More than twenty years into democracy, most political observers would agree that a sizeable number of black South Africans have been able to move up the social ladder into the “middle class”. While its exact size may differ according to the definition one chooses to apply, the immediate question that arises is whether this new middle class is an important force shaping South African politics - and if so, in what direction? Some political analysts have argued that the new black middle class relies on the political status quo and the clientelist politics that come with it for its sustenance. Others see it as a group that has the potential to light up the gloom of South Africa’s current political and economic environment to an extent beyond what its size would imply. Be that as it may, the political party battle for the hearts, minds and souls of black middle class voters in the run-up to the 2016 local government elections is certainly fiercer than ever before. Three major South African cities, including Johannesburg and Pretoria where the majority of the country’s black middle class resides, will be hotly contested.

In order to shed more light on the different facets of who the black middle class in South Africa constitutes, and what role this group - real or imagined - may play in shaping the country’s current and future politics, the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GiGA), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) and the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) decided to host a public debate on the topic.

The discussion will be moderated by Siki Mgabadeli from Moneyline on eNCA.

Speakers:

Nic Borain, Independent Political Analyst
Mzikisi Qobo, Associate Professor, University of Johannesburg
Shaka Sisulu, Chief Executive Officer, Cheesekids (tbc)
Ndlozi Mbuyiseni, National Spokesperson, Economic Freedom Fighters (tbc)
Lindiwe Mazibuko, former Parliamentary Leader, Democratic Alliance

Date: 04 May 2016
Time: 17:30 for 18:00-19:30
Venue: The Town House Hotel, 60 Corporation Street, Cape Town

Finger food and drinks will be served ahead of the discussion.