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*Women of the mines: apartheid and post-apartheid lived realities
of South African women*

1. Introduction

Characterized by racial despotism, exploitation and migrant labour, mining has been the main driver of the South African economy since the late nineteenth century.¹ Male migrant labourers moved from different homelands within South Africa and from neighbouring countries to find employment in South African mines. While the

1 Harold Wolpe, *Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa. From segregation to apartheid*, «Economy and Society», 1, 1972, n. 4, pp. 425-456; Jonathan Crush, *Swazi migrant workers and the Witwatersrand gold mines 1886-1920*, «Journal of Historical Geography», 12, 1986, n. 1, pp. 27-40; Edward Webster, Karl von Holdt (eds.), *Beyond the apartheid workplace. Studies in transition*, Scottsville (South Africa), University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005; Edward Webster et al., *Deep Mine Collaborative Research Programme. The impact of Ultra Deep Mining on the occupational culture of miners*, Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP), Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 1999 [unpublished]; Edward Webster, Glenn Adler, *Toward a class compromise in South Africa's "double transition": Bargained liberalization and the consolidation of democracy*, «Politics & Society», 27, 1999, n. 3, pp. 347-385; Dunbar Moodie, *Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines*, «Journal of Southern African Studies», 14, 1988, n. 2, pp. 228-256; Dunbar Moodie, Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for gold. Men, mines and migration*, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1994; Francis Wilson, *Labour in the South African gold mines, 1911-1969*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972; Francis Wilson, *Minerals and migrants. How the mining industry has shaped South Africa*, «Daedalus», 130, 2001, n. 1, pp. 99-121; Sakhela Buhlungu, Andries Bezuidenhout, *Union solidarity under stress. The case of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa*, «Labor Studies Journal», 33, 2008, n. 3, pp. 262-287; Sakhela Buhlungu, *Trade unions and democracy. Cosatu workers' political attitudes in South Africa*, Cape Town (South Africa), Human Sciences Research Council, 2006; Peter Alexander, *Marikana, turning point in South African history*, «Review of African Political Economy», 40, 2013, n. 138, pp. 605-619.

migrant labourers were super exploited in the mines where they laboured in dangerous and low paid jobs and at times not even able to remit wages home, their families in the homelands subsidized mine wages. African men particularly, were paid meagre wages because women in the rural areas and homelands were reproducing labour at no cost to the mines.² Because their unpaid reproductive work was so crucial to the mines, yet, did not cost the mines anything, it would seem strategic then to sustain this “order” which enabled capital accumulation and production of surplus value, without which the economy would collapse.

Different parts of the world legally prohibited women from underground work. In Britain this exclusion was enforced by the 1842 Mines Act.³ This was reinforced in the early 1900s by Article 2 of the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) Convention 45 of 1935, This Convention forbade the inclusion of women in underground mining. It also stated that “No female, whatever her age, shall be employed on underground work in any mine.” It exempted:

any other females who may occasionally have to enter the underground parts of a mine for the purpose of a non-manual occupation, females holding positions of management who do not perform manual work; females employed in health and welfare services; and females who, in the course of their studies, spend a period of training in the underground parts of a mine.⁴

In South Africa, the banning was legislated in 1911 by the 1911 Mines and Works Act No. 12 which categorically stated that “No person shall employ underground on any mine a boy apparently under the age of sixteen years or any female.” More recently, the South African Minerals Act of 1991 also banned women from working underground.⁵ The geographical location of mines and the migrant labour system facilitated the exclusion of women.⁶ The 1911 and 1991 Acts

2 Wolpe, *Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa*, pp. 425-456.

3 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/383817/Mines-Act>>.

4 <<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/cis/oshworld/ilostd/c045.htm>>.

5 Kgomotso Simango, *An investigation of the factors contributing to failure of heat tolerance screening by women at impala platinum*, Johannesburg, The Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management, 2006, p. 15 [unpublished].

6 Peter Alexander, *Women and coal mining in India and South Africa, c1900-1940*, «African Studies», 66, 2007, nn. 2-3, pp. 201-222; Peter Alexander et al., *Marikana. A view from the mountain and a case to answer*, Auckland Park (South Africa), Jacana Press, 2012; see also Michael Burawoy, *The functions and reproduction of migrant labor*.

and the racially prohibitive pass laws which restricted the movement of blacks ensure that husbands did not bring their wives or families to the mines and towns. The housing of mineworkers in single sex hostels with restricted controls of entry was crucial in ensuring the male mineworker did not bring females with to the mines.⁷ In other words, unlike in other countries where people could move freely, thus making family labour possible or enable the presence of women in mining, in South Africa this was not to be the case.

According to Alexander (2007) the fact that South African mines were bigger and highly mechanized and thus required a trained work force, which, based on the Mine and Works Act No. 25 of 1926 restrictions, could only be white men not Africans and certainly not women meant that women could not get mine jobs. The Job Reservation policies, therefore, ensured that jobs and competency certificates were issued to white males only to the exclusion of all others. Superstitions and myths about women's presence in the mines also played a role in their exclusion. There was a wide-spread belief amongst male workers that the presence of women in mining (especially underground) was bad luck and could cause a fall of ground, or seismic event, at worst, cause the minerals to disappear.⁸

The exclusion of women in mining, which had economic ramifications, was not only for core mining occupations which were often characterized as dangerous and requiring machoism, but also for occupations which were generally associated with femininity, eg cooks, nurses and administrators. Out of a number of hospitals and clinics servicing the mines only three had female nurses. Data from the 1927 survey of the gold mines shows that, out of a labour force of well over 100,000 men, only 2750 were women and children making the mines, quite what they called "a world without women."⁹ These

Comparative material from Southern Africa and the United States, «American Journal of Sociology», 81, 1976, n. 5, pp. 1050-1087; Moodie, Ndatshe, *Going for gold*; Moodie, *Migrancy and male sexuality*; Wilson, *Labour in the South African*.

7 Andries Bezuidenhout, Sakhela Buhlungu, *From compounded to fragmented labour. Mineworkers and the demise of compounds in South Africa*, «Antipode», 43, 2011, n. 2, pp. 237-263; Moodie, Ndatshe, *Going for gold*.

8 Moodie, Ndatshe, *Going for gold*; Matodzi Ralushai, *Experiences of women working on the mines. A case study from Rustenburg platinum mines*, University of Johannesburg, 2003, [unpublished]; Cecilia Addei, Richard Kwasi Amankwah, *Myths and superstitions in the small scale gold-mining industry of Ghana*, «Research Journal of Environmental and Earth Sciences», 3, 2011, n. 3, pp. 249-253.

9 Keith Breckenridge, *The allure of violence. Men, race and masculinity on the South African goldmines, 1900-1950*, «Journal of Southern African Studies», 24, 1998, n. 4, pp. 669-693.

mines explicitly preferred male workers.¹⁰ This was reinforced by representations the mines and mine life as physically demanding, the conditions as inconceivably hot, humid and not suitable for the fragile female bodies, and the place as dangerous where only “strong” men could survive.¹¹

The only mining case which was an exception to the exclusion noted above and had female workers was asbestos mining. Asbestos mines under the Mines and Works Act no. 27 of 1956 were exempted and could employ women if they were going to work only in “cobbing and sorting”.¹² He notes that in asbestos mines women made up to half the workforce from the 1890s «until the industry’s twilight in the 1980s». ¹³ he asserts that their wages were not paid directly to them or seen as separate from those of their male partners but were instead incorporated into the male wage. The economic dependency and vulnerability of these women is apparent.

These factors and more ensured that women’s exclusion from the mines, with its material consequences, was not only legal but socially legitimized. At the same time, the social reproduction work performed by women, which stretched household resources to subsidize wages of male partners, ensured and sealed these women’s economic vulnerability. This context is crucial if one is to understand the continued, though no longer legislated, subjugation of women in mining and its material consequence.

10 Hoyt Alverson, *Mind in the heart of darkness. Value and self-identity among the Tswana of Southern Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978; Moodie, Ndatshe, *Going for gold*; Breckenridge, *The allure of violence*; Alexander, *Women and coal mining*.

11 Alvin Ward Gouldner, *Patterns of industrial bureaucracy*, Glencoe (Canada), Free Press, 1954; Normal Dennis, Fernando Henriques, Clifford Slaughter, *Coal is our life. An analysis of a Yorkshire mining community*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956; Sizwe Phakathi, *Planisa! Gold miners’ underground practices*, «South African Labour Bulletin», 33, 2009, n. 5, pp. 13-15; Sizwe Phakathi, “Getting on” and “getting by” underground. *Gold miners’ informal working practice of making a plan (planisa)*, «Journal of Organizational Ethnography», 2, 2013, n. 2, pp. 126-149; Sizwe Phakathi, *Self-directed work teams in a post-apartheid goldmine. Perspectives from the Rock Face*, «Journal of Workplace Learning», 14, 2002, n. 7, pp. 278-285; Paul Stewart, “Kings of the Mine”. *Rock drill operators and the 2012 strike wave on South African mines*, «South African Review of Sociology», 44, 2013, n. 3, pp. 42-63; Moodie, Ndatshe, *Going for gold*; Webster, Adler, *Toward a class compromise*.

12 Jock McCulloch, *Women mining asbestos in South Africa 1893-1980*, «Journal of Southern African Studies», 2010, p. 413; Dhiraj Nite, Paul Stewart, *Mining faces. An oral history of work on the gold and coal mines in South Africa, 1951-2011*, Johannesburg, Jacana Press, 2012.

13 McCulloch, *Women mining asbestos in South Africa*, p. 413.

2. Democratic transition and gender inequalities

The legislations mentioned above which deeply entrenched masculinisation of mining and naturalized the exclusion of women were challenged during the country's transition to democracy. The transition to democracy meant that all discriminatory policies, especially on the grounds of gender were repealed. Consequently, the South African Minerals Act of 1991 which banned women from working underground was challenged by South Africa's democratic Constitution and Bill of Rights. It was repealed and replaced by the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) of 2002.¹⁴ Together with the Mine Health and Safety Act of 1996, these laws reversed the previous exclusions and opened up underground work to women. To date there are over 52 000 women who work in the mines out of a workforce of about 1.3 million workers. This means women constitute about 10.9% of the permanently employed mining workforce.¹⁵ The Chamber of Mines estimates that 13 million people depend on the mining industry for their livelihood.¹⁶ This is against a backdrop of grim poverty rates.

Currently South Africa has over 30 million people living below the highly contested "poverty line", with somewhat more females (58.6%) living in poverty compared to males (54.9%). Even after twenty-three years of South Africa's democracy unemployment remains remarkably high and by extension, poverty. Similar to global trends and partly as a legacy of the colonial and apartheid past, unemployment remains skewed by race (higher for Africans) and gender (higher for women), amongst other variables.

While it is reported that poverty rates have been declining since 2006, still, about 21.7% of the country's population live in extreme poverty and cannot afford to buy basic food items. In other words, they cannot purchase enough food to meet the minimum energy intake, and thus live below the food poverty line. Statistics South Africa which produces poverty data uses three national poverty lines,

14 <http://www.dme.gov.za/minerals/about_minerals.stm>.

15 The figures above of women in mining are novel "highs" with the exception of asbestos mines which had significant percentages (and sometimes up to half of the workforce) of women workers between the 1890s and 1980s; McCulloch, *Women mining asbestos*, p. 413; see also the Department of Mineral Resources Annual Report 2014.

16 Census 2011, conducted by Statistics South Africa, puts the dependency ratio at 37.9 for Rustenburg, see <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=rustenburg-municipality>.

the one mentioned above, the food poverty line (R400 (\$30) per capita per month-household income), the rebased lower bound poverty line (R544 (\$41) per capita per month) and the upper bound poverty line (R779 (\$58) per capita per month). The lower bound poverty line (37% of the population) is when there is not have enough money to purchase both enough food and non-food items (eg transport, medicines, airtime) while the upper bound (53.8%) are still living in poverty but can purchase basic food and non-food items. Women remain disproportionately affected, tending to be up to 30% poorer, and female headed household up to 40% poorer than men and male headed households, respectively.¹⁷ According to the Status of Women in the South African Economy report, “females tend to live further below the poverty line than their male counterparts, suggesting greater vulnerability”.¹⁸ It is thus important that we not only talk about poverty but the gender poverty gap which takes into consideration women and men as well as between female headed households and male headed household.¹⁹

3. From Gold to Platinum

The broad gendered economic vulnerability noted above, which has historical roots, cannot be divorced from recent “developments” in the mining industry. The shift in the concentration of mining activities from gold in the Witwatersrand and the Free State mines to the platinum belt in North-west and Limpopo has also led to shifts in employment and labour relations trends. More workers are increasingly casualised and externalized. The income and employment insecurity experienced by workers in platinum directly contributes to the economic vulnerability of these communities.

A comprehensive picture of the recent “mineral shift” from gold to platinum also points to a “spatial shift”, from urban industrial centres such as Johannesburg to rural communally owned and tradi-

17 Michael Rogan, *Poverty may have declined, but women and female-headed households still suffer most*, «Econ 3x3», 6 May 2014, <<http://www.econ3x3.org/article/poverty-may-have-declined-women-and-female-headed-households-still-suffer-most>>.

18 The Status of Women in the South African Economy. Department of Women. August 2015 <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Status_of_women_in_SA_economy.pdf>.

19 Dorrit Posel, Michael Rogan, *Gendered trends in poverty in the post-apartheid period, 1997-2006*, «Development Southern Africa», 29, 2012, n. 1, pp. 97-113; Rogan, *Poverty may have declined*; Idem, *Poverty and headship in post-apartheid South Africa, 1997-2006*, «Social Indicators Research», 113, 2013, n. 1, pp. 491-511.

tionally administered land in the former homelands such as Rustenburg.²⁰ In fact, highest reserves of platinum, about sixty per cent of the country's and forty percent of the World's platinum production takes place within the precinct of Rustenburg.²¹ It is a booming mining region with chrome and platinum industries.

Rustenburg in particular has an employment rate of 74%, the highest in the whole of North-West. The town is the mining and manufacturing hub of the province. It is estimated that about 40% of the province's mining activities happen within the borders of Rustenburg. Not only is the economy growing, but many people from all over the SADC region are moving to the region to be part of the "growth" that has engulfed the region. This is more evident when you walk around town and hear many different languages spoken, from Setswana, Xhosa to Portuguese. Alongside this huge platinum production and growth, the North-West region is also contending with an unemployment rate of 26.5% while the national average is 27.7% when using the official narrow definition and at 36.8% when we include discouraged work seekers.²² While the middle classes are finding secure employment opportunities in the boom seen in the platinum belt, the working classes remain on the margins with precarious jobs.²³ In other words, the benefits of growth are asymmetrically distributed.

Poverty continues, therefore, to be one of South Africa's biggest challenges affecting not only the unemployed but also the employed

20 Gavin Capps, *Tribal-landed property. The political economy of the BaFokeng chieftancy, South Africa, 1837-1994*, Doctoral dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 2010 [unpublished]; Sonwabile Mnwana, Gavin Capps, *No chief ever bought a piece of land? Struggles over property, community and mining in the Bakgatla-ba-kgafela traditional authority area, North West Province*, «SWOP Working Paper», 3, 2015, Johannesburg, Society, Work and development Institute.

21 <www.nwpg.gov.za/sde/stquo.ase>.

22 Quarterly Labour Force Survey- QLFS Q3: 2017, Statistics South Africa, <<http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=10658>>. According to Statistics South Africa, the narrow employment definition includes those who have worked for an hour in 7 days, those who begged on the streets and the expanded unemployment definition includes discouraged work seekers, those who want to work but are no longer actively looking for work, see also Peter Alexander et al., *Class in Soweto*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013; and Franco Barchiesi, *Precarious liberation. Workers, the state, and contested social citizenship in postapartheid South Africa*, Albany, State University of New York Press-Scottsville (South Africa), University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011.

23 Asanda Benya, *Women, mining and precariousness*, «Labour, capital and society – Travail, capital et société», 48, 2015, nn. 1-2, <http://www.lcs-tcs.com/PDFs/48_12/5%20-%20Benya.pdf>.

who often have to support over thirteen family members with one income. In North West alone, poverty levels are estimated at 37%. This roughly translates to 1.66 million people and an estimated 475 000 households.²⁴ The Marikana strikes in 2012, where workers were joined by community members in their demand for a living wage, were a clear embodiment of the socio-economic pressures facing, ironically, the mineral rich communities.²⁵

These contradictions strike one as they enter Rustenburg, on one side are newly built exclusive middle-class town houses and shopping malls, opposite them are informal settlements where the “poors” who service the mines reside in tin houses with no running water and electricity. The town still has many fully functioning hostels housing migrants that work in the mines. This illustrates that, even though there is growth in Rustenburg, not everyone is equally benefiting from it. The informal settlements are the “new communities” that are being built in spite of the wealth of the mines around Rustenburg. The whole province of North-West recorded an economic growth rate of 4.9% in 2004 with mining and quarrying contributing 24.9% to GDP. This shows that, in as much as the new economic growth is creating new upwardly mobile classes, it is also creating many poorer communities where paid employment is not enough.

Given the informal settlements that are mushrooming in the area, evidently a new working class is being created or revived. The

24 Statistics South Africa, see also Avintika Seeth, *Supra rues poverty, unemployment in North West despite R1m car purchase*, 2017, February 24, <<http://citypress.news24.com/News/supra-laments-poverty-unemployment-in-north-west-despite-r1m-car-purchase-20170224>>.

25 In 2012 South Africa’s mining industry, in particular the platinum sector, experienced a number of strikes by mineworkers. In some cases workers were joined by community members in their demands for a living wage of R12 500. In Marikana, the strike by Lonmin mineworkers culminated into what has become known as the Marikana massacre where 34 striking workers were killed by the state police while protesting on a hill just outside the employer’s premises. Another seventy eight were seriously injured and two hundred and seventy were arrested, tortured and charged with the murder of their colleagues. The Marikana massacre was a watershed moment, the first massacre in democratic South Africa. Women lost their male partners who were breadwinners, as a result, some of the widows had to go and take up the jobs of their husbands in the mines in order to put food on the table, roof over their heads and educate their children. For more, see Asanda Benya, *The invisible hands. Women in Marikana*, «Review of African Political Economy», 42, 2015, n. 146, pp. 545-560; Asanda Benya, *Absent from the frontline but not absent from the struggle. Women in the Marikana massacre*, «Femina Politica», 22, 2013, pp. 144-147; Alexander et al., *Marikana*.

informality is not only in living arrangements but also work contracts. As I noted elsewhere, mines, especially in platinum, are increasingly using subcontractors. To date, more than a third of all employees in the platinum mining industry are being employed through third parties where employment, income, representational and other forms of securities have been eroded contributing directly to poverty in the region. In other words, precariousness and resulting poverty is palpable.²⁶ The Marikana massacre and subsequent strikes were but one rupture resulting from these multiple crises.

Linked to the history of exclusion of women from mining I present above and the subsequent legislative inclusion, below I illustrate how while women are included in mining, certain in-house policies that have been put in place to facilitate their inclusion and “protect” them have ended up exposing them to levels of poverty and insecurity that male co-workers are not exposed to. For these women employment does not address their economic vulnerability and the wages are not enough to keep their families above the poverty lines I mention earlier.

4. Post-apartheid women in mining

Important to note is that it is against the backdrop of precarious employment and high unemployment rates that women were entering mining jobs and doing work that was once exclusively reserved for their male relatives. With the unemployment rate mentioned above it is unsurprising that a lot of the women who currently work in the mines were unemployed before their incorporation into mining jobs. Those who were employed indicated that they were mainly in casual and part-time employment; they worked as security guards, waitrons and machine operators at nearby Casino Resorts, cashiers at local grocery stores and domestic workers.

For some, working in mining was not their first option or preference but was necessitated by needs and lack of opportunities. The poverty and unemployment rates, as noted above, have pushed women to seek employment in the mines despite internalised notions of mines as men’s work. Rather than suffering the social stigma or political marginalisation due to unemployment, women prefer to work in mines. While there is a stigma attached to working in mining, families still “release” women to avoid starvation. Some women

26 Benya, *Women, mining and precariousness*.

reported that they faced opposition, not only from their communities but also from their families, for choosing to work in the mining industry. However, with a national unemployment rate of 27% getting a job in the mines is a step up and women argued, a way out of poverty for them, their families and households and is worth the subtle stigma attached to their jobs and the industry.

4. Blended and multigenerational households

Most women mineworkers were from families and communities around Rustenburg and Johannesburg where the unemployment rate was very high. In some of the communities they came from, such as Diepsloot,²⁷ most people, especially women, are unemployed. In 2008, the City of Johannesburg estimated that out of 200 000 working-age adults as much as 75% of the population in Diepsloot²⁸ were unemployed.²⁹ Rustenburg, despite its mineral “wealth”, also faces a high unemployment rate as noted above. As such, their wages were shared with a greater number of people than immediate families and households.³⁰

In Rustenburg, blended and multi-generational households are common and most of the women in the mines were from such households.³¹ The configuration of South African households has

27 The City of Johannesburg’s Livelihood Study reported that Diepsloot is the 5th most deprived ward in Johannesburg, one of the poorest areas in Region A which included Ivory Park and Midrand, «Johannesburg Poverty and Livelihoods Study», 2008.

28 Diepsloot is a migrant settlement outside of Johannesburg which began to develop in 1993 with migrants putting up makeshift homes on unoccupied land. Together with Orange Farm it has the highest percentage of people (8%) without formal education «Johannesburg Poverty and Livelihoods Study», 2008.

29 <http://www.joburg.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6818:tapping-into-diepsloot-arts&catid=88&Itemid=266>.

30 High unemployment is common in many township and rural households in South Africa. For survival these households tend to rely on the meagre social grants provided by the States; the child support grant, old age pension grant and disability. While some people may qualify for these grants, not all of them get the money and Mosoetsa (2011) argues that even if they would get the money, poor households would still be under economic pressure. See also Sara Compion, Susan E. Cook, *Young ‘Women of Phokeng’. Strategies for survival in contemporary South Africa*, «Agenda», 20, 2006, n. 68, pp. 95-103; Sarah Mosoetsa, *Eating from one pot. The dynamics of survival in poor South African households*, Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2011.

31 Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, Johannesburg, Ravan, 1991; Compion, Cook, *Young ‘Women of Phokeng’*. For a historical account on how Tswana households were constituted see also Alverson, *Mind in the heart of darkness*; Mosoetsa, *Eat-*

been linked to the already alluded to apartheid policies that targeted black Africans. Married women tended to live with some of their inlaws, husbands, children and sometimes younger siblings.³² Single local women on the main lived at their parents' or grandparents' homes in the (rural) villages around Rustenburg and were commuting between work and their rural homestead daily. Statistics South Africa shows that 26.4% of urban houses in Rustenburg are headed by women with 2.5% average size. This figure excludes nearby villages.³³ Migrant women mainly lived in informal settlements or mine villages³⁴ and these arrangements were necessitated by their income and responsibilities. Migrants' families and households were constituted differently, they often included homeboys and home-girl³⁵ networks and were revolving.³⁶ The everyday rhythms in these homes and households influenced how people's wages were spent and how far they were stretched.

ing from one pot, who looked at townships in KwaZulu-Natal, and Anderson Franklin, Monde Makiwane, Tawanda Makusha, *Male attitudes towards children, fatherhood, and childrearing: A descriptive profile from South African social attitudes survey (SASAS)*, «The Open Family Studies Journal», 47, 2014, n. 6, pp. 47-55, who looked across South Africa all noted the same phenomenon.

32 For more on this see Franklin, Makiwane, Makusha, *Male attitudes towards children, fatherhood, and childrearing*; Linda Richter, Jeremiah Chikovore, Tawanda Makusha, *The status of fatherhood and fathering in South Africa*, «Childhood Education», 86, 2010, n. 6, pp. 360-365; Linda Richter, Robert Morrell, *Baba. Men and fatherhood in South Africa*, Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2006, pp. 155-172; Laura Phillips, *I am alone. I am a woman. What are my children going to eat? Domestic workers and family networks*, «South African Review of Sociology», 42, 2011, n. 2, pp. 29-44.

33 For more facts about average household size, and the number of households in Rustenburg see <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=rustenburg-municipality>.

34 Mine villages are areas where mines have built houses for their employees. Usually a mining company buys a piece of land and “develops” it by building residential homes for their employees. The mine villages are not a South African phenomenon, Georgina Murray, David Peetz, *Women of the coal rushes*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2010, also note similar villages in Australian mining towns.

35 A homegirl or homeboy is mainly used to describe a person from the same village or province or town. These were very important networks for migrants both in apartheid and post apartheid South Africa, see Leslie Bank, *Home spaces, street styles. Contesting power and identity in a South African city*, London-New York, Pluto Press, 2011 for more on migrant networks and Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*; Moodie, Ndatshe, *Going for gold*.

36 Extended family excluded grandparents, parents and children women “mothered from a distance”, see Shireen Ally, *“Maid” with rights. The contradictory citizenship of domestic workers in post-apartheid South Africa*, PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006, p. 302.

The 2011 Statistics South Africa Census found that Rustenburg, which has a population of about 549 575, has an unemployment rate of 26.4% and a youth unemployment rate of 34.7%. Despite mineral wealth and an economic growth rate of 3.5% in the Rustenburg local municipality, in June 2013 over 38 informal settlements were identified in the Rustenburg municipality.³⁷ Characterising these informal settlements is grim poverty, the absence of government services and limited basic infrastructure.³⁸

5. *Spreading the income thin*

In this context, the women mineworkers interviewed were, in most cases, the main breadwinners and directly supported more than one household, sometimes supporting as many as eight to fourteen people.³⁹ As alluded to above, in the mines men continue to be the majority of the underground and above ground workforce while women are a minority and are given the low-paying and low-status jobs. As will be shown, most of them work as equipping helpers, attendants and assistants and a few work as miners, locomotive and winch operators (even though in most cases female winch operators are informally reallocated to more feminine jobs or are pikinini-also known as assistants). The pikinini occupation does not “exist” in the mine books, it is an informal occupation where a pikinini assists a supervisor with administrative work and sometimes personal duties. Women, therefore, remain in entry level positions and very few have been able to move to higher level positions both underground and above ground (as shift supervisor or mine overseer).

While women reported earning between R4000 and R4800 (\$300 and \$359) as subcontracted workers and R6500 and

37 Some scholars have attributed the rise of informal settlements in mining towns to the live-out allowance given to workers who do not want to live in mine hostels. See Sam Ashman, Ben Fine, *The Meaning of Marikana*, «Global Labour University», 2013, <<http://column.global-labour-university.org/2013/03/the-meaning-of-marikana.html>>. See also a report on the state on informal settlements in Rustenburg <http://www.thehda.co.za/uploads/images/HDA_Informal_settlements_status_North_West.pdf>.

38 Water shortages are rampant in the North-West province <<http://www.polity.org.za/article/da-statement-by-chris-hattingh-da-leader-in-north-west-on-the-truth-about-the-mothutlung-water-crisis-15012014-2014-01-15>>.

See also <<http://mg.co.za/article/2014-01-21-brits-residents-to-march-over-continued-water-shortages>>.

39 See Facts and Figures document published by the Chamber of Mines, 2012-2013, 2013-2014.

R7000⁴⁰ (\$487 and \$524) per month as general full-time workers, and more as miners, all of them reported that their financial responsibilities as sole providers in their families far outweighed their earnings.⁴¹

Some women reported that since they started working in the mines, even husbands have withdrawn their household financial contributions asserting that women now need to carry the load that they have carried for years alone. According to one woman, Bonang, since she started working in the mines her husband stopped buying groceries and instead gave her R700 (\$56) to buy food for the whole family, the rest came from her wages. Bonang kept asking «what can you do with R700? ... It's so little, it barely covers nappies (diapers) and formula (milk) for the last born ... he says I'm working now so it should not be a problem buying food and taking care of the day care fees». From her salary of about R4000 (\$300) (she is a contract worker), R900 (\$67) goes towards her three children's transport to school (R300 (\$23) each), R500 (\$37) towards their clothing credit account, R700 (\$52) for groceries R300 for her cellphone, and R300 for the woman who takes care of her children on Saturdays (she works two Saturdays a month). As noted above her husband also contributes R700, R150 (\$11) is sometimes for her hair, and she pays R400 (\$30) for day care. Most of her money, she says, is spent on household responsibilities. The very same income is unable to sufficiently support women and their households. It is important to also note here that households like Bonang's are often not eligible for state social grants, such as the child care grant, since their earnings exceed the government social grant threshold. Because there is currently no universal basic income grant, to supplement their insufficient income these women usually get loans.

40 This figure is difficult to compare to national standards since Statistics South Africa delineates these figures by race, gender, age, education, occupation, sector, province, and they also do cross-tabulation between these variables. For more information see <<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P02112/P021122010.pdf>> and <<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0100/P01002011.pdf>>. For figures on earnings across different ranks see Asanda Benya, *Women in mining. Occupational culture and gendered identities in the making*, PhD diss. University of the Witwatersrand, 2016; Kally Forrest, *Rustenburg's labour recruitment regime. Shifts and new meanings*, «Review of African Political Economy», 42, 2015, n. 146, pp 508-525.

41 Patrick Bond, *Debt, uneven development and capitalist crisis in South Africa. From Moody's macroeconomic monitoring to Marikana microfinance Mashonisas*, «Third World Quarterly», 34, 2013, n. 4, pp. 569-592; Deborah James, *Money-go-round. Personal economies of wealth, aspiration and indebtedness*, «Africa», 82, 2012, n. 1, pp. 20-40.

Another woman complaining about her responsibilities remarked:

I bring home the dollar. I buy the electricity, I buy groceries, my grandmother's pension only buys a few things, like replenishes things that get finished. I support everyone here, even my older sister who is at nursing school is my responsibility and her daughter.⁴²

While «bringing home the dollar» has increased women's power in the household, it has also been seen as a threat by patriarchs and seen to destabilise the «masculine rhetoric of breadwinning» and has resulted in household tensions and subsequent withdrawal of financial support from husbands.⁴³ This power shift has also left women with financial burdens that far exceed their income. Indeed, for some of these women, the “cost” of employment outweighs its monetary “gains”. Their wages are neither an alternative to poverty nor a path towards dignity. They constitute what is considered the working poor.

Other women remarked that their wages do not even stretch far enough for them to take care of everything. From interviews, there seemed to be minimal expectations on men, especially married men to contribute significantly financially or to financially care for parents (unless the parents were the caregivers of their children). Women on the other hand, especially single women, were expected to shoulder all responsibilities, including financially, for elderly parents. This is despite significant, but disguised wage differentials between male and female mineworkers.

While women can work in the mines and are in principle earning the same wages as men, the take home wages between them and male colleagues tend to be substantially different. As I argue and demonstrate elsewhere, men unlike women get production bonuses which significantly increase their take home income.⁴⁴ Because of low wages, the allure of production pressures on workers weighs heavily. Since mines give workers production bonuses when targets are met, what ends up happening is that women are informally re-

42 Nelisiwe (pseudonym), *Interview with Asanda Benya*, 2012.

43 Barchiesi, *Precarious liberation*.

44 Benya, *Women, mining and precariousness*, <http://www.lcs-tcs.com/PDFs/48_12/5%20-%20Benya.pdf>; Asanda Benya, *Gendered labour. A challenge to labour as a democratizing force*, «Rethinking Development and Inequality», 2, 2013, special issue, pp. 47-62, <<http://www.andir-south.org/rdi/index.php/rdi/article/view/11>>.

stricted and reallocated from working in certain teams, occupations and places. As a result, men and hardly women, receive production bonuses. This is because male workers believe that women are weak and slow and not able to push production and thus meet targets and help teams get bonuses. Because of these stereotypes about women's bodies, women end up being side-lined, excluded from teams who do production work and thus ineligible to bonuses, while men tend to be allocated workplaces that are closer to the face where production bonuses tend to be regular and high if targets are met. Consequently, the take home of men and women, even when they are in the same occupation, differs significantly because of where they are located in the production line; whether close to the stope or not. The informal job reallocation taking place, therefore, has gendered financial ramifications and impact on poverty levels experienced by these workers.

The informal reallocation happens when a woman has been allocated to work in a place closer to where blasting takes place. In such cases, teams tend to remove women from the blasting place and informally reallocate them work far from it to do work unrelated to their core responsibilities, one closely associated with femininity- an association that has pricy consequences. These jobs included fetching water for the team, in other words women assume caring responsibilities underground. Or they can be in charge of cleaning the working place, this can involve sweeping after workers eat their breakfast, painting direction lines around the working palce etc. In other cases, women are even removed completely from underground spaces and informally allocated jobs as *pikininis* (assistants) on surface where there is no bonus at all.⁴⁵ Being on surface as a pikinini not only deprives women of bonus income, but also affects their promotional chances, which are dramatically reduced when one has no, or limited experience of working underground.

45 A pikinini is a shift supervisor assistant, the one who carries the supervisor's bag and takes measurements for him (there were no female shift supervisors in all the shafts where I conducted this research). Historically in South African mines a pikinini was known as a «bass-boy», loosely translated to bosses' boy. Boy in this instance marked a permanent state of infancy and thus needing a white master. Every white miner had a pikinini who worked as his «personal *servant* underground», Moodie, *Migrancy and male sexuality*, pp. 63, 69. According to Karl von Holdt, *From resistance to reconstruction. A case study of trade unionism in the workplace and the community (1980-1996)*, Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 2000; they were the black buffer; a barrier between white supervisors and black workers, and were thus the “eyes, ears and hands” of white supervisors. They were later promoted to team leaders. The current role of pikininis, therefore, is derived from this history.

Additional to their basic wage and production bonuses men often also supplement their income by doing extra production shifts on week-ends – *skontiri*. Skontiri is an extra 8 hour production shift worked on “off-Saturdays”. Workers who work this shift get paid double their daily rate and get their money immediately after the shift. It is paid by Teba (a former recruitment arm for the mines during apartheid that now operates as a bank) upon the worker producing the day’s pay slip received at the shaft at the end of *skontiri*. Because most women live with their families it is often difficult to do extra production shifts. Their week-ends are filled with family (laundry for the family and cleaning the home) and community and church activities such as wedding, ancestral rituals and funerals where they are expected to attend and render free services such as preparing food.

Because of these pressures when at home in the nearby villages, some women have left their rural homes and are boarding in backrooms in townships near the mines. While this slightly reduces transport costs, it increases other costs such as food and rent. The children are often left to the care of parents and grandparents if they are available and healthy enough to care for children.

To supplement their income some women sold Tupperware (“high end” plastic home products), clothes from Johannesburg and Avon (beauty products) at work and in their communities.⁴⁶ Others joined *stokvels*,⁴⁷ usually ranging in contributions from R100-R1000 (\$7.5- \$75) a month. *Stokvels* and small businesses, however, are hardly enough to support these multi-generational households, especially for migrant workers who also support multiple households. As a result, most women rely on easily accessible and unsecured credit, micro-credit and bank loans even in cases where there are two incomes.⁴⁸ Women noted that with proof of income from the mines it

46 To sell Tupperware and Avon one does not need to have money upfront, however to buy and sell clothes and join a pyramid scheme one does need to put some investment upfront.

47 Shireen Ally, *From servants to workers. South African domestic workers and the democratic state*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2011, defines a stokvel as a revolving credit association. The women I worked with however, did not only use stokvels for getting credit, but also used them to save collectively or buy house goods. James, *Money-go-round*, p. 26, definition captures both these elements of a stokvel, she defines them as “credit-granting savings clubs” or more formally they are known as “Accumulated Savings and Credit Associations of ASCRAs”. Stokvels were based on trust, with no collateral required from the borrower.

48 Beauty Mahlaba, *Impilo enzima (A hard life)*, «Agenda», 9, 1993, n. 16, pp. 33-38; Deborah James, *Money from nothing. Indebtedness and aspiration in South Africa*,

is easy to get access to loans.⁴⁹ While heavily relying on loans to supplement income, most women complained that they had very high interests.⁵⁰ Money borrowed by women from the banks, especially migrant women who supported multiple households, was often to cover basic consumables, medical care and school fees for children. This is a common trend in South Africa for working class households and it has been noted that in some cases «consumer debt repayments account for up to 40 percent of monthly expenditures».⁵¹ In the case of female mineworkers this is compounded by the fact that they are supporting multiple households and are often the sole or only reliable breadwinners.⁵²

None of the financial vulnerabilities affecting women were taken into consideration by unions when negotiating new wage deals with employers. As I illustrate elsewhere, issues that predominantly affected women were seen as peripheral, even when they affect their earnings.⁵³ Because of the masculine bias of unions which leads to women being seen as second class workers in the mining industry, women have a negligible influence on union bargaining positions. Trade unions, as a result, did not formulate their wage bargaining positions with all the workers they represent in mind, only with men, who were their mental default mineworkers. As such, they prioritised issues “felt” by men and those men deemed important, not those affecting women. Unions, therefore, were not necessarily representing women nor were they their safe heavens. As a result, inequalities then between workers continued relentlessly, with men

Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2015; Bond, *Debt, uneven development*; Deborah James, Dinah Rajak, *Credit apartheid, migrants, mines and money*, «African Studies», 73, 2014, n. 3, pp. 455-476.

49 Bond, *Debt, uneven development*, p. 585.

50 *Ibidem*, p. 582, critiques what he calls the “super exploitative debt relations” caused by easy access to “unsecured credit” granted by both formal banks and microfinance institutions to mine workers. He points to exorbitant interest rates and other costs (such as legal fees) that the poor are charged which he argues sometimes amount to “three to 15 times the initial loan amount”. He also argues that the debts and increased unsecured lending by microfinance institutions were at the centre of the personal account on debt and supporting multiple households. Marikana massacre and it amplified the underlying conditions of uneven and combined development Bond, *Debt, uneven development*, pp. 581-582, see also James, Rajak, *Credit apartheid, migrants, mines and money*.

51 Bridget Kenny, *Walmart in South Africa. Precarious labor and retail expansion*, «International Labor and Working-Class History», 86, 2014, p. 176.

52 See Nite, Stewart, *Mining faces*, on worker’s personal account on debt and supporting multiple households.

53 Benya, *Gendered labour*.

earning more, and women earning significantly less when all that matters is considered.

6. Accommodating inequalities

What characterized the apartheid mining workplace order, as noted above, was the housing on mineworkers in degrading single sex hostels with strict controls of entry and exit and the racially prohibitive pass laws which ensure that husbands did not bring their wives to towns and mines.⁵⁴ Since the dawn of democracy, mines have been slowly transforming these hostels into family units. To regulate the accommodation of women, the housing and the recruitment policy work together. The recruitment policy states that women who work in the mines should be from within a 60km radius from the mine and the housing policy states that no woman should live in single sex compounds, only in family accommodation. In the absence of family accommodation, the policy prescribes, women are to commute between home and work daily. When a woman lives at home within the 60km radius from the mine that means she uses a significant portion of her income on public transport to get to work, while men who live near their work places or in hostels and have a company bus picking them up and dropping them off daily.

Both the recruitment and housing policies increase the cost of living of women in the mines. The criterion set by the mines that women be able to commute to and from work and be within a 60km radius from the mines is financially and mentally costly for women.⁵⁵ The journey to work involves three stops before one reaches the shaft where they work. It usually starts with a municipal bus from the local village to town, then a minibus taxi from town to the hostel and a mine bus from the hostel to the shaft. To make sure that they are on time for work, these women have to wake up in the early hours of the morning (between 2:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m.) because most villages are far from town where one can access a taxi to mine shafts.

Many women reported that the working times are a challenge but they need the jobs and have no other alternatives. One woman reported:

[...] I get up at 2:00 a.m. every morning and boil water to bath. While boiling water I prepare my lunch box and those for my kids.

54 Moodie, Ndatshé, *Going for gold*.

55 Benya, *Gendered labour*.

After that I take a bath and leave immediately for work. I must make sure that I'm at the bus stop at least by 3:30 a.m.; that means I have to leave the house at 2:45 a.m. and walk to the bus stop which is far. I wait for the bus or a taxi if it's not already there. It's hard to find taxis but buses are available, you just have to know the time and be willing to get up early. The bus takes me to town and I then catch a taxi to the mine hostel. When I get to the hostel I wait for the mine bus to take me to work. When I get to work it's already about 5:00 or 5:15 a.m.⁵⁶

Women have to pay from their own pockets for the first two vehicles as the mine provides the free bus only from the hostel. The hostel and the surrounding informal settlements I alluded to above rely on this free bus and thus do not have extra transport costs resulting from recruitment and housing policies that prevent them from living in hostels. After work, it is the same drill for them, both in terms of time and associated costs. A woman I worked with reported that:

[...] I only come up to the surface around 2:30 p.m. on a good day or 3:30 p.m. on a bad one. I then take a shower ... and head home. I again have to wait for the mine bus to the hostel where I can get a taxi to town and another one to my village. I only get home around 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. I still have to cook for my family, and make sure I'm in bed at least around 9:00 p.m.⁵⁷

Their male counterparts on the other hand have the option of staying in hostels or informal settlements near the mines, and most men take these. That means, unlike women, men do not have to worry about transport to work because the mine provides them with transport to the shafts and back to the hostels. Women face this problem because there are no hostels or centralised housing where the mine can organise transport to pick them up and drop them off after work. The reason for the absence of women's hostels is that the mine does not want to replicate the apartheid single-sex hostels where people were separated from their families for a long time.

While the mine does not have a hostel system for women, they have alternative housing which are often extremely costly for workers and hard to come by if you are new in mining; the single quarters and flats. However, even at those residences there is no running bus

56 Noxolo (pseudonym), *Interview with Asanda Benya*, 2008.

57 Maria (pseudonym), *Interview with Asanda Benya*, 2012.

service to pick up and drop off workers. Consequently, women spend an average three to four hours a day travelling to and from work and about 30-40% of their income on transport. A high cost to pay when unemployment and poverty levels are high and the wage supports multiple households of no less than ten people.

7. *Pregnancy and poverty: (Breast)feed one or many?*

Most of the women who are working in the mines are in their child-bearing years. Aware of this, the mine has a pregnancy policy in place. The policy states that women who are pregnant should not work underground but should instead be moved to alternative work on surface. This is to protect the unborn baby from harmful gasses underground. When a woman falls pregnant the mine either has to allocate alternative employment on surface to the woman should it be available or the woman goes on early maternity leave, usually from the second month. In the case where alternative employment on surface is available the woman continues to earn her wage and get all benefits. When she goes on early maternity leave, however, she no longer receives her full wage as some of her income is redirected to cover contributory benefits for the duration of her pregnancy. Since one can only withdraw maternity benefits for a maximum of four months depending on how long they have worked for and thus contributed to the unemployment insurance fund, women who do not get alternative employment on surface tend to exhaust their maternity leave benefits before the baby is born. This is especially the case if a woman goes on maternity leave in the early months of pregnancy. With no income and a baby on the way women often face tremendous pressures to borrow money with compounded interests from loan sharks. Before the baby is born mothers are already sinking in debt with no reliable stream of income. Once the baby is born the pressure is on the nursing mom to stop breastfeeding if they want to return to work. Breastfeeding mothers are not allowed to work underground, hence, when a mother decides to return to work they have to stop breastfeeding and return to work in order to provide for their new-born and extended family. The removal of women from underground once they fall pregnant affects not only mothers and the baby financially but extended family members who rely on the woman for survival and basic needs. Due to the financial pressures faced during pregnancy and accumulation of debt, after giving birth women have had to return to work and forgo breastfeeding their new-borns in order to feed many.

8. Conclusion

Above I have tried to illustrate the linkages between the exclusion of women from mining during the colonial and apartheid era and their continued marginalization in post-apartheid even though legally allowed to work underground. Their inclusion in mining has not necessarily translated to material or tangible gains or to reduction in poverty. The lack of a living wage that allows workers to live decent lives remains illusive. Instead, the mines continue to eat away at workers lives, to reproduce the cheap labour system and exploitative relations. Within the workplaces specifically, and mines more generally, there are widening income inequalities between executives, investors and workers, with those at the top taking a huge slice of the pie, leading to much discontent from below.

The discontent brewing, albeit gradually, is captured by the spirit of Marikana, a spirit of defiance, a spirit that refuses to retreat (*Asijiki*) even in the face of a massacre, as seen in 2012. Remarkably, with empty bellies and nothing to lose but shackles of manufactured poverty, workers continue to demand a living wage, and to demonstrate determination to change their living and working conditions. This is because mine women, their households and communities are stretched, they are struggling to afford basic necessities and to put food on the table.

The poverty levels witnessed in the North-West, despite the mineral wealth of the province, illustrates that employment alone is not the answer to poverty. For women in the mines and their families, paid employment, no matter how secure it is, is simply not enough to escape their impoverishment. The wages they take home after long days of labouring underground are not enough to feed their extended families and the multiple households they are responsible for. Their meagre (social and economic) resources are under incredible pressure from different directions. In some cases, as illustrated above, paid employment often leads to increases in expectations from family members, it sometimes leads to withdrawal of financial support from patriarchs who have internalised the “masculine rhetoric of breadwinning”, and who are threatened by women who work in the mines and bring home a wage. It is undeniable that paid employment for the working classes can “inadvertently” exarcebate poverty, particularly for women, due to all the reasons outlined above. The gendered impact of work and poverty are, indeed, salient and the discontent of the materially deprived is only going to get harder to contain and their cries too loud to ignore.

The conflict which is at the centre of industrial relations is only going to intensify if poverty continues unabated to characterise the lives of workers, particularly female workers who shoulder the responsibility of providing for all the complex household structures identified above. Momentum from below is building up and the resources of the women who have been absorbing the pressures of the system are getting exhausted and reaching crisis levels.

Abstract: Drawing from the apartheid and post-apartheid context this paper demonstrates how the poverty in the mines of South Africa, which disproportionately affects women, is a deliberate construction. The paper mainly draws from women who have links with and work in the mines. The first section deals with the historical exclusion of women from mining. I link this exclusion to the migrant labour system and incredibly low wages paid to husbands who were the preferred cheap labour in the mines. I not only locate this in history, but I also draw extensively from the current experiences of women who work in the mines. I argue that not only was apartheid at the heart of the construction of mining women's poverty, but even in post-apartheid South African women continue to suffer the brunt of the laws that are disguised as having their best interest at heart when in fact women in the mines are prejudiced by these laws. The data I use was collected in several research phases from 2008 until 2015. For almost eleven months, between 2011 and 2012, I worked and lived in the mines. To get at the in-depth and everyday practices I used participant observation, life histories, formal interviews, focus group discussions and relied on day-to-day conversations.

Collocandosi nel quadro del periodo dell'*apartheid* ma anche in quello del *post-apartheid*, il presente saggio dimostra come la povertà delle aree minerarie del Sudafrica, che colpisce in modo sproporzionato le donne, sia una costruzione creata ad arte. L'analisi riguarda principalmente le donne che lavorano nelle miniere o sono ad esse collegate. La prima sezione tratta dell'esclusione storica delle donne dal lavoro in miniera, che viene fatta risalire al sistema della manodopera migrante e ai salari incredibilmente bassi pagati ai mariti, che costituivano il nerbo della manodopera a basso costo nelle miniere. Tale fenomeno viene inquadrato nel contesto storico, ma anche implementato con dati provenienti dall'esperienza attuale delle donne che lavorano oggi in miniera. Nel saggio si sostiene che non solo l'*apartheid* era al cuore della strutturazione della povertà delle donne in miniera, ma che pure nel *post-apartheid* le donne sudafricane continuano a risentire del pesante impatto di leggi mascherate come se avessero a cuore l'interesse delle donne che gravitano intorno alle miniere, mentre in realtà risultano essere a loro sfavore. I dati su cui si basa l'analisi sono stati raccolti dall'autrice in varie, successive fasi di ricerca sul campo effettuate fra il 2008 e il 2015. Per l'analisi in profondità e per le pratiche quotidiane si è fatto ricorso all'osservazione partecipata, alle storie individuali di vita vissuta, a interviste formali e a discussioni di gruppo, nonché alle conversazioni quotidiane.

Keywords: Sudafrica, donne nelle miniere sudafricane, apartheid, post-apartheid, disuguaglianza di genere, discriminazione di genere, miniere sudafricane, povertà delle donne; South Africa, women in the mines, apartheid, post-apartheid, gender inequality, gender discrimination, women's poverty, South African mining world.

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