



Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, established in 2018, is a movement-driven research institute that is based in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The general orientation of the institute is to elaborate and amplify the theories of social and political movements as well as bridge the gap between movement intellectuals and academic intellectuals. The Pan-Africa institute of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research has worked on a range of issues, producing a slew of documents. Below, we share with you our main work, roughly annotated to give you a sense of the theory behind our production.

1) African Unity: Sovereignty and Dignity

The Scramble for Africa (1885) resulted in the partition of the African peoples into colonial territories. This partition carved up the continent along ethnic, tribal, and linguistic divisions, although the lines drawn were haphazard and often conformed to colonial logics and to the emergent formation of nationalities on the continent. Despite the struggles of the national liberation movements and the Pan-African integration projects, these divisions between countries and across the regions of the continent negatively impact the historical and cultural connections amongst Africans and their struggles against imperialist plunder. The partition of Africa has been an efficient instrument for



Western powers, who continue to try and deprive the African peoples from building liberation struggles to unify the continent.

During the final phase of the anti-colonial movement in the 1950s and 1960s, the vision of a new post-colonial continent included a commitment to an extra-national project called Pan-Africanism. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the anti-colonial struggle in Ghana, argued that Pan-Africanism is not based on the unity of a people who belong to a 'race' – which is a colonial category – but that the unities that need to be constructed are based on political commonalities (such as agreements about the integrity of the African continent and anti-imperialism). Central to the Pan-African vision are the concepts of 'sovereignty' and 'dignity'. Sovereignty is related to the idea that the continent and countries of the continent must have control over their territory and must be free to pursue any policies that are essential to their people. What is essential to the people of the continent and of the countries of the continent is to enhance the dignity of the people, both through improving the material conditions of life and by the development of the social and cultural worlds of the people.

A. Defending our sovereignty. US Military Bases in Africa and the Future of African Unity, Dossier no. 42, July 2021.

The enduring presence of foreign military bases in Africa continues to fragment and weaken African state institutions, prevent African unity and sovereignty, and subordinate the aspirations of the continent for pan-



African consolidation. Examining gendarme functions and geopolitics, dossier no. 42 explores how the presence of foreign militaries in Africa continues to impede African people in their pursuit of the two most important principles of pan-Africanism: political unity and territorial sovereignty.

B. Life or Debt: The Stranglehold of Neo-Colonialism and Africa's Search for Alternatives, Dossier no. 63, April 2023.

The African continent has for decades struggled with seriously high – and unpayable – levels of debt. The permanent debt crisis besieging them has not resulted from short-term market failures or from business cycles that will rebound, and that it is not fully a consequence of governments' mismanagement of finances or deep-rooted corruption. Rather, our assessment of the debt crisis draws from an important analysis given by Burkina Faso's President Thomas Sankara, who argued that 'debt's origins come from colonialism's origins' and, therefore, can only be confronted by the creation of new financial alternatives that fall outside of a neocolonial framework.

C. This Land is the Land of Our Ancestors, Dossier no. 53, June 2022.

This dossier discusses the land question in South Africa, looking at the role of white farmers who have long benefited from the labour of exploited Black farmworkers. Beginning with a historical account of the plight of farmworkers, it argues that those who work the land deserve to be its primary beneficiaries, but, instead, they have been excluded from the profits and stability of owning land for generations. Faced with this reality, dossier no. 53 discusses what a land reform agenda that centres the perspectives and needs of farmworkers would look like.



D. The Fate of Xolobeni Would Be the Fate Of Us All, Working Document no. 2, August 2019.

Since 1996, activists in Xolobeni, a coastal region in South Africa, have been fighting a foreign mining conglomerate that learned that their ancestral lands happen to be rich in titanium. The anti-mining activists of Xolobeni, who have lost many comrades to hit squads, continue to struggle against this foreign company and its partners in the South African government. Given that their land is located in a global biodiversity hotspot, their struggle is the struggle of us all: it is the fight for water, soil, food, and air.

2) Theories of African liberation

An outcome of the suppression of the sovereignty and the dignity of the African peoples has been a refusal to admit to the independent intellectual and cultural strength of Africa's national liberation vision, which is rooted in Pan-African thought. Indeed, there has been too little consideration of the important contributions made by Pan-African movement intellectuals towards an understanding of their own realities and to the requirements of transcendence from the imperialist order. We have begun to amplify the voices of the Pan-African socialist movement leaders as part of a general orientation to uplift the theories of African liberation.



A. The Thought and Practice of an Emancipatory Politics for Africa. Interview with Ernest Wamba-dia- Wamba Bazunini, July 2022.

Ernest Wamba-dis-Wamba was an important, radical African intellectual, who led a struggle in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and engaged movements elsewhere in the continent, such as Abahlali baseMjondolo in South Africa. He developed ground breaking work on the progressive potentials in some African cultural practices, particularly relating to democratic forms of collective deliberation. This interview was his final publication.

B. Frantz Fanon: the Brightness of Metal, Dossier no. 26, March 2020.

This dossier offers a sparkling introduction to Fanon's life and work, stressing the contemporary political traction of his radical humanism, and noting that his work carries an 'irrepressible openness to the universal' and an axiomatic commitment to 'recognize the open door of every consciousness'. It examines, in particular, Fanon's contribution as a theorist of praxis committed to move beyond the ontological and spatial ordering of oppression and undertake a form of insurgent and democratic praxis in which 'a mutual current of enlightenment and enrichment' is developed between protagonists from different social locations.

C. Paulo Freire and Popular Struggle in South Africa. Dossier no. 34, November 2020.

The ideas of the radical Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire had a profound impact on popular struggles in South Africa. Initially taken up by Steve Biko and others in the Black Consciousness movement in the



early 1970s, Freire's ideas spread to the trade union movement and to the community movements. Today, Freire's ideas continue to be used in progressive organisations in South Africa and to guide the work of many people undertaking political education work.

D. The PAIGC's Political Education for Liberation in Guinea-Bissau, 1963-1974. Studies in National Liberation, no. 1, July 2022.

In the pursuit of national liberation between 1963-74, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) was faced with the task of creating a new educational processes, structures, and spaces that could begin to attend to the material needs of the people and the needs of the political struggle. Combating illiteracy, fear, and ignorance, education would become the means through which African people could begin to reclaim and regain their voices and emerge as politically conscious and active members of society, both within their country and in the course of world history.

E. Josie Mpama. Studies: Feminism no. 5, March 2023.

The fifth study from the Women of Struggle, Women in Struggle series discusses the life and political struggles of Josie Mpama (1903-1979), a leader in the resistance against colonial oppression and the apartheid system in South Africa. As a central figure in the Communist Party of South Africa and in society more broadly, Josie teaches us about the importance of grassroots and mass organising. Like so many women involved in radical politics, particularly in the Global South, Josie's extraordinary political contributions and theoretical acumen have been overlooked and largely excluded from the mainstream historical record.



F. Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories by Amilcar Cabral, 2022.

Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories showcases the intellectual foundations and practices underpinning the liberation of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. From the importance of culture in decolonisation, to biting critiques of Portuguese colonialism, and strategies for guerrilla warfare in tropical forests, this new collection brings together select interviews, official speeches and PAIGC party directives from 1962 to 1973. Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories reveals Cabral to be a skilled diplomat and lively and pragmatic thinker, concerned with national liberation in the context of Pan-Africanism and international struggle.

G. Thomas Sankara Speaks (July 2023 release)

Under Thomas Sankara's leadership, the revolutionary government of Burkina Faso in West Africa mobilised peasants, workers, craftsmen, women, and youth to carry out literacy and immunisation drives; to sink wells, plant trees, build dams, erect housing; to combat the oppression of women and transform exploitative relations on the land; to free themselves from the imperialist yoke and solidarise with others engaged in that fight internationally. In speeches and interviews from 1983 until his assassination in 1987, Sankara speaks for the people of Burkina Faso and Africa, and as an outstanding revolutionary leader of working people and youth the world over.

H. The Revolutionary Thoughts of Kwame Nkrumah (August 2023 release)

Combining key selections from Ghana's first president's formidable body of work, The Revolutionary Thoughts of Kwame Nkrumah provides insights into the nature of colonialism in Ghana and the rest of the African



continent, struggles for independence in the 1950s and 1960s, and attacks on African nations' sovereignty. It forms part of a larger revival of socialist and pan-Africanist debates relevant to contemporary politics today.

3) South African history and politics

For a variety of reasons, our work has lifted up the experience of South Africa above that of other African countries. Here, we have mostly focused on the history of the South African liberation struggle in order to contest a historical narrative distorted by colonialism, the apartheid project, and the evasion of the post-1994 attempt to build a post-apartheid society. We have sought to elevate the struggles of the South African working-class that has found a variety of political instruments adequate to its struggle to overthrow apartheid and capitalism. Our studies respond to the words of the Black Consciousness poet Mafika Gwala:

**Our History shall be written
at the factory gates
at the Unemployment offices
in the scorched queues of dying mouths
Our history shall be our joys
our sorrows**



our moroseness
scrawled in dirty Third Class toilets
Our history will be graffiti
decorating our ghetto walls
where flowers find no peace enough to
grow
Our history shall be written...
Our history is being written
with indelible blood stains.

**A. When You Ill-treat the African People,
I See You: A Brief History of South
Africa's Industrial and Commercial
Workers' Union (1919-1931), Dossier no.
20, September 2019.**

The Industrial & Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) – a trade union, rural peasant movement, and urban squatters' movement – formed on the docks in Cape Town in 1919. Within a decade, the ICU had expanded across Southern Africa without regard for national borders and counted people from various African countries and the Caribbean in its leadership, as well as people who were Indian and mixed race. The largely forgotten history of the ICU is well worth recovering in a time of escalating chauvinism and xenophobia.



B. Black Community Programmes: The Practical Manifestations of Black Consciousness Philosophy, Dossier no. 44, September 2021.

This dossier focuses on the Black Community Programmes, a series of projects initiated in 1972 that served as the practical implementation of the Black Consciousness philosophy to give Black people the power to become self-reliant. In practice, these programmes included the foundation of publications and research, health centres, factories to employ the economically marginalised, and a trust fund to provide basic necessities for ex-prisoners as well as grants for yet other projects.

C. The 1973 Durban Strikes: Building Popular Democratic Power in South Africa, Dossier no. 60, January 2023.

In 1973, workers in the industrial port city of Durban embarked on a series of strikes, marking an end to a period of relative quiescence that came on the heels of tremendous state repression. The strikes began a process of unionisation that, within a decade, became the foundation of a wider mass democratic movement that mobilised millions of people in workplaces, communities, and educational institutions into the forms of counter power that brought apartheid to its knees. This dossier returns to the workers whose political contribution was, in the end, decisive.

D. 'The Politic of Blood': Political Repression in South Africa, Dossier no. 31, August 2020.

In South Africa, grassroots activists talk of 'the politic of blood', referring to ongoing assassinations and other



forms of repression. This dossier shows how grassroots activists and trade unionists have been subjected to ongoing repression by the state, beginning under apartheid and continuing under the rule of the African National Congress (ANC), much of which has never been fully acknowledged outside of activist circles.

E. The Homemade Politics of Abahlali BaseMjondolo, South Africa's Shack Dwellers Movement. Dossier no. 11, December 2018.

The shack-dwellers' movement— Abahlali baseMjondolo, or AbM— is among the organisations of the world's poor and dispossessed fighting for land reform and dignity. Despite waves of repression by the state, AbM membership now numbers over 50,000 in settlements across the country since their founding in 2006. In an interview with Tricontinental Institute, Zikode talks about the essence of AbM—what they are fighting for, who they are, what they have achieved, and what we can learn from them.

F. Shoot to Kill: Police and Power in South Africa, 2022.

Shoot to Kill is a vivid and ambitious survey of the complex politics of security, crime and social control in South Africa. From the slave-driver's whip in the 18th century Cape Colony to the dystopian armoured vehicles of our present, this book traces the secret history of the police through colonial wars, apartheid atrocities and hyper-capitalist state capture. While informed by global discussions on police abolition, Shoot to Kill: Police and Power in South Africa calls for a society based on democracy and justice.



G. Selected Writings by Ruth First, 2023.

Ruth First, born in 1925, held multiple roles during the struggles of her time as a communist militant, journalist, researcher and leading intellectual in South Africa. Until her assassination in 1982, she was a committed anti-apartheid activist. This book brings together five of her stirring essays on a range of topics including the landmark 1956 Women's March, the workings of the apartheid state, the history of armed struggle in South Africa, and pioneering research on the lives of migrant labourers in South African gold mines.

4) Broader Theoretical Grounding

At Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, our work is about building knowledge from the experience of social and cultural transformations wrought by popular struggles. The main epistemological basis for such an approach to knowledge is derived from Karl Marx's '11th Thesis on Feuerbach': 'philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it'. Our understanding of this axiom is that those who are trying to change the world have a sharp assessment of its contradictions, vulnerabilities, and possibilities. The movements and struggles for social transformation teach immense lessons about the character of power, privilege, and property and about the possibility of building a different kind of world. Based on the three main pillars of our Research Agenda – Contemporary Capitalism, Monsters, and Futures – our work is grounded in the theories explored in the following interregional texts:



A. In the Ruins of the Present. Working Document no. 1, March 2018.

In the Ruins of the Present traces the challenges posed by globalization and what these challenges produce for our society. The first attempt to address the problems of globalization was neo-liberalism. It failed. Next came cruel populism, which expresses itself in narrow, hateful terms. It will also fail. The Left is weak – decomposed by globalization. The need of the hour is for the Left to recompose itself, to become a vital force for a fragile humanity.

B. Globalisation and Its Alternatives. Notebook no. 1, October 2018.

This text lays out Samir Amin's assessment of the concept of globalisation as well as his concept of 'de-linking,' that is, for the Third World to compel imperialism to accept its conditions and to be able to drive its own policy. Amin's perspective helps us understand the current crisis of capitalism and imagine a world based on a multi-polar, internationalist people's agenda, rather than one driven by global capital.

C. Dawn: Marxism and National Liberation. Dossier no. 37, February 2021.

This text is an invitation to a dialogue, a conversation about the entangled tradition of Marxism and national liberation – a tradition that emerges out of the October Revolution and that deepens its roots in the anti-colonial conflicts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is an introduction to a wide-ranging conversation that includes many different revolutionary movements, mostly rooted in the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.



D. We Will Build the Future: A Plan to Save the Planet. Dossier no. 48, January 2022.

Under the leadership of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – People’s Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research partnered with 26 research institutes from around the world to draft A Plan to Save the Planet. This living, evolving document puts forward a vision for the present and the immediate future centred on twelve key themes: democracy and the world order, the environment, finance, health, housing, food, education, work, care, women, culture, and the digital world. Dossier no. 48 includes and elaborates on the Plan and lays out our orientation, principles, and horizon.

E. Ten Theses on Marxism and Decolonisation. Dossier no. 56, September 2022.

With the failure of capitalism to address the basic questions of our times, the obstinate facts of hunger and illiteracy that stare us in the face, it has become more urgent than ever to recover traditions that are grounded in a scientific approach and have a sincere desire to confront the dilemmas of humanity. Unpacking the traditions of national liberation Marxism in ten theses, dossier no. 56 unearths the foundations of revolutionary praxis that would allow for more factual assessments of our times, a closer rendition of contemporary imperialism that can advance the construction of a socialist world.



F. Sovereignty, Dignity, and Regionalism in the New International Order. Dossier no. 62, March 2023.

This text lays out Samir Amin's assessment of the concept of globalisation as well as his concept of 'de-linking;' that is, for the Third World to compel imperialism to accept its conditions and to be able to drive its own policy. Amin's perspective helps us understand the current crisis of capitalism and imagine a world based on a multi-polar, internationalist people's agenda, rather than one driven by global capital.

G. Eight Contradictions of the Imperialist 'Rules-Based Order'. Studies on Contemporary Dilemmas, March 2023.

Significant global changes have emerged in the years since the Great Financial Crisis of 2008. This can be seen in a new phase of imperialism and changes in the particularities of eight contradictions.

