

TRUTH IN POLITICS
Rhetorical Approaches to Democratic Deliberation
in Africa and beyond
(Ph.-J. Salazar, S. Osha, W. van Binsbergen, Eds.)

The purpose of this volume is to try and acclimatize “rhetoric” (“the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” – Aristotle) to the South African scene and the African scene at large, and to reflect on truth in politics. Why? Because politics in a democracy is a contest of words about competing truths. No government ought ever to believe that they have “the truth”. They are merely the sum total of what Aristotle presents as some sort of “picnic”: at the democratic table we all bring our own food to make the party successful, by the very variety of condiments and diversity of foodstuffs. To be democratic citizens involves the formidable task of learning to accept that each of us, however passionate we are about “what we believe”, and hold to be “true”, may and will be *untrue* for another citizen. We therefore have to argue, to deliberate, to enter, each of us at our own level, into a contest of words and beliefs. Democracy is about competing “truths”. This is why “rhetoric” – the study of public deliberation and the training in public debate and argumentation – is part of democracy in development.

Taking their lead from the work of South Africa’s 1994-1998 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, these contributions by intercontinental scholars in rhetoric, other branches of philosophy, African Studies, theology, intercultural communication and law, try to bring home the notion that rhetoric can be a powerful agent for democracy, an effective tool for citizen’s empowerment, a site for liberating thought. They also explore the possibilities and limitations of African applications of rhetoric, in a general context of globalized intercultural knowledge production, historic African rhetorical and constitutional practices, and the African experience under colonial and postcolonial conditions.



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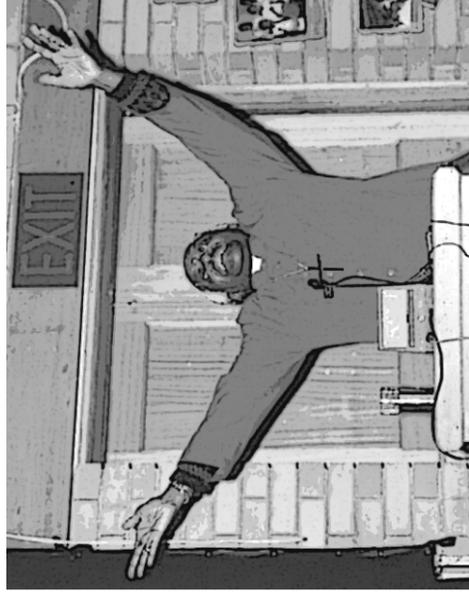
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