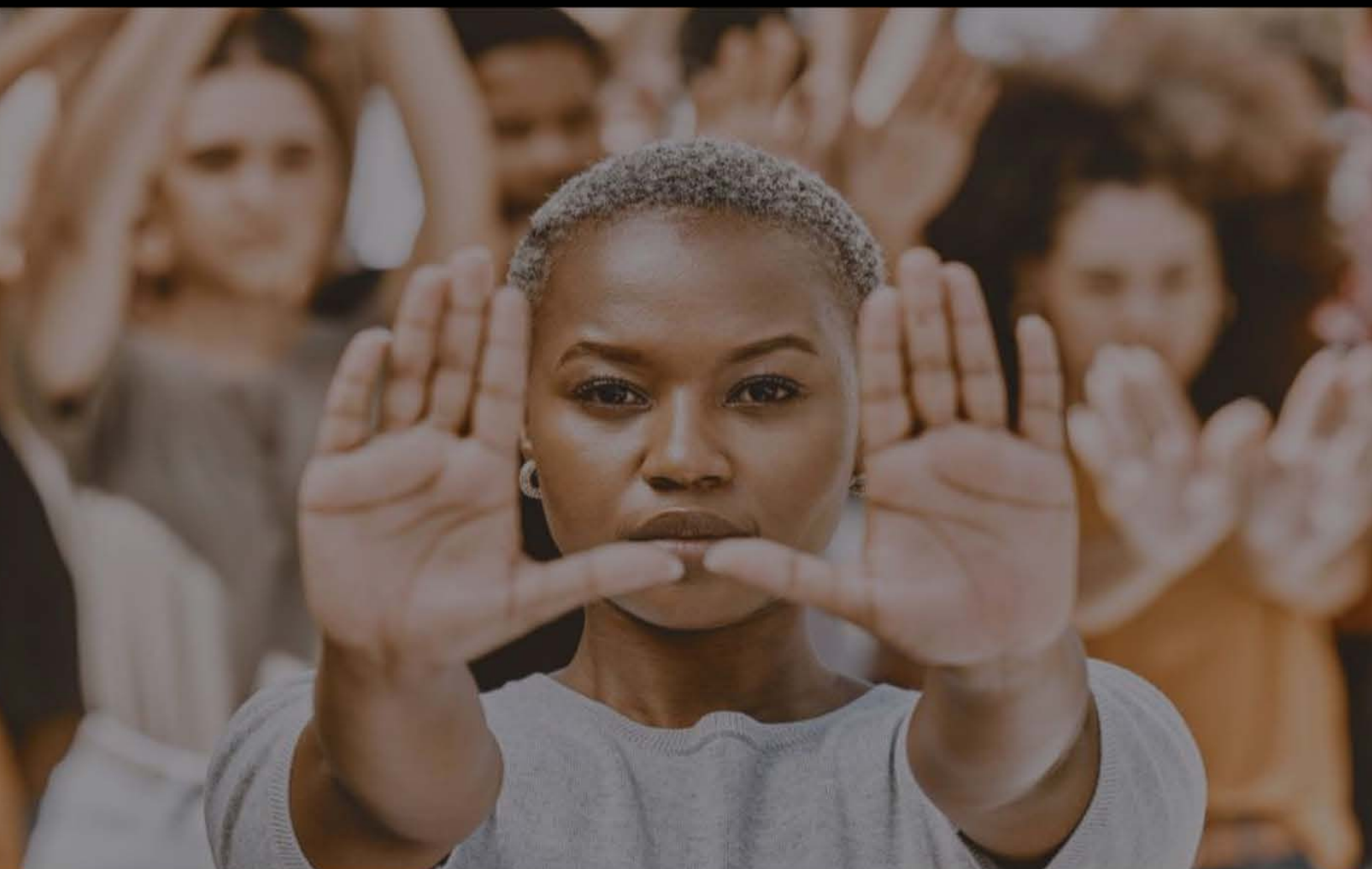


MARGINAL MIND MATTERS NPC.

Organizational Manifesto



;**MARGINS**

Push Boundaries

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*"We cannot achieve sustainable development and make the planet better for all if people are excluded from opportunities, services, and the chance for a better life,"
~ United Nations (2015)*

1. Introduction

The term social exclusion was developed in the West to refer to small enclaves of marginalized individuals, however, in South Africa social exclusion is the denial of social participation among the majority. South Africa has a long and painful history of social exclusion that has worsened over time. During colonialism political power, economic resources, and social capital were monopolized by European powers.

In the 1940s, social exclusion was institutionalized under apartheid. The liberation of South Africa from apartheid in 1994 did not dismantle these structures, instead, the Government of National Unity (GNU) sought to reform these structures. As a result, social exclusion continued under democracy. Policy measures were taken under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to redress social, political, and economic inequality but these measures were shortlived and brought piecemeal results.

In 1998, the Mbeki administration moved away from the RDP to more neo-liberal policies to encourage economic growth. International financial institutions encouraged this approach because it was believed that growth would trickle down to the grassroots. Policies such as the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) programme and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA) led to South Africa's growth rate averaging around 4% per annum. This growth led to increased productivity, employment, and higher incomes which lifted many of the previously disadvantaged out of poverty but it also detracted attention from unaddressed marginalization.

The economic recession of 2018, the COVID crisis of 2019, and loadshedding have brought social exclusion to the forefront. There has been a 40% drop in active employment since COVID. Half of those who lost their jobs were unskilled workers and 15 to 30% of those people fell into poverty. The country has yet to see a rebound to pre-lockdown levels. Inequality, unemployment, and poverty have reached staggering levels and around 70% of the population are estimated to be living close to or below the upper-bound poverty line.

Since 2019 South Africa has been rated the most unequal country in the world with 65% of its income earned by 10% of its population. General unemployment is estimated at 28.7% and youth unemployment is around 40%. Despite South Africa being the wealthiest country in Africa, poverty is around 55% and is gendered and race-based with black women and children being the worst affected.

In order to address the wide range of discriminatory and exclusionary processes arising from South Africa's history, as well as, the widespread deprivation that has arisen from poor policy making, natural and manmade disasters, and the poor economic climate,

poverty needs to be seen beyond economic determinism. The multi-dimensional nature of poverty and the long-term social and institutional processes that shaped it need to be addressed. Inclusion and participation are necessary to end chronic poverty, however, exclusion cannot be addressed through processes and institutions that integrate the marginalized into networks where they have little or no power.

Marginal Mind Matters is a registered not-for-profit company working to raise awareness around the injustice of social exclusion and help marginalized groups cope with that social exclusion. Margins is of the view that social exclusion needs to be addressed through social capital through self-help, support groups, and self-expression programs. These offerings are meant to grow relationships between the marginalized, link the marginalized to their leaders, and address poverty and marginalization in a meaningful way through awareness and self-empowerment so the marginalized can reach for the lives they deserve instead of living the lives that were imposed on them.

2. Social Exclusion and the Deprivation of Capabilities

According to Giddens social exclusion, “is not about gradations of inequality, but about mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream,” (Giddens cited in Silver, 2019). Social exclusion is denying people the right to participate meaningfully in the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of society. Powerful groups monopolize control over social access to spaces as well as activities, resources, and information which leads to social exclusion. This monopolisation is manifested materially through class, spatially through the urban/rural divide, politically by excluding people from equal citizenship, and culturally by privileging some cultures and languages over others.

The denial of social participation causes for people to be isolated from themselves which leads to feelings of poor self-worth and inferiority. Social exclusion also isolates people from others which leads to feelings of distrust, hyper independence, and disconnect. The systems of power and control that exclude groups of people from social life also exclude them from the resources and capabilities to do certain valued things that would define them as social beings. When people are denied the right to participate fully in their society they are also denied access to social capital which may be income from social lending or demand sharing, opportunities for work, and emotional support. The deprivation of social capital leads to lack of social cohesion which decreases the resilience of communities.



Figure 1 Social exclusion causes for people to be isolated from society and from lifesaving resources.

3. The Social Capital Approach to Addressing Social Exclusion

The biggest obstacle to social inclusion is the lack of access to social capital. Social support systems provide access to information, to economic opportunities, and to emotional and financial support. There is a complex empirical and conceptual connection between poverty, power, and agency. In order to address social exclusion, linkages need to be built between the marginalized through social capital and the networks of the marginalized need to be linked to the systems of state, media, and capital so the marginalized have voice and agency.

Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of society's social interactions and may include; civic engagement or participation in community networks, a sense of community identity, solidarity and equality with other community members, and trust and reciprocal help and support. The social capital approach to social exclusion is centred on addressing the relational nature of social exclusion through social capital. The premise of this approach is that social capital leads to social inclusion and builds cohesive and resilient communities.

Social inclusion integrates people into different relationships, organizations, and structures that constitute everyday life. It is achieved through interconnecting and mutually reinforcing actions and activities such as bridge-building between marginalized and non-marginalized groups, collaborative efforts, and involvement or participation in decision-making processes. Social inclusion promotes a sense of belonging and self-identification in relation to others.

According to the Department of Arts and Culture's National Social Cohesion Strategy, social inclusion is the extent to which mutual solidarity finds expression among individuals and communities. In South Africa, the systems of organized oppression created barriers to social interaction and this prevented marginalized groups from social integration, cohesion, and solidarity. In order to address social exclusion, the barriers that created structural inequalities and that hinder social interaction need to be addressed. If they are not, exclusion reproduces inequality and poverty and leads to multi-dimensional

deprivation.



Figure 2 Social exclusion leads to multi-dimensional deprivation. If it is not addressed it reproduces poverty and deprivation.

4. Social Capital for Social Inclusion and Cohesion- Margins Push Boundaries



Figure 3 Societies are made resilient to social, economic, and political upheaval through cohesion.

Social capital is achieved in the following ways:

1. Bonding social capital



Figure 4 Bonding social capital refers to individuals having an inner sense of cohesion and connectedness.

Margins is working to build bonding capital and push the boundaries of social exclusion through its **self-awareness programs**.

- The Margins Self-Awareness Program, and
- The Margins Journaling Program.

Margins self-awareness programs help the socially excluded understand what social exclusion is and how to overcome the negative impact it has had on their thought and behaviour patterns so they can transcend social exclusion and pursue the life they deserve instead of the one that was imposed on them. Margins self-awareness programs are available for free on its website at www.marginspushboundaries.com

The self-awareness programs are supported by the Margins Podcasting Series on social exclusion. Each week the series covers one emotion that arises from social exclusion. The emotion is defined and its impact and purpose in society is discussed. The marginalized are then provided with advice on how to free themselves from that emotion.

2. Bridging Social Capital



Figure 5 Bridging social capital refers to contact and engagement among the marginalized.

South Africa's history of colonialism, apartheid, and the current situation of gross inequality and poverty is the legacy of ineffective social capital and blocked pathways to upward mobility. This has left the majority of South Africans trapped in a cycle of poverty and despair. The marginalized have developed a variety of informal, relational, or socially mediated mechanisms that provide access to the material and other resources that mitigate social exclusion.

Such mechanisms include; stokvels, funeral and benevolent funds, food gardens, transport networks, informal markets and housing, and informal banking. Such mechanisms have the power to substitute for the lack of access to mainstream networks. These social mechanisms provide an invaluable resource to achieving social inclusion by allowing the marginalized to fulfil their roles in society, have a sense of place, feel

meaning and purpose, derive benefit from their society in terms of resources, agency, and emotional support.

Active social relationships through these social mechanisms leads to social cohesion, the mitigation of social exclusion, and the building of resilient communities. It has the potential to lead to an integration of social, economic, and civic life and the pursuit of active citizenship. By leveraging on these existing social mechanisms, social equilibrium can be fostered and give rise to a cohesive and inclusive society where all citizens can flourish.

Social capital based on these social mechanisms focuses on networks and relations of trust and reciprocity and relates to four areas;

1. The existence of community networks,
2. Civic engagement or participation in community networks,
3. A sense of community identity, solidarity, equality, norms of trust, and
4. Reciprocal help and support.

Margins is working to create opportunities for bridging social capital through its **support groups**.

- The Margins Self-Awareness Sponsor Program, and
- The Margins Journal Circle Program.

Margins support groups allow the excluded to access information and opportunities that can take them out of exclusion. When a participant has completed the self-awareness program, they can become a self-awareness sponsor. This means that they help someone, who is struggling with social exclusion, work through the self-awareness program.

When a participant has completed the journal program, they can host a journal circle. The journal circle provides an opportunity for socially excluded groups to work through the program as a collective, to share their experiences of social exclusion, and help each other.

3. Linking Social Capital



Figure 6 Linking social capital is about linking marginalized groups with non-marginalized groups.

Margins is working to encourage linking social capital through its **organizational and economic workshops** and its **self-expression clinics**.

The Margins mitigating social exclusion in the workplace and in the economy workshops educates corporates about social exclusion in the workplace and in business and provides information and resources on how to mitigate social exclusion and create a more inclusive economic environment.

Margins **self-expression clinics** link up arts and culture educators with marginalized communities and, in doing so, provides the space for the marginalized to explore their creative talents and participate in the cultural life of society. The output of these creative talents are used to draw awareness to social exclusion and link the marginalized to the non-marginalized.

5. Rationale for Margins

Section 16 of the Constitution of South Africa states that, *“Everyone has a right to freedom of expression, which includes; (a) freedom of the press and other media, and (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas.”* Democracy requires that everyone have a voice and is included in the social, political, economic, and cultural processes of their society.

In order to achieve that, the social distance between people that gives rise to social exclusion needs to be addressed. Social distance arose from South Africa's history of colonialism, apartheid, and the current state of poverty and inequality. This distance relates to a number of aspects of social existence:

1. Spatial boundaries relate to the architecture of apartheid. The poor underclasses (who are mostly black) are imprisoned in hyperghettoes comprising of the rural areas, informal settlements, and low-cost housing,
2. Economic boundaries separate the haves from the have nots,
3. Political boundaries separate those who have a voice and equal citizenship from those who have no access to their policy-makers and are rendered invisible in society,
4. Cultural boundaries privilege those who speak English and follow a Western culture from those who do not.

The intention of Margins collective efforts is to push the boundaries of social exclusion so the marginalized regain a sense of self-worth and claim their place as active and valuable citizens in South Africa.

6. Expected Outcomes

- A more inclusive society where all South Africans feel a sense of self-worth and can contribute meaningfully to their communities,
- A more inclusive economy where those suffering from poverty and deprivation can access the means to meet their basic needs,

- A society where people are aware of the negative impact of social exclusion and work together to end racism, sexism, classism and all other forms of discrimination,
- A more participatory democracy where leaders listen, engage, and act for and not against the marginalized,
- A society where the marginalized have an opportunity to express their internal suffering from social exclusion through whatever means available to them and where their form of self-expression is acknowledged.

7. Implications of Not Addressing Social Exclusion

- Isolation from social networks which could provide life-saving resources and opportunities and, therefore, lead to a deepening of poverty and deprivation,
- A lack of social cohesion which negatively impacts on the resilience of society,
- Dysfunctional social behaviors such as self-harm, crime, gangsterism, and substance abuse because the marginalized lack a healthy outlet for their despair,
- Lack of civic participation leads to an erosion of democracy,
- Lack of economic access leads to more people sinking below the poverty line and results in homelessness, poverty, and hunger.

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CONTACT ; MARGINS



support@marginspushboundaries.com



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