

Reinventing Participatory Democracy in South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

The People Shall Govern!

*Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;
All the people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;
The rights of the people shall be the same regardless of race, colour or sex;
All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.*

(from the *Freedom Charter*, as adopted at the Congress of the People on 26 June 1955 in Kliptown, near Johannesburg)

Every social struggle is an endeavor by a section of society to achieve emancipation from some social evil that those involved in such a struggle consider repugnant. Indeed, what inspires people in different societies to take part in such struggles is a vision of how social relations can (and should) be structured or restructured. Such a vision may be couched in different terms, depending on the context in which the struggles are being waged. For some, it is simply “freedom,” while for others it may be “democracy,” “socialism,” etc. But every struggle, as well as the vision of freedom or liberation that inspires it, always contains a promise of a decentralized or participatory kind of democracy that is inclusive rather than exclusive. In some struggles this participatory democratic utopia is explicitly articulated, while in others it is generally assumed to be the end-goal. In small social groups participatory democracy conjures up images of an assembly where all members of the group have a right to attend and to participate on equal terms in debates and decision-making. For large groups, participation suggests a highly decentralized system where ordinary members of a social group or an entire society have rights to participate both directly and indirectly in decision-making. In

a nutshell, the participatory democratic utopia is about the expansion of citizenship in a formal as well as substantive sense, and it is usually the working class and other marginalized sections of society who champion these ideas, as they stand to benefit the most in a participatory dispensation.

However, few struggles and revolutions in the history of humanity have resulted in lasting experiments in participatory democracy, and even the few that succeeded were short-lived. Thus, many revolutions have disappointed the vast majority of those who sacrifice the most and act as the shock troops of revolution. But the welfare state and the social regulation regime that accompanied it went a long way in ameliorating the impact of the marginalization of the subordinate classes, and thus helped to maintain a degree of credibility for the capitalist economic system. The supersession of the social regulation regime of the welfare state by market regulation from the 1970s onwards has resulted in unprecedented social exclusion and marginalization of millions of people from subordinate classes.¹ Exclusion and marginalization are synonymous with the current phase of globalization and its hegemonic ideological accompaniments such as free markets, minimal state intervention, fiscal discipline and cost recovery for all services provided by the state.

There are different, and competing, notions of democracy and all of them revolve around the model of citizenship that is envisaged. Parry and Moyser (1994) have suggested two broad categories or notions of democracy, namely, the “participatory or radical” conception and the “realist” conception. These authors argue that the participatory school seeks to expand citizen participation beyond traditional forms such as voting and signing petitions by encouraging the population to “play an active part” in government (1994: 45–46). The genealogy of these ideas goes back to models of citizenship expounded by theorists such as Rousseau and J. S. Mill, but it should be added that their influence has permeated most modern currents of radical social science. The realist notion, on the other hand, advocates a much more conservative and limited notion of participation that does not extend too far beyond voting at regular intervals. Schumpeter’s theory of democracy, which hinges on the view that “the electorate is incapable of action other than a stampede” (1987: 283), is an example of such a truncated and conservative notion of democracy. The model of citizenship that this notion of democracy implies is an exclusionary one that caters only to the elites in society.

South Africa has just emerged from a period of protracted conflict where the majority of the population fought heroic struggles against the injustice of apartheid minority rule. That struggle represented an attempt to achieve the expansion of social citizenship through the inclusion of all the country’s people in its social, economic and political life. Indeed, the *Freedom Charter*, a social democratic document adopted by a multiracial “Congress of the People” in 1955, represented an attempt to include all citizens in the affairs of the country by calling for the following:

- the right of all to be guaranteed political rights;
- equal rights for different social groups;
- the nationalization of strategic sectors of the economy;
- a radical land reform program;
- the protection of human rights of all citizens;
- a guarantee of work and security for all;
- the provision of education and housing; and
- the respect of the rights and sovereignty of all nations.

In the context of apartheid South Africa, the charter represented a counter-hegemonic project that sought to address the inequalities and social exclusion of the system. At the heart of the document is the clarion call "The People Shall Govern!" which was inspired by notions of participation and "self-government" at the lowest levels of the social structure. The charter was used by many generations of activists in different spheres of life such as civics, education and health as a guide to action in struggling for the establishment of "organs of people's power." But the *Freedom Charter* was not the sole origin of notions of participatory forms of democracy. A vibrant progressive trade union movement had been in existence since the early 1920s, and by the 1950s this movement had relatively strong democratically elected structures of representation and leadership (Lambert, 1988). When the movement was crushed in the 1960s, it took a while to re-emerge, but when it finally did so in the early 1970s it consciously nurtured a tradition of democracy that combined elements of direct participation and representative democratic rule in its structures. This chapter reviews the emergence and development of the discourse of participatory democracy in South Africa during and after the struggle for liberation by drawing on examples from the civic and trade union arenas of that struggle. It also seeks to identify and highlight factors and social processes that have undermined participatory democracy since the early 1990s, particularly under the democratic political dispensation that was inaugurated in 1994.

THE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRATIC TRADITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since the early 1900s the freedom struggle in South Africa went through several qualitatively different phases, all of which sought to expand the definition of the freedom envisaged. But two of these phases have had an enduring impact on the discourse of democracy that emerged at the height of the freedom struggle in the 1980s and early 1990s. The first period was in the 1950s, when mass agitation gave rise to radical notions of democracy. The *Freedom Charter*, discussed above, captured this new spirit of a radical democratic discourse with its phrase: "The People Shall Govern!"

At that time, this was a very radical notion, inspired as it was by the ideas of socialists, many of whom were active in the Communist Party of South Africa (later renamed the South African Communist Party [SACP]) and in the national liberation movement that was gaining prominence in the colonized territories throughout the world. However, state repression and the banning of liberation movements in the early 1960s frustrated progress toward the goal of ensuring that the "people" were the ones who governed South Africa.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, ideas of participatory democracy gained further popularity within the liberation movement and found expression in experiments of democratic participation in the liberated zones created by national liberation movements in other colonized territories. Basil Davidson's (1981) account of the establishment of participatory and representative forms of democracy in the liberated zones in Guinea-Bissau illustrates the centrality of institutions of political and social self-government in "transforming support or sympathy into active and voluntary participation by rural multitudes" (1981: 163). At the height of the mass mobilization phase of the South African liberation struggle, similar notions of liberated zones were influential among activists and movement leaders. For example, in 1986 the United Democratic Front's (UDF) journal, *Isizwe*, noted that the demand for the people to govern was being taken up by millions of ordinary South Africans:

The building of people's power is something that is *already beginning to happen in the course of our struggle*. It is not for us to sit back and merely dream of the day that the people shall govern. It is our task to realize that goal now. We must start the process of liberating South Africa. We must begin to place power in the hands of the people, in all spheres—the economy, education, culture, crime control, health, in fact, wherever it is possible. (UDF, 1986: 2)

The journal went on to elaborate the shape that this form of government would take:

We are struggling for a different system where power is no longer in the hands of the rich and powerful. We are struggling for a government that we all vote for. We are struggling for elected bodies in our schools, factories and communities. We want laws that are widely discussed throughout our country, street committee by street committee *before* they are even debated in parliament. We want courts where workers, peasants and teachers can be elected as magistrates. We want elected magistrates rooted in the communities in which they are serving. We want an army that belongs to all, in a country where all citizens are armed. (UDF, 1986: 4)

The township struggles of the 1980s were inspired by these ideas and, indeed, many activists sought to implement a participatory model of democracy in several arenas, including civic and residents' associations, schools, universities and workplaces. However, all these attempts and experiments were fraught with contradictions and tensions, all the more so because of the hostility of state agencies and other authorities. Mayekiso's (1996) book on township politics in the Alexandra township in Johannesburg is one of the best accounts of the extremely difficult task of establishing "organs of people's power" during South Africa's struggle for liberation.

The second phase of mobilization and struggle that had an impact on democratic discourse is the one that began in the early 1970s at about the same time when the new trade union movement emerged. Even though this phase owed its origins to the earlier period of mass mobilization and activism, the philosophical formulation and packaging of its ideas had a much stronger intellectual derivation than the earlier one. In this regard, the work of Richard Turner, a young philosopher who had studied in Cape Town and Paris, represents the most developed search for emancipation that moved beyond received traditions and notions of democracy. His seminal book, *The Eye of the Needle: Toward Participatory Democracy in South Africa*,² was inspired by what he termed "the necessity of utopian thinking." Turner argued that it was necessary and possible to move away from the notion that society and social institutions are "natural entities, part of the geography of the world in which we live" (1980: 2):

In order to reflect on our values, then, we have to see which aspects of our society are the necessary result of the imperatives of human nature and of organizations, and which aspects of it are changeable. We then need to make explicit the value principles embodied in our actual behavior, and to criticize these principles in the light of other possible values. Until we realise what other values, and what other social forms, are possible, we cannot judge the morality or otherwise of existing society. (1980: 3)

Turner then proceeded to discuss his "ideal possible society," which revolved around the notion of participatory democracy. The two principal requirements of this type of social system would be that it "enables individuals to have maximum control over their social and material environment, and encourages them to interact creatively with other people" (1980: 34).

The two phases of the South African struggle can be conceptualized as overlapping and mutually reinforcing stages in the evolution of utopian thinking in the search for social emancipation in South Africa. During the first phase, emphasis was on defining participatory democracy as an ideal or a goal to be achieved at the point of liberation. The *Freedom Charter's* call for the establishment of "democratic organs of self-government" in a post-

apartheid society was part of this discourse. During the second phase, not only was participatory democracy a goal for the future, it was also seen as practice within organizations of the pro-democracy movement. In a sense, this deepening of the discourse, which entailed translating the ideal into a "real utopia," could be observed most clearly in trade union and community/civic struggles from the 1970s onwards.

One of the traditions for which the post-1973 trade union movement has continued to pride itself is that of democracy and worker control of its internal structures and the decision-making within them. Freund argues that this was a "distinctive kind of grassroots democracy" because "decisions that concerned basic organizational issues were taken in a format that involved a high level of involvement and acceptance by ordinary members" (1999: 438). This tradition goes back to the formation of these unions in the early 1970s. In many of them the principle of worker control permeated every aspect of their organization and functioning, for example:

- the emphasis on shop floor structures led by democratically elected shop stewards;
- the creation of representative structures in which worker delegates were the majority;
- the practice of mandated decision-making and regular report-backs to members;
- factory-level bargaining, which allowed workers and shop stewards to maintain control of the bargaining agenda and the conclusion of agreements;
- the subordination of full-time officials to control by worker-dominated structures; and
- the involvement of workers, at all levels, in the employment of full-time officials.

The principle of worker control was built into the founding constitution of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1979 as well as that of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which was established in 1985. According to Baskin, the rationale for this was "to prevent union officials from dominating COSATU structures" (1991: 57). But, more importantly, worker control was aimed at ensuring the durability of union structures by allowing workers to take full responsibility for the functioning of their unions. This was necessitated by the hostility of employers and the state, which resulted in the unrelenting harassment and detention of union leaders.³

The 1980s saw unprecedented levels of militancy and mass mobilization in many townships throughout the country. These processes were accompanied by the mushrooming of civic organizations, which sought to contest

power in a context where puppet structures of the apartheid regime were in charge of civic administration. Mzwanele Mayekiso, then a civic activist in Alexandra township in Johannesburg, argues that 1986 represented the high point of mobilization and mass political involvement in the township:

Our most heady period of township organizing was the few months in early 1986 when we could really claim that apartheid rule was being displaced, street by street, by our own form of self-government. It was a liberating experience, though it did not last for long. (1996: 67)

The form of self-government that Mayekiso discusses had a very strong participatory dimension which pivoted on the establishment of "organs of people's power" such as street and area committees, "people's courts," *amabutho* (self-defense units made up of volunteers), and student representative councils. The virtues of these forms of organization were manifold. Above all, they ensured participation by people at the lowest level of social organization, namely the street. The street committee was actually a general meeting of all residents in a street, which provided opportunities for building unity and political involvement by all in matters that affected them. Although there were often problems and tensions in these structures, such as that between the youth and older members of the communities, street committees were generally effective in encouraging mass participation at the neighborhood level of the township. Street committees would then elect representatives to area committees, which would, in turn, elect representatives to township-wide civic associations. The civic organization was a coordinating body of struggles and campaigns for the entire township.

A series of other overlapping structures, such as people's courts and self-defense units, were often established, particularly in those townships that had relatively well-functioning street and area committees. The most effective people's courts were those that had been established under the auspices of existing street and area committees to ensure some kind of political accountability. In the case of Alexandra township, Mayekiso also makes the point that the integrity of the courts always depended upon a "community mandate," and that once community structures became weak and leadership absent because of detention, the courts ran the risk of degenerating into kangaroo courts.⁴ These courts were open to all members of the streets who wished to attend. The notion of a people's court emerged as an alternative to the unjust judicial system of apartheid and relied on members of the community reporting their cases there rather than taking them to the conventional courts. The system drew a lot from the African justice system where emphasis was on rehabilitation rather than punishment. An example of a successful people's court in Alexandra's 7th Avenue is described by Mayekiso (1996):

Initially it was run by the youth, but the elderly were later called in to preside. The courtroom itself was a tiny corrugated iron shack with benches to sit on and a table for the secretary to write minutes on. Both the accused and the complainant would sit among people respected in the community. The chairperson would open the discussion on the issue. The accused and the complainant would then give their sides of the story. The house would deliberate on the issue. One rule was that no one would be undermined or threatened. At the end, an amicable solution to the problem would typically be reached. Both parties would embrace each other. (1996: 82)

This discussion now turns to the invention of the democratic tradition within mass movements in South Africa. Hobsbawm (1983) has used the term "invented tradition" to refer to a set of practices that are usually regulated by certain rules to engender particular norms and values. He has also argued that the repetition that is implicit in this process implies continuity with the past. Of relevance for our purposes in this discussion is his assertion that "ancient materials" are often used to "construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes" (1983: 6).

A large store of such materials is accumulated in the past of any society, and an elaborate language of symbolic practices and communication is always available. Sometimes new traditions could be readily grafted on old ones, sometimes they could be devised by borrowing from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation—religion and princely pomp, folklore and freemasonry (itself an invented tradition of great symbolic force). (1983: 6)

In South Africa, democracy in general, and participatory democracy in particular, are dimensions of a tradition that was invented by the liberation movement as a whole, including the trade unions and civic organizations. The emergence of the democratic tradition in South Africa is often attributed solely to left intellectuals. For example, the tradition of democratic unionism is often understood solely as the contribution of the young generation of activists involved in the re-emergence of unions after 1973. Some, like Friedman (1987), have gone so far as to suggest that the white student activists and university intellectuals were the main source of the democratic ideas that were alien to the black workers who constituted the membership of these unions. However, a closer examination of the evidence suggests that the democratic tradition in the unions and in civic organizations owes its origins to a very wide range of influences and sources, among which were cultural, traditional, political, and intellectual influences. Thus the evidence shows that any attempt that seeks to examine and understand how the democratic culture and tradition were invented needs to go beyond the simplistic

notion that only a select group of intellectuals brought the democratic culture into the mass movement.

An examination of how these traditions were invented is simultaneously an attempt to understand the social character of trade unions and civic organizations and how they bear the imprint of the cultural heritage and social experiences of their members and leading activists. It would appear that the democratic tradition in union and civic politics was a complex fusion of the lived experiences of egalitarianism and grassroots participation shared by working-class people and the intellectual contributions of activists from different social and political backgrounds. The next section of the chapter attempts to identify some of these contributions and experiences and to discuss the economic and political context in which a robust tradition of participatory democracy emerged in trade unions and the civic movement.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF THE WORKING CLASS

The making of a mass movement and the associational forms to which it gives rise involves a series of social processes of mobilization and construction of new forms of solidarity and new identities. It is in the construction of these forms of solidarity and new identities that the lived social experiences of the different groupings that come together become crucial. In other words, a social group does not enter into new associational forms as a *tabula rasa*. In his seminal study of the making of the English working class, E. P. Thompson (1963) refers to the formation in 1832 of a society of weavers in Ripponden, a weaving village in the Pennines, and the remarkably radical tone of its founding rules, which were based on notions of communal cooperation and egalitarianism. This was during the time when Robert Owen's intellectual influence among the working class was at its height. Thompson's comments on the significance of the society's rules have relevance for our argument here:

This is not just a translation of Owen's doctrines to the context of a weaving village. The ideas have been shaped, laboriously, in terms of the weavers' experience; the emphases have shifted; in place of the messianic stridency, there is the simple question: Why not? One of the small cooperative journals was aptly entitled *Common Sense*: its emphasis was on the "Trading Associations." (1963: 794)

Thompson's account underlines the argument we make in this discussion that intellectual influences seldom take root in a vacuum. More often than not, they are received in a social and cultural milieu that has produced its own traditions, norms and values, which shape the lives of people in

particular ways. Thus the adoption of new doctrines should rather be conceived of as a dialectical blending of intellectual influences and the experience of working-class people. In the case of the new unions in South Africa, the different groups of workers that were part of the new processes of mobilization brought with them a number of lived social and cultural experiences that coalesced into what became the democratic tradition of these unions. Some of these experiences were not necessarily democratic in themselves, but they promoted the search, by workers, for more egalitarian alternatives. The discussion below identifies and discusses some of these lived experiences.

Religious influences

Many of the workers who joined unions during and after 1973 had deep religious backgrounds, while many others had some distant affiliations with different religious formations in their communities. The dominant religion was the Christian faith, which was practiced through different denominations. Religion had a profound influence on the new unions in the 1970s, and in many cases this influence was still visible in the 1980s. First, it imbued many with a sense of justice and provided them with a rationale for challenging oppressive and exploitative relations in society. Thus Salie Manie, then Western Cape leader of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), could find no contradiction between his Islamic faith and his activism:

My mother was a religious instructor at the mosque. Religion has always played a central role in my life. The concept of justice has been ingrained in our family. My mother brought us up not to compromise on what was right. I believe in God. I also believe in social justice. I see myself as a Muslim, but I also see myself as a socialist. (Gabriels, 1992: 77)

The new "black theology" that emerged during the early years of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) made an explicit link between the teachings of the Christian faith and the struggle for democracy in the country. Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s many church organizations and centers began to make a statement about whose side they were on by making church centers available as venues for union meetings. This was at a time when many hotels and other venues in "white" towns were hostile to black unions and other liberation organizations. Emma Mashinini, the first general secretary of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), recalls that when the union was established in 1975 she could not rent an office in its name because of the Group Areas Act and had to resort to asking the white National Union of Distributive Workers to use its name to rent the premises. Later, the landlord evicted the union because he

did not like the regular stream of militant workers visiting the offices. At this point, Mashinini was offered offices at Khotso House, the building that housed the national office of the South African Council of Churches (Zikalala, 1993).

Second, there were cases where religion or religious rituals acted as a unifying force in the new unions. One of these rituals was the prayer at the start of union meetings, which acted not only to unite those in prayer but also to lend legitimacy and respectability to the struggle. The use of religious prayers at the start of union meetings was associated with the older generation of workers and it remained an important ritual until a younger and more militant generation of workers took the lead in the 1980s.

Third, one example of the influence of religion on the new unions is the way in which religious hymns were adapted to the context of struggle and how the unions learned to use the power of song to mobilize workers into action. The power of song was not only in the lyrics but also in the rhythm. In the same way that song and dance play an important part in African cultural life, it came to play the same role in the unions, only now with greater religious derivations.

Finally, many of those who came to occupy leading positions in the new unions had prior experience of leadership in religious organizations of various kinds. One example of these leaders is Siphon Kubheka, who rose to become the general secretary of the Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union (PPWAWU). Before he joined the unions in the early 1970s, he was a lay preacher in one of the independent African churches, where he had gained experience in public speaking, negotiation and organizing skills. (Since leaving the union in 1996, Kubheka has become active again as a part-time minister in the church.) Philemon Bokaba, an ex-shop steward of NUMSA at African Telephone Cables (ATC) near Pretoria, who served as a national vice president for many years in the 1980s and 1990s, was an active official of his church for ten years before joining the union. He says that the skills that he gained as a church official were very useful in enabling him to perform his union duties.

In a nutshell then, although the Church is a hierarchical organization, it had a very influential role in the construction of the democratic traditions of the union movement. Indeed, in the context of apartheid South Africa, many church bodies had a relatively developed system of self-government and rank-and-file participation.

Traditional influences

The new unions also owed some aspects of their character to what remained of traditional African political culture, in particular, the tradition of debate and consensual decision-making by members of the community gathering at an *imbizo*⁵ or *lekgotla*. Moses Mayekiso argues that the experiences gained

in these traditional structures in rural settings were part of the mosaic of lived experiences that gave birth to the democratic tradition of unionism in the 1970s.⁶ There are many examples that show that this could be adapted and transferred into proletarian and other non-traditional settings. These gatherings were used by many migrant workers to debate issues and to resolve disputes among “home-boy” groups in South Africa’s urban areas and mining compounds. Indeed, part of the reason why many unions took root relatively quickly in urban and mining hostels or compounds is the fact that these traditional structures were used as mobilizing forums for union activities.

However, we must add that just like religious institutions, traditional structures tended to be hierarchical and were biased in favor of older men because maleness and age were associated with experience and wisdom. Suffice it to say that these experiences influenced the emergence of a more democratic culture of conducting union affairs, particularly the culture of debating issues until consensus emerges. In his book *Command or Consensus*, Hammond-Tooke (1975) describes the operation of local administrative councils (an *imbizo* and an *inkundla*⁷) in a traditional setting in South Africa’s rural villages:

The “chairman” of the council is of course the headman. In theory he guides the discussion, and the decisions are made in his name; in practice much depends on his personality and on the forces ranged for or against him in committee. We have seen how, in the traditional decision-making process, great emphasis was laid on consensus, so that decision-making was the product of an essentially “political” interaction between council members who were equal to one another. The official position of the headman in the bureaucratic structure has tended to skew this extreme democratic system, for he is now backed by the Administration. (1975: 141)

Hammond-Tooke referred to these structures as “tribal democracies” where there was “relatively little ‘authority’ attached to indigenous political officers. Political officers could command, but only after the order had been formulated by a process that involved consensus” (1975: 216). In many ways, the union workplace general meeting and the local shop stewards’ council bear a lot of similarities to the *imbizo*, especially in the way in which debate is conducted and consensus achieved.

Experience in cultural and sports organizations

The suppression of political and union activity in the 1960s was not accompanied by an obliteration of other social and cultural forms of organization among black South Africans. Indeed, in many areas the absence of political activity led many to find solace in other “non-political” social and cultural

activities such as sports and cultural bodies like dance clubs, choirs, and so on. Many of these bodies were run on strictly formal and relatively democratic lines, thus providing opportunities for those involved to gain basic organizational skills such as chairing meetings, operating bank accounts, keeping minutes, and participating in open debates and in the election of leadership. The skills gained from these experiences helped in the building of the democratic trade union movement and should not be underestimated.

Mutual help clubs or "societies"

Equally important in the building of the democratic union movement is the experience gained by working-class black South Africans in a variety of voluntary mutual help clubs. These take various forms, depending on the function they are supposed to serve. The *masingwabane* or burial society is a voluntary association established by people who then pool money, collected on a monthly basis, to be used in the event of a death of a member or his or her relatives. What is relevant about this form of association is the way it manages its affairs. A well-developed *masingwabane* will have a bank account, elected officials—chairperson, secretary, treasurer—and will keep a record of its meetings, which are held at regular intervals. In addition, it will have a democratic way of taking decisions and accounting for money spent. In the townships, the *stokvel* and its many variants, such as the *moholisano* and the "society," are formed as savings clubs where members take turns to receive all the funds collected every month. But in all these clubs, there are regular meetings and there is democratic debate about how much the contributions should be, who to admit to the club, and so on.

School struggles

Many of the workers who formed the new unions in the 1970s had come through a period of turbulence in the education system where they had been thrust into positions of leadership in struggles against the authoritarian education authorities. Although many of these experiences did not necessarily result in the formation of democratic structures, the experiences remain important nevertheless because it was in fighting these struggles that these activists came to embrace democracy as an ideal. For example, Nelson Ndinisa, a former shop steward and past president of the then South African Railways and Harbor Workers' Union (SARHWU) recalls a protracted struggle at his high school, Osborne High in Mount Frere, which led to his eventual expulsion before he could write his matric. He says that at a certain stage of that struggle he played a leading role because he could understand that things were not right. He attributes his political awareness to a history teacher at the school:

While he was doing history he would give us more ideas of what is happening. So he was actually the one, so that when these things happened in Soweto we had a better understanding of them. Now when the [Transkei] independence came he was able to articulate what it means. Generally in the rural areas people didn't understand. But we tried to form a student grouping on that side and we said that people must really understand that what we are getting is not really independence. So, that was the background as we started to know that something is wrong. I have always believed that that teacher actually played a critical role because he was able to explain and analyse the situation. Naturally, I was a good reader in black history and all those things, where we came from, why and all those things.⁸

Bobby Marie was also a student activist before he joined the unions. It was during this time that his political awareness developed and his student idealism propelled him toward involvement in democratic organizations in the community.⁹

Previous union experience

Many of the workers who joined unions in the 1970s had previous union experience, many of them having joined unions affiliated to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Many of these unions were run democratically and had elected shop-floor committees. Thus many of these older workers would have had some experience of belonging to a democratic organization. Indeed, a study conducted in 1974 revealed that many members of the new unions in the Durban-Pietermaritzburg area regarded Moses Mabhida, a SACTU leader, as one of the most influential leaders in the old Natal province (Lambert, 1988: 161–231). Many of these workers later became activists and leaders in the new unions.

Political and civic movements

Many of the members of the post-1973 unions had previous experience as members of political or liberation movements that had embraced democracy as their goal. Many of these members would have participated in movement activities in the 1950s and 1960s, and some of their experiences were brought into the new unions after 1973 and, according to Baskin (1991), many of them became frontline activists in the struggle to establish these unions.

In later years, movement activists from the civic associations, the United Democratic Front (UDF), and the Africanist and Black Consciousness Movement organizations joined the unions and brought with them considerable experience and skills in mass mobilization and organization. But it is

equally true to say that many union leaders brought their experience into these liberation movements.

Liaison committees

After the passing of the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act in 1973, many employers orchestrated the formation of liaison committees as a strategy to bypass or avoid trade unions. Many workers who were to become union leaders in later years participated in these committees. These structures were not democratic but they alerted those involved in them to the problems of working in toy-telephone structures. But to dismiss the entire experience as a negative one would be mistaken. In these structures, some workers learned organizational skills that are essential for running a democratic organization, for example, chairing meetings, taking minutes, giving reports and basic negotiation skills.

Negative experiences of apartheid authoritarianism

Petrus Mashishi, the president of SAMWU, says that most black workers did not join trade unions because they liked them. "We joined the trade unions because of the way we were treated" (Ginsburg and Matlala, 1996: 88). Millions of black workers experienced, in one form or another, the authoritarian nature of apartheid rule and these negative experiences predisposed them to some form of democracy, both as practice within their unions and as an ideal form of government for the entire society. Indeed, for those in the liberation struggle broadly, belonging to a democratic organization and being involved in the fight for democracy placed them on some kind of moral high ground *vis-à-vis* their apartheid oppressors.

Fear of repression

Many activists who participated in the early years of union organization and mobilization argue that unions had no choice but to be democratic. Jeremy Baskin argues that the post-1973 unions "made a virtue out of necessity."¹⁰ Democracy, he says, was made necessary by the hostile environment of employer resistance and state repression and to avoid the victimization of a few individuals. It also ensured that when leaders were victimized, the organization would continue to function since the members took responsibility for the survival of the union.

The contribution of lived experience highlighted above has been neglected by scholars of the South African trade union movement. Part of the reason for this omission could be that some of the experiences do not originate in organizational milieus that are known for being democratic. Indeed,

many of the experiences originated in undemocratic environments. However, all these experiences highlight the importance of workers' lived experiences and the fact that transformative associational forms, modes of collective solidarity and identities are never constructed out of pure antecedents but emerge out of life as it is lived by those who participate in the construction of those new associational forms, solidarity, and identities. This approach helps us move away from elitist approaches that always ascribe new ideas to an "intelligent outsider."

Having said the above, we should also note that many of the organizations and arenas where these experiences were gained were often conservative and backward looking. The negative or conservative lived experiences were also capable of being mobilized for different reasons. For example, the traditional experiences could be mobilized by ethnic groupings whose purpose was to collaborate with the apartheid government. In a similar way, religious sentiments could be exploited by conservative groups to discourage political involvement or to encourage collaboration with the apartheid state. Thus, "lived experiences" is a weapon that cuts both ways in that some of these can be mobilized in a transformative way while others can be mobilized in a retrogressive direction. It is here that the role of leadership and intellectuals becomes important, for they play a role in packaging and mobilizing these lived experiences to fit in with the transformative project. This discussion now turns to the contribution of intellectuals in the emergence of the tradition of democratic unionism. Here "intellectuals" is used in its broadest possible sense to include organic intellectuals and others who perform a general leadership role in organizations.

The intellectual contribution to the emergence of democratic unionism

The contribution of intellectuals in the emergence of the democratic tradition of unionism in South Africa is not in dispute. What is at issue is the form that this contribution took as well as the composition of the intellectual group involved in union organizing and mobilization. With reference to the South African trade union movement, the term "intellectual" has been associated only with a particular group of activists who were white and university educated. Many of these activists were employed by the unions, but there were a few of them who were based at universities as researchers and lecturers. Among some black officials and leaders in the unions, the term was used to refer to white officials who had administrative skills and possessed analytical skills that enabled them to "theorize" about the suffering of black workers. Many of these black leaders and officials resented the power of these intellectuals, which derived from their privileged background in the middle class of white society, and thus the term "intellectual" had the

connotation of "privileged fellow-traveler" for whom the struggle was not a life-and-death issue.¹¹

In this discussion the term is used in a much wider sense, which could be construed to include Gramsci's two categories of traditional and organic intellectuals. Webster (1992) has also used the term in this way with reference to the unions, but he also took it further by disaggregating the category of intellectuals further into five sub-categories, namely, professionally trained intellectuals, party intellectuals, freelance research intellectuals, union-made intellectuals, and grassroots intellectuals. For the purpose of this discussion, the most important role for intellectuals in the trade union movement was the "packaging" of a set of ideas into an ideology and a coherent political program. For the intellectuals to do this, they needed to possess analytical and administrative skills as well as an understanding of the lived experiences of the workers they were organizing. Few of the groups of intellectuals identified here possessed both strengths. Indeed, the strength of the intellectual contribution to the development of post-1973 unions was the combination of different groups possessing different strengths. For example, the strength of a worker leader and official such as Moses Ndlovu in Pietermaritzburg was that he understood the lived experiences of the workers that he organized and could translate abstract terms into a language that the workers understood. By contrast, some of the white officials that he worked with could read many books on theories of trade unionism yet needed to combine this strength with Ndlovu's knowledge to ensure that new strategies were effective.

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY AS EMANCIPATION

At this point we turn to the central theme of this discussion, namely, the emancipatory value of participatory democracy and why it is central to any project of social emancipation. In this regard, we should recall that, in his book *The Social Contract*, Rousseau identified two propositions regarding the importance of participatory democracy. First, participatory democracy is important because it provides every citizen with an opportunity to participate in political decision-making. The significance of this is that this form of democracy allows for the expansion of citizenship and the inclusion of those who would otherwise be excluded from the affairs of a community or the society as a whole.

Second, Rousseau appreciated the psychological effect of participatory democracy on the participants by "ensuring that there is a continuing inter-relationship between the working of institutions and the psychological qualities and attitudes of individuals interacting within them" (Pateman, 1970: 22). At the core of this proposition is the notion that the participation is free from coercion, is meaningful, and is an expression of the autonomy of the participants.

These propositions are germane to our discussion here, particularly insofar as they help us debunk conventional notions of freedom and democracy, which are based on two misleading dichotomies. The first dichotomy is that of "oppression versus democracy," which presents the issues in a zero-sum fashion. In other words, many would argue that either you have freedom or you have oppression, but you cannot have elements of both at the same time. This sort of reasoning then leads to an assumption that once you get rid of oppression, you get a democratic system that includes everyone in decision-making. However, existing evidence shows that most democratic transitions do not necessarily result in an inclusion of the majority in processes of decision-making nor do they lead to psychological emancipation as envisaged by Rousseau. All they result in is a formal kind of democracy where participation by the majority is limited to participation in periodic elections.

In the same way, under an oppressive regime there is always room for the oppressed to exercise some control and participation in deciding certain issues that affect their lives. This participation and control become more visible as the struggle intensifies and as ordinary people realize that they need to "build the future today." To some extent, the period from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s was such a period in South Africa, when alternative institutions and politics replaced, even if temporarily, the hegemonic institutions of the apartheid regime. Thus the people's courts, the street and area committees, the workers' industrial area committees, the local shop stewards' committees, and the workplace general meetings of this period represented a moment of emancipation for those involved. However, the problem with these enclaves of emancipation is that their scope is circumscribed and their influence confined to the small local communities that are constantly under threat of being disrupted and reincorporated under the orbit of the oppressive regime.

The second dichotomy that is often misleading is that of "reform versus revolutionary rupture" and how the former is associated with continued oppression (albeit in a modified form) and the latter with freedom and democracy. Many struggle activists and scholars tend to see a separation between the struggle itself and the ultimate goal of that struggle. In other words, there is often failure to conceive of struggle itself as an emancipatory moment when the oppressed consciously reject the constraints imposed on them by the oppressors and begin to work toward a new society based on new principles of social organization and governance. Thus the obsession with the moment of revolutionary rupture leads many to fail to appreciate the significance of embryonic moments of social emancipation as they unfold during the struggle itself. However, what history has shown us is that the moment of rupture, whether it is ushered in through a violent revolution or peaceful negotiations, seldom lives up to expectations in terms of its emancipatory possibilities. What it achieves, instead, is to disarm activists and demobilize all of those who, in their communities, workplaces, schools, and

organizations, were involved in building real utopias that gave meaning to their lives.

The foregoing discussion serves to highlight the centrality of participatory democracy to the discourse of emancipation. It also suggests that participation can be a method of conducting a struggle as well as a goal of that struggle. This observation has implications for the way we conceive of freedom and democracy because it helps us avoid the dichotomous approach that limits our understanding of the dialectical nature of social change.

A related additional point is what Pateman refers to as the "educative" or "social training" function of participatory democracy, which leads her to characterize the participatory democratic model as

one where maximum input (participation) is required and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual, so that there is "feedback" from output to input. (1970: 43)

In South Africa this was more evident in the trade union movement in the 1980s and the early 1990s. The grassroots structures of the unions, in the form of workplace general meetings and local shop stewards' councils, served as a training ground for millions of organized workers as they deliberated on internal union policy matters as well as issues pertaining to their wages and conditions of employment and broader political issues of the time. For these workers, unions had become veritable "schools of democracy" and out of this experience many of them graduated into regional and national roles. Since the democratic political transition, thousands of these men and women have been called upon to perform leadership roles in other arenas, such as politicians in local, provincial and national government, civil servants, managers in the private sector, and leading figures in non-governmental organizations.

In their comparative study of democracy and capitalist development in the twentieth century, Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) have argued that the working class is the "most consistently pro-democratic force" because it has an interest in achieving its political and social inclusion (1992: 8). In South Africa, this class also took the lead in experimenting with models of democracy, both participatory and representative in their mode of organization, and in fighting for democracy as an ideal for the whole society. Indeed, the mobilizing strength of the pro-democratic movement derived, to a large extent, from the democratic and participatory character of the movement's organized formations.

The section that follows reviews some of the strengths and weaknesses of these experiments and considers some of the factors that led to the decline of the participatory tradition during the transition to a post-apartheid society.

THE DECLINE OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY DURING THE TRANSITION TO A POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY

According to Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992), a relatively weak working class enables the middle classes to take a leading role in struggles for democratization, with the consequence that democracy is often limited. But then they caution that in each historical case, one needs to examine the specific configuration of class coalitions and the relative strength of different classes in order to understand how the balance of power shapes the prospects for democratic change. An examination of the South African case shows that the working classes were not weak. Indeed, the working class was highly mobilized and well organized on a number of fronts, particularly in its trade unions and civic organizations. Prior to the 1994 elections, the main liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), which had to re-establish itself as a mass-based political party after 30 years of imprisonment, exile, and underground operation, found that it had no choice but to embrace radical notions of political democracy and economic redistribution as outlined in the union-initiated Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). How did it come about, then, that the country ended up with a conventional model of democracy that leaves very little scope for mass participation? The answer lies in the configuration of class forces within the liberation movement, relations among the different networks in the liberation movement and the re-alignment of class forces since 1990.

Before the unbanning of the exiled ANC, the SACP and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1990, the political stage of mass-based opposition politics was occupied by the trade union movement, the UDF, civic organizations, and several other civil society organizations. But by far the most powerful and best-organized forces were the unions, particularly the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In all these organizations, notions of establishing "democratic organs of self-government" were very influential, as spelt out in the *Freedom Charter*. It was envisaged that these structures would become the new institutional forms through which power would be exercised in a liberated South Africa. Thus in 1986 a prominent community leader gave a very optimistic assessment of the new structures of "people's power," asserting that in some townships people were taking over power by "starting to run those townships in different ways" (Sisulu, 1986: 104). He then went on to identify some of the developments in this regard:

People exercised power by starting to take control in areas such as crime, the clearing of the townships and the creation of people's parks, the provision of first aid, and even in the schools. I want to emphasize here that these advances were only possible because of the development of democratic organs, or committees, of people's power. Our people set up bodies which

were controlled by, and accountable to, the masses of people in each area. In such areas, the distinction between the people and their organizations disappeared. All the people young and old participated in committees from street level upwards. The development of people's power has caught the imagination of our people, even where struggles are breaking out for the first time. There is a growing tendency for ungovernability to be transformed into elementary forms of people's power, as people take the lead from the semi-liberated zones. (1986: 104)

In a similar way, the trade unions had become organs of people's power and were posing fundamental questions about the economy and how it should be managed. Some were beginning to spell out the form of management that they envisaged, in the form of workers' councils that would be similar to those in place under the Yugoslavian system of worker self-management. Incidentally, Richard Turner (1980) had devoted a considerable amount of space in his book discussing participatory democracy, and he was also in favor of worker self-management through workers' councils.

However, from 1990 there was a marked decline of the participatory democratic discourse and several reasons can be advanced for this. First, the negotiated nature of the democratic transition had a demobilizing effect on ordinary citizens and thus undermined efforts toward self-organization at the grassroots level. During the negotiation phase of the transition, the future of the country seemed to depend more on the outcome of deal-making by a few leaders, and grassroots democratic structures, which had emerged in the course of struggles, did not seem to matter to these leaders. In 1991 a frustrated unionist expressed these sentiments about the ANC's approach to the political negotiations:

How can you mobilize your mass membership for action around demands, when at any moment someone will go off and negotiate with your opponent again—you don't know on what mandate, and what was agreed? It simply confuses people. They don't know what they are acting for, so they do nothing. (cited in Von Holdt, 1991: 19)

The effect of this was that power gradually slipped out of the hands of grassroots structures such as street committees, civic organizations, local union structures, women's organizations, and youth bodies and became centralized in the hands of those who were close to, or part of, the political negotiations process. Since 1994, this demobilization has translated into a kind of mass inertia and an expectation that the leadership and the democratic government should "deliver" services.

Second, the leadership of the unbanned ANC brought a different style of leadership into the mass democratic movement. Most of these leaders had

just come back from prison or exile and were often out of touch with developments within the democratic movement. The negative aspects of the style that they brought into the democratic movement were secrecy, lack of consultation (of ANC members and members of the ANC's allied organizations), reliance on certain personalities such as Mandela and the fact that most of these leaders did not come from defined constituencies in the form of local and branch structures. All of this discouraged any form of direct or indirect participation by those operating in local structures of the mass movement.

Third, many of the exiled leaders who came back into the democratic movement had "an inadequate understanding of mass organization and action" (von Holdt, 1991), and dominated the leadership ranks of the ANC. In exile, almost all of these leaders had been hosted by authoritarian regimes and some had assimilated the negative practices of their host governments. Even though these leaders proclaimed that they wanted to establish a democratic system founded on the spirit of the *Freedom Charter* to let the people govern, many of them had embraced the Schumpeterian notion that the masses cannot participate or govern. However, these "exile" and "prison" leaders of the ANC remained extremely powerful within the movement because of the "revolutionary aura" that many ordinary people associated with being imprisoned or being exiled. Indeed, many of the so-called internal leaders also felt obliged to defer to the "leadership," who had earned that status by virtue of having made the sacrifice of going to jail or into exile. In the moment of excitement with important leaders and deal-making that promised to bring about what had seemed impossible even at the height of the mass struggles of the 1980s, many began to take the participatory democratic tradition for granted and to assume that a representative kind of democracy would lead to the same outcomes. In the minds of many, it seemed impossible that such a "tried and tested" leadership could deviate from the democratic course and act in a way that was at variance with the aspirations of the majority.

Fourth, the South African transition occurred at the same time as the collapse of state socialism that to many had come to symbolize a radical alternative to capitalism. What also disappeared with the collapse of the Eastern bloc were utopian notions of social transformation, and this left many activists and movement intellectuals content with limited or elite notions of democracy. Many of these activists and intellectuals were won over to the view that "there is no alternative" (TINA), and several of them have actually joined the ranks of the capitalist class by riding on the wave of so-called "black economic empowerment."

Fifth, processes of class formation or elite formation have accelerated, with many of the leading activists, who were part of the tradition of democratic participation, having become beneficiaries of new opportunities created by the deracialization of society. Thus the discourse of a collective participatory

democratic culture has been overtaken by one of individualism and careerism where empowerment is seen to emanate from taking advantage of opportunities created by deracialization.

Sixth, the state-sponsored campaign of violent terror that was unleashed on the democratic movement soon after the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela had a debilitating effect on the practice of democracy in organizations. The violence was clearly intended to demoralize communities, to terrorize activists, and to smash the innovative forms of resistance and organization that had developed over the years. Many local structures, such as street committees and local shop stewards' councils, ceased to meet, and many activists and members of organizations stopped attending meetings. In the circumstances, decision-making was left to a few individuals, thus engendering a new style of leadership that lacked accountability.

Finally, there were many other factors that led to a diminution of the democratic tradition in mass organizations in the early 1990s. Among these has been the generational change in the mass organizations that were part of the struggle. For example, many of the union activists from the 1970s to the early 1990s have moved on and have been replaced by a new generation of younger activists who were not part of the social experiences of the earlier period.

All the above have coalesced into a new culture of organization and leadership that stands in contrast with the nascent tradition of participatory democracy in South Africa. This elite culture of democracy coincided with the intensification of South Africa's insertion into the global economy. All of these processes have engendered a new political culture in organizations and state agencies that is beholden to national and global capitalist interests. This culture seeks to reinforce rather than challenge the hegemonic processes of globalization, and it is about the marginalization, rather than the empowerment, of subordinate classes, grassroots movements, and local communities. Indeed, this culture appropriates the language and discourse of democracy to oppress, marginalize, and atomize rather than emancipate. Thus, today, in the face of a growing challenge by grassroots movements and activists, the usual refrain by many government representatives is that "the government has a duty to govern." Gone are slogans about "organs of people's power" or such clarion calls of the heady days of the democratic struggle in the 1980s as "The People Shall Govern."

In 1991 the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the largest and most influential union that is an affiliate of COSATU, adopted a resolution on the political alliance between COSATU, the ANC, and the SACP in which they noted that "decades of illegality have imposed serious limitations on the ANC." The resolution then pointed out that the unions that had experience and leadership had a duty to build the ANC and that the "accumulated experience of participatory democracy, accountability and mandates of the

trade union movement must permeate ANC structures at all levels" (cited in von Holdt, 1991: 27). However, these good intentions have failed to materialize. Not only did the unions and other mass organizations fail to infuse their participatory democratic culture into the ANC, but many unions and community organizations themselves have been losing that culture of participation, mandates and leadership accountability. One of the most effective excuses used by unaccountable leadership in organization today is that issues associated with global economic restructuring are complex and, under this pretext, small groups of individuals end up making all the decisions.

TOWARD A PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

Despite the changed national and global conditions, there is scope for revitalizing the participatory democratic tradition in South Africa. Indeed, the national democratic dispensation does open up space for political contestation and mobilization without the threat of state repression. However, for such attempts at resuscitating the participatory democratic tradition to be successful, certain conditions need to exist. First, there must be a thoroughgoing critique of the current dispensation and a contestation of the notion of democracy itself. Such a critique and contestation would be aimed at re-appropriating the ideals of democracy and injecting an emancipatory content into the discourse and practice of democracy. Such a critique and contestation must seek to place participatory democracy at the center of the new discourse as a means to the end, namely social justice and emancipation.

In the context of South Africa and many other countries in the developing world, social emancipation should be understood in the context of the realities facing subordinate classes, namely, poverty, hunger, violence and crime, patriarchy, racism, social marginalization, and the legacy of colonialism as manifested by dependency on the developed countries. All these realities are obstacles to social inclusion and emancipation in that they exacerbate social marginalization and the exclusion of subordinate groups and classes. In this regard, participatory democracy is one of the ways in which the social and political inclusion of the marginalized and oppressed classes can be guaranteed in a reformed social system. This implies that, in addition to seeking to expand arenas of popular democratic participation, a project of social emancipation should also seek to identify and resuscitate past structures as well as preserve existing structures that enhance participation at grassroots levels of society. In this regard, the participatory elements of African traditional modes of government discussed earlier in this chapter could be adapted and combined with representative forms. The experience of the trade union movement and civic organizations shows that it is possible to do this without these forms losing their integrity. However, this resuscitation and preservation of certain forms of government and decision-making would

have to be accompanied by an acknowledgement that participation is a crucial dimension of social emancipation that allows subordinate classes to articulate their interests and assert their power. Left-wing intellectuals and organic intellectuals from these classes would then have to contest the notion that representative democracy is the only way to make decisions and run government in modern societies. They would have to show that the popular refrain by the elites and their intellectuals that "participation in contemporary society is impossible" because of the complexity of the issues and the size of the population is nothing but a justification for the exclusion of the majority from shaping their future.

However, asserting the virtues of participatory democracy is not an easy task, particularly under the current hegemonic paradigm where decentralized decision-making is considered by many to be inefficient and primitive, while representation by elected representatives and consultants is considered efficient and modern. This cynicism and elitism can also be found among current and past community activists and unionists. A former unionist has argued that, in a context where union membership has grown by leaps and bounds and "as issues become more complex," the unions must accept that "substantial decision making will have to end up in the hands of a few individuals rather than structures of any kind" (Schreiner, 1994: 47). A project of social emancipation has to contend with this elitism and cynicism and make a convincing case showing why participatory democracy is a minimum requirement for the emancipation of subordinate classes.

Second, the above suggests a need to go beyond a critique and begin to explore "real utopias" that enable local communities and grassroots structures to shape the agenda of social emancipation. This would go a long way toward alleviating the alienation associated with what Rose (1967) termed "the mass society," where individuals are socially isolated from one another. But most importantly, it would achieve an objective that Turner identified as being of cardinal importance to the project of social emancipation:

It is to give individuals the maximum possible amount of control over what happens to themselves and hence the maximum possible amount of freedom to decide what they want, and then to act to get it. Its object is to free the individual both from the direct power of others and from the power of hidden social forces. It is not a choice, but a framework within which choice becomes possible. (1980: 83)

Third, attempts to reinvent democracy and social emancipation must speak the language of real people grappling with real problems in all spheres of society. Successful cases of community and worker mobilization and organization in the South African struggle show that participatory democracy is most successful when subordinate classes are able to appropriate and

translate intellectual discourses into action to better their conditions. This implies that such discourses have to be intelligible enough to lend themselves to practical and meaningful application and experimentation. Thus these discourses must also suggest realistic and winnable goals that build cumulatively toward more fundamental changes.

Fourth, there is a need to forge new local, regional, national and international networks to link local struggles and build overarching solidarities that allow for the sharing of experiences and the removal of atomization of subordinate classes and their struggles. In the main, these have got to aim at the free or voluntary exchange of experiences and knowledge rather than the creation of bureaucratic structures. This would have to entail creative uses of different forms of the mass media and new forms of communication to assert alternative or counter-hegemonic forms of globalization.

Finally, the above implies a need to reinvent the left itself so that it grasps the challenges of building counter-hegemonic global struggles and experiments in alternative forms of social organization. It also means that the left has got to rethink its role within the changing conditions of neoliberal globalization. In particular, the role of left intellectuals needs to be assessed since they stand in a very powerful position to shape and reshape discourses; however, there is always a danger that some may abuse the power and authority that derive from their intellectual role because they confuse it with political leadership. This is important because intellectuals have the power to lend legitimacy to certain discourses and to delegitimize others.

Thus, the reinvention of social emancipation and the revitalization of participation as its kernel is simultaneously a political and an intellectual project and, as such, requires contestation at both levels. In the era of global neoliberalism, such contestation needs to occur at all levels, including the global arena. Among other things, it has to contest the trivialization of everything local and counter the glorification of the so-called global village, whose essence is inscribed with the interests of capitalism.

Notes

- 1 For a detailed discussion of the difference between social and market regulation see the excellent piece by Standing (1997).
- 2 The book was first published in 1972. Turner was murdered by apartheid assassins on 8 January 1978.
- 3 Jeremy Baskin, personal interview, 24 February 2000.
- 4 A kangaroo court is an unprocedural or improperly constituted trial. It is deemed unprocedural and unfair because it does not follow fair and procedural norms. Kangaroo courts are therefore part of what some term "rough justice."
- 5 This is a traditional African village assembly, usually presided over by the chief or his/her representative. It is usually an open forum where members of the

village gather to discuss issues that affect them. These gatherings are still widely used in South Africa's rural villages as democratic forums.

- 6 Moses Mayekiso, personal interview, 11 August 1999.
- 7 This is a traditional African court where villagers gather to hear and adjudicate cases of a civil and criminal nature. Today this structure has been modified to suit modern circumstances. The people's courts in urban black townships in the 1980 were modelled on this structure.
- 8 Nelson Ndinisa, personal interview, 20 April 1999.
- 9 Bobby Marie, personal interview, 26 October 1999.
- 10 Jeremy Baskin, personal interview, 24 February 2000.
- 11 See, for example, comments by Andrew Zulu on intellectuals as cited in MacShane, Plaut and Ward (1984: 70). Petrus Tom also made a similar comment at the end of his book when he warned workers: "My message to the working class is that nobody will liberate you except yourselves. Don't give your struggle to intellectuals, academics and other organizations who do not have the workers' interests at heart, who want to further their aims at the expense of the workers" (1985: 68).

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