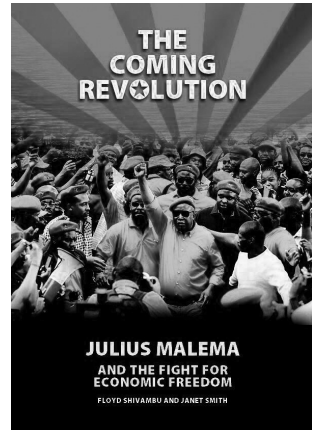


## BOOK REVIEWS/BOEKBESPREKINGS

**Floyd Shivambu (ed.)**, *The coming revolution: Julius Malema and the fight for economic freedom*. Johannesburg: Jacana, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-4314-1037-8 (Soft cover). 288 pages.

The book is intended as an introduction to the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), South Africa's youngest revolutionary socialist party in parliament, and its charismatic commander-in-chief, Julius Malema. It starts with a foreword by the EFF Commissar for Justice and Special Projects, Dali Mpofu. This is followed by an input from Floyd Shivambu, EFF Commissar for Policy, Research, and Political Education, in the form of a brief introductory section on the purpose of the book which is spiced up by eulogizing Malema. This is followed by a section of 115 pages by Shivambu on the genesis of the EFF, titled, Where do we come from? His point of departure here is that “[c]urrently, settlers own our country” (p. 13), and because “settlers are on our land as a result of violent colonial conquest and dispossession of the black majority and Africans in particular” (p. 13), the ownership and control of economic resources in South Africa should be returned to the African black majority. This relates specifically to ownership of the banks, mines and agricultural land.

Not much in this section (chapter) is really new to the informed reader. Moreover, there is no scholarly analysis that – for the sake of contextualising the EFF's position – touches upon works such as that of the French economist, Thomas Piketty, and its focus on wealth and income inequality internationally, and its application in South Africa. Theoretically or academically, the only matter of interest is the revelation that the EFF is using a Marxist-Leninist-Fanonian paradigm as a tool of analysis. The work of Frantz Fanon is added to that of Marx and Lenin to complete “the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-racist circle that is the only real basis for true liberation” (p. 78). In Shivambu's view, this liberates Marxism and Leninism from what they view as “the racist mindset that dictates that the African and black experiences must be viewed from the Western [Marxist-Leninist] Perspective [...]” (p. 78). Otherwise, this section does not offer a deep scholarly and insightful analysis of South Africa's political-economic anatomy and architecture.



On a more practical note, there are some interesting remarks, such as the EFF becoming more determined to achieve an equitable land share at home after a visit to Zimbabwe where they saw many people benefiting from the land distribution policies. What is also clear is that Julius Malema was the key figure and principal driving force in the establishment of the EFF after his clash with President Jacob Zuma in 2011/12. Generally, the narrative and thrust of this section (chapter) is strongly informed and directed by party political rhetoric and revolves around the need and struggle for economic freedom in South Africa, as well as by an effort to debunk any view that “current ANC policies are good” (p. 107).

The third and fourth sections (chapters) are merely of documentary value as these are the EFF’s two principal policy documents, namely its Founding Manifesto and Election Manifesto. With these documents the EFF intends to bring about real economic transformation in South Africa. What is clear is that the EFF has policies on an array of matters, ranging from sports, arts culture, and recreation to social grants, democratic participation and governance.

On p. 208 the book starts to lose the “sterility” of the second and third parts. The fifth section is a 79-pages recording of two interviews that Janet Smith, executive editor of *The Star*, conducted with Julius Malema. The interviews took place on 25 January and 6 February 2014 respectively and touched on personal questions relating to Malema’s background as well as his views on contemporary political issues. The reader gets a glimpse of Malema’s early childhood in the poverty-stricken township of Seshego (Limpop. Province); the cutting of his political teeth as a very young member of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), his grooming to become a political organiser and activist; his absence from school for the sake of political organisation; his move to another school after having been sjambokked for absence from school; his hate for his high school principal because of his negative remarks about COSAS and the Young Pioneers (an organisation in which Malema found a political home); and Malema’s initiative to model the constitution of his school’s SRC on the constitution of COSAS. Malema summarises his childhood with the following statement, “The problem with me is that you can’t explain Julius, the 10-year-old, or Julius Malema, without politics, because there is no such a thing. I have never had that childhood life” (p. 219). He also explained his (publicly-known) low matric mark for woodwork, which he attributed to his absence from class because of (among others) his activities as president of COSAS (2000-2004). Sometimes Malema’s views sound a bit exaggerated when he claims that, “I went to write Matric without having sat in a class of Matric and I passed”, but it is clear that political activism and organisation were the lifeblood of his existence as a teenager. He became a “recognisable individual in Limpopo” (p. 222) and saw himself as soldiering in the footsteps of the late Peter Mokaba, finding inspiration from struggle figures like Winnie

Mandela. Today, he is the self-proclaimed leader of the EFF, the vanguard of the working class, bent on realising the ideals of socialism. The interviews also touched upon other matters of interest, specifically whites in South Africa. Malema argues that white people do not fear him and that he appears more on pictures with white people than with black people. He also states that he has never been confronted by a white Afrikaner who says that he (Malema) is messing up the country. AfriForum, however, misinterprets what he and the EFF stand for, “but [they] have chosen to misunderstand me” (p. 228).

International affairs also featured in the interviews and predictably, the interviews turned to Zimbabwe, giving the reader a good idea of Malema’s views – also on Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. His views about land reform in Zimbabwe are positive and he believes that land restitution has helped to realise the potential of the people of Zimbabwe, and maintains that “other countries must follow” (pp. 232-233). Botswana is viewed as breaking ranks with the AU and this takes the reader back to Malema’s clash with the ANC on matters pertaining to Botswana and his efforts to assist the opposition in Botswana against the country’s “puppet regime” (p. 234).

Other interesting EFF related matters touched upon in the interviews are the striking red berets of the EFF and the funding of that by membership fees; the association of universal leftist politics with the colour of red; and the organisation of the EFF and its “fighters” through a central command team led by a commander-in-chief. Malema’s personal relationship with Pres. Jacob Zuma during his days as leader of the ANC Young League was also discussed. Malema remarked that they had never been in a “close, cosy relationship. (p. 245), and that Zuma is a man who changes his position from time to time and even from day to day. Malema’s absolute disdain for Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa is also revealed and this is clear from his view that Ramaphosa is “a personal project of the Oppenheimers who handpicked him and worked very hard to take him through” (p. 246). Other top ANC leaders with whom he never associated were Trevor Manuel and Max Sisulu – especially because of their views on the impracticality of nationalisation and expropriation of land.

The interviews also throw more light on Malema’s views on Western market forces, private property (which should be guaranteed), job creation, as well as politics in the Limpop. Province (his home province); his personal material wealth and gifts received (including a Breitling watch and a Range Rover vehicle); love and women; and the public controversy around his squabbles with the South African Revenue Service (SARS). Towards the end of the book, Malema affords the reader an important insight into his personal life by remarking that, “I didn’t have a father figure to look up to, to inspire me as to how to take care of relationships. The rest we learned from senior leaders of the ANC. So I think if we had such

a foundation we would have dealt with issues differently” (p. 275). Much about the EFF as a leftist, activist, unconventional and somewhat disruptive political organisation – when one, for instance, assesses its parliamentary role – could be discussed, explained or understood within the framework of these three sentences.

This book is as unconventional as the EFF itself and some critical readers would perhaps argue that it lacks a solid, scholarly grounding in South Africa’s political economy and its challenges. Even though this is perhaps not the purpose of the book I would still recommend it as reading material for scholars and students interested in gaining a better understanding of present-day politics in South Africa and the diversity of views on South Africa’s future. Moreover, it encourages reflection on Julius Malema – who is certainly a young hard-skinned political figure with charisma, influence and staying power, and one who has the support of a youthful party with the potential for growth.

**Theo Neethling**

Department of Political Studies and Governance, University of the Free State