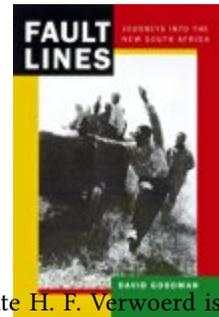


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David Goodman. *Fault lines: Journeys into the New South Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. ix + 400 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-21736-2.

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This is a magnificent book by all accounts. Part personal drama and part social history, the book is about the persistence of apartheid in new South Africa. In an attempt to understand the grassroots experience of apartheid and democratic transition, the author took several journeys to South Africa at the height of apartheid in the 1980s and during the transition period in the 1990s, speaking to mostly ordinary people across many divides.

The book is divided into four parts. In the introduction the author talks about his early encounter with the two faces of apartheid South Africa: the goodwill and friendliness of black people living in abject poverty, ubiquitous danger of death and harassment; and the condescending and carefree attitude of the generally well-to-do whites to their black neighbours. The reader is taken through the moving as well as harrowing personal accounts of apartheid and new South Africa. Part one partly describes the unpleasant experiences of Frank Chikane, the ANC activist now part of the presidential entourage, as he became an enemy of the apartheid state, and, eventually, survived various assassination attempts. Juxtaposed to this is the work of an ignominious security cop and one of his would-be assassins, Paul Erasmus. Chilling details of his ruthless interrogation techniques and murders are described vividly, as is the specific attempt to kill Chikane. It is shown that the failure of the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) process to bring about full confessions and wholehearted apologies was not necessarily a let off for the perpetrators like Erasmus. Most of them live unhappy and even suicidal lives and suffer from psycho-moral traumas as they seek to deal with their bitter past.

In part two, Goodman looks into the heart of the apartheid ideology through the Verwoerd family. The

prime architect of apartheid, the late H. F. Verwoerd is duly represented by his son, Willem, to whom he bequeathed an iron will and an intelligent but stubborn mind. As a keeper of the Verwoerd legacy, Willem takes pains to explain the 'good intentions' of the apartheid ideology, blaming its failures on 'the ANC types' – a few agitators as opposed to the insouciant majority of 'traditional' Africans – and P.W. Botha and F. W. de Klerk for tampering with his father's grandiose political scheme. But nothing pains him more than the fact that among Afrikaners who have left the laager and embraced the new dispensation in an attempt to undo the Verwoerd's legacy is Willem's own son and daughter-in-law, both ANC MPs. This leaves his and other Afrikaner families bitterly divided by their different loyalties: apartheid and post-apartheid.

Part three describes the struggles to escape poverty. Adelaide Buso enjoys some political influence as a municipal councillor representing a squatter camp, but her political clout is circumscribed by her lack of economic influence as a domestic servant of a wealthy white family in the town. On the other hand, the moderately educated Tumi Modise is a go-getter who pushed her way up the career ladder to end as a Mercedes-driving businessperson whose kids go to a former-white school. As a new black capitalist, Tumi credits hard work for her success and offers unfashionable explanations for the continuing poverty among black people.

In the fourth section, the struggle is over land, arguably the most emotive issue in most post-colonial societies. The story is told both through the lives of black farmers who were forcefully removed from their land and their white neighbours who benefited from the expropriated land and property. In the late 1980s, the Magopa

returned to their land to become 'illegal squatters' and ever since they have struggled to make ends meet. The government's land restitution process is painfully slow and piecemeal, but they remain optimistic. White farmers jealously retain the fruits of the removals without any shame and their attitude to their black neighbours remains unchanged, prompting Goodman to make an all-too-familiar observation: apartheid lives on in the *platte-land*; whites are the bosses and blacks are the exploited workers.

Goodman ties these contradictions together magnificently in a personal conclusion. It would be unfair to expect him also to have covered the Coloureds and Indians if this were not his focus, but a note acknowledging their experiences in the conclusion would have helped round off the book. In the land struggles section, the opportunity to bring in the PAC and AZAPO, who have placed much value on the land problem, is missed. On page 297, Goodman erroneously says the ANC stormed the World Trade Centre talks, when it was the neo-Nazi AWB. The book is critical of the ANC-led government, especially its adoption of economic policy priorities designed to please Washington and London, such as tampering with trade unions, reduction of social welfare expenditure, and obsession with foreign investment. These policies benefit the rising black millionaires and ensure the perpetuation of white control of economy but leave the majority of the people in abject poverty.

As the author shows, this policy shift has much to do with the compromises enshrined in the new constitution, of which the most costly in terms of black interests was the protection of property rights ensuring

that white farmers retain the land expropriated from black farmers and the guarantee that the old civil service (largely uncommitted to the present challenges) would retain their jobs. Even the work of the TRC, hailed as an unprecedented success by some, asked more of the largely black victims than of the perpetrators and beneficiaries of apartheid. Whites generally shunned it in denial; apartheid operatives made carefully choreographed confessions and half-hearted apologies to escape prosecution, while victims showed a remarkable willingness to forgive the wrong doers.

The book is predominantly about the mammoth problems facing the new South Africa. Yet, Goodman remains cautiously optimistic about South Africa's future. The inclusion of engrossing portraits of persons interviewed or referred to, provided by award-winning South African photographer, Paul Weinberg, give humanity to the story of dehumanizing apartheid.

Fault lines is a lucid, well-illustrated, intensely personal and well-grounded book, a must read for anyone interested in, teaching, and researching on South Africa, democratic changes from a violent past, problems of reconciliation, inequality and poverty. The simple and vivid language used makes it suitable for senior high school and university students. This is a significant start into the much-needed appreciation of the plight of ordinary men and women in the so-called post-apartheid South Africa.

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