

The African National Congress (ANC) and the Impact of the Land Restoration Process in Democratic South Africa Since 1994: Socio-ecological Challenges to Poverty Alleviation?

Chitja Twala

*Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa
E-mail: twalacm@ufs.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT The year 2013 marks the centenary of the proclamation of the famous 1913 Land Act in South Africa. Therefore the present inequitable distribution of land as faced by the African National Congress (ANC) government in a post-apartheid South Africa can be traced back to the Natives Land Act of 1913, the Urban Areas Act of 1923, and the Group Areas Act of 1950. In the 1990s, after the unbanning of the liberation movements including the ANC, there were high expectations among both rural and urban people (especially those who were victims of land dispossession), that land would be speedily returned to them and that the advent of democracy would mean that opportunities to own and use land would be opened up across the country. After December 1998 which was the cut-off date for the lodgment of land claims, the ANC came up with a somewhat ambitious but unsuccessful plan of returning at least 30 percent of the land to the original inhabitants by 2014. Interestingly, the ANC government has since acknowledged that the above will be unrealisable by 2014. Therefore, this study interrogates the historical and ecological impact of the land claims under the ANC's rule in South Africa since 1998 and how this compromises the issue of poverty alleviation. The challenges of this venture will also be scrutinised in view of its impact on the livelihoods of poor South Africans. On the basis of the findings of this study, recommendations are made for handling the issue of land by the ANC's government in South Africa.