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NATIONAL DAYS

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY - 21 MARCH

The Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. The Constitution further provides for the establishment of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) of which the aim is to promote respect for human rights, promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights, and to monitor and assess the observance of human rights in South Africa.

The SAHRC was launched on 21 March 1996, 35 years after the fateful events of 21 March 1960 when demonstrators were gunned down by police: The Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952 extended Government control over the movement of Africans to urban areas and abolished the use of the Pass Book (a document which Africans were required to carry on them to 'prove' that they were allowed to enter a 'white area') in favour of a reference book which had to be carried at all times by all Africans.

Failure to produce the reference book on demand by the police, was a punishable offence. The PAC proposed an anti-Pass campaign to start on 21 March 1960. All African men were to take part in the campaign without their passes and present themselves for arrest. Campaigners gathered at police stations in townships near Johannesburg where they were dispersed by police. At the Sharpeville police station a scuffle broke out. Part of a wire fence was trampled, allowing the crowd to move forward. The police opened fire, apparently without having been given a prior order to do so. Sixty-nine people were killed and 180 wounded.

In apartheid South Africa this day became known as Sharpeville Day and although not part of the official calendar of public holidays the event was commemorated among anti-apartheid movements.

FREEDOM DAY - 27 APRIL

Freedom Day is the commemoration of the first democratic post-apartheid elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994, when Nelson Mandela was elected as President.

WORKERS DAY - 1 MAY

Worker's Day is testimony to the hard battles that workers in this country and in other parts of the globe have waged for workers' rights and social justice over many decades. It is also a reminder of the many challenges that still confront working people and the poor in South



Africa - and which remain obstacles to sustainable human development among all developing nations.

The South African working class has been at the forefront of the struggle for a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and united nation. It has understood and consistently maintained that workplace struggles cannot be separated from broader social struggles; that economic justice and equality cannot be achieved without national liberation. And it has argued that these struggles cannot be separated from the struggle for gender equality and, specifically, women's emancipation.

This day pays tribute to the millions of workers who fought for a democratic South Africa and the many who sacrificed so much so that all South Africans could today enjoy rights of citizenship in their own country.

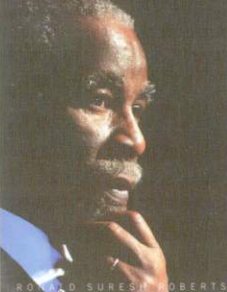
Through the new Constitution the rights of workers to join trade unions, to organise, to strike and to engage in collective bargaining has been won and the legal position of workers has strengthened through the Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

Workers' Day serves to remind the nation that humanity will not be free of oppression and exploitation unless the workers of the world - and the peoples of the world - unite and work together for a new world order based on mutual respect, justice and equality.

GOOD READING

Fit to Govern

The Native Intelligence of Thabo Mbeki



RONALD SURESH ROBERTS

FIT TO GOVERN

By Ronald Suresh Roberts
STE Publishers

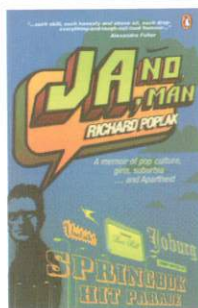
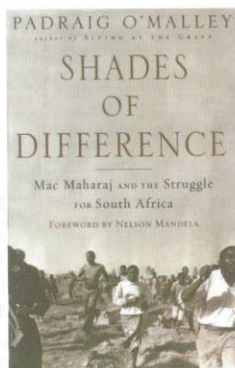
In *Fit to Govern*, Ronald Suresh Roberts explores President Thabo Mbeki's intellectual traditions, examining the difficult issues he has faced – including Zimbabwe, HIV/AIDS and neo-colonialism – and casting fresh light on his logic. His book places the President and South Africa in a global context, recognising the many challenges that inform government, and celebrates South Africa's ongoing transformation. With his wide knowledge of history, politics, literature and debates in South Africa's media, as well as having had unprecedented access to the President himself, Roberts is uniquely placed to write with authority about Mbeki.

SHADES OF DIFFERENCE

MAC MAHARAJ AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOUTH AFRICA

By Padraig O'Malley
Penguin

A rabble-rouser from his earliest schooldays, Mac Maharaj grew into a potent force in the underground anti-apartheid movement as a member of the Communist Party and the ANC. He served time on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela for 12 years, and when he was released he smuggled out with him the script of what would become Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*. Now, for the first time, he tells us the full story of his political involvement. Combined with Padraig O'Malley's skilful framing and buttressed by Maharaj's own strong voice, this is an important book in the collected oeuvre of South African history.



JA, NO, MAN

By Richard Poplak
Penguin

Described as 'a memoir of pop culture, girls, suburbia... and Apartheid', *Ja, No, Man* is Richard Poplak's nostalgic story of the first 16 years of his life. According to Poplak, 'What makes my experience

remarkable and my perspective unique is that I lived in South Africa only under the apartheid regime... My South Africa, the universe I inhabited as a boy, died three months after I left it.' The book is divided into sections – Beginnings, Early Days, Awakenings, and Depths and Depths – that when melded together provide a thorough evaluation of life in the early '80s in Johannesburg, and of the awakening of a young teenager to what apartheid really meant.

RED ON BLACK

THE STORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POSTER MOVEMENT

By Judy Seidman
STE Publishers



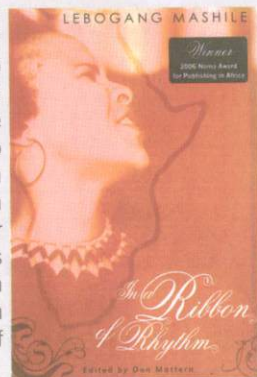
South African artists and activists produced thousands of posters, banners and murals that recorded, interpreted and engaged with the struggle for freedom during apartheid. As a producer of struggle materials, Judy Seidman's *Red on Black* tells the story of these artists, their intentions, ideas, hopes and the harsh repression under which they worked. In her book Seidman documents the

history and use of graphics and posters in the struggle against apartheid – exposing banned artistic material and describing the environment in which they fueled a collective awareness.

IN A RIBBON OF RHYTHM

By Lebo Mashile
Oshun Books (Struik)

Lebo Mashile is a South African spoken-word poet who grew up with her family in political exile in America. She returned to her home country as a teenager soon after the demise of the apartheid regime. In this collection of stunning poetry, Lebo celebrates her womanhood and her blackness. She explores the allures and also the racial injustices of both South Africa and America in strong, confident tones. Her chapbook is filled with poems that beg to be lifted and spoken out loud – each one filled with rhythms and cadences of anger, meditation and joy.



SEEN IN SA



JAMES BLUNT

In the three years since James Blunt released his debut album, *Back to Bedlam*, it has sold 11 million copies worldwide, reaching number one in 18 countries and cracking the top 10 in 35 countries. In South Africa, the album went triple platinum. The British singer and songwriter will be in South Africa in May. He will perform three shows, the first at the Coca-Cola Dome in Northgate. From there he will head to Durban and Cape Town.

FRENCH PRESIDENT NICHOLAS SARKOZY AND HIS WIFE CARLA BRUNI

French President Nicholas Sarkozy, accompanied by 40 key French business chief executives and his new wife Carla Bruni, was in South Africa in February on an official state visit. Director General in the department of foreign affairs Gert Grobler described the co-operation of the two countries on a variety of issues as "excellent." During his visit Sarkoy and President Mbeki oversaw the signing of several agreements, including co-operation on energy, science, transport, tourism and fishing. France is South Africa's eighth largest trading partner with bilateral trade between the two countries amounting to R26-billion in 2006/2007.



IRISH PRIME MINISTER BERTIE AHERN

The Irish government recently announced that it has approved a €5-million grant (about R50 million) for building township houses in South Africa. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern announced details of the grant - made to the Niall Mellon Township Trust - during an official visit to South Africa recently.



GREEK MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sue van der Merwe hosted her Greek counterpart Theodoros Kassimis, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, during bilateral political and economic talks at the Union Buildings earlier this year.

South Africa has maintained strong ties with the Hellenic Republic due to the large Hellenic community in the country estimated at 60 000.

MIKE TYSON

Former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson visited the Moletsana Secondary School in Soweto early this year where hundreds of school kids awaited his arrival with great enthusiasm. Tyson was in South Africa for the "Fire and Brimstone" boxing tournament at Emperors Palace, where he and other celebrities and VIP guests watched South Africa's Corrie "The Sniper" Sanders taking on Osborne "Big Daddy" Machimane in the evening's main bout, a heavyweight match over 10 rounds.



Picture credit: SAPA stringer

CELINE DION

Multiple award-winning singer Celine Dion performed in Pretoria as part of her Taking Chances world tour. Dion has earned music industry accolades from around the world and is best known for her Grammy and Academy Awards winning classic "My Heart Will Go On". The singer performed in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.



Picture credit: Gerhard Uys/SAPA