

Reed, Amber. Nostalgia After Apartheid: Disillusionment. Youth and Democracy in South Africa. 222p. bibliogr. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020.

In this monograph, Reed documents how residents of Kamvu, a village in South Africa's former Transkei, express nostalgia for Apartheid and perceive of the basic tenants of liberal democracy as being at odds with their culture. Are these expressions simply rhetorical? Reed partially agrees. She acknowledges that democracy is a shifting signifier and that villagers expressed resistance through an essentialising concept of culture. Moreover, the past they imagined may not have existed.

Kamvu is currently situated in the Eastern Cape Province and has a population of 5,000. The nineteenth century frontier wars reduced chiefly power and access to land, and the cattle killings of 1856 paved way for a market economy and labour migration. The Apartheid system reinforced racial hierarchies, and Transkei's political autonomy was illusory. South Africa's new ANC (African National Congress) government brought few benefits. Life expectancy fell drastically during the AIDS pandemic, and half of adults were unemployed. Yet the ideal kinship structure remained patrilineal, and senior men still assumed authority, even in the absence of fathers.

The next three chapters focus on the teaching of democracy. Reed examines frictions arising from operations of the Non-Government Organisation, Sonke Gender Justice, and from the introduction of Life Orientation classes in great detail. Sonke aimed to stem the transmission of HIV, combat domestic violence, and promote gender equality through workshops, peer education and the production of digital videos. Despite propagating human rights with missionary zeal, the organisation aimed to be culturally sensitive. For example, it called for the medicalisation rather than abolition of circumcision. Villagers nonetheless

blamed Sonke for imposing Western ideas. They argued that sanitized circumcision is devoid of symbolic value, such as the necessity of initiates to demonstrate strength by enduring pain. Adults argued that youth should be taught loyalty towards their family and community rather than to speak out against tradition. Moreover, villagers were perplexed when Sonke's offices closed, after only three years.

During Orientation classes at high schools, educators were expected to facilitate discussions on multi-culturalism, human rights, and gender equality. But, according to Reed, most educators associated active learning with unruly classrooms and high failure rates. Most continued to impart morality through rote learning, and some still used corporal punishment. They also filtered their lessons through local cultural precepts, such as notions of respect (*hlonipa*). Few could bring themselves to promote gay rights, or to agree that fathers, too, should change nappies. Learners publicly obeyed commands and privately rebelled.

In Chapter Six, she analyses nostalgia more generally. As an avenue of remembering, nostalgia denotes a desire to hold onto an idealised past, and a perception that change threatens cherished practices and instils a sense of alienation. In local discourses, Apartheid provided space for cultural autonomy and ensured economic stability; but democracy took a wrong turn. Cultural practices are now disappearing, there is greater concern about rights than responsibilities, crime runs rampant, and wage earners fail to support their parents. But nostalgia for a simpler, non-commodified existence exists alongside future-orientated consumer desires. Youth, with no direct experience of Apartheid, also expressed such nostalgia. Sadly, some seem to have internalised racist stereotypes, and believe that whites made life better in the past.

Reed concludes by observing that nostalgia often arises in times of social upheaval, and is linked to support for autocratic leaders such as Donald Trump, who promise a return to tradition and security. But another possibility is apparent in uprisings by Black students, who demand free education and a socialist redistribution of resources. This response occurs in urban townships, where it is less possible to romanticize the past. Yet, despite widespread dissatisfaction with government, Kamvu residents still overwhelmingly voted for the ANC.

This lucidly written monograph opens new ground, particularly in the study of education and Black conservatism during the post-Apartheid era. It also raises a series of crucial questions for future debate. Does present day nostalgia link with earlier Red cultural responses to colonialism in the Eastern Cape? Also, why should people continue to support a Party they blame for deplorable conditions? Perhaps the ANC is less committed to liberal democratic values than we suppose, or perhaps tradition is deemed more pertinent to the domestic than national political realms. Any answer to these questions would require a more in-depth study of local political processes, that lies beyond the purview of this monograph.

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