

Introduction

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Like those political public intellectuals included in the first volume in this series, *The Fabric of Dissent: Public Intellectuals in South Africa*, the individuals selected for Part 1 of this volume have contributed in several different ways, and have played multiple roles. Some have been key actors behind the establishment of major political organisations, including the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and liberal political parties, while most have been leaders of the key political organisations that emerged in the country in the second half of the past century and during the post-apartheid era. Several of the public intellectuals included in Part 1 initiated and/or led campaigns such as the sabotage campaign in the early 1960s, military actions until the early 1990s, the campaigns against detention without trial and the death penalty, the campaign to build Black Consciousness, the Release Mandela Campaign, the United Democratic Front's (UDF) Million Signatures campaign in the early 1980s, the campaign against military conscription, and others. The public intellectuals included here have made significant intellectual contributions in the form of speeches, lectures, newspaper articles, journal articles and books, while a few are credited as authors of key political documents of the organisations they led.

Five distinct categories group the individuals selected for Part 1: the first group is made up of leading members of the ANC, the SACP and the UDF; the second includes leading members of the PAC (Barney Desai and Patricia de Lille); the third, leading members in the BCM (Steve Biko, Barney Pityana and Mosibudi Mangena); the fourth, leading members of liberal political parties (Alex Boraine and Frederick van Zyl Slabbert); and the fifth includes public intellectuals whose most prominent political roles were in other organisations (Archbishop Tutu, Sheena Duncan and Zwelinzima Vavi).

The various prominent roles in the liberation struggle played by people such as Frene Ginwala, Ronnie Kasrils, Thabo Mbeki and Chris Hani before and after they went into exile draw attention to those public intellectuals whose political role has had significant consequences, in this case, the onset of a democratic South Africa. The contributions of all four extended beyond their political activities to include discussion and debate about revolutionary theory and practice during the struggle. Ginwala, Kasrils and Mbeki played prominent roles in post-apartheid political life, while Mbeki became a leading proponent of the African Renaissance, among other things. Similarly, Alan Boesak, Kgalema Motlanthe, Frank Chikane, Trevor Manuel

and Blade Nzimande were leading figures in the anti-apartheid struggle inside the country during the 1970s and 1980s, which eventually culminated in the democratic South Africa. Some played leading roles in guiding revolutionary activity, while others, Boesak in particular, also contributed to debates on its theory and practice. Motlanthe, Chikane, Manuel and Nzimande were appointed to significant positions in various administrations during the post-apartheid era, where their political role continued to have significant consequences.

Barney Desai and Patricia De Lille were prominent activists of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) during the anti-apartheid struggle. Desai, who had earlier been a leading figure in the Coloured People's Congress, rose to prominence when he challenged the ANC's policy of excluding non-Africans from membership. While Desai was marginalised from politics during the post-apartheid era, De Lille played a continuous political role from the time she worked in the underground of the PAC in the 1980s until her recent appointment as a Cabinet minister in the Ramaphosa administration. From breaking the barriers women faced in the labour movement in the 1980s, she has turned to issues related to corruption, HIV and AIDS, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, xenophobia, women, and poverty.

Of the leading figures of the BCM, by far the most important was Steve Biko. Biko initiated the movement and became the leading figure in the development of the philosophy underlying Black Consciousness, which still resonates internationally. Barney Pityana was one of the founding members of the BCM, played a leading role in the movement while in exile, and was a significant force in mobilising international support against apartheid. While Biko never lived to see the democratic South Africa because he was murdered by the apartheid security forces in 1977, Pityana went on to play leading roles as a human rights campaigner and educationalist in the post-apartheid era. Mosibudi Mangena, who joined the BCM in the early 1970s, has spent his life since then as a leader in the movement, and has occupied several important positions in government in the democratic era. He has contributed significantly to debates and discussions within the BCM for decades, and to science and technology policy development during the democratic era.

Alex Boraine and Frederick van Zyl Slabbert are legendary figures in liberal political circles in South Africa, and their leadership role in liberal political parties and commitment to human rights and the transformation of South African society are widely recognised. Both were behind important events during the 1980s, including arranging delegations of prominent South Africans to meetings with the exiled ANC. Recognition of their significant political role was carried into the new democracy when Boraine was appointed deputy chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the mid-1990s and Van Zyl Slabbert chair of the Electoral Reform Commission in the early 2000s. They were also behind the formation of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (Idasa), which was behind the visits to the ANC, and which functioned to address the legacies created by apartheid during the democratic era.

Desmond Tutu, Sheena Duncan and Zwelinzima Vavi operated outside of political parties during their entire adult lives, but the roles they played have been politically significant. Tutu,

a Nobel Prize winner, is noted for his outspoken criticism inside South Africa and abroad, of the apartheid system and the injustices and social ills it gave rise to. He continued to play a prominent role during the democratic era, notably serving as chair of the TRC. He continued to be vocal on moral and political issues, while devoting his time to issues of health, particularly those around HIV and AIDS. Duncan, a long-time president of the Black Sash, devoted her life to the abolition of apartheid and campaigns for human rights. In this role, she serves as an example of those people who, as Nelson Mandela described, embrace universal beliefs that have changed the course of history. Vavi, the youngest of the political public intellectuals included in this volume, rose to prominence in the democratic era as president of the country's largest trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). He has been an outspoken critic of the democratic government, and a forceful advocate on issues that are important to the majority of South Africans – the working poor – such as inequality, poverty, unemployment, and corruption.

These political public intellectuals serve as inspiration to many South Africans for the contribution they have made to the liberation of the country, the roles some play in the democratic era, and the ideas they have initiated or propagated.

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