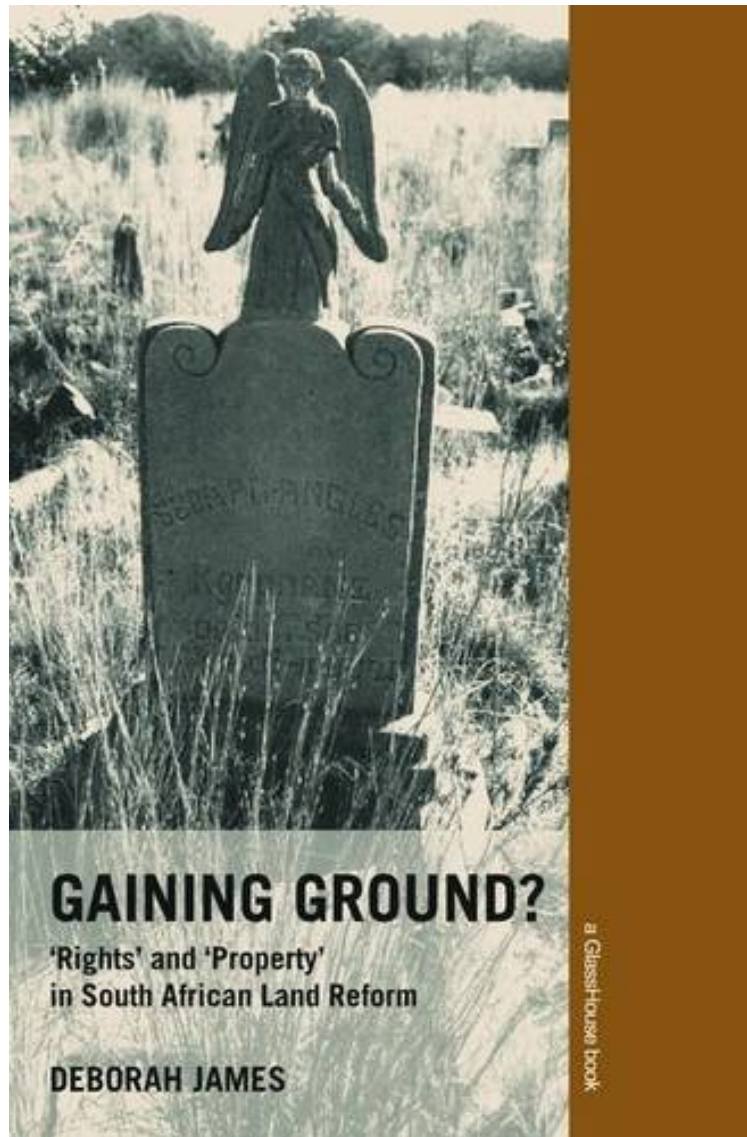


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Gaining Ground? Rights and Property in South African Land Reform

Deborah James

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Gaining Ground? Rights and Property in South African Land Reform examines how land reform policy and practice in post-apartheid South Africa have been produced and contested. Set in the province of Mpumalanga, the book gives an ethnographic account of local initiatives and conflicts, showing how the poorest sectors of the landless have defied the South African state's attempts to privatize land holdings and create a new class of African farmers. They insist that the 'rights-based' rather than the 'market-driven' version of land reform should prevail and that land restitution was intended to benefit all Africans. However their attempts to gain land access often backfire. Despite state assurances that land reform would benefit all, illegal land selling and 'brokering' are pervasive, representing one of the only feasible routes to land access by the poor. This book shows how human rights lawyers, NGOs and the state, in interaction with local communities, have tried to square these symbolic and economic claims on land. Winner of the inaugural Elliott P. Skinner Book Award of the Association of Africanist Anthropology, 2008

"This is a significant book about an area of profound concern... James writes with a companionable fluency that continues to capture one's interest as well as invite engaging expectations of what lies ahead. It [*Gaining Ground?*] is a straightforward, brightly informative read." - *The Sunday Independent* (South Africa), December 16th 2007 "On the whole, the book offers an interesting and nuanced perspective on land reform. It opens new avenues for researching land issues in South Africa and other contexts." - Maano Ramutsindela, *University of Cape Town, African Affairs*, vol 108, no 431 (April 2009) About the Author Deborah James is a Reader in the Department of Anthropology, LSE.