



# **On Their Own: Women, Urbanization, and the Right to the City in South Africa (McGill-Queen's Studies in Urban Governance)**

*Allison Goebel*

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South Africa, the most urbanized country on the African continent, displays some of the highest levels of socio-economic inequality in the world. What is life like for low-income African women in urban South Africa in the post-apartheid era? Does urban life offer new opportunities for personal development, equality for women, and freedom? Are there new forms of marginalization and danger shaping women's lives? Why are so many women heading households on their own, and what does this mean for family, livelihoods, intimacy, and citizenship? In *On Their Own*, Allison Goebel explores women's experiences in the rapidly urbanizing context of post-1994 South Africa. She navigates different layers of urbanization in the country and illuminates the ways through which women's experiences of urbanization differ from men's, and why these differences matter. In an approach that emphasizes women's right to the city, Goebel presents original research in a case study of the city of Pietermaritzburg, features life stories of urban women, and engages with the literature in South African history, politics, gender studies, urban studies, and environmental studies. A revealing study of the ways in which urbanization is creating urgent social, economic, and environmental challenges for South Africa, *On Their Own* also highlights the fraught legacies of apartheid and the aspirations of post-apartheid society for equality and opportunity across race and gender lines.

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