Gender and citizenship: learning from South Africa?

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Introduction
The dramatic political transformations that occurred throughout the world during the 1990s served to refocus international attention on theories of citizenship and democracy. The impacts of the collapse of state socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and of apartheid in South Africa have reverberated widely, revivifying interest in notions of citizenship and contributing to the re-evaluation of civil and political citizenship rights in other societies. The claiming of these rights in places like South Africa have helped remind theorists in more established democracies of their importance to citizenship (Lister, 1997). Notions of citizenship in South Africa are clearly located within the broader national transformation project that seeks to alter the social and economic inequalities of a long history of systemic and structured race discrimination. These effects have also been fundamentally structured by gender relations, as is evidenced by the impoverishment of the majority of South African women. Addressing the effects of gender inequalities is thus a necessary part of social transformation.

In this paper, I argue that there is an urgent need for a critical examination of the nature of citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa and, in particular, black[1] women's experiences of citizenship and the ways in which their formal citizenship is mediated by informal structures of power. The purpose is to argue that there are theoretical and political lessons that might be learned (for better or for worse), both within South Africa and beyond, from understanding the process of political transformation here and assessing its gendered impacts. In addressing this after only seven years of post-apartheid democracy, this perhaps raises more questions than answers, but in doing so the paper makes a case for developing further avenues for research.[2] The first question to ask, however, is why should South Africa be the focus of outside attention in the first place?

'An unusually intrusive interest…'
As Ifi Amadiume (2000) argues, the anti-apartheid struggle was a global movement, even though those who put their lives at risk were local South Africans (youths, women, the black working class and grassroots people). Consequently,

> [T]he world has maintained an unusually intrusive interest in the processes of
> democratisation in the new South Africa (Ifi Amadiume, 2000:272-273).

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[1] I use the term 'black' as inclusive of all women of colour, whilst being mindful of the sensitivities associated with such terminology.

[2] I am currently conducting 8 months' research in South Africa on the subject of gender and citizenship, part of a two-year project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It would be too premature to present any empirical findings at this stage. Although the discussion here is largely theoretical, I hope to raise some issues that are of general significance to social science research in and about South Africa.

As the epitome of unbridled institutionalised racism, South Africa has a uniquely appalling past, the consequences of which were critical to the negotiations that enabled the definition of a new democracy and notions of citizenship. The remarkable political transformation of the 1990s inevitably inspired interest beyond South Africa. This interest, especially when it is also critical of transformation, can be intensely irritating for some South Africans. (I experienced this at a recent international conference session on 'Finding democracy in a new South Africa'[3], where a South African in the audience questioned why scholars based in European and North American institutions were so interested in and critical of South African democracy.) It is perhaps understandable that resentment at external criticism is generated in a period when people in South Africa are working hard to build a sustainable democracy and a more equitable society against the backdrop of enormous economic constraints. Much of the resentment seems to stem from the tendency of western[4] academics to impose their own understandings of democracy and citizenship upon the South African context and to gauge the successes or failures of the political transition here from within these often-inappropriate frameworks[5]. While being acutely aware of these problems, I wish to argue that this 'unusually intrusive interest' in part stems from the fact that there is much to be learned internationally about gender and citizenship from the 'new' South Africa.

Issues of race, class, privilege and power, that were epitomised by the 'old' South Africa and are still prevalent in the 'new', are issues that continue to bedevil most established states and many democracies. The opportunity to learn from South Africa's unfolding transformation is clearly a major reason for external interest. Furthermore, curiosity is not confined to western theorists and policy-makers. For example, many African states with similar colonial histories and contemporary political, social and economic challenges have a particular fascination with developments in South Africa, especially the liberal political and economic dispensation for which South Africa has opted. It could also be said that the potential South Africa has to offer, especially in the arenas of gender and citizenship, lies in the fact that theorists and policy-makers here have not ignored the experiences of other post-independent countries. South African women in their diversity have enhanced their 'home-grown' political understandings and activism through the lessons learned from feminist/womanist politics elsewhere. Indeed, it could be argued that one of the strengths of South African gender activism has been its extraordinary openness to debates emanating from African feminism/womanism, western feminisms, feminisms from so-called third world countries and black feminisms in western countries. The lessons of the urgency of having a constitutional framework upon which to build full citizenship for women were learned by those South Africa women exiled in post-liberation Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Perhaps now is the time to consider what might be learned, both by international feminisms and theorists of citizenship, from attempts to address gender inequalities in South Africa through the process of political change.

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[3] The Association of American Geographers 96th Annual Meeting, 4-8 April 2000, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
[4] I use this term to refer to those Anglo and European countries that continue to dominate global knowledge production.
[5] Although, it is interesting to note that much of South Africa's constitutional dispensation is borrowed from 'western tradition/s' of government and governance (German and Canadian, for example).

Achieving structural transformation

One example of where lessons might be learned is the success that South African gender activists had in laying the foundations for structural transformation. It is axiomatic that in no post-independent state has *de jure* equality been translated into *de facto* equality for women. The South African context is of particular relevance since the process of democratic transition has the potential to create radically different relationships between the state and its citizens than those that have evolved in other post-independence/ post-revolutionary countries. The tendency of abstract theories of democracy to overlook gender dynamics could have been exacerbated in South Africa, where racial inequality is obviously paramount (Seidman, 1999) and where patriarchies are deeply entrenched across cultures. However, the move to build a deracialised state was accompanied by a constitutional framework that sought to overcome all inequalities. Therefore, admittedly only through a process of struggle, gender issues have been central in the democratic transition and in debates about the nature of citizenship. There is now a substantial literature on gender and citizenship in South Africa (for example, *Agenda*, 1999a; Albertyn, 1994b; Hendricks, 1996; Kadalie, 1995; Liebenberg, 1999), much of which focuses on the gender implications of the new Constitution and state restructuring. The story of the formation of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in 1992 and its fight to ensure that women's rights were written into the new Constitution is by now a familiar one. There is continued analysis within these literatures of structural changes with regard to gender equality, including the role of the Commission on Gender Equality, the role of women in Parliament and the implications of new legislation.

I do not wish to review these political developments here, but simply to point out that the structural framework created to protect gender equality, and the processes by which this was created, were not always necessarily inspired by European models or western feminisms. Although the WNC was established to undertake a fact-finding mission to ensure that women's rights were written into the Constitution, the women involved took a different approach. This was not simply a 'women's project', but an exercise in participatory democracy involving a long period of research by field workers across the nation. As Amadiume (2000) argues, the easy (and potentially exclusionary) option of conference-based theorising for an immediate, legally and theoretically constructed document was rejected. Members of the African National Congress did not regard Europe as a model of an 'egalitarian society', particularly in matters of gender equality. Women activists in South Africa were adamant that mere policy statements on gender issues would not eradicate negative attitudes to women overnight, but that it was important to create a correct framework as a foundation for future gender and racial equality. That framework could not come from western feminism which, according to Messud (*The Guardian* (London) December 16, 1992),

> *ANC members argue, has been about women blaming men rather than working with them; about trying to change the symptoms of women's oppression without examining the socio-economic inequalities at the root.*

Other women in the WNC saw its fact-finding mission as a process of education and consciousness-raising that would produce an inspirational document. Indeed, the

Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1994) that informed the Constitution has been hailed as one of the most liberal in the world. The question now is whether the fundamental structural achievements in the name of gender equality are merely token concessions, and only good for cultural performance at national and international levels. South Africa is not alone amongst post-liberation societies in having constitutional guarantees to gender equality. However, the success or otherwise of other structures, legislation and policies in all spheres of governance that have been created to ensure gender equality is paid more than lip-service is potentially informative.

The significance of gendered citizenship
In this paper, I wish to highlight the significance of moving beyond analysis of state structures and formal guarantees to gender equality and exploring the realities of citizenship for previously marginalised women. Despite the outpouring of feminist scholarship on structural changes in South Africa, the complexities of gender and citizenship for women still constitute a new and relatively under-researched area. Given the recency of democratic transformation, there is still a dearth of research that focuses on the *lived experiences* of women's citizenship, especially the majority of women still marginalised by the legacies of apartheid. There has been little analysis of the extent to which *de jure* rights are being transformed into *de facto* equality, or of the implications of citizenship for women beyond the jural realm (*Agenda*, 1999b). There has been relatively little research on changing gender relations and livelihoods at the level of households and communities. Ways in which women can access power and resources at the local level are still poorly understood (Baden *et al*, 1997). Although seven years of democracy constitutes too short a period for assessment of radical social changes, the continuing transformation of governance (especially at the local level) invites reflection on what has been gained. Foregrounding the interests and experiences of the most marginalised and historically disadvantaged women in South Africa (those who are poor, black and often living in rural or peri-urban areas) is a valuable gauge of progress. Interest in these issues also coincides with a profound questioning of the meanings of citizenship within western debates and international feminisms; efforts to construct radical and substantive democracy in South Africa will surely inform these wider debates.

Political and theoretical lessons in engendering citizenship
An explicitly gendered democratisation process has had a significant influence on the nature of democracy and citizenship being constructed in South Africa (Albertyn, 1995; Ballington, 1999a; 1999b; Gouws, 1996). It is my contention that theorising from the experiential base of South Africa might inform understandings of citizenship in three broad areas.

1. Spaces and meanings of citizenship
I am interested in how we conceptualise the material and metaphorical spaces of citizenship[6]. For example, liberal democratic theorists focus on the meaning of

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[6] These issues are also of personal interest given my ambiguous status as a British subject, with no recourse to a Bill of Rights, and a citizen of Europe, where citizenship rights are much more clearly defined in law. The Labour Government attempted to resolve some of these ambiguities by passing a Human Rights Act in 2000, arguably inspired by the solidifying of human rights in places like South Africa.

citizenship in terms of rights, entitlements and obligations. This rights-based notion of citizenship is challenged by those theorists who argue that citizenship is a matter of public standing in the political, social and economic spheres (Marshall, 1965; Walby, 1997). In this sense, citizenship is conceptualised as more than a set of political rights granted by the state. In South Africa, it has long been recognised that political rights are clearly not sufficient alone to transform deeply entrenched inequalities. Citizenship is not simply confined to the spaces of formal politics and the law, but encompasses the economic, social, and political relationships between social groups and structures of power that mediate the standing of individuals in the polity (Staeheli, 1994). The implications of this are, first, that it is necessary to look beyond the arenas of the state to identify the actions of citizens that affect their standing; second, that citizenship is an active concept that individuals can use to change their material circumstances and social standing. The ways in which ordinary people, in particular, black women are responding to restructuring in South Africa is therefore of profound significance, as is an examination of the importance of social and economic status to both citizenship and substantive equality (Mouffe, 1992). Of critical importance is an understanding of how different groups of women evaluate and respond to political change and the restructuring of citizenship, and grassroots responses to state restructuring and conceptualisations of citizenship. There are still questions to be answered about black women's responses to official discourses of gender equality, and the impacts of these on lived experiences. These questions are clearly underpinned by the notion of citizenship as a contested concept. Understanding how black women (and, indeed, other marginalised groups) comprehend and construct their citizenship, and what expectations they have of the new democracy, is thus of theoretical and practical interest both inside and outside South Africa.

a) Political spaces. Theories of gendered citizenship in the west, especially those based around the notions of participatory and substantive citizenship, might be informed by an understanding of the multiple spaces of black women's citizenship, political activism and the redefinition of their political identities. The South African context demonstrates that creating substantive citizenship depends both upon the transformation of power structures and civil society activism. Black women are beginning to enter into power structures in order to transform them, but the terrain of their political activism is still being debated in South Africa. However, as suggested, it is now recognised that citizenship is not confined to formal power structures and is constructed and exercised in a number of material and metaphorical spaces. Therefore, understanding where and how black women are mobilised (at national, regional or sectoral levels, in overtly political organisations, or in organisations such as churches and stokvels where they are politically passive) is of significance. Structural and local contexts facing individual women have obviously changed during the political transformation in South Africa, as have the ways in which different women respond to these and the implications of these responses for citizenship. At this juncture it might be expedient to explore how different women are repositioning themselves *vis-à-vis* the state, whether there is a move from political demands based on rights to demands for state support for providing through community organisation, and the implications of this. The ways in which black women are (re)defining their identity as citizens, which is likely not to be state-centred but including relationships defined by

local capital and in the community, could have broader theoretical implications for feminist theories of citizenship. As Gail Seidman (1999) argues, if 'women's interests' are defined, in part, by the spaces through which political participation is channeled, the democracy that is being constructed in South Africa may offer a new vision of gendered citizenship.

b) Socio-economic spaces. In considering the meanings of citizenship, it can be argued that the harsh economic reality in South Africa is the greatest single obstacle to equality. It can be thought of as a diminution of women's citizenship rights and can be considered undemocratic, with some groups unable to participate beyond the ballot box (Lister, 1990). It is widely accepted, in both political and theoretical circles, that unless structural economic and social problems are addressed, democracy will have little meaning to the majority of South Africans[7]. Unemployment, in particular, hits women hardest (Budlender, 1999). Although jobs were a priority of all political parties in the run-up to the 1999 election, there was little, if any, attention to the special circumstances and needs of women. Affirmative action policies indicate the willingness of the government to intervene to ensure equality, but these are not themselves sufficient. Women's participation in public institutions will not occur overnight. Political and civil rights have limited meaning for most women unless socio-economic rights are accorded centrality and interpreted in gendered terms (Liebenberg, 1999). The tendency of global economic processes to amplify inequalities and undermine the possibilities for economic redistribution also offers a potent challenge to those struggling for gender justice (Friedman, 1999). It is important, therefore, to understand the ways in which women's citizenship, in its diversity, is mediated by these local, national and global economic factors. The South African context demonstrates clearly the importance of second-generation rights (social and economic), which go beyond first generation rights (political and civil) (Gouws, 1999; Liebenberg, 1995, 1999). The exclusion of poor, black women from effective access to social services, economic resources and opportunities means that as yet South Africa has not achieved full citizenship for all (Liebenberg, 1999).

c) Local governance. What is apparent from the South African context is that effective governance of poverty and inequality, which is also clearly gendered and racialised, is dependent upon institutional structures that are capable of responding to the needs of the poor. Although it is relatively easy to redesign formal institutions, underlying societal institutions are much slower to change. Lisa Bornstein (2000:202-203) argues that the redesign of public sector governance structure has outpaced the ability of the relevant organisations to change:

> *Many local and provincial government agencies suffer severe human and financial capacity constraints and, in the absence of a thorough shift in commitment to human rights, the rule of law, gender equality and open electoral processes, may continue with attitudes and practices characteristic of the*

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[7] This was central to ANC rhetoric in the 1994-1999 government and the RDP was intended as a means of solving some of these problems. GEAR, however, is potentially contradictory. For a critique, see Bond (2000) and Liebenberg (1999).

apartheid era.

As several commentators have suggested, democratic reforms do not necessarily help the poor unless the institutions of government are improved in terms of popular participation. Institutional structures at the local level still have a tendency to exclude already marginalised peoples, especially African women. As a recent edition of *Agenda* (2000) demonstrates, political exclusion of women generally is more pronounced at the level of local government and the relative absence of women's representation and organising at this level could be a serious hindrance to the advancement of gender equality. The ongoing transformation of local government, therefore, provides a timely opportunity to assess the success of the mainstreaming of gender issues in the democratic transition. The system of local government in South Africa is a world-first in many ways because it requires creativity and participation from all levels of society for its success. However, it remains to be seen whether rural areas will have improved access to resources, and whether the new structures will facilitate the participation of the poor, and especially women, given their existing disempowerment within communities. That women are still underrepresented within council structures may only compound the challenges of engendering citizenship through participatory democracy.

d) Domestic citizenship. Activists fighting for gender equity in South Africa sought a democracy in which domestic relations, in addition to relations in the public arena, could come under state scrutiny (Albertyn, 1994a; 1994b). Despite the Constitution, there are clearly practical hurdles to citizenship and full inclusion for certain groups of women, and there is therefore a need to understand different regulatory regimes and the positions of different women within them. The legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle of defining black women in relation to the community and nation has reinforced traditions in which their citizenship is mediated by their subordination to men and their symbolic roles (primarily as mothers)(Lewis, 1999). Consequently, significant questions remain regarding the impacts of restructuring on domestic citizenship and private patriarchies. Masculine 'dignity' (as power and control) is still predicated on women's indignity and silence, and this continues to be a disturbing element of South African gender politics. (The difficulty of airing discussions about physical and sexual violence towards women in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is but one example of this[8]). The implications that this has for a covert and unacknowledged asymmetry in citizenship are profound. However, within many communities and cultures, women have a long history of fighting for empowerment and emancipation. It is, therefore, important to consider how different groups of women have mobilised and continue to mobilise around notions of domestic citizenship, and to understand the ways in which citizenship is inextricably connected to naturalised social roles, which legal rights and policy-making cannot easily dislodge. Cultural barriers and domestic patriarchal relations can remain largely untouched by the political changes that have swept South Africa. Understanding the impacts of these obstacles on the lives of different women and their responses to these entrenched inequalities is thus of significance, both in theoretical terms and in constructing a more equitable society in South Africa.

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[8] See Krog's (1999) discussion of this.

2. Citizenship and difference

Research on citizenship has exploded the assumption that once suffrage was achieved for women, blacks and other groups, all citizens became automatically equal subjects of the political community (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999). A central question in present debates is the extent to which 'difference' discriminates between citizens. Is 'the citizen' an abstract subject with equal access to rights, including the right to participate in democratic politics, or are the discrepancies in the positioning of specific citizens crucial to the understanding of their citizenship? Questions such as these have been critical in the construction of citizenship in South Africa. Here, the theoretical notion of extending rights to all citizens equally is fraught with practical problems because of the difficulty of incorporating difference into the definition of liberal democracy. Policies of positive action aimed at specific groups rather than individual rights have been adopted in the hope of a collective provision of needs (Yuval-Davis, 1997). There is a clear tension between the notion of universal and equal citizenship and the fact that in reality citizenship is based on power which is exercised through social, economic and political structures that perpetuate the exclusion of members of certain social groups (Staeheli and Cope, 1994). The government has attempted to take account of this in some of its social policies, and in order to achieve equality some groups receive differential treatment (e.g. affirmative action in public sector employment). Despite this, nation building has not seriously engaged identity construction constituted through difference and related power imbalances (Gouws, 1999). As a consequence, rights discourse in South Africa has failed to transform gender relations and construct equal political, social and economic citizenship for women.

In theoretical terms, feminists have called for debates to move beyond questions of equality and difference to engage notions of gender justice. There is a need to deconstruct notions of self and other upon which difference is based. The South African context demonstrates that if equality means sameness and the annihilation of difference, not much is achieved to eradicate dominant and entrenched power relations (Gouws, 1999). The mediation of equal citizenship by other collective, historically determined identities is still of importance in South Africa. Thus, the theoretical concerns about citizenship and difference currently being debated in international feminism (e.g. Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999) are crystallised in the realities of the South African context. As Amanda Gouws (1999) argues, difference is not necessarily dealt with through extending equality to all citizens. Recent debates have demonstrated that in liberal democratic societies equal treatment often results in unequal outcomes. In South Africa, the construction of a liberal democratic society was seen as the solution to the legacies of apartheid and inequality. However, as Gouws suggests, it is the interpretation of these concepts and the construction of policies to give substance to these concepts that are of interest. Thus, although the constitution presents 17 grounds on which discrimination must not take place (including sex and gender), the Equality Clause makes provision for differential treatment to deal with disadvantage (in other words, affirmative action). Significantly, the Constitutional Court is interpreting equality as *substantive* equality rather than *formal* equality. Research in other contexts might be informed by an understanding of the ways in which the specific location of different women in South African society - their group membership by ethnicity, race, class, religion, age or life-

cycle stage - mediates their citizenship in different ways, determining access to entitlements and capacity to exercise independent agency despite guarantees of equality in the constitution.

3. A postcolonial feminist theory of citizenship?

Feminist debates about the nature of citizenship are often Anglo- or Eurocentric and tend to ignore constructions of citizenship in 'developing' nation-states (Rai, 1996). Postcolonial theories suggest that western feminists should not assume that their experiences of struggling for greater gender equality could be projected onto the very different life experiences and contexts of women elsewhere. Black women in South Africa have dealt historically with issues of women's emancipation in their families, communities and political movements without necessarily being aware of the term feminism (Mangaliso, 1997). As we have seen, the maintenance of a stable democracy depends upon the translation of *de jure* rights into *de facto* equality. It also depends upon the direct empowerment of people from the grassroots level upwards, allowing popular and equitable participation of all sections of the population in decision-making and resource allocation at all levels. These active notions of citizenship bring into question Euro- and Anglo-centric notions of the scales of citizenship, extending beyond the public sphere and formal employment into neighbourhoods, communities, and homes. In addition, there is a tendency, both by governments and by theorists of citizenship, to treat women as recipients of citizenship rather than agents in its construction (Seidman, 1999). Acknowledging and understanding the agency of women in their diversity poses a challenge to these assumptions.

There are broader questions, therefore, about whether citizenship can be re-theorised in the light of events in South Africa. In particular, attempts to understand the processes of transformation and women's participation in them might inform western feminisms. Current difficulties for women's citizenship in the west are not necessarily related to rights, but to participation; feminist theorising has done little to alter this. Although gender activism in South Africa during the 1990s was deeply influenced by international feminism, we should consider what international feminism might learn from debates and developments in South Africa. Despite the obvious achievements of women's activism, Hein Marais (1998:221-222) is particularly critical about the role of feminist politics in South Africa. He argues that the truism of the 'triple oppression' of apartheid, capitalism and patriarchy has not aided the emergence of organised feminist politics. He suggests that the ways in which race, class and gender intertwine in women's lives have been obscured by this metaphor of layered, cumulative oppression. As a result, the history of black women has been engulfed in the history of national liberation struggle, and the honest expression of difference, together with the pursuit of overlapping agendas, has been suffocated. He argues that these emerged only in 'impetuous forms during a phase of historical opportunity' during the transition. The legacies of the suppressions of the apartheid era, however, have meant that women have been discouraged from organising politically. In addition, the longstanding delegitimisation of women's concerns as 'soft political concerns' by popular organisations has fuelled political alienation and forced many women to withdraw into secluded zones of organised activity (Hassim, 1991:70-71). According to Marais, as a result the social landscape is replete with apolitical women's structures like church co-operatives and self-help groups

which are 'detached from feminist visions which could make connections between such groups and wider politics' (Marais, 1998:78-79). He continues,

> *The ghosts of the past haunt efforts to develop a women's movement built around a feminist politics. Steered into the slipstream of nationalism, and waged in profoundly different political and material conditions, South African women's struggles were fought in isolation from the upsurge of feminism in the industrialized world. Whether bearing the label or not, feminism was scoffed at as an irritant in the lubricated workings of the national liberation struggle. So much so that in the 1990s, in perhaps its most opportune time in the country, it is peppered with the calumny of being elitist, anti-African and purely 'intellectual'.*

While this is true to some extent, Marais both underplays the enormous influence of organised women's politics and also makes the assumption that South African feminist politics can be defined within the broader framework of feminist politics elsewhere. He fails to recognise the peculiarities of South African women's movements and the specificities of gender politics in South Africa. He also fails to recognise the continued efforts of women's and feminist organisations to create structures to engender citizenship at all levels, and to produce gender-sensitive social policies. It is these efforts to meet the very challenges that Marais outlines that might inform a broader feminist politics. The ways in which women are empowering themselves to build strategic alliances across party lines, between parliamentarians and civil society, and between academics and activists is particularly informative and potentially inspiring. The mobilisation of women's groups and activists to engender democracy and citizenship at the national, local and community levels is, therefore, of significance, both within South Africa and in informing the political activities of women in other contexts where they might be excluded from formal political structures.

The apparent success of South African activists in changing the terms of democracy challenge us to rethink democracy less as an end point in the 'democratic transition', but as a process, around which activists can mobilise and participate in to shape democratic aspirations. The South African context might illuminate, at least to some extent, whether alternative notions of citizenship, which point towards locally rooted and participatory democracy, can effect radical and substantive democracy. To do so, there needs to be some understanding of whether citizenship in South Africa has been successful in the creation of spaces, both metaphorical and material, for the participation of even the most marginalised of groups, where emphasis is placed on the abilities of people to participate in and mould the policies that shape their everyday lives (Staeheli, 1994). At the same time, western theorists and policy-makers have to be open to the possibilities of exploring the lessons that might be learned by theorising from the experiential base of South Africa.

Conclusions

There are obvious and by now well documented ethical issues that arise from conducting research into the themes I have raised here. These issues relate to intersections of privilege, power and knowledge, the implications of researching across difference, the positionality of the researcher *vis-à-vis* the researched and the ethico-politics of

representation, which can be only partially alleviated by a commitment to collaborative research. They have been inspired by sustained criticism of western feminism by black and so-called third world feminists. The implications of these criticisms are nowhere more hotly debated than in South Africa[9]. Bearing these criticisms in mind, research into the different interpretations and implications of gendered citizenship is significant in destabilising hegemonic notions of citizenship. There has been a tendency for theorists elsewhere to focus on precisely how South African women utilise (or do not) the (arguably quite western) national machinery for realising full citizenship, since this has been hailed as a major advantage that South African women have over women elsewhere. However, the critical question is whether this is really the case and there are obviously many lessons to be learnt from South Africa in attempting to answer this. Furthermore, recording the life histories of black women, and paying particular attention to their understandings and negotiations of political and economic change, their understandings and experiences of citizenship, and the nature of their political activity has the potential to re-orient hegemonic feminist understandings of gendered citizenship.

Research of this kind contributes to wider literatures on the lived experiences of political and economic change (eg Katz and Monk, 1993; Townsend, 1995). Such approaches are of particular significance in the South African context given the erasure of black women's lives from histories and historiographies (Farr, 1999). Discourses arising from the histories of black women in South Africa should inform the ways in which citizenship is being constructed and contested. Western researchers and observers should acknowledge African modes of thought on issues of citizenship, democracy and human development. As Oshadi Mangena (1996, cited in Amadiume, 2000) argues, African peoples can depend upon existing legacies of African systems together with the prevailing knowledges about them to formulate an authentic theory of human development. This more holistic understanding of development, of which constructing citizenship is an important part, would put human survival and African philosophies at the centre. Her argument is for alternative understandings based on relevant and empowering ideas generated by indigenous African cultures (a central point of many non-western feminisms). These ideas have philosophical merit in the search for an alternative theory of human development and for the emancipation of African women. As Amadiume suggests in her appraisal of Oshadi Mangena's work, these ideas are an informed contribution to the global debate on human development and feminist methodology, and they should certainly inform the ways in which outsiders approach research in contemporary South Africa.

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[9] See for example *Agenda* (1993); Bennett and Friedman (1997); Funani (1993); Hendricks and Lewis (1994); Holland-Muter (1995); McFadden (1995a, 1995b); Serote (1992).

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