

Predatory Welfare Debt, Race, and Cash Transfers

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Cover art: A grant recipient displays her EasyPay card for the
camera. Source: Ashraf Hendricks for GroundUp.

Transferred Justice: Historic Debt and Future Repair

Over the last six chapters, I have detailed the challenges of successive cash transfer distribution systems and the complex and uneven ways they have been rearticulated with racial capitalism. I have argued that racialized poverty and inequality are not simply the result of historical dispossession and exploitation but have been remade through the processes and practices of cash transfer delivery. Before concluding, there is one more question I would like to address: If multiple experiments in social grant payments have failed to bring about a more just and equitable politics of distribution, what might?

Throughout this book, something of an answer has started to emerge from conversations with my interlocutors. In many of the previous chapters, I have included moments when cash transfer claimants told me that the promises of the liberation struggle have not been fulfilled and, importantly, that cash transfers (alone) would likely never fulfill them. In different ways, people have suggested that they are owed something more substantial than cash transfers to repair the harms of colonialism and apartheid. Very often, what people demand in addition to grants, or even instead of grants, is land. Of course, demands for land have often enlivened anticolonial and postcolonial struggles for new ways of being in the world. When land is evoked in such instances, it is often dense with meaning. Claims to land can, of course, be claims for private property and wealth accumulation but can also be claims to other diverse possibilities for social relations, which are not commodified or individualized. Appealing to the harms and trauma of the past, demands for land are often demands for reparation, repair, belonging, and new practices of organizing society for collective well-being. In this chapter, I consider how cash transfer recipients are mobilizing claims to land to articulate their desires for justice and repair.

As I was doing this research, I often was struck by the extent to which the demands of my interlocutors departed from those made by scholars and activists at the time. After the COVID SRD grant was introduced, many political parties, think tanks, NGOs, academics, and journalists started to advocate for some form of basic income. Older organizations like the Black Sash and the Basic Income Grant Coalition have campaigned for universal basic income (UBI) with varied intensity for decades. Newer organizations like the Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ), the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII), #PaytheGrants, and Cry of the Xcluded have joined the fight more recently. So too, international institutions like the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) have pressured South Africa to introduce some form of basic income support. Most proponents of UBI argue that cash transfer programs make the individual impoverished subject the point of intervention, and therefore, prioritize reducing extreme poverty in a minimalistic way and cede more radical fights for equality, justice, and redistribution.¹ Universalizing cash transfer payments would promote cross-class solidarity to build better policy, demand accountable institutions, and distribute collective rewards. Likewise, universal distribution could end the biases of racist, sexist, and heteronormative qualification criteria; improve social assistance programs that continue to segregate, divide, and diminish benefits for poor populations; and liberate all of us from the necessity of accepting exploitative, dangerous, low-paid work (Mkandawire 2005; Ferguson 2015; Standing 2017; Fouksman and Klein 2019).²

While this all sounds positively utopian, the public activism around UBI has been largely incommensurate with what many grantees themselves propose. After studying cash transfers, I never once heard a grant claimant say, “What would really help is a *universal* grant” or “*Everyone* should get this money.”³ This could be because the grant system has always been experienced as small and inadequate, and thus, it is hard to imagine what a large and generous program might look like. But I think there was more going on than just that. I was constantly struck by the fact that whenever I asked questions about how the grant program could be improved, people often started talking about land and, to a lesser extent, jobs and public goods (see chapters 3, 4, and 6). Sidestepping the question of cash transfers or even UBI, the things people proposed often constituted more substantial and reparative forms of distribution.

Importantly, their demands were not based on universal rights claims or universal social entitlements but on South Africa’s particular racial



7.1. Basic income grant protest. Source: Chris Gilli for GroundUp.

capitalist history. While liberal universals rely on a conception of a shared humanness—whereby all people supposedly have a certain set of inalienable rights—the golden age of such pronouncements was also the “golden age” of slavery and empire, when few people counted as human and were included in these universals (Mehta 1999). Many people that I interviewed questioned whether universal cash transfer programs would be able to repair centuries of particular racialized harms. Instead, like Stuart Hall (2000), they suggested that the way to create substantive universal rights is by addressing particular harms. They described how South African capitalism relied on the production of racial difference and the categorization of Black people as less than human for profit. They explained how their families had been structurally disadvantaged and continue to be structurally disadvantaged long after democracy. Given this, they often interpreted cash transfer programs, even universal ones, as another means of *transferring* or deferring social justice, a thin fiscal membrane to soften structural brutality alongside a perpetual postponement of transformation.

This gap between the civil society debates and grant claimant demands reminded me of what Robin D. G. Kelley wrote in *Freedom Dreams*: “The most powerful visionary dreams of a new society don’t come from little think tanks of smart people or out of the atomized individualistic world of consumer capitalism where raging against the status quo is simply the hip thing to do. Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagements; collective social movements are incubators of knowledge” (2002, 8). While

my interlocutors were waiting in grant payment queues, they frequently gave voice to dreams and demands that did not follow the party line set by NGOs or academics. They were not bamboozled by development priorities that focused on small individual interventions instead of structural transformation. In Jimi Adésínà's (2020) memorable phrase, they understood when so-called experts were "calling dog monkey." Instead, people made reparative demands that linked a past that was violently usurped to a vision of a future that could potentially start to deliver the promises of freedom.

The evidence contained in this chapter is different from the rest of the book. Instead of closely observed practices—related to cash transfer machines, grant distribution queues, or parliamentary oversight processes—much of the evidence I give here comes from several in-depth interviews that are, by no means, representative of all recipients' views of cash transfers. And yet these interviews speak to a reparative politics that surfaced throughout this research. In so many large and small ways, people expressed their desires for a more substantial, material program of repair that would not be reduced to another antipoverty intervention. To make this argument, I first discuss a couple of interviews that began with grants and slowly morphed into conversations about land and reparation. Then, I trace two lineages of reparations thinking in South Africa—the land question and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)—that have been influential but insufficient. After that, I consider how the claims-making processes of my interlocutors are both inspired by but also distant from ideas of repair tied to African anticolonial nationalist struggles and nonaligned Third World liberation projects. Finally, I explore how people are organizing in small, mundane ways to build the power necessary to repair past injustices and, critically, remake the world.

A Cultural Topography of Cash Transfers

In *Give a Man a Fish* (2015), James Ferguson has proposed that a new "politics of distribution" is emerging around cash transfer programs in Southern Africa. While Ferguson gives a number of examples of where this distributional politics is bubbling up, he considers how land and resources have been central to calls for redistribution for settler colonial theft. But he points out a key problem here. While debates about land are often framed in terms of "the people" gaining an ownership share in the "country's wealth," demands for shared ownership *by the people* are often converted

into proposals for national ownership *by the state*. He describes how, in many places, processes of nationalization have worked to enrich a small elite rather than benefit all citizens. He says that such processes of nationalization cannot address the foundational question of distribution: How can national wealth actually be distributed—by who and by what mechanisms? To answer this question, he turns to the Namibian and South African experiences of social transfers and proposes that the “dry technocratic” machinery of welfare programs may offer a mechanism for actually redistributing the sort of “rightful share” that those who demand land envision.

I remembered this thought-provoking analysis while doing this research because, like Ferguson, many people often brought up both land and cash transfers in our interviews—albeit in *very* different ways. In his analysis, Ferguson considers how political demands for land redistribution could extend to (or have extended to) demands for a rightful share in the form of a cash transfer—facilitated by an effective, if dry and technocratic, distributive system. In my interviews, people expressed their disenchantment with cash transfers—often because of that very same ineffective, if dry and technocratic, distribution system—and yearned for other forms of redistribution instead. People were pushing back against the ways that cash transfers had “rendered technical” (Li 2007) a set of deeply ethical, social, and political questions about distribution. When my interlocutors compared (and contrasted) cash transfers with land, it surprised me because actual land redistribution programs have never served the number of people cash transfers have, nor have they offered the type of distributional share that people have hoped for. But still, there was something about land that appeared to offer something more palpable than cash transfers ever could. I thus want to pause and spend some time considering the relationship between land, cash transfers, and redistribution because there is clearly something important going on here.

My interview with a pensioner from Botshabelo illustrates this point.⁴ On a cool morning in 2019, in the middle of the Free State, my partner Leopold and I were sipping tea with Kgotso, one of the leaders of the Botshabelo Unemployed Movement, cheekily called BUM for short. Sitting at a large table in a small office made from freight pallets, we watched Sihle, a seventy-one-year-old pensioner, pull jars from BUM’s bookshelf, pour seeds into a series of tattered envelopes, and replace them again. As Sihle made use of BUM’s seed bank, I noted that this type of borrowing refused the rules of capitalist credit, appealing to social relations beyond debt. Sihle’s “loan” would only be paid back if his garden flourished and if he

remembered to return seed after the harvest. Otherwise, it would be forgiven; in fact, there was nothing to forgive because it was never recorded in the first place. Sihle assured Kgotso that he would replenish the seed, but Kgotso declined with a pun: “We are BUMs. We don’t repay our debts.”

This interaction was an obvious counterpoint to my visit. Kgotso explained to Sihle that I was in Botshabelo to learn about debt and social grants. Sihle’s interest was piqued, and he sat down for a coffee and a chat. Besides the seed, I asked Sihle if he had other sorts of loans.

Fluent in a half-dozen languages, Sihle spoke Afrikaans and Leopold translated for me. He shared that he recently borrowed money when his sister died to pay for her funeral. But his loan repayments made it difficult to cover his monthly expenses. He quickly rattled off the things he needed to buy:

Nothing is alright. My food? Because of the drought, I need SASSA. I can’t grow. I need to buy *mealie meal* [corn meal] and *vleis* [meat]. There’s no fruit, too expensive. I buy oil, I buy sugar. I spend R700 on groceries. I have lay buys for clothes for my grandchildren. I don’t buy clothes for myself. I still wear the clothes that the *oubaas* [old boss] that my sister worked for gave her. So, they’re all the *oubaas*’s old clothing. They look good on me don’t you think? A hundred [rand] electricity means nothing. It’s finished before the month’s end. Oooohhh, and transport. I carry that on my shoulders. I am deaf in the eyes. I went to the hospital. I got a date for the operation. I was totally deaf in both eyes. I was blind. Now they fixed the one eye. And now I must go later for the other eye. All this travel to the hospital is on my shoulders. I spend R400 (\$22) plus on transport. I have a funeral burial plan, which comes off the grant every month automatically. And I have another one from the Christian funeral parlor, which I pay cash each month. *I am the voorloper [the ox at the front of the wagon] pulling all these things.*

When Sihle described himself as an ox, it was the first time he referred to agrarian lifeways in our conversation that morning, but it would not be the last. As many scholars have pointed out, cattle hold an important place in Southern Africa (Ferguson 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1990). Anthropologists have used cattle to explore notions of value beyond capitalism and to elaborate the ways kinship relationships are organized. As prestige commodities and forms of durable wealth, cattle were purchased by migrant workers to build their homesteads, pay for their marriages, and serve as a pension plan in old age (Murray 1981; Ferguson 1985). But oxen

are far more metaphorically contradictory. They are prestige commodities and forms of durable wealth, to be sure, but they are also beasts of burden, yoked, castrated, and dehumanized. When Sihle described himself as an ox, he was characterizing himself as a working animal, who must toil for his family to pay their expenses and sweat for his creditors to pay his debts.

As Sihle itemized his budget, he listed many things that the state claims to provide but doesn't, or doesn't entirely, and that he must "pull" himself. He explained how he spends his grant topping up these essentials. Although his grandchildren get a child support grant, it does not cover their clothes, and he must purchase these on layaway. Although he qualifies for free basic services, the electricity does not last through the month, and he must buy more. Although the state provides free health care, he must pay for transportation to the hospital and medical supplies afterward. He pays for two different burial policies, so his children do not go into debt when he dies, and he repays the money he borrowed for his sister's funeral. With inadequate social support, he pulls a heavy load indeed.

I asked Sihle, "Has life always been so expensive?"

Kgotso, knowing Sihle well, pretended to choke on his tea. I took this to mean, yes, there were times when life was more costly indeed.

Sihle was born in a township outside of Cape Town, where his father was a teacher and Pan-African Congress (PAC) leader alongside Robert Sobukwe. As a result of his father's activism, his family was constantly on the run from the police. Sihle said, "My father got into lots of trouble, and we were chased everywhere. We went from place to place on the run. We were *vlugtelingen* [refugees or scatterlings]." The security police forced Sihle's family to flee from Cape Town to Bloemfontein and across the border to Eswatini (previously Lesotho). "The whites chased my father out of the country. We had to flee at night and jump the fence because we could not go through at the border. It was very hard. Sometimes we were without food, and we were hungry. It was very hard. We trekked hard. We trekked on hardness." The perils of hunger and flight had brutal consequences for Sihle's family. Of fourteen children, only he and his sister survived because their aunt took them in and brought them up in Zastron.

Though he was the son of a teacher, Sihle had little formal schooling because his father "no longer had the strength" to give him an education. Sihle got a political education through his participation in the anti-apartheid struggle. He got a job "working in the yard" for the South African Police but did not stay there long. He explained, "I was a student of Steve Biko. I'm my father's son. I'm the next generation of Pan-Africanism,

Black Consciousness. And me, working for the police? No. I couldn't." Sihle moved to Johannesburg and worked for a construction company as a carpenter for over three decades instead.

After listening to Sihle, I felt sheepish asking if he thought a bigger, more substantial cash transfer might help. Sihle retorted, "Cash has no value. It's meaningless. It's in the pocket and out of the pocket. I do the garden for my extra needs. As someone who is plowing, my hope is to have one hectare of land and water to go with it. Land and water redistribution is the answer—not SASSA. I have my own bank in the land. I have my own bank in the ground. The earth is my bank. The only bank you need is the land."

Sihle described how cash has little value because it is fungible and transferable. It is impossible to save because, as soon as it comes into his possession, he must spend it. He cannot store it, save it, invest it, or grow it for the future. In contrast, Sihle proposed that land and water offer a more secure store of value. He described a form of life where land, rather than cash, can support life from cradle to grave. His answer evoked a common understanding of the interdependency of people and land: When you are born, your umbilical cord is buried in the land; as you grow up, your survival depends on its cultivation; and when you die, your bones are returned to the land. For Sihle, land is a set of social relationships—rather than a commodified and transactional cash sum—that offer a moral economy of dignity and the ability to flourish, as many anticolonial leaders (see, e.g., Plaatje 1916; Kenyatta [1938] 2015; Nyerere [1963] 1987) and scholars (Nkosi 2023; Berry 1992; Peters 2004) have described.

Sihle's desire for land was not just about far-fetched freedom dreams but was attached to memories of a form of life that he laments having lost—or never really had—given his family's involvement in political struggle. Sihle described how he was dispossessed of the possibility of living an agrarian life, harassed by the security police, chased out of the country, and deprived of rights of ownership and citizenship. When Sihle describes wanting land and water, he is yearning for fragments of a life that was denied to him. Cash grants, as technocratic and economic objects, cannot offer the forms of belonging, relations, and practices that he most wants. In many ways, this interview with Sihle resonates with a much earlier set of arguments made by James Ferguson in his masterful article on "The Bovine Mystique" (1985). He demonstrated how, amid Southern African migrant labor regimes, cattle and cash were incommensurable and could not easily be converted or exchanged. He argued that cattle have been articulated to dense

gendered and generational practices and cannot simply be reduced to a monetary value. The agrarian form of life that Sihle desires is tied to these sociocultural practices around masculinity, gerontocracy, autonomy, belonging, freedom, and futurity. This “rightful share” he seeks is incommensurable with a simple cash transfer. My time with Sihle vividly underscored how the politics of a “rightful share” cannot simply be reduced to technical procedures to deliver regular, reliable monthly incomes and wealth accumulation. Rather, the types of redistribution Sihle hoped for was not commodified, but relational, and tied to a very different sort of decolonial and reparative vision of the future.

Apartheid’s Bad Debts

Sihle was not the only one to compare cash transfers with land. In 2021, Patricia Matolengwe, the seventy-year-old leader of the South African Homeless People’s Federation and winner of the Order of the Baobab (the Presidential Medal of Honor), came over to our house for lunch. Leopold and Patricia had been friends for twenty-five years, but this was the first time we had been able to see each other in person since COVID began. When she asked how the book was going, I muttered something vague about needing an ending and trying to consider how the social grant program could be made more useful to people.

Patricia was excited by my question. She said, “Erin, we should get payback. If you remember how much it was that was taken from the people, there must be that payback. This money [i.e., the grant] is not enough.” Patricia contrasted cash transfers with what she called payback, which sounded quite like reparations to me. She elaborated:

The people, four hundred years ago, they plant by themselves. They plant food. They plant everything. They were having huge pieces of land to make their living. There was no problem for them at all. There was no such poverty. They were having their own livestock. Everything was easy. The problem comes during the apartheid system. [Leopold interjected: “And the Dutch and British before that.”] Yes, and the Dutch and British before that. They take the land from the people. They divide and rule. They push people away from the cities. People were used to having freedom. When the British came to South Africa, it’s where the problem lives. They started to persuade people, working with chiefs to take over the power of

the people, bribing them for that divide and rule, and making them fight. The most power they took from the people was the land. That one alone is the one that makes things so difficult as it is today.

Patricia seamlessly moved from cash transfers to a history of stolen land. She made it clear that people deserve reparation for the dispossession of land but also the dispossession of previous forms of life that have been foreclosed to them. She described how the British used policies of divide and rule to alter earlier social relations. When she explained how chiefs and headmen became vulnerable to moral corruption and bribery, she was coding cash and commodification as something destructive and divisive. In contrast, when she explained how the power of people is connected to the land, she was coding the earth as a source of creativity and stability. Her demand was not for land as private property but land as a source of collective decommodified relationships of belonging. Counterposing cash and land, Patricia was adamant that payback cannot come in the form of a simple cash payment. Much like with Sihle, she pushed back against the ways cash transfers have been reduced to a small technocratic distribution for poverty alleviation. Patricia put it like this:

There's no future with grants. For me, I'm not about the coin, I am for this land. Land is the most important [thing] which needs to be paid back to our people. There is a lot that we can do with land. Right now, we are stuck. We do have plans, but when it comes to being able to explore what you are planning, you are stuck. There is no land to explore, no land to build. And now they started to close our mind-set. When you start talking about the land, they want us to talk about a house or a structure or a grant, which is something, but it's not the one we want. We want land. . . . Those small monies of grants, they are giving as if it's going to be enough, and we are going to shut up. It's not. We are talking about the land, so that we can explore what we are thinking.

As a contemporary of Sihle, Patricia similarly laments transformations in the regional political economy. She also mourns the loss of land, both as land itself but also because it was the condition of possibility for invention and exploration. It was a material base from which people could imagine how they want to live and attempt to make their visions into reality. She accuses the government of harnessing and channeling more diverse and expansive popular visions into narrow development projects. Instead of land, the government offers a house or a grant. This turns people into passive

beneficiaries whose “mind-sets” are closed to more creative possibilities and cultural practices. Without land, Patricia feels people are stuck and are limited in the ways that they can produce knowledge and pursue freedom. With it, Patricia feels people would have the freedom to “explore what they are thinking,” to experiment, to live differently—and, importantly, to fail knowing they still have land as a safety net and support structure.

I asked Patricia how she was working to reclaim land. I wrongly assumed she would answer my question by describing her work with the South African Homeless People’s Federation (SAHPF). For thirty years, she has led a national social movement of women fighting to secure land, tenure, and houses across the country. Under her leadership, the SAHPF built the first, and most famous, self-help housing project in Victoria Mxenge, Philippi. And yet, she was not interested in talking about her work in Philippi, which she associated with civil society compromises and international donor regimes. She wanted to tell me about how she personally demanded the return of the land her grandfather had cultivated and on which he was buried. She said:

I was grown up at the farms next to Barkly East, which is called Wasbank next to Indwe [in the Eastern Cape]. When I was home, I asked this man . . . well, he’s not even a man, but a child to me. He was born while I was fourteen or fifteen. My grandfather worked for his father. We grew up together. I found that he is owning all the farms that were surrounding his father’s farm. His father was already owning many people’s land, but now, he owns more. I asked my family, how come this child is owning so much? I pointed out that this farm was owned by so and so . . . and that other farm was owned by so and so. . . . He said, “No, they sold it to him. No, they gave it to him.”

She paused before continuing:

I went back to him and said, “You got all this land. Do you have a viable piece of farm that you can give to me or sell to me?” He said, “There is nothing. I cannot promise anything.” He owns that whole area from Barkly East to Rousseau. He told himself he is going to take it for himself. I was asking one of his father’s portions, which was looked after by my grandfather. At that one, my grandfather planted an orchard, and there were such nice fruits . . . and my grandfather’s grave is still there. Every year, we always ask him permission to visit that grave. I was thinking if he could give it to me, we would have access to those graves from my mother’s family.

Most of the graves are there. Instead, he said, “There’s a guy looking after those portions of land who’s from Switzerland. I must make an appointment beforehand to call that guy to open the gate for us.” The Swiss guy is his friend. I think maybe he is selling those portions to them, so he can earn more than what he can get from me.

Refusing to have her desires channeled into “acceptable” development programs, Patricia effectively sought individualized reparations under her own steam. Patricia knew exactly what land belonged to her family; she knew who owned it now; and she asked for its return either as a gift or a sale. Patricia implicitly questioned whether a foreigner should be able to purchase that land merely because he has the cash to do so, or whether her grandfather’s labor and bones should *count* for something too. She counterposed her grandfather’s bones being buried deep under the earth with the shallow claims of Swiss ownership. This sale papered over the theft of her family’s land and labor—a theft that continues to be codified and condoned within the democratic constitution and private property rights. Using the discourse of payback—or reparations—Patricia attempted to contest the basis of this sale and assert herself as the rightful heir to this piece of land.

Defaulting on Freedom

Conversations like these were exciting because people were using discourses of land to elaborate their dreams of another world. But actual land reform programs and actual reparations programs have been as complex and fraught as cash transfer programs. I was struck by the fact that my interlocutors who were talking about land and/as reparations knew that these “official” programs had been deeply problematic and unsatisfying. On one hand, the “official” program of reparations emerged through the TRC and was whittled down to a small, one-time cash transfer for victims of gross human rights abuses. On the other hand, “official” programs of land reform have focused on rural areas and the creation of a small Black commercial farming class. Thus, people were not making these claims because there was some perfect program that they hoped to access but because discourses about land and reparations can wrest distribution from overly technical considerations and resituate them within moral and political life.

South Africa's only "official" reparations program began shortly after the transition in 1996. Parliament inaugurated the TRC with the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act and mandated it to "uncover the truth" about gross human rights violations committed during the apartheid era. Led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC consisted of three committees: the Human Rights Violations Committee, the Amnesty Committee, and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee. Under the remit of the first committee, twelve commissioners and hundreds of statement-takers traveled around the country, meeting with people to gather evidence about gross human rights abuses, including detainment, torture, and murder by an illegal regime. Under the remit of the second committee, perpetrators of abuse were also invited to give evidence of the violence they committed, and if they told the truth and their crimes were deemed to be politically motivated, they could be granted amnesty from future prosecution. Throughout these two processes, members of the third committee identified 22,000 people as victims of gross human rights violations and recommended that they receive reparations in the form R17,000–R23,000 per year for six years in reparations. But the TRC only had the power to make recommendations, and the government reduced their proposal to one-time payments of R30,000 to 16,837 people (Simcock 2011).

While TRC remains the only process through which reparations have been paid, the outcome was deeply unsatisfying to all involved. When I interviewed Mary Burton, a prominent Black Sash member and TRC commissioner, she asked me: "The TRC identified only 16,837 people who were victims of apartheid—only 16,837 victims of apartheid? How could that possibly be true?" Such a project was compromised from the start because the TRC legislation set strict parameters on the types of cases they would consider—that is, gross human rights violations committed between 1960 and 1994. As such, the TRC could only ever address the spectacular elements of apartheid violence and not the more everyday abuses. It had no ability to recognize the pedestrian structures of control over Black South African life from birth to death: the dispossession of land and expropriation of labor; the denial of rights, citizenship, and self-determination; the planned inadequacy of health care, education, and social services; and the extensive policing and surveillance by a violent and unrepresentative government. Mahmood Mamdani (2010) wrote that the tendency of the TRC to focus only on victims and perpetrators of apartheid ignored all of those who were affected by apartheid but did not necessarily suffer gross human

rights violations, and it simultaneously ignored all those who benefited from apartheid but did not necessarily commit gross human rights violations. As such, it discounted the everyday profits and harms differentially allocated by race.

Despite such limitations, the TRC commissioners were a broad church and held different political and ideological positions (Fullard and Rousseau 2008). The six-volume report is not univocal and contains more radical demands that stretch far beyond individual reparations to named victims. The *Report of the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee* (TRC 2003) explicitly states that reconciliation can only be achieved after economic justice is attained: “This exposure and exploration of past experiences—this reconciliation—needed to be accompanied by reparation and rehabilitation-related services and the meeting of financial and other needs. Without this important component, the work of the Commission remains essentially unbalanced” (chap. 1, para. 22). The commissioners identified different types of reparations that were urgently required. Their plan included individual payments but also the delivery of a full range of services to all affected communities and the total transformation of all state institutions built on racist foundations. Likewise, nearly half of the report was devoted to how to raise money for substantial reparative initiatives. The authors identified some of the banks and industries that profited from apartheid and recommended the state put pressure on them to pay back their odious profits either voluntarily or by court order. They also proposed a one-time individual wealth tax on beneficiaries of apartheid. While the TRC did not have the power to do any of these things, it offered a possible framework for future reparations processes.

In its aftermath, people who identified as victims of gross human rights violations organized as the Khulumani Victims Support Group. Khulumani members met regularly to provide support for one another and to continue the work of the TRC by seeking reparations from twenty international corporations that profited from apartheid. Khulumani filed a case in the United States under the Alien Tort Claims Act (ATCA), which enables foreign nationals who have been victims of human rights abuses to bring civil actions against corporations. Initially, their claim was levied against banks, car companies, and oil companies for a range of violations, including “arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, forced exile, arbitrary denationalization, and the extrajudicial killing of family members” (Simcock 2011). However, successful ATCA litigation hinges on proving that the defendants knew the apartheid government was engaging in universally abhorrent ac-

tivities. Due to this high burden of proof, only five of the initial twenty corporations could be prosecuted: GM, Ford, IBM, Daimler, and Rheinmetall (Bond and Sharife 2009). Over two decades later, only GM agreed to pay a paltry \$1.5 million (R27 million) in shares as compensation. Khulumani fought this case alone as the Mbeki government refused to support them due to potential damage to relations with foreign capital. While Khulumani claimed reparations for historic debts, it had to do so within an international legal structure that favored the beneficiaries of apartheid. Even so, their considerable efforts help us think past the nationalist trap and situate South Africa within international circuits of financial accumulation.

One of the unintended consequences of the TRC was that the struggle for reparations has continued to be narrowly defined for victims of gross human rights violations—to the exclusion of everyone else. I interviewed Shirley Gunn, an anti-apartheid activist and member of uMkhonto we Sizwe who was involved in the TRC hearings and the Khulumani support group. For her, groups like Khulumani and, more recently, Galela have been vital to organizing and supporting the many people who suffered gross human rights violations themselves or lost family members to gross human rights violations but did not receive reparations through the TRC process. She explained how some people filed cases with the TRC at the time but were not approved or were approved but not paid; others were not able to apply before the list was officially closed; and still others are demanding more than the token sum they were awarded. In the intervening years, the money set aside in the President's Fund to pay reparations has grown to almost R2 billion (\$111 million). From 2022 and 2023, about 100 to 150 older South Africans slept outside the Constitutional Court for over a year to demand their share of the money in this fund, but to date, nothing more has been paid out. This money sits unused in a bank account because no single politician or organization has the moral authority to decide what to do with it. While vitally important, Khulumani's and Galela's efforts have come to be seen as carrying on the "legitimate" work of reparations, while other fights for equality and justice tend not to be interpolated under this banner—with the exception of land.

While the TRC is the only governmental framework to explicitly use the word *reparations* in South Africa, struggles for land restitution have been about repair as well. Although the South African government has introduced several land redistribution programs, as my conversations with Sihle and Patricia show, popular discourses about land are lively, complex, and cannot be contained by official government agendas.

As Hendricks and Ntsebeza (2000) demonstrate, despite land being central to popular dreams of freedom, actual processes of land reform have been marginalized in postapartheid South Africa. This is, perhaps, because the anti-apartheid struggle was largely urban and never explicitly fought around the land question as with countries like Zimbabwe and Mozambique. While political organizations adopted policy positions about land restitution, the actual fight for land itself remained peripheral to their activities. During negotiations preceding the transition to democracy, the ANC agreed to a “property clause” that confirmed all existing property rights. This meant that the colonial usurpation of property was effectively enshrined in the democratic constitution. Due to this clause, the transfer of land was henceforth dependent on the market, and the so-called “willing buyer, willing seller” principle. Any government-initiated land reform program required the state to buy land at market rates from the beneficiaries of colonial theft.

Under this guiding principle, the ANC introduced three land programs: land restitution, tenure reform, and land reform. First, land restitution sought to restore land to Black people (or their descendants) who had been dispossessed since the passage of the 1913 Natives Land Act. To be considered for restitution, individuals and communities had to lodge claims by 1998, which were then assessed by the Land Claims Court. While small household claims in urban areas were generally paid out in cash, large community claims in rural areas proved much more difficult to settle. Existing owners had to agree to sell land, and the government had to find the money to purchase it, often at inflated rates (Walker 2007). Second, the tenure reform program sought to ensure that people living and working on white-owned farms were not evicted from them and received some form of long-term security. This process created the conditions for mass eviction before the legislation took effect. The tenure reform program did the opposite of what it set out to do, enabling farmers to deny residence to people who had lived and worked the land for generations (Du Toit and Ally 2003). Third, the land reform program sought to build a class of Black commercial farmers in partnership with established agribusiness to secure large-scale industrial agriculture (Kepe and Hall 2020; Mtero et al. 2019). Government has opted to buy and retain control of land, allocating use rights to multinational companies and offering dividends to farmworkers. Most farmworkers have not benefited from this program and often live and work in similar conditions as before. Land reform has been predominantly focused on transforming racialized patterns of accumulation, en-

abling wealthy Black individuals to become partners in large-scale, industrial agribusiness.

As James Ferguson (2015) and Andries du Toit (2019) argue, such programs have proceeded without regard for the real decline of South Africa's agrarian structure. Given the realities of climate change, with megastorms and droughts threatening small farmers, there is little possibility for stable, successful subsistence agriculture anymore. Even the most remote areas of the country are connected to industrial agricultural systems and commercial retail chains, which foreclose the possibilities for local food sales by small-scale providers (Neves and Hakizimana 2015). Rural areas and the former homelands are extremely poor and fare significantly worse than urban areas according to a variety of social metrics (see Noble et al. 2014). Given this, a significant majority of poor people have moved to cities to live in urban peripheries, in townships and informal settlements, where they attempt to make a living from fragmented and diverse hustles. Their desires for land are not captured by rural subsistence production but by a decent, dignified foothold in the city, perhaps a house with a little land and cheap and reliable municipal services. Official government land reform programs have not come close to addressing the "land question" in ways that are appropriate to contemporary political economic transformations and the lived experience and desires of South Africans. For younger people especially, their lives are not confined to rural areas and their dreams for a good livelihood are not confined to farming.

Claims to land, in popular discourse, have always been much broader, more flexible, and more exciting than official programs could allow. When the Congress Movement sent out fifty thousand volunteers to collect demands for the Freedom Charter, one of the key things that emerged was that "the land shall belong to those who work it" (South African Congress Alliance 1955). As Andries du Toit (2018, 1088) has written, "The issue of whom the *land* should belong to is often tangled up with unresolved questions about whose *country* South Africa really is." Discussions about land are informed by moral arguments about the "need to heal the wounds of the past and the need to establish a legitimate postcolonial order." Like Sihle and Patricia, people use claims to land to push back against the current status quo and the largely unacknowledged and unrepaired inheritances of the past. As such, unlike official land reform programs, popular calls for land are about the materiality of land itself as well as the multivalent means by which people critique current conditions and imagine repair.⁵ In many

ways, popular discourses of land have always refused being rendered technical or channeled into official developmental programs. Gillian Hart (2002) has signaled the potential for discourses of land to be disarticulated from rural agrarian imaginaries and rearticulated with broader demands for a social wage, secure livelihoods, and redistributive justice. Indeed, I think, the affective force of discourses of land are serving as a potent way for cash transfer recipients to claim more reparative futures.

Reparations as World-Making Projects

I am certainly not suggesting that everyone I met counterposed grants with land or voiced nostalgia for an agrarian form of life, but many shared a critique of the ways that cash transfers had narrowed their life possibilities. I found that people's desires tended to split along generational lines, with younger adults demanding things like jobs and education instead. My interview with another member of the Botshabelo Unemployed Movement illustrates this well. A few months after COVID arrived in South Africa, the Black Sash asked me to do some follow-up research with their partner organizations to understand how people around the country were faring during the pandemic. When I called Kgmotso, he connected me with Tuma, a thirty-year-old organizer who had taken me on a walking tour of payday lenders during my previous visit. Back in 2019, Tuma had worked as a gardener in Botshabelo, and his wife ran a hair salon from their home. He had just gotten a bursary to return to university to complete his degree. He hoped that would lead to a good, formal job with a salary and benefits sufficient to move his wife and three children out of Botshabelo.

When we spoke, I asked Tuma how lockdown had changed things for him and his family. He replied, "Before lockdown, life was okay. I was looking forward to this year and there was a promise of getting a bursary and going back to school and the odd jobs to keep me going. Now this lockdown has affected the economy and made life difficult for the unemployed who depend on casual jobs. Take me, I'm using me as an example, I used to help people in Botshabelo clean their yards. Most people are at home now and can do their own gardens, and others are unemployed and can't afford to pay. And my wife, she can't work . . . people were not allowed to come to the house to her salon."

He explained that at the beginning of the pandemic, his whole family was surviving on his children's grant money. However, the cash Tuma's

children received could not keep up with social and economic changes wrought by the pandemic. “The only food we can buy from the children’s grants is mealie meal, cake flour, and basic staple food. The country changed so much and so fast. My older children’s schools closed down and the school feeding scheme. They ate two meals a day at school that they now eat at home. The food prices became very high. . . . We cannot afford what we used to afford. The shop owners took advantage of us. I don’t know if they are capitalist or what?”

After three months, Tuma qualified for the COVID SRD grant, but it did little to make up the shortfalls. He referred to this grant as his “electricity money” because the entire amount went to cover electricity and nothing more. I asked Tuma what he thought of this new grant program, and he said: “Somewhere somehow it helped me a little bit because I can buy electricity for the household . . . but it is not enough. We don’t just need electricity money. We need bursaries, training, and jobs.”

Unlike older generations that focused on land, Tuma demanded “bursaries, training, and jobs.” It struck me that, like Sihle and Patricia, his desires were also attached to memories of a form of life that he laments having lost, or rather never really had. Whereas Sihle and Patricia yearned for the agrarian lifeways of their parents, Tuma yearned for the industrial lifeways of his. While exploitative, apartheid’s migrant labor regime provided a possibility for young men to gain dignity and respect by providing for their families. As Franco Barchiesi (2011) has argued, visions of democracy were predicated on the idea of work citizenship, where skilled employment would offer Black people a means of achieving the benefits of freedom. Despite the centrality of work to imaginaries of freedom, the postapartheid period did not bring about broader industrialization or work-based inclusion. Tuma’s desire for a decent, skilled job was about not only earning a wage but being able to meet sociocultural expectations around masculinity, maturity, and independence. I don’t think he was under any delusions that work would be free of exploitation, but a decent, dignified job still represented the possibility of a better life than he could afford on the grant he currently received (see Dawson and Fouksman 2020).

In contrast to his dreams of employment, Tuma enumerated the long-standing inadequacies of grants in helping him and his family achieve economic stability. He stated that grants are kept very low, below the cost of inflation and rising food prices. Retailers used the pandemic to make even more profit from the things people needed to survive. The government did not raise taxes on pandemic profiteers, severely limiting the amount of

revenue that could fund social programs. For Tuma, life on a grant means that he will remain on the very bottom of global capitalist hierarchies, unable to weather disasters and offer his family some security. Instead, he understands education and employment as a pathway out of his current precarity. As such, Tuma's demands are not so different from Patricia's and Sihle's after all. He too is articulating a desire for a more substantial basis on which he can build a life and ensure he can pass something on to his children for the future.

Before I hung up the phone, I asked Tuma if he had any questions for me. He put me on the spot: "Look at us here in Botshabelo. We are Black. We were moved here because of apartheid. We have no work here. We have no houses here. No education. No electricity. And now? Lockdown. The police, we have the police here . . . and they scare our children. What are they doing here? And now the government hands us this R350. This can't help us with these problems. R350 can't fix this. What is the Black Sash doing to help us?"

Tuma recounted the brutalization and dispossession of Black people in Botshabelo, as well as the surveillance and policing that continued under COVID-19. He described how his family currently experienced state intervention as the combination of minimal grants and maximum police—a carrot and a stick—which worked together to discipline the poor during the pandemic. The grant ensured that poor people had barely enough to avoid starvation, while the police ensured that they were incarcerated in their homes far away from wealthier suburbs. Tuma described how state violence was wielded against poor Black people via social welfare in combination with authoritarian police power. When the parsimonious cash grants failed to keep people quiet and they started to protest, the state relied on the police to ensure discipline under the threat of violence. Nothing less than structural transformation could overcome these long-standing institutions of state brutality.

My conversation with Tuma resonated with Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò's (2022) conception of reparations as "world-making" or as "a construction project." Táíwò argues that we urgently need new conceptions of reparations that are suited to current conditions of neocolonialism, police violence, mass incarceration, xenophobia, predatory finance, and climate crises. He elaborates how such contemporary problems arise from the violence of capitalism, slavery, and colonialism, and the ways that such violence continues to be codified in the very economic markets, governance frameworks, and political institutions that promise freedom. Táíwò argues that

global racial capitalism was a world-making project that transformed the conditions of life for the last five hundred years and led to an extremely unequal system of distribution. Reparations, then, must be as big and as significant a world-making project to end our current system of accumulation that advantages some people and places over others. Simply using the same social, political, and economic mechanisms and institutions cannot unmake the world; rather, these mechanisms and institutions must themselves be remade. Reparations should, therefore, be conceived as a series of “construction projects” to produce new structures, institutions, cultures, norms, and relationships.

Táíwò builds his theory of reparations as a construction project on the ideas and practices of twentieth-century African intellectuals and revolutionaries. Anticolonial African leaders did not aspire simply to transition from colonies into a new, but also unequal, system of nation-states (Getachew 2019; Wilder 2015). As Adom Getachew argues, Black leaders on both sides of the Atlantic were engaged in diverse political projects of decolonization that did not necessarily suit this Westphalian narrative. While the international system of states is ostensibly predicated on equality, African nations were born into a racialized world order that used international political and economic institutions to continually secure the conditions of domination. African leaders understood the challenges they faced and proposed new international legal structures to protect themselves from interference by foreign powers. They also proposed transnational, regional federations to provide economic networks of solidarity rather than exploitation. In addition, they proposed an international economic order of norms, treaties, and laws that would redistribute burdens and obligations on states to change the distribution of global wealth. This was not a program of aid or charity, where formerly colonized countries would be begging for handouts. Nor was it a program of borrowing and lending under conditions that still benefited previous colonial powers. Rather, their demands were about remaking existing social, economic, and political institutions (Táíwò 2022).

While this is certainly generative, David Scott (2004) warns that mid-twentieth-century revolutionaries lived in a different “problem space” or historical conjuncture than we do, and it is important to mark these differences in time instead of trying to draw a continuous line between them. Given the substantial tragedies of the postrevolutionary era, he argues that it is no longer possible to narrate anticolonial struggles as a form of revolutionary overcoming, where good triumphs over evil, hardships are

significant but short-lived, and freedom is around the corner. Instead of internationalism, the nation-state had triumphed; instead of nondomination, neocolonialism had triumphed; instead of socialism, neoliberalism had triumphed. After revolution, former colonial powers and new global hegemonies have failed to redistribute ill-gotten wealth, investing in Third World “development” projects that are easily harnessed and channeled for their own benefit. At the same time, Third World elites have “captured” and benefited from such international investment, allowing poverty and inequality to grow far worse. We live in the aftermath of revolutionary hopes and dreams that have largely been foreclosed.

Even so, in more recent work, including a presentation at the University of Cape Town’s Center for African Studies (2025), Scott suggests that reparations discourses might offer a way of reckoning with our current conjuncture. While there have, of course, been reparations claims for centuries, he understands the present iteration of reparations demands to emerge from the humanitarian projects of the 1990s. Contemporary reparations discourses, then, are not just about yearning for an unfinished revolution; they draw upon the trauma and harms of the past to develop modes of repair in a time when revolutionary possibilities have passed. Younger generations inherit memories of past trauma from their relatives and can link them to their experiences of present harms. Bringing these together might potentially inspire new approaches to social justice and a more egalitarian politics of distribution (Scott 2013). Perhaps as Táíwò says, reparations must be a construction project, but as Scott might swerve, a construction project that is embedded within the complexities of our time.

All the grant recipients I’ve discussed here critique how cash transfers are technocratic, developmental projects that, in their current form, cannot remake the world in our present time, apt to our present conditions. While the South African government spends a large portion of its GDP on social welfare, people do not experience health care, education, and social grants as efficient or generous. Major national infrastructure—such as electricity, water, transportation, and roads—has not been maintained or expanded due to inadequate investment or corrupt contracts. At the same time, the government invested in tax concessions—that is, a form of welfare to the elite—effectively subsidizing accumulation of the 1 percent who hold two-thirds of South Africa’s wealth (World Bank 2018). Treasury contends that such tax cuts are necessary to attract investment and encourage job creation. And yet, according to the IMF, financial and nonfinancial firms doing business in South Africa rank in the top three globally for the

size of their profits (in Bond 2021). With such a tax policy, the only way to pay for social programs is by taking on additional international debt, often from countries that profited off apartheid. As South Africa's debt servicing costs rise, Treasury finds it increasingly difficult to adequately invest in social grants and basic services (chapter 6). With tax cuts firmly entrenched, the working classes pay off the debts that fund social expenditure and wealth stays where it is. South Africa's position within the global system of states and its inability to hold corporations accountable for the crimes of the past dramatically limit its ability to redistribute resources in a way that might start to be reparative and enable people to, in Patricia's words, "explore what they are thinking."

Patricia's contribution is not only about distributing a simple and technocratic share to everyone in the nation. Rather, she offers a conception of repair that is not only economic but articulates with older meanings, lifeworlds, and sociocultural practices as well. Thomas Cousins has defined repair as a form of work to build capacities from "mutual incompleteness, becoming with others, and a relational effort to absorb, without effacing, the wounding effects of colonial displacement, racialized exploitation and labor" (2023, 4). For him, the work of repair takes place amid a global capitalist order in our current time to capacitate and empower other modes of life. Drawing on the work of Algerian French artist Kader Attia, Cousins proposes that, rather than aspiring for a form of repair that makes the past invisible, our work of repairing should expose the scars—not only to ward off amnesia but to offer grounds on which we can rebuild relationships with one another.

Building People's Power

The question then becomes how we work for repair within what Antonio Gramsci might call the conditions of "passive revolution." The anti-apartheid struggle could not involve a complete remaking of the world, because the terms of struggle and the desires of its leaders were already educated and disciplined by modern forms of power. As discussed, in the late apartheid period, the National Party tried to hang on to power by enabling the creation of a Black elite. In the new South Africa, neoliberal restructuring and affirmative action programs continued to build the Black elite and middle class. A partially "deracialized" Black and white elite ended some older political institutions and made new ones in ways that

worked to maintain a very unequal system of racialized distribution for the working class and poor. While the ANC tries to suggest that they have the moral authority to deliver the benefits of liberation, the difficulties of life for most people viscerally undermine such claims. And much of what the government can provide is constrained by being an indebted country within a global hierarchy of sovereign debt. When people juxtapose cash transfers with reparations, they are offering an alternative vision about what type of society might be possible in the future.

When I asked Patricia about the practical ways people could work for repair, she responded,

First, people need to be organized in order to share the experience and start to talk about these things. People are being used for. . . . How can I put it? . . . People are so spoilt. Their mind-set is dead. They are living for bribes, for just getting for today, not thinking of tomorrow. But even though it will take time for people to be organized—correction, *reorganized*, we were organized before—we need to change our mind-set and think better for the future, starting with transforming these newly born children, who are the ones that will inherit this country, so that they can grow up better than the way it is now. In order to do that, we need those institutions to be established. There are institutions that need to be reestablished, so people aren't just working for themselves and being corrupted.

Patricia has had a lot of experience with organizing. After growing up in Indwe with her grandmother, she moved to Cape Town to live with her mother and finish her final year of secondary school. Patricia's mother was a domestic worker living in the servants' quarters at the back of her employer's house. Patricia did not have permission to be there and had to hide under the bed to prevent being detected by the madam. She also had to sneak in and out of the whites-only area without a *dompas* and was arrested while walking to her tutor's house to study for her high school exit exam. Her tutor rushed to the police station and negotiated a fine rather than deportation to the Transkei Bantustan. Now known to the police, Patricia and her mother moved out of the whites-only suburb and built a shack in an informal settlement in the Cape Flats. Within a few months, their shack was torn down and they were forcibly removed to Site B in Khayelitsha.

Thrown into political resistance, Patricia joined key organizations fighting apartheid, including the United Democratic Front (UDF), the United Women's Congress Organization (UWCO), and the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). She quickly rose to leadership positions and explained:

"I was a leader, not an intellectual. I was a street committee member. I was an ANC member and a UWCO member. I was serving as treasurer on local ANC branches in Khayelitsha. I walked door to door, talked with people about what we were doing, took membership fees, and kept the books. I was very active in these movements." In 1992, the apartheid security police funded armed violence between the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in Natal in an attempt to derail the transition to democracy. Patricia helped organize a "Blood, Chain and Freedom Charter Action" at Parliament to maintain the political momentum toward the transition. "We broke through the picket on the gardens side of Parliament. What you did depended on how fast you were. We pinned the Freedom Charter to the doors of Parliament, threw blood-red paint on the walls, and chained ourselves to the pillars of Parliament. We each had our own chain, lock, and swallowed the key when we were chained. You got the key back after you went to the toilet."

When Patricia says we need to be "organized—correction, *reorganized*," she is harkening back to this work of the liberation struggle, when she participated in the slow, steady work of building collective power and social solidarity. She feels that most people today are alienated from themselves and each other and thus prone to petty corruption. She argues that people must change their "mind-sets" to take on the structural injustices faced in everyday life. I think her understanding of the word *mind-set* is akin to Gramsci's ([1929–1935] 2011) notion of "common sense." Gramsci describes how popular consciousness is the contradictory and fragmented terrain on which people make sense of the world. But people can engage with, modify, and transform their consciousness, working from their everyday experiences to build more coherent and radical philosophical positions. Using her own experiences, she argues that the common sense of South Africans is not fixed but constantly transforming and imbued with traumas from the past that are connected to the present conditions of life. Antivanguardist through and through, Patricia is clear that people themselves, rather than professional organizations or local leaders, already have the resources to change their mind-sets and to transform South African society.

For Patricia, changing South Africa seems to be about the total transformation of social, political, and economic life: the remaking of the world. She describes how the social formation, which has been inherited from late apartheid and continues to prioritize elite accumulation, cannot be used to bring about a more egalitarian nation. And she describes how people can



7.2. Black Sash protest at St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town, 2017. Source: Erin Torkelson for the Black Sash.

work together to find points of leverage to challenge corrupt institutions and transform current political, social, and economic realities. As Patricia says, the best place to begin is with young people. She wants to pass down her experiences to the next generation and educate their “mind-sets” to create a better future. She sees herself as part of a tradition of struggle that succeeded in overthrowing a white supremacist regime but failed to bring about economic transformation for the majority. She wants to pass on this tradition of collective organizing and social solidarity for the youth to inherit and take forward to build a better world. In this way, she is outlining a practical program of action for the present, not simply drawing on a romantic revolutionary overcoming.

Revolutionary Dreaming

Whenever I give presentations on this work, I am asked: “Why aren’t people taking to the streets over the failures of the social grant system?”⁶ Those who ask this question explain that South Africans are not afraid to protest and cite frequent “service delivery” rebellions over things like hous-

ing, electricity, and water. They wonder whether I think that people see grants as a gift, rather than a right, and therefore do not deign to make demands. Such questions seem to suggest that there is only one legible form of South African protest—that is, burning tires and *toyitoying* through the streets—and if that is not happening, then no one is engaging in contentious politics.

There have, of course, been some demonstrations about cash transfers that erupt spontaneously at local paypoints or are organized by civil society organizations (see chapter 6). For me, however, there was something particularly exciting about the modes of thinking and being that emerged beyond these types of action. When I looked back at my fieldnotes, I found that, although people may not have been protesting as much or as visibly as expected, they *were* talking to one another and developing a common vocabulary around the inequities of grant payment. Importantly, they were also caring for one another in ways that are not often recognized as political but cultivate forms of social solidarity and mutual aid. Almost every day, I heard people offering assistance with livelihood struggles, pushing back against technocratic cash transfers, and demanding more substantial forms of repair. People used the debts articulated to cash transfers as a resource to organize and build social solidarity. At times, these debts became an opportunity for my interlocutors to make moral claims about what is still owed to them and the unfinished business of revolution.

I wrote this chapter to better understand how recipients were attempting to push back against the economism of grants and articulate their desires in reparative terms. Reparations are about the repayment of debts—not (only) economic debts, but moral, political, and sociocultural debts as well. The people I spoke to used discourses of land and reparations to connect racialized harms of the past to development interventions of the present and express a desire for a more equitable world. What I've written here is not meant to be representative, nor is it an attempt to predict the future or offer a diagnosis of what should happen next. Instead, it is an attempt to think with all the everyday intellectuals I encountered throughout this project and valorize their revolutionary dreams.

GovChat, Capprec told its shareholders: “The relationship with GovChat presents a number of potential commercial opportunities, which are consistent with the strategic objectives of Capital Appreciation” (in Rose 2021). And its shareholders seem to have agreed because, on the very same day, Capprec’s stock price shot up by 7.6 percent. As part of this deal, GovChat put its intellectual property up as collateral, including “software rights, trademark rights, and technology source codes.” Essentially, if GovChat could not repay its loan, Capprec was in a position to inherit all its data.

- 15 Amendment to the directions issued in terms of regulation 4(5) of the regulations made under section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 Of 2002): Measures To Prevent And Combat The Spread Of Covid-19 Reg3(k) (viii)(cc)(iv,v), May 9, 2020.
- 16 The means test was later raised to the food poverty line.
- 17 This was formed by several political parties in 2024, when the ANC failed to win an absolute majority in the national elections.
- 18 See Case and Deaton (2020) on “deaths of despair.”
- 19 Thanks to Andries du Toit for this point.

Chapter Seven. Transferred Justice

- 1 In this chapter, I am dealing only with exciting, progressive analyses on UBI. As has been well documented, there are very conservative proponents of UBI as well, including Friedman (1968) and Murray (1981).
- 2 UBI advocates argue that it could lead to structural change through an aggressive approach to taxation and redistribution.
- 3 Some people who have been excluded from grants might say these things, and those who have been involved with civil society campaigns might too. However, it is a little surprising that more people are not more positive about a universal program.
- 4 Botshabelo is a Black settlement of about a million people established (seemingly) in the middle of nowhere, totally delinked from urban opportunity, yet large enough to be a thriving urban area itself. Driving from Bloemfontein, the nearest city, one passes fifty kilometers of farmland before ever reaching Botshabelo. Formerly part of the QwaQwa Bantustan, Botshabelo was built far enough from Bloemfontein to force all Black people who were not employed in the local economy to live in a rural area and close enough to mobilize laborers for farmwork and minework when required. Botshabelo had a small boom in the late 1970s, when it was (briefly) designated as an industrial decentralization area (Cobbett and Nakedi 1987). Fifty

factories opened within five years—by companies from Taiwan, Israel, and South Africa—and closed within fifteen. Nearly all major industry moved across the border to Lesotho or out of Southern Africa entirely.

- 5 This disjuncture between popular and policy approaches to land became quite clear in the lead-up to the 2019 election. At the time, Julius Malema, the former president of the ANC Youth League who split off to form the Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) party, called for the government to speed up land reform through expropriation without compensation. Malema, thus, argued how the repudiation of nonmarket solutions to the transfer of land effectively defers any concrete program of reparation. To defang the threat of the EFF in the elections, the ANC appeared to take expropriation without compensation on board, holding parliamentary hearings, commissioning expert testimony, and introducing legislation. However, this had little effect on existing land reform programs and silently disappeared from the agenda after the election.
- 6 The most recent time I was asked this question was in 2022 at a conference on UBI at the University of the Witwatersrand.