particularly the poor who are residing in remote areas. One could argue with a level of certainty that such a policy is an obstacle to the development of the majority of previously disadvantaged black children. Based on the fact that the admission policy discriminates against certain children, it is not unreasonable to claim that the post-apartheid nation is in chains. Since the development of a child from a rural background is restricted by the South Africa law, an important question to ask is: Is the configuration of a post-apartheid nation in chains, based on the discrepancies in the education system, sufficient to justify the argument? I will now look at the oppression experienced by women in the country.

*Women in chains of patriarchy – the imperialism of masculinity in South African politics*

Angie Motshekga, the president of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) is reported to have said: "South Africa is not ready to have a female president".<sup>21</sup> The statement was reportedly made in an address to the media on the outcomes of the ANCWL national elections' workshop held on 4-6 October 2013 at the ANC's headquarters in Johannesburg.<sup>22</sup> Motshekga further stated, "We know the ANC, we understand the ANC, we understand the ANC processes, and no one wants to go into a futile battle. There are traditions and processes that have a long, long life".<sup>23</sup> In other words, because of the ANC's traditions (that is, patriarchal traditions) and processes, any attempt to lobby for a woman president would be futile. This means that any quest to have a woman at the head of government in South Africa would inevitably end in failure. However, a critical question to pose is: Can one really base the preceding argument on the statement made by one person, namely Angie Motshekga?

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<sup>21</sup> Qaanitah Hunter, "No Woman President 'Soon'," 2013. Page 1. [http://www.thenewage.co.za/108808-1007-53-No\\_woman\\_president\\_soon](http://www.thenewage.co.za/108808-1007-53-No_woman_president_soon) (19 February 2014). Also see Lebogang Seale, "SA Not Ready for Female President, Say ANC Women," 2013. Page 1. <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/sa-not-ready-for-female-president-ancwl-1.1589121> (19 February 2014).

<sup>22</sup> Seale, "SA Not Ready," 1.

<sup>23</sup> Seale, "SA Not Ready," 1.

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Well, the history of South Africa – particularly that of the ANC – does seem to support Angie Motshekga’s statement. How? Historically, the ANC has never had a woman president. According to the ANC historical records, the presidents of the party have been as follows: John Dube (1912-1917), Sefako Makgatho (1917-1924), Zacharias Mahabane (1924-1927), Josiah Gumede (1927-1930), Pixley Seme (1930-1936), Zacharias Mahabane (1936-1940), Albert Xuma (1940-1949), James Moroka (1949-1952), Albert Luthuli (1952-1967), Oliver Tambo (1967-1991), Nelson Mandela (1991-1997), Thabo Mbeki (1997-2007) and Jacob Zuma (2007- ).<sup>24</sup> Based on this record, it is clear that men have dominated the leadership of the ANC, since only men have been elected as president of the party. It would be illogical and untrue to suggest that there were no women in the history of the ANC who were capable of leading the party. Therefore, the history and tradition of the ANC could best be characterised by male dominance. Given that history, Angie Motshekga’s claim that South Africa is not ready to have a female president is not surprising. In fact, both Motshekga’s claim and the history of the ANC show how the patriarchal chains have oppressed women.

If the country is indeed not ready for a female president, then the patriarchal chains that are used to oppress women are evident in the imperialism of masculinity in South African politics, particularly within the ruling party, the ANC. In particular, it could be argued that the present ANC government has maintained certain patriarchal tendencies and its operation is based on imperialistic masculinity. Hence, male dominance is forestalling possibilities of electing a female president. The noticeable dominance of men in the processes and traditions of the ANC leads one to assume that, to a great extent, women are suppressed and restricted from assuming leadership of the country. Therefore, in a sense, women are also chained, since they cannot be elected as South Africa’s president.

However, in terms of the role of women in drafting the Constitution, particularly in minimising the possibilities of gender imbalance and sexism in the Constitution, LenkaBula and Makofane note that women were adequately represented.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, even though women played a role in drafting the country’s Constitution, and a woman, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,<sup>26</sup> was once the deputy president of the state in 2005, for now, the chances of a woman becoming the president are slim. It is worth noting that there is nothing in the

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<sup>24</sup> African National Congress (ANC). “12 Presidents 100 Years: Celebrating 100 Years of Selfless Struggle,” 2012. Page 1. <http://www.anc.org.za/centenary/show.php?id=9330> (26 February 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Puleng LenkaBula and Mpeane Makofane, “Women’s Moral Agency and the Quest for Justice in Africa,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 36 (2010): 139.

<sup>26</sup> Mlambo-Ngcuka’s competence as deputy president as well as in her present office on gender equality and empowerment of women issues at the United Nations illustrates the ability of women to productively assume leadership roles.

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South African Constitution that prevents a woman from being elected as president of the country, which is why it is possible for women to lead parties such as the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Agang South Africa (Agang SA). Helen Zille is the leader of the DA, while Mamphela Ramphele is the leader of Agang SA. Even though it is evident that women can be leaders of political parties and thus be a potential president of the country, women continue to be restricted by the tradition and processes of the ANC, the governing party. Such a conspicuous restriction validates the claim that patriarchal chains continue to bind and restrict women from being the president of South Africa, particular while the country is being led by the ANC.

Therefore, given the disadvantages experienced by both women and young people in South Africa, it would now be worthwhile to delve into the experiences of black people in the economy of the country.

*An economy in chains – a limitation to change*

In the book, *The shock doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism*, Klein presents an interesting chapter entitled, “Democracy Born in Chains: South Africa’s Constricted Freedom”.<sup>27</sup> In the chapter, Klein documents critical statements emanating from two interviews she conducted: one with Rassool Snyman and the other with Yasmin Sooka. Rassool Snyman lamented that, “They never freed us. They only took the chain from around our neck and put it on our ankles”. Yasmin Sooka, on the other hand, is reported to have said, “We’ll keep everything and you [the ANC] will rule in name... You can have political power, you can have the facade of governing, but the real governance will take place somewhere else”.<sup>28</sup>

The above statements, as well as Klein’s theme, “Democracy Born in Chains: South Africa’s Constricted Freedom”, seem to echo Lucky Dube’s idea of *Mickey Mouse Freedom*. In other words, they both suggest that the post-apartheid South Africa is not entirely free. Of course, the country is free from the institutionalised oppression of the past called apartheid. However, it is clear that South Africans still experience oppression in the form of socioeconomic injustice, among others. Klein, in particular, strongly urges one to probe the possibility of socioeconomic oppression, which appears to constrict the country’s young democracy. Therefore, I am inclined to submit that the post-apartheid South Africa, along with its young democracy, is indeed in chains.

Klein throws light on how the ANC élite, represented by the late Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, reportedly submitted the ANC’s

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<sup>27</sup> Klein, “Democracy Born in Chains,” 194-217.

<sup>28</sup> Klein, “Democracy Born in Chains,” 203-204.

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economic programme for a democratic dispensation to Harry Oppenheimer for approval. The ANC élite claimed that there was no reference to nationalisation and no slogan connecting the then upcoming ANC government to Marxist ideology.<sup>29</sup> This point reveals the continuity of the capitalist and imperialist tendency by the apartheid white oligarchs such as Oppenheimer, the former chairman of Anglo-American and De Beers. They plotted to advance their aims to secure economic power and control, at the expense of the economic liberation of the black masses. In other words, any attempt to advance Marxist ideology, that is, equitable sharing of resources, was blocked. Once again, it is clear that the post-apartheid South Africa remains in chains.

Furthermore, the ANC élite yielded the control of the South African Reserve Bank to Chris Stals, who also ran it under the apartheid government, while the Ministry of Finance was headed by Derek Keyes, who also held that office during the apartheid regime.<sup>30</sup> That means that the status quo was maintained with regard to the ownership of the South African Reserve Bank during the transition to democracy. Even though the Reserve Bank is answerable to parliament, it is in private hands. And as Edozien puts it, it is doubtful whether parliamentary pressure could overrule the policies of the Reserve Bank.<sup>31</sup> The Reserve Bank is a private entity and can do as it pleases. Both Bond and Klein are correct in their observation that the autonomy of the Reserve Bank was compromised in the negotiations for democracy.<sup>32</sup> Had the Reserve Bank been placed under the control of the state, that is, the post-apartheid state, the government would have been able to secure capital for land reforms, for example, but this was compromised. As such, the privatisation of the Reserve Bank, particularly the ceding of its ownership to those who ran it during apartheid, prevents the post-apartheid government from printing money for any redistributive and transformative socioeconomic purpose.

In addition, the debt left by the NP élite, which the ANC élite agreed to repay, as well as the payment of the NP élite's pension fund, which ballooned from 30 billion rand in 1989 to more than 300 billion rand in 2004, constituted a restriction on the government's economic activity.<sup>33</sup> That

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<sup>29</sup> Klein, "Democracy Born in Chains," 208. Marais shares the same sentiment as Klein. See Hein Marais, *South Africa: Limits to Change. The Political Economy of Transition*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2001), 122.

<sup>30</sup> Klein, "Democracy Born in Chains," 202.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Edozien, "Ending Economic Apartheid," 2008. Page 3. [http://www.sane.org.za/docs/eea\\_shortversion.pdf](http://www.sane.org.za/docs/eea_shortversion.pdf) (20 February 2014).

<sup>32</sup> Klein, "Democracy Born in Chains," 200-202. Bond makes a similar point. Also see Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000), 55-56.

<sup>33</sup> Klein, "Democracy Born in Chains," 213.

restriction probably caused the NP élite to retain economic power and control over the ANC-controlled government. According to Zuma, “the government’s level of debt, *under the majority rule of the ANC*, was 48 per cent in 1994. This level was reduced to 46 per cent in 1999, and reached the lowest level of 27 per cent of GDP in 2008, before the impact of global financial and economic crisis”.<sup>34</sup> However, the debt is expected to reach 45 per cent in 2015.<sup>35</sup> Thus the money that could have been spent on redressing socio-economic injustice is being used to settle the national debt and is channelled into the NP élite’s pension fund. A critical question is: How does this relate to the indebtedness of many South African middle-class people?

In an interesting paper entitled, “Ending Economic Apartheid,” Edozien expresses his view of the post-apartheid South Africa. He argues that “the end of political apartheid is ultimately meaningless without the end of economic apartheid”.<sup>36</sup> He criticises the privatisation of the Reserve Bank and South Africa’s huge debt. He makes three critical points: First, he states that “money, today, is sold as a commodity for private profit. When we sell money, we call it a loan, and we call our profit interest”.<sup>37</sup> Second, he points out that

money, today, is mostly debt created by the banking industry for its profit. The banks are not required to have all the money they loan. They simply make it up out of nothing as they need to, subject to the reserve requirement stipulated by the Reserve Bank.<sup>38</sup>

Third, Edozien explains that

today, most national money originates in a conceptually very simple process. The private banking system creates the money, most of it out of nothing, as a loan to be repaid with interest according to a set schedule. So: most money is introduced into

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<sup>34</sup> See Jacob Zuma, “Address by President Jacob Zuma in Response to the Debate on the State of the Nation Address,” National Assembly, Cape Town. Page 2. <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?reid=16929> (20 February 2014). The italics are the author’s own.

<sup>35</sup> Zuma, “Address by President Jacob Zuma,” 2.

<sup>36</sup> Edozien is not alone regarding the reality of economic apartheid in South Africa. In his closing remarks at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference of 2014, held in Dallas, Texas on 20 February 2014, Frederick Haynes III alluded to economic apartheid in South Africa. He claimed that South Africa is experiencing economic apartheid. If this observation is correct, it would imply that South Africa is not completely liberated. See Edozien, “Ending Economic Apartheid,” 1.

<sup>37</sup> Edozien, “Ending Economic Apartheid,” 1.

<sup>38</sup> Edozien, “Ending Economic Apartheid,” 2.

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circulation by those whom the banking industry considers to be creditworthy borrowers. You must already have money in order to get money easily.<sup>39</sup>

So what do we make of Edozien's argument? It could imply that the South African middle class, which comprises mostly black people, will be perpetually trapped in debt. The cars and the houses that many middle-class workers possess belong to the banks, and not to them. Thus they are likely to continue to pay bonds or home loans that take many years to settle. Edozien's views also explain why the poor, when trying to open a business, find it difficult to receive loans from the bank – they have no credit record. In an open letter to President Zuma, Edozien rightly concludes that "South Africa will never ever grow itself out of poverty under the current financial regime. It is not possible".<sup>40</sup> From Edozien's argument, and given the continuing capitalist and imperialist tendency of the white oligarchs, the control of the Reserve Bank by a private entity and the magnitude of the debt of the nation – particularly the middle class – South Africa indeed appears to be a nation in chains.

*Church's prophetic witness in chains*

As regards the prophetic witness of the church during the transition from apartheid to democracy, Bentley<sup>41</sup> asks some critical questions: What authority does the church have to speak? Is there a social recognition that the church's utterances are divinely inspired, or has the South African socio-political structure destroyed the divine platform from which the church conveys its message by acting as the "mouthpiece of God"? In his response to these questions, Bentley locates ecclesiology within the post-apartheid space and describes the space in which the church finds her prophetic voice thus:

With the gaining of these constitutional rights by all religions – thereby saying that there was now an equal standing among religions – there was also a surrender of power by the church. Now the church became one voice among many, one religion within a cosmopolitan mix of faiths, persuasions and

<sup>39</sup> Edozien, "Ending Economic Apartheid," 2.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph Edozien, "Restorative Economic Justice for South Africa (Part I): A Parallel Economy Would Liberate the Masses," 2009. Pages 1-4. [http://www.sane.org.za/docs/rejsa\\_part1.pdf](http://www.sane.org.za/docs/rejsa_part1.pdf) (20 February 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Wessel Bentley, "Defining Christianity's 'Prophetic Witness' in the Post-apartheid South African Democracy," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 39/1 (2013): 262.

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convictions which may not necessarily carry the same ideological premise as that of the Christian faith.<sup>42</sup>

For Bentley, the post-apartheid space provides an opportunity for the church to be in dialogue with other faiths such as Islam and African Traditional Religion, since other religions now have equal standing and voice due to constitutional democracy. However, this development has impinged negatively on the church's identity and role in South Africa, as well as on her prophetic witness. Further, Bentley seems to agree with Nkuhlu that the church needs to reposition itself in terms of its new role in the post-apartheid South Africa:

The church has to be the example of peace, racial tolerance, democracy and caring; be the instrument of understanding, healing and reconciliation; be part of the delivery of social services; initiate projects for social and economic development; resolve disputes between communities and government; fight against crime and corruption and assist with the internalising of the values of society's new-found freedom.<sup>43</sup>

Bentley strongly submits that the church needs to be present in the community and be more than just the voice of the voiceless.<sup>44</sup> This means that the church ought to initiate projects that respond to HIV and AIDS, education, and so on.<sup>45</sup> Plausible as his suggestion appears to be, it presents a challenge. The stress on the presence of the church in the community, in the form of community projects, presupposes that its role as the voice of the voiceless and advocate of justice is less important. The shift in priority and Bentley's silence on how the church can retain its space and authority in order to be critical of the state, show that from an ecclesiological perspective, the church's prophetic witness is in chains.

Interestingly, Siwa shares Bentley's sentiment. He also supports the view that the church needs to show a transforming presence in the community by initiating projects, which – according to him – is what transforming

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<sup>42</sup> Bentley, "Defining Christianity," 262.

<sup>43</sup> Bentley, "Defining Christianity," 263. Also see Wiseman Nkuhlu, "The Church and Socio-economic Reconstruction during the Transition," in *Being Church in a New Land: A Selection of Papers Presented at the 1995 National Conference of the South African Council of Churches*. (ed. South African Council of Churches. Johannesburg: Edenvale Printers, 1995), 7-8.

<sup>44</sup> Bentley's view is in line with Brueggemann's conceptualization of the church's role as the voice of the voiceless. See Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 13.

<sup>45</sup> Bentley, "Defining Christianity," 265-266.



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prophetic action means. However, both Bentley and Siwa are silent on how the church can publicly denounce socioeconomic injustice in the country. They do not seem to acknowledge the limitations of the ecclesiastical community.

For instance, *The laws and discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa* (MCSA) permits the church to condemn injustice in the country.<sup>46</sup> The provision is made in the public relations clause embedded in paragraph 1.37 of the publication as follows:

The Presiding Bishop is the Chief Public Relations Officer of the Connexion. Statements on matters of national importance shall be issued by him. In matters of public concern, he may consult the Bishops. Officers of Connexional Departments shall communicate with him if needs be on matters which may require his consideration. Bishops are Public Relations Officer within their areas. Superintendents may communicate with them on matters which require their consideration. A Bishop may appoint liaison officers with the local Press and News Broadcasters.<sup>47</sup>

The above statement suggests that only the presiding bishop can publicly criticise the government of South Africa, that is, at a national level. By implication, only the presiding bishop is permitted to criticise the oppressive elements perpetuated by the post-apartheid regime, which we have tried to reconfigure above. If, for any reason, the presiding bishop is not interested in articulating such comments, no one else can do so without breaching the policy of the church. As such, no other member of the clergy or the laity is free to publicly denounce socioeconomic injustice without the approval of the presiding bishop, and this is the experience of many congregants in the MCSA. This type of restriction suggests, from an ecclesiological perspective, that the church's prophetic witness is in chains.

### **Conclusion**

In this article, the author set out to investigate and articulate the conspicuous forms of oppression in the post-apartheid South Africa in order to determine whether the country has indeed achieved holistic freedom. Two historical narratives were examined, one that portrayed South Africa as having achieved freedom, and the other showing that the country still needs to work

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<sup>46</sup> Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), *The Laws and Discipline of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa*, (Woodstock: Salty Print, 2007), 230.

<sup>47</sup> Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), *The Laws and Discipline*, 235.

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towards holistic liberation. In the tenor of liberation of Africans, Lucky Dube's *Mickey Mouse Freedom* strongly confirmed the persistence of socioeconomic injustice in the country. Inspired by such a song, I have tried to configure some of the various forms of oppression evident in the post-apartheid South Africa, especially with respect to the education system; the imperialism of masculinity in South African politics; limitations to change in the country's economic activity; and restrictions on the church's prophetic witness. Consequently, I feel that one can say with a level of certainty that South Africa is a post-apartheid nation in chains: it still needs to address issues of oppression and social injustice, and it should not be regarded as a state that has achieved complete freedom.

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