



Gangs, Politics and Dignity in Cape Town

Steffen Jensen

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This is a vivid study of the day-to-day experience of living in a working class neighbourhood on the Cape Flats. It deals with issues of criminality and the search for dignity in a harsh, economically depressed urban landscape. Gangs are the main focus of the study, but gang members are presented on a broader canvas as family members, neighbourhood friends, members of sports clubs, employees. Within this intensely claustrophobic world devout Christians and Muslims, drug dealers, cops, gangsters and welfare workers all rub shoulders. Mothers, despite being disempowered in many ways, are hugely important figures in 'the courts', commanding respect within the family and even from gangsters. Criminality is a blurred concept in the township, where alternative and competing moral codes have emerged. Central to this analysis is the complicated and diverse concept of dignity. How is it constructed? What is its basis? How does it differ among the various protagonists of the township? Steffen Jensen is Senior Researcher at the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, Denmark North America: University of Chicago Press; South Africa: Wits U Press(PB)

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