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Gregory Houston, Modimowabarwa Kanyane and Yul Derek Davids (Eds.), *Paradise Lost: Race and Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2022. Series: Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies, Volume: 28 E-Book (PDF): ISBN: 978-90-04-51594-9.

Reviewed by: Kathryn Mathers, Duke University.

*Paradise Lost: Race and Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa* is a project about imagination. It lays bare the beautiful, complex contested imaginations and dreamings that made up anti-apartheid movements; but, in doing so, the book reveals the limits of what was imagined before Apartheid ended. It is in these limits that this book's chapters unpack why post-apartheid South Africa remains hostage to the idea of race as well as racism. *Paradise Lost* goes back in time (though it might only seem like yesterday) to show us two lost paradises: the one that Apartheid's ways of thinking and structures made for white South Africans and the paradise that many of us dreamt would become real when Apartheid fell.

The lesson of these chapters is that while the dream for paradise remains a hallucination, the paradise grounded in the idea of white superiority and in white systemic privilege still haunts South Africa. *Paradise Lost* tells this story of how race remains central to South Africa's future through rich data and observation of everyday life in the country. It does the essential work of going backwards into memories, histories, and memorials so that it might be possible to imagine a different future. *Paradise Lost*'s dream is that, if we could understand better how racism is maintained in a legally nonracial society, we can find ways to eradicate racism and inequality in South Africa.

As a collection of essays, the volume is split into three parts. First, 'Part I: White Privilege and the racialized Power Structure in South Africa' grounds the book by employing through descriptions and analyses of South Africa's historical legacy of racism. This section also articulates the key concepts and terms that will appear over again in the book's essays, including white privilege, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), intersectionality, racial capitalism, coloniality, and decolonialism. It brings forward the sites of higher education and the workplace as spaces in South Africa where apartheid and colonial legacies are firmly embedded,

but where struggles for change are also manifested most emphatically. The next two sections, ‘Part 2: The Manifestation of Racism in Post-apartheid South Africa’ and ‘Part 3: Race and Identity in Post-apartheid South Africa,’ offer essential data and analysis on specific sites, moments, and institutions where the struggle over South Africa’s future is fought, including the sporting arena, heritage sites, the census, and universities.

*Paradise Lost*, here, presents required reading on the state of South Africa right now, as multiple chapters provide quantitative and qualitative data on exactly what South Africans are experiencing or thinking about racial discrimination, poverty, immigrants, and quality of life. The combination of a deep historical dive, with evidence-based descriptions of life in South Africa, is an exceptional contribution to South African studies. This book allows us to begin the project of imagining a future that disentangles South African lives from the seemingly intractable web of racialized thinking and racist structures.

Together, the chapters show the paradoxical work that race thinking, and racism continue to proliferate in South Africa. Alexis Habiyaremye’s chapter on the ‘Impasse of Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa’ disrupts a unidirectional perspective on BEE—not only showing that capitalism is racist, but that capitalism depends on racism. Catherine Ndinda and Tidings P. Ndhlovu’s chapter on ‘the Intersectionality of Gender, Race and Class in the Transformation of the Workplace in Post-apartheid South Africa,’ does similarly disruptive work to show the ways South African identities have all too often been defined by others. While intersectionality is often hailed as a way to increase visibility of the different sites of marginalization, this essay shows that when gender is articulated with race, it is white women who come out on top, strengthening rather than disrupting racial hierarchies in multiple employment sectors. Another paradox is revealed in Neo Lekgotla laga Ramoupi’s essay on ‘Racism in Higher Education,’ which shows that the fear of a loss of privilege in the face of attempts to build equity have combined with a sense of white superiority to reinforce rather than undermine racism in education institutions in South Africa. As outlined by Konosoang Sobane, Pinky Makoe and Chanel Van Der Merwe, these fears and gatekeeping are especially apparent in the struggle over language teaching at universities.

Thobeka Zondi, Samela Mtyingizane, and Steven Ngqapheli Mchun’s ‘Discrimination Followed Us into Paradise,’ mobilize the HSRC’s national opinion survey (South African Social Attitude Survey SASAS, a frequent and useful tool for many of the chapters) to underscore the ways perceptions of discrimination do not map onto the realities of who is really struggling in South Africa. Specifically, this essay shows how white South Africans feel a burden of discrimination—a profound paradox, given how clearly *Paradise Lost* articulates evidence that these feelings are

in direct contradiction to the realities of life for many South Africans. This situation is what Desai, drawing on Martinot, calls the ‘machinery of whiteness’ in his essay on the almost casual ways Black cricketers are labeled ‘diversity selections’ no matter how good they are while being excluded from daily companionship with their teammates.

Although there is a rich foundation of work here from South African and African writers and thinkers, a lot of fundamental thinking about South Africa originates in the US. However, most of this book’s chapters expertly unpack racism and the work it does, so they could have benefited from reflections on the limitations of drawing on U.S. based race studies to think through poverty, education, and economics in South Africa. Steven Gordon models a productive attention to when and why South Africans should look to research beyond its border in ‘Attitudinal Analysis of Anti-immigrant Sentiment in South Africa.’ Further, Crain Soudien’s forward reminds us that South Africa’s struggle is not just a local one, but also possibly a precursor for the world’s future. Yet, this collection of essays pays little attention to how global capitalism and politics influence South Africa. Consequently, this narrow point of view limits authors to seeking explanations and solutions for racial capitalism and other hangovers from apartheid and colonialism to the South African political and economic structures.

*Paradise Lost* is an essential read for understanding South Africa’s inextricable and heartbreaking entanglement with its deep history of racist colonial and apartheid systems. Throughout each book chapter, each author strives to outline solutions or ways forward within their particular sites of research—from the possibilities and limits of Ubuntu and decoloniality (citing Ndlovu-Gatsheni), to calls for African knowledge production and raciolinguistic decolonial thinking, to the necessity of radical democratic politics. These essays culminate in Modimowarbarwa Kanyane’s thoughtful elaborations of the ways South Africans need to work towards decolonizing both white and black minds to create substantive equality, social justice, and national reconciliation. The strength of this collection, however, is in giving us the realities of both past and present as a platform for reimagining what South Africa could be. Ultimately, the paradox that *Paradise Lost* reveals is that South Africa must think with race in mind or the country will never move through or beyond racism.

#### **Research Africa**

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