

Publication

Persistent Injuries, the Law and Politics: The South African Victims' Support Group Khulumani and Its Struggle for Redress

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The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) marked the start of a wave of transitional justice mechanisms across the African continent and beyond. In South Africa, several nongovernmental organisations formed in relation to the mandate of the TRC and accompanied its nation-building project with critical support. In the wake of the TRC, however, their role changed from companions of a shared transition project into watchdogs of the state's reluctance to take forward the recommendations put forth by the TRC. This contribution focuses on the efforts of Khulumani Support Group, and specifically its Western Cape Province branch. Khulumani is a membership-based organisation for victims of apartheid violence. While it has retained its focus on shared victimhood among its members and preoccupation with the legacy of apartheid in victims' lives, it has developed a more confrontational approach to the issue of the 'unfinished business' of apartheid. Khulumani has sought legal remedies both domestically and internationally, thus moving away from a reconciliatory towards a more legalistic approach regarding transitional justice matters. Parallel to the court cases, Khulumani has always participated in political discussions around transitional justice issues and has invested much in the conscientisation of contemporaries and the state. This contribution examines the intricacies a victims' support group is faced with in post-transition times. Khulumani stands for the concerns of a fragile group of people. If it articulates general political concerns of victims too loudly and authoritatively, it runs the danger of brushing over its members' voices and individual injuries.

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