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The ANC's Early Years
Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940

By Peter Limb (Michigan State U.)

At a time when African National Congress-alliance politics are again prominent in South Africa, this nuanced study of the intersection of class and African national forces, in the history of Africa’s oldest national liberation movement, helps explain the deeper origins of this alliance. The book squarely places African agency at the center of South African history and re-casts the story of the ANC in the words and actions of its own members and supporters at local and regional, as well as national, levels. In doing so, it shines a long overdue light on ordinary black activists, including politicized workers and women, and integrates these stories with those of more well-known leaders.

“...an impressive and skilfully-crafted study in which the author’s imaginative attempt to integrate orthodox political history with labour and social history is supported by a masterful knowledge of documentary sources...helps recover the voice of both national and regional ANC leaders (and, indirectly, that of workers) before 1940 and the exploration of the social origins, class background and identity of ANC leaders provides a means of contextualising and explaining ANC leaders’ attitudes to, and political relationship with, the labouring poor.”

~ Paul La Hausse de Lalouvière, U. of Cambridge