



# **Precarious Liberation: Workers, the State, and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa (SUNY series in Global Modernity)**

*Franco Barchiesi*

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*Examines the relationship of precarious employment to state policies on citizenship and social inclusion in the context of postapartheid South Africa.*

Millions of black South African workers struggled against apartheid to redeem employment and production from a history of abuse, insecurity, and racial despotism. Almost two decades later, however, the prospects of a dignified life of wage-earning work remain unattainable for most South Africans. Through extensive archival and ethnographic research, Franco Barchiesi documents and interrogates this important dilemma in the country's democratic transition: economic participation has gained centrality in the government's definition of virtuous citizenship, and yet for most workers, employment remains an elusive and insecure experience. In a context of market liberalization and persistent social and racial inequalities, as jobs in South Africa become increasingly flexible, fragmented, and unprotected, they depart from the promise of work with dignity and citizenship rights that once inspired opposition to apartheid. Barchiesi traces how the employment crisis and the responses of workers to it challenge the state's normative imagination of work, and raise decisive questions for the social foundations and prospects of South Africa's democratic experiment.

Franco Barchiesi is Assistant Professor in the Department of African-American and African Studies at the Ohio State University. He is the coeditor (with Tom Bramble) of *Rethinking the Labour Movement in the 'New South Africa*.

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