

# Laying Ghosts to Rest

Dilemmas of the Transformation in South Africa

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Mamphela Ramphele  
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The author has been involved in transformation issues all her life, but maybe she is too quick to sign death certificates for some of the problems that our society faces. The “stubborn ghosts” of racism, sexism, ethnic chauvinism and authoritarianism are difficult to exorcise because they are still alive. And well! So when will transformation end and when did it start?

In her struggle to defend the weak and poor, the powerless and disempowered, the women of South Africa are Ramphele’s number one priority. Her previous anthropological work has already exposed the shameful record of what she calls sexism, and I have referred to as *dodaism* or a distorted and violent kind of *budoda* (“masculinity” is not quite the translation). She principally blames the colonial variety of capitalist exploitation

for the disempowerment of women, but also South African Stalinism, UDF political culture and, of course, the *induna* system of government.

Her suggestion that “traditional leaders” were taken out by nationalist governments in Mozambique and Tanzania is not true. Chiefs and headmen were simply driven underground or re-elected as village development committee members. In post-civil war Mozambique, they have actually been reinstated. You cannot lay the ghosts of traditional authority to rest while the kings and priests are still alive, and there is no indication that they are going anywhere just yet, if ever.

All in all, the author examines what has gone wrong in South Africa – TRC talks, AIDS philosophising, unemployment, etc. – and pins her hope on liberal democracy to put transformation back on track. This would appear to be a minority position but, like other members of the ruling elite, Ramphele has probably never shared the same values or aspirations as the disempowered fellow citizens she seeks to defend. This book is essential reading for anyone tracking the progress of South African society on its long walk to freedom.