

**ELITE (RE-)CONSTRUCTIONS OF COLOURED IDENTITIES IN A POST-
APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: ASSIMILATIONS AND BOUNDED
TRANSGRESSIONS**

by

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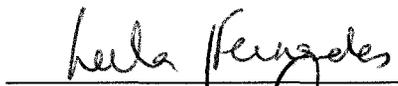
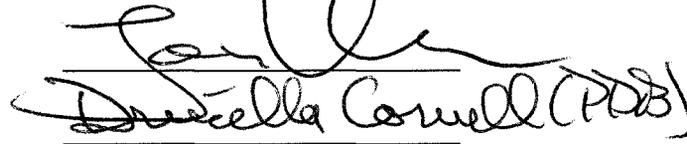
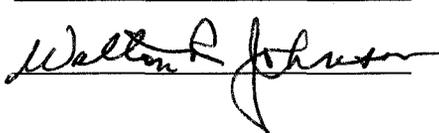
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II. ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Elite (Re)Constructions Of Coloured Identities In A Post-Apartheid

South Africa: Assimilations And Bounded Transgressions

by MICHELE RENÉ RUITERS

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Professor Leela Fernandes

This thesis engages with issues of identity, diversity and democracy through a study of the reconstruction of colouredness, a marginal identity, in post-apartheid South Africa. I argue that coloured elites reconstruct their apartheid-designated racialized identities in order to create new identities that reflect their own and their communities' experiences and needs. This reconstruction process often results in a reification of past expressions of each identity, which needs to be negotiated in a contemporary era. Ultimately, self-definition creates agency and therefore a stronger citizen who participates more effectively within their polity and thus strengthens democratic practices. I argue that diversity enhances democracy only if a politics of recognition is practiced.

The thesis also examines the possibility of releasing identities from historical baggage in the sense that a new identity could be constructed. I show that 'new' identities are constrained by the past and often struggle to free themselves from existing constructions. I argue that this is possible only if elites are willing to let go of past

constructions and to be more inclusive in their visions for the future. The state, however, should continue to recognize marginal groups in order to combat the emergence of isolationist and reactionary politics from those groups.

My project examines one community's search for recognition from a state that has, since 1994, rejoined a larger African community, which is largely unknown to ordinary South Africans. I argue that this process of reconstructing a coloured identity, which certain coloured elites have undertaken, is not a social movement but is a spiritual search for belonging, which provides a social network of similar minded people who wish to redefine their identities. I also contend that the reconstruction of coloured identities has to occur within a new framework in which an African identity is more inclusive and within which attempts have been made to move away from past constructions of identities.

III. DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ndimlo – This is who I am

I dedicate this thesis to Ivy May Ruiters, my grandmother, a phenomenal woman who set the bar high, and to my mother, Edna Ruiters who then pushed me to overshoot it. I know you are proud of me.

There are many people who helped me on this long road to completion. I'll do them chronologically and not in any order of importance.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

In 1994, South Africa entered a new political era. Racialism was outlawed and Black people could take their rightful place in a new democracy. The dominant party, the African National Congress, introduced a new ideological framework that was to guide our relations with each other within the country and to guide South Africa's relations with the region, continent and world. The overarching ideology was based on an African renaissance which was to favorably reposition Africa in a global system. In this context, identity re-emerged as an important category in South Africa, despite the ANC's call to non-racialism, as people jostled for what they perceived to be scarce resources. Social relations in South Africa have always been defined in terms of difference based on whether people were 'white', 'Black African', 'Indian' or 'coloured'. The term Black African is newly constructed. 'Black' or 'African' were used in the past to denote people who were of Nguni origin, or in 'other' terms, people who were not white or coloured. Black was also used to denote a political identity in the liberation struggle and it included everyone that was not white (see Kuhn 2001:21). I have chosen to use Black African because 'African' presently refers to all who live on the continent while 'Black African' has the same constricted meaning as 'African' did under apartheid rule.

During the apartheid era, the state imposed racialized identities onto people and, more often than not, did not take into consideration people's everyday experiences with their identities. Two processes are occurring simultaneously. The state is reinventing itself as an African nation with an 'African' identity that has not been clearly defined to date. Secondly, groups within South Africa are grappling with the process of (re-)naming

themselves within this new political milieu. The South African state needs to redefine itself in a post-apartheid, globalizing world and is attempting to do so through the creation of a 'new' South African identity that can be shared by all South Africans. The introduction of an overarching 'African' identity has created insecurities in South African society and has resulted in people holding on to their apartheid-defined identities. How can South Africanness be created in the light of a fragmented society? Can we use old identities to forge a new identity and can we move beyond race and ethnicity in the twenty-first century? What can the state and groups do to construct identities that depict novel 'imagined communities'? How does the state overcome the past to forge a new society based on political ideals of justice, democracy, equality and humanism?

This thesis is set in a particular space that is unique in its demography and the types of social relations between different groups of people which arose as a result of colonial practices and apartheid laws. The Western Cape Province occupies a region on the southern most area of South Africa. It is arguably the most picturesque part of the country but also the most segregated in the post-apartheid era despite the repeal of racist laws in the early 1990s. The Western Cape has a population of 4 524 million which makes up 8.8% of the total South African population (Census 2005).¹ What makes the Western Cape unique compared to the rest of South Africa is that that the population designated under apartheid law as 'coloured' comprises 53.9% of the total population in the province while Black Africans total 26.7%, whites 18.4% and Indian or Asian 1%

¹ I have rounded off the census figures to the nearest thousand.

(Census 2001).² These demographics differ from the rest of the country's racial make-up because of the peculiar history of the area.

The demographics also skew the language statistics in this province: 56.3% of the population speaks Afrikaans while 23.7% speak Zulu, and 19.3% English. As a majority group in the province, coloured people influence the numbers of Afrikaans speakers, unlike anywhere else in the country. The Western Cape was until the late 1980s a job reservation area for coloured workers which meant that Black African workers could not move into the area and occupy jobs especially those in the textile and fishing industries. This practice tainted relations between coloured and Black African workers with the result that the movement into the province of the latter group created much tension and the perception that Black Africans were going to 'steal' jobs from coloured workers. The strained economic relations have moved into the political and social realms and continue among workers and unemployed people today.

The Europeans and the Chinese passed by the Cape on their respective journeys of discovery. The first Chinese sailors set foot on the African continent at the Cape in the early 1200s while the Portuguese pass by in the 1400s, followed by the Dutch and the British. A Dutch colony was established at the Cape in 1652 as a halfway station for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) fleets that passed by on their way to the East. The Europeans and the Asians encountered indigenous groups at the Cape who came to be known as the Khoi Khoi and the San, or more derogatorily, the Hottentot and the Bushmen. Bartering was established and social relationships were forged. These relations remained unequal throughout history and into the apartheid era as the children of the

² I acknowledge that these identities are constructed yet battle with the stereotypes created by those discrete categorizations. My writing is influenced by my experiences as a person of colour during the apartheid era.

KhoiSan and the European settlers were deemed to be of lower social status than the whites and later were elevated above the Nguni people who had trekked south into the region from the North of the Orange and Limpopo Rivers which still today form a natural border around South Africa.

Race did not initially play a role in social relations at the Cape but once slaves were brought into the region a social hierarchy emerged between the settlers who were white and constructed themselves as superior to the indigenous and free KhoiSan. At the lower end of the rung were the slaves brought in from Indonesia and East Africa who were of a much lower social status and also darker because of their geographical origins. The society during British rule established a social hierarchy that placed importance on respectability and status, which made it easier for people who were not European or white to 'ascend' into white society because of their levels of respectability acquired through education and 'proper' social manners. In addition to this, despite the National Party's segregationist policies, the apartheid era also proved to have spaces through which coloured people could slip and apply for reclassification as white. Black African people could also apply to be reclassified as coloured if they could pass as coloured.

The politics of the era were never clear cut. Within each community people made use of the opportunities offered by the apartheid system, such as reclassification, and improved their lives as best they could, while on the other hand other people from that same community vociferously fought the apartheid state and collectively adopted a Black identity that was politically rooted rather than racially defined. The coloured community is marked with collaborationists and oppositionists who deftly determine their politics based on their political and social needs. After decades of apartheid the United

Democratic Front was established and comprised supporters of the banned African National Congress. The UDF, with a predominantly coloured membership, never laid claim to being a coloured organization. Its more senior members self-identified as Black and spoke about non-racialism and Black consciousness. The UDF was one of the organizations that played a major role in the demise of the National Party government which subsequently unbanned the South African liberation movements and freed Nelson Mandela in February 1990. New opportunities emerged politically and socially, as people began to grapple with new identities in an attempt to rid themselves, and the country, of apartheid history.

Under apartheid 'coloured' was either accepted by members of a community or rejected depending on the politics of the individual and the group. In the post-1990 period leaders from the coloured communities who were active in the resistance organizations began to publicly claim colouredness as their identities. These were people who had denied the imposed coloured identity in the past and who now were embracing it at public fora. This thesis interrogates why this was happening. Why would someone, who had previously rejected a particular identity because it was imposed and carried a normative value that had been determined in relation to whiteness, embrace that same identity? My respondents argue that this was a necessary cultural spiritual process with the objective of reclaiming an identity that had been negatively stigmatized under colonialism and apartheid. They argue that coloured identity remains marginal in the 'new South Africa' because their communities perceive the newly constructed overarching African identity to be exclusive. I also ask how 'old' identities are

reconstructed into 'new' identities and whether this process is underpinned by fear of being excluded or political and economic expediency.

This thesis determines that coloured elites have constructed a marginal identity in a South African context across three periods: colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid. I define 'elite', in a South African context, to mean political leaders who have access to media and public fora. The respondents in this thesis have been and some still are political leaders in their communities. They have political stature that affords them the attention of the media and they generate public debates around issues which they identify as important to themselves, their communities and the country. This thesis examines the choices these elites have made in terms of their communities' identities and the political decisions they have made based on those identities across this historical trajectory. Discourse plays an important role in framing identity choices, therefore this thesis examines the ways in which identities and communities are imagined by the state and by the people themselves. Even though individual and group agency is sometimes constrained, groups and individuals attempt to reconstruct their identities in ways that more accurately depict the material experiences of their existence. If historical and existing institutions and structural arrangements limit identity choices, is it possible to construct 'new' identities within the existing boundaries set by history and existing institutional and structural arrangements? (Cohen 1999). It is important to determine how people change and renegotiate their identity choices under conditions that limit those choices.

Who is 'Coloured'?

The coloured people were defined as a 'mixed' race group that was neither white nor Black. It was constructed as a buffer group between the two racially divided extremes in this country. Some people accepted the imposed apartheid identities while others opposed the state's denial of their agency to choose their own identities. For this reason coloured identity is very peculiar to the South African context, however, it also provides a snapshot of the experiences of many marginal groups across the world. The Cold War and the reconfiguration of power relations within the world have provided opportunity spaces for marginal groups to claim a space and identity for themselves. How are marginal identities reconfigured and re-imagined in this globalizing world? How do they define themselves, obtain recognition and negotiate with power? These questions make it imperative that we provide a historical overview of how the state and coloured elites construct coloured identity. Under the colonial and apartheid eras colouredness was an in-between category, supposedly without a culture, without an obvious and authoritative history; and arguably without a political home.³ Coloured identity in South Africa remains a hotly contested subject in the twenty-first century and will continue to be so as more and more people disrupt imposed racial categorizations (see Erasmus 2001, Wasserman and Jacobs 2003, Hendricks 2000b, Jung 2000, Zegeye 2001a). This work provides a new perspective on coloured identities as they relate to the social, political and economic constraints placed on the identity by larger structural relations.

³ Under apartheid the four main race groups were Black (African), White, Coloured and Asian. Others did exist within the categories of coloured. The category black included those people who were born of parents who were from one of the indigenous tribes of Africa.

Colouredness historically dates to social interaction with the first Dutch settlers who arrived in the 1600s.⁴ The local people of the southernmost region of the continent, the Khoi and San, entered into economic and social relationships with the white settlers. When East African, Indonesian and Indian slaves came into the region and the indigenous tribes from the north moved south, a 'new' identity evolved through social and political interaction between the various race groups.⁵ 'Miscegenation' between the white settlers, the indigenes and the slaves, gave rise to a 'mixed' race person. The assumption that coloured identity was born from a combination of different people is problematic because it incorrectly assumes that identities are primordial and fixed. Identities are not immutable therefore they should be examined temporally to determine how they have addressed and dealt with changing relations within a society.

Coloured identities occupied a space that previously did not exist; one that was deemed to be 'better' than Black African but not quite white. Courtney Jung asserts:

Coloureds by their very existence, inhabited an oppositional space. They existed at the intersections of multiple racial classifications, occupying a residual, clearly non-racial category. Coloureds defied racialization. Under apartheid, those 'outside' racial stereotypes were redefined in racial terms, to support the ideological proposition that the world was naturally divided into separate races that belonged apart (2000:168).

Under colonial rule the state created a new racialized identity into which people labeled 'coloured' could fit. The apartheid government legislated those identities into formal existence and maintained racial differences until the early 1990s when F.W. de Klerk's watershed speech unbanned the liberation movements and released Nelson Mandela after

⁴ Anthropologists have found evidence of Song Dynasty (960-1279) at Mapungubwe. A Chinese map dating back to 1320 shows the route around and details of the Cape of Good Hope. The Portuguese rounded the continent in the 15th century but did not settle at the Cape.

⁵ I acknowledge that race is socially constructed and only use the word 'race' in order to discuss the relationship between the various groups of people in South Africa.

twenty-seven years in prison. Coloured elites have opened up debates since 1994 on coloured identities and have proposed that communities and individuals re-imagine their identities and frame them in terms they have chosen for themselves: KhoiSan, creole, slave-descendent, and African being the more common self-chosen identities. Elites who have chosen these identities have begun to debate with the overarching concept of 'Africanness' in an attempt to determine where they fit into the new political, economic and social dispensation.

Why Identity?

Identity is the way people define themselves and how others see them. It includes cultural practices, language, gender, religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, class and many more attributes that make people who they are. Identities are constructed relationally and are multiple and fluid. Context plays an important role in which identity is more dominant than others at particular times. An identity is simultaneously imposed and self-defined because the individual defines her identity based on how others see her even if she is not constrained by oppressive politics. Identities become important if the individual perceives her identity to be under threat. For example, if a state institution comprises a great number of workers from one particular ethnic group within society and she is not of that group, she will probably believe that her marginal identity will limit her access to resources and to the public space. Identities are not only important in the newly democratized South Africa. The conflicts in the Balkans, Burundi and Rwanda, the Basque areas in Spain and in other areas marked by secessionist movements all point to battles for the right to self-identify and for a group of people to choose a particular path

for themselves. Identity politics has become a driving force behind these conflicts of the late twentieth century.

This thesis concentrates on coloured identity specifically in the Western Cape but the same processes of identification and renegotiation are being experienced and undertaken by people from other groups within South Africa. Whiteness, Blackness, Indianness are all being redefined by people who self-identify as such in order to accommodate their own new understandings of who they are how they fit into the larger South African landscape. Melissa Steyn (2001) and Max Du Preez (*Pale Native*, 2003) have interrogated whiteness in the post-1994 South Africa and show how white people redefine themselves as African. Swathi Veeravalli's (2003) work on Indian identities in South Africa examines the renegotiated Indian identities that have emerged since apartheid ended. Courtney Jung's entitled *Then I was Black* (2000) traces the development of new conceptions of Blackness, colouredness and whiteness in a 'new' South Africa. These works all show how different groups of people have reacted to the new opportunity spaces to redefine or re-identify themselves. As Yarwood argues in her study of hip-hop in South Africa, "the universe of potential racial identities and race in South Africa is no longer situated in one place or space but rather inhabits a deterritorialised shifting cultural space" which is defined as public spaces where people renegotiate and redefine their identities.

Because identities are constructed relationally, it is important to define the public sphere in which those identities are negotiated and constructed. There are many public spheres in which the state and elite citizens interact in order to create common understandings of the broader society. The state dominates the official public sphere and

attempts to enforce conformist behaviour on the citizenry, but numerous oppositional public spheres emerge parallel to the dominant space as a result. These counter-publics and the official public sphere house the debates and discourse around citizenship, power, people-hood and nationhood (Smith 2003), among others. It is within these spaces that the state constructs official identities and groups construct counter-identities. Coloured was constructed as an official identity as 'not white' and 'not African'. In response to this people constructed themselves as 'so-called coloured' in order to deny the term or as 'Black' in order to reject colouredness completely. The ways through which elites negotiate their position within this space and how they offer counter-identities in response to state-imposed identities, should be made visible; that is what this work attempts to achieve.

Paula M.L. Moya (2000) asks "Why [study] identity?" when "much of what has been written about identity seeks to delegitimize, and in some cases eliminate, the concept itself by revealing its ontological, epistemological, and political limitations" (Moya 2000:2). Despite the shortcomings of the traditional concept of identity which have been exposed by postmodernism and post-structuralism, the concept is still important today. Rogers M. Smith argues that because identity is not paid sufficient attention by political scientists, the significance of the "processes, through which senses of political membership, allegiance, and identity are formed and transformed" is lost (2004:42). It is important for scholars to examine the construction and reconstruction of political identities in order to achieve a more complete picture of political behaviour. National identities within the context of the nation-state comprise many other identities, many of which often trump the former. People choose an identity which foreshadows

their other identities; this process is important because it highlights why particular identities are more important than others at various times and which factors influence identity formation. Often instrumentalist and economic interests are listed as primary to identity formation, however, as Smith posits, “just as economic interests influence our affiliations, so those affiliations shape our sense of economic interests” (Smith 2004:51). It is for this reason that scholars of the politics of identity should move beyond the narrow emphasis of the nation-state into the more nuanced arena of other social identities in the public sphere.

Contrary to Moya and Smith’s support of the study of identity to produce a better understanding of politics, Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) article “Beyond ‘Identity’” (2000) argues against the use of identity as an analytical category. They claim that “‘identity’ is too ambiguous, too torn between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis” (ibid.:2). The authors distinguish between a ‘category of practice’ and ‘scientific’ categories which facilitate the study of human social behavior easier. Concepts which straddle these two categories are ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nation’ (ibid.). This work aims to do ‘identity-talk’ without reifying identities, because it is important that the ways in which people discursively construct their identities are interrogated. Perhaps this is what Brubaker and Cooper refer to as an ‘identification’ of oneself and others within particular and general contexts (ibid.:14). This work uses the term identity as it refers to a category of people but in effect refers to ‘categorical identification’ processes by people of themselves and others (15) in terms of race, class, gender, nationality, and so forth.

Identities are also important because various citizens are associated with a particular group for social or political reasons, based on where they come from, their access to political power, and their aspirations for the future. For purposes of this dissertation, I will only examine the processes that give rise to groups' political identities. Because there is often incongruence between how groups see themselves and how society perceives them, groups could feel marginalized and sometimes invisible (Palumbo-Liu, 2000:773), therefore it is important to examine how those groups construct political identities in relation to citizenship and their access to the public sphere.

Race and Ethnicity

I argue that race and ethnicity continue to play important roles in structuring political and social relations in South Africa. Pierre van den Berghe distinguishes between race and ethnicity where race is “a group that is *socially* defined but on the basis of *physical* criteria” and ethnicity refers to “shared cultural characteristics such as language or religion” (in Dubow 1994:361, emphasis in original). In an extensive extract Akil Kokayi Khalfani and Tukufu Zuberi explain the South African context of race:

Race is the outward and visible form of social salient physical difference; it is also the flag of the population – the sign by which each racial population distinguishes itself from others, the visible mark of its distinctiveness, and a mark that is borne by everything that emanates from the race. Race is the symbol of both stratification and population identity, because both are aspects of society. Thus, racial identity becomes part of a group's collective identity and its sense of history and culture, but *the group transfigured and imagined in the physical form of skin colour is what appears as race* (2001:174, emphasis in original).

Intellectuals employ race, which is an imposed identity, instrumentally to meet their political demands. Gramsci's organic intellectual facilitates the construction of a common identity based on one or more shared characteristics, such as race and ethnicity, for

material gain (see Omi and Winant 1994, Smith 2003, Hanchard 1994). The colonial and apartheid states constructed coloured identity in a particular way that supported and maintained the establishment of the white-dominated capitalist state. In the post-apartheid period, the intellectuals who have emerged since 1994 have begun to re-imagine new identities that reconfigure South African society in ways that support those intellectuals' needs and objectives; in this case it is a Black African neo-liberalist state that promotes an African identity. Race has now given way to ethnicity as groups that perceive themselves as marginal groups find ways to make themselves more 'African', for example, KhoiSan, white Africans (Afrikaners), and so on.

Since the 1970s it has become more common for people to use 'ethnicity' as a code word for 'race'. Neville Alexander concurs with this by stating that "theories of ethnicity had, by sleight of hand, replaced and subsumed older theories of race in social science discourse" (Dubow 1994:366). I show that race has become synonymous with ethnicity because the common cultural practices of ethnic groups can be linked to the apartheid state's racial categorization of the group. This phenomenon prevails to the present period and continues to generate stereotypes about identities and cultures. For example, most people who practice Islam are deemed to be coloured because during apartheid there were very small numbers of Muslims from North Africa in our communities.⁶ Generally speaking, ethnic groups are made up of members who share cultural practices. They are self-defined groups of people who share cultural identities.

In this sense coloured identity is an ethnic identity as the members of the community share a place and a history (Erasmus 2001). They also share an identity that

⁶ See Baderoon 2001 for a more recent discussion on images of Muslims in the media. See also Davids 1987 and 1992 for discussion on Muslim practices during colonial times. See Lubbe 1987 on Muslim resistance during British rule.

allows them to ‘recognize’ each other because of their phenotypes. In a discussion with coloured women, journalist Gail Smith refers to this ability to recognize each other as racial radar (“I do identify coloured people. It’s the gaydar thing”).⁷ Through an analysis of shared space and history, the constructed nature of coloured identity becomes more evident. I examine how people designated as ‘coloured’ self-identify and give identity to their groups; more specifically I determine how elites identify their groups. Charles Taylor argues that the “core and kernel of identity” comes from the “subject of identity. That is, the person who is identified becomes the source of that identity” (Abdi 1999:149). The indigenes, under the white colonist’s gaze, became the source of their identities. Biological essentialism and representations produced racialized representations of indigenous people in South Africa during the periods of colonialism. This work hopes to disrupt hegemonic ideas of the agency-less subject. Pejorative stereotypes have played a major role in racial segregation in South Africa, therefore it is important that those generalized statements about a group are problematized and disrupted.

Identities are both imposed and chosen in that those identities that are imposed are then either embraced or re-made into an acceptable identity by the named group. Bekker and Leildé distinguish between identities from above and identities from below. Identities from above are constructed and imposed by the state or institutions in order to create “horizontal communal links” and to both include particular people and exclude the Other (2001:4). Identity from below involves a process of creating an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ in order to be a part of a group and to be recognized as such.⁸ These two constructions take place simultaneously. The ‘I’ or ‘us’ cannot exist without the Other. Identities are relational

⁷ Focus Group interview, Johannesburg, 3 April 2006

⁸ See also Tajfel and Fraser (1978) for a discussion on individual versus group identity.

and are shaped through contestation for resources and recognition, and are situated in time and place, therefore shift constantly. Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) distinction between 'internal self-understanding' and 'external categorization' are helpful here in that the former could either include or exclude the latter, however, "[s]elf-identification takes place in dialectical interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge" (ibid.:15).

Identity construction during the colonial and apartheid periods took place both from 'above' and 'below'. Colonial and apartheid constructions were imposed but at the same time the communities who were named took ownership of those names and made meaning and created their own understanding around those names. Bekker and Leildé quote Castells: "although identities can be originated from dominant institutions, they become identities only when and if social actors internalize them, and construct their meaning around this internalization" (2001:5, see also Brubaker and Cooper 2000:14-21). Resistance is always present because as 'official' meaning is created, the communities disrupt those meanings by creating their own identities or responses to those imposed identities. Castells also argues that actors excluded from dominant institutions create "trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society" (ibid.:6). Colouredness therefore is not static, nor do the bearers of the identity lack agency, as the thesis will show.

Insider Re-vision of History

By revisiting racist constructions used during the colonial period, this work does not wish to perpetuate a static and racialized understanding of a particular community in

ways that continue to undermine the dignity and self-determination of that community in the contemporary period. Leela Fernandes cautions scholars against the potential for the other to become “the site for the production and consumption of a modernist authenticity and purity within a decentered, fragmented age of postmodernity” (1999:123). In our attempts to reexamine historical constructions, we could err on the side of ‘othering’ the other yet again. If I am insensitive to the Foucauldian “power/representation relationship” (ibid.:123) and fail to make a concerted effort to situate my analysis within the broader structures of power that exist within South Africa, my work could present the indigenes as ‘authentic’ and ‘pure’ even if I do attempt to destabilize generalist constructions. My position as a Third World Other, by virtue of my colouredness, in the South African context affects my reading of texts and images, and the reading of my audience. “The effects of texts are contingent on the questions of audience and the location of the consumption of texts” (ibid.:124). As a coloured scholar who grew up in the apartheid era, my reading of the texts is different than that of an academic who is based in the ‘West’, or even one who is South African but not coloured. In addition to that, not all coloured readers would experience my sources or my texts in the same way as I have because I have studied and lived abroad and return with different conceptions and perceptions compared to my broader community. Political leanings, education, experiences, exposure to different cultures influence the levels of perception and agreement my readers might have in response to my work. For this reason I am an outsider in terms of my location as a coloured scholar in relation to other scholars who write about race in South Africa, and I am an outsider to my community who might experience their colouredness in a vastly different way than mine.

I also re-view the past in ways that are influenced by who I am and by my experience in apartheid South Africa. By reproducing colonial and apartheid discourse around the 'native', this work might be seen as perpetuating those static notions of racial and ethnic identities. On the contrary, "[t]he representation of the subaltern may simultaneously subvert hegemonic nationalist narratives even as it is implicated within the theory of imperial interests that [Gayatri] Spivak lineates" (Fernandes 1999:125). I both disrupt the representation of coloured identity and play into apartheid constructions of (racial) difference in my work but the latter result is only if coloured identity continues to be viewed as an imposed identity. It is important that re-presentations of colonial subjects do disrupt understandings of whom those people were, therefore this chapter hopes to show the construction of identities in South Africa as a complex and contested process from colonial times to the present.

This work is cognizant of Fernandes' warning and attempts to highlight the early constructions of colouredness that emerged during the colonial period that were later adopted and further developed by the National Party government during the apartheid era. It is with this consciousness that an attempt is made to trace the origins of a coloured identity from a disparate source of identities. Himani Bannerji (1998) argues that representations of history fill in the gaps created by colonial histories, which are also representations; the act of re-presenting the past also allows historically silenced voices to be heard, and is undergirded by the ideologies of the writer. As a result, varying representations emerge from different readings of the past which impact on how a historical identity or event is viewed in the present. Justifications for particular representations vary across time and space. Colonial representations were often

undertaken in the interest of Science and Anthropology, observed the behavior of the 'natives', and depicted them in ways that best suited colonial objectives. These images and discursive constructions created an other whose experiences were different from that of the white colonist and established a hierarchy that supported the latter's belief system. It was necessary for the colonists to represent the other in derogatory or static ways in order to strengthen their own sense of society and self as the more superior party. One cautionary note that needs to be considered is that the category 'colonial/colonist' is not simplistic or homogeneous, but consists of multiple and fluid identities (see Stoler 2002).

I am aware that I have occupied the position of the author as 'mirror' which "involves an injunction to sustain, encourage, and provide confirmation for the global predations and depreations of 'the Big Bad West'" (Narayan 1997:137). The power dynamic within the South African context illustrates this statement at a more local level. In this case, the 'West' could be seen as that which is powerful, meaning whiteness (pre-1994) or Blackness (post-1994); and the 'global predations' would be the oppression of the coloured community. Narayan argues for the 'mirror' to be a face "Returning the Gaze" with a "range of expression and responsiveness" (ibid.). I have attempted to portray "native representations" (ibid.) of experiences throughout this thesis through a 'two-way mirror' to show that despite imposed constructions of particular identities and the constraints placed on them by the state, the coloured people constructed their own identities based on their personal experiences within a structure of unequal relations in a system of racial oppression. Politically self-conscious representations construct subjects discursively in progressive and nuanced ways and hopefully provide alternative ways through which one could read the imagery/images of the group.

A National Identity

To understand contemporary constructions of any identity, it is necessary to examine the historical roots of the process. In order to understand the 'now' we have to return to that point of entanglement, the point of difficulty, and for South Africa that would be the colonial period. It is important to "[work] out what remains of the past, and how we relate to both the past and its remainders, or its traces in the present" (Nuttall 2004:732). Identities are not merely imposed, but are also adopted and adapted by those who choose those identities. Paula Moya argues that "identities are [...] not simply products of structures of power; they are often assumed or chosen for complex subjective reasons that can be objectively evaluated" (2000:9). People adopt identities for many reasons, which relate to access to power, resources and notions of belonging, amongst others.

This thesis also examines the construction of a national South African identity and argues that, in its present configuration that identity is exclusive rather than inclusive of all citizens who claim to be South African. In 1994, the ANC adopted the 'one nation, many cultures' slogan to depict the diversity of South Africa. Communist Party senior member Joe Slovo argued that "[f]orging one sovereign nation is an integral part of the objectives of the national democratic revolution" (Pampallis 1995:24). For this reason, the ANC-dominated state began to construct a single national identity based on a contested 'African' identity, which Thabo Mbeki outlined in his 'I am an African'

speech.⁹ I argue that, instead of being non-racial, the ANC's construction of a national identity is Africanist in its ideology. It could be argued that an African country should have an Africanist identity because,

It is clear why leaders would wish their constituents to identify the new regime with that people's most ancient and glorious values and achievements. And it is clear, as well, why leaders might wish to exercise considerable control over the understanding of their political identity and obligations to which their constituents are exposed (Smith 2003:2).

The introduction of an African renaissance project, *ubuntu*, and an African identity in the post-apartheid period, show how a new South African identity is being constructed by elites within and outside the government. Elites from groups that perceive themselves to be marginal have responded in kind to the state's construction and have created new conceptions of Africanness and have called for a new understanding of *ubuntu*, which I cautiously refer to as neo-*ubuntu*. I argue that *ubuntu* as it is presently understood is not easily accepted by the coloured community because of its Black African roots. There are some parts of the coloured community that deny their connection to Africa and therefore deny any relevance of African values and ideologies to their lives. Neo-*ubuntu* instead, is an exercise, which constructs a people-hood to which coloured elites could add coloured identities in the 'new' South Africa. "Nation-building is thus a notion that embodies two different concepts of democracy: the participation of all citizens in governing their lives and the creation of unity through greater equity" (Pampallis 1995:26). How does a newly democratized state combine both concepts of nation-building in a context characterized by gross racial inequalities?

⁹ Mbeki includes identities such as the Khoi and the San and the slaves, but coloured perception is different. Note, I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6.

Methodology

Gavin Lewis argues that “to study Coloured history one needs to know what a ‘Coloured’ is; yet to accept existing definitions of Coloured is to accept implicitly, and thereby reinforce, the obviously unjust and arbitrarily imposed definitions of a state in the interests of white supremacy” (1987:4).¹⁰ I have not implicitly accepted the imposed identity of colouredness, but neither have I denied the existence of a coloured identity. Instead I have looked at discourses around coloured identity through an analysis of state legislation, state discourses and elite coloured responses to those discourses. I have interrogated and contextualized coloured identity into different spaces and time periods. My interest to define how coloured people have seen themselves in the past and see themselves differently in the present is not an attempt to reify racialised categorizations of people. It is important to understand how these communities created and internalized and simultaneously contested their identities. Finally, I have chosen this area of study to determine how an inclusive national identity could be constructed to portray the diversity of a society and how marginal groups see themselves within a national identity. This work does not question whether coloured identity does or does not exist, but examines how the group was constructed through colonial machinations that led to the emergence of a group identity known as ‘coloured’.

My respondents are coloured elites in the sense that either they have occupied leadership positions in the South African liberation struggle or they have access to the public sphere through their positions as organic intellectuals in their communities. I composed a list of people who were publicly engaged in reconstructing their identities in

¹⁰ See Hattingh 1988 for a comprehensive overview of writings on coloured identity by coloured authors.

the media and on public fora. Ironically, many respondents know each other through their involvement in Black politics but have now chosen different ways in which to define themselves. It is for this reason that I have chosen people from the KhoiSan revivalist movement and the slave project, the creole school of thought and those who self-identify in the post-apartheid as 'coloured'/brown people. I treat each of these group identities as separate for the purposes of this study but in reality they overlap within the communities because people choose to self-identify differently from time to time based on their context. For example, in an intellectual discussion Patric Tariq Mellet might identify himself as 'creole' but among a more general public he might self-identify as 'coloured'. My respondents are discourse and cultural brokers who promote their particular causes fully cognizant of the power of identity categories and attempt to maximize their benefit within the present political milieu which valorizes an 'African' identity.

I conducted 20 two-hour open-ended interviews with intellectuals and leaders from the coloured community. Some respondents I personally identified (Weeder, Abrahams, Oosterwyk, September), while others were recommended to me (Mellet and Kolbe, the KhoiSan revivalists – Burgess, Sassman, Witbooi, Martin and Marks).¹¹ These interviews were recorded with written consent. My position as an 'insider' provided me with access to political leaders like Durand, Cupido and Simmons. I believe that my coloured identity opened doors with these leaders and afforded them the space to tell me things off the record, which unfortunately I cannot use in this thesis. My status as a woman shaped the interview somewhat with my older male respondents as they adopted

¹¹ I held a focus group with middle class women who hold leadership positions in the academe, media, government, and business to determine how individual women informally construct their identities and how they interact within a broader South African context as women identified as 'coloured'. I have attached this interview as an appendix because it shows how elites self-identify and negotiate their identities as individuals rather than how elites construct group identities for their constituencies.

a 'fatherly' attitude towards me and spoke 'at' me rather than answering questions I posed to them. I was also marked as other in my language of choice (English), which made my class visible, while most of my respondents were Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers. Joe Marks noted a further difference by referring to me as "Griqua", which is my grandfather's more local ethnicity and which can be determined through my last name "Ruiters".

There is also a personal story behind this thesis. I grew up in the Western Cape under apartheid law. My parents could not marry because my father was white and my mother self-identified as Black. I grew up in a coloured neighborhood where my friends looked like me and went to schools that were designated coloured. Cape Town was, and still remains, spatially segregated which meant that I did not have friends who were different until I went to Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape. I always considered myself Black and believed that Blackness was an inclusive identifier and was in opposition to apartheid. My colouredness was perceived by people who did not consider me Black therefore I was placed into a stereotypical role before I could introduce myself. This is the experience I carry with me every time I return to Cape Town. And it is for this reason that identification processes became interesting to me in the post-1994 period. Why did I feel uncomfortable when people said I was coloured? What is it about my coloured identity that I wanted to deny? And more importantly, why were so many other activists publicly reclaiming their coloured identities despite their denial of colouredness in the liberation struggle? This thesis is a personal journey for me to come to terms with my own sticky identity and with my country's fascination with identification.

Growing up under apartheid taught me that I had a place and space in which I could be safe (my community and family) and another where I was not allowed. This created a schizophrenic existence because in my community I could be who I was meant to be, while elsewhere I fit others' ideas of who I should be. Language, religion, color, hair, nose, lips, intonation all played a role in determining whether I was acceptable or not. We also policed ourselves – if we were middle class we did not want to be read as *gam* which signifies loud, crass, working class behavior associated with derogatory stereotypes of coloured identities that date back to colonial times. The struggle for liberation from apartheid aimed to break those false ideas and to instill in us an idea that coloured people belonged to a larger Black identity. This was successful to a certain extent, as is witness by the United Democratic Front's (UDF) marches and gatherings in the 1980s. A Black identity forged links between Western Cape communities but these connections were not sustained in the post-apartheid era. This thesis looks at reasons why those links could not be sustained and why people find it difficult to move beyond a particular identification of themselves.

In this study, my coloured identity granted me access to people I knew as political leaders because I knew them during the liberation struggle in the 1980s and 1990s. I could return to them to ask them about their understanding of identity and the political situation within which South Africans found themselves. My colouredness opened doors because I was similar to my respondents, because I spoke the same language of struggle, because I lived in similar conditions. My position as a woman enabled me to be 'taught' by my older male respondents who felt they needed to 'educate' me about the past. My insider status opened doors and unlocked stories and I feel privileged to have been trusted

enough with my respondents' accounts of their personal lives. I remain an outsider though because I interpret their words, theorize them and manipulate their stories to fit my story. I hope they will still see themselves in my work.

Chapter Synopses

My work follows a historical trajectory which starts with the arrival of the colonists in 1652 and ends in the present. The theoretical structure is outlined in Chapter Two and largely uses Cathy Cohen's framework in *Boundaries of Blackness* (1999), which highlights the importance of the history of the group, their institutions, their leaders, their power relations within the dominant group and the strategies they employed to counter or collaborate with that power.

In Chapter Three I examine both state constructions and colonial subject constructions of coloured identities and argue that a vague imagined community (Anderson 1991) had to exist before the state could harness that commonness and construct a formal identity. I argue that race came to colonial society later because, during British rule, status and respectability created boundaries for who was acceptable to colonial society and who was not. As a result of these social rules, coloured elites attempted to enter colonial society through education at the Mission schools, mimicking white forms of respectability, and engaging with white-dominated political institutions.

Chapter Four shows how race emerges in the period during which the National Party ruled South Africa. Apartheid became the order of the day and all people who were not white were required to occupy spaces outside the official public sphere. Black people were forced to create alternative political spaces in order to respond to state discourses on separate development. I argue that these counter-publics (Fraser 1996:118) are in a

dialectic relationship with the state that is both responsive to state discourse and attempts to create a response independent of the official public space.

Chapter Five presents identities that have emerged since 1990 when the South African political environment began to move towards democracy. This period is marked by processes of self-definition, which re-produced historically-based identities such as the KhoiSan and slave identities. Also it examines new conceptions of creolized and brown identities. This chapter shows that identities struggle to escape their historical conceptions, which render new identity constructions difficult.

Chapter Six examines the state's promotion of an African identity within the context of an African renaissance. I interrogate perceptions that the ANC-defined conception of an African identity is limited based on its historical genesis and that marginal groups have not accepted and assimilated the discourse around a Pan-African and national identity based on Africanness. I examine ways through which the state could incorporate all South Africans under the principles of humanness, 'peoplehood' (Smith 2003), *neo-ubuntu*, recognition, dignity, justice, and equality.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis. It provides a synopsis of the arguments and theoretical framework outlined in the thesis. It also offers suggestions for future studies on coloured identity in a multicultural South Africa.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has outlined the aims and objectives of this thesis. It studies the historical elite constructions of coloured identity in an attempt to determine how coloured identities are constructed in a post-apartheid period. It argues that identity

construction is constrained by history, existing institutional arrangements, and state discourses. I assume that identity is fluid, multiple, and negotiated within particular structural relations that constrain new identities. The next chapter examines the theoretical framework of this thesis and lays the foundation for the analysis of historical and contemporary debates on colouredness in a multicultural society.

Chapter 2: Elites, Marginal Identities and the Public Sphere

This chapter examines elite constructions of political identities within a multicultural and 'new' democracy. It is specifically concerned with elites from marginal groups and the subsequent strategies open to them in the public sphere. This is an attempt to understand how political elites, within a democracy, construct and deal with marginal identities that persist in all societies across the world. Elite, in this study, refers to political leaders who have access to public fora and the media and have stature within their communities. They are also endowed with the power to initiate debates around issues that are pertinent to their communities and themselves. This work will depart from the understanding that all identities are socially constructed, and that most identities are constructed by elites. Also, I argue that democracies, by definition, are inclusive and are based on citizen participation that relies on citizens' understanding of identity issues: how and where one's group fits into the political system. It assumes that elites construct identities and ethnicities that are political by building group relations being cognizant of the group's past and present experiences, therefore the history of interactions between groups is important.

Marginal groups are particularly interesting because they do not have access to the dominant public space or to resources and power generally held by the dominant groups. Cathy Cohen's work, *Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics* (1999), provides a theory of marginalization which argues that despite a shared racial identity, African-American society is becoming more and more fragmented due to how elites react to different types of marginalization, which she distinguishes as

follows: categorical, integrative, advanced, and secondary, which each yields a particular kind of politics, both from the state and from the marginal community itself. Elites can only operate within the boundaries of existing relations of power, social structures and constraints and the community's level of openness to new constructions of itself. I argue that elites construct identities that need to resonate with their community, or else that new construction would fail to gain support and take hold in that society. How do elites construct political identities, under what constraints and through which opportunities? Which strategies work and why? And what does this all mean for citizenship within a democracy? These are questions that are asked in this thesis.

Political identities

Political identities are founded on existing relations of power and types of interaction found within a society; they are relational and historical, therefore are negotiated and contested. Because these are political identities, they are formed and performed in ways that attain some material or positional gain for the group. This assumes the existence of a particular system of power relations between identities. It also assumes that as power relations shift, those identities shift and their holders renegotiate them within the public sphere.

Each political identity exists within a specific nexus of class, race, gender, and ethnicity, to mention a few categories open to oppression, and occupies a particular position on the power spectrum, ranging from dominant to sub-dominant. Some identities defy easy categorization and are often referred to as 'hybrid' or 'creole' identities. These hybrid or creole identities destabilize boundaries that neatly separate people along the

lines of ethnicity and race, therefore the state attempts to control those identities. In the post-colonial period, societies have constructed 'mixed' identities more positively as those identities are seen to provide new spaces of being and accommodate a kind of politics where difference is embraced and where people are encouraged to find new ways to perform their multiple identities. The use of the term 'mixed' for particular kinds of identities is problematic: all identities are hybrid in the sense that they are multiple and fluid. This discussion is continued below.

To return to political identities, I argue that the state constructs citizens through recognition and acceptance of their political identities. The state's notions of citizenship assume that citizen participation is central to the success of that political system. I contend that elites attempt to (re)construct identities that conform to state-defined citizenship. Elites, despite their self-interest, attempt to improve their communities' position within the public sphere and operate under particular conditions when they are marginalized. In short, this chapter looks at how elites from marginal groups (re)construct identities in order to create more space for their constituencies in the public sphere.

Marginal Identities

Scholars and politicians usually evoke the term 'marginal identities' when race and ethnicity contribute to differential roles within a society. There are many other categories of oppression, such as gender, class, sexuality, and geography, which give rise to marginalization, but I only examine race and ethnicity in this section. Colonial constructions of ethnic and racial identities laid the foundation for contemporary understandings of those categories. In South Africa, ethnicity and race are often used

interchangeably especially when apartheid-era progressive scholars attempted to divorce their work from apartheid racism. While race refers to phenotypic differences, ethnicity in South African texts referred to that which is 'tribal', 'traditional', or 'backward', and was used to divide society into 'ethnic' (read: racial) groups (see Bekker 1993). Even in the post-apartheid period, there is still a broad reluctance to conceptualize whiteness as an ethnicity. To show the conflation of the two terms, I employ Dvora Yanow's term, 'race-ethnic' identities' (2003). In post-colonial states, where race-ethnic identities persist in the public sphere, questions are being asked as to why these two categories continue to be salient within those states. For example, race-ethnicity remains important in South Africa and in the United States, despite claims of non-racialism and equality. It could be argued that particular conceptions of a narrow national identity, which continues to marginalize and exclude certain people within the public sphere, would lead to a growing demand from and for those marginal groups to be included and heard at a national level. MacDonald argues that non-racialism makes race a "private" matter which "not only preserves race; it also keeps race available for purposes of political mobilization" (MacDonald 2004:632). In societies that claim to be non-racial, accusations of racism continue to emerge, which shows that race-ethnic identities continue to play leading roles in mobilizing people within democracies, especially where there are discrepancies in groups' access to economic resources and political power.

It is true that economic interests could lie behind the continued use of race in the construction of identities, because certain racial constructions support the capitalist system; but that would limit scholarly analysis to economics. Stuart Hall argues that economic reductionism hides the sociological rationale behind race in the twenty-first

century. If one agrees that race and ethnicity are “social or cultural features of ... social formations” (Hall in Essed and Goldberg 2002:40) and that solely focusing on economic issues would limit our understanding of the links identities have with economics, it is imperative that a sociological perspective be employed to examine the structural aspects of race. I would argue that economics is important, especially in the case of coloured identities in the Western Cape. Race and economics are closely intertwined in the post-apartheid South Africa particularly in areas where a community perceives itself as marginal and fighting for scarce resources. It is important therefore that a combination of economics and sociological frameworks be integrated into any study attempting to understand why race-ethnic identities persist in a post-colonial world.

Analysis that employs a non-economic framework would also show how identities become places of belonging (Norval 1996b). Instrumentalism is not the only rationale behind the identity constructions.¹² Elites do drive the initial process, but in order for identities to be accepted, they need to be claimed and ‘reformatted’ by ordinary people who have begun to search for a more representative identity that reflects their daily experiences. Jung (2000) posits that elite-driven identities need to achieve ‘resonance’ within communities. However, elite instrumentalism does lie behind the reconstruction of localized identities (Sharp and Boonzaier 1994), but that process is not necessarily confined to purely economic interests. Psychological or spiritual gain could also be achieved through reconstructed identities, as Steven Robins (1997) argues. Instrumentalism does not always lie behind identity constructions because groups and individuals often reconstruct old, or construct new, identities for spiritual reasons. These

¹² See Douglas 1997 “Reflections on State Intervention and the Schmidtsdrift Bushmen”.

(re)constructions do not always afford the group increased access to the political arena. Instead the group may seek political and social recognition or acknowledgement in the public sphere. This discussion is taken up later in the chapter.

Despite my preference for the term ‘race-ethnic,’ and the common conflation of the two terms, it is necessary to define each term separately as race is not always equal to ethnicity, and vice versa. ‘Race’ refers to discernable physical attributes, such as varying levels of skin pigmentation that define differences between groups of people that are used to define differences. Difference is based on observable “phenotypical variation” (Miles in Jenkins 1997:78) between groups of people. “[R]ace’ is above all a marker of difference, an axis of differentiation” (Frankenberg 1993:138) that depicts difference in a very public and obvious way and is complicated through constructions of what is (not) an acceptable phenotype within a society. Even though, scientifically speaking, race does not exist, it is important to examine the material effects acts of racism have on people who are racially marked.¹³ Some confusion exists around what race ‘is’. Sandra Wallman conflates race with ethnicity when she asserts that race is only one of many ‘ethnic boundary markers’ (in Jenkins 1997:74). Cornel West (in Essed and Goldberg 2002:97), on the other hand, examines how colonial discourses constructed white supremacy through reifying classical aesthetics and cultural norms that were based on Grecian concepts of aesthetic beauty. For West race covers issues of cultural practices and phenotype. With time, Blacks fell outside those historical parameters of what was

¹³ See also Omi and Winant’s (2002) contention that race is “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (2002:123). They state that theories of race have ranged from race being immutable and fixed to being socially constructed, but argue that both these premises should be questioned because the concept of race is based on physical differences, which are utilized for political and social ends purely through the construction of particular phenotypes as Other.

civilized, educated, aesthetically acceptable or appealing and what was not. Therefore modern conceptions of inclusion/exclusion came to be based on racially constructed boundaries.

In short, even if one argues that race does not exist, society discerns difference through phenotypical markers which are endowed with socially constructed norms and values. In this conception of race, the racial categories are discrete and easily measurable, which means that Blacks can not pass as white because societies set clear boundaries (Yanow 2003:163). In contrast, ethnicity is related to cultural practices and “frequently originates in the assertions of group members themselves” (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:27). Self-identification provides agency and group-esteem because if we “constitute the subject in the act of naming it” (Butler and Salih 2004:7), we disempower the subject through naming and racial classification processes. Brubaker and Cooper argue that the modern state has been “one of the most important agents of identification and categorization” (2000:15) and this is evident in the South African state which made “legible” (Scott 1998) boundaries and distinctions between people. The debates that emerged after the formalization of these differences are then limited to those predetermined boundaries and people, in most cases, claim imposed identities for themselves.

Race-ethnic identities are contextually-based “products of human perception and classification” (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:23). Communities are either cohesive because of shared race-ethnicity or are brought together because of race-ethnic classificatory processes. For example, South Africans who speak isiZulu as a home language, originate from KwaZulu-Natal (‘the Zulu Kingdom’), and share other ‘Zulu’

cultural practices bond on the basis of their shared Zulu-ness. The Zulu identity extends beyond a Black racial identity because some whites identify as ‘white Zulus’ by virtue of their shared cultural Zulu-ness.¹⁴ Race-ethnic identities provide social beings with a connection to each other, and to the group, through a recognition that they share either a phenotype or a cultural practice. We create an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991) and foster a sense of belonging through our shared experiences. However, on the downside, the state exploits those similarities that create cohesion within a group and, as a result, highlight differences between groups.

Race-ethnic identities provide the state with criteria to construct particular notions of citizenship. The state employs various strategies that either include or exclude people based on their race-ethnicity. “Categorizing and classifying often lead to or are undertaken for the purpose of scientific and state administrative endeavors, and counting has a similar power to naming” (Yanow 2003:9). Counting controls and disempowers people and groups as states, through naming and counting, “exert their influence over their citizens and residents” (ibid.:22). These processes facilitate the placement of new arrivals into an existing classificatory framework based on race-ethnic identities. Classification also imposes different levels of power onto each group based on their “racial category” (Jenkins 1997:19). These racial categories are then used to control racially marginal groups (Khalfani and Zuberi 2001:164). As a result, a racial nationalism emerges with a dominant race and subordinate races, for example, in South Africa a

¹⁴ See Courtney Jung (2000) for her discussion on Zulu identities in a post-apartheid South Africa. South African singer Johnny Clegg self-identifies as a ‘white Zulu’ and resides in France. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), led by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, identifies itself as a party that represents Zulu-speakers and those who identify with its politics. Initially, though, it was seen to be a ‘Zulu party’. It is argued that the IFP was set up as an internal platform for the exiled African National Congress but the organizations’ paths split in the 1980s as the IFP collaborated with the Nationalist Party in an attempt to gain more political ground for the Zulu people.

Black African national identity supersedes other identities within the nation-state. All relationships are imbued with varying levels of power therefore a raced society would be based on a belief that one racial group has the right to control another group due to the latter's subordinate position, or its majority by numbers.

Race facilitates the state's control over its subjects such as the South African apartheid government employing what Deborah Posel refers to as 'common sense' tools to determine who belongs to which group (in Nuttall 2004).¹⁵ In Yanow's terms, bureaucrats "eyeball" (2003:127) people in order to determine where they belong and, at various historical moments, 'allow' light-skinned, straight-haired Black¹⁶ people to 'pass' as white while others are not. In South Africa and the United States, a pencil test was used to determine which racial group children could belong to. The pencil was passed through children's hair and if it fell straight out, the child was deemed to be acceptably white enough to attend a school identified racially as 'white'. An additional test, called the brown paper bag test, was utilized in the United States which determined which Blacks could 'become' white.¹⁷ If the person's skin tone was darker than the brown paper bag in use, they were deemed to be Black. These 'common sense' tests show how fluid and negotiated identities are and how, ultimately, the state's bureaucrats determine racial identity based on their 'common sense' judgments.

In addition to the state's control over its citizens, people controlled themselves, and others, by 'eyeballing' each other and pointing out whether a person 'belonged' or

¹⁵ See also Geertz 1983 "Chapter 4, Common sense as a cultural system" *Local Knowledge*

¹⁶ Here I use the term 'Black' inclusively meaning everyone who is not white.

¹⁷ Naomi Pabst argues that these tests, and others, "were employed in order to exclude dark-skinned, nappy haired persons from membership in the black elites" (2003:198-9). Both the state and the American Black elite employed the same tests to include/exclude people from membership which shows how the Black elite assimilated the race-based standards set by the state.

not. The 'one-drop blood rule' in the United States denied individuals control over their own racial identities while in South Africa, people who could 'pass' were constantly fearful of being exposed by people who 'knew' and 'recognized' them as one of a particular group. Communities mark their own boundaries through processes of inclusion and exclusion: us/not us. Michael Omi and Howard Winant put it more succinctly: "[r]acial rule can be understood as a slow and uneven historical process which has moved from dictatorship to democracy, from domination to hegemony" (2002:131). The state controls the debate through classification, but if the named group takes on state-divined nomenclature, they are accused of 'false consciousness'. In contrast to being named, self-identified groups empower themselves through an affirmation of their language, culture, history and standpoint. It is important therefore, for political reasons that those individuals and groups who have had an identity imposed upon them, struggle to make sense of their position in an unequal society, and create a new identity that reflects their experiences. Society should insist that new processes be put into place that encourage self-identification and congruency between outsider perceptions of a group and that group's perception of itself. Yanow (2003:7) argues that the lines are "blurred" between identities created through self-determination and those that are imposed by the 'other', but in-group and out-group members continue to have different perceptions of the group.

I contend that we cannot escape incongruence between insider and outsider perceptions of any group. Despite groups self-defining their race-ethnic identities, past constructions of identities have a strong impact on reconstructed identities, therefore new identities often comprise both old and new meanings. Groups emerge because they share common traits, which are race-ethnic. For example, race itself does not necessarily

constitute a group but racial oppression would; neither does shared ethnicity lead to a shared group identity. These factors “facilitate ... group formation” (Weber in Jenkins 1997:10). Groups do not form automatically but are constructed through social inclusion and exclusion. People self-consciously band together due to their shared experiences rather than their shared experiences creating a group identity. A shared language does not lead to cross-class bonding but it does facilitate the construction of a new group. Likewise, members of the same racial group could move from one language group to the next making that particular identity fluid and contextual. However, Everett Hughes argues that “[i]f it is easy to resign from the group, it is not truly an ethnic group” (in Jenkins 1997:10). This is a contentious statement because it assumes that there is an essence to ethnicity that cannot be discarded. Ethnicity, like all identities, is socially constructed, therefore it is easy to deny an ethnic identity but we do not often do so because, at some level, we need to belong to groups. Race-ethnicity is “collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal self-identification” (ibid.:14).

It is this recognition of shared groupness that Cornell and Hartman (1998) define as a common bond, real or perceived, between people who share a common culture or share experiences.¹⁸ I concur with Cornell and Hartmann (1998) that ethnicity can be self-ascribed but argue that it is sometimes removed from the agency of the holder and utilized by the dominant power for political purposes. “It is not necessary – perhaps not usual – that an ethnic designating term is itself introduced by a dominant authority; the name will likely have an older usage quite independent of its transformed application”

¹⁸ See also Baum 2004.

(Wilmsen and McAllister 1996.:5). In the South African case, a group identity formed between subjects who shared “memories of colonization and migration” (ibid.:16) which shows that factual genetic links are not important to group formation, rather that the individuals perceive there to be one. The state later named this group ‘people of colour’ for classificatory reasons and imposed its power over its members and using the group’s own terminology against it.

Historically, ‘race-ethnic’ (Yanow 2003) groups lose and gain power as boundaries between groups shift and different constructions of citizenship are created.¹⁹ Race-ethnic identities reflect a “historical moment with its attendant sociopolitical ‘realities’” (Yanow 2003:15) which means that at another historical moment those identities could be constituted differently. The state’s categorization of its subjects shifts from period to period while, simultaneously, subjects accept or reject those identities. Under *apartheid* light-skinned, sharp-featured, non-kinky-haired Black Africans could apply for reclassification by the state and be admitted into a more economically viable, or socially acceptable group such as ‘Coloured’ or ‘Indian’. Those whose phenotypes were not sufficiently vague were denied that privilege. The *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa*, compiled and published by the South African Institute of Race Relations, a state funded institution, regularly reported on how many ‘Africans’ became ‘Coloureds’, how many ‘Coloureds’ became ‘White’, and unexpectedly, how many ‘Whites’ became ‘Other’. In 1978, 192 South Africans were reclassified as follows:

¹⁹ Dvora Yanow (2003) examines how “peoples” (2003:viii) are created in the United States through categories of race and ethnicity and how public policy, and the administration thereof, constructs different types of citizens. She refers to the American state’s discourse of “race-ethnic” identities (ibid.), which characterizes the interchangeable use of race and ethnicity. Yanow’s term is applicable to the South African context for two reasons: firstly, race and ethnicity have been used interchangeably, and secondly, ‘ethnicity’ has often euphemistically been replaced for ‘race’.

Cape Coloured to White	150
White to Cape Coloured	10
Indian to Malay	6
Malay to Indian	2
Cape Coloured to Indian	3
Cape Coloured to Chinese	2
Indian to Cape Coloured	10
Indian to White	1
White to Malay	1
Black to Indian	4
White to Chinese	3 (Gordon 1980:72) ²⁰

The numerous racial categories show how the South African government constructed race in order to divide-and-rule a Black majority. The constructions of coloured were even more ludicrous: Cape Coloured, Griqua, Cape Malay, Other Coloured, Bastards all denoted in-betweenity. More will be said about this in a later chapter. The numbers hid stories that reflected people's experiences and explained, to a certain extent, why they changed their classifications. For example, Indian people could own shops in places other than their areas of residence. Coloured people lived in better areas than black people, and the state conferred on Chinese and Japanese subjects an 'honorary white' status. These examples above provide proof that race-ethnic categories are not fixed, that identities shift and change as new social realities are sought or arise.

Censuses and control

As seen above, the state attempts to control its citizens through categorization, numbers and naming. Appadurai defines the processes of classification in terms of group identities and examines each group's position in the "political landscape" (1996:114).

²⁰ See also Khalfani and Zuberi 2001 for a more complete catalogue of classifications used by the South African state between 1911 and 1996.

Brubaker and Cooper argue the same point in that censuses control people in a 'classificatory grid' (2000:15). Citizenship differentially places its citizens in the political public space and determines citizens' varied access to the power the state has afforded them.²¹ Appadurai argues that the introduction of the census in British-controlled India both controlled the indigenous people and created "the conditions for new strategies of mobility, status politics, and electoral struggle" (1996:116). Classifications and enumerations of people, places, animals and plants put "different weights and values on existing conceptions of group identity, bodily distinctions, and agrarian productivity" (ibid.) thereby creating conditions favorable to assimilation and upward social mobility. "The Act of Enumeration was an act of defining the colony for the civilized European world. The pre-modern censuses were a key element in the colonial process of transforming the identity of the African subject" (Khalfani and Zuberi 2001:173). The 'original' and 'uncivilized' African subject was transformed into a colonial subject who aspired to be assimilated into colonial society and attempted to move up the social ladder by acquiring education, social respectability and standing.

Appadurai's study of colonial India shows that the colonial system encountered an existing form of hierarchy based on the caste system, which they assimilated into their own classificatory format.²² The British, and the Dutch, on their arrival in South Africa, did not find a race-ethnic hierarchy on their arrival but introduced one based on British

²¹ See also Timothy L. Alborn (1999) "Age and Empire in the Indian Census, 1871-1931" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol 30 Issue 1, pp61-89 in which he emphasizes the sociopolitical consequences of various census categories. See also Dvora Yanow (2003) *Constructing 'Race' and 'Ethnicity' in America: Category-Making in Public Policy and Administration* where she examines the role censuses have played in constructing race-ethnic identities in the United States.

²² In the American context, Myrdal's use of 'caste' refers to "a rigid social stratification (which for blacks, has meant subordination), essentially inherited, with the sort of staying power that gives it the look of permanence" (Karst 1989:251).

conceptions of social status, civility and respectability. ‘Rigid social stratification’ came later in the nineteenth century. Even though indigenous bodies were being counted and classified since the 1650s (Khalfani and Zuberi 2001, Zuberi and Khalfani 1999), the first official South African census occurred in the late 1800s and, as in India, “bodies were given quantitative values ... associated with ‘dynamic nominalism’..., that is, the creation of new kinds of self by officially enforced labeling activities” (Appadurai 1996:125).²³ ‘Dynamic nominalism’ also points to the varied constructions of identities over time and political epoch.²⁴ Census-defined and state-imposed identities were later either assimilated or rejected by those who were labeled through those processes.

Initially, Appadurai asserts, the Indian classificatory system freed the indigenous people from “the specificities of the agrarian terrain” (ibid.:126) and provided them with greater access to the larger public sphere. This also holds true for the South African case where indigenous groups were forcibly moved off the land into urban areas to obtain employment through the introduction of land tax and other laws which prevented indigenous people from owning land. Ultimately, the white state constructed citizenship on the basis of ‘bioracial’ characteristics that either provided access to or exclusion from the public sphere.

The enumeration of the social body, conceived as aggregations of individuals whose bodies were inherently both collective and exotic, sets the stage for group difference to be the central principle of politics. Linking the idea of representation to the idea of communities characterized by bioracial commonalities (internally)

²³ Annual enumerations of various settler populations were conducted from 1657 to 1785 and from 1805 to early 1900s (Zuberi and Khalfani 1999). Populations were enumerated for numerical purposes (livestock, produce, property, consumption) and for taxation purposes when “‘Inhabitants’ of the Cape Colony over sixteen years of age – the taxable population – were to be entered into the Colonial Registers [while] Africans were enumerated by proxy” (ibid.:4). The ‘Coloured’ classification was introduced in 1705 but not used between 1744 and 1840. It was abandoned in 1865 and only used again in 1911 when the Union was constituted (ibid.:6).

²⁴ Hacking (1986) coined the term ‘dynamic nominalism’.

and bioracial differences (externally) seems to be the critical marker of the colonial twist in the politics of the modern nation-state (Appadurai 1996:130).

The public sphere was characterized by a politics of difference in which the state controls and orchestrates social relations between subjects. These differences are seen to be “incommensurable” (ibid.) and therefore demand differential treatment from the state through taxes, geographical control, the franchise and legislation. The state’s objective, through censuses, was to keep its categories separate and manageable, despite its claims to democracy and equality. Equality through citizenship did not extend to Black or marginal people. “Among full members of the community, the ideal of equality prevails; as to outsiders, the issue of equality seems irrelevant” (Karst 1989:43). In the US, Blacks had been constructed as inferior and as a result had been “subjugated by the dominant race”. Even after emancipation, Blacks were still subject to whites (ibid.:43-49). This subjugation played a major role in elite constructions of citizenship and identities.

Passing

‘Passing’ disrupts state-imposed categories. An individual who is not white who pretends to be something she is not is accused of being a ‘play white’.²⁵ “Passing is an act of disguise: masking those features that mark one as a member of a subdominant group in order to be identified *by others* as a member of the dominant group. It is the ultimate in observer-identification” (Yanow 2003:100, emphasis in original). If the bureaucrat determines that the person *looks* white, despite that person not *being* white,

²⁵ See Zoë Wicomb’s *Playing in the Light* (2005) for a fictional account of a daughter’s discovery of her family’s ‘play white’ identification during the apartheid era. Wicomb also asserts that ‘playing’ implies a joy whereas the action of ‘playing white’ hides years of pain and denies any playfulness because of the watchfulness that is required of the person doing the ‘playing’.

the official would change that person's racial classification. What is important in this context is that the new designation is accepted '*by others*' in that group: group acceptance is more important than genetics. If someone from a 'lesser' group could maintain the social behavior and appearance of the other 'higher' racial group, then they would be allowed to pass. Perception counts more than reality in this case. Because race was inextricably tied to an economic hierarchy in apartheid South Africa with whites, those who could 'pass' as white reaped the benefits assigned to whiteness, while those who could not reclassify themselves into a 'higher' group, remained on the other end of the economic and social scale.

Self-identification and passing are acts of "resistance" because they "subvert ... practices of other-identification" (Yanow 2003:100). Yanow asserts that reasons for passing range from either wanting to "disappear 'forever' from one's birth community to an intention 'to disappear' one's birth identity publicly while maintaining the masked identity in private" (ibid.:101). Passing also allows the individual access to a world of privilege and status to which they would normally not have access. Hanchard refers to this as "an attachment to whiteness" (1999). Despite individuals' 'passing' rather than groups, passing "renders personal identity as an expression of group identity in the form of group membership" (Yanow 2003:102.). The individual who passes successfully adopts the identity of the recipient group in terms of its "categorical prototypes" of race and culture (ibid.).

Society's reliance on the 'purity' (prototype) of races encounters problems when race is complicated through a production of a new space via interracial relations. Norval argues that "an emphasis on homogeneity, purity, and authenticity always occurs at the

expense of the recognition of difference and diversity” (in Nash and Scott 2004:277). ‘Mixed race’ or ‘interracial’ bodies create problems within a world where the dichotomy of white/black still exists. Racialized societies construct and perpetuate assumptions about the purity of the hegemonic race against which every Other is seen to be inauthentic or impure. “A race ... is defined not by its purity but rather by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination. Bastard and mixed-blood are the true names of race” (Young 1985:180). In the light of the socially constructed nature of race and ethnicity, people have begun to experiment with various identities to find a space in which they belong.

Social context and the group’s position within a society are necessary to determine why the group either accepts or rejects its identity.

At the level of seriality racial position is constructed by a relation of persons to a materialized racist history that has constructed racially separated spaces, a racial division of labor, racist language and discourse, and so on ... like gender structures, class or race structures do not primarily name attributes of individuals or aspects of their identity but practico-inert necessities that condition their lives and with which they must deal (Young 1994:732).²⁶

This is true, but we live in a world where *Race Matters*, as Cornell West succinctly declared in his book (2001), because race is made to matter through its relationship to economic status and power. In race-ethnic societies, economic power is often tied to the hegemonic identity within that society, therefore the materiality of people’s lives forces them to take cognizance of their positions in that society. If the individual finds herself in a disadvantaged position she will attempt to improve her status through gaining access to better employment, marrying ‘up’ or, if she phenotypically can, through ‘passing’.

²⁶ Sartre referred to the series as a ‘practico-inert reality’ where “social objects and their effects are the results of human action; they are practical. But as material they also constitute constraints on and resistances to action that make them experienced as inert” (Young 1994:724-6)

Interestingly, whites do not pass ‘down’ to Blackness, or a contextually lower category, but instead Blacks pass ‘up’ to whiteness.²⁷ Because the upward mobility of passing is clearly visible to society, people who pass are often accused of instrumentalism or opportunism (Yanow 2003:103), but the flip side of economic and social gain is a loss of family, community and “a deep-rooted feeling of not belonging” (ibid.). The need to ‘belong’, the act of ‘passing’ and the fear of being ‘discovered’ assume that there is an essence to every identity that people need to find and secure for themselves. What happens when an identity cannot ‘find’ and ‘secure’ a sense of belonging and escape discovery?

‘Errors’ and ‘Mistakes’

The terms ‘race-ethnic’ and ‘passing’ assume that discernable racial and ethnic boundaries exist between categories but, as Yanow determines, “more and more individuals find themselves not fitting into single race-ethnic categories” (2003:x). This inability to define a group or an individual complicates the use of race-ethnicity in census processes as “[t]hey claim membership in multiple categories, or they don’t fit into any at all ... These individuals are categorical ‘surplus’ or ‘leftovers’” (ibid.). The United States census officials view these individuals as ‘errors’ or ‘mistakes’ in census processes (ibid.:70). Also, the state attempts to control these transgressors of race-ethnic boundaries by assigning them a negative status of ‘Other’, as in ‘White’, ‘Black’ or ‘Other’. “In Brazil mulattoes defied control” (Marx 1998:25) while in South Africa coloureds were

²⁷ Dominant groups do not often pass into subdominant groups except as an experiment, for example, John Howard Griffith passed as Black in *Black Like Me* (cited in Yanow 2003:102).

forcibly inserted into a state-created group designed specifically for them. The 'one-drop rule' effectively denied people the ability to self-identify as 'mixed race'. Yanow suggests that 'mixed race' is not considered in race-ethnic trait lists because "it would upset the clarity that discrete, bounded, categorical essences putatively have" (2003:172).²⁸ Those people who are 'mixed race', 'mulattoes', 'coloureds', '*mestiza*', '*métissage*', 'hybrids', 'errors' and 'mistakes' defy "blood purity" and represent "danger: proximity could lead to contagion and contamination" (Yanow 2003:194).²⁹

Two processes come into play when the state names and controls its subjects. Firstly, the state marginalizes people who do not fit the 'prototype' by means of public policy and legislation that prohibits their full participation in the public sphere. Secondly, these 'other' societies separate themselves from the center through a different political and cultural expression from the 'norm'. In the Canadian context, Alvin Kienetz speaks of "Euro-aboriginal hybrid societies" who began to see themselves as "'a people apart'" (1983:4). Marginalization is both other-imposed and self-imposed. In its historical meaning hybridity includes images of creole languages and cultures, pidgin and miscegenated children, "which were seen to embody threatening forms of perversion and degeneration" (Young 1995:5).³⁰ Robert C. Young argues that hybridity "assumes ... the

²⁸ To date the US has five race-ethnic categories: Alaska Native/American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, and white. "Much of the struggle to include a 'mixed race' category in Census 2000 [in the United States] was ... an effort to make a personal story narratable, to make visible and to accord legitimacy to a social identity and the individuals holding it who have been silenced and 'disappeared'" (Yanow 2003:194).

²⁹ The term 'mixed race' has only recently emerged in the South African context because parents who give birth to 'mixed race' children balk at naming them 'coloured' due to the historical stigmatization of coloured people.

³⁰ Nancy Scheper-Hughes uses Erving Goffman's concept of "spoiled identity" in her work on a community in South Africa. She defines "spoiled identity" as resulting from "the stigmas of physical difference, of ethnicity and 'tribe', and the stigmas of behavior and morality, to which [she] now add[s] the stigmas of history and place" (2001:2). This brings to mind Sarah Gertrude Millin's classification of coloured people as 'God's stepchildren' in her 1924 novel of the same name.

prior existence of pure, fixed and separate antecedents” that still “repeat [their] own cultural origins” (1995:25). Erasmus echoes Young’s assumption when she argues that South African coloured identities arise not out of a “race mixture” but through “cultural creativity [and] creolized formations shaped by South Africa’s history of colonialism, slavery, segregation and apartheid” (Erasmus 2001:14).

Traditionally, South African scholars are reluctant to theorize coloured identities as ‘hybrid’ or ‘creole’ because of the associations with the violation of pure categories. A new generation of scholars use the terms in complex ways that depict a past of “appropriation, dispossession and translation in the colonial encounter” (Erasmus 2001:16).³¹ In positive colloquial terms, it is a *bredie*³² of identities. In an attempt to escape the stigma of a ‘coloured identity’, some people self-identify as ‘creole’ or ‘brown’.³³ ‘Hybrid’ identities historically referred to those “groups that straddled and disrupted cleanly marked social divides and whose diverse membership exposed the arbitrary logic by which the categories of control were made” (Stoler 2002:110). Hybridity was a “powerful trope for internal contamination and challenge conceived morally, politically and sexually” (Stoler 2000:20) therefore required control through

³¹ Also see Nuttall (2004) for a more extensive discussion on hybridity and creole identities. Wasserman and Jacobs (2004), on the other hand, critique the use of ‘hybrid’ and ‘creole’. See below.

³² A *bredie* is a stew/casserole which consists of meat, vegetables, potatoes in a brown or tomato gravy served with rice. It is constructed as ‘typical’ coloured/‘Cape Malay’ cuisine. Cape Malays are Muslims who are descendants of the early slaves in the Cape.

³³ Zoë Wicomb points to the use of the word ‘brown’ as proof of the celebration of “in-betweenness that serves conservatism” (1998:102). A brown identity still assumes a mixture of discrete quantities of Black and white therefore does not transcend a racial framework. ‘Creole’ does not adequately describe the post-apartheid/colonial coloured identity as it implies an impurity or imperfection because the original languages/cultures have been defiled. Herman Wasserman and Sean Jacobs critique the use of ‘creolization’ in the South African context because, they argue, it is not a “free-for-all [process because] serious faultlines inherited from the past still exist in South Africa, hampering cross-cultural movement” (2003:16). One cannot claim a creole identity without reference to past oppression.

legislation and social norms based on morality and respectability.³⁴ In the postcolonial period hybridity “reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority” (Young 1995:23). Similarly, Homi Bhabha views hybridity as resistance (Norval 1996a:279).³⁵

In postcolonial scholarship, groups that defy clean race-ethnic categorization are accorded a new and powerful political space. Bhabha refers to a ‘third space’ while Anzaldúa’s (1999) *la frontera* creates a space for resistance politics. The latent strength of ‘hybrids’ that had been feared by the colonial powers is now celebrated. The mixtures of cultures/languages/ethnicities produce a new way of being that could lead to a better society and no longer refer to impurity but to a process in which a new identity is constructed. These two ‘third spaces’, borderlands and frontiers, are still confined by lines of demarcation that limit and restrict and control difference. It is an uneasy space that is surrounded by ‘pure’ areas of identity and only occupied by those who are ‘mixed’, creole, hybrid or *mestiza*. Pabst argues that the ‘third space’

Risks reinscribing the very modes of classification it seeks to critique by establishing an additional category of belonging with its own dominant narratives, its own questions of belonging, its own issues of authenticity and essentialism, and its own policings and regulations (2003:202-3).

I agree with Pabst and add that in some societies in which subdominant groups are marginalized, mixed/hybrid/coloured people require the ‘third space’ to rally support before they can participate fully in the public space. They need to engage with their

³⁴ Later miscegenation was seen to have beneficial outcomes through the introduction of one race into another. See Hendricks 2001 for a discussion on race and sex at the colonial Cape. See Robert J.C. Young’s chapter “White Power, White Desire – the Political Economy of Miscegenation” in *Colonial Desire*, 1995:142-158

³⁵ In contemporary scholarship, Homi Bhabha defines hybridity “as a new location of resistance to essentialist identities and associated political demands” (Mac an Ghaill 1999:59).

difference before they move beyond it to a possible ‘gray’ identity or a ‘racelessness’ (Zack in Pabst 2003:202). Hybrid identities appear to be viable for future politics but they maintain a white/Black dichotomy. Hybridity produces a new identity/language/representation of the familiar, which through elite manipulation and group acceptance, these new identities could become political power houses and influence how politics is practiced in modern societies. However, before we reach that political space in which hybridity is celebrated, we have to deal with societies in which racialism has “demonized ... those of mixed race” (Young in Pabst 2003:205).³⁶

The state’s and other elite constructions of race-ethnic identities play an important role in the creation of a national identity, which is made up of particular sub-identities. The state includes and excludes certain sub-identities which ultimately results in some groups being marginalized. For example, subdominant race-ethnicities in a Black dominated society often either reject Blackness outright or “embody” (perform) an “authentic blackness” (ibid.:206) in an attempt to gain recognition or access to power. Through these processes, identity’s fluidity and fungible borders are exposed. It is due to identity’s manipulability that the state and other elites manipulate existing social identity constructions to meet their needs. Elites construct identities through negotiation. These identities are constructed and contested in the public sphere. This process is driven by elites who wish to (re)instate their groups as citizens and as full participants in the public space. Ultimately their aim is to gain recognition from the state in the public sphere. The state in turn, as a result of elite and other social sources of pressure or acquiescence,

³⁶ ‘Racialism’ is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘racism’ in the South African context. In this context, however, it refers to a recognition that race matters.

either restructures citizenship or maintains its prevailing conceptions to include or exclude those groups.

The Public Sphere

The state, elites and ordinary citizens engage politically in the public sphere. I argue that elites construct and reconstruct political identities in the public sphere through negotiation with the state and their constituencies in the media, on public fora, and in their daily interactions with their communities. These spaces of communication and negotiation occur within the public sphere, which is that space in which people learn to interact as political beings and are/become civil with each other. The public/private split has emerged in the modern era where the “private [is] the realm in which inequalities emerge as the inevitable consequence of freedom” (MacDonald 2004:630) and the public is controlled by laws and the state. There are multiple public spheres in which debates arise in response to or in anticipation of state actions.

Jürgen Habermas defines the public sphere as the space that is shared by citizens; “the realm of freedom and permanence” (1989:4). For Habermas the public sphere is

[T]he sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor (1991:27).

The public sphere is not a spatially defined concept but “comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action ... Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily, and not forever” (Arendt 1958:199). Arendt also assumes that the public sphere predated the state, therefore

incorrectly creates the assumption that all people were equal within the public sphere (see Hanchard 1999:63). Arendt's public sphere is impermanent: individuals and social movements enter or exit the 'space' as political interests converge into political action. The presence of the public sphere assumes that democratic principles exist within that society (Holub 1991:3). Despite its claims of equality, the public sphere excludes the Other by selecting those individuals and groups who conform to a particular conception of the 'citizen', for example, early conceptions created the citizen as male, white, and middle class.³⁷

Habermas (1989) argues that the public space emerged as a result of the evolution of the new nation-state, market driven economies and the dissemination of information by the state through printing presses. Mass communication played a major role in elite constructions of political identities (1989).³⁸ It was therefore a space in which social communication and debate occurred outside the formal parameters of the state and in which key figures and institutions mediated the interaction between the state and the public. "These publics aimed to mediate between society and the state by holding the state accountable to society via publicity" (Fraser 1996:114). It is also a space in which dominant or elite perceptions are constructed and perpetuated, ranging from "activities connected with sheer survival [which] are permitted to appear in public" (Arendt cited in Habermas 1989:18) to issues related to equality and freedom. Theoretically, the public space is occupied by citizens who are equal under law, but citizenship is bounded by the

³⁷ Yanow refers to an "American Adam" who is "the collective embodiment of a 'White' communal perspective. From his perspective (and in many respects, this modern-day Adam has also been male), the salient unmarked characteristics against which he perceives 'Otherness' are 'white' skin, Northern European facial features and hair, and 'unaccented' English" (2003:65).

³⁸ See also Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts (eds.) 2004 "Introduction" in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

political and historical milieu and therefore changes as political eras change. Initially, the most important citizens were the elites or the “bourgeois” who were “the real carrier[s] of the public, which from the outset was a reading public” (Habermas 1989:23). It was broadly assumed that citizenship was constructed around the educated, middle class males who entered the public sphere to debate political issues of the day. Dissemination of the ‘truths’ of the day occurred through scholars to the general public thereby marking the speakers as citizens. This “bourgeois public sphere” (Habermas 1989) is the space in which elite members or “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci 1999) of any community begin to reconstruct their group’s identity in an attempt to counter hegemonic constructions of thereof.³⁹ “The public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of society” (ibid.:30-31). Elites create and elicit public opinion by virtue of their position in society, and pass their constituents’ interests on to the state through the media and other institutions.

These elites construct new understandings of citizenship, which implies either an inclusion or exclusion from the public sphere, and thereby further their objectives. In addition to education and lineage, citizenship was also granted to individuals who owned land and businesses, effectively prohibiting those whom the law prevented from owning those assets. Citizenship could be defined as membership to a political community, most probably the (nation) state and is delineated according to boundaries set by the state for

³⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois’ “Talented Tenth” or a “Critical Organic Catalyst” (West and hooks 1991) could play in the challenge against the status quo. The latter term is more powerful because it shows that the elite effect change that is carried forth by the rest of the community.

its subjects.⁴⁰ For example, lineage and birthplace, property ownership, levels of education and religious affiliations determine ‘true’ subject status on acceptable individuals. Citizenship is conferred on individuals but is a group identity: if one is not “born into the right group,” one’s request for citizenship could be refused (Kymlicka 1995:124). For example, in most cases, only elites could gain access to the public sphere, therefore an ordinary person could only gain access to that space through elite representatives. It should not be forgotten, however, that parallel public spheres coexist and that the ordinary person could gain access to any other public space. The exclusive nature of the ‘official’ public space has changed over time as more and more people become involved in the dissemination of information to the public and also as more people demand to be heard within the public arena. The public sphere expanded to include informal discussions that express the political and cultural interests of many different communities and classes.⁴¹

Public intellectuals use the mass media and other public spaces to disseminate their ideas and interests in a more accessible form to the ‘masses’. Habermas’ “early public space [was] as a domain of self-education and cultivation, [which] tended to ‘level up’, [while] the modern media, in its pursuit of the widest audience, is inclined to ‘level down’” (Crossley and Roberts 2004:6). In their attempts to reach the widest audience by means of the mass media, political parties and other social movements, public elites/intellectuals ‘dumb down’ their information and create ‘sound bites’ for their constituencies and broader public. For this reason, the information in the public sphere is reduced to synopses of race, access to power, economic mobility, exclusion/inclusion,

⁴⁰ I hesitate to refer to South Africa as a nation-state because the state is not constructed as an entity with one nation but rather as a ‘rainbow nation’ in which many peoples live and belong.

⁴¹ In this context culture is defined in terms of language, religion, shared social practices, and so forth.

and so forth. It is in this truncated public discourse, and through the public expression of group interests and cultures, that group identities, often stereotypical, are formed and negotiated.

As mentioned above, there are multiple and “competing counterpublics” (Fraser 1996:118), which all jockey for a space that would afford them the most public attention. Many “subaltern counterpublics” (ibid.:125) contest the bourgeois nature of the public sphere and utilize “alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech” (ibid.). The bourgeois elites countered these alternative norms and styles thereby blocking the Other from the bourgeois public space. Political recognition within the public sphere could counter the power bourgeois elites have over the official or hegemonic public space, which the state elites have monopolized. Marginal identities negotiated for and claimed space within the public sphere and either created their own spaces or took (temporary) control of public spaces to express their subaltern identities and politics. Minstrel shows in the United States, and Cape-based Coon Carnivals (*Kaapse Klopse*) provided platforms for emancipated slaves and free blacks to occupy public spaces that ordinarily were denied to them.⁴² The colonial government allowed the celebrations as they thought they were a source of entertainment for the freed slaves, but the latter saw the parades as an opportunity to mask their defiance of the colonial state as entertainment. These acts are similar to James Scott’s “hidden transcripts” and “arts of resistance” (1990) that the ‘weak’ use to counter the state’s oppression of them. Michael Hanchard refers to micropublic spheres that are “spheres of public articulation that were

⁴² The Coon Carnival continues to be a symbol of cultural expression in the coloured community. See Denis-Constant Martin (1999) and Shamil Jeppie (2001) for more information on the Coon Carnival in colonial and contemporary Cape Town.

not limited to, but dominated by the idioms, norms and desires of working-class women and men” (1999:62-3).

“Multiple sites of power” (Cohen 1999:36) or “micropublic spheres” (Hanchard 1999:74) coexist alongside each other. Coloured communities in the Cape Colony published resistance newsletters, for example, *Straatpraatjies* (Adhikari 1996), in which the coloured elite aired their marginal communities’ voices, opinions and discourses. These alternative voices existed alongside “the [white] bourgeois public sphere [which] continued to rely on features of certain bodies. Access to the public came in the whiteness and maleness that were denied as forms of positivity, since the white male qua public person was only abstract rather than white and male (Fraser 1996:109-42). Any person who falls outside the (invisible) conceptions of whiteness and maleness therefore was not constituted as a citizen.⁴³ “For the deliberately marginalized subject, differential participation in the public sphere becomes one of the most potent forms of exclusion in modern systems of governance” (Jackson 2003:45-46). The state controls its subjects by extending and retracting citizenship to suit its ideals and programs. Elites constantly contest these contentions and hope to find expression for their aims and constituencies. Elites negotiate with the state and with each other and in the process construct modern-day political identities and differential relationships between the state and its subjects, and between subjects themselves.

⁴³ See Melissa Steyn (2001) *Whiteness Just Isn't What it Used to Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa* and Richard Dyer (1997) *White* for discussions on the invisibility of whiteness in white-dominated societies.

Elites, Institutions and Ideology

Elites construct political categorizations that sometimes resonate with the self-identification of broader group to which they belong (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; see also Jung 2000). ‘Resonance’ is the “the extent to which individuals internalize the political meanings and boundaries that elites mobilize. It functions as a gauge of political identity at mass level” (ibid.:34). The higher a group’s acceptance of a political identity is, the more resonant the identity is with that group’s conception of itself. If the identity is accepted, elites could easily manipulate the group’s conceptions of itself in order to produce particular outcomes that favor the elites (Marx 1998, Jung 2000). The collective ‘elites’ comprise more than those who have a significant economic status within a society to include people who take up leadership roles as ‘organic intellectuals’ (Gramsci 1999) or ‘political entrepreneurs’ (Jung 2000 and Hendricks 2002). For the purpose of this study, political elites are formal and informal leaders within a community, regardless of their class status, who, for various reasons, have access to public fora on which they publicize their political visions for the future. Accusations of instrumentalism often abound as elites purportedly act rationally in order to minimize their losses and maximize their gains as they mobilize support for their political objectives. This rational behavior extends to the process through which political identities are constructed.

Elites influence constructions of group identity through the dissemination of information and discourses which propagate a common understanding of the group’s origin, its place within history and how it could gain access to power in the future. “How political elites choose to organize, how well they organize, and how encompassing are

their networks are factors likely to affect the types of meanings that are possible and the success of the mobilization effort” (Jung 2000:32). Institutions and structures are established by elites to further their aims within their societies. Elites rarely construct new identities, but instead use existing constructions that are historically based. New identities are complex in that a new community has to be created out of disparate elements, for example, the ‘rainbow nation’ in South Africa or, hypothetically, a non-hyphenated ‘American’ identity, which are composites of the many diverse identities found within each country. In the event that elites use existing identities, they mobilize support around those historically-based identities in order to maximize their group’s access to the public sphere and to improve their status and position within the political system. This improvement could occur in economic terms and on the more spiritual level of strengthening a sense of ‘belonging’. The term ‘belonging’ is politically difficult as it enters the realm of political psychology. Karst has referred to it as “a soupy gerund” (Karst 1989:xi) for this very reason, because it defies ‘scientific’ definition. He argues that despite this ‘soupiness’, it remains an important term in politics because it determines who belongs to the nation or to a group. If a political identity resonates within a community it means that people believe they ‘belong’ to the group and therefore are bonded to each other despite their differences.

As mentioned earlier, the need to belong to a group could be material or spiritual. If people are excluded from the public on economic grounds, that exclusion could forge a sense of belonging due to their shared economic oppression. Excluded people could also claim membership to a particular group for spiritual reasons in the sense that their ‘belonging’ creates a community and therefore bonds them to each other. Anthony Marx

(1998) argues that the American and South African states minimized intrawhite conflict in order to counter perceived Black threats to the southern US slave-owning states and to the post-colonial Afrikaner-dominated Union of South Africa. The construction of a unified white group resulted in white rule and racial segregation in those two countries. It was in the economic and political interests of white elites to mobilize their constituencies around a common white identity in order to present a unified front to counter Black opposition, not only for economic reasons but also to create a common, cohesive and unwavering white identity with which all whites would identify.

Much of this political cohesion was created through political organizations and by virtue of white elite positions. Informal leaders also mobilized support within their communities. Political leadership therefore plays an important role in the public sphere and in race-based societies, such as South Africa and the United States, the public sphere provides an important arena in which race-ethnic identities emerge through negotiation and contestation. Elites manipulate these categories to reinforce existing group identities and to foster stronger political identities among group members for political gain. They interact with the state by negotiating different conceptions of citizenship, which, in South Africa, has been and continues to be mediated through race and ethnicity. The South African state has used race and ethnicity to determine inclusion or exclusion from the central polity resulting in political elites jockeying for positions of power. The racial framework (King and Smith 2005) in the United States promotes a particular construction of race-ethnic identities which benefits whites.

We see all political institutional orders institutions as coalitions of state institutions and other political actors and organizations that seek to secure and exercise governing power in demographically, economically, and ideologically

structured contexts that define the range of opportunities open to political actors (ibid.:75).

Hegemonic institutions organize society in such a way as to facilitate the propagation of the existing system. Social manipulation is done according to identity, for example, race, cultural practices, religions, and so forth.

Arjun Appadurai, in his article entitled “The Past as a Scarce Resource” (1981), looks at how meaning is constructed through the use of the past. He argues that there is a “definable cultural framework with such which debates concerning meaning must take place” (1981:203) and identifies four norms, namely, authority, continuity, depth and interdependence. These four factors relate to the authority of the person invoking the history implying that the more ‘authentic’ the speaker is the more authority she holds. Secondly, continuity refers to the credibility of the source and their story of the past’s congruence with other representations of the same past. Thirdly, depth is important in the sense that there has to be agreement on the “time-depths in the mutual evaluation of the pasts”; and, finally, interdependence refers to how much the past relies on its position within other pasts (ibid.). These dimensions provide us with an understanding our how history is used to further a particular political objective. In this specific case, the speakers of coloured and other related pasts such as slave and KhoiSan histories are endowed with authority because of first hand or scholarly experience of the past. These are elites from the coloured community who speak with authority on the past of the group therefore provide some continuity with their communities. Depth is provided through the agreement that the colonial and apartheid eras constitute the different time-depths for coloured stories. Finally, the reliance of the coloured and related stories on stories of white and Black African (Nguni) conquests provide minimal credibility.

History is used by marginal race-ethnic communities in order to ground them in the present. Race-ethnicity identities are important in the contemporary period because, in times of uncertainty and policy change, individuals feel the need to tie their identities to something that is 'rooted' in the past and often turn to primordial understandings of their primary identities. People reach back into history to determine their 'origins' and to find other people who share those origins and then, in turn, create a representative history of their group, which they could use to their advantage. A 'new' race-ethnic identity or community then emerges. For this reason, it is important to critically assess how the state and elites construct and reconstruct race-ethnic identities in order to mould them to fit their interests. As mentioned earlier, elites construct or revive race-ethnic identities based on historical conceptions of those identities when they perceive a threat to their group's material and spiritual well-being. It is therefore necessary to understand how the state and elites construct these identities through reconstruction of old identities and through their manipulation and control thereof.

Citizenship and Belonging

In the American colonial context, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney defined a citizen as "a member of a moral community who counts for something in the community's processes of decision" (Karst 1989:44). Citizenship is therefore bounded by the ability or opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. If this is the acceptable definition, voting rights would determine citizenship within a polity. Blacks, both in South Africa and in the United States, did not have voting rights during the early years after colonization. Blacks were denied the "respect, responsibility and participation" that

were afforded to white people. This process of exclusion defined the boundaries of who constituted the nation; who belonged to the nation. Citizenship in South Africa initially was only extended to whites and coloureds (in the Cape Colony until 1956 and then again from 1984), and in 1994 was finally extended to Black Africans. The exclusion of Black Africans defined citizenship in race-ethnic terms. Elites from the coloured communities lobbied for equal rights because they perceived themselves to be closer to whites than to Blacks. Coloured elites constructed political organizations and institutions that emphasized their differences from the Black African community. White elites initially embraced the coloured elites because the latter's support gave the whites additional power over the majority Black African population. It was in the interests of the white minority to court coloured elites, who in turn, constructed their identity as civilized, educated and socially acceptable.

Constructions of South African citizenship remained the same from 1948 until 1996 when the new Constitution was legislated into existence. Whites were the ideal citizens and were always included while coloureds, Indians, and Black Africans were either completely excluded or provisionally accepted. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) protects individual rights and makes reference to an undefined citizenship:

1. There is a common South African citizenship.
2. All citizens are –
 - a) equally entitled to the rights, privileges, and benefits of citizenship;
and
 - b) equally subject to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.
3. National legislation must provide for the acquisition, loss and restoration of citizenship. (Chapter 1, 3)

At no time does the Constitution unequivocally state that citizenship is ABC, rather it refers to 'citizenship' without any definition. If citizenship is linked to liberal democratic rights and privileges for individuals, then it follows that all individuals are protected even when they are within groups. The concept of citizenship is important because it connects the state to civil society. Civil society is the public sphere because it is non-governmental and it provides space for the public to engage in dialogue with itself and the state.

Citizenship means that an individual belongs to a state or a nation-state and has access to the public sphere or civil society. However, the state determines who has access to the public sphere by conferring (in)visibility onto its citizens through citizenship. This process of making (in)visible is linked to identity because the state determines which identities are (un)acceptable. Citizenship is concerned about "problems of civilized living, how to live with civility towards one another" (McGuigan 1996:148). Therefore citizenship can be conferred onto individuals by the state but those individuals could experience exclusion and marginalization due to their identities within a liberal democracy because of past history and former negative constructions and stereotypes of identities.

Kymlicka argues that two reasons exist for limiting citizenship to particular groups, namely, "to recognize and protect our membership in distinct cultures" and to allow "group-differentiated citizenship within a state" (1995:125). This is evident in colonial and apartheid South Africa where distinct groups of people were denied citizenship despite their belonging to the South Africa state through birth, geography and residence. Their participation in the public sphere was limited by their race and ethnic identities, thereby denying them full citizenship. This is the case in South Africa because,

as will be shown, in the past South African citizenship has been linked to race and ethnic identities. As McGuigan argues “the issue of ‘race’ as a discursive and subjectivising construct rather than a biological essence is poised between two concepts with heavily contested meanings, identity and citizenship” (1996:135). Due to the negative history of the categories of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ the term culture has often been used to euphemistically describe difference, therefore we hear of cultural identities or cultural differences.

Citizenship in this context takes on new complexities because it cannot only be based on individual rights and privileges. The negotiators at the South African talks in the 1990s held heated debates about group rights versus individual rights (see Reddy 1992). “Can a theory of rights that is so individualistically constructed deal adequately with struggles for recognition in which it is the articulation of collective identities that seem to be at stake?” (Habermas in McGuigan 1996:149, see also Kymlicka 1995:125). The nation-state constructs a national identity that is supposedly common, however, group identities owing to race and ethnicity need to be taken into consideration. In this regard, Michael Walzer distinguishes between the rights of the individual (Liberalism 1) and the rights of the collective (Liberalism 2) which provide equal protection to all cultural groups (Walzer in McGuigan 1996:149), especially minority groups. The shortcomings of Kymlicka’s (1995) theory of multicultural citizenship become evident when applied to the South African context and to the context of coloured identity within South Africa, more specifically.

It could be argued that the Bill of Rights, and liberalism, ensures the extension of human dignity, freedom and equality to all who live in South African, but not all who live

here are citizens. Neither are all who live here afforded full citizenship. Marginal identities still exist in race-ethnicity-based societies. Because race-ethnic identities continue to be important, elites continue to frame 'new' identities on old constructions. Elites evoke historical conceptions of 'belonging' to a nation and a group and mobilize support for those identities from their constituencies. The community either accepts or rejects those identities based on the level of resonance that was evoked by elite constructions of the identity. Much of their acceptance or rejection depends on whether they see themselves in the elite-generated stories of belonging, and whether they see any benefit arising from those affiliations.

'New' constructions of Race-Ethnic Identities

Resonance depends on whether communities accept the 'new' identities elites construct through discourse and political institutions. I argued earlier that elites in the public sphere use existing identities to construct 'new' identities, or new conceptions of old identities. There are many discourses which occupy the public space thereby offering many myths of origin. Communities have the opportunity to 'shop' for the 'best fit' when they feel the need to adopt a 'new' identity for political and social reasons. The fact that there "is no single public sphere to which we all have access and in which we all participate equally" shows that the public sphere is "fragmented and, at best, multiple and diverse in its manifestations" (McGuigan 1996:4). Marginal voices enter the new public sphere and attempt to claim a space for themselves and their interests. They use the public space to make their political and cultural interests known to a broader public and also use that space to rally interest around new constructions of race-ethnic identities. In

South Africa, the new public intellectuals from the coloured communities engaged in the public sphere on unequal terms because the state had created its own discourse of a 'rainbow nation' that precluded any references and calls to smaller localized identities. Any reference to a race-ethnic identity was labeled as 'racist' and divisive and therefore discouraged. The African National Congress argued that race-ethnic loyalty would scuttle the newly acquired South African democracy. For this reason, accusations of essentialism and divisive practices were leveled at coloured elites who wished to make public their notions of new coloured identities that discredited old colonial and apartheid stereotypes of coloured people.

When people move beyond old constructions of race-ethnic identities, the society cannot immediately accept the disruption of old borders and boundaries. A new construction of colouredness in certain parts of South Africa, which includes an acknowledgement of KhoiSan/slave histories and hybridity, has given rise to contentious discussions in the public sphere as elites and ordinary people debate the merits of rehashing apartheid-inspired identities. The main question that arises is why would people wish to revert to racially constructed identities when there is an opportunity to move beyond those negative constructions? I would argue that the situation within which they find themselves appears to generate fear of marginalization therefore they wish to return to an identity that is both familiar and predictable in terms of the responses it generates from others. In the South African case they revert to racialized identities that have been rejected by the new government and society in general. Pabst critiques Bhabha's third space in the same way in that historically-based identities maintained racialized spaces within South African societies. The South African public sphere

accommodates the different voices but maintains the raced identities through references to apartheid categories. Despite the calls to a 'rainbow nation' and a non-racial society, we cannot move beyond the constructions of race-ethnic identities.

It could be argued that the new 'mixed' category included in the United States' Census 2000 utilizes essentialist identities and does not succeed in moving beyond them. Granted 'mixed race' does more aptly describe people of multiple cultural and race-ethnic backgrounds, but it is constructed within the confines of those predetermined categories of 'African American', 'white', 'Hispanic', 'Native American', and so on. 'Mixedness' does not eradicate boundaries; it only slightly disrupts clear-cut constructions of defined blackness or whiteness. 'Mixed race also plays into the conception of race mixing, which results in hybridity. Our societies are so old that 'mixing' has invariably occurred over generations; a 'pure' race or category does not exist. If one follows this argument, then "[h]ybridity simply *is*", as Pabst claims (2003:208).

This study focuses on a group that is marginal to the mainstream political sphere because of its hybridity. I argue that marginal groups have to employ different strategies to engage with mainstream politics in order to survive. They raise issues that relate to questions about "authenticity [and] belonging" (ibid.) in order to find a space for themselves which reflects the dominant national identity. Because of their marginality, these groups and their elites have to employ particular strategies to define a public space for themselves and to mobilize for issues that affect their daily lives. What are these strategies and how successful are they in a multicultural democracy?

Marginal Groups and Agenda-setting

Cathy Cohen (2003) argues that there is much to learn about how marginal groups deal with political issues that affect them. I use her definition of marginal groups which she defines as those which “have historically been and continue to be denied access to dominant decision-making processes and institutions; stigmatized by their identification; isolated or segregated; and generally excluded from control over the resources that shape the quality of their lives” (2003:24). However, I add that perceptions of marginalization determine whether a group defines itself as marginal or not. Because these groups perceive themselves to be marginal, they use “indigenous sources, information and organizations” (Cohen 2003:25) to make themselves heard and seen. These resources and institutions provide “alternative and oppositional ways of thinking about issues” (ibid.). Cohen’s theory of marginalization is based on three major principles; first it argues that in order to understand marginal groups in the present era one needs to examine their historical origins and the systems of oppression that gave rise to them. Second, how do elites in these marginal groups “wield localized power, frame issues, and distribute community resources” (ibid.:26)? Cohen includes the Black media and political institutions. It is vital that we examine power relations within the marginal group. Finally, the strategies that emerge from this group are as a result of negotiation and contention and are dialectic (ibid.:27).

Cohen’s theory of marginalization provides a suitable framework to examine how a marginal group in South Africa, the coloured community, reconstructs its identity to fit into a new political reality. In order to make sense of the contemporary strategies employed by coloured elites for identity (re)construction processes, we need to

understand how the group came about. We also need to examine the elite-structured institutions that played a role in mobilizing and maintaining various coloured identities. Finally, how do coloured elites adjust to negotiations and contestations in the public sphere that challenge and shape their particular version of reality?

Marginal groups occupy particular subordinate spaces within those societies; spaces that have been mapped out over time but, despite their shared experiences, such as oppression, cohesion does not automatically arise within these minority groups. “Consensus issues” no longer monopolize the attention of black organizations, Cathy Cohen argues. They are being “challenged and sometimes replaced by cross-cutting issues and crises rooted in or built on the often hidden differences, cleavages, or fault lines of marginal communities” (ibid.:9). Cohen contends that many African Americans still “lack the political, economic, and social resources necessary to participate actively in decision-making that significantly influences and structures their lives” (ibid.:9). Elites play an important role in identifying and highlighting issues that require attention. They also create structures and discourse which represent a particular construction of reality with which to mobilize support from marginal communities.

The coloured community is not actually marginalized but sectors perceive themselves to be marginal to mainstream politics and economics to the extent that they do not recognize themselves in the newly constructed national identity, except when it comes to race and the construction of an identity associated with Africanness. The historical tensions between coloured and Black African people are evident in this reluctance to identify as ‘African’. Black Africans are said to accuse coloured people of being ‘cultureless’ because their identities are too hybrid to be linked to any one

'authentic' African culture and because they are the descendants of slaves and indigenous people who were physically and culturally displaced by colonialism and apartheid. I argue against this because culture is lived daily. Culture is what we do every day and is that which becomes familiar through repetition therefore language, music and lifestyle make up a group's cultural identity (see also Erasmus 2001 and Wasserman and Jacobs 2001). Because citizenship in 'the new South Africa' rests on cultural 'authenticity', sects of the coloured community are attempting to discover their true roots in order to prove their belonging to the South African nation-state. The hybridity of coloured citizens continues to marginalize them in an African nation-state that is purportedly non-racialist in nature and assures citizens that they are all equal and free to participate in the public sphere.

Conclusion

This work focuses on the roles elites play in reconstructing identities of marginal groups. I also examine the public sphere in which the institutions operate; these institutions order the relationships of power within marginal societies. I argue that elites mobilize support from their constituencies by manipulating political identities, but these identities do not always resonate with the groups thereby leading to negotiation and contestation within the group. Courtney Jung (2000) argues that elites mobilize political identities for personal gain. I modify her argument to include mobilization for a 'positive black identity' (Gaines in Cohen 1999:62). I include perceptions of marginalization to Cohen's theory of marginalization in order to explain why and how coloured elites have operated within the colonial, apartheid and contemporary periods. I see her schema of marginalization as a spectrum of marginalization that ranges from categorical

marginalization to secondary marginalization rather than an either or situation. Within different contexts and time periods a group might perceive itself to be more marginalized than other places and times therefore the group is not definitively marginalized at all times. The following chapters map out how coloured elites have reconstructed political identities within the coloured community during the colonial, apartheid and contemporary periods; which strategies they used; and what the community's responses were to those strategies. Elites perform tasks that guide their respective communities toward goals that require buy-in from those constituencies. This work aims to develop an understanding of elite responses to particular contexts and attempts to examine elite behavior and constructions of identity within a changing society.

Chapter 3: Colonial Constructions of Coloured Identity⁴⁴

People are Trapped in History and History is Trapped in Them – James Baldwin

This chapter examines elite constructions of coloured identity from 1652, when the Dutch arrived at the Cape, to 1948, when the National Party took control of the Union of South Africa. I argue that the construction of a coloured identity was a twofold process. Firstly, the colonial state and society imposed their constructions of coloured identities onto local groups via social practices and institutions. Secondly, the community labeled as coloured adopted and re-defined the state's construction of colouredness by reconstituting it according to their day-to-day experiences. For many it was easier to fit into the official public sphere than it was to live on the margins of that space. The liberal politics of the Cape Colony provided a social structure in which individual freedoms were respected and the vote was extended to all who qualified as citizens within the boundaries of the Colony. At the same time, colonial society at the Cape was built on social status and respectability rather than racial difference, which lent it a particular character that was not found elsewhere in South Africa. The alternative public sphere which the KhoiSan, slaves and 'free Blacks' occupied existed alongside the official public and resulted in some elites from the non-settler population aspiring to be included in the official public sphere as that was where power and recognition lay.

⁴⁴ In reference to the contemporary period I use the term coloured problematically. Not all people defined as coloured under the apartheid regime called themselves coloured. This was and still is a contested term which is still used to depict mixed race identity, however far removed it is from this generation. I also use a small 'c' to denote the constructedness of the identity. In cases where a capital 'C' is used I have made reference to the term as used under apartheid rule.

This chapter examines early elite constructions of colouredness with specific reference to KhoiSan and slave identities, which would later, by the 1880s, feed into common conceptions of contemporary colouredness. The term 'elite' includes both those leaders who represent state interests and those who are found within the coloured communities. I argue that within the colonial framework social status was prized and based on Victorian conceptions of 'acceptable behavior' and aspirations to upward social mobility. Elites in the coloured community saw those options as their only way to transcend the confines of an imposed identity. This upward social mobility was evident in the importance coloured elites attached to education, the English language, and decorum. Status later gave way to racial prejudice and to *de jure* racial discrimination from the late 1800s. Initially, however, a coloured identity did not exist within the minds of those people who were later to be classified coloured. During the period of slavery a community of slaves and KhoiSan did exist, but, as I show below, the community was comprised of very disparate groups that came from various parts of the British and Dutch empires, which complicated the formation of a collective identity. Despite this difficulty, the act of colonial labeling created a community out of a group that did not exist, except in their shared experience with slavery, which implies that there must have been an implicit understanding of that identity in order for the colonial powers to define it as such and for that community to then bind together due to an imagined bond. This chapter discusses the processes through which the colonial powers framed colouredness, how coloured elites adopted that constructed identity for political and economic reasons, and how the state later used that adoption against the subaltern community in order to lay down the racial foundations of the apartheid period.

“Otherness, thanks to the power that Europeans exercised, was racially marked and defined, which is characteristic of racial classification systems” (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:29). The colonial and apartheid systems in South Africa created difference that was structured officially along lines of race and ethnicity, what Ann Laura Stoler refers to as the “racialized politics of classification” (2002:8). She goes on to explain that “[c]olonial categories were binding but unbound by those within them, were excessively rigid and exceeded their limits, had nuanced criteria for inclusion that were reworked by people who made them and by those they could not contain” (ibid.:8-9). The colonial powers set the boundaries for racial identities but within those boundaries people were ‘free’ to construct their own understanding of their identities. This speaks of the fluidity of identities, the subjectivity of naming, and the refusal by those who were being named to accept their categorization passively. It also refers to attempts by a state to control its citizens, all its citizens, because colonial identities controlled both the colonizer and the colonized. By setting boundaries for the ‘natives’, the white colonizers limited their own behavior and relationships.

Arrival of the Colonists

The arrival of the Portuguese at the Cape in 1487 marked the start of 400 years of colonial rule. This period also produced a version of history in which indigenous people’s identities and their expectations were “deformed, de-emphasized, and selectively depatterned for the advancement of the dominant colonizing groups” (Abdi 1999:151). The Portuguese navigators did not settle at the Cape of Storms (*Cabo das Tormentas*), as it was first known, but on their way to the East, anchored briefly to barter food, water and

livestock for trinkets with the indigenous people. The area later became known as the Cape of Good Hope (*Cabo de Boa Esperanza*) because it augured well for the settlers as they arrived. In 1509 the first Portuguese slave raid was unsuccessfully launched against the KhoiKhoi. This violence was to mark the relationship between the settlers and the indigenous people of the Cape for many generations.

The Dutch first arrived at the Cape in 1647 but soon left due to unfavorable conditions. However, they returned in 1652 to establish a permanent supply station to service their ships going to the East. The initial colonial writings depicted a cautious, yet derogatory approach towards the indigenous people. The first sign of animosity emerged when Autshumao (also known as Autshumato or Autjoema)⁴⁵, also known as Harry or Herry the *Strandloper* (beach ranger/walker) who was a KhoiKhoi translator and tracker for the Dutch, was accused of betraying the Dutch to the *Saldanhars*, a nomadic group of cattle and sheep farmers who did not trust the Dutch because of the latter's unfair trading practices. Soon after, in 1653, Dutch records began to refer to 'the natives' rather than their specific group names, which marked the end of favorable relationships between the colonists and the indigenous people. The moment of the colonization of the Cape can be traced to 1657 when Autshumao asked Jan van Riebeeck "where [the KhoiKhoi] were to go should [the Dutch] build homes there and cultivate the land" (Thom, 1954:89).

Autshumao accused the Dutch of stealing cattle from the Goringhaikonas⁴⁶ and

⁴⁵ KhoiSan Historian Yvette Abrahams uses Autjoema but as the most usage in other references is Autshumao, I have chosen the more common form.

⁴⁶ The term – also spelled Goringhaiconas, which means the children of the Goringhaiqua – did not appear in the history books after the early 1700s and the onset of a smallpox epidemic of 1713 which killed many of the KhoiSan. For more detail and additional sources on this group and the period see M.L Wilson, "Shell Middens and 'Strandlopers'" South African Museum *Sagittarius* Volume 4, Number 1 <http://www.museums.org.za/sam/resources/arch/strandlo.htm> (accessed 4 May 2005)

subsequently organized a rebellion against the Dutch in 1658; he was captured and banished to Robben Island by Van Riebeeck in 1659.⁴⁷

George M. Theale, a noted historian of Cape colonial history, provides a catalogue of phenotypical markers of indigenous people in the Cape before 1505 (1910). The indigenous people of the Cape, the ‘hottentots’ (KhoiKhoi) and ‘bushmen’ (San) met the settlers when they started arriving in the 15th century. These two groups, to which I will refer as ‘KhoiSan’⁴⁸, shared the same geographical area although they lived different lives. The KhoiKhoi were pastoral people, while the San were nomadic. According to historical writings, they intermarried and lived together peacefully. As evidence of this peaceful coexistence, Theale posits that the term ‘*Strandlopers*’ was used to “denote a different class of people, an impoverished people of mixed Hottentot and Bushman blood, speaking the Hottentot language and whenever possible following Hottentot customs” (1910:15). On 5 April 1652 Jan van Riebeeck referred to Autshumao as “a cunning captain of miserable *strandlopers*, Hottentots or Goringhaikonas” (ibid.). Constructions of Autshumao and the KhoiKhoi as ‘untrustworthy’ and ‘pitiful’ are evident here, and, later they were also seen to be ‘uncooperative’ when the conflicts between the KhoiSan and the colonists increased in intensity.

Despite Theale’s assertion that the KhoiKhoi and San cohabited peacefully, other writers noted the differences between them, which fed colonial misrepresentations of the two groups. “Tame Hottentots seldom destroy their offspring, except in a fit of passion, but the Bushmen will kill their children without remorse on various occasions” (Theale,

⁴⁷ “Autshumao -1663 - ” <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/autshumao.htm> (accessed 4 May 2005). He was probably one of the first political prisoners at Robben Island.

⁴⁸ Robert Ross defines the word ‘Khoisan’ as “a portmanteau word from an early 20th century collation of the Khoi (Hottentots) and San (Bushmen)” (1999). I have used capitals for both Khoi and San to indicate the defined identity of each group yet combined the identities to form a political identity of KhoiSan-ness.

1910:30).⁴⁹ These constructions of difference between the KhoiKhoi and the San created tensions between them and resulted in competition for favors from the colonists. “There never was any intercourse between Bushmen males and Bantu or Hottentot females, as these would have looked with horror upon such a degradation” (ibid.:48). Interclan wars were common during this period, therefore it would be correct to argue that there was no common identity shared by the KhoiKhoi and the San at that stage. Theale’s writings portray the animosity between the Khoi and the San even further: “Hottentots termed themselves KhoiKhoi – men of men – prided themselves upon their superiority over the savage [San] hunters ... they were considerably more advanced towards civilization than the Bushmen” (90). According to Theale, the San were named ‘Sana’ by the Khoi and hated it “just as the mulatto prides himself upon his descent from a white man, and resents being termed a negro” (106). This discussion shows that two separate communities emerged through colonial renditions of indigenous life at the Cape. The construction of difference led to actual difference.

The public sphere in the colonial period was dominated by state constructions of otherness. Michael Hanchard, in his discussion on racial politics in Brazil, argues that

In both eighteenth century Europe and twentieth century Latin America, the bourgeois public sphere was a contradictory, politically bifurcated domain, open to some groups and closed to others. The extent of marginality was, and is, determined by the degree and conditions of otherness on each continent (1999:68).

Similarly, the state determined who could participate in the public sphere in the South African context. The indigenous people were not permitted because they were not ‘civilized’ enough to participate. Their interaction with the state occurred through other

⁴⁹ Theale quoting from Richard Lovett *The history of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895* (London 1899)

social institutions such as bartering, employment, and with the Magistrates of the Cape when they infringed the local law. They were not citizens therefore they were marginal to the official public sphere. They were also only permitted to participate in the public sphere in so far as they contributed to the construction of difference within the colonial society. Hanchard posits that the denial of participatory citizenship perpetually marked Africans as subaltern and marginal (ibid.). To counter the overwhelming power of the colonial state, indigenous people created their own institutions which provided them with membership to 'subaltern counterpublics' (Fraser 1996:125). However, they constructed their own experiences and identities within the confines created by the colonial government thereby adopting 'coloured' as a nomenclature for themselves and the group.

Discourse plays an important role in the construction of identities and public spaces. Early constructions of the indigenous people would later feed into contemporary stereotypical ideas about KhoiSan descendants. Yvette Abrahams suggests that the construction of 'KhoiKhoi' as synonymous with 'slave' became evident in the late 18th century because, "like slaves, they had no rights" (2004:14). Colonial constructions of the KhoiKhoi as abusers of alcohol, prolific child-bearers, immoral, untrustworthy and lacking brevity would later translate into contemporary constructions of coloured identity in apartheid South Africa and subsequently provide justifications for that group's continued marginalization. Similarly, Hanchard argues that in Brazil blackness was equated with "sloth, deceit, hypersexuality, and waste of all kinds" which ultimately led to a denial or marginalization of the terms *Negro* and *preto* in contemporary Brazil (1999:71). In both the Brazilian and South African cases an imposed identity was denied by the affected community and resulted in that group's continued isolation.

The colonial public space allowed certain constructions of the KhoiSan and slaves that supported its ideas of white supremacy. Ironically, Maylam (2001) and Hudson (2004) argue that the 'racist' treatment of the KhoiKhoi in the colonial period does not point to mere claims of white supremacy but rather points to European potential to behave like 'the savages'. There was no underlying racism that defined colonial relations during this early period, rather there was an "awareness that the loathsome strangeness of KhoiKhoi manners in fact derived from the common absurdity of all human beings" (Hudson, 2004:316).

Hudson argues that this awareness of 'absurdity' formed the foundation of racism in the colonies, not notions of biological difference that already had been disputed through various progressive writings from the colonies. The KhoiKhoi and San were not beasts or wild men but were 'like' the Europeans in many aspects and could assimilate into European culture quite easily, as evidenced by Autshumao and Eva (Krotoa), who was Van Riebeeck's household translator. Hudson goes on to state that "eighteenth century authors became more willing to acknowledge [KhoiSan] humanness, making possible the often self-reflective proposition that 'Otherness' lies mostly in *cultural* difference not in 'nature'" (ibid.:318). This might be the case in writings that were published in Europe, but the commonplace conceptions of the KhoiSan as 'uncivilized' and 'Other' continued to flourish in the official public spaces in the colonies.

Elites from the KhoiSan, in other words those who were mentioned in colonial writings, constructed their own identities in close proximity to whiteness. Pictures of KhoiSan men and women dressed in 'respectable' colonial attire are evident in history books (see Boonzaier et al. 1996). These are depictions of modernity and civility with

hopes of dignity. Hanchard (1999) argues that Blackness and other marginal identities in the colonies were constructed as opposite to modernity, therefore marginalized groups aimed to become more like the colonial rulers in their dress, language and social behavior in an attempt to become more acceptable. This “identification with whiteness” (ibid.:9) created a stratified subaltern society which, like the hegemonic society, was based on phenotype distinctions.

Race at the Cape

In the official public sphere, the KhoiKhoi threatened the clearly defined racial categories that colonial Europe had created because their light skin “presented the greatest threat to the direct relation between skin colour and racial capacity that became a typical thesis of nineteenth-century ethnography” (Hudson, 2004:232). Colonial discourses and writings made the KhoiKhoi and San ‘strange’ in order to justify their economic, social and political behavior in the colonies. Interactions with the indigenous people at the Cape complicated the conceptions of citizenship and identity and resulted in a stratified society that allowed some members access to ‘pass’ through social barriers while others could not. The KhoiKhoi were seen to be “a special race” (ibid.) that was not Black, therefore they occupied an undefined space in colonial society and were more often than not assimilated into colonial society. As a result, the KhoiKhoi adopted the language and dress of the colonists in an attempt to ‘fit in’. Already, at this early stage, the state was creating a distinct KhoiSan identity that was interpreted as a hybrid of “so-called ‘Negro’ and other racial traits, an anomalous touching of one stem on others to produce an errant, southward pointing twig” (ibid.). ‘Hybridity’ in this sense denoted an

impurity and mixture of two 'pure' races that could not be specified. The KhoiSan were not obviously a mixture of white and Black but their phenotypes were different from the Nguni (Bantu) groups and therefore challenged the cleanly defined racial categories as it occupied the space between the Black African and the colonists. 'Creole' was also used to depict the 'mixed' nature of culture in the Cape Colony as it denoted "slaves or individuals of other races besides Europeans who were born at the Cape from two imported parents or from one parent already born at the Cape and the other born in his/her country of origin and later on imported" (Rugarli 2000, np).⁵⁰ Dutch society was very amenable to the KhoiSan entering their society, possibly because of Dutch experiences in the Netherlands Indies where the indigenous people were granted closer access to colonial society than in other colonies.⁵¹ At this stage in colonial history the concept of hybridity was moved from the natural sciences to humans and was used to describe a 'mixing' of two people each of a 'pure race'. 'Mixed race' people were then deemed to have 'dirty' or 'impure' blood that made them 'less than' those who had procreated within their 'race' groups.

Sarah Nuttall contrasts the Dutch colonial practice with that of the English and argues that "[t]he Dutch, not particularly committed to racial purity, preferred to legalise a Dutch-speaking Christianised 'mixed race' people, although the British would later try to establish a clearer basis of stratification compared to what they saw as racial chaos" (2004:737). Hanchard also posits that mulattoes "evade the stigma of racial difference and are sociologically better off than their darker skinned counterparts" (1999:10). The

⁵⁰ Anna Maria Rugarli 1998 "The Story Of The 'Prize Negro' Called Present" from her thesis entitled "Slavery At The Cape Colony From Acquisition To The Process Of Creolization, C. 1790-1830", Faculty of Political Sciences of the Università degli Studi, Milan, Italy

⁵¹ See Ann Laura Stoler (2002) *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* Berkeley: California University Press

British metropole sought to create a stratified society within the colonies into which British citizens could easily move, which meant that class and race played important roles in organizing the British colonies. Status and respectability were defined along racial and class lines and were closely tied to Christianity. If a not-white, free subject was of an acceptable status (baptized, educated, entrepreneurial or propertied) he could gain (limited) access to a strata of society that he would otherwise be denied had he been an ordinary 'native'.⁵² Official discourses around citizenship circumscribed boundaries delineating who was a citizen and who was not “thus marginalization occurs, in part, when some observable characteristic or distinguishing behaviour shared by a group of individuals is systematically used within the larger society to signal the inferior and subordinate status of the group” (Goffman cited in Cohen 1999:25).

Social life and gender

Identities are constructed in relation to others, therefore it is important to note that KhoiSan communities existed alongside and within colonial society. Yet early colonial reports constructed them as 'cannibals' and 'heathens'. The KhoiSan were also described as a people who were ugly, shameless, beastly, and thievish; they stank, mutilated themselves, and ate raw flesh and intestines. Placing people on the periphery or in inferior positions has much to do with making people dependent on those who have power and “wealth to give them a portion, but at a price” (Boonzaier et al. 1996:31).

⁵² I purposely use the term 'man' because women were not afforded the same privileges as men. Women in South Africa did not obtain the franchise until the early 1900s. I balk at the use of the word 'non-white' because it denotes a norm of whiteness and a history of repression and structural violence. Roger Ballard explains that the “condition of being 'not-white' is indeed best understood as a handicap” (1996:19).

These authors argue that “this fixes in place an ideological structure which ensures that the less fortunate accept their position without question” (ibid.:32). This statement is contentious in that it assumes that imposed identities are accepted without resistance. It is evident in progressive historiographies that the KhoiSan people did contest those negative constructions of their identities and constructed notions of ‘self’ and ‘Other’ separate from those of the colonial power. However, the general impression of the indigenous people by the late 1800s was expressed by Francis Galton, the father of eugenics, who described the KhoiSan as follows:

When I say Oerlam, Hottentot or Bushman, the identical, same yellow, flat-nosed, woolly-haired, clicking individual must be conjured up before the mind of my kind reader, but differing in dirt, squalor, and nakedness, according to the actual term employed; the highest point of the scale being a creature who has means of dressing himself respectably on Sundays and galadays, and who knows something of reading and writing; the lowest point, a regular savage (Hudson 2004:326).

Colonial writings reported that indigenous men took several wives, who showed their genitals to male colonists for a small trinket or did not cover them at all; they spoke a crude language, stole, cheated, were untrustworthy and idle, *inter alia*. “The word ‘hottentot’ was synonymous with degradation” (ibid.:59).

The KhoiSan (and slave) colonial experiences were gendered.⁵³ Colonial society constructed a KhoiSan woman “a sexualized body” (Pierson 1998:12). Early writings of colonial experiences of non-settler women show that those women were seen to be over-sexed and over-sexualized. Sara Bartmann is a notable example of this.⁵⁴ She was twenty years old when she was taken to Europe in 1810 to appear as evidence of the

⁵³ See also Magubane (2004a) *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*.

⁵⁴ See Yvette Abrahams’ (1998, 2000 and 2004) and Pamela Scully’s writings on Sara Bartmann and women in colonial South Africa. I use Abrahams’ spelling of Bartmann but it is also spelled ‘Baartman’ or ‘Bartman’.

'strangeness' of the Khoi woman and became known as the 'Hottentot Venus'.

Describing Galton, Hudson writes:

Inflamed by a Cape woman whom [Galton] describes as 'a Venus among Hottentots', but too discrete to fulfill his desire of measuring her steatopygia with a pocket-ruler, [he] stands at a distance with his sextant, measuring her curves and then calculating their width and breadth by means of trigonometry (2004:326).

The male colonial gaze created a racially sexualized object which exposed "the prurience of the male European gaze, the displacement of sexual fears and desires onto the colonized 'Other', the voyeuristic and fetishized fascination with the genitalia and secondary sex characteristics of vanquished 'races'" (Pierson: 1998:12). Scientific racism provided the justification for the analysis and cataloguing of indigenous people both in the colonies and in the metropole. In accordance with the nature of science during that period, scientists attempted to categorize people into neat, isolated categories, but inevitably the walls between the categories proved to be permeable at cultural and social levels.

Despite the attempt to dehumanize and objectify Sara Bartmann, it could be speculated that her fetishized and exoticized body created a fashion that emphasized the rear skirt section of European women's clothing. European fascination and adoption of fake steatopygia point to the fact that KhoiSan bodies were desired by both white women and men, for different reasons. Women's adoption of the bustle in Europe and the actual buttocks of KhoiKhoi women in the colonies satisfied (all) male gazes across the Empire. Homi Bhabha argues that the colonists desired a "reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (1994:86). In the colonial context, it was permitted to desire a KhoiKhoi woman but white society would marginalize anyone who acted on that desire. Female KhoiSan were marked as

promiscuous therefore not acceptable to civilized European society. Women's bodies are inscribed by cultural norms and punished for perceived transgressions if they do comply with society's expectations.

The KhoiSan were tied into colonial society through various institutions such as land, employment and labor. The colonial government dispossessed the KhoiSan of their land and cattle through various decrees, such as the land loaning system of 1703. A ban against private barter trade was first repealed then reinstated, which meant that the KhoiSan were forced to sell their labor to the settlers. The KhoiSan were free Blacks but could not vote as they were not permitted to own land. They were deemed to be outside colonial society, yet beneficial to it. The onset of the first, brief British colonial period in 1795 led to a further stratified society with 'respectability' being the main currency. Britain lost its rule of South Africa in 1803 but regained it in 1806. Missionaries in the region had educated many indigenous people. For example, Krotoa, Van Riebeeck's translator, was educated and 'civilized' by the missionaries and settlers in the colony and subsequently gained access to settler society.⁵⁵ Christianity was part of the civilization framework, therefore missionaries were sent to South Africa to educate and convert the local people.⁵⁶ Colonial elites established various institutions to educate and civilize the indigenous people, some of whom embraced the new religions and cultural practices that came with the settlers and with the slaves.

⁵⁵ The Dutch named Krotoa Eva when they first met her.

⁵⁶ See J.A. Millard 1999 "Tikhuie, Vehettge Magdalena d.1800 Moravian Church, South Africa" http://www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/tikhuie_vmagdalen.html (accessed 30 May 2005)
 Note on website: This article is reproduced, with permission, from *Malihambe - Let the Word Spread*, copyright © 1999, by J. A. Millard, Unisa Press, Pretoria, South Africa. All rights reserved. Vehettge Tikhuie, known by the colonists as Magdalena, was mooted to be one of the first KhoiSan proselytizers. She was converted in 1737 by the Moravian missionaries at Genadendal, one of the earliest mission stations in the Cape, and led that church for 50 years until her death in 1800.

Slavery at the Cape

The colonialists interacted with not only the indigenes but also with the slaves whom they brought in to supplement their meager supply of compliant labor. Because the Dutch were prohibited from owning KhoiSan labor, they were forced to trade and bargain with the KhoiSan for their labor. Culminating from this ban, the first slaves arrived in the Cape in 1658 from present-day Angola and Ghana. Many of the early slaves also came from the Indian Ocean basin, namely Mozambique, East Africa, Zanzibar and Batavia. The slaves who came from the Mozambican and East African coastlines were collectively known as ‘*Mosambieker*’, ‘*Masbiekers*’, ‘*Mozambiques*’ or ‘*Mozbiekers*’, which attributed to the group an identity discernable from those of the other slaves. Patrick Harries, a Swiss historian, argues that in addition to the considerable number of Mozambican slaves (about 25 000) who arrived at the Cape between 1780 and 1880 (2000:29), including a brief period of British rule from 1795 to 1802, the importance of the emergence of the group lies in the “instructive example of the power of classificatory labels, the strength of identity as a resource, and the malleability with which people conceive of themselves and others” (ibid.:48). It is arguable that the *Masbiekers* were first labeled by colonial society; formed a community because of that shared label; mobilized themselves as a collective; and, due to their heterogeneity, straddled white and Black identities.⁵⁷ As I argued above, the process of identity from above and from below

⁵⁷ I have chosen to use ‘*Masbiekers*’ over the other versions of the nomenclature because one still hears the word being used in the Western Cape to denote a particular contemporary coloured identity. Harries states: “[i]mmigrants of Mozambican origin were common enough throughout the region for the term *Mozbieker*, or *Mozambiquer*, to become a colloquial epithet used to describe an individual of dark complexion”

are simultaneously initiated by the settlers and by the indigenous and slave subjects, therefore the settlers and the indigenes construct different meanings of the same identity.

Harries' argument is important because the state's action of naming the East African slaves results in the construction of a group identity that arguably would not have emerged organically because of the differences in group members' origins, languages (Portuguese, Arabic) and cultures. This process of constructing imagined communities was replicated throughout the Cape Colony and led to the formation of coherent groups of non-settlers who otherwise would not have formed collective identities. The state defined the *Masbiekers* as neither 'African' nor 'native' because the group occupied a particular space in the racial hierarchy of the Cape. This is evident in the 1891 census in the Cape when they were classified as "Mixed and other Coloured Races" and were "exempted from native law" (ibid.:44). Harries also asserts that the *Masbiekers* were predominantly male, therefore they married women from outside their community, particularly locally born "Creoles" who were French-speaking slaves from the Seychelles and Mauritius (ibid.:31). Their offspring resisted official classification because the state could not cleanly place them into neatly defined identities. How could they categorize 'mixtures' that crossed boundaries and complicated notions of what Black people were meant to look like? The state's inability to classify a group of people also exposes the fluidity and multiplicity of identities under colonialism and apartheid, which defied classification.

The *Masbiekers* initially embraced the state-imposed label because it offered them an opportunity to construct a recognizable and recognized group within a new and

(2000:27). See also Vivian Bickford-Smith's "Black Ethnicities, Communities and Political Expression in Late Victorian Cape Town" *Journal of African History*, 26, 1995a, pp450-451.

alienating society. Status and respectability formed the basis of the colonial society for the very reason that race could not easily be controlled, therefore it was important for the *Masbiekers* that the state recognize them. Most manumitted slaves were *Masbiekers* and were also known as 'Prize Negroes' (Harries 2000:32).⁵⁸ They performed menial and manual labor in the Cape docks as stevedores or as fieldworkers, herders or day-laborers. "Such was [the Prize Negroes'] inferior status in the post-emancipation period that the term '*Masbieker*' acquired a distinctly pejorative meaning" (ibid.:33).⁵⁹ That recognition was not positive, as they had hoped. In an attempt to raise their social acceptability, missionaries and philanthropists educated the 'Prize Negroes' to prepare them for assimilation into colonial society at the end of their indentures in the 1850s. This was not solely a philanthropic endeavor because ultimately the church and settler society could not relegate the *Masbiekers* to the lower levels of society because of the group's phenotype and Creole cultures. The church taught them to read via exposure to Christian literature, and encouraged them to adopt European dress and thereby become more 'civilized'. The Native Commission of 1903-05 later supported the role of the church in the colonies when it argued the following:

The commission considers . . . that no merely secular system of morality that might be applied would serve to raise the native's ideal of conduct, or to counteract the evil influences that have been alluded to, and is of the opinion that

⁵⁸ 'Prize Negroes' were indentured labor and were sometimes referred to as 'free slaves'. "Theoretically they were free and thus considered as having a higher status than slaves, yet they had in practice lost their freedom when captured on their native soil and many were kept 'enslaved' for long periods of time. Their peculiar role has to be put in the specific context of the Cape Colony, where the concepts of 'creole' and 'creolization' meant both the mixture of races and the percentage of the slave population locally born compared to slaves newly imported into the colony" – Anna Maria Rugali <http://www.club.it/culture/culture2000/anna.maria.rugarli/corpo.tx.rugarli.html> (accessed 5 May 2005). See also Saunders 1994.

⁵⁹ *Masbiekers* were also referred to as "Black" or "ordinary negroes" and later as "prostitutes and 'scavengers'" (Harries 2000:34) because of their darker skins.

hope for the elevation of the native races must depend mainly on their acceptance of Christian faith and morals (*Catholic Encyclopedia* – ‘Kafirs’).⁶⁰

Two non-settler institutions were at the forefront of this civilizing project: St Paul’s Mission Church (Anglican/Episcopalian) established in 1878, and Zonnebloem College in 1859. These institutions were important in the ‘*Masbieker*’ community as they provided opportunities for free slaves to access colonial society through Christian ideologies and colonial education.

The 1875 census provided the framework for those undertaken in 1891 and 1904. Six classificatory categories were introduced and based on “a combination of skin colour, facial features, degree of assimilation, origins and language” (Christopher 2002:403). By 1875, “there was an approximate, but by no means precise, correlation between lightness of pigmentation and social status” (Bickford-Smith, 1995a:444). The census categories were European or White, Malay, Hottentot, Fingo, Kafir and Bechuana, Mixed and Other. *Masbiekers* were classified as ‘Mixed and Other’ because of their diverse biological make-up and foreign origin. It is not possible to provide clear reasons as to why the state changed its categories in 1875, but suffice it to say that the ‘Mixed and Other’ category acted as a catch-all for everyone who could not easily be defined as ‘European or White’, ‘Malay’, ‘Hottentot’, ‘Fingo’, or ‘Kafir and Bechuana’. In 1904 the Census of the Cape of Good Hope distinguished between three groups: White, Bantu (native), and Coloured (Anderson 2003:32), thereby providing the seeds for the apartheid state that took root when the Union of South Africa was declared in 1910.⁶¹

⁶⁰ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08591b.htm> (accessed 30 January 2006).

⁶¹ For an excellent source for South Africa’s historical chronology see <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/menu.htm> (accessed 9 May 2005). See also Leonard Thompson’s *A History of South Africa*.

In 1911, the *Masbiekers* were classified again as “‘Mixed Race’, alongside Creole communities such as the Malays and Griquas that were clearly culturally distinct from the ‘Bantu’” (Harries 2000:46-7). The *Masbiekers* definitively challenged the early apartheid constructions of racial identity when, by 1909, no *Masbieker* chose to self-identify as such and fully assimilated into the category ‘coloured’ or ‘mixed race’ (ibid.:47-8). This reclassification effectively erased the identity from Cape society and assimilated it into the newly defined ‘Mixed and Other Coloured’ category. New groups were included in the latter group and comprised identities such as the Bastaard-Hottentots (also known as ‘Bastards’, ‘Basters’ and ‘Griquas’) who were the “‘offspring of European or slave men and Khoisan women, or at least those of Khoisan descent who adopted European mores” (Ross 1999:7).

I could argue that the term ‘*Masbieker*’ had become so laden with historical prejudices that the carriers of that identity no longer wished to claim it. I could also argue that their communities had become too diverse for a single homogenous descriptor to suitably define the members of those communities. It is unclear whether elites first denied their ‘*Masbieker*’ identity or whether the society as a whole refrained from using the term because it had lost its salience. It is more likely that the Cape became more diverse because of the influx of slaves from other colonies, intermarriages and ‘mixed’ offspring which nullified the use value of the term. The social and sexual intercourse between people from different origins produced a society that was diverse and cosmopolitan. However, despite the seemingly permissive nature of the Cape, the state and society constructed distinctions between ‘acceptable’ phenotypical traits and those that were not.

They instituted social regulations allowing fair-skinned slaves to work in the private sphere while darker skinned slaves were restricted to field or estate work.

Impositions and Adoptions

British historian N.G. Barrier argues that “the census imposes order and order of a statistical nature. In time the creation of a new ordering of society by the census will act to reshape that which the census sought merely to describe” (cited in Christopher 2002:401). The early censuses categorized people from different origins, languages, and cultures into ‘Mixed and Other Coloured’. This was an imposed identity but it was also adopted by people who occupied that position in colonial society. Historian Mohammed Adhikari (1992) argues that a shared slave identity formed the basis of an early coloured and asserts that by the 1880s a distinctive coloured identity had emerged that was greater than the sum of its parts because of new practices, a creole language and intermarriage. The 1865 census, which enumerated the European, Hottentot, Kafir and Other populations, still distinguished between the KhoiSan and slave communities. However, Adhikari (1992) asserts that the characteristics associated with slaves were slowly extended to the KhoiSan people and vice versa, thereby historically endowing an emergent coloured identity with a slave past.

Again I cannot definitively argue that coloured identities emerged organically from Cape society or that the state was the sole constructor of identities during that period. It is clear that coloured people were recognized as a group because, after Emancipation Day in 1838, a limited citizenship was extended to free Blacks and the KhoiSan at the Cape. This was largely because the Cape Attorney General, William

Porter, preferred to “meet the Hottentot at the hustings voting for his representative than meet the Hottentot in the wilds with a gun on the shoulder” (Vail, 1989:242).⁶² A politics of recognition played an important role in the mobilization of coloured identity from within the group. Charles Taylor relates recognition to identity and posits that “non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being” (1992:25). The state recognized coloureds as citizens and subsequently created the space in which they could organize themselves into religious and political groups by the late 1800s because of that recognition (see Lewis 1987, Hommel 1981, Du Pré 1994 and Goldin 1987).

In contrast to Adhikari (2002), Robert Ross argues that a common identity was forged between slaves and the KhoiSan due to their “legal status and ... subordination to their masters, as farm workers, as unskilled labourers, as craftsmen and workmen and as domestic workers” (1983:121). Ross claims that the imposition of the identity from above led to a passive acceptance of colouredness rather than an organic process in which slave descendents self-identified as coloured. Ross appears to be in the minority in this case because many other scholars have argued that coloured identity emerged from a shared experience, living environment and status within the colony.⁶³ They were, in effect,

⁶² The liberal tradition of the Cape was not reproduced anywhere else in South Africa, therefore only in the Cape were Others afforded the right to vote on the same ballot as whites. The mixed origins and social status and respectability continued to play an important role in colonial society even after the end of slavery. Coloureds could vote for the same representatives as white voters until 1951 when the introduction of the Separate Representation of Voters Act removed that right. By 1956 coloureds were placed on a separate voters roll and in 1968 their right to vote was removed completely with the introduction of the Separate Representation of Voters Amendment Act. The apartheid government eroded all the privileges afforded to the coloured community up until the late 1960s. This matter will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

⁶³ See Bickford-Smith’s discussion of Ian Goldin (1987) and Gavin Lewis (1987) where he argues that in the 1980s it was in the historian’s interest to argue that coloured identity was imposed. In the post 1990 period it has become more acceptable to discuss alternative origins of coloured social identity and move away from the “condescension of denying coloureds the primary role in the making of their own identity”

forming an identity from below. I argue that the process came simultaneously from above and below. The settlers determined the measure of respectability and acceptability all citizens should hold, while those who were labeled as coloured defined their own identity in response to the state's framework. Robert Ross refers to "the markers of status" (1999:3) which determine levels of social differentiation and associated behaviors in the Cape Colony. These markers, levels of education, 'civilization' (dress, language and religion) and wealth, which were acceptable to British society in England, were exported to the Southern African context with the settlers. The introduction of 'civility' and 'respectability' did not remove agency from the non-settler communities. They opposed the state imposed boundaries on their movement, behavior and identity in many ways. Historian Yvette Abrahams argues that a "collaborator and guerilla" (Boonzaier et al. 1996:88) often co-existed in the same KhoiSan person. They collaborated for their economic survival and fought against the colonial power in an attempt to maintain their identity and their continued existence within a racialized society.

Ross (1994:4) argues, as does Maylam (2001), that status was the organizing factor in Cape colonial society. Colonial powers wished to establish a 'respectable' society in the colonies during the 1800s. Stoler complicates the argument by claiming that race was integral to a class-based rule in the colonies (2002:13). I agree that class and race defined boundaries but contend that, in the South African case, the presence of the KhoiSan created a new kind of colonial relationship between colonists and indigenes because the state constructed them as "less than human" (Bickford-Smith 1994). They were therefore placed in a very different category from the other indigenous people

(Adhikari in Bickford-Smith 1996a). See also Zimitri Erasmus (2001) *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place*.

whom the colonists met in the Netherlands Indies or in the East. The Cape Colony context therefore favored a racially based society and, ironically, allowed certain boundaries to be permeable to those who were 'acceptable'. This imposed a further hierarchy on the society in the Cape.

Race had already structured the society, placing white settlers at the apex and the free Blacks and the slaves at the base of the social pyramid. Missionary education steeped in Christianity, which was provided to the free Blacks (mostly KhoiKhoi), elevated them above the other 'non-white' groups in the Cape even though the education was deemed inferior to white education. Many of the early mission stations established for the KhoiSan people were religious and remain so to this day.⁶⁴ A particular identity around the church and the bible was fostered in the Griqua community, a particular KhoiSan group that continues to practice a very distinct culture today. Mission stations only granted Christian slaves and freed slaves the right to live at the station as long as they obeyed the rules. One of the oldest mission stations in South Africa is the one at Genadendal, a coloured community on the outskirts of the present-day Western Cape.⁶⁵ J.S. Marais (1968) argues that the mission stations played a major role in controlling and socializing the coloured people into a white-led society and without those mission stations coloureds would be 'degenerates'.

In response to the proselytizing of the Christian missionaries, some ex-slaves chose to convert to Islam in an attempt to disrupt colonial rule. Historian Vivian Bickford-Smith argues that

⁶⁴ See Elbourne 1992 for "Early Khoisan uses of Mission Christianity". See also Tisani 1992 for gender relations in mission stations.

⁶⁵ See J.S. Marais (1968) for a comprehensive yet conservative history of other mission stations in the old Cape Colony such as the Kat River Settlement established in the 1830s.

Conversion to Islam aided the process of giving these Capetonians a sense of psychological 'self-ownership'. Conversion to Islam also provided material support for the poor and social status for the wealthier which may have been denied to them by bourgeois white exclusiveness (1995a:445-6).

This conversion to Islam also marked a conscious move away from colonial Christianity which excluded those it deemed unsuitable.⁶⁶ The term 'Malay' was adopted in the 1870s and was used by the apartheid government to mark people who were descendants of slaves from Malaysia and Indonesia. 'Malay' also later referred to coloured people who practiced Islam as a religion. The colonial and apartheid governments' attempts to divide the former slave and KhoiSan communities, albeit imagined communities, did not succeed. Subaltern resistance arose in response to the hegemonic nature of colonial society. Counter-publics were created as Muslims and Christians came together to celebrate festivals and commemorate important days in street carnivals that were started as early as 1823. They celebrated Emancipation Day and New Year by forming Christian and 'Malay' singing and marching troupes. By the 1870s the street carnivals were more organized and the 'Coon Carnival' arose from a community that shared a common history of bondage (Bickford-Smith, 1999:446).⁶⁷ The carnivals were an opportunity to have fun but also masked the more political objective of conscientizing ordinary people about their oppression. The songs that were sung had political messages in them that highlighted the racial, political and social inequalities in the system.

Come Britannia, the civilizing one,
Make the nations into slaves...
Your tyranny will soon humble

⁶⁶ See Bickford-Smith (1994:298-312) for his discussion of Muslims in the Cape in the 1800s and Shamil Jeppie (2000:80-96) for his debate on the connections between "Coloured, Malay, Muslim".

⁶⁷ See also Denis-Constant Martin's work on minstrels and carnivals at the Cape. See also Bickford-Smith (1994) on the history of the Coon Carnival and its links to the American minstrel tradition.

Those that call this land their own (ibid.:448-9).⁶⁸

Social expressions of resistance were not overt during the colonial period but were conducted either on an individual level or were hidden in cultural expressions, for example, the street carnivals and the *ghoemaliedjies* (literally ‘drum songs’). Muslim and Christian expressions of colouredness are different but shared hybridized expressions of identity also emerged during the colonial and apartheid eras. This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.

J.S. Marais’ *The Cape Coloured People 1652-1937* (1968) outlines the history of the coloured people in an often patronizing manner, but it is one of the most comprehensive accounts of that group’s history to date. Marais argues that despite the removal of legal barriers social separation continued. People “failed to appreciate the strength of the social colour bar which persisted after the legal barriers had been removed” (1968:256).⁶⁹ By the late 1800s coloured people were regarded as ‘equal’ citizens in terms of land ownership, access to missionary education and employment rights. Ordinance 50 granted special rights to ‘all free persons of colour’ (not including the Nguni people). Cape society remained divided but divisions between the Europeans and the coloured people, and the Nguni and coloured people, were not equidistant. The coloured population had been socially and economically constructed much closer to the Europeans than the Nguni to the Europeans and therefore acted as a buffer group between the whites and the Nguni. Ironically, some whites, coloureds and Nguni lived in the same locations until the Group Areas Act was passed in 1956.

⁶⁸ Kom Brittanje, jy beskaaf/Maak die nasies tot jou slaaf.../Jou dwinglandy sal jou verneer/Die wat hulle land eige noem – original text

⁶⁹ It is interesting to note that the term ‘colour bar’ was probably coined from W.E.B. Du Bois who first referred to the ‘colour line’ that divided white from Black in America in 1903.

Miscegenation and Misfits

Emerging racialized and racist ideas about a coloured identity evolved during colonialism and were further solidified during apartheid. 'Colouredness' as a label emerged in the 1800s in various government documents. For example, a document from the Cape of Good Hope made reference to "the coloured people speaking the Dutch language" (in Christopher 2002:403). Ordinance 50 was introduced in 1828 to improve the "Condition of Hottentots and other free persons of colour at the Cape of Good Hope" and to institute a new legal system of "Laws affecting those Persons" (Ross 1999:8). This is arguably the first official reference of collective 'group' of people who were not white, though Zuberi and Khalfani argue that the 'Coloured' classification was introduced in 1705 but not used after 1744 until 1840. It was abandoned in 1865 and only used again when the Union was constituted in 1911 (1999:6). By 1853, the category "free persons of colour" referred to the descendants of slaves, colonists, and the KhoiSan "who had not, following their colonization, been absorbed into the Xhosa or other Bantu-speaking groups or had not taken refuge outside the colony's frontiers" (Vail, 1989:242). The censuses of 1865, 1875 and 1892 listed 'non-European' people either as 'Coloured' or 'Other than European or White'. At this stage segregation was *de facto* rather than *de jure*, however, laws that were introduced complicated people of color's lives. An example of the *de facto* segregation was the separate housing locations set up by white municipalities in which people of color were forced to live.⁷⁰ The Masters and Servants

⁷⁰ These were the beginnings of the modern-day townships still found in South Africa where the provision of services and the standard of living are severely limited.

Ordinance of 1841 further tightened control over workers whether they were free or slaves. The British created order out of Dutch chaos and “at this point the histories of the San, Khoikhoi and former slaves began to converge and the term ‘coloured people’ was sometimes used in contemporary records” (Boonzaaier et al. 1996:114). Mohammed Adhikari (1992, 2002)⁷¹ posits that the term ‘coloured’ emerged much later in the 1880s, while Vivian Bickford-Smith uses an 1838 extract from records of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission⁷² in Cape Town, which ministered to the “‘Coloured classes’, the former slave population, a few Moslems and some negro slaves captured by men-of-war and liberated here” (1994:304), to show that the term emerged at a much earlier date.⁷³

Early constructions of colouredness were founded on conceptions of ‘mixed’ identities. Marais follows suit when he argues that the “history of the Coloured People is the history of aboriginal Africans (and a few orientals) with Europeans” (1968:ix) and that “miscegenation which in its various permutations and combinations was to produce the Coloured People began early with unions, regular or irregular, between Europeans on the one hand and slaves or Hottentots on the other” (ibid.:10). This is problematic because miscegenation implies a mixture of two independent species or races and undergirds a racist belief that indigenous people and their offspring are not the same as Europeans. In her contentious colonial novel *God’s Stepchildren*, Sarah Gertrude Millin claims that the ‘shame’ of miscegenation marks coloured people from the moment of their ‘immoral’ conception.

⁷¹ Mohamed Adhikari in “Hope, fear, shame, frustration: Continuity and change in the expression of coloured identity in white supremacist South Africa, 1910-1994” (unpublished PhD thesis, UCT, 2002), argues that it was in the 1880s whereas other historians like J.S. Marais argue for an earlier date.

⁷² It is interesting to note that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)/the Nederduitse Gerformeerde Kerk (NG Kerk) supported apartheid policies therefore separate church structures emerged from each of the racially defined communities.

⁷³ See Vivian Bickford-Smith (1995a:452-3) for a more detailed discussion on the evolution of the term.

By 1672, 75% of children born to Company slaves had white fathers and between 1652 and 1795, over 1 000 ex-slave and 'native' women married white, free burghers (Maylam 2001:40). Maylam argues that 'miscegenation' occurred because of the higher percentages of white men to white women and that white men preferred women of 'mixed race' to the indigenous women (ibid.:42) consciously contributing to the construction of a racially stratified society at the Cape. Marais (1968) lists 1664 as the year of the first 'mixed marriage' of Krotoa to van Meerhoff, a Dutch explorer, and uses the term 'miscegenation' to describe an 'impure' coupling. Despite Marais' initial sweeping analysis of "the Coloured People", he concedes that they do not form one "homogenous whole" because "slaves, Hottentots, Bushmen and Europeans" contributed to the identity of the "Coloured People of to-day" (ibid.:30-31). Marais, like other primordialists, implies that shared biological origins frame coloured identity. His argument consequently plays into a racist construction of identity in colonial and apartheid South Africa.

The term 'miscegenation' is problematic because of its racist ontology, however, this in-between, 'mixed' nature of coloured identity created many opportunities for phenotypically almost-white coloured people to pass. "Those few rich, educated, and light-skinned enough could and often did meet their aspirations by 'passing' into the white community, a process which siphoned off many of the natural leaders of the Coloureds" (Lewis, 1987:9). It is not known how many coloured people 'passed' as white because they would not have 'confessed' to census takers as they would have lost the social capital they had as whites by self-identifying as 'coloured'. Dvora Yanow argues that "because passing takes place within a realm of masking and secrecy, it is difficult to

imagine a systematic study of its processes and effects” (2003:104). In fact, reclassification statistics only emerged during the apartheid period. For as long as racial and social boundaries were seemingly porous to phenotypically acceptable people, free people of colour could move between identities and gain whiteness through “race elevation” (Lewis 1995:3of4).⁷⁴

Language also provided coloured people access to colonial society. The KhoiSan learned Dutch in order to trade and interact with those colonists. KhoeKhoe and San, the languages of the KhoiKhoi and San soon infiltrated the languages heard in the colony. A ‘kitchen’ or ‘Bastard’ Dutch emerged as a language of common status spoken by the KhoiSan, slaves and colonists within colonial homes. Ross quotes Achmat Davids who asserts that “what was to become Afrikaans was seen in the early nineteenth century to be the language of the lower orders of society” (1999:59). This ‘new’ language challenged the hegemony of English during British rule at the Cape between 1806 and 1910. Language also emerged as a space of resistance. Afrikaans became the *lingua franca* in the Cape colonial society and facilitated communication between disparate groups of people.

The interrelatedness of KhoiSan, slave and colonial experiences in the Cape colony created a space in which languages, religion, cultural practices were creolized to create a particular Cape culture. Words were used to denigrate particular people. Marais notes that

Different words – no doubt a legacy of the days of slavery – are used to designate Coloured People or Natives from those used for ordinary human beings. In the

⁷⁴ See Brian C. Lewis (copyright 1995-6) “And They are Still Passing: Blacks and American Society” for a discussion on passing in America in the 1990s. <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Ithaca/3638/passing.html?200527> . See also Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1988) ‘historical oppositional dualities’ which provide a model for overcoming Blackness.

early 1900s and during apartheid, a man of colour was a '*jong*' not a 'man', a woman a '*meid*' not a '*vrou*', a boy is a '*kleingoes*' (i.e. small goods). In many parts of South Africa Natives are known as '*skepsels*' (i.e. creatures)...a farmer calls his laborers his '*volk*' – the same word used for slaves (1968:5).⁷⁵

'*Hotnot*', an abbreviated and derogatory form of 'Hottentot', denotes someone who is behaving in an 'uncivilized' manner and is often used to denigrate coloured people.⁷⁶ The descriptions and nomenclatures developed during the colonial period continued to exist in the twentieth century and inadvertently contributed to the creation of a community identity because only people who were marked with colouredness (behavior, language, skin) could be referred to with these terms.

Imagined Communities

An 'imagined community' emerged in the 1800s that provided a space in which coloured identity could be expressed in a myriad of ways. A shared sense of history, through the experiences of slavery and colonial rule, created a common bond despite the array of different places of origin, languages, cultures and religions. The mass urbanization that occurred after the Mineral Revolution in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s also resulted in the movement of different people into towns. Bickford-Smith (1994) argues that the proletarianization of peasants and freed slaves created an imagined community. Mission stations also created a bond because of the shared living space.

⁷⁵ Jong and meid are words that depict the settlers' view that 'non-whites' are like children, not adults who should be respected. Meid is a word that bestows the woman with a child-like attitude and infers loose morals. This word was used across the board for non-settler women. It is still used in some contemporary South African colloquialisms and refers to women in a derogatory way. 'Jong' is the equivalent of 'Boy' in colonial America.

⁷⁶ Some KhoiSan people assert that the term 'hotnot' has been reclaimed to denote a quick thinking person of KhoiSan origin. Despite derogatory words like 'queer' and 'nigger' being reclaimed, in Ruiters (2005) I argue that some words cannot be reclaimed because the historical violence they inflicted on people has not been redressed.

Many Griqua people moved to mission stations like those at Genadendal and Klaarwater and used “an invented identity to create a sense of common solidarity, and mobilize that solidarity in defence of the group’s interest” (Lewis 1987:9).

In many places, large and disparate groups formed communities that congealed into an ill-defined identity that the colonial government named and bordered. A community cannot be named without an understanding of an implicit connection, however, tenuous, between people. This connection could come through KhoiSan, slave, and emergent ‘mixed race’ identities. It also evolves from shared experiences, language, cultural practices, and a sense of dislocation. Many urban people who were defined as coloured were dispossessed of their land in many ways, therefore shared a sense of isolation within the confines of the ‘Mother City’, Cape Town. These experiences all fed into a shared identity which, unfortunately, the colonial state defined before the community could define itself.

Labor policies in the 1800s also created divisions within colonial society. The state developed a skilled and semi-skilled coloured labor force that would support white labor supremacy. A ‘white labor policy’ was first mooted shortly after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), when poor whites needed employment after the war. Coloured people, who could only be educated through the missionary school system, were given semi-skilled jobs while the Black Africans were employed as unskilled labor. This maintained a hierarchical class and racialized structure in society. Later policies such as the Apprentice Act of 1922 provided coloured labor with in-service training for artisan trades. Black Africans were constructed as unskilled labor and were provided access to

menial jobs. In this way a common class identity was complicated by the division of the Black working class into racial groups.

Colonial and missionary institutions continued to ‘civilize’ the “leaders of a leaderless people” (Marais 1968:246) but maintained the “Coloured People in a state of tutelage or pupillage” (ibid.:252). People who attained literacy and religion could move within colonial society and aspire to social acceptance, however, those who were unable to read were often maintained in menial positions at mission stations. Marais’ distinction between ‘Coloured People’ or ‘natives’ and “ordinary human beings” (1968:5) depicts an awareness of that social stratification and related citizenship.

‘I am Coloured’

One could speculate as to why the colonial state imposed the term on an ‘ill-formed’ group, but it is clear that there is contestation over whether the group did or did not claim the term for itself as is evidenced in work by Adhikari and Bickford-Smith. “Coloured as a self-description stressed the fact that shade of pigmentation closely correlated with historical and contemporary experience at the Cape for Hottentots, Malays or people called ‘Bastards’ alike” (Bickford-Smith 1995a:453). Or was it that the state appropriated a term that was used as a self-definer, and fixed it within a racial paradigm that was an unintended outcome of group agency?⁷⁷ Anderson argues that by 1904 the state “sloppily conceived” colouredness as “all intermediate shades between the [White] and [Bantu (native)]” (2003:32). I have argued above that a community of sorts had to exist in order for the state to label it, therefore colouredness is an imposed as well

⁷⁷ See also Maylam (2001) for a more nuanced discussion of this matter.

as an adopted identity. What is important is that a 'coloured' identity was allowed to emerge as conflicts between the Black African populations at the Cape and the settlers increased. The KhoiSan and free slave populations, not in opposition to the colonial society as were the 'marauding' Black Africans, were allowed to create and be molded into an intermediary identity for political reasons that were to become clearer at a later date.

It is important to note that an imagined community could exist without being named. People of color in the Cape Colony were only 'named' in the early 1800s when the British abolished slavery. It is my contention that prior to this period there was no need for any community to be named because the differentiation was based on a colonial conception of status that everyone could aspire to if they adhered to the accepted practices. The end of slavery opened up social boundaries that had previously been policed by commercial ownership of people and made it possible for slaves who had been assimilated into colonial households to behave in socially acceptable ways in the public sphere. At this point in South Africa's historical trajectory the colonial state also found it necessary to define communities in order to spatially control them.⁷⁸ Due to slave and KhoiSan experiences under colonialism they formed informal communities and gravitated towards people with whom they felt comfortable. This created an even greater sense of community.

The naming process undertaken by the colonial state later served as political leverage in the named community as it "rallied around a reconstituted ethnic identity" (Anderson 2003:32, see also Goldin 1987:161) in order to counter the oppressive politics

⁷⁸ See Frescura 2001 for an analysis of apartheid geography.

of the state. Franz Fanon argues that the colonizers succeeded because they imposed their “image of the colonized on the subjugated people” who must then “purge themselves of these deprecating self-images” (Taylor 1992:65). Attempts at ‘purging’ were evident in the adoption of the term ‘so-called coloured’.

‘Coloured’ came to be associated with ‘inferior’ [and] in time coloured came to *mean* inferior. This is why the Coloured people so often refer to themselves as ‘the so-called Coloured people’ – it is because they cannot readily and will not openly accept a name which has come to have such unhappy associations (Van der Ross 1979:74).

Resistance to the imposed identity of colouredness existed alongside an acceptance of the imposed identity. As E.P. Thompson reiterates, “no ideology is fully absorbed” (1968:431). This is evident both institutionally and in day-to-day politics.

‘Collaborationist’ and ‘guerilla’ politics emerged from within the same community from the late 1800s onwards.

Expressions of ‘coloured’ politics

Marais (1968) spuriously argues that coloured people did not have the ability to start their own political organizations, let alone hold political opinions. Gavin Lewis’s thorough research in *Between the Wire and the Wall – A History of South African ‘Coloured’ Politics* (1987) disputes Marais’s statement by showing how coloured politics emerged in the late 1890s. Elites in the coloured community formed various associations, parties, organizations and bodies from the late 1800s. The Coloured People’s Association was founded as a national organization in 1892 and aimed to “unite ‘the coloured people of [the Cape] colony’ and to uplift them ‘socially as well as morally’ (ibid.:11), however, there is no further mention of the organization after 1894. The Afrikaner League

(Coloured) was founded in 1883 by Coloured alluvial diamond diggers and transport riders but dissolved soon after the local elections. This shows a new political self-confidence among Blacks in the Cape. In 1896, the pro-British South African League established some 'B' branches for Coloured members and in 1898 Cecil John Rhodes changed his speech from "equal rights for all white men south of the Zambesi" to "equal rights for all civilized men" (Lewis, 1987:11). It is important to note that educated and propertied coloureds were allowed to vote during this period, thereby creating an acceptable class within the coloured community.

By 1903, the Stone Meetings in District Six were well-known within the coloured community and afforded an opportunity to those speakers who "emphasized coloured or black 'race pride'" (Bickford-Smith, 1994:306). Socialist Wilfrid H. Harrison describes the meetings as follows:

There was a large stone just above the residential properties on the mountain side at which meetings were held every Sunday morning, chiefly for ventilating the many grievances of the Coloured community. They were known as the Stone Meetings and the chairman opened the proceedings by shouting "*Kom na die klip*" [come to the stone] ... I attended those meetings for a long time afterwards and I found there, as amongst most of the Coloured races of the world, that the antipathy to the white man and administration is very deep.⁷⁹

The attendees at the Stone Meetings were elites by virtue of their levels of education and professional occupations. They were "great men among their people" (Simons and Simons 1968) like John Tobin, a coloured farmer at Klipheuvel, who initiated the Stone Meetings. In 1904 Harrison ran against Dr Abdullah Abdurahman for Town Council and the latter won. In 1906, Dr Abdurahman, a medical doctor and Muslim leader, stood for election to the Cape Parliament but was not elected. Richard van der Ross (1979) writes

⁷⁹ <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/sources/harrison-wilfrid+/wlfrid-index.htm> (accessed 5 January 2006)

in *Myths and Attitudes: An Inside Look at the Coloured People* that Dr Abdurahman declined a Black African nomination in 1906. Van der Ross argues that Black Africans did not support a candidate from their own community which showed their 'lesser status'. I would argue that this proved that politics was non-racial at that stage but that a perceived need for a separate coloured identity ended the solidarity between Black African and those who were constructed, and in turn constructed themselves, as coloured.

Abdurahman was elected president of the African Political Organisation (APO) in 1905, a "mass radical movement" (Simons 1968) that was to form the mainstay of elite coloured political activism in the earlier part of the twentieth century. "The APO gave much attention to educational needs, agitated for better facilities, admonished parents to send their children to school, and ventilated the grievances of the teachers" (Simons 1968). It also defended "Coloured people's social, political and civil rights" (Bickford-Smith, 1995a:461) and was led by a Christian coloured elite that "made common political cause with its Black Christian counterpart in Cape Town and the Cape Colony at large in the 1890s, [and] it made sense that they did so as Coloureds" (ibid:453). Dr Abdurahman's leadership of the APO from 1905 until his death in 1940 highlighted the collaboration between the Muslim and Christian elites in the early 1900s. It was clear that Abdurahman opted to collaborate with white power in order to gain benefits for his constituencies and that he failed to adopt "Gandhi's message that a voteless and rejected people would not obtain relief from a parliament of their oppressors, but must depend on their own strength and develop their own methods of struggle" (ibid.). The APO clearly had "assimilationist tendencies" (Adhikari 2002:21) and aimed to maintain relationships with the Union government.

The class divisions in the coloured community created a fragmented society that was divided by each faction's political interests.

Within the Coloured community, elite status was not entirely a function of economic status. Other factors impinged, such as education, religion, family background and, all other things being equal, skin-colour, with white features carrying higher status ... The Coloured elites aspired towards integration into white society, with all the privileges that this implied, not to a separate Coloured identity with its negative social implications (Lewis 1987:13).

Lewis creates the misperception that elite coloureds are homogenous in their political expression. This is not true as their political spectrum stretched from conservative to radical politics. On the conservative end, the Labour and National Parties wooed coloured elites to vote for whites who would hopefully win key seats in the Cape in the early 1900s. Each party employed different tactics: the Labour Party had coloured voters agree that they would uphold white standards while the National Party, under Hertzog, placed coloureds on a "platform apart from the native" (Lewis, 1987:83). These two party directives created a coloured elite that was, to a large extent, separate from its broader community.

Early coloured political action emerged from Christian coloureds, many of whom joined the South African Christian Political Association in 1895 in an attempt to "be accepted as equals by whites" (Bickford-Smith 1995a:457). The aspirations of coloureds to be accepted by whites were evident in their political strategies. Adhikari notes that the 'assimilationists' "assumed that all people, no matter what their current condition, were capable of self-improvement and the attainment of 'civilisation', which in the minds of the Coloured élite equated to Western bourgeois culture" (2002:28). For example,

Christian Ziervogel's *Brown South Africa* (1938)⁸⁰, a slim contribution by a 'brown' intellectual to the debate on coloured identity in the early 1900s, argued that coloured people needed upliftment from Black Africans towards whites. Adhikari labels Ziervogel's work as "typical of moderate, assimilationist discourse within the Coloured elite" (2002:77). Class played a major role in early coloured organizations in that coloured elites wished to be acknowledged as 'different' from the majority Black African population. However, despite the importance of class, there was no common Black political identity among elites. Ties between the Black African and coloured leaders were "tenuous" at best due to differences in language, culture, economic wellbeing, race, geography and status (Simon 1968). This gulf between the two groups rendered a common Black movement vulnerable to the apartheid government's segregationist machinations.

The APO and the African National Congress were similar in outlook: "they represented the interests of the elites in their communities; both aspired towards an integrated, non-racial South Africa; both saw themselves as a national forum for the discussion of issues affecting Africans and Coloureds" (Lewis 1987:78). However, a formal relationship did not develop between South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the precursor to the ANC, and the APO despite their partnership on many political fronts. Maurice Hommel's controversial doctoral thesis *Capricorn Blues* observes

how a combination of deliberately divisive strategies by the state, assimilationist tendencies within the coloured community and weaknesses within the Coloured

⁸⁰ See Adhikari's (2002) work for a more detailed discussion on Ziervogel and his position on and in the coloured community.

political leadership frustrated the fruition of the natural alliance between Coloured and African peoples against white domination” (Adhikari 2002:94).⁸¹

By the early 1900s a definitive coloured identity had coalesced and boundaries between colouredness and Black African-ness had been clearly delineated. Political privileges had been extended to coloureds and not to Black Africans, which led to animosity between the two groups and did not make for easy political collaboration. A few disgruntled members of the APO formed the South African Coloured Union in 1913 and the Muslim/Christian coalition broke down because, while the APO had been under the leadership of a Muslim, the SACU declared itself an organization protecting the rights of *Christian* coloureds (Lewis 1987:81). Likewise, in rejection of the assimilationist character of the APO, the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) was established in 1943 as an organization that espoused non collaboration with racist institutions. Their Ten Point Programme called for the removal of all the disabilities and restrictions based on grounds of race and colour and the acquisition by non-Europeans of all these rights enjoyed by the European population (Adhikari 2002:181). NEUM was also a response to Jan Smuts’ introduction of the Coloured Representative Council (1943) which was meant to administer political and social issues emanating from the coloured community.

At this point in history, Hommel argued, “the Coloured people constituted were a ‘volk’ (people) in their own right, as a nascent nation in the making, requiring a separate and distinct orbit for socio-political development” (Adhikari 2002:93). Strangely enough the term ‘ethnic’ was never extended to describe coloured identity which was seen to not be rooted in history or with filial connections because of the disparateness of the

⁸¹ Adhikari states that some of Hommel’s thesis “took up [radical theorists’] ideas and arguments – even verbatim chunks of their writing, some of it unacknowledged – in *Capricorn Blues*” (2002:90).

community. During the period 1904 to 1935, “the development of policies of preference for Coloured men and women were closely related to attempts by the administration and employers to deflect opposition based on non-racial organization” (Goldin, 1987:51). 1904 also marked the point where the official census incorporated an exclusive definition of colouredness which distinguished them from ‘White’ and ‘Bantu’ (Cape Census G19/1905, 10-4, para 102). The Western Cape region had emerged as a preferential area for coloured workers thereby dividing class solidarity in that group.⁸² Race was used to scuttle workers’ attempts to destabilize the Union. The Native Urban Areas Act (1923) provided special residential status to coloured citizens in the Cape to the exclusion of Black Africans. The latter act prohibited all Black Africans from living in the Cape peninsula area thereby providing jobs to coloured workers almost exclusively. This job reservation policy created tensions and animosity between the two groups that still exists in the Western Cape in the twenty-first century.

In 1919 the Pact government, an alliance between the Labour and National Parties, embarked on a program to win the hearts and minds of the coloured voters. The Pact offered a ‘New Deal’ which would allow coloured people to “share in the privileges legislated for white workers” and be spared the indignities experienced by Black Africans. “Hertzog promised Coloured voters, therefore, not assimilation with whites but an extension of their economic opportunities and political rights as a separate ‘ethnic’ group alongside whites and apart from Africans” (Lewis 1987:1180). After the 1924 election the Pact reneged on its agreement with coloured voters and provided significant hurdles to their access into the formal working environment. The Apprenticeship Act of

⁸² See Gates (2001) for an anthropological discussion of Western Cape fishermen and how they construct their own identities.

1922 almost eradicated the skilled coloured working population when it introduced more stringent educational qualifications required by an apprentice. The introduction of a Civilised Labour Policy⁸³ (1924) also ensured that “Coloureds also suffered from the impact of a policy which was widely interpreted to imply that only White men and women were civilised” (Goldin 1987:42). Lewis clarifies that ‘civilised’ referred to “labour rendered by persons whose standard of living conforms to the standard generally regarded as tolerable from the European standpoint” while ‘uncivilized’ labour referred to labour “rendered by persons whose aim is restricted to the requirements of the necessities of life as understood among barbarous and undeveloped peoples” (1987:132). Under the apartheid government the Native Representative Council was “the only form of political representation for Africans left at the end of the segregationist era” (Norval 1996a:15) and the Coloured Representative Council for coloured people. Black African workers were forced to stay in their ‘locations’⁸⁴ and emerge for work each day. The early governments, prior to the 1948 National Party victory, passed laws that stratified society and protected white workers from the ever increasingly militant Black workers. Racism, as in the past, was based on commercial interests and a growing racial ideology and consciousness of difference. Paul Maylam’s (2001) test for racism in the colonial period proved to be correct in its assumptions during the early 1900s.

Elite coloured political behaviour further stratified the coloured community by the use of the term ‘coloured’. “The appellation of ‘Coloured’ was eventually adopted by the

⁸³ The Civilised Labour Policy, the Wage Act of 1924, and the Mines and Works (Amendment) Act of 1926 (popularly known as the Colour Bar Act) were introduced to protect white workers (Lewis 1987:131-2)

⁸⁴ A location or township is a place in which Black Africans were forced to live when they entered the urban areas to look for work. These spaces were devoid of development, vegetation and human comforts. They were later known as ‘dormitories’ which made reference to workers returning to sleep and not really living in that space.

élite of those so described because of discrimination against them by whites, but also because, as ‘Coloureds’, they were wanting to distinguish themselves from Bantu speaking Africans” (Bickford-Smith 1994:308). I would argue that the term ‘coloured’ was adopted by the political elite who wished to gain credence within Cape politics. They used the term because it was commonly used by the settlers in reference to them; it became shorthand for a collective identity which that community used in order to make inroads into political spaces and later gave them relative economic and social entry into a *de jure* segregated society. This process of delineation of the coloured community also had ramifications for internal group relations because by identifying themselves as ‘Coloureds’ the political leadership separated their social and political identity from the rest of the group’s identity, which has been depicted as ‘lower class’. This stratification has great bearing on the future of coloured identity and politics during the apartheid era that many political leaders have tried to overcome.

Conclusion

The state and coloured elites played a role in the construction of a separate coloured identity during the colonial and apartheid eras. Coloured identity emerged as a result of a perceived threat and was used as a means to rally and mobilize people who identified themselves as ‘coloured’ against that threat. As I argued earlier, it is unnecessary to determine whether the state first identified the group or whether a loose conception of a group identity already existed because of shared experiences under slavery and colonialism. It is clear that the colonial state imposed colouredness onto a community of descendants of slaves, KhoiSan and colonists. It is also clear that that

identity was adopted by the labeled community in order to mobilize politically and to express their identities in ways that could counter the oppressive structures in which they found themselves. Coloured identity, at this stage, was consolidated and was either assimilationist or antagonistic towards the white government. By 1948, a racially divided society was evident both through the machinations of the state and through people linking their individual identities to particular groups for social and political reasons. Identities were not only chosen to gain access to power and resources but also to create a sense of belonging through shared histories and experiences.

This chapter has shown how state and coloured elites constructed separate understandings of coloured identities that were then imposed and adopted during the colonial period and sedimented by the 1800s through social and political behavior. Imagined communities were formed in an attempt to find a place of belonging in a socially divided world and also to promote a group's interests politically and economically. Those communities adopted and adapted the colonial nomenclature because it made it easier for them to operate within the confines of a stratified society. Colouredness is multiple in the sense that it is a conglomeration of different identities: slave, KhoiSan, colonist, Black African and many more. The 'undecidability' of colouredness placed it in a precarious position as it battled for recognition by Cape society and by the state. Attempts by various assimilationist and non-collaborationist organizations prove that identities are fluid as opportunity spaces opened and closed for them at various times. For some a non-racial identity was important but in a racialized country that ideal was not easily attained. Coloured people, regardless of how they self-

identified, were saddled with an in-between identity that became more evident during the period 1948 to 2000.

The official public sphere in the Cape Colony was renowned for its “special tradition of multi-racialism” (Bickford-Smith 1995b:1) and accommodated relations between people from different social and racial backgrounds. This social milieu produced a society that initially accepted racial difference but later attempted to control social interaction between groups. The Cape liberal tradition allowed for equality before the law and a non-racial franchise (ibid.:2), but this changed in the 1880s when formal institutional restrictions were passed prohibiting unfettered social intermingling. ‘Race’ and ‘class’ were used interchangeably in the 19th century, resulting in a particular understanding of which race was more acceptable in class terms than others. This did not, as American historian George Fredrickson argues, solely exist because of the “notorious permeability of the colour line” or “tolerance of miscegenation” (Bickford-Smith 1995b:5). Despite the liberal traditions of the Cape Colony, “[d]e facto segregation existed in many amenities, social activities and institutions between 1875 and 1902” (ibid.:5) even though law did not prohibit Black participation and entry into those spaces. Citizenship was racially and spatially marked by the early 1900s.

Groups such as the Coloured Affairs Department (CAD) and the Coloured Advisory Council (CAC) occupied the official space. The CAC comprised state-elected members from the coloured community who advised the state on “matters affecting coloured people” (La Guma 1972). These assimilationist bodies were opposed by the Anti-CAD conference, which was held in Cape Town in 1943 to counter the CAD and the CAC. In the counter-public sphere revolutionary coloured elite groups attempted to

overthrow the apartheid government and aimed to secure a system based on equal political rights for all constituencies. The assimilationist strategies would later backfire as coloured groups attempted and failed to join forces with Black African political organizations. For assimilationists, their aim was to enter the official public sphere and participate as 'equals' while the revolutionary groups like the NEUM tried to create a separate space in which they could mobilize coloured people around oppositional ideologies of communism, socialism and the overthrow of white rule. Citizenship had moved from conceptions of respectability and status in the Colony, to a racialized framework that initially excluded the Black African majority and ultimately the coloured voters.

The representation of history in this chapter only provides a bounded image of life in the Cape Colony. Elsewhere in colonial South Africa colouredness was experienced differently, but that is not the focus of this study. I have attempted to show how elites have constructed coloured identity and how that identity has changed over time to suit their political and social aspirations. I have also shown how elites have used political institutions to mold coloured identity for their own objectives. The white state incorporated them initially and then later rejected coloured citizenship as the latter group became more anti-state in its political expression. The coloured elites established political, religious, cultural and social practices and institutions that countered the hegemony of white society. This act had varying degrees of success based on the level of state repression during different periods.

This chapter does not capture many of the resistances to the state's attempts to control the identities of not-white people but as a collective Black politics became more

visible and strident, state repression increased exponentially. Chapter 4, which covers the apartheid period which was in existence from 1948 to 1994, will show how coloured elites negotiated a new understanding of their identities under an increasingly repressive white state.

Chapter 4: Apartheid Opportunities and Constraints

Coloured Liminality
and I hybrid, after Mendel,
growing between the wire and the wall,
being dogs body, being me, buffer you still
- Arthur Nortje, "Dogsbody half-breed"

All identities are socially constructed relationally and are manipulated by elites to meet their particular political and social agendas. During the colonial period a simultaneous process of assimilation and rejection took place when the state imposed racialised identities onto its subjects. An imposed identity from above creates distinctive power relations between the state and the named, while those constructed from below challenge state-imposed identities. Under colonial rule the liberal Cape society was stratified according to social respectability and status within society, positions that were upheld by the subjects themselves (Ross 1999). Racial categorization only emerged much later (Bickford-Smith 1995b and Maylam 2001) and was formalized under, first, the Union government and then under National Party rule from 1948.

This chapter examines the construction of coloured identities during the apartheid era. It argues that the state imposed 'colouredness' on people who were not white/not black through legislation, the politics of space and brute force. The in-betweenity of coloured identity is evident in the middle position it occupied in society. White people occupied positions of power and ordered society to suit their social, economic and political needs while the Black population, meaning everyone who was not white, was disenfranchised and forced to live under conditions that removed their political rights and basic social privileges. This chapter looks at apartheid legislation and argues that all South Africans were forced into categories that controlled their social behavior and

political expression. By constructing the Black population in South Africa as Other, the white government constrained the choices of white people too and policed that group's behavior. However, again, the imposition of an identity did not preclude the agency of the coloured community in creating their own identities or their own understanding of that imposed identity. "We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things ... others want to see in us" (Taylor 1992:33). It should be noted though that apartheid legislation created identities that were "locked in[to]" (Martin 1998:523) century-old definitions, therefore opposition occurred within the boundaries set by the apartheid state.

In short, I argue that the apartheid state and coloured elites each communicated their versions of coloured identity in various public spheres, but most often in dialog with each other. Coloured elites, depending on their politics, used identity either to mobilize support for or against apartheid policy. The state, on the other hand, used identity to create differences *within* Blackness in order to create division among the Black population in South Africa. This was achieved through discourses on how people were different because of their 'race', therefore that difference justified separate development programs. The state maintained social and physical distances between groups through the designation of physical spaces for whites, coloureds and Black Africans. These spaces were resourced according to a sliding scale of rights, with whites being most deserving of full services. Anthias and Yuval-Davis postulate that "[t]he boundary is a space for struggle and negotiation" (1992:4). It is for this reason that space became contested in South Africa during apartheid, because it limited people to predefined areas that determined how worthy they were of receiving state-provided services. It is important

therefore to look at the struggle for political and physical space as a manifestation of political resistance against the government. Language, religion and cultural practices are some of the symbolic spaces which were occupied and contested during the apartheid period therefore this chapter also examines those aspects in the coloured community's struggle for identity.

Apartheid Apparatus

'Apartheid' simultaneously refers to colonial *de facto* segregation and to a "set of certain legislative measures" that were introduced when the National Party (NP) won the 1948 election (Norval 1996a:1). The practice of 'apartheid' therefore broadly spans the periods of colonial rule and the NP-led apartheid regime but is differently expressed in each of the periods. Chapter 3 showed how colonial constructions of colouredness emerged both from the state and the group itself whereas this chapter will show how coloured identity was legislatively imposed from 1948. Racialized identities are not abstract or homogeneous categories, but should be understood in relation to specific sets of social relations in which nationhood, gender and race play important roles (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). It will also examine the ways in which coloured elites responded to those constructions. 'Elites' are community members who have access to both the official public and counterpublic spaces through which they can disseminate their ideas. Coloured elites are not a homogenous group. They neither follow similar political ideologies nor employ similar tactics but employ multiple strategies to avoid clear boundaries between them and other groups. Most importantly, they have used the fluidity of their identities to transgress state-imposed categories.

It is easier to study apartheid discourse than oppositional discourse from coloured elites during the apartheid era because the former dominated the official public sphere. The apartheid state made its policies public through state-supported media and public speeches. Norval's book *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (1996a) offers a valuable resource to uncover the processes behind "apartheid projects" that go beyond race and class (Norval 1996a:3). Identities are discursively constructed, meaning that they are bounded by language and general acceptance of that language both by people who constitute that identity and by those outside the identity. It is important therefore that the "political grammar" (ibid.:2) of naming needs to be analyzed and deconstructed in order to better understand how apartheid was so successful in the South African context. It is also vital to keep in mind that though apartheid was a violent and oppressive system it was not entirely successful at silencing subjects. Anti-state groups embarked on moments of resistance as a means to assert their own identities and power. Coloured elites who were anti-establishment created counter-publics in which they could voice their opposition to the government, while coloured elites who were pro-government sought ways that would provide them with greater access to the official public sphere.

The advent of Afrikaner rule in 1948 extended a white, frontier Afrikaner identity to the wider South African society. Liberal politics under colonial rule had limited Afrikaner identity to the political practices of assimilation and tolerance. Cape liberalism allowed seepage into its society only if subjects assimilated; all those who did not assimilate were excluded, including Blacks and Afrikaners. Colonial segregation was different from apartheid (Maylam 2001) where the former concept encapsulates the process of *de facto* separation of white from Black and the latter refers to the *de jure*

legislated segregation. Separation did not extend far enough for the post-1948 Afrikaner-led state who then devised '*apartheid*' to create official segregation between racialized groups. The 1950s presented a new kind of segregation that went beyond earlier social and political divisions in South Africa. Racially based ethnic identities became the focus of the NP government through the introduction of the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act and the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act. Whiteness was exemplified through the infantilization of Blackness which had to be governed first and then later granted self-governance without adequate support from the central government. For white supremacy to be sustained, the process of constructing separate racialised identities became more and more urgent leading to the violent repression of the 1980s, which marked the final days of the apartheid regime.

As Norval argues, "a clear racist logic was at work: exclusive Afrikaner nationalism was an obsessive quest for a core of authenticity which could, however not be found" (1996a:95). This process entailed the progressive exclusion of Black Africans, coloureds and Indians from the official public sphere unless their interaction was mediated through puppet bodies such as the Coloured Affairs Department, the Department of Native Affairs (La Guma 1972, Evans 1997).⁸⁵ Later, under the Tricameral Parliament, the House of Delegates for Indian people and the House of Representatives for coloureds were created to appease those groups after years of disenfranchisement. Black Africans had been removed from the voters' roll prior to 1910 while coloured voters were placed on a separate voters' roll which allowed them to vote for white representatives to speak on their behalf in parliament. The Franchise Action

⁸⁵ See also Sol Plaatjie 1916 *Native Life in South Africa*

Council, a non-racial group, protested against the Separate Representation of Voters Act but to no avail. The state increased its repressive management of the Black population and progressively whittled away Black rights over the next four decades.

Mass urbanization of Black Africans produced a more militant urban Black population. This marked a period of “dislocation” (La Guma 1972): both from the land and from established identities that had emerged during the de fact separation period. New identities were required in order to survive in the new socio-political milieu of 1948. “With the process of urbanization came the development of a more coherent and comprehensive response to the policies of segregation by African, coloured and Indian political organizations” (Norval 1996a:15). For the Black population, trade unions became the leading institutions for counter-state activism, for example, the Industrial and Commercial Union (1922) and Congress for Non-European Trade Union (1941) mobilized workers across racial lines.⁸⁶ The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) also played a major role in organizing Black workers during the early days of apartheid rule. Leaders of these organizations were elite, educated individuals like Z.K. Matthews, Yusuf Dadoo and J.B. Marks. Politics during this period was defined as ‘non-racial’ meaning that race did not play a leading role in the struggle against the National Party government; it was a class struggle that had been taken up by all workers. The state countered this comprehensive opposition by granting certain trade unions and political groups the right to act in the public sphere and suppressed others through the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, both instituted in 1953. The Defiance Campaign of the mid-1950s forever changed

⁸⁶ See Tom Lodge’s *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* for a comprehensive discussion of this period in history.

the practice of anti-apartheid struggle in the public sphere. All South Africans who opposed racist rule took to the streets in support of Black African activists who burned passes and occupied areas marked “whites only”.

Definitions of ‘Coloured’

With reference to coloured identity, the state attempted to create a “sense of national awareness” among the coloured nation and to foster in each coloured person a “sense of pride in himself and his people” (Goldin 1987:79). This was done so as to break the Black political alliance. “By cutting off all escape [to whiteness] for the Coloured middle class the Nationalists hoped to promote the development of that class” (ibid.:80). These strategies definitely created a group identity through the conscious separation of coloured people from their Black African and white counterparts. The state controlled coloured access to the official sphere through puppet bodies such as the Coloured People’s Representative Council, which was established in 1968 and comprised of 40 elected and 20 state-nominated members from the coloured community. Assimilationists played a major role in defining official coloured politics during this period. Coloured leaders who wished to participate in government structures sought to do so based on the grounds that they were ‘equal’ to whites and therefore demanded equal representation in the white parliament.

Ex-parliamentary organizations like the Non-European Unity Movement (1943) and Coloured People’s Congress (1953) occupied the oppositional spaces in coloured politics. The Anti-CAD movement was one of the most radical coloured organizations at the time and its members identified as ‘Black’ in an attempt to create a common Black

front against the apartheid state. The African People's Organisation also played a major role in coloured politics until the 1950s when it disbanded (Lewis 1987). Many of these political organizations were anti-state and non-racial and opted to effect change from outside official structures. Alex La Guma quotes the leader of the NEUM, Dr Richard van der Ross, as saying that coloured people would ““use the instruments available to us’ because ‘that was the only way the Coloured people can organize themselves under the present system’ and the coloured people were not ‘given to working underground’” (La Guma 1972).⁸⁷ The decision not to engage in underground tactics and the occasion of the first Coloured Representative Council, a conservative intra-government body, election in 1969 resulted in a government-controlled outcome through which coloured political voices were controlled and became marginal in the official public sphere.

The state simultaneously shackled coloured political activity and rejected it for its ignominious past. Apartheid continued to link coloured identities to debates on miscegenation (Reddy 2001). Coloured identity therefore pointed to a ‘mixing’ of two, or more, pure bloods. Derrida’s notion of ‘undecidables’ was apt to define the position of coloured people in South African society as ““[u]ndecideability’ is not concerned simply with ‘indeterminacy’. Rather, it designates ‘a determinate oscillation between possibilities’ which are themselves ‘highly determined in strictly defined situations’” (Norval 1996a:308). Similarly, art historian Lize van Robbroeck (2003) explains that the ‘undecidable’ produces a ““horror of indetermination’ as they ‘bring the outside to the inside, and poison the comfort and order with suspicion and chaos’” (171). And, Leela Fernandes (1999:125) refers to the “untranslatability” of the subaltern who does not allow

⁸⁷ The African National Congress and the Pan African Congress were banned in 1960 and subsequently launched underground attacks against the apartheid state from centres outside South Africa’s borders.

for easy categorization. Later, various ‘untranslatables’ or ‘undecidables’ would be recategorized out of the category ‘Coloured’. The Chinese later became ‘honorary whites’ and the ‘undecidables’ were narrowed down to ‘Coloured’ by the Population Registration Act (see Wilhelm 2005).

Through shared experiences and history based on slavery and conquest, coloured people also recognized their status as a ‘group’ by the 1940s. The state, through the census, controls the bodies of its subjects. Even the radical CPSA “accepted the existence of a separate and distinct Coloured community” despite organizing around class issues to fight capitalism (Lewis 1987:181). Arjun Appadurai (1996) asserts that state labels and census processes actually serve to create a community where one did not exist before. I argued earlier that a community of sorts needs to exist in order for the state to assert its power through labeling over the group. This was evident by 1948. Citizens, in turn, adopt labels and conform to census categories creating “conditions for new strategies of mobility, status politics, and electoral struggle...” (ibid.:116). Within these imposed categories people made meaning of their own experiences and created new social hierarchies and politics based on the relations found within the group.

Throughout the apartheid era the government continued with their attempts to define coloured people and to justify their treatment of the group as ‘different’. The Theron Commission Report of 1977 on the ‘coloured question’ describes the ‘coloured community’ as follows:

It is comprised of individuals ranging from those who in appearance, biological type, life-style, and cultural characteristics are barely distinguishable from Whites (whether Afrikaans or English speaking) at one end of the spectrum, to individuals who, at the other end of the spectrum are barely distinguishable from a variety of Bantu population groups, as well as Asians (Van der Ross 1979:27).

This imagined community created spaces for themselves in which they practiced their cultures, religions, languages and lifestyles. The apparent dissimilarities to which the Theron Commission referred were tolerated and accepted within those coloured communities. Muslim lived next to Christian, English and Afrikaans were spoken widely, phenotypical differences were par for the course, even though those who closely resembled white or Black African were taunted with nicknames like 'Whitey' and 'Kaffirjie' (loosely translated into 'Little Nigger'). Humorous irony was also used when really dark skinned coloured people were nicknamed 'Spook', meaning ghost. Relations within the coloured community were constructed according to the racial practices of the state as communities expressed the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable phenotypes. These permissive social spaces were destroyed when the Group Areas Act was applied more rigorously in the 1960s, but continue to color the nicknames used by people in predominantly coloured areas.

Social spaces and Political issues

Relationships within the group emerged because of a shared history and space that was circumscribed by racialism. Chapter 3 discussed how the shared history created a sense of community among a disparate group of people. Spatial apartheid also aimed to create an 'imagined community' and to "achieve a correspondence between racialised political differentiation and racialised spatial separation" (Maylam 2001:181). Until the early 1960s, coloured people were permitted to reside in urban areas for many reasons, of which I will provide two. Firstly they were a necessary semi-skilled labor pool that required easy access to the urban factories and industries. Secondly, their in-between

status in the racial system of South Africa protected them from harsher segregation policies that were meted out to Black Africans. Coloured people's status was eroded with the advent of the Group Areas Act of 1950 which "carved up the country into – in theory – hermetically sealed geographic units designed as vehicles for difference" (Friedman 2004:240). This was only achieved 'in theory' because people crossed these borders socially and physically on a daily basis on their way to work and within townships like Sophiatown and District Six. Maylam (2001) also argues that spatial apartheid was introduced to administer industries' labor needs. Bantustans and segregated townships were established to act as labor pools outside the city centers. Migrant labor, as a result, became the anchor of the apartheid capitalist system (Hanchard 1999:7).

Another piece of legislation provided the framework for racial differentiation. The Population Registration Act of 1950 required all subjects to be registered in terms of their racial group. In terms of the Act 'a coloured person' was defined as "a person who [was] not a white or a native" (RSA, 1968, vii). By the 1960 census coloureds were defined as "all persons not included any of the three groups" meaning white, Asian and African groups.⁸⁸ The NP government drafted and tabled a segregation ordinance which proved difficult to pass because the draft could not clearly define "where 'Coloured' ended and 'white' began" (Lewis 1987:189). It was in the state's interest therefore to clearly mark boundaries between racial groups because, if it wished to create a foolproof racial hierarchy that could employ 'common sense' tests to identify race, it needed to distinguish quite clearly between categories (Posel in Nuttall 2004:735). For example, the pencil test checked hair texture to ensure the kinky-haired ('not-white') children were

⁸⁸ See also Khalfani and Zuberi (2001:168)

placed into coloured schools. This is similar to the brown paper bag test in the United States that afforded Blacks of a lighter hue than a brown paper bag access to white society. These ‘common sense’ practices split families as some members of a family could be classified white while others could not.

In order to counter ‘passing’, the state also changed the registration of children or adults who had “erroneously” been classified (Khalfani and Zuberi 2001:168).⁸⁹

Cases have occurred where parents who are quite willing to use the correct form for entering their own particulars have objected to using a separate form for their children who happen to fall within the definition of ‘mixed or coloured’. These entries are accepted to avoid giving offence and afterwards transferred to the correct form either by the Enumerator, the Supervisor or in the Census Office before tabulation (ibid.:167).

The ability of the individual to self-identify during the apartheid era was removed and transferred to the official. Even if an official accepted the individual’s self-definition without question, the former still had the power to determine that individual’s identity within state-defined boundaries. Brubaker and Cooper argue that self-definition, or ‘self-understanding’ “may be overridden by overwhelmingly coercive external categorizations” (2000:18) therefore self-identification could concur with the official identification of that person. According to apartheid law, a person who could generally be accepted as white could be classified as ‘European’ (white), which implied that as long as appearances were upheld people would be allowed to transgress racial boundaries. It is ironic that the Population Registration Act prohibited self-definition but allowed for official reclassification if the person could ‘pass’. The Classification Board was established to legalize passing in South Africa. This process provided the opportunity for

⁸⁹ See also Roger Ballard (1996:5-7) on passing in Britain. He distinguishes between the public passing and the private difference immigrants are forced to adopt in order to be invisible in and to assimilate into ‘English’ society. He argues that most immigrants opt for overt cultural expressions in the public sphere in order to “resist racial and ethnic denigration in an overt way” (ibid.:7).

“any person who considers himself aggrieved by his classification...” (USA, 1950, 283 [Section 11, Subsection 1). In 1978, 192 South Africans were reclassified, while, by the end of the 1980s 3 455 ‘Cape Coloureds’ had been reclassified as ‘White’ and 1 827 Blacks (Africans) had changed their racial classification to Coloured (Khalfani and Zuberi 2001:164). Reclassification practices show how porous the borders between categories were even though laws prohibited border-crossings between racial categories. It should be noted that ‘poor whites’ also crossed boundaries for material reasons. It was easier for them to find a job as a semi-skilled ‘coloured’ worker than a menial white worker.⁹⁰ I would argue that most people who opted to move from one group to another did so because of marriage and aspirations to improve their social status.

Coloured people who could pass “lean towards an identification with whiteness, an attachment to the idea of ‘being white’” (Hanchard 1999:9).⁹¹ However, as Hanchard continues, “phenotypic self-identification does not operate as a free-floating signifier for Brazilians, but within long-standing parameters of white and black, with qualified but nonetheless oppositional meanings attached to both phenotypic categorizations” (ibid.:9-10). Coloured identity is the glue that held the apartheid classificatory system together as it was the yardstick against which whiteness and Blackness could be measured (Reddy 2001). However, the purity of whiteness and Black African-ness were countered by the “essence” of “mixed racial blood [which] signifies the unclassifiable, the doubtful and the

⁹⁰ Whites were not treated similarly despite their race. There were large numbers of poor whites immediately after the war many of whom required jobs and, I would argue, some were willing to become coloured to obtain employment. See Marlene van Niekerk’s *Triomf* (1999), a novel about the lives of poor whites in the township of Triomf, formerly (and now again!) known as Sophiatown. Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, in her critique of Van Niekerk’s *Triomf* (2004) argues that the apartheid state treated poor whites similarly to Black Africans.

⁹¹ See Zoë Wicomb’s *Playing in the Light* for a fictional rendition of a coloured family who ‘played’ white in order to benefit from their assumed whiteness.

borderline. A set of characteristics which is the norm for all people becomes the abnormal, the dangerous, the Other” (Reddy 2001:78). The state therefore had to treat Colouredness very differently because it occupied a peculiar place between whiteness and Black African-ness.

Imagined Community Realized

A shared coloured experience and living space fostered community bonds forged by racial segregation and apartheid. Ironically, bonds between Black African and coloured communities failed to grow despite the efforts of coloured political elites who had adopted a Black political identity. As the apartheid system took root, even influential organizations such as the National Liberation League (NLL) and the CPSA could not engender non-racial politics in South Africa. Contrary to the non-racial ideologies of these two organizations, many earlier coloured organizations worked on the presumption that a coloured identity existed and therefore fought for the interests of that community within the racialized hierarchy. Race trumped class when it came to political mobilization as the apartheid government made it clear that the coloured community would benefit, however marginally, more than Black Africans.

Within the coloured community class later played a major role, however, when the forced removals moved people from places like District Six to the Cape Flats, a barren heartless area, racial ties were strong in the face of apartheid. Vivian Bickford-Smith argues that every community has both real and imagined aspects where the real is a physical space that is shared by people which creates a spatial community through “occupational, kinship and neighbourly ties” (1995b:3). The imagined aspect is the

connection people feel through sharing a history or experiences, the psychological sense of belonging, of identifying with others who have similar experiences; and empathy which results in a “community for itself” (ibid.:4). Journalist and activist Trevor Oosterwyk remembers that “families around your own house would know each other” (personal interview).⁹² The children played sports, hung out in gang groups (Oosterwyk belonged to the Wonderkids), gathered around shebeens (illegal taverns), frequented the community library and attended schools in the area. Oosterwyk disrupts the sense of community ties by claiming that “[n]one of those friendships was retained. [But once I left the area] I recognized people who came from *Bonties*.”⁹³ There was a sense of ‘Bonteheuwel’ in all of us – we came from the same space: a desolate, sandy place.” Even though the physical space and context might change, the imagined connections remain strong.

As a result of the Group Areas Act of 1950 the racially mixed residential areas were destroyed and single-raced areas were constructed. The ‘mixed’ spaces took on mythical proportions during the apartheid period as the older generation spoke about the ‘old days’ when all people lived together in ‘peace and harmony’. Sean Field refers to this as the “story of place” and “a struggle for home” (2001:98). District Six in Cape Town was one of those areas. Set at the foot of Table Mountain it had an enviable view of Table Bay, into which the Dutch had sailed in 1652. In this space English and Afrikaans, Muslim and Christian, South African and foreign, upper and lower classes co-

⁹² Personal interview with Trevor Oosterwyk, 31 March 2004 Pretoria. All quotations attributed to Oosterwyk refer to this interview unless otherwise stated.

⁹³ ‘*Bonties*’ is an abbreviated form of ‘Bonteheuwel’ (meaning ‘coloured hill’ referring to its view of Table Mountain in the distance), a working class coloured community on the Cape Flats. See Verenia Keet’s *Colored Hill* (2005) for a fictional story on family and community life in Bonteheuwel.

existed ‘peacefully’.⁹⁴ The physical space that was created District Six, and other similar areas, offered a haven to which residents could return after a day’s work in the city or surrounding industrial areas.

When residents of areas like District Six, Windermere, and other similar spaces across the country, were moved to the new segregated residential areas they “experienced a loss of common heritage when they were displaced to the townships, as their close ties to the mother city were broken” (Swanson and Harries 2001:77). The imagined communities created through the practices of colonialism and early apartheid were torn apart and displaced into areas that were far flung and lifeless. Sean Field depicts this loss in the following excerpt from an interview with an older woman who had grown up in District Six:

They took our happiness from us. The day they threw us out of Cape Town, that was my whole life tumbling down. I don’t know how my life continued. I couldn’t see my life in this raw township far away from the family. All the neighbours were strangers. That was the hardest part of my life, believe me (2001:11).

The complex webs of connection that existed in areas like District Six were broken and were never rebuilt after the era of forced removals. Self-identified ‘Brown Afrikaner’ Adam Small described the destroyed District Six: “There it lies, then: the ground on which the District once lived for real; red earth of Table Mountain; empty now; an open mouth, wounded, and – as I say – screaming silently” (cf Jackson 1999:106). His depiction of the wounded earth closely resembles the pain of the coloured people during that time. New communities had to be built by people who felt a sharp sense of

⁹⁴ See Yousuf S. Rassool *District Six – Lest we Forget: Recapturing Subjugated Cultural Histories of Cape Town (1897-1956)* Cape Town: Salty Print 2000 for an autobiographical account of life in District Six. Also see South African novelist and poet Richard Rive’s works on life in District Six, and novelist Alex La Guma’s work.

dislocation and marginalization, both physically and emotionally. Coloured identity during this period underwent a significant change in that the areas to which they were moved were 'purely' coloured spaces. Stuart Hall (1993) argues that identities are always in the process of being made, therefore they never arrive at a conclusion or point where they are complete. Zimitri Erasmus (2001) correctly states that coloured identity was '*Coloured by History, Shaped by Place*'. The Cape Flats, as the area is known, became a living space to hundreds of thousands of displaced people who attempted to make meaning and home of an unknown area. They were physically and politically removed from the decision-making and economic center of the Province, Cape Town, and had to travel in from their 'exile' to their places of work in the City. Oosterwyk's Bonteheuwel was one such space on the Cape Flats.

District Six provided "an enclave within the wider national context of class oppression and exploitation, racial segregation, religious differentiation and ethnic chauvinism and, indeed, xenophobia" (Soudien 2001:115). It was a space of transgression. Multiplicities of coloured identities were found within the boundaries of District Six. 'Hybridity' would best describe the nature of identities and culture in that area (ibid.:121-2). Robert J.C. Young argues against the use of 'hybridity' as it "assumes ... the prior existence of pure, fixed and separate antecedents [that are] still repeating its own cultural origins" (1995:25). In new identities the old continue to exist. In some instances, colouredness is primordially seen to be the mixture of the blood of 'pure' cultures and identities. Contrary to Young, Homi Bhabha explains more aptly that coloured identity "represents a hybridity, a difference 'within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality" (1994:19). Hybridity in this work refers to the

combination of different experiences, cultural practices and lifestyles and is not related to phenotypical difference which is exploited in racialized societies. Desiree Lewis posits in her work that “hybridity and hybridization are used to describe the production of non-unitary, shifting and incomplete subjectivities, a production that interrogates the idea of polarized, complete and essentialized identities” (2001:134). Coloured identity is ‘hybrid’ because it comprises different understandings of what it means to be a coloured person in a social context and offers opportunities for people to choose particular expressions of their identities. “Hybridity is, therefore, not only the product of structural forces which surround people, but the expression of popular choice too” (Soudien 2001:122). Soudien shows the agency of the subaltern in this instance.

People created their own spaces in which they could express their identities in particular ways. They both conformed to and unsettled the dominant group’s notion of them as individuals and as a group. District Six, a hybrid space in which “people played, worked and lived” became “crucial to their development as individuals and communities” (Field 2001:100). The physical and social spaces in which these hybrid subjects lived were bounded by the apartheid state through borders and laws. Both the geographical space and the people who occupied those spaces sought strategies which would ensure their continued opposition to the racialized onslaught from the state. In a discussion about the contestation of physical space in colonial and apartheid South Africa, historian Shamil Jeppie (1990) asserts that the streets were conquered by coloured people through their performances during the Coon Carnival. “It was a public declaration of control over the meaning of streets, but as such, became a site of struggle” (Jackson 2003:77). These complex communities did not survive the forced removals of the 1960s because their

physical space was reduced to rubble and the people were moved onto the Cape Flats.⁹⁵ Contestation over access to physical space characterized the apartheid era as space became a valuable resource in the apartheid government's program to separate the races and a valuable space in which oppressed subjects could perform their rejection of state-imposed constraints.

Another physical articulation of spatial politics was expressed in the presence of railway lines and national roads which demarcated the 'right side of the tracks' which literally meant the 'whiter side of the tracks'. In the new racially segregated residential areas social status became associated with physical spaces. Within a 'homogeneous' racial area social status was a ready tool for discerning difference within the community. David Abrahams remembers that when his family moved to the Cape Flats family members paid attention to their 'location' – "I live in Newfields, where do you live? Belhar?" (personal interview). Residential areas became signifiers for class and status within the coloured community. Within the greater Cape Town area people recognized and associated spaces with particular levels of status. 'Southern Suburbs', 'Northern Suburbs' and the 'Cape Flats' signified different lifestyles that were familiar to insiders. The reduction of coloured identity to a physical space created identities that were continually denied a symbolic space and location within society. Don Pinnock describes the connection to place and experience that underlines coloured identity on the Cape Flats

⁹⁵ Forced removals started long before the apartheid regime came to power and instituted its separate development policies. The 1902 Native Reserve Locations Act enforced separate residential areas. "In 1901, [Black] Africans living in District Six and elsewhere in [Cape Town] were forced to move to barracks in the docks and to Ndabeni location, far away from the city" (Bickford-Smith 2001:15). This was the first forced removal of Blacks from an urban area in the Cape. Separate white and coloured areas also existed though this was due to informal separation rather than *de jure* segregation. Attempts by the Cape government in 1938 and 1939 to enforce 'coloured residential segregation' failed because of public protests led by Cissie Gool and other National Liberation League members (ibid.).

and illustrates the gap between the suburbs and the Cape Flats, and, more subtly, between raced groups.

The shared experiences of District Six and prison, the social structures of the ghetto sharpened by contact with the 26s [a prison gang], the shebeens [illegal drinking establishments], the Coon Carnival, the poverty and the imposed images of 'colouredness', these are in fact the very fabric of moment to moment relationships of world-view which is unimaginable to residents in the quiet, leafy, mountain suburbs of the city (Pinnock from Jackson 1999:156).

Gangs and the Coon Carnival are often touted as coloured 'culture' and those depictions often offer simplistic portrayals of coloured identity.⁹⁶ They do not depict the multifaceted, fluid and negotiated identities coloured people perform each day as South Africans.⁹⁷

Pinnock's portrayal of the difference between suburbs and ghetto could be seen within differently raced Black spaces too. Trevor Oosterwyk remembers the distance between Guguletu, a Black African township and Bonteheuwel as an almost impassable "social distance" that was divided physically by a wide national road. This distance became evident during the 1976 student uprisings that erupted in Soweto and reverberated across the country:

We went into the African township. We crossed the N2 [national road] to Guguletu in solidarity. We had no idea where to find a school [and] got cornered by the police. People from the African township accepted the [coloured] kids running away from the cops. It was a [road to] Damascus experience. It changed my negative images of the Black [African] community. (Oosterwyk, personal interview)

⁹⁶ Social commentary programs produced for South African television, such as those aired on *Special Assignment*, a local television documentary program, depict different versions of the stereotypical coloured: drugs, gangs, child prostitution, prison life, and so forth. See examples of *Special Assignment* programs entitled 'On the Tik-Tik Express' (drugs on the Cape Flats) 8 June, 2004, 'Blood Rites' (gangsterism in the Western Cape) 12 October, 2004, and 'Truck Stop' (child prostitution in the rural town of Beaufort West) 15 February, 2005. Zimitri Erasmus refers to this as 'funny' history: "Oh, what a funny, drunken, gambling, violent and mad race we are!" (*Sunday Independent* c 1998). For an excellent account of gang life in the Western Cape see Don Pinnock's work and Jonny Steinberg's *The Number*.

⁹⁷ See Seekings 1996.

This snapshot of township life in the 1970s speaks to the physical and social distance between public spaces and communities and captures first encounters with the unfamiliar. It is also indicative of the lack of relationships between differently raced communities during the entire apartheid era: coloured people did not know the layout of adjacent Black African townships and neither did they know the people, their languages or cultures. Black Africans who had access because of their class position as ‘the maid’/‘the girl’/‘the servant’ (domestic workers), ‘milkie’ (the milkman), the ‘garden boy’/‘garbage man’, and so forth, knew the layout of coloured areas but, only from the perspective of their roles as service providers who did not ‘belong’.⁹⁸ Often, as Oosterwyk pointed out, the spatial and symbolic distance between differently raced groups was eroded by an act of kindness and political solidarity. State institutions, through legislations and the police, attempted to prevent people from different spaces meeting and becoming familiar to each other. The state feared that if Black people realized the extent of their shared oppression they would mobilize en masse and, by virtue of their numbers, overthrow white rule. However, smaller battles were won on a daily basis, for example, for Oosterwyk this one experience exposed him to a community that was similar to his in the sense that his neighbors would have opened their doors to fleeing students, and yet different to his because it varied in dimensions, language, neighbors and so forth. Coloured political elites who were Congress-aligned in the 1970s and 1980s embarked on a new project to narrow the distance between communities and familiarize each community with

⁹⁸ Coloured residential areas were never called ‘townships’ because that term was socially and politically reserved for Black African residential areas to show the difference between the two racialized areas.

another.⁹⁹ As a result, a ‘Black’ political identity re-emerged during the 1970s that slowly eroded the boundaries between the various groups of subalterns.

Black Politics and State Repression

Black politics emerged in the 1950s when the ANC sought support for its anti-apartheid struggle. Coloured politics up until then had been split into the assimilationist and oppositional camps. By the 1950s coloured politics had to make a choice to remain on the margins of anti-apartheid political action or to engage with other political bodies that were non-racial in ideology. Ironically, non-racial politics was also Black because it supported the majority Black African population who experienced the brunt of apartheid legislation. Reg September, an ANC stalwart and icon in the coloured community, spoke of the dilemma facing coloured activists during the 1950s.¹⁰⁰ Trotskyite organizations such as the NEUM and the more inclusive Anti-CAD movement offered viable alternatives to Congress-aligned bodies in the 1950s. Those organizations were relegated to marginal political positions because they were perceived to be oriented towards coloured political issues. September had to choose between organizations such as the Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA)¹⁰¹, which he describes as having a “shallowness of statement” and not having “the capacity to bring about change”, and Congress-aligned groups such as the South African Communist Party. September was

⁹⁹ Congress-aligned movements were those political organizations which were ideologically linked to the African National Congress. They are referred to as ‘the Alliance’.

¹⁰⁰ Personal interview with Reg September, 23 February 2004, Parliament, Cape Town. All quotations attributed to September are from this interview unless otherwise stated. He is fondly and respectfully known in struggle circles as ‘Uncle Reg’.

¹⁰¹ This is one of the main coloured anti-apartheid groups. Gavin Lewis (1987), Cheryl Hendricks (2000) and Mohammed Adhikari (2002) provide in-depth analyses of the politics of this organization.

also active in the Franchise Action Committee that opposed the scrapping of coloured voters off the common voters' roll in 1956 and held the position of Secretary in the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) that was established in the early 1950s. During the Defiance Campaign of the 1950s that included the signing of the Freedom Charter in 1955, September was actively involved in broad-based liberation politics in South Africa.¹⁰² He made a very emotional decision to join the Alliance and to leave 'coloured' politics because even though he claimed a 'coloured' identity he believed he was "in a general sense African" (personal interview).

Non-racial politics subsumed group identities in the public sphere even though those identities still continued to exist in the separate residential areas, schools, administrations, and so forth. Coloured political activists, like September, who had chosen to align themselves with the 'liberation struggle' threw their support behind a new kind of politics that was labeled either 'non-racial' or 'Black' because it was inclusive of all people who fought against apartheid regardless of race. Because of this decision to support Black politics, political divisions persisted between coloured people who self-identified as congress-aligned 'Black' activists and those who continued to call for the recognition of a separate coloured identity.¹⁰³ This phenomenon occurred at the time when the apartheid state banned the ANC and other liberation movements, which were then forced to take up guerilla warfare against the regime. The state responded with a massive increase in state oppression and unveiled the Total Strategy program, which

¹⁰² The Defiance Campaign in the 1950s brought together all South Africans who rejected the pass system that required all Black Africans to carry passes allowing them employment access to white areas.

¹⁰³ The UDF was formed as an internal wing of the banned ANC and was made up of civil society organizations. For in depth analyses of the UDF see Ineke van Kessel *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams - The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa* (University of Virginia Press, 2000) and Jeremy Seekings *The UDF - A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983 - 1991* (David Philip Publishers, 2000)

continued until F.W. de Klerk, a *verligte* (moderate) Afrikaner, took over the leadership of the National Party and the state in 1989.¹⁰⁴ This change, and the sustained efforts of the international community and the liberation movement, slowly chipped away at the apartheid apparatus, so much so that their combined effects overthrew a regime that had been existence for over forty years.

Oppositional politics occurred at individual levels as well as the group. For many coloured activists, self-definition was an oppositional strategy as it disrupted the assimilation of oppressive labels which continued to confine people to state-set parameters. Identities were passively absorbed and did not emerge with the advent of apartheid designations. David Abrahams, a political activist, talks about coloured identities that “predate apartheid”. This statement provides a link to my earlier argument that a sense of community existed before separate identities were legislated. He problematizes colouredness and so doing moves beyond apartheid conceptions of the identity.

Some of us manage to deal with [an imposed coloured identity] but for the majority of coloured people identity is located in an identity that wasn't necessarily given to us by apartheid. It pre-dates apartheid and is more complex. ... I come from a family that typifies many coloured families where the issue of identity is fundamentally linked up to where they come from, who they are, who they ethnically most closely identify with. Identity is not a racial thing. It is religious, ethnic, social class. All those thrown into one. I would never want to reduce it to just one identity. I have multiple identities. When I talk about my own experience it is constructed by a multiplicity of identities (Personal interview 16 February 2004).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ The apartheid state believed that it was under ‘total onslaught’ from the Soviet funded anti-apartheid movement and required a ‘total strategy’ to protect itself against this attack. South Africa, in effect, became a military state as the National Security Council took over decision-making with regard to national and international relations.

¹⁰⁵ Personal interview with David Abrahams, 16 February 2004, Cape Town. All future references to David Abrahams are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

Abrahams could be regarded as an ‘organic intellectual’ (Gramsci 1999), or what Farred (2003) terms a “vernacular intellectual”.¹⁰⁶ Abrahams has problematized his conception of coloured identity through the acknowledgment of his ‘multiplicity of identities’ and his refusal to be tied to one conception of his identity. For him, his identity is centered on the cultural practices with which he associates and how he performs them. For many activists colouredness encapsulates daily experiences that were raced by the state. Their experiences were more than their racial category therefore their politics could transcend the racial boundaries imposed by the state.

Other elite approaches to apartheid conceptions of coloured identity included attempts to eradicate stereotypes, such as those held by former President De Klerk’s wife, Marieke De Klerk, who referred to coloureds as the “left-over people” (cited in Adhikari 1992:9). Some stereotypes associate coloureds with particular cultural expressions such as the “coon carnivals” and “‘capey’ Afrikaans” while others conceive of coloured people as “drunken, happy-go-lucky clowns (*die ‘jollie hotnot’*) who often/always became violent when drunk” (Gerwel cited in Erasmus and Pieterse 1997:3).¹⁰⁷ These negative characterizations continue to marginalize the majority of the coloured community in South African society. Many coloured elites deny the existence of “a coloured culture, coloured identity” and, like educationalist Norman Duncan, ask someone to “show” them “what it is” (Duncan in Erasmus 2001:21). Abrahams’ and Duncan’s responses to

¹⁰⁶ A vernacular intellectual is more than Gramsci’s organic intellectual. For Farred it is someone who “is capable of translating the disenfranchised experience of subjugation as an oppositional, ideologically recognizable, vernacularized discourse” (2003:11).

¹⁰⁷ See Grant Farred (2003) *What’s My Name? – Black Vernacular Intellectuals* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota for a discussion on the subversive potential of the vernacular. James Scott (1990) also argues that the ‘hidden transcripts’ provide a space in which to be subversive without appearing to be so. Many Cape-based coloureds speak an Afrikaans that is unique to the area and which is often portrayed as a tourist attraction and as comic relief. It has a long history dating to the emergence of colonial Afrikaans, hence it could be seen to be a vernacularly subversive act that has remained a part of the community’s identity.

coloured identity typify two apartheid-period approaches to coloured identity and both concede that identities are socially constructed. There is a difference, however, as the denialists ignore the material experiences of people who share a place and history while people like Abrahams recognize that shared existence. The debate then centers on what coloured identity is or is not, rather than dealing with the material effects of raced identities.

Father Michael Weeder, an activist and Anglican Priest at St Philip's parish in Woodstock, also attests to the construction of social identities and argues that coloured identity "need not be permanent."¹⁰⁸ It's temporary, not even pro-breyani, or *tweede nuwe jaar* [second New Year which is celebrated in the Cape region only], Sunday lunch, church, coloured because *ek is nie 'n slams nie* [I am not Muslim], coloured because I'm from Cape Town." (personal interview with Father Michael).¹⁰⁹ He has imbued an apartheid-imposed identity with a personal day-to-day understanding of what it means to be coloured based on his notion of identity as a "smartie box" (ibid.) in which multiple identities co-exist.¹¹⁰ As Craig Calhoun argues, identities are constantly renegotiated in a process "in which individuals present one identity as more salient than another, and within which individuals achieve some personal sense of continuity and balance among their various sorts of identities" (1994:26). Father Michael chooses his identities based on the context in which he finds himself. He defines identity in binaries ("I'm not Muslim because I'm Christian") and negotiates each identity in the context which he finds

¹⁰⁸ St Philips has a long history dating back to the colonial period. It was a church that many freed slaves attended. 'Lydia', a freed slave, is seen as one of the leading figures of that period in the Cape area.

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview. 12 February 2004, Woodstock. All future quotations accredited to Father Michael will be from this interview, unless otherwise stated. Father Michael Weeder chose to be addressed as 'Father Michael'.

¹¹⁰ 'Smarties' are multi-colored candy-coated chocolate buttons, similar to plain *m&m's* in the US.

himself. The equivalent binary of 'I/not I' comes through in the self-definitions of those who occupy the identity as it is always constructed in terms of what it is not.

Challenging Identities

In response to the assertion that coloured identities are state imposed, I would argue that it is not a "passive identity" because it is "creatively produced ... in the context of ... relationships to both whites and Africans, as well as ... relationships within different coloured communities" (Erasmus 2001:23). All identities are imposed in South Africa and all identities continue to operate within the boundaries set by apartheid. Despite elites like Father Michael and David Abrahams who consciously construct their identities, they continue to do so in terms of the apartheid framework. They argue that their recognition of the multiplicity of their identities disrupts the power of the state to determine who they are but they continue to do so in a constrained environment. Zimitri Erasmus talks of the agency of coloured people through the making and remaking of "rich tapestries ... rather than simply [accepting an identity] imposed by the apartheid regime" (2000:73). We negotiate the spaces of expression throughout our days based on our access to resources and power. As Erasmus and Pieterse point out, "it is important to conceptualise coloured identities as relational identities shaped by complex networks of concrete social relations rather than seeing 'coloured' as a particular category of individuals and/or as simply an imposed name from a racist past" (1997:8). Elites in the coloured community in the apartheid era mobilize around different understandings of their own and their communities' identities. Conservative coloured elites participated in state structures as coloured subjects and opted to effect change from within. Progressive

elites handled the coloured identity in two ways. Firstly, they denied colouredness as purely state-imposed because they recognized that for many members of the community, a 'coloured' experience did exist because of their position in South Africa's historical trajectory. Secondly, and more importantly, they believed that coloured identities were primarily Black identities therefore should participate in Black politics. Like Father Michael says, "it was the organized African that gave me such a lovely sense of belonging" (Weeder, personal interview). The majority people who made up the liberation struggle were Black Africans who set the scene for other people who self-identified as Black.

Other coloured elites rejected the identity based on the term coloured being "too loose", "indefinable" and "amorphous" (September, personal interview). Some denied it because of the term's association with 'shame' (see Wicomb in Jackson 1997:97) and began to refer to themselves as 'brown people'. Wicomb (ibid.) refers to a 'brown' identity which coloureds have utilized to represent their in-betweenity in the South African context. 'Brown' represents a disjuncture between white and Black African. It cannot be seen as a 'mixture' of the two extremes. The NEUM, in response to a 1962 article titled "*Ons Bruinmense*" (Us Brown people) argued against the nomenclature. "[P]eople must know that the status of the *Bruinmens* marks them with the badge of inferiority, of being less than human" (Adhikari 2002:244). For some, a brown identity offers an alternative to colouredness. Henry Cupido, a former participant in apartheid political structures, rejects the term 'coloured' because the identity was legislated.¹¹¹ Cupido refers to himself as a '*bruinmens*' (brown person) and identifies with "Africa as a

¹¹¹ Personal interview with Henry Cupido, 14 February 2004, Cape Town. All future quotations attributed to Cupido are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

continent” and firstly as a “South African” with a “land identity” (personal interview). Cupido’s claim to a ‘brown identity’ has remnants of Afrikaner identity in it through its connection to land and country. Stan Simmons, a senior representative in the New National Party identifies similarly to Cupido:

I don’t like the term coloured. I would rather be called a South African first and then if they do want to use a colour connotation, whatever, then I’d rather be a brown South African ... There is no such thing as a white person and there’s no such person as a black person ... colour should not be of importance ... if you want to talk of a group rather refer to their ethnicity” (personal interview).¹¹²

Wicomb (1998) argues that a brown identity was manipulated by the New National Party during the 1994 election in order to win over the coloured voters from the ANC.

Cupido’s and Simmons’ denials of colouredness shows the highly contested nature of the identity but an adherence to a ‘brown identity’ depicts a return to a conservative politics and a primordial identification based on skin colour. Simmons does however acknowledge the social constructedness of colouredness through his recognition that that the term ‘coloured’ “differs from area to area in South Africa”. Simmons problematically refers to different groups as ‘race groups’ when he is discussing language and cultural groups, which reflects a broader theoretical difficulty scholars have with the relationship between race and ethnicity in South Africa.

In a similar effort to escape ‘colouredness’ people have attached ‘so-called’ to the coloured identity. September rejects this term and calls it “a noxious term” that is enveloped in “pretense” and argues that one cannot speak of a mixture as “so-called coloured”. ‘So-called coloured’ points to an effort to deny an imposed identity. Abdou Maliqalim Simone asserts that

¹¹² Personal interview with Stan Simmons, 14 February 2004, Cape Town. All future quotations attributed to Simmons are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

This 'so-called' is thus deployed for surfacely divergent aims – connoting both a desire to erase the absence of a coherent collectivity it implies and to maintain it as a sign of a collectivity united by its subversion of clear-cut racial polarities and politics (1994:10).

People would self-identify as 'so-called coloured' simultaneously employing the boundaries imposed by apartheid and unsettling and disrupting them through their own agency and refutation of the term. The term was often verbally used with the animated gesticulation of quotation marks which Wicomb refers to as “disavowing scare quotes” (1998:93) meaning that they show the subaltern's rejection of the imposed categorization. Unlike African Americans who have progressed through various terms denoting their identities ranging from negro to colored to Afro-American and, finally, African American, coloured people did not create another term with which they could describe themselves. They instead continue to struggle to find a term with the 'right fit'. 'Creole', 'mixed race', 'brown' and many others are a few of the contested terms employed by coloured people.

Some coloured people, who wish to escape the stereotypes and pejoratives associated with colouredness, also use an 'exotic' identity to counter 'common' colouredness. For example, some claim St. Helenan or Madagascan heritage, linking themselves to the slaves and migrants brought from those island nations. These island identities are still used by coloured people who wish to escape the stigma of apartheid-generated coloured identities and stereotypes. Later, during the post-1994 period, whites claimed Madagascan linkages to claim an 'acceptable' exoticism that was not coloured but was 'mixed' enough to deny whiteness as it existed during apartheid. Elites monopolize the fact that identities shift and re-form as contexts and time change and mobilize around those changes and new meanings.

During apartheid fluidity was illusionary, argues Adhikari (2002), as is shown when evaluating the responses of coloured activists in response to white repression. During various political periods coloured people adopted different political strategies that changed the expression of their identities but mainly remained within the confines of apartheid.

While coloured identity was fluid, this was a situational fluidity. Because of their intermediate status and ambiguities in their situation they were able to exploit, coloured individuals, leaders and organizations had a range of options open to them when responding to social and political circumstances, giving it a degree of fluidity within a given situation. Both their marginality, and what seemed to be sensible choices given the circumstances, conspired to reproduce a range of similar responses that created a stability in the expression of the identity ... rather than a gradual transformation or an evolution punctuated by periods of rapid change as initially envisaged (Adhikari 2002:324).

Assimilationist strategies recognized colouredness as a group identity and embraced that identity within those communities and organizations. Non-assimilationist organizations and strategies either added quotation marks or 'so-called' to 'coloured' in order to deny the identity. Adhikari argues that this movement within the identity does not change the identity inherently as it continued to exist within the confined space of the apartheid regime.

Language

There were other ways to challenge the enforced confinement apartheid policed. Rachel Prinsloo argues that “[c]ollective identities can be invented or re-invented, reified and dissolved but do not exist outside the subjective belief of the community members involved as well as outside of the imagination of other collectivities” (1997a:4). Those meanings, whether imposed or self-constructed, could only exist within the boundaries of

the imagination of people not in the group. “The system imposed stereotypes on individuals ... that made them subjective carriers of a set of values and beliefs” (Pickel 1997:19). The carrier of the identity was proof that the identity existed, resulting in a circular argument. However, it should be noted that “identities are always in excess of the stereotypes presumed to represent them” (Soudien 2001:17) therefore it is important to recognize those parts of the identity that are not made visible through stereotypes. A broader Black identity is one such identity that defies caricature and prevents the play of an “‘ethnic card’ by drawing on resources like language, common ancestry and religion to improve their political and economic position to the disadvantage of [Black] Africans” (Pickel 1997:25).¹¹³ Stereotypes continued to play an important role in maintaining separate communities. Institutions, such as the Labour Party led by Reverend Alan Hendrickse, that professed to represent ‘coloured interests’ persisted in drawing attention to racial, cultural, language, religious and class differences between Black communities. Political organizations could not represent coloured interests across the board even if they claimed to do so. Coloured identities were too heterogeneous to be serviced by ethnically-oriented institutions.

Language is political in South Africa because, in the coloured community, it often signifies the class of the speaker. Afrikaans was always seen as the oppressor’s language therefore was denounced for many years despite it being the most widely spoken language in the Western Cape coloured community. It was “associated with social inferiority, cultural backwardness and Afrikaner racism in the minds of the Coloured elite while English was revered as the language of culture, civilization and progress”

¹¹³ See also Messina 1995 “Kleurlinge is ook Swart” for his discussion on Black Consciousness in the Western Cape until the 1970s.

(Adhikari 2002:312). Coloured students, many of whom spoke Afrikaans as a home language, supported Black African students in the 1976 Soweto uprising which protested against the imposition of Afrikaans in their schools. Afrikaans, or 'kitchen Dutch', was a 'bastardized' version of the Dutch spoken by the colonists. It was a language slaves and the KhoiSan used in the private sphere, the kitchen, and with their interactions with the settlers. Other languages within the Cape Colony influenced the Dutch spoken at the Cape and resulted in the creole language of Afrikaans. Historian Shamil Jeppie quotes one of the apartheid architects, D.F. Malan as saying that "Afrikaans is not only [the coloureds'] language but together with the Dutch-speaking white man they developed that language. It is their language in the fullest sense of the word" (2001:85).

In the early 1990s, Afrikaans-speaking coloured people demanded to be recognized as 'Afrikaners'. The argument was that they shared a language with white Afrikaners and, by extension, shared a particular culture and identity. This is problematic because white Afrikaners are often associated with conservative and racist politics that supports the continued separation of raced groups. Playwright and journalist Mike van Graan argues that "[n]o one person or group owns the language. It is contested in the way that it is spoken – and language is the very vehicle for the contestation of ideas, values and perspectives on the world, about the language itself and the people who use it" (2005). In a recent South African television program entitled "Sink or Swim," Neville Alexander argued that parents wish their children to learn English in schools as it is "desirable as well as desired" by non-English mother-tongue speakers (*Special Assignment* SABC3, 14 June 2005). English is the *lingua franca* of commerce and politics in South Africa despite constitutional recognition of eleven official languages.

People recognize the power that English holds and realize that in order to gain access to power they, and their children, need to be proficient in it. Alternatively, Father Michael remembers that as a child he spoke Afrikaans to gain access to groups where Afrikaans first language speakers predominated. Language, during the apartheid era, had the power to fix individuals and groups within a determined identity but those identities were constantly being negotiated based on the physical and political space in which people found themselves.

Political Constraints and Opportunities post-1984

It is clear that under apartheid coloured people were represented in an electoral system that maintained them in a position that was not white/not Black and therefore ensured that they remained as a buffer between the minority white ruling group and the majority Black African population. Much of the oppositional politics during the 1960s through to the late 1980s was rooted in the conception of Blackness as a political identity. Father Michael argues that “Black Consciousness sharpened my identity as Black, I was antagonistic to the term ‘coloured’ – ‘coloured’ was a nothingness”. Father Michael’s statement brings to mind Bessie Head’s phrase, “thing of nothing from nowhere” (Wicomb 1998:97). The Black Consciousness Movement, established in the early 1970s, was based on the idea that one could be Black politically yet non-Black African racially, and in this way provided a home to all who self-identified as Black. In his interview, Father Michael revealed that the ideology of Black Consciousness taught him to be “Black and proud” as a poor working class subject and gave him “pride through class analysis”. He continues: “The church taught me to be ashamed of my color; it didn’t

explain my poverty so I internalized that. It is a religious framework of conservatism so I had a very low self-esteem. The Black consciousness said “*Jou moer*, this is not right” [Fuck you!].” (ibid.).

Black Consciousness was a unifying tool that was used very effectively during the 1970s and 1980s. People who self-identified as politically Black rallied around the politics of Blackness, which was in support of the struggle against the apartheid government. It was an inclusive struggle that recognized that everyone had an African identity by virtue of their geographical space and willingness to fight for freedom and democracy. Many coloured activists supported, and continue to support, the tenets of Black Consciousness. Hennie van Wyk, a ‘retired’ activist, was “‘Black during the liberation struggle. It was correct at that period of time. [My] greatest idol was Steve Biko [who said:] be proud of who you are, where you come from, find your heritage and roots” (personal interview).¹¹⁴ However, on the other hand, an all-encompassing Black identity denied the particularities of coloured people’s experiences. Zimitri Erasmus poignantly states that “[w]hen one lives aspects of [white and Black] cultural identities having to choose one means the denial of some part of oneself (2001:14)”. She continues:

The power and pain of living with entanglements demands politics based on remembering and living with the wounds of the past, and acknowledging complicity in the present. It demands living with everything one is. ...Identifying only as black further expresses a desire for political authenticity (ibid.:25).

Erasmus’ statement is problematic for many reasons. If one defines ‘coloured’ primordially as a ‘mixture’ of white and Black then it could be argued that coloured people denied their ‘whiteness’ in order to claim a Black political identity and participate

¹¹⁴ Personal interview with Hennie van Wyk, 26 February 2004, Retreat. All future quotations attributed to Van Wyk are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

in a non-racial fight against apartheid. However, this is simplistic in that colouredness is not a 'mixture' of 'pure' identities but it is an identity in its own right. Notwithstanding this problem, there were coloured people who were 'complicit' in apartheid by not challenging the construction of a separate identity to Black African-ness because that identity afforded them some benefits and constructed them as 'better than' Black African. Throughout 'the struggle', the ANC preached non-racism and non-racialism and yet valorized a purportedly all-encompassing Black identity.¹¹⁵ Black Consciousness succeeded in creating a national Black opposition to apartheid and also laid the foundation for an 'authentic' Black identity that would emerge in the post-apartheid period.

Not all coloured people supported the Black Consciousness movement. This was made evident in the 1984 Tricameral elections that established a parliament comprising of three separate houses: the dominant House of Assembly (whites), and the subordinate Houses of Representatives (coloureds) and of Delegates (Indians). This was an attempt by the beleaguered South African state to harness support from the Indian and coloured constituencies. Abdou Maliqalim Simone argues that "[i]n South Africa the cultivation of coloured as an identity was more an act of whites hedging their bets, inducing the byproducts of a miscegenation to become the anxious partners of their administration" (1994:8). The 'divide and rule' politics employed by the apartheid government worked in some instances as coloured candidates were elected to represent their communities. However, they made political decisions that supported the apartheid framework. Erasmus

¹¹⁵ It is not clear whether in some cases 'racialism' was a colloquial form of 'racism' but the terms were sometimes interchangeable. Kwame Appiah in *My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992) distinguishes between these two terms very succinctly. Racialism, he asserts, is the recognition that there are various races within society. This does not necessarily entail moral judgments on the differences. Racism is defined by moral judgments on people based on their race or differences.

and Pieterse (1997) argue that coloured people were offered political bribes by the apartheid government in order to entice them to participate in the Tricameral system and thereby legitimize it. Cupido states that he was “personally not in favor of the (racialised) management committee system but had to know the system to help people”.¹¹⁶ Coloured people who qualified for welfare packages accepted them, not because they ‘sold out’ the anti-apartheid struggle, but because of their material needs at the time. “In a large measure [the benefit system] represents the material basis for significant political support and control that conservative politicians and parties have managed to secure especially amongst working class communities” (Erasmus and Pieterse 1997:11). The patronage system resulted in a disproportionate number of coloured welfare recipients in relation to the numbers of white and Black African recipients. This created the impression that coloureds were ‘better off’ under apartheid than they would be in the post-1994 period.

Partly in an effort to counter the proposed Tricameral Parliament and to address predominantly coloured people’s political issues, the United Democratic Front (UDF) was established in 1983 in Mitchell’s Plain, a large coloured community in the larger Cape Town area. The UDF was a ‘multiracial’ umbrella organization based on the ideology of non-racism/non-racialism.¹¹⁷ David Abrahams counters this claim and argues that the “UDF gave an illusion of non-racialism” because people involved in the struggle against apartheid still lived in racially separated communities and challenged the repressive system from very different standpoints. The UDF used a different strategy in

¹¹⁶ The anti-apartheid activists would label Henry Cupido and Stan Simmons ‘political sell-outs’ because of their assimilationist stance.

¹¹⁷ Non-racism and non-racialism were used interchangeably in the apartheid era. However, there is a theoretical distinction because non-racism means that there should be material differences because of race should not be allowed, while non-racialism implies that society should not be divided along racial lines.

the Western Cape compared to the other areas in which it mobilized support. Abrahams explains that:

At the mass level we used many ANC slogans and discourse for the UDF. It was an attempt to legitimize the ANC [inside the country]. People on the ground didn't see it that way [but] the leadership understood it. The demographic and social makeup of the Western Cape was so different from the rest of the country [that] we needed a specific strategy for the Western Cape.

Western Cape coloured supporters believed the UDF to be primarily a coloured organization as it had been founded by coloured leaders. The connection between the UDF and the banned ANC and other Charterist bodies was not immediately evident.¹¹⁸ This created problems for the ANC in the 1994 elections, to which I return in Chapter 5. Father Michael asserts that despite the UDF's perceived identity as a coloured organization in which coloured people "saw themselves", the leadership did not concern themselves solely with the interests of the coloured communities, but was the caretaker of *all* charterist-aligned constituencies. As an umbrella organization the UDF provided the broad framework for activism in the Western Cape, and elsewhere, but did not proscribe community level programs that were designed by member organizations. David Abrahams explains that the ANC's loss in the Western Cape lies in "misconceptions in the true content and depth of racialism in the 1980s". In his opinion, the ANC should have been more aware of the racism in the Western Cape and campaigned more inclusively instead of using "ethnic mobilization".

¹¹⁸ The ANC drew up The Freedom Charter in the 1950s which set out a set of rights for free South Africans. It still exists today and is a respected document in South African history. ANC aligned groups are called Charterist meaning they ascribe to the tenets of The Charter.

The End of Apartheid

The UDF operated during the last era of the apartheid regime and in a period of oppressive state control. In the face of mounting opposition, the South African apartheid state declared States of Emergency in 1985, 1986 and 1987 which were meant to violently quell, with impunity, uprisings from the majority Black population. A State of Emergency was a decree that afforded the state unrivaled powers to arrest dissidents, detain without trial and use violence to control Black bodies. The UDF led an effective defiance campaign in the late 1980s against the apartheid government during which 'the people' took to the streets and made the city 'ungovernable'.¹¹⁹ Cape Town remained a white city that closed down at the end of the business day. Only street children and homeless people occupy the 'Mother City' after dark.¹²⁰ For this reason, anti-apartheid activists decided to take over public spaces and make the city 'ungovernable' during business hours. The marches were reminiscent of the Coon Carnival that takes place at the start of each year. Loud festive liberation music blared from the Parade, a square in the center of the city that is now a parking lot, but which is still used for informal traders and corner proselytizers. People sang freedom songs and *toyi-toyi*'d in the streets demanding the unbanning of the liberation movements and the release of Nelson Mandela.¹²¹ On 2 February 1990, after months of street battles between protesters and the army and police forces, former President F.W de Klerk announced the release of Mandela

¹¹⁹ The Freedom Charter asserts that 'the people shall govern'. References to the people fighting apartheid were truncated into 'the people' or the *mense*.

¹²⁰ These are homeless people who historically lived in the foothills of Table Mountain. In a contemporary period Cape Town's homeless are now pejoratively known as *bergies* (people who live in the mountains).

¹²¹ The *toyi toyi* is an energetic high stepping 'dance' that people performed at political marches, funerals and gatherings while singing liberation songs and chanting political rhetoric. It symbolized the strength and unflinching efforts of the anti-apartheid struggle and created a shared experience of anti-state sentiments.

and the unbanning of the liberation movements. Almost immediately after, the UDF dissolved. The decision to disband the UDF led to much speculation about whether that action had cost the ANC the 'coloured vote' in the Western Cape. Chapter 5 deals with this question in detail.¹²²

A new terminology emerged during the 1994 pre-election period which eradicated yet acknowledged difference. The 'new South Africa' was a 'rainbow nation' in which all South Africans were different but equal. The ANC was careful to emphasize the historical significance of more especially Black African identities, as a means to harness the majority group's support in the first democratic election. As a result it lost the 'coloured vote' in the Western Cape. Father Michael explains that the "[n]on-racialism of the ANC undervalued differences" in the Western Cape, which remained important to the coloured community that still perceived its marginality in a post-apartheid context (see also Davis 1995).

The re-adoption of an inclusive Black political identity afforded coloured people political affiliations and associations with the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s and removed them from the margins of the struggle into the fray of mainstream liberation politics. A Black political identity provided all who self-identified as such with an 'acceptable' identity. However, coloured comrades who fought for liberation from white domination and aligned themselves to the majority Black African population of South Africa were "blacks of a special type" because they were not 'really' Black (Erasmus 2001:19). Coloured freedom fighters and activists denied their imposed coloured identity in order to be accepted as Black but they would never truly be accepted

¹²² See Lubbe 1991 and 1994 for her analysis of the 'coloured vote' in the 1928 and the 1994 elections. See also Rachel Prinsloo 1997 for her analysis of the 'coloured vote'.

as 'Black' because of their colouredness. Black in this instance defines a political identity that was anti-apartheid and pro-Congress-alliance but that Black political identity did not fully extend to coloured people because of the perceptions of colouredness' collusion with whiteness. Father Michael also adopted "African-ness as political identity" and retrospectively characterizes himself as having become "Nguni-fied" and through "appreciating Africanness" he "compromised" his own identity and subsequently discovered that "Blackness as a political identity [was] limited" (personal interview). Despite Father Michael's discomfort with Blackness, Courtney Jung correctly posits that "Black identity was in fact easily compatible with Coloured identity, and evidence shows that many people held both comfortably" (2000:197). However, as Zimitri Erasmus (2001) earlier argued, by claiming Blackness coloured activists were forced to repress their coloured identity. Homi Bhabha's analysis of Nadine Gordimer's novel *My Son's Story* (1990) describes coloured identity as a "halfway house of racial cultural origins [that] bridges the 'in-between' diasporic origins of the coloured South African and turns it into the symbol for the disjunctive, displaced everyday life of the liberation struggle" (1994:19). Colouredness became associated with a space in which the unease and chaos of the liberation could be seen. It follows then that no politically active person occupying a coloured body would wish to be identified with an identity that was 'disjunctive' and 'displaced'.

It was clear that, in a post-apartheid context, a Black identity held more power than the contested coloured identity. Blackness was perceived to be more politically 'authentic' during and after the anti-apartheid struggle. Black elites began to reify group identities in an effort to claim a 'political authenticity'. Again coloured people were told

that they did not have a culture or know their history therefore could not claim an 'authentic' identity, land, or belonging. Blackness as an identity was credible because its links to the continent and the struggle of the majority were visible while colouredness continues to be questioned and refuted as a category, both by people who occupy that identity and by outsiders.

Conclusion

In the run-up to the 1994 election coloured elites were optimistic about their position in the 'new South Africa'. The New National Party (NNP), a reconstituted apartheid National Party, specifically targeted the coloured voters in the Western Cape:

Hundreds of voters...have been encouraged to identify themselves as coloureds, and not as part of a broader Black majority in which they would be submerged. The only way coloured interests can be furthered is if they are addressed as part of a group and not just as Blacks. (*Business Day*, 27 May 1999).

The NNP monopolized the fears of a historically marginalized group and spoke to coloured people directly. In 1994, Peter Marais, a coloured member of the Tricameral Parliament, claimed that the National Party was the "natural home for the majority of the Coloured community" (Jung 2000:199). The ANC, on the other hand, opted to concentrate on electioneering in Black African townships even though they had been advised by coloured political leaders to mobilize the 'coloured vote'. In its endeavor to be non-racial, the ANC ignored a sector of society that still attached importance to its apartheid identity because of that group's historical marginalization. The ANC also determined that a South African identity was not the sum of its parts; that communities would have to abandon specific identities and identify as 'South African'. This chapter

has shown that identity reconstruction occurred within the boundaries set by the apartheid state, therefore it would be unrealistic to assume that people would abandon those identities on the promise of a new political dispensation. What has become clear in this analysis is that new identities cannot be constructed but old identities are reconstructed to more clearly reflect individuals and communities lived experiences.

This chapter has also shown how coloured elites have utilized the limited public spaces that have been opened for them and made meaning of their identities in those spaces in a repressive era. They did not move beyond the confines of apartheid imposed identities but negotiated spaces in-between boundaries and borders. A collective Black identity provided a temporary home for coloured activists but they realized that this was achieved as the expense of their coloured identity. I have argued that apartheid institutions and culture continue to frame the practice of coloured politics and, in fact, all politics in South Africa. Coloured communities perceive their voices to be marginal in the post-apartheid era despite the watershed changes of 1990. Why? What opportunities exist now that could shape the ways coloured intellectuals could change the construction and perception of their identities? The next chapter examines the new opportunities and strategies open to coloured activists in the post-apartheid era and determine whether these new spaces could produce new identities.

Chapter 5: Emerging Constructions of Coloured Identity – Post-1994

“Brown Bleeds through the straight line, unstaunchable – the line separating black from white, for example. Brown confuses. Brown forms at the border of contradiction”

– Richard Rodrigues, *Brown* (2002)

This chapter examines contemporary reconstructions of coloured identity. The legal boundaries mapping group identities have been eradicated by the end of apartheid, thereby creating opportunities for people to self-identify. The emergence of the new political and social dispensation in 1994 created a unique opportunity to experiment with all identities. White and Black African identities are also being constructed in the post-apartheid era as citizens begin to configure new relations of power. This chapter focuses primarily on reconstructed coloured identities such as those linked to KhoiSan, slave and creole understandings of that identity. I will examine each of these identities separately and include people who self-identify as ‘coloured’ despite the opportunities to move away from the apartheid-imposed nomenclatures. I will use interpretive analyses of political texts and draw on ethnographic observation of the daily sense of coloured perceptions gained through everyday conversations and comments to the press. This is consistent with ethnographic practice that uses this commonsense understanding as evidence (Geertz 1983). I argue that the ‘new South Africa’, in which people are ‘free’ and ‘equal’, has created new problems for communities who perceive themselves as being marginal to mainstream politics and consequently either agitate for recognition from society and the state, or withdraw from the political public sphere. Much of the reconstruction of identities is being undertaken by the state and small organizations with the information being filtered into broader social spaces and debates. It is important to note that this chapter does not deal with lived experiences but analyzes state and coloured

elite discourses on identity; for that reason it will focus on state discourses around the 'new South Africa' and coloured elite responses to those debates.

Under apartheid many coloureds argued that they were not 'white enough' to gain benefits; now in a post-apartheid era they claim that they are not 'Black enough' to meet the requirements for affirmative action positions. The ANC won the majority of seats in parliament in 1994, 1999 and 2004 but the Western Cape has proven to be a habitually contested area. Many coloured people continue to vote for the New National Party and the Democratic Party in the Western Cape. "They feel they have been bypassed by the reconstruction and development programme; they have not benefited from affirmative action and they see themselves as the step-children of SA." (*Business Day*, 27 May 1999).¹²³ This editorial summarizes the general perceptions among coloured people in the Western Cape, however, reality would argue that it is not true. Many coloured people occupy senior positions in the South African cabinet and provincial government. A number of business and church leaders come from coloured communities and sports heroes also hail from areas such as Mitchell's Plain, Bonteheuwel, Hanover Park which are predominantly and historically coloured residential areas. Demographically the coloured community makes up 8.8% of the total South African population therefore it follows that they would not occupy as many positions as the Black African group which comprises 79.4% of the total population. The perceptions of marginalization persist therefore how does the state respond to groups that perceive themselves as excluded or marginalized into its vision of a 'rainbow nation'? As Olive Schreiner (1923) asked:

¹²³ Sarah Gertrude Millin's 1924 novel *God's Stepchildren* gave rise to the identification of coloured people as stepchildren. They belong to the family but are not quite welcome.

“How from our political states and our discordant races, can a great, a healthy, a united, an organized nation be formed?” (cited in Alexander 2002:32).

The National Question

The end of apartheid afforded people a new political freedom in terms of electoral politics, human rights and individual freedoms. Suddenly, “everyone is South African”, said Stan Simmons, a New National Party (NNP) representative in the Western Cape. “With our history we need to build a nation to improve our way of living, rather than to fight. We can differ but need to work together, not be enemies”. In the post-apartheid period the nation-building project became vital in order to construct a unified South African identity.¹²⁴ The rallying cry during the early days of the post-apartheid period was one that rejected difference and sought similarities between South Africans. In an address to the first sitting of the National Assembly of South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu exclaimed: “We of many cultures, languages and races have become one nation. We are the rainbow children of God” (Alexander 2002:81).¹²⁵ Both Tutu and former President Nelson Mandela urged all South Africans to unite and participate in the ‘rainbow nation’. This imagery has very real political implications. Firstly, the imagery of a rainbow makes reference to difference, and especially the continued existence of racial differences in a post-apartheid era. It also evokes the image of the opposite ends not meeting, according to ordinary people on the street. “In the South African case, the,

¹²⁴ This thesis continues the discussion around identity and nation-building in Chapter 6.

¹²⁵ Historian HC ‘Jattie’ Bredenkamp corrects this assertion and claims that it was Jessie Jackson who had coined the term in his 1984 US Presidential campaign. (Minutes of the Roots & Visions Forum 5 April 2003). Mala Singh (1997) criticizes South Africans’ continued use of this American metaphor as it situates our debate on nation-building within the context of multiculturalism, a theory which this country should not follow.

perhaps unintended, stress placed on coexisting colour strata or groups by using the rainbow image is to my way of thinking counterproductive” (Alexander 2002:100). Instead Alexander proposes the “Garieb” (the Great River or Orange River) metaphor, a great river in South Africa which crosses most of the country and moves us away from the “sense of unchanging, eternal and god-given identities” (ibid.:107).

It could be argued that the persistence of the rainbow metaphor is due to its imagery of ‘unity in diversity’ which most politicians lay acclaim to when they promote the ‘new South Africa’ to the world and itself.¹²⁶ Historian Gary Baines (1998) argues that the “‘rainbow nation’ metaphor both informs and reinforces the vision of nation-building” (no page number) through the concept of multiculturalism.¹²⁷ However, Baines argues, the rainbow might not be a suitable image for nation-building in South Africa due to its association with multiculturalism which, he claims, ideally “should foster a political culture which seeks to accommodate – or, at the very least, tolerate – heterogeneity and difference” (ibid.). A democratic South Africa does demand tolerance for difference from its citizens but also frames its national identity in particularly ‘African’ discourse.¹²⁸ Multiculturalism maintains separation of groups in that it emphasizes the differences between groups. It also maintains that all identities have equal access to resources, are equally recognized by the state and have equal space for the expression of their cultural practices. The policies based on multiculturalism assume that societies comprise racial and ethnic groups of varying sizes that require special protection from the dominant hegemonic group because of historical structural inequalities. I argue that the theory or

¹²⁶ The new Coat of Arms of the Republic of South Africa (2000) promotes diversity in /Xam, a KhoiSan language: *!ke e: /xarra //ke* (diverse people unite or people who are different join together).

¹²⁷ See also Patrick McAllister (1996) “Australian Multiculturalism: Lessons for South Africa?”

¹²⁸ Most South Africans claim to be tolerant of each other. See Gibson and Gouws 2003.

practice of multiculturalism cannot hold in places where race and ethnicity continue to mark identities in particular and unequal ways and where they continue to play an important role in groups' access to political power and resources (Taylor 1994, Adam 1995, Kymlicka 1995). The South African state has opted for a multicultural approach to cultural difference but this multicultural approach becomes implicated in subtle power relations and intersecting identities. For example, multiculturalism in South Africa has also been railroaded by the tourism industry which relies on difference in order to market South Africa and its cities as 'multicultural' destinations. Multiculturalism ignores other categories of inequality such as caste, class, gender, and rural vs urban identities (see Okin 1999), which determine power dynamics in unequal societies. It is for this reason that Spinner argues against the call for "cultural rights" because "the language of culture should not displace the language of power and wealth" (1994:136, see also Habib 1996). Communities are encouraged to promote their cultural heritage and often in rural areas this is done in the name of development and tourism. However, the tourism industry does not bring sufficient income or levels of development to a region required to build an independent economy from that of the city. Rural areas are maintained in their 'traditional' states in order to monopolize on a multicultural identity.

The rainbow imagery hides the significant class divide that people experience and underemphasizes the importance of class relations to groups' access to power and resources. This is particularly important in the South African context because it is a country of 'two nations' where the dominant nation is white and "relatively prosperous"

and the other larger one is poor and Black (Mbeki 1998b).¹²⁹ Alexander acknowledges the significant class divide in South Africa and suggests that we would need to

[M]ov[e] away from the notion (and the reality) of separate racial, and to some extent also ethnic, groups towards a situation where the multiculturalism of the society can find its expression in the fact of multiple identities of the individual held together by the overarching national identity, that of being South African (2002:98).

Alexander's conception of multiculturalism includes a nation-building component in which no identity supersedes others, where each identity influences others and "continue to constitute and reconstitute the mainstream" (ibid.:107). In an official African National Congress (ANC) document entitled *Nation-Formation and Nation-building* (1997) the Party recognizes that the concept of the rainbow nation could "fail to recognize the healthy osmosis among the various cultures and other attributes in the process towards the emergence of a new African nation" (page 4 of 5) if separate identities continued to pay allegiance to places other than Africa, for example, Indians to India and whites to Europe. According to this document, coloureds are "somewhere in the undefined middle of the rainbow" (ibid.). The rainbow metaphor has since been abandoned from political rhetoric because it has failed to present a viable alternative to viewing the fissures caused by apartheid and colonialism in South Africa.

Consequently, the ANC proposes a "New Patriotism" that remains vaguely defined but would ultimately forge a national identity that is South African, with an emphasis on the 'African'. Thabo Mbeki claims that "[w]e must share a common recognition of the fact that all of us stand to gain from the transformation of South Africa into a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous country" (2001:np). Politically this translates

¹²⁹ South Africa has one of the highest Gini coefficients (59.3) in the world, according to the 2004 *United Nations Development Report*, which means that class differences are immense.

into the recognition of identity differences that somehow remain in play in a contemporary South Africa. It is also an expectation that those differences would need to be suspended for the sake of a coherent nation-state. Peter Mokoena, a Director in the Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology in the Western Cape government, concedes that “a [national] collective identity ... supersedes everything” (personal interview, Cape Town, 12 February 2004).¹³⁰ He continues:

South Africa has embarked on a nation-building process. It is a nation of numerous identities. We need laws and rights that protect small identities. We can exercise all the rights without a power struggle. There are too many people for us to think the same way or have the same language. It is important that that process should not trample over individual and group identities ... Nation-building is a political not a cultural process (ibid.).

If Mokoena is correct, specific identities do not threaten a national identity therefore should be allowed to take root and flourish within a democracy. Can South Africa take that risk in the light of its lacking a coherent national identity? On the other hand, if South Africans only identify as ‘South African’, referencing their geographical origin, when speaking to non-South Africans, and do not identify as a national collective in their day-to-day existence, then would the nation-building project succeed in imagining a new collective that means something to everyone within the group?

Even though the state has identified a number of approaches to construct a new national identity, that identity has not in the past, nor will it in the future, play a major role in people’s lives except in the face of perceived foreign interventions, be they economic, political or cultural, or in moments of celebration when our national sport teams successfully compete against international opponents (Farred 2001). A strong

¹³⁰ Peter Mokwena is the Director of Culture and Heritage, Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology in the Western Cape Provincial government. All references accredited to Peter Mokwena are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

national identity commonly emerges when the country its people feel under threat. It is also invoked to imagine a new nation, as was the case when then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki gave his landmark “I am an African” speech at the occasion of the adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. He successfully created an all-inclusive narrative outlining a new shared myth of origin for everyone who identifies as an ‘African’.¹³¹ This was a departure from the term ‘African’ that was used to denote Black Africanness under apartheid rule because it includes aspects of a shared geographical and historical experience that makes us uniquely African (as opposed to American, European, et cetera), and excludes racial particularities except to say that they all combine to make us who we are.

His speech, however, opens itself to prior understandings of the term ‘African’. I argued in Chapter 4 that apartheid labeled people as ‘white’, ‘coloured’ or ‘African’ therefore the latter is understood to be ‘Black African’ rather than an all-encompassing term referencing a shared continental identity. Coloured elites who were involved in the liberation movements would be familiar with the ideas of an African identity because of their association with Congress-alliance structures. Not all sectors of society are comfortable with the term because, as Farred (2001) claims “whereas ‘full blackness’, or Africanness has translated into full citizenship of and belonging to the post-apartheid state, colouredness has retained its historic ambivalence” (182-3) and for that reason coloured communities retain their particular notions of ‘African’ meaning ‘Black African’.

¹³¹ Statement of Deputy President T.M. Mbeki, on behalf of the African National Congress, on the Occasion of the Adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of The Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill 1996 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1996/sp960508.html>

Many coloured people still conceive the ANC and Mbeki's 'African' to be exclusive in nature, despite Mbeki's repeated attempts to imbue Africanness with a more continental meaning. Baines (1998) points out the dual use of the term in an ANC document entitled "Building on the Foundations for a Better Life" (1997). In this document the organization calls for "affirmation of our Africanness as a nation...in [...] recognition of a geographic reality and the awakening of a consciousness which colonialism suppressed" (page 6 of 18), but simultaneously makes reference to the apartheid-imposed identities of 'coloured', 'white', 'black', and 'Indian' as a means to distinguish between the benefits obtained and roles each group played in the liberation struggle. Likewise, in the realm of culture, 'African' is understood by some coloured elites to imply an 'authentic' Black African culture. Sarah Nuttall reminds us that "race appears to be hardening in the public political realm precisely as legalized racism has been abolished ... This hardening is taking place at the same time as more choices are becoming available in terms of racial identification, especially in the sphere of culture" (2004:738). The state's insistence on drawing a distinction or marking difference using race has led to divisions within South Africa that are being addressed, or ignored, in order to create a national identity.

Attempts to create national pride have been made through projects such as the *Proudly South African* campaign that places a sticker on goods made in South Africa that claims the products' South Africanness. The project also entreats all South Africans to buy locally produced goods and therefore build the economy. The national South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) also designed a slogan for its most representative television channel that nightly declared '*Simunye – We are One!*' The City of Cape Town

in the Western Cape Province claimed itself to be a place of 'One City, Many Cultures' in an attempt to show its unity *despite* its diversity and divided historical past. Ironically, it is in the Western Cape that overt racialism and racism have persisted. These discursive attempts to construct a common identity among South Africans have produced varying results, however, the main underlying problem is that the differences cemented during the apartheid era are proving to be highly resistant to the superficial strategies employed to address those differences. South Africa has to address the differences within communities, especially those communities in which 'new' identities have emerged since 1994, in order to create the building blocks for a national identity that is resilient to challenges from subordinate identities.

New identity-related opportunity spaces emerged in the post-1994 period, but South African society has not embraced a new national identity, New Patriotism, or other newly emerging identities. Instead, old identities are being revised leaving the impression that 'new' identities are not attainable and can only be re-imaginings of existing ones. Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael claim that these are "new forms of imagining" (2000:2). It is not the identity that changes, but what does change are the ways in which it is constructed. Samuel Huntington claimed that "people are discovering new but often old identities" (in Leshilo 2002) which points to the problem of constructing new identities. 'New' identities in South Africa are being constructed within the same social, political and economic milieu that existed prior to 1994, even if the racial face of power did change. The new power relations influence the ways in which people interact in public spaces but they have not changed the fundamental class identities despite the

emergence of a small Black elite by virtue of the ANC-government's Black Empowerment and Affirmative Action programs.

Citizens are reconfiguring boundaries of inclusion and exclusion according to their perceptions of whose needs and aspirations are being represented in government. Those people or communities, who continue to feel marginalized on the basis of their race or class, balk at the idea of a national identity as they attempt to protect their limited access to resources. Pallo Jordan argues that unless marginal groups see visible delivery from the government of social services they will believe that there are insufficient resources for all (1997:10). In a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (see Table 1 below) soon after the 1994 election, many South Africans still identified predominantly by racial group. This proves that South African society was then still divided. Adam Habib argues that

While identities are transforming in the new South Africa, this is not occurring in the direction of a national consciousness ... while there is some empirical evidence to suggest that a South African identity is increasing among Afrikaner whites, English-speaking whites and Asians, there is a marked upsurge in ethnic identities among coloured and African populations (1996: page 4 of 16).

Table 1 provides statistical evidence in this regard. It could be argued that whites (English- and Afrikaans-speaking) and Asians feel that their needs are being addressed by the ANC's liberalist ideology, therefore they support a burgeoning national identity in addition to their 'ethnic' identities. In the coloured and Black African populations the reverse is evident. Ethnic identities are predominant because historically those identities have provided access to goods and services that were partitioned according to specific identities.

Respondents identify as ...	Afrikaans-speaking Whites %	English-speaking Whites %	Coloureds %	Indians/Asians %	Africans %
South African	47.3	70.5	32.75	45.26	14.41
Ethnic	32.48	10.33	-	-	53.83
Racial	18.43	9.48	46.93	37.64	19.44

Interestingly, recent research conducted by *Afro Barometer*, a journal produced by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Mattes et al 2005), shows that respondents from the coloured community did not associate their group identity with an ethnic identity: the majority of coloured respondents replied that the question was not applicable to them. The same occurred among Indian respondents while 43% of white respondents and 54% of 'African' respondents claimed an affinity to an ethnic identity.¹³² Ironically later in the questionnaire, when asked about which (ethnic) group they could trust, coloured respondents identified their own group without questioning the notion that they were an ethnic group (ibid.).¹³³ These statistics have consequences for the nation-building project because for some groups ethnic identities remain strong, while for others a national identity is more important. If citizens are more likely to identify in terms of their specific identities, then it is important that a national identity encompasses all those differences or

¹³² Interestingly, white Afrikaans speaking people have a higher sense of belonging to an ethnic identity than white English speaking respondents. I could argue that the English speaking South Africans still have connections with the United Kingdom while the Afrikaners see themselves as 'Africans' connected to the land.

¹³³ See Questions 72 – 84d.

finds a way to create cohesion and similarity between the groups beyond sporting events that have the uncanny ability to cross boundaries within South African society. Similarity in difference would work well for a national identity in South Africa, however, the details would prove to be complex and politically volatile.

After the brief euphoria in the first few years of democracy, citizens who perceive themselves to be marginalized have returned to specific ethnic identities, which shows that the present political and social milieu is not inclusive. Pallo Jordan asks this: "Is the ANC leaving those of our people who identify ethnically to the political wolves of ethnic entrepreneurship by continuing to discourage ethnicity and favouring an inclusive nationalism?" (1997:12). The state argues that those people who continue to identify ethnically are racist or ethnicist and aim to derail the national project. The ANC's return to a Black or 'African' identity has revived a conservative conception of those identities and has returned the debate to issues of 'tradition' and 'authenticity' which were found in 'traditional' societies prior to cultural and genealogical hybridization (see Sharp 1997). Robins (1997) disputes this by claiming that identities and cultures change, therefore they can never be 'authentic'. Cornell and Hartmann argue that

Ethnic and racial categories may be delineated firstly by others, but when groups begin to fill those categories with their own content, telling their own histories in their own ways and putting forth their own claims to what their identities signify, then they are engaged in a classical process of constructing ethnicity. When a racial group sets out to construct its own version of identity, it makes itself both race and ethnic group at once (1998:30).

Coloured people's reconstructions of their ethnic and, by extension, racial identities in the post apartheid period, point to Cornell and Hartman's 'classical process of constructing ethnicity'. The apartheid government constituted a racial category whose members, in turn, created their own self-understanding because of a shared history and space. Cornell

and Hartman's extract shows how a group constructs and reconstructs its identity to better depict its 'own version of identity'. This process, however, is affected by prior constructions of identities and the power relationships that undergird that structure, therefore the new constructions need to negotiate a space for themselves within a structure that still functions along the lines of race and ethnicity.

Elites Change Identities

New kinds of relationships are structured by groups according to their desire to increase their access to resources and for broader political recognition from the central government. I argue that it is not only an instrumentalist objective to increase material resources but it is also a call for a recognition that has driven particular coloured elites to call for a new identity. It is clear that the process of reconstructing coloured identities is an elite process because it is driven by people who have access to the media, have held leadership positions in the liberation movement structures and have participated in the general debate around coloured identities in public fora. It is also a process that is evident predominantly in the Western Cape region, with a few smaller movements emerging in the Gauteng region but largely around access to material resources and local services, for example, the *Kleurling Weerstandsbeweging* (Coloured Resistance Movement). In the contemporary period, coloured elites have begun to question their identities and have embarked upon a reconstruction of their 'old' identities in order to move away from a 'negative' representation of coloured identity, with the result that a new identity consciousness has invaded the political and social arena in South Africa. A process of "conscientization" has taken place, which means that people have become

“critically aware of the possibilities of their life situations, [are] systematically and sustainably examining the alternatives, and confidently adopting the most effective method and means of social development” (Abdi 1999:150). The personal awareness of oppression has led to a movement which wishes to renegotiate the position of coloured people in a democratic South Africa.

Coloured elites have become more vocal about their position, and that of their communities, in society. They have engaged in debate in public spaces through letters to the press complaining about their in-between identities; demanded the state recognize the KhoiSan as the First Peoples of South Africa; and claimed a ‘new’ colouredness on public podiums. Zoë Wicomb refers to the reconstruction of coloured identity in the post-1994 period as an “ethnographic self-fashioning” (1998:92). Elites have begun to sift through the history of the coloured people and chosen identities that fit well with their conceptions of themselves in a contemporary South Africa. They have discovered in themselves a “depth of agency” (Bhabha 1994). As I have shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the coloured community has never lacked agency but has been forced to act and react within the bounds of the apartheid system. In the post-apartheid period we are no longer confined to assimilation or counter-apartheid politics (Adhikari 2002) but are able to choose identities with which we choose to be associated. The media’s homogenization of the coloured community into ‘the coloured vote’ in 1994 showed a lack of understanding of the debates around issues of difference *within* the coloured community. Homi Bhabha defines ‘depth of agency’ as an understanding of the “measure of the ‘me’ which emerges from an acknowledgement of my inwardness, the depth of my character, the profundity of my person ...” (Bhabha 1994:48). This individual and personal process of which

Bhabha speaks has been translated by coloured elites into a message that includes a call to the broader community to 'self-define' itself. Under the guidance of coloured elites, people have begun personal journeys into their identities and now engage vibrantly in the media about their position in contemporary South Africa. This is not a social movement, as Stryker (2000) would define it, but it is a process that has taken root throughout the community but it is a social process which has been adopted by small groups of people in an attempt to refashion their identities.

The process of self-identification has been painful, because it forces people who have denied a part of themselves to come to terms with painful histories. For many, says Henry Cupido, a leading figure in the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), it is a confusing process because, as he argues, "*die bruinmense is verwaard omdat hulle self moet identifiseer*" (personal interview, Cape Town, 14 February 2004).¹³⁴ Many people who have chosen to redefine their personal identities experience ridicule and marginalization from their families and communities because they have revived and adopted identities which were negated and stereotyped throughout history, for example, KhoiSan and slave identities. Many coloured people have been "socialized by seeing the photo's [sic] ... of ... white ancestors, not the black ones" (Jordan, Jaffer and Maré 2002:14). Many coloured families have successfully hidden the Black African identities of their forebears and have chosen to highlight the histories of their white settler family members.

Abdou Maliqalim Simone (1994) correctly argues that "the end of apartheid, far from diminishing the salience of racial classifications and cognition, significantly

¹³⁴ "The brown people are confused because they must now self-identify [in the post-apartheid era]". All quotations accredited to Henry Cupido are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

expands the range and ‘vitality’ of racial significations” (in Jackson 1999:237). How many more meanings can we construct using original apartheid terms? Many coloured elites consciously use the term ‘coloured’ to show that they have reclaimed the term and imbued it with new political meaning. Simultaneously they also acknowledge that coloured people might have internalized the imposed identity and used it solely to self-identify for want of an alternative term. The new political dispensation has provided those people who were classified ‘coloured’ the agency to “negotiate and reinterpret their mixed feelings and fragile identities in empowering ways” (Field 2001:98). For many elites in the coloured community, the term ‘coloured’ still inadequately and problematically describes their identities. They adopted and awkwardly wore the identity throughout the apartheid era. David Abrahams, Trevor Oosterwyk and Father Michael all self-identify as part of the coloured community but add new understandings of their colouredness to that identity. This paper focuses on these ‘new’ constructions of coloured identity in the past apartheid era.

New Coloured Identities

‘New’ conceptions of colouredness have emerged which include historical identities such as those of the KhoiSan/creole/slave communities throughout South African history. I have identified these ‘original’ African identities as coloured because to date there is only evidence of coloured people claiming KhoiSan identities. Mbeki, in his ‘I am an African’ speech, claimed KhoiSanness as part of his identity but this acknowledgement is not widespread. KhoiSan identities have been denigrated throughout colonial and apartheid history therefore Black African and many coloured people reject

them outright. KhoiSan Chief Jean Burgess overheard a woman at a KhoiSan prize-giving event in the Eastern Cape saying that she was not one of 'them' because she was 'educated' (*geleerd*) (Burgess interview, 2004). Despite misgivings about the reconstruction of coloured identity, the process has reinforced the heterogeneity of coloured identity which, in the past, has always been represented as homogenous; as if a stereotypical 'Cape Coloured' identity was the archetype portrayed in that community. The process which many individuals have undertaken has been on a personal level. Those who have chosen KhoiSan identities have linked their process to ethnic or 'tribal' groups such as the Damasqua, Outeniqua, Griqua, etc. Again, this is not a social movement, even though people have come together to define their identities collectively. It is a personal process in which people renegotiate their relations with each other in a South African context. It should also be noted that all identities – white, Black African, coloured, Indian, Asian and so forth – in South Africa are undergoing change within the new political dispensation, therefore social, political and economic changes have created opportunities in which identities can be adjusted, adapted and reassessed.

It is necessary to remember where coloured identities have come from in order to determine how they will be constructed in the future.

Coloured identities have been shaped by very particular racist discourses. It is important to conceptualise coloured identities as relational identities shaped by complex networks of concrete social relations rather than seeing 'coloured' as a particular category of individuals and/or as simply an imposed name from a racist past. The value of this approach is its challenge to any notions of colouredness as homogeneous and/or an essentialist ethnic identity with fixed cultural boundaries as well as its acknowledgement of the particularity of identities (Erasmus and Pieterse 1997:8).

This lengthy quotation aptly describes the process of reconstructing coloured identity during the post-apartheid period. The constructions that evolved during the colonial and

apartheid eras continue to bear weight on present-day identities. History counts.

Colouredness can only be redefined if it challenges existing stereotypes and disrupts the power relations that have existed between coloured people, whites and Black Africans.

There can be no homogenous concept of colouredness as individuals and societies create identities that relate to their new experiences within the structures of power, race, class, sexuality, and so forth. Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) concept of 'intersectionality' argues for a new theory of identity that acknowledges the combination of these structures. In order to understand colouredness in its myriad of expressions, one needs to understand the positions each identity occupies. This poses a problem for social activism but it need not preclude a common identity. I will return to this later.

Gail Smith, a journalist who self-identifies as coloured, embraces a coloured identity that had been maligned in the past and argues that for many years she has been made to feel ashamed of her 'brownskin identity'.¹³⁵ Smith argues that

We need to make peace with coloured identity. I need to start celebrating the good things, to move away from negativity. In my work around Sarah Bartmann I began to understand where this negativity came from - this whole idea of *Gam*, people of mixed blood being less than. History. I began to understand the animosity between coloureds and Xhosa. It all starts to make sense. I began to write, talk and celebrate identity. We need to celebrate coloured identity. There are some wonderful things about being coloured, I can't explain them. It just is. A word, phrase, song ... I resist stereotypes (personal email).¹³⁶

Smith's reference to the almost mythical nature of colouredness and her inability to describe it speaks of an essence of colouredness that is found within everyone from that community. Her recognition of her identity does not necessarily refer to a primordial identity but rather to a space, history and experience that she shared with a wider

¹³⁵ Gail Smith is an identity and gender activist who was instrumental in the Sarah Bartmann documentaries by filmmaker Zola Maseko ("The Life and Times of Sarah Baartman – 'The Hottentot Venus'", 1998). She also played a major role in the repatriation of Sarah Bartmann's remains to South Africa in 2002.

¹³⁶ Personal email correspondence with Gail Smith, 25 March Johannesburg 2005.

community. Her resistance to stereotypes implies a process of identity construction both personal and political that can be seen in pockets of the coloured community. In a local newspaper, Chris Nissen, a former ANC Chairperson in the Western Cape, states boldly that he “refuse[s] to be called ‘so-called coloured’. I am coloured” (1996). Nissen’s rejection of the appellation “so-called” points to his reclamation of the term ‘coloured’. It appears that the trend to redefine a coloured identity has gone full circle back to ‘coloured’ as positive. ‘So-called’ has been removed from the term because it denoted an identity that did not exist for those people on whom it had been imposed. Now, coloured elites, possibly in an attempt to harness a collective identity for political reasons, have begun to rally around new conceptions of the term ‘coloured’. Recently a journalist explained that ‘coloured’ has become a *‘towerwoord’* (magic word) for him. He calls coloured people die *‘ware reënboogmense’* (the true rainbow people).

Dis daarom dat die woord ‘Kleurling’ lankal nie meer ’n woord is wat iemand soos ’n dolk na my kan gooi nie. Trouens, dit het vir my ’n towerwoord geword; ’n woord wat hiérdie mense voor my oproep: die tawwe ouens in hul GM-[General Motors] overalls, die sekretaresse met haar klip-klik-stappie, die main konyn wat met sy aktetas in sy blink plaat spring. Ja, self die werkloses, ontsnap uit Picasso se Blou Periode ... ‘Kleur-’ met of sonder ‘-ling’ is móói (Vincent Oliphant Rapport 12 June 2005).¹³⁷

Oliphant conjures up images of coloured people and immerses them with his ethnically defined pride. In the same image he evokes the working class motor workers, the white collar secretary, the middle class office manager, and the unemployed. Through his imagery one can see the array of identities that make up colouredness in South Africa.

¹³⁷ “That is why the word ‘Coloured’ no longer is a word which could be thrown at me like a spear. Instead, it’s become a magic word for me; a word that conjures up these people: the macho guys in their GM-overalls, the secretary with her clip-clop walk, the important man who jumps into his fancy car with his briefcase. Yes, even the unemployed, escaped from Picasso’s Blue Period ... Colour, with or without the ‘-ed’ is beautiful” (my translation).

His romantic understanding of a group of people shows the pride and esteem that he feels for 'his people' (*my mense*).

Simon Bekker et al. argue that people resort to race and ethnic identities in South Africa when they are faced with a crisis. "Where [race] does emerge as a strong identity marker appears to be in situations of unemployment and low educational levels or in situations where groups do not or cannot identify with an alternative positive identity, or both" (2000:15). Johan Durand, an NNP member of parliament, grew up in Gauteng, a province in the north of South Africa. Durand, despite his different geographical experiences to the Western Cape coloured community, supports the need for self-identification processes.

People must leave coloureds alone and allow them to define their own identity eventually. We should not enforce identity on people. I will fight for the right to self-determination. I am coloured. People should acknowledge their diversity. Other South Africans should not question our identity because this is who we are (personal interview, 18 February 2004).¹³⁸

Durand's statement obliquely makes reference to the argument about the role of the 'coloured vote' in the 1994 elections. The ANC lost the Western Cape to the New National Party in 1994 and blamed the coloured voters for that loss. This accusation appeared valid because coloured voters make up the majority of eligible voters in the Western Cape, and in the polls prior to the election had been ambivalent about their political preferences.¹³⁹ Coloured elites in the Western Cape have tried to find ways to lobby for a collective political identity through mass identification with and support of working class issues. Political representatives like Chris Nissen (ANC) and Simmons

¹³⁸ Personal interview with Johan Durand, 18 February 2004, Cape Town. All future quotations attributed to Durand are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

¹³⁹ The only other province the ANC had lost was KwaZulu-Natal which had gone to the Inkatha Freedom Party, whose members are predominantly Zulu-speakers.

(NNP) have employed their colouredness as political drawcards to lure coloured voters who have expressed feelings of marginalization and disadvantage since the advent of the ANC-led government's leadership of South Africa. These feelings are adequately expressed in the phrase: "under apartheid we were not white enough, now we are not black enough" and refer to service provision, affirmative action programs and housing allocations in the Western Cape. In an article in the *Cape Argus*, a daily newspaper in the Western Cape, Solly Philander, a coloured comedian, claims that the debates around coloured identity are initiated by intellectuals who see the imposed identity as problematic. Philander claims that "it is impossible to make the leap from just being an 'old coloured' to an emancipated, evolved and free person" (in Oosterwyk 2002:14). This statement protects those coloured people who wish to self-identify as 'coloured' despite the advent of a new political dispensation. The 'new' coloured to which Philander has referred has to be open to different identities, different hierarchies and be a fully participative non-racial citizen.

The persistence of a coloured identity in the Western Cape is directly related to how marginal that community feels in the post-apartheid era. Coloured respondents in a recent *AfroBarometer* poll have shown a reluctance to self-identify as anything other than 'coloured' (see Mattes et al 2005). Ethnicity, in this case, provides a safe space in which coloured people feel they can express themselves and maintain a particular lifestyle they had under the apartheid regime. Social change agents or 'organic intellectuals' like Trevor Oosterwyk, Father Michael Weeder, David Abrahams, Gail Smith, and many others, were ANC activists during at least the last three decades of the twentieth century. During that political period they defined themselves as 'Black' to show their allegiance

with the oppressed Black African population in South Africa. They also supported the ideology of Black Consciousness. Their and others' attempts to contribute to the liberation struggle led them to deny an identity that was seen to be 'conservative' and 'racist' in favor of a more inclusive understanding of political Blackness. Because coloured identity occupied a space that was problematically positioned closer to whiteness than blackness, it was seen to be anti-Black African which forced activists from the coloured community to deny a reactionary coloured identity and to show their allegiance to the Congress movement by politically denying coloured identity in its entirety.

Two respondents, both senior political leaders – Stan Simmons and Henry Cupido – referred to themselves as 'brown' (*bruin*). Wicomb (1998) reminds us that the New National Party manipulated the concept of 'brown' identities during the 1994 election in order to win over the coloured voters from the ANC. Cupido and Simmons' denials of colouredness reveal the highly contested nature of the identity, but even though an adherence to a 'brown identity' depicts a move away from an identity connected to whiteness and Blackness, it does not move far enough from primordial identifications based on race. 'Brownness' relates to the phenotype of most coloured people but cannot directly be associated with apartheid nomenclature, therefore appears to afford the subject agency to name her/himself. Simmons acknowledges the social constructedness of colouredness through his recognition that that the term 'coloured' "differs from area to area in South Africa", however cannot seem to construct 'coloured' into a positive identity. Simmons also problematically refers to different groups as 'race groups' when he makes reference to language and cultural groups. This reflects the theoretical

difficulties that scholars have with race and ethnicity in South Africa (see Dubow 1994, Van Den Berghe 1970, Heese 1988).

The 'coloured vote' in the Western Cape was blamed for having derailed the ANC's objective to win a two-thirds majority in the country in 1994. The New National Party mobilized significant support in working class and under-class coloured areas and subsequently won the 1994 election in the Western Cape. There was an outcry about how the coloured voters had sided with their oppressors. Many people from the coloured community in the Western Cape have since felt marginal to ANC-led politics. Iris Marion Young argues for a "universality of citizenship" (1989) that includes all citizens but, I would argue, the ANC-led government's conception of citizenship has not enabled coloureds to "transcend particularity and difference" (ibid.:250). As I alluded to above, the coloured community does not easily buy into the idea of Africanness, despite some attachment to KhoiSan identities, which they define as not being Black African. One finds that educated and middle class respondents are more accepting of the new government and its policies, but this does not translate into widespread support for the state, hence the reluctance within the coloured community to identify as 'African' or even 'South African' (see Klandermans, Roefs and Olivier 2001). Grant Farred argues that

Part of coloured 'resistance' to citizenship may be explained by the fact that a society with not only a long and antagonistic history of racial division, but a predominantly binary one (black versus white), coloured 'difference' has long marked this community as idiosyncratically liminal (2001:177).

Farred's statement is true to a limited extent. It is not 'resistance' to citizenship but a yearning for full citizenship that drives the coloured community's demand for recognition and acknowledgement. Also, it is evident that South Africans resist a universal

citizenship and continually refer to people as coloured, Black African and white. Cheryl Potgieter, an academic and ANC activist explains:

Whites and Africans pigeonhole and see us as ‘coloured’. Theoretically I don’t know how we should engage with this. Do we talk about building a South African identity, but then there’s something lost. I do know that the ordinary working class person in Bonteheuwel, Mitchells Plain, and Eersterus people says ‘we are coloured’ (focus group interview, 2 April 2004).¹⁴⁰

Potgieter’s statement that coloured people are forced to be ‘coloured’ by those with whom they interact shows the limitations imposed on that community, individuals and identity in a post-apartheid era. She also argues that a ‘South African’ identity could hide the particularities of the experiences of citizens. Zimitri Erasmus (2001) posits a similar argument when she claims that a Black political identity made coloured contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle invisible. As a result, coloured people are “possessed of a more fragile sense of belonging ... engaging in contradictory projects: they are simultaneously trying to write themselves into and against post-apartheid sameness” (Farred 2001:182). The Janus-like face of the coloured person shows both the agency of the individual in relation to identity choices that they make throughout their day and the lack of choice in terms of the range of identities that are available to them.

Despite the fact that coloured elites have embraced a broad conception of an ‘African’ identity, continued racism persists within the community towards Black Africans. I would argue that this appears to be as a result of a perception that the ANC has embarked on an exclusive Africanist project in which South Africa was to become ‘Africanist’ in its policies, outlook and culture. In a recent letter in the *Cape Argus* a

¹⁴⁰ The first two suburbs are working-class coloured communities on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape and the latter is the only coloured community in Pretoria. Personal interview with Cheryl Potgieter, 2 April 2004, Johannesburg. All future quotations attributed to Potgieter are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

reader wrote the following: "President Mbeki's speech on Africanism to parliament was the turning point. It was not to uplift the African spirit but to impose a new brand of "black" African elitism" (28 July 2006). Another reader wrote: "We so-called coloureds are not in general black or, in particular, African. So what/who are we?" (ibid.) and yet another reader: "The ANC is here to protect and entrench the rights of the blacks to the exclusion of coloureds, Malays and Indians" (ibid.). These readers argue that they do not fit the description of an African. It appears that for some coloured people Africanist programs appear to deny the specific experiences of the coloured community which they see as proof of their further marginalization in South Africa. The African Renaissance concept – a framework for the improved development of Africa – and Thabo Mbeki's "I am an African" speech, judging by the recent letters in the *Cape Argus*, shows that non-elites in coloured communities continue to perceive 'African' as 'Black African', therefore raise issues of being more marginalized and threatened than before. Kobena Mercer argues that "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (1990:43). For some conservative elites in the coloured community, coloured identity is being threatened by 'Africanness' and as a result they call for a protected and defined 'coloured ethnic identity' which is defined in terms of language, religion, and historical experiences, and is propagated by an array of organizations that sprang up after the 1994 elections.

Brown Identities

In February 1995, a new coloured 'ethnic' organization emerged. Mervyn Ross, the leader of the *Kleurling Weerstandsbeweging vir die Vooruitgang van Bruinmense*¹⁴¹ (KWB), argued the following:

We are proud that we are ethnic. And once we are ethnic and being recognized by various other people, we can also go further and say 'Look, we are ethnic. We have our own language, our own culture, our own land and we want to govern ourselves'. We are not prepared to be governed by the white man anymore – he made a mess of it for 300 years. We are not prepared to be governed by black people (in Caliguire 1996:10).

Ross does not clarify who his constituency is, therefore it is not clear who he represents. In fact, he speaks as though he represents *all* coloured people, which is not true. Ross appears to have generalized grossly by claiming "our own" culture, land and language. His claim to an ethnic identity has alienated many in the coloured community who associated ethnicity with 'tribalism', 'traditionalism' and Black African. Jackson (1999:178) outlines the KWB's political claims:

- A land claim to the western and Northern Cape and the 12 islands off the Atlantic Coast, including Robben Island
- A demand that the central government recognize the obliterated languages of the Khoi, San and Griqua
- A demand that steps be taken to preserve these cultures, not as a curiosity for tourists but in a way determined by these people themselves
- The assertion of a distinct identity

The KWB represents "the most extreme ethno-nationalist portrayal of Coloured identity" (Hendricks 2000:239). His attempt to mobilize around an ethnic identity has not rallied great support, and neither has the Afrikaans language been sufficient to mobilize coloureds to join the organization. Poet Adam Small defines the coloured community as

¹⁴¹ Coloured Liberation Movement for the Advancement of Brown People

“basically Afrikaans, and I would say for 90% or more, the Coloured people are Afrikaans-speaking and Afrikaans-thinking and Afrikaans-doing” (1971:5). Small does not offer his understanding on how coloured people ‘do’ and ‘think’ Afrikaans. His analysis of the coloured community is limited to the 1970s because even though many coloured people claim Afrikaans as a mother-tongue language, the English language has been claimed as a marker of status in the coloured community. Also, the Western Cape based, coloured Afrikaans-speaking people recognize, with pride, that they speak a patois removed from that spoken by white Afrikaners, therefore do not identify with white Afrikaners for whom Afrikaner identity is highly politicized around right-wing politics. Mervyn Ross also invokes Small’s conception of ‘brown Afrikaners’:

We as brown Afrikaners suffered for three hundred years under racism. That is exactly why the KWB was formed, to oppose the racism of the NP and the ANC ... We want to unite brown people over the whole of Southern Africa, to combat the insecurity and political powerlessness we have suffered because of the treason (of the NP and the ANC). We want to give our people vision, economic advancement and political power (Brümmer 1995:8-11).

Unlike its white right-wing counterpart, the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (Afrikaner Resistance Movement), the KWB does not want a *volkstaat* (ethnic homeland) even though it does want the state’s new land restitution policies to consider land lost prior to 1913.¹⁴² Shannon Jackson argues that for the KWB to succeed Ross has to “presume the prior and continuous existence of a ‘brown people’ who are to be classified an ethnic group and then included as part of South Africa’s indigenous population” (1999:180). Ross cannot claim a ‘continuous existence’ of brownness as it has drifted in and out of political constructions of coloured identity since the early 1900s. However, it appears

¹⁴² Existing legislature allows land lost after 1913 to be considered for restitution programs. All KhoiSan land was lost prior to 1913 therefore is outside the bounds of negotiations between government and claimants. See Robins 2004 on land issues and representation of the KhoiSan.

now that there has been a growing trend for people to self-identify as 'brown' since 1994. For groups like the KWB, brown identity is obtained at birth and because brown people were always here in Southern Africa they belong to the land and are 'indigenous'. Ross will not realize his dream to be leader of the 'brown people' because, for him, brownness is achieved at birth. Many people are self-identifying as 'brown' in a post-apartheid era in order to disrupt old racial orders, and in an attempt to claim a belonging to the land as indigenous people. Some coloured elites, such as Ross, wish to be involved in mainstream politics yet create identities that partition their constituencies off from the rest of South African society.

This dual process of 'engaging in contradictory projects' (cf Farred 2001) was evident in the election results in the Western Cape in 1994. Activists and opinion polls in the coloured areas had different views about the possible outcome of the election results: Congress-aligned activists were very optimistic that the ANC would win in the Western Cape, while many pre-election polls showed a large number of undecided voters in the Western Cape.¹⁴³ David Abrahams explains that the success of the UDF in the Western Cape in the 1980s had provided Congress-alliance activists with a false sense of confidence in the outcome of the elections. "We expected [the support for the UDF in the 1980s] to translate smoothly to an ANC election victory. It never happened and we didn't spend time to find out why it didn't happen". It has become clear that the ANC was not willing to engage coloured voters as 'coloureds' during the election campaign. They also decided to concentrate on predominantly Black African areas where the majority of their

¹⁴³ The *Weekly Mail and Guardian* reported, in the week leading up to the 1994 elections that, according to the New National Party polls, at least 20% of coloured voters in the Western Cape were undecided as to which party they would vote for. The ANC polls put the figure at 40%. In 1994 the polls showed that the ANC only had 15% of the 'coloured vote' while the National Party had 45% of that constituency (April 22-28 1994).

support-base was situated. This tactic presented problems to the ANC as many working class coloured people voted for the New National Party and the Democratic Party in 1994 (Seekings 1996:35). Middle class voters, according to Seekings, due to their relatively high levels of education and employment, were not threatened by the ANC's affirmative action and redistribution policies, therefore voted for the liberation movement-turned-political party. However, some middle class coloureds, some of whom had been active in the New Unity Movement, an organization that was anti-collaborationist in its methods of activism and espoused Black consciousness ideals, refused to participate in the election.¹⁴⁴ Wilmot James explains that the ANC lost because it dealt with the coloured community as a homogeneous group.

There is no single, anthropologically homogeneous, coloured community. There are many communities, bound together by decades of exclusion and a rootlessness created by group areas ... This is a diverse group of folks who, like South Africa itself, belong to this soil and this history but are finding it difficult to come home, to finally feel they belong (James and Caliguire 1996:43).

An ethnic identity was attributed to the voters in the coloured community during the run-up to the elections as is evident in the coined term the 'coloured vote' and also in the ANC's simplistic political campaign in the Western Cape.¹⁴⁵ David Abrahams clarifies:

We didn't anticipate that the election of 1994 and the way coloured people voted. It was a combination of fear, ethnic racial difference, them/us, representation of ANC that primarily represents African people. We thought the [ANC] policies would inform people's decisions. The issue was not about who the National Party put up. In 1994 it wasn't about policies – it was about fear, ethnic mobilization and them/us. We didn't understand it or anticipate it then.

Activists who had worked in the coloured areas during the days of the UDF and the run-up to the 1994 elections underestimated the levels of racism that still existed between

¹⁴⁴ The New Unity Movement is the updated version of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) that emerged into coloured politics in the 1940s.

¹⁴⁵ Thabisi Hoeane 2004 has since disputed the concept of racial voting in South African elections.

coloured and Black African communities in the Western Cape. This shortsightedness proved to be the downfall of the ANC in that region. Father Michael explains that the ANC lost in the Western Cape as a result of an “uncritical application of the national question” that did not “contextualize” the issues or the “revolution” in those areas. Father Michael believes that had the ANC looked at the specificities and localities of coloured experiences, the party would have achieved a victory in the Western Cape, but because it emphasized a nation-building project that emphasized differences to a large extent, they missed the opportunity to win over the ‘*bruinmense*’ (brown people).¹⁴⁶

As a result of voters’ choices, the ANC’s loss in the Western Cape undercut the national victory of the ANC in 1994 and 1999. The resultant political backlash and social ridicule of the ‘coloured vote’ then created a perception within sectors of the coloured community that they were being alienated from mainstream political life. Zoë Wicomb argues that this

Shameful vote [...] coincides with the resurgence of the term *Coloured*, once more capitalized, without its old prefix of *so-called* and with the disavowing scare quotes earned during the revolutionary struggle when it was replaced by the word *black*, indicating both a rejection of apartheid nomenclature as well as inclusion in the national liberation movement (1998:93).

Ultimately, the KWB’s ethnic mobilization in the coloured community did not succeed but it did reach a particular sector of the community which has identified with its call for an ethnic politics and looked for a coloured party to represent ‘coloured interests’. It would be interesting to see how the Independent Democrats fare in the next elections because the party has been perceived as a ‘coloured’ party as its leader is coloured.

¹⁴⁶ ANC Western Cape provincial representatives Lynn Brown and Ebrahim Rasool self-identified as ‘bruinmense’ (brown people) in the run-up to the 1994 election in an attempt to speak the language of the coloured communities on the Cape Flats, a predominantly coloured area that arose as a result of forced removals in the 1960s and 1970s.

The December First Movement and Slave Identities

Another emerging movement that focused on aspects of coloured identity was the December First Movement (the Movement). When the ANC lost the Western Cape Province to the New National Party in 1994, coloured activists expressed shock that their constituencies had voted for the party that had led the apartheid government. Even though David Abrahams claims that they initially did not attempt to understand the outcome of the 1994 election in the Western Cape, coloured activists later regrouped and discussed what had ‘gone wrong’. In this period, a well-known educationalist – Richard van der Ross, an Afrikaans-language poet – Adam Small, and an activist – Chris April, launched the Coloured Forum in Delft, a coloured township on the Cape Flats on July 26, 1995 (Jackson 1999:182). Wilmot James describes this forum as follows:

[T]he Forum positions itself unmistakably in the mainstream. It was to engage with, and not erode, democratic institutions. It purports to draw on, not supplant, the party-political framework. It encourages introspection, self-evaluation and self-criticism, as a way of energizing coloured people into the main stream. The social-psychological benefits of this approach are not to be underestimated for building self-esteem and confidence, as the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s demonstrated (*Cape Times*, 4 August 1995).

James was of the opinion that the coloured community would gain self-esteem and confidence by analyzing itself and thereby become fully engaged in the democratic process. Due to the psycho-social aspects espoused by this view, it was not widely supported with the result that the Forum did not “create a particularly vocal or popular platform” in 1995 and 1996 but it did however “inspire” (ibid.) the formation of the Movement, which was named after the emancipation date of slaves in the Cape Colony in 1834 (Jackson 1999:182). The possible reason behind the failure of the Coloured Forum

was the conservative politics associated with and historically voiced and practiced by its proponents: Van der Ross, Small and April.¹⁴⁷ The Forum's politics was problematic because they called for the recognition of colouredness in essentialist terms which included notions of colouredness being created through a mixing of peoples. For example, Richard van der Ross had always written and spoken about coloured identity as an essentialist and fixed identity that did not change over time (1979).

The Movement was established in 1999 to inform coloured people of their history and culture, which, due to apartheid education, was largely unknown and widely refuted within their communities and by outsiders. The Movement was to be "a political cultural formation" which has as its central focus the "political awakening of coloured people" (Trevor Oosterwyk, December First document, date unknown). For David Abrahams, the rationale behind the formation of the December First Movement was follows:

The movement originated because firstly, why did 1994 happen in Western Cape? What is it about the coloured community that led to this? Secondly, what is it about politics inside ANC in the Western Cape that needs to be addressed? There were two streams of thought. We need to start putting the notion of understanding the political, social and demographic realities on the top of the agenda in the ANC. Some people labeled us as coloured nationalists. Not many people were willing to confront this issue. ... We wanted a movement that could tackle the issue of political realities facing the coloured community. It was to be different from other colouredisms emerging. We were not ethnic nationalists who saw this as an opportunity to get into parliament. We did not want to become a party but wanted to find a way to inject into ANC debate coloured identity and coloured issues. We started discussions of notions of identity – who are we, where do we come from, how do we differ from other ethnic groups? We resisted moves to join any of the other colouredisms.

¹⁴⁷ An example of Small's reactionary politics is a Dutch Reformed minister's statement he supported in the United States in 1971: "[The minister] ...[put] forward a really interesting idea, I thought, that white Afrikaners are not a 'people', a 'folk' (sic), without the Coloureds because a 'folk' must be complete. It must have a proletariat. And the Whites taken on their own have no proletariat. The proletariat is really the Coloureds" (1971:22). Chris April had also participated in the controversial Tricameral parliament in the 1980s.

The December First Movement therefore was an intellectual movement that engaged with discussions of colouredness and coloured identity within an ANC-led political milieu. The leaders of the Movement had been UDF and ANC activists during the run up to the 1994 election. They were not distancing themselves from the ANC but wanted to introduce the debate on coloured identity into ANC structures. This was an attempt to foreground the particularities of the Western Cape within a larger debate on identity in a post-apartheid South Africa. Abrahams later said that they wished to “demythologize [colouredness] and to take it out of the realm of reactionary coloured ethnic group identity” (ibid.). The Movement attempted to create a deeper understanding of coloured identity that was not tied to an ethnic understanding of identities. For them colouredness was tied to a history of slavery and experience, rather than a primordial fixity. Father Michael Weeder argues that the

December First was demonized and the biggest hatchet men in this thing were the coloureds in the unions and the ANC to show much African they are within the image of Nguni African: the African as noble and the African as pure. They had to show how they went for these narrow coloureds. So to show how big I am, I have to go against my own people. I’m just saying how the December First initiative was aborted for ethnic politics’ celebration of the First Nation in an idealized rewritten way. If all you can cite me are Van Riebeeck’s diaries or what a missionary is saying about the KhoiSan and what they are doing under the moon [shakes his head]. You must have a critical hermeneutic of what you read.

The ANC structures did not support the continued existence of the Movement because it appeared to highlight differences between voters in the Western Cape. The ANC-led national government was of the opinion that non-racial policies would smooth over the differences within the Western Cape. This was not to be so because identities, particularly within the Western Cape, became more important in the provision of social services to the previously disadvantaged communities. Marginalized communities fought

even harder for recognition from the provincial and national governments in an attempt to highlight their needs.

For the leadership of the December First Movement, the provision of material benefits for coloured people is not the primary focus of their project. They aimed to inform people of their past in an attempt to foster feelings of belong and esteem. Father Michael explains that “the December First Movement pursued an agenda that said ‘*this* is the way we are African’. We have equal access [to Africanness]”. He argues that the coloured stake was “devalued” because coloured people are seen to be “not fully African” or “not having suffered fully” (ibid.).

Father Michael explained that his interest in slave history sparked his work on the December First Movement.¹⁴⁸ This was different from the Coloured Forum because the Movement wished to inform coloured people of their roots and origins which would hopefully lead to a better understanding of their place in contemporary South Africa, while the Forum wished to create a stronger essentialist coloured identity. Oosterwyk defined the Movement as “completely a cultural organization” (ibid.). Two of the founding members, Oosterwyk and Abrahams, in a letter to the Editor of a Cape Town-based English-language daily newspaper, the *Cape Times*, wrote that the three broad objectives of the organization were:

1. The need for political lobbying and advocacy aimed at the ending of the political and social marginalisation of coloured people.
2. The encouragement of an intellectual and political culture based on an understanding of a non-essentialist politics of difference and diversity towards building the nation.
3. Organising the broadest layers of coloured people in social action aimed at restoring their rightful place in their own upliftment and participating in the

¹⁴⁸ Father Michael has been instrumental in the work on the Prestwich Street Project (inner-city Cape Town burial ground discovered while developers were cleaning a site) and Lydia Williams’s story (an emancipated slave who held sway at St Phillips in the Woodstock area during the early 1800s.)

broader social, economic and political transformation of this country. (Date unknown).

Much criticism could be directed against the notion of an organization established for coloured identity, politics and culture, as was directed against the Coloured Forum. In a later document the Movement recognizes this essentialism and explains it as follows:

There seems to be an obvious contradiction between wanting to ‘bring coloureds into the political and economic mainstream’ and yet also in the same breathe (sic) to talk about the ‘development of a non-racial project’. My response to this is that we have to admit, as many other people have argued, that the so-called non racialism [sic] of the 1980s was largely a failure ... because it never moved beyond being an organisational ethic and principle which for many reasons never permeated to the masses in a fundamental way (December First Movement document, author and date unknown).

Again the overt racism that exists in the Western Cape, due to a battle for limited resources and indigeneity, in the sense of who belongs, is made evident through this organizational statement. The Movement does not wish to perpetuate racial differences yet needs to operate within a structure that still recognizes racially-based difference. Abrahams also argues that “the ANC is more comfortable with dealing with ethnicity [and the belief that] ‘Coloured people are different’”. Ironically, the ANC does not address those differences and fears but produces broad-stroke policies that define citizenship in terms of ‘Africanness’ with which the broader community does not identify.

KhoiSan Identities

An African identity has emerged strongly from within the coloured community but I would argue that it is not seen to be a Black African identity. Mervyn Ross makes the distinction between Black African and KhoiSan when he mentions that the KhoiSan

people were the indigenous freedom fighters of South Africa: “We were the first to have fought against colonialism; it was the Khoisan, our ancestors. Where was the black man then?” (in Brümmer 1995:8). Father Michael moves away from any reference to Africanness when he rejects KhoiSan identity for being “‘coloured’ by another name. It is a post-modern tribalism that is driven by the impulse of separateness and quest for purity. It looks like a politics of ethnicity on appearance and doesn’t look at power”. Ross’s reaching back into historical identities as a source of belonging and differentiation between the ‘black man’ and the KhoiSan shows his need to connect coloured identities to something that is authentically African and also ethnic in nature.

It could be argued that the KhoiSan revivalist movement is instrumentalist in its identity formation processes as it links the identity to land rights and land restitution, and the political recognition of its leaders by national and international bodies (see Sharp and Boonzaaier 1994). KhoiSan revivalist movement activists like Chief Joseph Little, Chief Jean Burgess, Chief Harleen Sassman, Hendrik van Wyk, Ron Martin, and Joseph Marks mostly argue that their movement aims to engage people in a more personal process.¹⁴⁹ These key individuals began to debate KhoiSan identities in the public sphere in the period immediately after 1994. Sassman, Marks and Burgess later became self-identified Chiefs of different ‘tribes’ within the KhoiSan movement. Burgess, and others, claim that they are “still always an African” (personal interview 17 April 2004).¹⁵⁰

Burgess, like other coloured people, wished to find out more about her genealogy in order to prove that she belonged here and that her journey was more spiritual than

¹⁴⁹ Respondents who self-identified as ‘KhoiSan’. Chief Joseph Little is one of the initiators of the KhoiSan debate in the Western Cape and was an ANC activist during the liberation struggle.

¹⁵⁰ Personal interview with Jean Burgess, Grahamstown, 17 April 2004. The interviews with Burgess took place on two different dates, as will be shown in the citations. Both interviews were not recorded as per the wishes of the respondent.

instrumental. KhoiSan chiefs generally do not wish to be included in the Congress for Traditional Leaders in South Africa (CONTRALESA), a body made up of Black African chiefs that is afforded limited political power and recognized by the Constitution.¹⁵¹ For Burgess the creation of a sense of belonging is of utmost importance to the KhoiSan revivalist movement (personal interview 16 October 2004). This notion of humility is connected to Burgess's belonging to an ancient group of people who always lived in Africa and therefore have a right to be in South Africa as equal citizens.

Joseph Marks prefers the same revisionist history. Marks, a retired political activist from the Western Cape, argues that his identity is linked to the Outeniqua, a tribe historically from the mountains around the Southern Cape, of which he became chief in the 1940s. Uncle Joe, as he prefers to be known, denies any coloured identity and is derogatory in his comments about coloured identity. "I am not a coloured. The only desire of the coloured people is to assimilate [with the whites]".¹⁵² His denial of colouredness shows an attachment to a historical identity that could be traced to the period prior to the arrival of the Dutch. It could be argued that this is a search for purity; a purity that cannot be achieved through a hybrid coloured identity. Arguments of instrumentalism would apply here as Marks and others claim a KhoiSan identity linked to the restitution of land. "I left the ANC because of my 'obstructionist habits' around negotiations regarding land rights". KhoiSan land rights were not open to negotiation as the ANC had strategically identified 1913 as the cut-off date thereby nullifying many

¹⁵¹ This point is controversial because some chiefs have, off the record, expressed an interest in being formally acknowledged through membership to a structure such as CONTRALESA because it affords them governmental recognition and provides them with a stipend for their activities.

¹⁵² Personal interview with Joseph Marks, Retreat, Cape Town, 23 February 2004. All future quotations attributed to Marks are from this interview unless otherwise stated. He is known as Uncle Joe in struggle circles.

coloureds' claims to land that their families had lost under British rule and during the early years of the Union. The Land Restitution and Reform Laws Amendment Act of 1999 clearly states that “‘restoration of a right in land’ means the return of a right in land or a portion of land dispossessed after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices” (Section 1, emphasis in original). KhoiSan land was dispossessed prior to 1913. Urban coloured landowners could claim the land they lost in places such as District Six and other residential areas from which the apartheid state forcibly removed them.

During our interview Marks made reference to my comment about being Griqua because of my birthplace, Kokstad.¹⁵³ Griqua identity is clearly distinguished from the newly revived KhoiSan identities in that it has had over 100 years in which to define itself as separate, more advanced, more recognizable. Griquaness did not ‘become extinct’, as some KhoiSan identities, but managed to survive despite colonialism and apartheid. The reasons for this could be that the Griquas clearly identified themselves as not being coloured and excluded their identity from the boundaries of KhoiSan identities until recently. Cecil Le Fleur, Chairperson of the National KhoiSan Consultative Conference (NKCC), explains that the apartheid government’s “purposeful attempts to transform our people [Griquas] into a coloured identity disempowered our people. There was forced registration by officials based on phenotype” (my translation – UPE Speech 2004).¹⁵⁴ Under colonial and apartheid rule the Griquas sought a separate existence that

¹⁵³ The Griquas, a KhoiSan group, settled in Kokstad in the late 1700s after Adam Kok III trekked across the country to a piece of land now known as East Griqualand.

¹⁵⁴ All references to Le Fleur are from his speech entitled “*Die Stryd om Erkenning van Suid-Afrika se Eerste Inheemse Mense in ‘n Nuwe Demokrasie*” (The Struggle for Recognition of South Africa’s First People in a New Democracy) 19 October 2004. The event was not recorded. The speech was conducted in Afrikaans which I translated as I took notes.

protected and maintained their culture within a racialised system that ignored their particularities and treated them exactly the same as it did other coloured communities.

In specific terms the Griquas' search for separate development and self-determination and, more generally, the KhoiSan revivalist group's project, renewed discussions around ethnic and racial identities. In 1997, the KhoiSan Identities and Cultural Heritage Conference was held in Cape Town to discuss the future of KhoiSan identities in a 'new South Africa'. A number of issues led to this point. Firstly, the declaration of the United Nations' Decade of Indigenous Peoples in 1995 highlighted the KhoiSan people's "*regte en identiteit*" (rights and identity) in Southern Africa and situated the debate in an international context. Secondly, in 1996 Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech opened up a debate around who is 'African' (Le Fleur *ibid.*). Mbeki states the following:

I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape – they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and dependence and they who, as a people, perished in the result (8 May 1996).¹⁵⁵

The ANC government's claim that the KhoiSan had "as a people, perished" (*ibid.*) pushed the KhoiSan movement leaders to make visible surviving KhoiSan communities of the Griquas and other smaller less well-known KhoiSan identities. Le Fleur's position as Chairperson of the NKCC is made interesting in that he is also head of the Griqua house.¹⁵⁶ Many people argue, off the record, that Le Fleur's interests are primarily to protect the interests of the Griqua who have a cultural and religious identity that still

¹⁵⁵ Statement of Deputy President TM Mbeki, on Behalf of the African National Congress, on the Occasion of the Adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of The Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill 1996 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1996/sp960508.html>

¹⁵⁶ The Griqua National Conference (GNC) was established in 1904 and remains one of the oldest institutions in the coloured community.

exists due to the group residing in separate communities in Klaarwater, Ratelgat and Kranshoek. Le Fleur said as much during his speech: “*Griqua kultuur en tradisie het oorleef tenspyte van die regering se aanval op die KhoiSan mense. Dit is deur ons te doene dat die KhoiSan vlam brand*” (2004).¹⁵⁷ Much of Le Fleur’s speech concentrates on Griqua identity and rights thereby creating an impression that he was speaking for that group at the expense of the other KhoiSan groups.

Unlike the KWB and the December First Movement, the KhoiSan revivalist movement has entered the debate related to group rights of indigenous peoples. Issues of indigeneity abound in reconstructions of KhoiSan identity that make the distinction between indigenous identities and racial identities. The NKCC’s definition of ‘indigenous’ follows the United Nations’ understanding which delinks the term from ‘native’ or ‘aboriginal’ identities:

*Die KhoiSan sê hulle is inheems. Ons baseer die argument op UN inheemsheid. Dit is nie oor rasse skoonheid nie. Inheemsheid is vermeng, maar dit beteken nie dat dit nie ’n bepaalde identiteit kan aanvat nie. Dit is die beginsel van self-identifikasie (Le Fleur 2004).*¹⁵⁸

Le Fleur talks about *volksregte*, a people’s rights, thereby removing KhoiSan identity from the liberalist conception of individual rights. The KhoiSan movement wishes to obtain recognition for language and cultural rights, which Le Fleur claims are not protected by group rights or community rights. The KhoiSan do not only need protection of their cultural, linguistic and religious rights but also need those cultural expressions to be constructed, re-constructed and corrected (*opgebou, herstel en regstel*) before they can

¹⁵⁷ “Griqua culture and tradition survived despite the regime’s attack on KhoiSan people. It is through our doing that the KhoiSan flame burns” (my translation).

¹⁵⁸ “The KhoiSan people say they are indigenous. That is the basic argument about UN indigeneity. It’s not about racial purity. Indigenous identities are mixed, but it doesn’t mean that they cannot take on a specific identity. It’s is about the principle of self-identification” (my translation).

be protected. He calls for a separate process through which the KhoiSan could catch up to other groups and argues that this is the reason why they need recognition first before they call for protection.

Efforts to revive the language and cultures of the KhoiSan groups have emerged in the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape regions. Social constructions of KhoiSan identities are important because the culture has largely been eradicated through cultural assimilation into coloured communities. Ron Martin, a KhoiSan activist in the Western Cape, states that he is “fighting Khoi awareness cause”.¹⁵⁹ Another cultural activist, John Witbooi from the Eastern Cape refers to this process as a “reawakening and demystification of KhoiSan identity” (personal interview).¹⁶⁰ Martin calls for “constitutional accommodation” of the KhoiSan and the “restoration of [KhoiSan] identity and dignity as a people” (ibid.). They re-learn their culture, language and history is at “informal gatherings” (ibid.). He has played a “pioneering role” in the restoration of the Nama language through the promotion of Nama language classes. Martin’s purpose is to show that “culture can be embraced by everybody” (ibid.). For him ‘coloured’ is ‘KhoiSan’ and through knowledge and experience of that culture, stereotypes will be destroyed: “we put it out there that these people are not nonentities, cultureless bastards; the working class of the Western Cape” (ibid.). Martin distinguishes between cultural identity and racial identity by arguing that “cultural groups are not ethnic or racial”

¹⁵⁹ Personal interview with Ron Martin, 18 February 2004, Cape Town. All future quotations attributed to Martin are from this interview unless otherwise stated.

¹⁶⁰ Personal interview with John Witbooi, 28 October 2004, Uitenhage. All future quotations attributed to Witbooi are from this interview unless otherwise stated. I have included this interview because Witbooi was instrumental in changing the school history curriculum in the Eastern Cape, the area from where Sarah Bartmann came, to include the history of the KhoiSan. The Eastern Cape was also known as the Frontier during the colonial era when the British settled there in 1820. It was an extension of the Cape Colony during that historical period.

(ibid.). Culture can transcend racial and ethnic barriers constructed in society. Evidence abounds in South African schools and universities, where students from all ‘racial groups’ share similar tastes in music, fashion and a preference for the English language.

KhoiSan activist John Witbooi assisted with the establishment of the KhoiSan Awareness Initiative (KAI) in the Eastern Cape that promoted an understanding and knowledge of the KhoiSan groups in that area. “How do we decide what is our authentic culture? KAI is not interested in political issues. We’re interested in language, culture, history. KAI is non-partisan” (Witbooi, personal interview). I would contend that organizations that participate in the politics of identity cannot be considered non-partisan. Witbooi shows this by demanding that KhoiSan chiefs be recognized as traditional leaders and join CONTRALESA thereby giving them access to political representation in Parliament, stipends and power at a local government level. Cecil Le Fleur argues against this:

The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) originally tried to get the KhoiSan incorporated into [the CONTRALESA] process in 2003. We said no because the law differs from KhoiSan needs and demands. The Griquas could fit into the law in a particular way but not completely. The KhoiSan said no. Geographical region is important for the law. The KhoiSan are not geographically situated. The law was also a combination of laws from 1907 [that recognized tribal identities and origins] (2004).

Consequently, KhoiSan groups have sought recognition on international forums. The United Nations has recognized the KhoiSan as First Peoples and the World Summit on Indigenous People embraced and supported the KhoiSan’s struggle for national recognition. The South African government has not recognized the group constitutionally but argues that it has protected individuals’ language and cultural rights under the constitution.

Issues of authenticity are important to Black Africans in the post-1994 period for particular social and political reasons related to access to resources. Ethnic identities such as Xhosa, Zulu, and Sotho are grounded in historical writings and can prove their belonging to Africa in terms of shared language and culture. Because of its rootless nature, coloured identity has not attained the same level of authenticity as the Nguni cultures. For this reason the KhoiSan revivalist movement could be accused of attempting to define identity in 'pure' terms by relating KhoiSan-ness to the past, prior to colonialism and apartheid. Kwame Anthony Appiah says the search for authenticity can be like "peeling an onion" as people try to find the essence of their identities (2006:np).¹⁶¹ He issues a warning that cultures constantly change and "[s]ocieties without change are not authentic: they're just dead" (ibid.). Like Appiah, Edwin Wilmsen advises that "ethnic authenticity, what it means to be a real Nama or any ethnic 'x', has to be seen in relation to time, place and audience" (Wilmsen et al. 1994:350). The search of an 'authentic' African (location) identity that is tied to the land, such as a KhoiSan identity, will not prove those members' authenticity because society, and the state, has not attached any value, other than its tourism value, to that identity. In this time and place and with this audience, KhoiSan identities are only important as far as they show the diversity of identities in South Africa and add to the magic of the 'rainbow nation'. It is evident from the different expectations of the KhoiSan leaders that their objectives for the movement vary. Witbooi would like more political power for KhoiSan leaders through official representation, land restitution and official recognition for, one could argue, material benefit, while Burgess, Martin and Sassman look at improving their

¹⁶¹ See also Fukuyama's "Primacy of Culture" (1995).

communities' self-esteem through active cultural practices and education about their KhoiSan past.

Creoles and Africans

In 2002, Father Michael and ANC stalwart Reg September launched the Roots & Visions Forum “to promote enquiry, information sharing, debate, cultural activity, engagement with issues of Africa, and proud celebration of our African heritage along with the full tapestry of our Creolised [coloured] culture”.¹⁶² The Forum was to be inclusive regardless of political affiliation or status within the society on the proviso that participants ascribe to a “non-racist, non-ethnicist and non-sexist approach” (ibid.). However, their aim was to engender debates about identity in the coloured community in order to empower that community to become more engaged with contemporary politics and more specifically with the nation-building project. “We use terms like ‘creole’ and ‘creolisation’, but we do not use these terms normatively” (ibid.). ‘Creole’ refers to people who have “multiple ancestral roots” (ibid.). Patric Tariq Mellet, an identity activist in Cape Town, asked the participants at the Roots & Visions meeting in 2003 to “[g]o back and read President Mbeki’s ‘I am an African’ speech. I am also creole, the sum total of what I am, I am not what others say I am ... The more of us who proudly say ‘I am an African’, the more of a movement there will be” (Meeting Minutes 2003:10). The nature of the debate around creole identities is not very different than that of the December First Movement. Both factions within the coloured community intellectually

¹⁶² “The Roots and Vision Forum”, <http://www.inyathelo.co.za/roots.about/main.html> (accessed 15 August 2005)

analyze identities and processes related to social change in the post-apartheid society. It is important to note that the founders of these movements acknowledge the intellectual nature of the debate and concede that not many of the objectives will be shared by the broader coloured community.

Mellet explains his use of the term 'creole' in the context of coloured identity, and manages to incorporate debates around who was an 'African' and the position of coloured people within history.

The language that developed was made up of a whole array of languages. It was a hybrid language, a creole language, Afrikaans, emerged from slave population. There was contestation around Afrikaner creole identity vs Afrikaner creole identity. For most of the 1700s and 1800s the term 'coloured' did not feature. If you look at the first political organizations, the first recorded coloured organization was the Kimberley Afrikaner League in 1880 and the APO 1903. There was a period when Coloured people said proudly that "I am an African".¹⁶³

Mellet also argues that African nationalism in South Africa came from the coloured people. He provides the examples of the South African Native National Congress (which later became the African National Congress), the Afrikaner League, and the African People's Organisation (APO) which had moved black identity away from a racially imposed 'native' identity towards a broader Africanness as had been imagined in African American writings at the turn of the 20th century. Mellet advises nation-builders to define his Africanness and not to "run away from [his] creole-ness or mulatto-ness" (ibid.). For Mellet, the multiple identities found in an African context would form a part of the nation-building project. The national naming process should not engulf minor identities under a suffocating national identity, which will ultimately lead to dissatisfaction and increased tensions within South African society.

¹⁶³ Personal interview with Patric Tariq Mellet, Cape Town, 12 February 2004.

Due to the legacy of apartheid, the processes of naming and categorizing have always been opposed in South Africa. Academics and organic intellectuals act with care when they introduce new terms into the social realm. For example, the term 'creole' has not been well-accepted in post-apartheid South Africa. The only respondents who mentioned 'creole' identity were Father Michael, Uncle Reg September and Patric Tariq Mellet, who were instrumental in the Roots & Visions Forum. The term has been used to describe cultural characteristics and racial identity in the coloured community. Sarah Nuttall argues that 'créolité' as a theory has not been utilized extensively in South Africa because 'mixed' constructions were viewed as being "both racist and suspect" (2004:733). Zimitri Erasmus argues that coloured identities are based on "cultural creativity [and] creolized formations shaped by South Africa's history of colonialism, slavery, segregation and apartheid" (2001:14). She posits that creolization "involves the construction of identity out of elements of ruling as well as subaltern cultures" (2001:16). Erasmus refers to a creole identity in the contemporary period when she says "coloured identities are made and *re-made* by coloured people themselves in their attempts to give meaning to their everyday lives" (ibid., my emphasis). Again, this is an intellectual debate which fails to gain a footing in the broader coloured community. Creole identities are passé in that community because everyone is seen to be mixed and is accepted as 'coloured'.

Also coloured people believe strongly that their 'mix' occurred so far back in their historical memory that it does not feature in their contemporary consciousness. As a result, 'mixed' has new connotations in a post-apartheid South Africa in that it denotes children born of 'mixed' couples. Journalist Bongiwe Mlangeni asks: "What identity do

you give a child of mixed race in post-apartheid South Africa?” because ‘coloured’ is an “inadequate definition ... ‘What am I?’ is the question many children need answered without feeling they are the result of an immoral act” (2003).¹⁶⁴ Terms such as ‘creole’ and ‘hybrid’ hide the negative stigmas attached to a coloured identity while signifiers ‘brown’ or ‘mixed’ would more likely appear in ordinary conversations that have consciously moved away from the use of ‘coloured’. Neville Alexander refers to it as a “cultural domain without boundaries” (2002:207) in which people can experiment with different computations of identities and cultural practices.

Way Forward

Accusations of race-based voting are founded in some cases, however issue-based politics has always been important in the coloured community. Racism does exist within the coloured community for reasons mentioned above however, as this chapter argues, the coloured electorate has always sought a political home that best represented their interests. The 1994 and 1999 election results also point to an emergent issue-based politics in the Western Cape. In 2004 voters were more informed and voted for parties who advocated changes to socio-economic conditions rather than along party lines. The ANC is the incumbent party and will be so for many elections to come, and claims to address issues that are of importance to all voters regardless of racial makeup, for example health care, poverty reduction, service provision, housing and education.

¹⁶⁴ Bongiwe Mlangeni “Racial Identity is greyer than ever in the new South Africa” <http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/articles/TarkArticle.aspx?Id=857478> (accessed 7 February 2005)

Loyalty votes for the ANC threaten democracy because even if the party has not delivered on its election promises, its supporters would vote for it on the basis of their historical linkages to the former liberation movement. It is imperative that, in addition to addressing material and social needs, the party and the state should be cognizant of the different histories and materialities of each community's experiences and acknowledge those. The nation-building project cannot succeed if certain specificities are valorized and others are not.

The term 'coloured vote' has created anger amongst political elites in the coloured community. They argue that the coloured community is not homogenous therefore does not vote en bloc (see Hendricks 2005). South African citizens cast their vote largely based on race and history rather than political issues and party affiliation while coloured people are the only voters to be held to a historical construction of their identity. As a group they were bunched together in the colonial and apartheid periods and have been forced to remain tied to that imposed group identity. Party politics in South Africa are run largely along the lines of race because the past still affects choices people make. Simplistically, the New National Party lost seats in the 2004 election because white voters felt that the party was pandering too much to black voters and was courting an alliance with the ANC. White people who vote for the ANC or IFP are not berated for anomalous voting and neither are black people who vote for the NNP or the DA.

People in a post-apartheid South Africa are reconstructing their identities but are doing so within an apartheid framework. Coloured identities continue to occupy a space between whiteness and Black Africanness even though it moves through a continuum comprising KhoiSan/coloured/creole/mixed people. Time, space and institutional

structure feed into constructions of identity, therefore coloured people still create meaning within their communities and through experiences that are still tainted by apartheid. On a positive note, however, the group has begun to interrogate its own constructions of itself and to debate its conceptions of its 'authenticity'. By claiming an 'authentic' African identity coloured people can claim to belong in South Africa and to be tied to the land. Constructions of 'authentic' indigenous identities cement the divide between Black Africans and coloureds which needs to be eliminated in order for South Africa to be truly democratic.

The ANC state is calling for a national identity in a period when specific identities are being sought. Fears of 'ethnic' nationalism underlie the caution against localized identities. The argument is that in order for a young democracy to exist, internal strife and differences should be minimized. This thesis argues the contrary: in order for a democracy to survive, specific identities are necessary so as to provide individual citizens with the ability to say "This is who I am" and vote on their beliefs. This is not a call for searches for primordial linkages rather it is a call for 'imagined communities' to emerge according to the needs of each community and group. Abdou Maliqalim Simone argues that coloured people are 'cultural brokers' in that "what [they] have to offer ... in their deliberations of identity is the resilience entailed in crossing all types of boundaries rather than in simply forging negotiated agreements which harmonize interactions, but essentially allow the boundaries to remain" (1994:21). If coloured people continue to search for discretely recognizable identities they will lose the 'resilience' and ability to cross boundaries to which Simone has referred.

The politics of identity in South Africa since 1994 has shown that this country is still beset by issues of difference. In turn these differences, in the present political milieu, determine whether groups gain access to resources and recognition, or are rendered politically or socially invisible. Coloured, 'brown', KhoiSan, creole and slave identities have highlighted the nuances within the coloured community thereby revealing individuals' agency in the process of choosing their individual and collective identities. Coloured elites have managed to find new ways to construct coloured identities that conform to the discourse around Africanness, authenticity, indigeneity and belonging. Elites' motives could be instrumental or spiritual but they have engaged in these debates in a public sphere that is dominated by the ANC. Steven Robins conceives of identity reconstruction as a "recuperation of social memory" (quoted in Sharp 1997:16). I would agree that it is a recuperative process but it is also a process by which new memories are made and which responds directly to the nation-building project and the call for democracy in South Africa. Sharp suggests that the reasons for perceptions of marginalization in the former coloured community "may be that the dominant metaphors of the nation-building process have a different meaning for this segment of the population than for others" (1997:15).

The process of constructing a national identity that hinges on conceptions of 'African' needs to incorporate an inclusive 'Africanness' that embodies a sense of belonging in its bearers. "ANC stalwarts – their Africanness is mine. Slave spirits are mine. Identity is not singular, it's plural" (Mellet, personal interview). Perhaps this is the true hybridity which post-colonial writers have theorized. Sharp argues that "[cultural] hybridity involves a reflexive awareness of multiple subject positions rather than a simple

'mixing' of two or more cultures" (1997:17). A society with multiple identities will bolster democracy unless the hegemonic identity conforms to old racialized divisions within South African society. I would argue that various identities within an individual that are recognized in particular contexts could provide for and reinforce participatory democratic practices. Chapter 6 examines the implications in greater detail, suffice it to say, the nation-building project is not very successful at the moment which will impact negatively on the strength of the democracy in South Africa.

Chapter 6: The Politics of Newly Constructed Identities in South Africa

Yesterday is a foreign country – tomorrow belongs to us! – Thabo Mbeki¹⁶⁵

National identities are purportedly necessary to create cohesion amongst people who belong to a particular state. This chapter examines South Africa's nation-building project and questions whether an 'African' identity sufficiently includes images of marginal identities that are on the edges of historical and social expression in a contemporary South Africa. It presents two options for a national identity based on the ideologies that Africa belongs to all who live in it and Africa is for Black Africans. Which national identity has the ANC proposed in its public speeches and which identity is being perceived by the marginal groups? If the proposed African identity is inclusive regardless of ethnic and national differences, why, in the South African context, do some communities continue to feel marginalized? Should identity politics have a future in South Africa considering this country's past, or should it be abandoned because of the potential damage it could cause in this society? Should identity politics be excluded from decision-making processes that address issues of economic importance because of apartheid's legacy? Or should the state embark on programs that address all needs regardless of the identity of affected communities and the relative disparities?

This chapter argues that new conceptions of what it means to be an African and a South African need to be developed in order to move away from old constructions that continue to rely on apartheid's racial frameworks. It also provides my normative analysis on the South African political and social milieu. As I explained in Chapter One, I am a

¹⁶⁵ Afrikaner youth first made this statement which illustrated their allegiance to the 'new South Africa' when they met with former Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in 1998. Mbeki has since borrowed the phrase for many of his speeches.

Black South African who was classified coloured by the apartheid government. My work reflects an activism that grew out of particular experiences and understandings of my position in a racially divided South Africa. It is for this reason that normative analyses thread through this chapter as I believe that the political and social needs to be more inclusive and should be required to address perceptions that arise from various constituency groups. Based on my analysis in the preceding chapters, I argue that the ANC needs to clearly define the term 'African' in order for it to be an inclusive identity that encompasses all South Africans, but it should also include an understanding of this country and its people's geographic situation. I agree with Chery Hendricks:

But who are the Africans in this city? Part of the problem is the exclusion (both self and by others) of coloureds as African. Being African has in the past and, continues to be, defined narrowly in terms of hue. This despite a rhetorical insistence that Africanness denotes the full range of identities culturally rooted in the continent (or, others add, those with allegiance to the continent). Coloureds, for reasons rooted in apartheid logic, in the past have eschewed the African identity and now remain largely excluded by current gatekeepers of the identity. Their feelings of marginalisation, even where they constitute a majority, are directly linked to their group representation and concomitant lack of confidence and defensiveness in asserting a right to belong and also proudly to walk the corridors of power. (*Cape Times* 27 May 2005)

Hendricks' argument mirrors the words of many of many coloured people who speak about their marginality in South African society.

Time and space are important to the definition of an identity because they influence how and why groups are formed in particular ways. This chapter builds on the issues of authentic identities, indigeneity and belonging that Chapter 5 began to examine. It offers a possible alternative to South Africans, and more especially to coloured people who wish to engage with and construct 'new' identities. The formation of an African and a national identity is important to the South African state because of its pariah status

during the apartheid era, and its geographical isolation from the rest of the continent. South Africa has to show its allegiance to a larger body of like-minded states and that it has moved away from the narrow minded apartheid state to a newly democratized and inclusive state. As Anderson (1991) argues, a shared experience and common space creates a nation and a national identity. The creation of the state harnessed that identity and used it to create the environment in which a national identity is forged and given meaning (Alexander 2002:88). Manuel Castells cautions that “communities may be imagined, but not necessarily believed” and that the state cannot construct a national identity by itself (1998:39). It is in the state’s interest to imagine the national identity in a convincing way and to include as many other conceptions of a national identity as necessary. Therefore it is as important to examine ANC documents to determine how the ANC-dominated South African state defines that identity as it is to examine non-governmental elite constructions of the national identity. National identities are constructed through negotiation between actors and therefore reflect a combined imagination of the identities. In 1997 the ANC claimed that “the main thrust of the [National Democratic Revolution] is not to promote fractured identities, but to encourage the emergence of a common South African identity” (1997:p2 of 5). What that ‘common’ identity should be is not clearly stated, but the document does note that “some of the identities associated with ‘culture’ or ‘ethnicity’ or ‘religion’ can in fact be contradictory to the building of a new nation that is based on principles of equity” (ibid.). What should be done with those “centrifugal” forces which divide the country into ethnic groups? (ibid.) The South African liberation movements, in their struggle against the apartheid

regime, opted for an inclusive “centripetal” Black political identity that held the opponents of apartheid together, regardless of their racial identities.

In the post-1994 period the ANC has to move beyond a race-based identity and employ a new national identity to bring together the disparate parts of the society divided by apartheid. This period also engendered debates around who really was African, such as the debate started by the white Afrikaans-speaking journalist Max du Preez who caustically exclaimed “[p]erhaps the [black intellectuals] should now stand up and tell us what the hell they mean when they talk about Africanism and Africanist. They should explain why we should not think it is just a camouflage for black narcissism” (2005). This statement shows the frustration experienced by non-Black African people who have attempted to negotiate their way into the post-apartheid Africanness perceived by marginal groups to be espoused by the ANC. If identities are self-defined in a contemporary period, why is it that an African identity is withheld from some parts of the citizenry because that part does not conform to general perceptions of what it means to be African? Novelist Zakes Mda refers to these people who guard the boundaries of Africanness as “Gatekeepers-of-all-Things-African who treat Africanness as an honour that can be bestowed at will on those they favour” (2001:np). It is within this context that new identities have to be forged, national and otherwise, therefore it is important to determine who the participants are in the nation-building project and how they participate.

What is the African Renaissance?

South African society and state have to determine what social, cultural, spatial and geographical features make up an African. Identities are created through negotiation, therefore a new social policy should be cobbled together as a means to create cohesion in South Africa. In the early 1990s a national consciousness arose for various reasons: the successful negotiation process ending in the ‘miracle’ of 1994, the rugby and soccer victories in 1995/6 and the healing process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the mid to late 1990s. Since then South Africans have struggled to make meaning of who we are and why we have chosen those attributes.

National consciousness and national identity are political constructs which arise out of a particular historical experience which, for one reason or another, persuades people that they should cohere under a common identity for the pursuance of shared political and other objectives (Jordan et al. 2002:2).

Can this ‘common identity’ be attained? Ironically, since 1994, divisions have emerged strongly and the possibility of attaining a national identity and a national consciousness has receded. I return to this shortly.

In 1994, Thabo Mbeki re-introduced the term ‘African Renaissance’ to South Africans and in 1996, he proudly and broadly defined himself as an ‘African’.¹⁶⁶ The African renaissance ideology promotes African collaboration to counter the continent’s marginal position in a globalizing world, but more locally, to create a coherent national identity within a larger African identity. African renaissance “forecast new leadership,

¹⁶⁶ See earlier conceptions of the African Renaissance in Cheikh Anta Diop: *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in Culture and Development 1946-1960*, translation Egbuna P. Modum, London: The Estate of Cheikh Anta Diop and Kamak House (1996). Some authors prefer to refer to an African renaissance (small R) (see Liebenberg 1998) or to use quotations, ‘African Renaissance’ (see Maloka 1998 and Bond 2003) to remove the connotation that the African Renaissance is an exceptional event or the first of its kind. See also Malegapuru William Makgoba *African Renaissance* 1999. See also Vale and Maseko (2000).

resurgent African economies, more democracy, and a significant new role for Africa on the world political stage” (Griggs 1997:np) and was based on a collaborative relationship between African countries which would improve the continent’s position in a globalizing world. Mbeki saw the African renaissance as the ‘third movement’ in Africa’s post-colonial period, with decolonization and the liberation struggle being the first and second movements respectively (Maloka 2001:2).¹⁶⁷ The African renaissance aims to do the following:

- Establish democratic political systems that achieve peace, stability and economic development
- Effect people-driven and people-centered development
- Free Africa from neo-liberalism and imperialism
- Emancipate and protect women on the continent from harmful cultural and economic practices
- Confront the scourge of HIV and AIDS
- Create an independent and self-determining Africa (Mbeki 1998).

In this regard, the renaissance requires a mass movement to promote and instate its programs and ideology but it is often accused of being neo-liberalist and European in its outlook (see also Bond 2003, Magubane 2004b).

This idea has reaped a mixed response. On the positive end of the spectrum, the Namibian Prime-Minister Hage Geingob asserts his understanding of an African renaissance as follows:

African Renaissance is our vision for Africa that, by the year 2025, it becomes a continent in harmony with itself and with the world, where every person has an opportunity to achieve his potential to the fullest in an environment of peace and security, where every citizen of every country is guaranteed human rights, and is assured of basic means of survival, self-respect and fulfillment (1997:np).

The phrases ‘opportunity to achieve his [sic] potential to the fullest’ and ‘assured of ... self-respect and fulfillment’ are important to this discussion because those are the aspects

¹⁶⁷ Found online at www.polis.sciencespobordeaux.fr/vol8ns/maloka.pdf (accessed 8 March 2006)

which ensure that citizens feel that their needs and rights have been recognized and included in the discussions around an all-African project. An African renaissance is built on a nationalist struggle for independence. It relies on sovereign states that wish to work together to overcome their disadvantage and marginal position in a globalizing world. Nationalism in this context points to the battle for an 'African' state and identity that is modern. Mbeki moves away from the concept of a continent that "shares a common destiny" and calls for a movement to "attainment of peace, stability, sustained development and a better life for the people" throughout the Continent and in individual countries as well. (1998). A Pan-Africanist ideology forms the basis of this statement because Mbeki assumes that unity across the continent would drive the rebirthing process, but he simultaneously remains within the confines of the nation state as he calls for each state to embark on a program that will realize these developmental goals.¹⁶⁸ Professor Issa Shivji argues that the African renaissance is a South African-led statist project driven by neo-liberal interests and that the rest of the continent is not too convinced about the project.¹⁶⁹

I would argue against the renaissance project because it is an project that has significance to the top eschelons of South African society and it has redirected state attention from internal political difficulties to an external sphere to which ordinary South Africans cannot contribute. Neither does it make a marked difference to their daily experiences as African or South African citizens because the African renaissance project is more concerned with Africa's role internationally and is therefore imposed on South

¹⁶⁸ A Pan-Africanist movement includes political, economic, social and cultural relations across the continent.

¹⁶⁹ Professor Issa Shivji, University of Dar Es Salaam, spoke about the viability of the African renaissance project during an address to the Women's Academic Solidarity Association at Rhodes University, 10 March 2006.

African citizens rather than a result of a consultative democratic process. Eddy Maloka puts it more succinctly:

...[T]he ANC puts more emphasis on ‘the mobilization of the people of Africa to take their destiny into their own hands’ [...] but linked to this, is the role of the ‘patriotic’ bourgeoisie and intellectuals, as opposed to that of the poor and marginalized sectors of the society (2001:4 – 5).

The elite have a role to play in forging a route for new Africa while the ‘masses’ bring up the rear but there is also the fear that this process could be an “élite plot” that has “one-sided élite interests at heart ... while continuing the oppression of the majority of African people” (Liebenberg 1998:3 of 9). This cynicism is strengthened when Mbeki highlights the existence of two nations in South Africa: one rich and white, one poor and Black. The neo-liberal and western oriented economic policies which South Africa has adopted will not minimize the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The African renaissance program advocates for an Africa that competes equally in the global arena, which implies the need for African states to adopt neo-liberal political and economic systems that inevitably exacerbate the marginal status of the already poverty-stricken Black, mostly Black African, majority.

The Africanist view of an African identity is perceived to assume an exclusive, Blackness, excluding whites, in the South African context. As Father Michael Weeder argues,

At the end of the day, when I look at the struggle, when I read names, I would for where am I in this picture. When I saw books on the ANC from the 1980s and 90s, when they were in exile in England, I would open it up to the glossary of names or the index. I would ask where is Basil February. What do they say about Basil February?¹⁷⁰ That says something about yourself. All those people are my heroes, this broad pantheon, *maar ek wil myself daar sien* [but I want to see

¹⁷⁰ Basil February and James April were the first armed coloured MK soldiers, and were involved in a Rhodesian attack in 1967. See Van Driel (1995).

myself there]. I think that's what the coloured masses were picking up in the UDF. (personal interview)

If one chose this definition of Blackness one would support everything African (see Van Vuuren 2000) but who determines what is African? This is the debate that rages now as South Africans grapple with an African identity. The African identity espoused by the African renaissance is seen to include *all* identities, not only Black, on the continent and most especially those that identify with the rebirth of Africa as a continent.¹⁷¹ The construction of a Characterist African identity and an Africa-centered project is inclusive (non- or multi-racial) and ensures that the heterogeneity of the continent is reflected in its policies and outcomes. Continued use of the narrow definition of African forces Mahmood Mamdani to warn against an Africanism that practices “reverse racism” and fails to change relationships and practices within a society in any way (1997:23). The government’s affirmative action and transformation programs aimed at redressing past imbalances are seen to be examples of ‘reverse racism’ because only Black Africans are eligible to apply. Journalist Karima Brown writes

The ANC has failed to heed the concerns raised by activists from the coloured community. These concerns centre around the continued marginalization of the community and access to resources. Fears around affirmative action are not taken seriously, yet the ANC has bent over backwards to address white fears on the same issue. (1995:29)

The state has begun transformation programs but many whites, coloureds and Indians feel that despite the claim of non-racism, the ANC-led administration is doing what the apartheid government did, just in reverse. Mbeki’s response is the following:

¹⁷¹ Van Vuuren (2000:64) equates this to Marcus Garvey’s “Africa for the Africans”, “Hurl the Whiteman to the sea” and “Quit Africa” slogans. In a similar vein, the now-deceased ANC Youth League president, Peter Mokaba, was infamous for his chants “One Settler, One Bullet” and “Kill the Farmer, Kill the Boer” at the height of the apartheid era in the 1980s. The ANC denounced these slogans as they went against its call for a non-racial ‘new South Africa’.

It is clear to me that some Honourable Members believe that our pursuit of the goal of the transformation of our country to become truly non-racial, and therefore the property of all of us, is a scarcely disguised attempt at so-called reverse racism. What this says is that it is not possible deliberately to uplift the overwhelming black majority, disadvantaged by three-and-half centuries of racial domination, without disadvantaging the white minority whose exclusive welfare had been the central preoccupation of three-and-half centuries of white rule, whatever its form, its changing historical expression, and its impact on various sections of white South Africa. (2005)

Mbeki's statement speaks of 'black' in inclusive terms but it is indisputable that the majority of the poor is Black African therefore the marginal groups' perceptions of 'reverse racism' could be supported with statistics on how many homes are given to the Black African poor versus the number of homes provided for poor predominantly coloured poor communities. In 2005 tensions arose in the Western Cape around housing allocation. Fire destroyed shacks in a Black African township which resulted in the allocation of houses to those people rather than to 'backyard shack dwellers', who are predominantly coloured and had been on the housing waiting list for eighteen years. The Democratic Alliance representative warned that "unless this matter is sensitively handled there is a real danger of polarising relations between coloured and black communities" (Essop et al, 2005).

Similarly to Mamdani, Willem van Vuuren raises serious doubts as to the claim that the new African identity is racially inclusive, tolerant, diverse and pro-human agency (2000:62). He argues that the ANC Youth League, as has the ANC, has always distinguished between 'African', 'European', 'Coloured', 'Indian' in its documents. In the post-apartheid era it is difficult to relate to Mbeki's inclusive 'African' while the ANC continues to use apartheid-legislated identities in its documents and speeches in order to discern between differentially deserving people. The ANC maintains that it

works for the interests of the Black majority but in the broader framework of a Black African hegemony. Clifford Young points out that “‘nation-building’ homogenization cannot succeed. Nor, over time, can simple ethnic domination serve as a stable formula for rule” (in Van Vuuren 2000:80).

William Makgoba’s conception of an African is equally narrow as he calls for an African identity and culture that integrates “other cultures ... into and through African visions” (van Vuuren 2000:72). This is the crux of the problem: an African identity is still largely perceived to be Black African rather than the meaning propagated by Mbeki. For example, in a letter to the editor Athol Trollip writes:

It is true that there was some advantage to being coloured as opposed to being black (African), especially in the Western Cape, but this insidious marginalisation also led to the decades-long manipulation of a people who still feel marginalised and manipulated. In the so-called New South Africa the detested practice of racial classification has official re-emerged and is used as a measurement tool to determine all considerations from job applications to securing state tenders. (2005:7)

Trollip’s statement shows that racial classification still continues to exist in South African discourse especially when it comes to programs redressing the past.

Any attempts to deny this exclusive notion of Africanness fall on deaf ears. Those who claim that the dominant definition of an African is narrow are consequently accused of being racist and anti-nationalist. The majority Black African population in South Africa does warrant recognition in cultural terms because of their large numbers, however, this should not be done based on racial divisions and apartheid conceptions of difference. Mahmood Mamdani calls for an African-ness that “repudiates and transcends racism” and “heralds an African identity more inclusive than exclusive. Rather than a birthmark, African identity becomes a mark of belonging to a community, a commitment

to forging a common future” (1997:23). Mamdani’s conception of an African identity therefore is tied to belonging to a geographical space (the continent), and a community and to identifying with a common future. It also implies an acknowledgement of the continent’s political diversity within a democratic framework. South Africa needs to move from the “apple pie self-images of traditional rural societies” (Van Vuuren 2000:71) based on *ubuntu* and tolerance towards a new understanding of what it means to be an African, however old identities continue to constrain conceptions of new identities therefore we have to find new ways of defining who or what is ‘African’. Who is African enough to participate in the nation-building project? I would suggest that this question could be answered through a broad conception and application of the notion of citizenship.

Who is an African?

If the ANC’s construction of ‘African’ is non-racial but it contains a predominantly Black African identity, who is ideally situated to be actively involved in the nation-building project? The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) protects individual rights to culture, language and religion, and through those it ensures that groups’ interests are protected.¹⁷² Karis argues against this:

But the whole point is that in countries where the population is not homogeneous, where there are a number of national groups, it becomes necessary to go further than merely to recognize the right of each individual citizen of the state. It becomes essential to create conditions under which those who do not belong to

¹⁷² The Constitution does not protect group interests but ensures that the individual has a right to practice her own language and culture without interference from the state or anyone else. The cultural, linguistic and religious rights are protected in terms of individuals’ freedom of association and freedom of expression.

the numerically superior groups are able to develop their languages, culture and customs without let or hindrance [...] the guarantee of full rights to minority groups is fundamental to any truly democratic society” (in Van Vuuren 2000:75).

Ironically, the ANC-led government does not protect minority rights in a democratic South Africa but rather opted for the protection of individual rights as it argued that group rights would be protected through the individual’s freedom of association. In contrast to the ANC, the Black Consciousness Movement’s conception of an African identity is inclusive of all identities which are not white. Steve Biko’s Black Consciousness was not Africanist (Nolutshungu in Van Vuuren 2000:76) but rather called for the psychological liberation from structural oppression based on racial identities.

I would cautiously extend the ANC or Charterist understanding of Africanness, which obliquely argues that African equals Black, to include everyone who belongs and is committed to the success of the African continent. My conception of an African is someone who was born or has lived for an extensive period on the continent and is committed to the social (humanist), political (democracy) and economic (sustainable development) values expressed in the African renaissance project. An African would also recognize and celebrate the diverse cultural practices of people who share the geographical space. For me an African identity is about belonging to a group of people who share a space, history and vision for the future. It is founded on self-definition within a broad understanding of what it means to be an ‘African’ in a contemporary period. I ‘cautiously’ accept the Charterist definition of an African because we need to go beyond the historical conceptions of what it means to be an African.

I also am cautious because the past twelve years have shown that the conception of who is an African has remained narrow and 'monochromatic' (Van Vuuren 2000) understanding of who is an African. Former Ambassador to the US, Richard van der Ross claims that "none of the serving [Western Cape] MEC's appeared on the list of the so-called Africanist Group. Judging from its name, one can surmise that this group wished to confine its list to Africans, that is, to blacks (2003:11). Unionist Randall van den Heever argues against this limited construction of 'African'.

I most certainly do not regard myself as 'Africanist' ... I have regarded myself as black since my UWC days. I also profoundly identified with President Thabo Mbeki ... [when he] declared: 'I am an African'... [I]t is fine for Van der Ross to describe himself as 'coloured'. But he must disabuse himself of the notion that the term 'African' refers only to black people'. (2003:11).

The conflict around who is African and who is not and whether the term African is limited or not continues. Citizenship could redefine who belongs and why. Elites like Van der Ross and Van den Heever continue to engage in debates that question old conceptions of state-based identities and citizenship.

African citizenship is diverse by definition because of the existence of the nation-state that emerged in the colonial era. How does Mbeki, and by extension the ANC, define citizenship in Africa and in South Africa? Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech is the best indicator of who he thinks an African is:

I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape. [...] I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. [...] In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. [...] I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsa and Sekhukhune led, the patriots Cetshwayo and Mphephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour because of freedom. My mind and my knowledge of myself is formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert. I am the grandchild that lays fresh flowers on the

Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas [...] I am the child of Nongquase. [...] I come from those who were transported from India and China [...] (1998a:31-32).

This tapestry of identities makes up Mbeki's new African but comes under criticism from Chipkin who argues that the 'African' in Mbeki's speech is a modern Black African man (2003). Chipkin claims that Mbeki's Africans are "authentically [African] when able to see themselves through liberated eyes" (2003:30-31). Are those people who do not see their complicit relationship with the apartheid state and who accepted and continue to use the 'taxonomies' of the apartheid era? Are they 'authentic' Africans? It does appear that Mbeki expects people to shrug off the identities they had prior to 1994 and to accept and new imposed definitions of who they should be. It is concerning that the liberated nature of the new African is seen to be a state in which s/he accepts unbounded (by time) and unequal development because of past inequalities. Self-definition and self-determination are the cornerstones of Mbeki's definition of an African. Mbeki's African acknowledges her ties to the past but is an individual rather than a member of a group/community of people.

Imposed identities are problematic in that they are constantly challenged and never really are accepted by people. Identities cannot be "fabricated" (Van Vuuren 2000) but should be imagined and given meaning by the holders of those identities. They would contain remnants of old identities, but invariably, because they are self-chosen and self-defined, are greater than the old identities. As Anderson (1991) and Castells (1998) argue, a state cannot create a national identity without collaboration and input from its citizens. I would extend that argument and argue that a state should be cognizant of the boundaries defined by its citizenry and attempt to make new meaning around those

boundaries. Here Gloria Anzaldúa's (1999) borderland and Homi Bhabha's 'third space' (1994) come into play. Do South Africans need to create a space around the existing collectivity of identities that could be filled with a new conception of what it means to be 'South African' and 'African'?

For reasons mentioned above, the Mbeki administration's attempt to promote a common future and a sense of belonging through the nation-building project has not been as successful as they had hoped it would be. Gerhard Maré argues that the process of nation-building "[creates] the desired congruence between a political, economic and geographic unit, and a citizenry with an over-riding loyalty, through deliberate action by a central authority" (1997:1). South Africa has, to date, not succeeded in its search for a cohesive national identity except under conditions of external 'threats', for example, from international sports teams (Farred 2004) or foreigners moving into our neighborhoods and our economy.¹⁷³ The most important challenge for our new democracy is to cobble together a national identity that sufficiently encompasses yet goes beyond the diversity found within South African society based on non-racialism, an inclusive politics and an all-encompassing African-ness. Pallo Jordan, an ANC member of parliament and Minister of Arts and Culture, claims that "an inclusive nationhood [is] rooted in the universalist, liberatory outlook of modernity and the realities and imperatives of South Africans of all races sharing a common territory" (1997:17). Jordan's notion of an 'inclusive nationhood' plays homage to the dictum 'unity through diversity' and acknowledges, but minimizes, the influence of history on present day experiences through its call to a contemporary modernity. He, like Mbeki, also reverts to the

¹⁷³ Ironically, xenophobia directed against citizens from the rest of Africa is rife in South Africa due to the perception that the foreigners take scarce jobs and resources from local people.

individual in society. He defines nationhood in terms of an occupation of a geographical space and a shared present, which is very difficult in a society which has begun to reify cultural and historical identities in an attempt to re-center the former voiceless Black African majority. Through the process of re-centering all things African, an essentialist notion of African-ness has arisen and marginalizes minority groups and communities in South Africa.

Marginal voices on African identities

How do marginal groups define an African identity? If the state cannot impose a national identity on its subjects, how can it be constructed from a disparate group of individuals who share a geographical space? KhoiSan identities are indigenous African identities and therefore inextricably linked to South Africa as a place. KhoiSan representatives claim that they are African in the authentic sense because they are the First Peoples of this continent. Jean Burgess, a KhoiSan chief of the Ghonaqua, claims that she is KhoiSan but also is “still always an African” because she is rooted in this continent (“*Ek staan met my voete op dié aarde*”).¹⁷⁴ The UN has conferred the status of First Peoples onto the KhoiSan but, according to Le Fleur, the South African state has failed to recognize their ‘indigenous peoples’ status except on international fora.¹⁷⁵ This statement is disputed by the report on indigenous issues in South Africa from the Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Economic and Social Council who is

¹⁷⁴ Personal interview with Jean Burgess, Grahamstown 17 April 2004.

¹⁷⁵ The UN defines indigenous people in UN Article 169 of 1989. Le Fleur claims that forty-five UN articles address indigenous rights.

Encouraged by the Government's declared commitment to meet the demands of the indigenous groups in the country and by the ongoing efforts to formulate and implement appropriate legislation and policies to address issues such as land restitution, multilingual and multicultural education, the representation of traditional authorities in public life and the delivery of health and other services. (Stavenhagen 2005)

Again perceptions override the reality. Stavenhagen is 'encouraged' with the South African government's handling of indigenous issues while, in the same year, Le Fleur, the Chairperson of the KhoiSan Consultative Council, states that he is dissatisfied with the ways in which the government has handled their issues.¹⁷⁶ Nancy Fraser's theory that "religious and ethnic minorities, who face discrimination within territorial states, are reconstituting themselves as diasporas and building transnational publics from which to mobilize international opinion" (2005:72).

KhoiSan identities could play a "restorative role" by reconnecting coloured people to an African identity (Martin 2005:25). "This connection is an empowering one and critical to overcoming African alienation, restoring possession of self-respect, esteem and love for oneself and others (ibid.). KhoiSan leaders have reasserted their belonging to Africa and have embarked on programs to teach people about their African heritage. Ron Martin calls for KhoiKhoi people to mark themselves as 'African' on census documents and to find out who they are in terms of history and genealogy because those processes "fit in with nation-building and a national collective identity".¹⁷⁷ Leader of the National KhoiSan Consultative Conference and of the Griqua people, Cecil Le Fleur, makes

¹⁷⁶ Over a two year period I was unable to secure a meeting with Cecil Le Fleur therefore cannot provide his response to Stavenhagen's report.

¹⁷⁷ Personal interview with Ron Martin, Cape Town, 18 February, 2004.

references to the KhoiSan belonging to the African continent therefore obliquely accepts being African by virtue of their status as 'indigenous peoples'.¹⁷⁸

In the post-apartheid South Africa all identities lead back to a redefined African-ness that is still under negotiation. KhoiSan people defined themselves as African for recognition and healing while Black Africans claim an African identity that is 'traditional' and culturally linked to this continent. Mellet identifies coloured people as "African creole" and suggests that as South Africans, we should "attempt to throw the quilt in all its colors" (Mellet, personal interview). He also argues that too much attention is being paid to "sub-identities" and that we should concentrate on the "nation-building project" instead (ibid.). Mellet's words underline Peter Mokoena's argument:

Nation-building process is political [...] Recognizes plurality and does not try to enforce laws. We are a nation of numerous identities. We need laws and rights that supersede small identities. Everyone needs to exercise all the rights without a power struggle. [This country has] too many people [for us] to think the same way or have same language. It is important that the nation-building process should not trample over individual and group identities.

In order for the nation-building project to be cognizant of all the differences within South African society it will need to adopt a multicultural approach. In the previous chapter I argued that multiculturalism could be viewed negatively in that each culture is seen to be separate and the state protects the differences between groups. It is necessary for us to move beyond the separate identities and to concentrate on an overarching identity that makes up South Africanness in all its hues. Alexander supports my suggestion:

[I]n this country we face the real problem that if we do not promote national unity, that is, arrive at a core of common values, practices and national projects (regardless of the class character of the political leadership at the moment), we shall, as in similar cases in recent historical experience in Europe, Africa and

¹⁷⁸ C J Langenhoven Public lecture 19 October 2004, University of Port Elizabeth (now known as the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University).

Asia, fall apart into warring ethnic groups, each with a more or less separatist agenda (2002:91).

Ultimately we, as South Africans, will need to reach a place where we will be comfortable self-defining as 'African' with or without the baggage from the apartheid era. We will attain that shared sense of self that Anderson (1991) referred to, by sheer will-power to claim Africa as part of us because of the attachment of Africanness to resources and recognition in the South African context.

The State's Options

Nation-building is seen to be a prerequisite process for the consolidation of a new democracy. The ANC seems to concur with this statement because it constantly refers to the need to create a new identity ranging from national (South African) to continental (African). Mbeki has recognized the need to build a national identity within a global world in which the nation-state has been diagnosed as 'weak'.

Why has the nation state been declared dead just at the moment that so many previously colonized nations are emerging from the ravages of colonialism and the confusions of post-colonialism, and as we are starting to take our place in the world community as entities that can negotiate on our own terms, with our own voices? (Steyn 2001:5)¹⁷⁹

It is necessary for emerging democracies to claim their identities in an ever-increasingly interdependent and globalizing world that both threatens homogeneity and promises continued heterogeneity (Appiah 2006). A national identity provides the state and its citizens with a sense of who they are at home and internationally (South African) while also sharing common characteristics (democratic) with other states in the world. States

¹⁷⁹ Contrary to the general understanding that Africa is made up of states, Robert Thornton (1996) argues that Africa has countries not states, nation-states or ethnic groups.

are constructed by the “most powerful” therefore they organize the society in terms of their own interests thereby structuring relations of inequality (Maré in Jordan et al. 2002). It is important that the state addresses these inequalities as elites could exploit ethnic differences to gain access or block access to resources. One way to reduce conflict on a sub-national level is to promote all identities equally and to provide them with equal access to the public sphere. Another way is to create an overarching national identity that provides the state with a cohesive citizenry.

The state has identified the need for a common national identity to reduce tensions between different groups: it has elected to embark upon a project that defines a common citizenship through a ‘shared’ culture, history and tradition proscribed by an overarching African-ness. The outcome of this process is a system, contrary to Mamdani’s caution against an Africanism, which continues to maintain the social and economic inequalities established by the old political systems. The state argues that it has attempted to address these divisions through an official discourse about nationhood, which is “characterized by the continual attempt to recognize, seek and affirm the diversity of traditions, suppressed histories, and regional and local peculiarities that are, in this sense, similar to many of the narratives of postmodern discourse” (Williams 2000:3 of 5). This process has not been sufficient, which is evidenced by the backlash of “ethnic nationalisms” (ibid.) such as the Forum for Coloured People and the revival of ancient rites for virginity testing in the Nguni cultural practices. The state has chosen to focus on the recognition of difference (multiculturalism) to redirect attention from economic inequalities. Some coloured elites have reconstructed their identities for instrumentalist gain (Boonzaier and Sharp 1994), however, for many the search for a new

identity is related to issues of authenticity. As Mda argues “[t]his [KhoiKhoi] identity empowers them with authenticity and imbues their Africanness with greater meaning. The KhoiKhoi connection further confers on them ‘first nation’ status – a finer pedigree than African” (2001:np). This is done in a misguided attempt to secure a group’s access to resources. South Africa has become rooted in cultural tourism that packages identities for international consumption (see Boswell 2005 and Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). Some communities do not have any other commodity or service to sell therefore opt to sell their culture.

If Martin Chanock is correct in arguing that “[c]ultures, like brands, must essentialise. Successful sustainable cultures are those which brand best” (in Comaroffs 2005:5) then cultural identities have become purely instrumentalist. Likewise, anthropologist Rosabelle Boswell claims that “African leaders are deeply concerned to rejuvenate international perceptions of their nations, as perception influences their access to important material and social resources” (Boswell 2005:1). These two statements show how heritage and culture have created an opportunity for states and groups to gain access to material resources for the propagation of their cultures. The state gains funding from international structure for heritage sites in which ‘culture’ is performed in ‘authentic’ ways. Groups then capitalize on the state’s recognition of those sites and essentialize their cultures in ways that afford them access to the public sphere and also to funding that protects ‘traditional’ cultural expressions. The state has created an environment in which ‘authenticity’ is rewarded, for example, projects such as the KhoiSan Cultural Village and other cultural villages scattered around the country have been established with state funds in order to keep these cultures alive. Within these spaces cultural practices are

performed true to 'age-old' ways. It is my contention that the state should support localized identities but should do so with the understanding that there is a more important overarching identity that encapsulates all those patchwork identities found in our colorful quilt. South Africa believes that its constitutional protection of individual rights would protect its minorities, however parties like the National Party and the more conservative Afrikaner parties believed that if their group rights were not protected they would face the tyranny of the majority and a hegemonic identity.

John Stuart Mill and Robert Dahl argue that a democracy founded on a system of ethnic differences will lead to an unstable democracy (in Mattes 1997:1). Arend Lijphart argues,

Social homogeneity and political consensus are regarded as prerequisites for, or factors strongly conducive to stable democracy. Conversely the deep social divisions and political differences within plural societies are held responsible for instability and break down in democracies" (1977:1).

Through the creation of a common identity within the borders of a state, democratic practices could therefore be stabilized as all citizens' needs are theoretically met. This is not true in a twenty-first century world where ethnic identities pervade social and political spaces and a national identity is commonly tagged on as a hyphenated identity: African-American, Black-South African. Ethnic identities could 'threaten' a democracy if they place differential levels of claim on resources, thereby forcing the state to play a political game in which different sectors of the polity are granted varied levels of access to power and resources. How could the South African state address these ethnic and economic differences that in turn ensure that democratic values are upheld and political and social equality is achieved?

Existing Options

South Africa has a culturally diverse population and has not witnessed violent ethnic conflicts since the period leading up to the 1994 elections. This diversity purportedly threatens the political culture of the state at the levels of the political community; the constitutional regime, incumbent governments, leaders and their policies; and the individual and her/his role as citizen (Almond and Verba 1963). The political community has to service the citizens and if there is no consensus on what the political culture should be, it could lead to the leading party unilaterally choosing a constituency to be the focus of their programs. The ANC has the support of the majority in this country therefore their programs service the needs of their electorate who are mostly Black African and mostly working class.¹⁸⁰ The overwhelming majority held by the ANC has been cause for concern though. James and Caliguire warn against South Africa becoming a country with a “permanent majority with no turnover in government on the horizon” (1996:60), which in essence implies a potential system of democracy which does not respond to minority needs and demands. It could be referred to as a ‘no-choice’ democracy due to the lack of power of the other parties, therefore a vote for the dominant party would bring about a change.

Where majority and minority turn into permanent artifacts, neither minority nor majority rule necessarily lead to viable regimes ... the construction of permanent divisions between the majority and the minority in a multi-cultural context is the outcome of a nation-state paradigm, of the state as the expression of the right to self-determination (Mamdani 1996:34).

¹⁸⁰ The ANC has an alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and with the South African Communist Party (SACP) which leads to much conflict between the ANC and its two partners on issues of equitable social development. I would argue that the ANC has moved away from its social reformation policies and towards neoliberal programs that enrich the elite sector of South Africa at the expense of the workers and poorer sectors of this society.

The nation-state paradigm is problematic in the African context because, unlike Castell's contention that the nation existed before the state (1998), in Africa the state existed before the nation (Shivji 2006).¹⁸¹ The African state's national project is therefore to build a nation from disparate tribes of people. Shivji argues that the national project did not succeed because it failed to transform the colonial state that relies on ethnic differences. His thesis thus refutes Castell's notion that the nation existed before the state because in Africa the colonial states formed national identities that ultimately protected the dominant identity at the expense of the minority identities thereby leading to permanent divisions within that society.

If Mamdani is correct in his assertion that the majority culture or identity becomes the predominant framework therefore nation-states are inherently unequal, it would follow that no attempt should be made to create a national identity because the latter leads to conflict. South Africa insists on creating a single overarching national identity and reassures its minorities that difference will be incorporated into that identity. This is problematic because who decides which part of an identity is included into the national whole? Mattes (1997:3) argues that ethnic identities are seen to be static therefore are often secondary to a national identity in the process of democratic consolidation. I would argue that a national identity employs features of ethnic identities that play into a particular notion of the how the state wishes to see itself, or be seen by its citizens and other states. If an Africanist image is the ultimate objective of the South African state, then images that depict a primordial or an essentialist 'African' way of life would be chosen above those which characterize a modern South African experience. In tourism

¹⁸¹ Professor Issa Shivji Rhodes University, 10 March 2006.

video clips, images abound of Zulu dancers, Xhosa bead workers, and coloured women selling flowers in Cape Town. These are static images of South African life that attract tourists who want to visit a place which is simultaneously modern but also connected to a particular history. A national identity for tourism is not dynamic and fluid but speaks to those demands from the world of (western) tourism or to those needs of a continent that makes a state 'belong' to Africa.

It is one thing to proclaim the necessity of recognizing the salience of ethnicity and quite another thing to assign ethnic groups a prime constitutional role in the creation of a new society. The ethnic categories used by advocates of power sharing remain dangerously close to the clumsy constructions of apartheid's planners ... Instead of legitimating the emergence of fluid forms of ethnic identification, many of those who proclaim the irreducible importance of ethnicity end up by reviving the dead-weight legacy of apartheid ascriptions (Dubow 1994:368).

The Comaroffs, in their article "Ethnicity Inc." are more positive about 'deadweight' legacies and argue that "heritage... is culture named and projected into the past, and, simultaneously, the past congealed into culture (2005:2) that can be packaged, marketed, sold to and consumed by others. One of the reasons why 'dead-weight ... apartheid ascriptions' have increased over the past 12 years of democracy is related to the commodification of cultures.

Another response is related to the state's call for an 'African' national identity after which ethnic identities were revived to combat the perceived threat of homogeneity. The latter perception is problematic because it assumes that 'African identities' are homogeneous. The state, therefore, has an obligation to show the differences between different constructions of Africanness in order to show that no one identity is more 'authentic' or powerful than any others. When the state reifies cultural expressions and rewards 'authenticity' identities become sedimented in a historical context and are

promoted as one of the many attractions of a diverse society in an attempt to promote multiculturalism, and non-racialism. The post-apartheid era has been marked with essentialized notions of identities rather than an attempt to create a new hybrid or creolized identity that is broadly South African. For example, the recent Jacob Zuma trial has produced slogans such as “100% Zulu boy” and Zuma’s choice to deliver his testimony in isiZulu has reinforced his identity as a ‘Zulu’. His support base is predominantly Zulu-speaking people who hail from KwaZulu Natal, the “Zulu Kingdom”. This reinforces the idea that there is a ‘Xhosa-Nostra’ out to remove him from power (see Christine 2006).

A new national identity could depart from the ‘dead weight legacy of apartheid ascriptions’ and enter a new era in which all citizens are recognized and protected by a rights-based ideology. Despite the fact that I advocate a simultaneous process of constructing a national identity in conjunction with the more ethnic based localized identities, I am aware that a national identity could overwhelm the minority identities and therefore subsume difference in an attempt to create sameness. Multiculturalism is too limited an option for the South African state as it maintains differences and boundaries between identities. Robert Mattes’ (1997:12 – 13) study of South African’s identification with group and national identities shows that

A strong group identity may actually contribute to the potential for a strong overarching national identity... The strength of national identity increases with one’s ability to accept difference and diversity, and is associated with higher ratings of one’s own race group as well as with more positive out-group ratings.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Mattes’ reference to out-group ratings points to one group’s view of another group. Mattes concedes that this study was time bound and possibly skewed. The interviews were held in 1996 soon after South Africa’s victory in the Rugby World Cup during which then President Nelson Mandela wore a replica of the captain’s shirt. There was a heightened sense of euphoria and common identity which ties in with Farred’s (2000) argument about the ability of sporting victories to bring together disparate identities in

Only when people are secure in themselves will they be willing to consider themselves as part of a larger whole. Coloured people will continue to feel marginalized if they are not politically and socially recognized and will therefore be resistant to a national project which negates their difference to an even greater extent.

I asked Chief Jean Burgess why she had embarked on a project that taught coloured people about KhoiSan histories and cultures. Burgess answered:

Everybody on this earth has a right to know who they are ... Through legislation we became Cape Coloureds who were denied a basic fundamental right to know [our genealogy] ... My liberation struggle is to restore the right to know. It is a human right ... Every KhoiSan should know and embrace his/her identity and become a proud South African. Only then can they contribute to the development of this country. (Personal interview 16 October).

Burgess's response shows that individuals and minority groups need to take up the search for their own identities before they can participate in the state and broader democracy. Cornel West claims that "black cultural agency as a precondition for black collective insurgency" (2001:302). Granted, the process is elite-based which verifies Gramsci's concept of organic intellectuals taking up their communities' issues for the community and carrying them forward to fruition, but the general group benefits from those efforts of the elites to highlight and promote the interests of the group. If this process is about nurturing a greater participation in democracy, how are people mobilized once they have reached the point of knowing who they are? The KhoiSan revivalist movement assumes that the people's recognition of their own agency will allow them to make more demands on the state from a rights-based approach.

South Africa. It should be noted that this was the 'miracle' period immediately after the 1994 elections during which everything seemed possible.

A rights-based democracy is one in which all identities and groups are protected by a constitution, a Bill of Rights, the law, and a free society that allows individuals to choose what is best for themselves, but through an understanding of ‘a common good’. This understanding ties in with the notion of *ubuntu*, which inadequately translates into ‘I am because we are’.¹⁸³ Constitutional Court Justice Dr Yvonne Mokgoro defines *ubuntu* as “a morality of co-operation, compassion, communalism, concern for the interests of the collective respect, respect for the dignity of personhood, with emphasis on virtues of that dignity in social relationships and practices” (Pityana 1999:144). Political theorist Drucilla Cornell proffers an American understanding of the concept: “how we are together entails a strong notion of responsibility towards one another” (2004:7). Community and the individual connect through an understanding of their relationships with each other within their physical and social contexts. It is a humanist understanding of the interconnectedness of life and people within an African context. Cornell examines the efficacy of reviving the notion of *ubuntu* in the context of contemporary South Africa.

Painted with a broad brush, *ubuntu* can potentially be mobilized to infuse moral being through an imaginative recollection of a purportedly uniquely South African ethnic that sees our humanity as operating against and creating a force field oppositional to the values of advanced global capitalism associated with the ‘West’ (Cornell 2004a:np).¹⁸⁴

A return to ‘traditionalism’ is problematic in a society in which ‘African culture’ is predominantly seen to be Black African culture. Those sectors of the society which have not historically internalized *ubuntu* as a philosophy, because of its association with Black Africanness, would view it as an imposition of majority thought on to minority groups. If

¹⁸³ ‘*Ubuntu ungumuntu ngabanye abantu*’ – ‘People are people through people’.

¹⁸⁴ This paper and others, listed as Cornell 2004 a, b and c, were sent to me by Professor Cornell. They describe and analyze her work with the Ubuntu Project at Stellenbosch University’s Institute for Advanced Studies.

the concept is framed within broader parameters of justice, collective decision-making, humanism and understanding, it might have greater success. As Cornell discovered, there are many criticisms of *ubuntu*.

Broadly construed those criticisms range from the claim that *ubuntu* was once a meaningful value but now gives nothing to young South Africans to the claim that *ubuntu* is inherently patriarchal and conservative. Still others argue that *ubuntu* is such a bloated concept that it means everything to everyone, and as a bloated concept it should not be translated into a constitutional principle. Although *ubuntu* was included in the epilogue of the interim constitution there have not been many attempts to incorporate *ubuntu* into postapartheid jurisprudence (2004c:1).

Marginal groups experience difficulty with the concept because its meaning is so fluid and elusive. It is also a Black African term with which they have limited familiarity unless they were involved in the liberation struggle. *Ubuntu* is seen to be an African concept that does not easily translate into cultural practices that are not Black African.

Christoph Marx claims that *ubuntu* became “ethnicised” and was “elevated into a central element of a new cultural nationalism” (2002:52). The core of the nation is occupied by a particular South African who symbolizes the essence of the nation. Marx continues:

... [A] contradiction between Ubuntu and nation-building becomes apparent, because Ubuntu is the sign of a nation already in existence, while the South African nation still has to be built. This contradiction is overcome, however, when Ubuntu is seen as a means to lay the fundamentals for an identity. The true nation is that part of the population that is already inspired by Ubuntu, so that the larger South African nation can be grouped around it. (ibid.:58)

For this reason many elites in marginal groups struggle with the term, and the coloured community specifically rarely uses the term to describe unity and humanism, therefore coloured people are not familiar with the meaning of the term. In a recent article in the *Mail and Guardian*, a Democratic Alliance candidate who was running in a by-election in a predominantly coloured area stated the following:

I'm not a racist, but under the whites we suffered and our people are still suffering. We're still not getting jobs; our voices are still not heard. I'm a coloured and we're marginalised – so how can we align ourselves with a political party who will continue to disregard us? (Joubert 2006:10)

If these communities are to constitute a part of an African identity, it is imperative that their elites expose them to the philosophical discourse around African ideologies such as *ubuntu*, assist them in the construction of their own understanding of the term and translate 'foreign' terms into everyday language that would be accessible and useful to the community, for example, using terms such as care, respect, reciprocity, and so forth. The coloured community generally struggles with the term *ubuntu* because coloured people have a minimal understanding and capacity to speak African languages as a result of apartheid education, which did not offer African languages in coloured schools until the late 1980s. Coloured people therefore feel excluded when terms such as *ubuntu* are used and they tend to view them as Black African. It is my understanding that many coloured people shy away from an African because of the apartheid government's negative constructions of Black Africanness in opposition to coloured identities. As long as work and services are still being fought for on racial grounds, those two communities will not reconcile.

Christoph Marx strongly warns us of "a new cultural nationalism" which is in search of "purity, which it hopes to locate in the past and in tradition; in short, in an idealised, ahistorical, pre-colonial Africa" (2003:60). I argue that a narrowly defined African has occupied the public space and participates in the South African nation-building project in a particular way. This public space excludes minority groups from exercising power and thereby prevents them from exercising their identities with dignity. Charles Taylor asserts that dignity reflects "our power, our sense of dominating public

space, or our invulnerability to power, or our self-sufficiency, our life having its own centre, or our being like and looked to by others, a centre of attention” (in Hanchard 1999:69). Hanchard (1999) is correct to challenge Taylor’s universalist understanding of dignity. A public space in which race and ethnicity play a role in determining levels of access to power, or ‘invulnerability to power’, makes it difficult for minority groups to assert their dignity. Taylor’s conception of dignity falls apart in a public space which is based on different access to power and the public sphere. It is weak because it does not take into consideration the position of minority groups in a multicultural society. I would argue that dignity, like *ubuntu*, needs to be reimagined in order to involve more people in the discussions around the creation of a new democratic society. Dignity could be reconfigured to include philosophies such as humanism and an inclusive peoplehood that goes beyond ethnicity and race (see Smith 2003), which *ubuntu* already has at its core.

Could *ubuntu* work in a contemporary and diverse South Africa? Is it a valuable philosophy or ethic that could create a new type of South African society in which equality, freedom, responsibility, humanity and community (ibid.) are constantly developed in relation to citizens? Could it contribute to a successful democracy? Could a ‘traditional’ concept steeped in a particular historical ethos be successfully translated into a modern concept? *Ubuntu* is seen as an ‘African solution to an African problem’. Dirk Louw calls it a “distinctly African rationale for [the] ways of relating to others” (2001:28). I would argue that for the coloured community *ubuntu* is mired in nationalist and a narrow African ideology that goes against the democratic framework for which South Africans fought and which they obtained in 1994. The ideology is authoritarian, patriarchal, conformist and ethnocentric in character, which precludes its relevance to a

contemporary South Africa. It also circumscribes a very narrow public sphere that does not allow for criticism and limits non-African ideas and identities. We have to find other terminology which adequately and more inclusively addresses the needs of South African society.

Ethnic or minority nationalisms or identities will persist in the South African context, therefore we need to either allow a national identity to subsume them or not create a national identity at all. As stated earlier, Castells argues that a national identity cannot be 'fabricated' but rather should be imagined. How do we create an overarching identity that does not subscribe to conservative nationalism? Should it not be allowed emerge organically through the sharing of space, place and time? Sociologist Fred Hendricks advises against the focus on identity because, he argues, it has the tendency to "erase the significance of class, producing instead a textured analysis of difference without an explanation for the manner in which that difference is perpetuated" (2003:11). Neville Alexander also argues for class consciousness and class-based activism in order to address the socio-economic differences in South Africa. Class will continue to pervade South African society because of the neoliberal policies of the Mbeki administration and his insistence on South Africa becoming a viable political African leader in global politics. A socialist revolution will not take place in South Africa, thus it is senseless to speak of a classless society in South Africa as this country is too steeped in the neoliberal paradigm. It is also too interested in forging a place for itself at the international decision-making table to adopt a system which engenders equitable development. We need to examine other options to produce social, political and economic change in South Africa.

New Identities?

Is it possible for us to create new identities that learn from the old yet open up new spaces of being in the future? How should we deal with the persistent salience of ethnic difference in this country without relying on a collective class identity to eradicate those differences? Should ethnic identities be ignored or subsumed through a national identity? These questions are important because neither is it possible to ignore past constructions of identities nor is it likely that we can ignore marginal groups, such as the coloured community, and their post-apartheid perceptions of their position in South Africa. One possibility is to create a citizenship that “levels out and depoliticizes cultural differences” (Leca 1992:22), which is impossible because apartheid experience has taught us to emphasize cultural/ethnic/racial differences between us and to highlight the relative material benefits that come with each group identity. Citizenship in South Africa continues to be built on notions of cultural difference that have become more political, not less, in a democratic system. Saul Dubow warns us that “the political history of ethnic construction in South Africa, as elsewhere, points to the continuing availability of ethnicity as a defining, politically manipulable, variable in the restructured power relations of the country” (1994:349). Not only has the color of the broker of power in this country changed but the relations of power within Blackness have also changed, which results in a new social milieu that is both similar to yet different from the apartheid era. Thabo Mbeki’s second tier economy is predominantly Black and poor, but a small, yet growing, percentage of Black people have joined the middle class. In order to survive as a vibrant democracy, the South African state needs to de-center notions of ethnicity in the political and economic realms and instead work within a framework that aspires to confer

on all dignity, humanness, equality and citizenship structured around “justice, equality and community” (Mouffe 1992:4).

For Chantal Mouffe (1992) this means a radical conception of citizenship that includes pluralism, which is inherent in modern democracies. Due to a focus on individual rights, the diversity (pluralism) within a democracy is often invisible or lost. I would prefer to use the term ‘multicultural’ instead of pluralism but ultimately both terms mean discrete identities that exist peacefully side by side. Both multiculturalism and pluralism play into imagery of the rainbow nation, therefore show identities to be distinct with clear parameters. South Africa needs to find ways through which cultural diversity is respected and channeled into a common overarching identity. Chantelle Mouffe underscores that “[i]t is indeed important to reassert the view of citizenship as a system of rights constitutionally guaranteed to all members of a political community, and to affirm that these rights should not only be political but also social” (ibid.:4). A radical citizen is therefore an engaged and active citizen with rights (Mouffe 1992). How does this address the issue of rights and justice?

Nancy Fraser’s post-Westphalian democratic justice (2005) offers a possibility to address inequalities and ‘misrepresentations’ of people and groups on a global level. She asserts that it’s the framework that needs to be changed rather than the ‘who’. In the South African context we could argue that the framework of participation needs to change rather than who occupies certain positions and whose voice is heard. People should be able to actively participate in decision-making and feel that their voices have been heard. It’s both a recognition of the different voices and a public space in which debates can occur. Fraser calls this “participatory parity” and distinguishes between two

kinds, namely, a “substantive principle of justice” in which everyone has a voice and a “procedural standard by which we may evaluate the democratic legitimacy of norms” (ibid.:87). The latter involves a process in which “open deliberation occurs”. It could be argued that South Africa already has this particular kind of participatory parity that is secured by our constitution, and therefore question why some communities still perceive themselves as being marginal. I think an answer would come through a connection of South African local voices to a larger transnational debate. For example, the minority identity issue could be linked to other minority communities’ experiences around the world. There are other South African theorists who posit differently and limit their work to a recognition of multiculturalism or pluralism.

If we are historically diverse, how do we address material inequalities in a modern world? Johan Degenaar posits that South Africa requires a model of democracy that addresses both “the material and value infrastructure of a democratic culture” (1993:14). A pluralist democracy could be instituted:

Firstly, according to a multiparty democracy; secondly, promoting the existence of a plurality of autonomous organizations such as church, university, business associations and trade unions; and thirdly, accommodating a plurality of communal cultures and fostering a tolerance for such a plurality (ibid.:15).

Mouffe calls for a theory of social justice that “can serve as a framework for regulating the diversity and plurality of demands and rights claimed by the various participants in the political community” (1992:6). The theory of social justice suggested here lies beyond the boundaries of nationalism and culture. It creates a new political culture that is shared by everyone within the policy that is based on humanism, equality, democracy, justice and respect.

It is clear, in the South African context, that a multicultural or plural society cannot be achieved in conjunction with one based on a single national identity because twelve years after the advent of democracy, a truly universalist South African identity has yet to emerge, instead one that has emerged is dominated by a hegemonic African identity. Leca agrees: “actual pluralism is post-national – it separates the construction and maintenance of peripheral solidarities from the acceptance of rules of administration and identification with the symbols of the central authority” (1992:24). Does this mean that a plural society can only exist if we exist within a post-national world? Globalization has not destroyed the state, therefore we are not likely to achieve a post-national world. Maré’s statement that “the ‘nation’ is unimaginable in the local [South African] context, unless it be constructed on the basis of an exclusive rider, such as ‘race’” (1997:1), is disturbing because it points to how difficult it is to build a national identity on categories other than race and ethnicity. A national identity would need to be constructed on alternatives such as a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (ibid.) that bypasses the power politics of difference and is based on equality and community.

Could Michael Walzer’s concept of “complex equality” within a “*civil society*” (emphasis in original, 1992:90) address the differences and inequalities experienced within South Africa? Walzer argues that four answers have been proposed to the question “what sorts of institution should we work for?” (ibid.) but that all these are incorrect. These answers also focus on the role of the state, which no longer has the power it used to have prior to globalization and the resultant condition of the ‘weak state’. Walzer sets out the four answers, each of which grounds its argument in the role of the state and an active-participant citizen. His notion of a ‘civil society’ presupposes a

space in which citizens simultaneously can be equal and different: “the realm of fragmentation and struggle but also of concrete and authentic solidarities” (ibid.:97). This is a space a fragmented society should aspire to because “in a more densely organized, more egalitarian civil society” (ibid.:99) disengaged and marginalized citizens might be more willing to participate. Only a democratic state can sustain a democratic civil society and vice versa (ibid.:104).

Does the South African state practice the kind of democracy that nurtures a civil society, or a ‘civic nation’ (Simpson 1994:474) in which plural identities could exist and, in turn, bolster the state? The notion of ‘pluralism’ is not readily accepted in a post-apartheid South Africa because of the historical and political use of the term. Under apartheid the term was used to refer specifically to Black identities; pluralism used racial and cultural markers to distinguish between Black citizens through the Department of Plural Relations in the 1970s. At times the incumbent Minister of that department referred to Black Africans as ‘plurals’ (the term was never used to define white citizens). However, the notion of a plurality of identities and the resultant diversity could easily be accommodated into a new public sphere that creates a public space in which people can be different in their local contexts and yet share a common collective identity. Wilmsen et al. posit that South Africans need to find “a vocabulary that recognizes – possibly celebrates – forms of ethnic identification that are flexible and polyvalent rather than those which are exclusivist and chauvinistic” (1994:348). We need to move beyond particularistic notions of identity.

At a national level a collective identity should not be promoted at the expense of localized identities: on the contrary, cultural identities could continue to warrant support

from the state. “‘Cultural citizenship’ is as integral to democracy as political and economic citizenship” (Nyamnjoh 2005:5). I am not convinced that Nyamnjoh’s conception of cultural citizenship is free from an Africanist perspective, therefore I argue that local cultural identities are necessary to ensure that a political democracy remains healthy and viable yet should not be the glue behind a larger collective identity. A society constructed along plural or multiple identities with a national identity that supports larger ideals would be appropriate in a country characterized by such marked inequality. Difference should only be harnessed if ethnic identity “(with its associated symbols, emotional force and sense of psychological support) could be deployed to secure group interests and to secure collective material advantages” (Adam and Giliomee in Dubow 1994:364). If that difference does threaten the equality of the society it should not be harnessed. It is too easy for elites to mobilize along ethnic and racial lines for their own interest, therefore protections against that practice should be built into our social contracts and institutions.

We could return to some of the ‘original’ social contracts that the liberation movements introduced. For example, the policy of ‘non-racialism’ could address inequalities.

The discourse of non-racialism has the potential of acting as ... a new imaginary in which the valorization of closure and purity of identity characteristic of apartheid can be countered without simply supplanting it with a new homogenizing unity. This is so for two reasons. The notion of non-racialism, first, contains *at least potentially* a questioning of purity as the basis of identification ... It stresses not the givenness and naturalness of forms of identification, but their openness and fluidity ... Second, non-racialism also provides a horizon of identification which moves beyond divisions, towards a universalizing discourse on unity (Norval in Maré 2001:88).

The ANC has, since its inception in 1912, always preached non-racialism, but its recent programs based on the African renaissance and *ubuntu* have not clearly carried the message across in programs that redress past inequalities. Non-racialism should be fostered through social policies and political will in order to create a society in which race and ethnicities do not take center stage in decision-making processes. I would not go as far as to imagine “a-world-in-which-race-does-*not*-matter” and call it “home” (Morrison 1998:3). Winant argues that we should think of race as a relationship in which competing racial projects exist (2000:186). It is, therefore necessary that we see race operating as a “‘marker’ of the infinity of variations we humans hold as common heritage and hope for the future” (ibid.:188). Maybe this way we could reach Morrison’s ‘home’.

Maré argues that it is not possible because “*non-racialism* should mean the rejection of racialism, of the existence of races as socially meaningful categories” (2001:90) and not be understood as “*non-racism* or *multi-racialism*” (ibid.). South Africa’s experience as a racialized society has complicated the move away from race-based analyses and frameworks, both theoretically and practically. It is not possible for South Africa to be post-race for socioeconomic and political reasons, as listed in this body of work. Ivor Chipkin’s analysis of Mbeki’s ‘I am an African’ speech shows the shortcomings of definition of who is African and argues that it is masculinist and narrowly defined (see Chipkin 2003). Such analyses show that scholars still have an exclusive, racialised and sexist conception of South African citizenship. It could also be argued that there are many other reasons why non-racism is not possible in South Africa, *inter alia*, the racialization of the opposition and criticism of the governing party. Members of the Democratic Party are often accused of being ‘western liberals’ (read:

racist) and anti-African; media critique of the government is labeled 'racist'; minority groups' claims for recognition of their localized identities that do not have an 'African' origin (whatever that means) are met with accusations of being racist because they do not show a willingness to deny apartheid constructed identities; and, most disturbingly, those people who choose not to vote are accused of being against a non-racial South Africa.

"Under apartheid, racial nationalism mobilized opposition; under democracy racial nationalism suffocates it" (MacDonald 2004:653). The pervasiveness of race precludes the evolution of a truly non-racial society.

Race plays an important role in Mbeki's two nation thesis which declares that "there are two nations in South Africa, one black and poor, and the other white and relatively well-off" (in Maré 2001:97). Race needs to be separated from ethnicity, class and culture in order for South Africa to be truly non-racial. This can only be achieved through political will, policies and social practice. The Constitution and Bill of Rights call for a non-racist society but legal protection is not enough. Michael MacDonald argues that

Non-racialism locates race in the private, the unofficial, sphere. Officially the non-racial state is universal ... but making race a private matter not only preserves race; it also keeps race available for purposes of political mobilization. The non-racial state is a liberal democratic state and liberal democratic states represent 'private' interests in 'public' institutions (2004:631-2).

Race, and ethnicity, should be eradicated from the private as well as the public spheres because democracy should pervade all of society. A society cannot be egalitarian if the private sphere still maintains unequal relationships of any nature.

It is for this reason that practical examples of non-racialism should be witnessed throughout the social and political milieu. The main focus of this new democracy should

be to create a framework of rights, justice, opportunities, community and humanism. This can be done through acceptance of all based on equal opportunity. Economic redress is important but in order to create growth in our economy and stability in our society we should concentrate on the provision of rights to all citizens; education, health, welfare, housing and employment are the mainstays of a flourishing democracy. A needs-based policy should be drafted which does not determine which racially defined beneficiaries are more deserving or needy than others.

A new conception of citizenship is necessary. The Freedom Charter declares that that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people” (1955).

Apartheid left South Africa with a race-based imbalance but the neoliberal policies instituted by the Mbeki administration will not address those imbalances sufficiently. How do we create a new society under the yoke of the old? I would argue for a new South African identity that acknowledges diversity and minimizes difference. It is a creolized or a hybrid identity that comprises all the experiences of its people and yet forges a unity that can be shared without citizens feeling that their identities have been compromised or truncated into meaningless imagery. It has to capture the history and the present in a fluid and complex manner. This identity could be based on philosophies rather than actual experiences. We could make the Constitution a lived document by combining it with the vision of the Freedom Charter and ensuring that equality exists through diversity. The politics of recognition plays a major role in the process because it is through acknowledgement that an individual and a community exist. A metaphorical space needs to be created in which people claim a South African-ness as it is understood

in the twenty-first century. Concepts such as 'deep, horizontal comradeship' (Maré 1997), civil society (Walzer 1992), civic nation (Simpson 1994) and neo-*ubuntu* should be employed to create a new democratic society in which citizens feel that their needs are being met and that they are able to engage with democratic practices on a daily basis. If the state provides goods and services regardless of race or ethnicity but in terms of need, the conflict around resources will evaporate. Marginal groups would no longer be able to accuse the state of denying them their rights and neither would they resort to ethnic politics to claim those rights.

It is important, however, not only to stress that recognition of diversity is necessary in South Africa but also to clarify that all identities are fluid and ever-changing. South African society bases its understanding of identities on the past and labels those who want to transcend those constructions as being anti-national project. Maré suggests that "the task of the state is to foster and maintain the conditions that are necessary for citizens and the many organs of civil society to create democracy, a desirable alternative to nation-building" (1997:9). Naively and optimistically, Neal Ascherson argues that "[e]thnicity will eventually disappear and loyalty to institutions: to a constitution, or to particular democratic structures" will emerge as the new politics (2004:105-6). He asserts that multiculturalism will "slowly yield to the infinite varieties of hybridity" which will give way to "post-hybridity" or "new forms of politics" (ibid.:106). One of those new forms could be issue-based politics in which parties clearly have to state their political platforms for each election. Voters would have to be informed about and be interested in participating in democratic practices that benefit the entire society. South Africa has to find a way in which to promote participation, limit conflict

based on differences and nurture an environment in which people work together for the good of the whole.

Conclusion

Zimitri Erasmus argues that in a post-apartheid South Africa “we need to acknowledge the fluidity and the openness of identity – but not at the cost of imagining a rainbow-land where our relations with one another are not shaped by the past, by new configurations or ‘race’, or by emerging class and/or regional and broader politics on the continent” (2001:15). Nelson Mandela, at the 2004 Annual Steve Biko Foundation Lecture, called for an RDP of the soul which would “re-instill in the consciousness of our people that sense of human solidarity, of being in the world for one another and because of and through others” (2004).¹⁸⁵ Both Mandela and Ascherson’s ideal worlds acknowledge multiple identities and differences yet manage to work towards a society that has a common bond. Multiple identities are crucial in successful democracies because they can be harnessed to provide a more representative democracy. Multi-ethnic societies could dissolve into ethnic conflicts and divisions but it is possible that through a politics that is issue-based, a politics of recognition and deliberative democratic principles, a new kind of political milieu could be achieved. Claude Ake posits that “people participate not because they are individuals whose interests are different and need to be asserted but because they are part of an interconnected whole” (1993:243). Seyla Benhabib (2002) argues for a deliberative democracy that allows for cultural

¹⁸⁵ In this quotation Mandela refers obliquely to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which was started in 1994 to address the socio-economic imbalances incurred by apartheid in South Africa.

identities that are not confined to definite boundaries, flexible citizenship, legal pluralism and models of institutional power sharing. There are many models that South Africa could adopt but more importantly this country needs to find her own style of democracy and society that works for her people and her institutions. Those ideals are already expressed through the constitution but need to find concrete expression in society. Differences will always exist in an ex-colony and a country divided by apartheid policies but those differences could be harnessed in a new dispensation based on hybridity to create a much stronger whole.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis has argued that elites from the coloured community have constructed an identity based on perceptions of marginalization. I have shown the importance of public organic intellectuals and the political importance of taking discursive dimensions of identity formation seriously. I have argued that identities are constructed, fluid, contextual and relational. Marginal groups have used their identities to further their political objectives and to gain greater access to power with varying effects because the existing social and political structures determine the boundaries of identity constructions. The past influences the present, therefore historical constructions of identities have a strong impact on how present-day identities are being imagined, and often constitute a re-imagination of old identities rather than an entirely new creation. This constraint limits the building of new relationships within a transforming society like South Africa.

I used Cathy Cohen's (1999) theoretical framework on marginal identities to inform my thesis' structure of my thesis. I analyzed the historical conceptions of the groups' identities, their relationship to the dominant group and the institutions they have at their disposal or have had to establish to deal with their marginal status. I also looked at the options open to them to further their group's interests within a politically oppressive context. I used Benedict Anderson's (1991) theory on the 'imagined community' and argued that this is a two pronged process because the community itself imagines itself into existence through shared experiences and the state monopolizes on their common identity to construct more constrictive identities. The state imagines that community in ways that force it to conform to a 'racial order' (King and Smith 2005). Hall (1994) argues that identities are always becoming, they are never fully realized,

therefore I argued that identities should be allowed to exist because they will inevitably become more representative of people's experiences especially since, in this context, identities are no longer imposed. It is important to note, however, that identities are constrained by the past therefore we should see them developing on a continuum and we should consciously strive to reach an ideal identity which incorporates issues such as citizenship, equality and justice.

As a marginal identity in South Africa, coloured identity has been adapted to opportunities and constraints that have arisen within this context since the arrival of the settlers in 1652. Coloured elites have either collaborated with or opposed the state's constructions of the identity, depending on their political ideology within the political milieu. Conservative coloured elites who wished to assimilate into white-dominated society educated themselves and adopted social status through respectable behavior in colonial society. This limited their access to colonial society but gave them the illusion of participating as equals in a political structure that denied Black Africans the vote. Coloured elites formed political organizations like the African People's Organisation (APO) that called for assimilation into the dominant political structure, while other elites opted to support the Congress structures which emerged in the early 1900s and opposed white rule because it was based on racial discrimination.

This dichotomy in coloured politics remains in play even in contemporary South Africa. This thesis argues that coloured people have always voted in terms of their interests rather than as a racial bloc. The 1994, 1999 and 2004 national elections have shown how the 'coloured vote' has changed since this country adopted democracy. I argue that the racialization of voting patterns serves to maintain racial differences within

South Africa and exacerbates already tense inter-community relationships in areas like the Western Cape where the majority of the population is comprised of coloured people. Racial categories continue to be of value to South Africans because we have a perception that the state owns a limited pot of services and has subsequently chosen to service the most deserving sections of the population, namely Black Africans. This has caused serious problems in areas like the Western Cape where coloured and Black African poor communities compete for 'limited' services from the state. Ideally state services should not be provided along apartheid lines of white, coloured, Indian and Black African but in reality the state makes choices based on which group comprises its largest support bloc which is perceived to be predominantly Black African.

The political 'miracle' of 1994 presented all South Africans with an opportunity to reconstruct apartheid identities. Identities such as African, KhoiSan, slave-descendant, brown person, emerged from the coloured community specifically. These elite debates took place in the public sphere and attempted to change the ways through which coloured people constructed their identities in a post-apartheid context over which a Black party reigned supreme. It should be stated clearly that these new identities do not constitute a social movement but rather a public debate which outlines options open to coloured people who wish to reconstruct their identities. The idea behind initiating the debate within the coloured community is to present an identity which has historical roots and cultural practices. Coloured identity has always been accused of being 'without a history' or denied its existence, therefore it was important for elites to ground the identity within an inclusive African context thereby giving the claimants of that identity a sense of belonging to the African continent as well as to a community with a history. I highlighted

the potential problems that could arise from this: identities that are rooted in history and offered to communities as 'authentic' and 'traditional' are essentialist because identities change and adapt to temporal and spatial differences. The KhoiSan identity is made 'modern' even when it is performed as an 'authentic' and 'traditional' identity because the agents give new cultural expressions to 'old' practices (Robins 1997).

My 'big question' is how identities are constructed and whether contemporary identities can break free from old constructions. My normative conclusion based on my analysis argues that a new framework which allows us to construct identities in a multicultural context should be developed. South African society will construct and reconstruct its conception of what and who is an African and move towards a common understanding as a country. The new identities will invariably contain remnants of the old but as newer identities are constructed the society will incorporate fewer and fewer aspects of the old. I also argue for a revision of concepts such as *ubuntu*, 'African' and the 'African renaissance'. The African National Congress has provided us with a historical understanding of these terms and should now create a public space in which these concepts and ideologies could be debated, reframed and reaffirmed by all South Africans. Boundaries between identities have shifted, therefore a new kind of politics is necessary to define the nation and national identity.

[Group identities are] not a set of objective acts, but the product of experienced meanings. In this conception difference does not mean otherness, or exclusive opposition, but rather specificity, variation, heterogeneity. Difference names relations of both similarity and dissimilarity that can be reduced neither to coextensive identity nor to overlapping otherness (Young 1995:161).

Our national identity therefore should be an overarching, all-inclusive identity that recognizes difference but finds ways to create an imagined community that is held together by an interest to see this country and continent succeed.

Marginal groups' positive perceptions of their position in societies play an important role in creating stability in democracies across the world. States have a role to play in securing the interests of all their citizens but more especially those of groups who feel that they are immaterial to the well-being of that particular state. The ways in which state and other elite discourses frame belonging and identity could impact the future of democracy. I hope that this work has hopefully contributed to local debates around one such marginal identity and provided a historical and contemporary understanding of where and how it fits into African and South African spaces. Future work could examine gendered experiences of coloured identity and provide a more nuanced analysis of the people who occupy racially marked bodies. I have examined elite constructions of coloured identity which potentially furthers the debate around coloured political expressions and the choices the group and individuals have made and continue to make.

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Interviews:

David Abrahams – political activist
 Chief Jean Burgess – KhoiSan chief of the Damaqua tribe in the Eastern Cape
 Henry Cupido – Member of the African Christian Democratic Party
 Johan Durand – Member of Parliament – New National Party
 Vincent Kolbe – historian and museum curator
 Chief Joseph Marks – retired political activist and KhoiSan chief of the Outeniqua tribe
 Ron Martin – KhoiSan activist
 Patric Tariq Mellet – Managing Director of Inyathelo (South African Institute for Advancement) and political activist
 Peter Mokoena – Director of Heritage, Western Cape Provincial Department of Arts and Culture
 Trevor Oosterwyk – Journalist and political activist
 Chief Harleen Sasman – KhoiSan chief
 Reg September – Member of Parliament and ANC activist
 Stan Simmons – Member of Parliament, New National Party
 Hennie van Wyk – retired political activist and KhoiSan cultural activist
 Father Michael Weeder – Anglican Priest, cultural and political activist
 John Witbooi – Deputy Director of Arts and Culture in Eastern Cape region and KhoiSan activist

Focus group:

Althea Belford – political activist and senior civil servant
 Sandra Brown – senior civil servant
 Cheryl Potgieter – Head of Gender Unit, Human Sciences Research Council, Professor of Psychology and political (gender) activist
 Gail Smith – Journalist and gender activist
 Belinda Wort – senior civil servant

Appendices: Transcriptions of Three Interviews

These interviews with Father Michael, Joe Marks and the Focus Group were included as illustrations of how identities are discursively constructed. I worked loosely around my questions and generally started an interview explaining what I was doing and needed and then allowed the respondent to tell their story. If I needed more information I would pose more direct questions. I was an active participant in the Focus Group as I believed my story could add to the general story being told by the small group of thirty- or forty-something professional women who grew up in coloured communities. Not all the questions listed below were answered by all the respondents. I have kept the English as it was spoken without correcting sentence construction or grammar in an attempt to illustrate the language style used in the Western Cape by people previously classified as coloured. I also took my responses out of the first two interviews in order to allow the speaker to tell his story uninterruptedly.

Interview Questions (no particular order):

1. How does the interviewee self-identify and why?
2. How are class and gender divisions played out in the coloured community?
3. What role could elites play in reconstructing coloured identity in South Africa?
4. What impact will this 'new' identity have on the political power of the group?
5. What political role could the coloured community play in the future?
6. Is there a future for identity politics in SA?
7. How will changes at the elite level trickle down to the larger working class?
8. How is the discourse about changing identity and political power being framed by elites?
9. What discourse has the elite group used in the past to refer to coloured identity? Are there limitations to this discourse? If yes, then what are those limitations?
10. What strategies are being used by elites to broaden the support for a changing social and political identity?

Joseph Marks 23/2/05 (retired activist in his 70s)

Joseph Marks (known to everyone as Uncle Joe) spoke English and Afrikaans which Uncle Joe called “the language of the slave camp”. Uncle Joe didn’t have a ‘problem’ with me speaking English but thought he should tell me this. Uncle Joe speaks of oral history and events within the lives of the KhoiKhoi as if they had happened to either himself or his nearest family. He refers to the KhoiKhoi as his cousins and uses ‘we’ to refer to his forefathers.

The KhoiKhoi could not understand Dutch. We made language with sweat/blood and tears. The history of language very important. I never recognized the word coloured or the names the colonizers gave us. “Kaffirs” the colonists gave – it came from India and meant unbeliever. It was later moved to refer to black Africans. The Dutch called us Strandlopers. When the Malay slaves arrived they told the master that we looked like people from Java who were called Hottentot and it was quickly transformed to hottentot. So we moved from Strandlopers to Hottentots. We became slaves.

The English were at Muizenberg and conquered the area. The Dutch retreated. The English changed the name to non-European. In 1948 when the Nats [National Party] came into power they changed the name to non-white. It’s the shortest name given to us. In 1955 they gave me a choice of 5 names. Me and Cassiem Jabari went change our names at Observatory. I gave the non-white *kaartjie* [card] to the madam, and the madam looked at me like this: she looked at my eyes and they were quite nice, en my *knoppe*¹⁸⁶, she looked at my hair from both sides of my head. Then she said “you must sign here” and I’m a Cape Coloured now. I thought everyone was called Cape Coloured but my friend was registered as ‘Other Coloured’. I said “Madam, no you can’t do this. We live in the same street, work at the same place. He must also be Cape Coloured”. The Madam responded “*As julle nie nou dadelik van hierdie venster af gaan nie, aanbied ek die polieste*” [If you do not step away from this window this minute I’ll call the police]. I was a cheeky hotnot.

To my horror, at lunch time I discovered that we were called five different names: Cape coloured, other coloured, mixed, plurals, *Kaapse Maleier* [Cape Malay]. That was 1960 when they called me these ugly names. For that reason I reject all the names the colonizers or the master gave me and I stand by name that is historically given to me by my closest cousin [the KhoiKhoi] – Kwe. My own name for myself is Koekoena, this is who I am but [the KhoiKhoi] gave us that name apparently to my Grandparents. This is oral stuff. *Dit is die regte waarheid* [That is the honest truth]. When people say oral history has a short lifespan, oh my God, my oral history goes into twenty-two thousand years. My grandfather, grandgrandfather, where, when, what, how. We have no time for that now. Our own name for ourselves is Koekoena.

¹⁸⁶ There is a controversial argument that the knobs on the skull depict race.

My cousins knew the wild lions, we shared the same space. The lions went past us and my cousins were very amazed by it. He then gave me a different name – KhoiKhoi which means a man among men. It spoke of the bravery of the KhoiKhoi. I'm not sure if they were brave or if it was stupidity.

That name stuck with us for the last 22 000 years. We perfected that name Khoikhoi as the man among men. The history of the Khoi is one of peaceful coexistence with nature. When I was in prison a few times with UDF activists. We had almost something like relayed television through the prison. One would say "*die ding sê so...*" [this is what I've heard ...] and relate stories.

[The KhoiKhoi] were not created like Christians. We had no respect for Christians because it's a modern religion. My grandfather used to say "*Dis 'n nuwe geloof. Dis baie mooi. God vat die stof en toe maak hy vir hulle. Hy blaas sommer sy asem in en toe gaan hy sommer dadelik.*" [It's a new religion, it's very nice. God took dust and breathed life into it]. We believe something different. We believe we come from another planet. It is in the constellation of Orion. And God put us the KhoiKhoi people here and we believe that all other people are the descendents of this KhoiKhoi family: six wives and two men. This tribe had beautiful and smart females. Outeniqua, griqua, nama, namaqua. Colonists merged namas and namaquas even though they are two different people. Professor Cohen started indigenous theory and practice. He knew where the Namaquas lived who was Nama. The Namas have the same arrogance as we have; the Outeniquas are an arrogant people. For survival, to preserve our culture [the arrogance] was inculcated in our culture. *Die ouma sê "Maak s. nog, nog."* [The grandmother says "Do this, again, again". Uncle Joe shook his head as if saying no]. Always say no. If you ever nodded, my God it must be that they want to kill you or there's something wrong. But you must always say 'No'. Maybe that is part of our culture to be arrogant. *Astrant* [cheeky and cocky].

When we started CAHAC (Cape Areas Housing Action Committee - 1983) in the Western Cape, at the first meeting everyone wanted me to be the Chairman.¹⁸⁷ I said no, "*Ek wil nie, ek wil nie*" [I don't want to]. My cousin Wilfred Rhodes became chairperson. When the UDF launched the people unanimously chose me as president, especially the people from the townships. I refused. "*Moenie vir my President kom maak nie. Van wat? Van die paar skapies wat julle hier het?*" [Don't make me President. President of whom? Of these few sheep that you have?]. I refused and they made me vice-president. When my brothers in exile returned they were more arrogant than me, which I didn't like. I told them that I am the ANC. I am the ANC, when you were nowhere to be seen when people were trained internally [to fight against the apartheid government]. I am KhoiKhoi, the native that causes all the trouble. I'm not impressed with intelligence.

¹⁸⁷ CAHAC was formed to deal with rent increases and the forced sale of houses in the Western Cape and the constitutional changes that were to be introduced by the Tricameral Parliamentary that was established in 1984. South Africa's present Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, was chair of CAHAC in 1983 and a key player in the UDF. See article <http://disa.nu.ac.za/articledisplaypage.asp?articletitle=CAHAC+meeting&filename=SNSEp83> accessed 15 July 2006.

In the old days when you come to a so-called coloured's house, the first thing you see the diplomas all over. The highest diploma in all homes is JC – junior certificate [grade 10]. It would be a principal or a policeman, or something. If you've got matric, oh my God, then you respected someone. Matric was the highest education at that time. My grandfather, of the old man's two grandsons and granddaughter one had Matric and the other two had JC. My father used to live with them. I'm the successor of my grandfather, Chief of the Outeniqua clan.

In the old days so-called coloured people were very fond of respectability. *Sien die papier en die tie*. [See, the diploma and the tie]. *Jy sien ook hulle sit voor in die kerk. Ons dommes sit agter of upstairs. I'm a troublesome person.*

I was born in 1936 in Mosselbay. My father Catholic and my mother was a practicing KhoiSan. None of them would ever talk about religion, ever. I didn't know about KhoiSan. My father was a very dominant person. When my mother died KhoiSan people said the Xhosa people have adopted our customs, almost everything to a T. Everything we did they do. My grandmother came and said "*Pak al julle goed op die lorrie en kom saam*" [Pack your things on the truck and come with me]. We went home and Sunday came and I dressed up to go to church. Nothing happened. Next Sunday came, same. At the first Khoisan ceremony I attended they inaugurated me as successor. I had to go for special training on oral history. They would tell me "*Jou pa, jou oupa, jou oupa-grootjie, jou oupa grootjie se grootjie, Kaptein Dikkop...*", who they were, what they did. Our [Outeniqua] ancestor was the only patriarch that had six wives. The rest had seventy wives, eighty wives according to how many cattle they had. They had to have wives to be able to have the people. They wanted boys. If they had a girl they would take another wife.

I came to Cape Town in 1949. In 1952, I went to a meeting that was addressed by Mrs [Cissy] Gool in the Drill Hall in Cape Town. Me and my friends went there, me being a dumb guy from the farm, *ons het gaan rokshuns gemaak vir die meeting* [we went to cause trouble at the meeting]. I asked what they mean by *rokshuns maak* and they said *Ons gaan skreeu en vrae vra*. One guy will talk and say *Ja, ons wil nou weet*. [We will shout and ask questions ... Yes, we want answers now]. So half-way through the meeting, I listened and listened. I had oral training and with oral training they teach you about discipline. Cape coloureds from Cape Town didn't have discipline. The more I listened the more I liked what she said. So half-way through I went to the leader of the group and said "*Jy gaan nou die ding gaan jy toe maak*." [You will stop this heckling]. They called me Boerjong because I came from a farm. Anyone who talks, Boerjong "*gaat die tande wegslat*" [I'll knock out your teeth]. The Outeniquas are a fighting people. If you go to Pacaltsdorp and ask to speak to the Outeniqua KhoiKhoi they don't know them.¹⁸⁸ If you say "*ek wil praat met die aanpakkers*" [I want to talk to the aggressors] they will show you where they are. *Ons is baie mos* [we are many]. We are like soldiers, we peaceful until attacked.

¹⁸⁸ At the invitation of KhoiSan Chief Dikkop, two British missionaries established a mission station at the farm Hoogekraal in 1812. The farm was renamed Pacaltsdorp in 1818 after the death of the resident German priest, Reverend Charles Pacalt. The Southern Cape town of Pacaltsdorp is still home to KhoiSan descendants.

We are stubborn. I think Minister [Trevor] Manuel at my cousin's funeral said he mentioned the same thing. Me and Minister Manual started CAHAC and the UDF. He knows a lot about me saying no. My family is quite stubborn. The children are taught the same way. The only thing I live for is that the Constitution tells us that if I promote the language and culture of the Khoi and San people. I speak at schools in the area and elsewhere. I speak about the history of the Khoi and the San people. About where I come from and it's a very slow and painful process because the white colonists have decimated our religion, culture and language. We start all over again. Somebody has to start. I'm very lucky and privileged that lots of people are awakening to these facts. Oral history is being passed on. I got my oral history from my aunt. Dr [Richard] Van der Ross is another source. Between him, me and his cohorts we believe our grandfathers can't die.

My grandfather spoke about the Nama as '*geel mense* [yellow people]'. [Uncle Joe pointed to my arm] '*Soos jy*' [like you]. [When I said I was Griqua he changed his statement]. '*Hulle is donkerder*' [they are darker].

Die Nama het baie vlieë stront op hul gesig' [The Nama have fly poop (moles) on their faces]. He described the Namaqua to a T. When they open their mouths *ek dink, Jesus Christ, jy's 'n vokking* German [I think, oh my goodness, you are German]. Coloured people have a great desire to assimilate with people who are white and their favorite people they want to be is German. The one race they want to be is German, then Irish then comes St. Helena. This is the biggest desire KhoiKhoi people have; to assimilate with white people.

I have also been to the United States twice. I went to Minneapolis/St Paul. I spoke to a [Amerindian] Chief and his council. They were unimpressed. I said "You know Chief I am at a loss". He said that I was telling their story. They will tell that story in the early 1930s when you heard that people had white grandfathers. We need to recapture the small things; small cultural practices. The KhoiKhoi called white people "ugly people". So-called coloureds desire to assimilate with whites. The Chief said white people there claim that their great grand mother was an Indian Squaw. I called him an Indian and he said "I am a Native American; I haven't seen a real Indian yet because I haven't been to India". The Maori and Native Americans have similar stories to the KhoiSan.

We are very proud people. My grandfather said we are not proud we are stupid. We are very proud that we want nothing from nobody. Our council says we want nothing from nobody because we will do it ourselves and we will do it our own way. Uncle Joe has a Zulu wife. We'll do it ourselves and do it our own way. Cultural councils have been set up for KhoiSan culture.

I left ANC because of "obstructionist habits" around negotiations around land rights. I said to them that I only joined the ANC because I wanted my land back. I think I was promised that when liberation comes the KhoiKhoi will get its land back, but now they sold the land back to the conquerors. I can't live with that. I'm very sorry. So I stopped

the negotiations. I said to them that they didn't struggle, I struggled here.¹⁸⁹ I was shot at, banned twice, jailed. I would never agree to that. But apparently that the inside people that it was previously agreed that the land won't be touched. I can understand that but I cannot live with it. Then everybody – the Germans, Irish and St. Helenans said “Resign, resign”. So I came home and thought about it. That time was the time to climb the political ladder. Eventually I was driven to the point where I resigned. I wrote Mandela a letter, Steve Tshwete phoned me and told me that Mandela would fly to the Cape Town airport to talk to me in the morning. I thought about it long and hard. I could not remain a member of the ANC because of the land question. I worked for the UDF and ANC in Section 4. I said no I can't do that and won't do that. It doesn't mean that I don't have respect for President Mandela. I will always admire him for the rest of my life. In fact the Outeniquas made Mandela honorary chief. The KhoiKhoi never made any other nation a chief. It's against their nature to do this unless you are of my blood. So I resigned the following day and amonth after two people came, I didn't know they came from the Democratic Party. *Hulle sê vir my* [they said to me] “Hello Mr Marks. You must join us.” I said “You are the land grabbers, why must I join you?” The man put up a good argument and I joined the DP and stayed 5 years with them. At the press conference, Zack de Beer said “*Hy is nou een van onse manne*”[He is one of us]. I said “I can never be one of you. I can join the piece of paper that says it's the Democratic Party.” They don't know me.¹⁹⁰

I retired. White people are inherently racist. Not that they want to be racist. It is inherent in them to be like that. They don't know any other way. They are nice to your face and the moment you walk away they say something different. It's because of their history. White people came into this country, stole my land, decimated my culture, forced me to change to their religion. I didn't know my own religion. I am smothered by the Christian religion. Then I remember good Christians who came here. Wagenaar described KhoiKhoi like this “*kaffirs is spierenwitten, geslitten oe, met 'n moessie in gesiggen, gekoekende hare and stinkende vreeslik*”[Kaffirs are white, have slanted eyes, with moles on their faces, nappy hair and stink terribly]. Now my grandfather used to emphasise Wagenaar a lot. He said we must understand what he was saying. It's important what he said. Wagenaar became the second governor of the Cape after van Riebeeck left. He explained that the Khoi took the fat tailed sheep fat and rubbed himself with it for sun protection. It smells like hell and acted as a snake repellent. Those families were rich. One family had 100 men and 400 children with 200 000 cattle. I spoke at the University of Pretoria last year and I almost got killed. I said Afrikaners is 42% German, 42% French Huguenot, 11% Dutch, and the rest is pure KhoiKhoi. Only Van Riebeeck and one of his scribes came with wives the others came without. They made do with what was here. I said to them *julle is 'n halwe hotnot, 'n kleurling* [you are half 'hottentot', a coloured].

¹⁸⁹ For the most part, the leadership of the ANC after its unbanning was constituted by members who had returned from exile hence Uncle Joe's reference to them not being 'here' in South Africa during the struggle.

¹⁹⁰ Uncle Joe left the ANC for the Democratic Party and lost some of his political credibility for his party 'hopping'.

Let me touch on the coloureds. I'm sure Reggie [September] expanded on that. I joined the Coloured People's Congress and very joined it reluctantly. I told him the last time he was here "*ek het maar net gejoin omdat daar 'n mooi cherrrie was. Jy weet die cherries het my so gepressurise*" [I only joined because of a beautiful woman. You know the women pressured me]. I said I'm not a coloured. The organization's name was Coloured People's Congress. The only desire coloured people have is to assimilate with people who are white. It's never going to happen. I said the English said you're a non-European. The white blood we obtained was when we were slaves. The master slept with the female slaves; the cruelty of the Dutch. I got my oral stuff but I also confirmed it with written history that coloured people have this desire to be white and I check [see] about ten everyday. *Julle Sturwies* [you posers].

All my foreign students want to know what the coloureds think. *Ons praat mos Afrikaans, die variasie van die Kaap is mos suiwer Afrikaans. Ons het dié taal gemaak met sweet en bloed en tranes* [We speak Afrikaans, a Cape variation is pure Afrikaans. We created this language with our sweat, blood and tears], because we were punished for speaking KhoiKhoi. At that time we were three times more than the slaves. The masters were afraid that we were ganging up on them because they couldn't understand our language. The good slaves were Malay slaves who came from Malaysia. They would report to the master. Even Wagenaar spoke about our language. He said "*Kaffirs' praat 'n taal wat God nie eens kan verstaan nie*" ['Kaffirs' speak a language that not God can even understand].

Coloured people are children of the KhoiKhoi. Some of them are victims of rape. There were a few when the English came later who married indigenous people. It is less than 1%. I went to Namaqualand and saw how they look. I go to those places with Professor Cohen and Morris. I went to *Willetrap* [Wildwalk] in Namaqualand. I was so taken aback that white people have contempt for us; even when they bury us. I was driving. I drove past the place three times even though the mileage said we should be there. Usually in the rural area the main road or the railway line indicates who you are. When I came there I assumed that this was the white area. When I say white I mean white-white. I said "*Meneertjie, waar woon die outas*". I tried to use outta. When he opened his mouth he was so Namaqua. *Hy se: "Julle moet nie praat soos 'n stommerak nie. Ons bly hierso. Die hoof bly daar waar die horings is* [You mustn't talk like idiots. We stay here. The Chief stays at the house with the horns]. I stopped there. Cape Town people, we lose who we are. I'm not a KhoiKhoi anymore. I've lost it. We merged with coloured people. When I saw the chief I said "Good God, this is my grandfather all over again". The chief took us in. I love the KhoiKhoi completely. The KhoiKhoi are self-sufficient.

The cruelty of colonizers. The more I talk to other people in other areas... let me give you a worst case scenario. When slave gave birth to the master's child, the slave woman raised the child up to 10 years old then sold on the market. You can imagine that slave woman's pain when she sees her baby being sold on the market. The pain of giving up a child. Wellington, just outside Cape Town, was the biggest slave market. The Cape had a lot of cruelty. Sell them far away from their families, they broke up families. That woman

would never see her daughter again. He will never see his daughter either. I want to talk about the cruelty of slavery. I don't know if the Griqua had the same experiences.

Ons gaan nie kerk nie ons is die Outeniquas. Onse geloof is 37 000 jaar oud. Julle Kriste se nuwe besigheid is maar 1900 jaar oud. En die pankies met die rooi keffiyas hulle het ook 'n nuwe besigheid. Julle gaan goed aan [We don't go to church, we are the Outeniquas. Our religion is 37 000 years old. You Christians' business is only 1900 years old. And the Moslems with the red keffiyas, they also have a new business. You are doing well]. There are some old cultures being revived – religious practices. There is status in religion – respectability. When I became chief at 22 years old in 1950s, after much thought I told them to go to church. My people felt isolated. All of them went to one church. When the Hottentot Law was passed, 'hottentots' could only live on a white man's farm or mission station if they went to church. My great-grandfather [Chief Dikkop] didn't want to go back to a farm so started looking for a missionary and he found Reverend Pacalt. He blew the horn and they all came to a tree in Grootbrak where he told them to give their heart to Jesus to get off the white man's land. We had the mission stations. We also built the church and the house for the missionaries. The missionary came to do the last rites he had already dedicated his soul to God and his ancestors. My spirit was there. He didn't take the last sacrament. When he died he was buried separate from his family because he didn't take the last rites. They were fed these lies from 1815 about my grandfather. *Hy was 'n dronklap* [a drunkard]. People lie about my grandfather.

We believe all religions are correct. How can there be a wrong religion if you praise God? Jesus said God is a spirit and those who worship him worship a spirit. At Victor Verster prison I tell the criminals *"ek gaan die boek lees"* [the Bible]. I did a pilgrimage and it was very good for me. From Bethlehem to Bethany. Jesus was a truly remarkable man, to carry a cross up that mountain? They forced a black man Simon to carry a cross. You know Jesus was a black man? Songs of Solomon chapter 1 verse 5. He said 'I am black'. Now your white masters have changed it now to 'brownish'. Are your masters not ashamed to do that? Mr Schofield he translated the Bible from Greek to English. He interpreted it as Black, like the Rose of Sharon, lily of the valley. Isaiah 53 verse 3: he was despised and rejected, a man of sorrow that were acquainted with grief and we hid as it were our faces from him.

My only mission in this world now is to raise the consciousness of people now called 'coloured'. I think the coloured people should reject that name with the contempt it deserves. There's no need to continue with that name. And our government? I spoke to different people in provincial government, culture and those people. Why do they insist on using that name? He said if we had a referendum tomorrow, 90% would say they're coloured. *Hulle het die history boks uitgehaal. Hulle het die kop oopgemaak en die history boksie uitgehaal. Hulle het volkol history. Hulle het net die naam wat die master uitgegee* [They took out the history box. They opened our heads and took out the history box. They have no history. They only have the name that the master gave them]. They are quite happy with the name the master gave them. All their lives they've had all the

names: kaffirs, Hottentots, Strandlopers, non-European, non-white, Cape Coloureds, Other Coloureds. They had to live with those names because they had no choice.

There are so many gangs in our areas. I worked with gangs all my life. I used to be a hawker. I lost my job in 1976. The previous boss told this one that they shouldn't give me a job. I was a troublemaker. Foremen were all fair skinned coloureds. I thanked them for sacking me. Coloureds had to join the strikes of 1976.¹⁹¹ Me and my children listened to Thabo Mbeki speaking from Lusaka. I was foreman at this stage. I took a week's sick leave. I was stopped from entering workplace when I went back. I never worked for the white man again. I became a hawker until 1979 when I helped form a women's group in Western Cape. I helped Mildred Lesiya, *deurmekaar* [disorganized] Mildred.¹⁹² I could not get them to become fused. Each one wanted to be a chief. I helped form civic organizations like CAHAC. I used to bring two busloads full to meetings in Athlone.

I used to work with gangs. My first love is to work with gangs. They're the end product of the South African social and political production line. Every person in my road had a baby before they got married, including my wife. Everyone had a baby, some had two babies. It's a custom by us. *Dan vat ons 'n man* [Then we'll get married]. The boyfriend is in the gang and he's got nothing to do with this baby. The poor girl is alone. The child grows up and sees the only smart guys in this road are gangsters. He has good clothes and a good second hand car. Every four years new gangs are born in the Steenberg/Retreat area. The Americans were born here in this township. Half the children here belong to that gang. The old gang was the Mongrels and the Mafias and so on. I don't mind. There's no remedy. I went to see Steve Tshwete when he was Minister of Police and told him that he must beat poverty first. If you want to beat the gangs, don't put them in jail because you don't have enough jails. It will take you five years to build a jail and there'll be three times the number of gangs. The problem is a socio-economic problem. Putting them in jail is not going to help.

So there the child goes and joins the gang. They give him a gun and say "*skiet 'n ander ou*" [Shoot a member of another gang]. He gets a reward for that. One thing about gangs, unlike politicians, they keep their promises. Gangsters keep their promise. They say you're going to do three years. *Jy sal iets leer daar in die tronk* [You'll learn something in jail]. They get tjappies to show which gang they belong to. The gangs are saying there's a better life with them. The biggest problem we have here is that the community will develop their own style of working with gangs, but it's the intelligentsia who causes all the problems we have with gangs in the area. *Dis daardie man met die sociology papier wat met die bende kom praat en kom verduidelik dat hulle hulle lewens styl kan verander as hulle xyz doen* [It's that man with the sociology degree who wants to speak to the gangs about changing their life style if they do xyz]. These are my children. They are flesh of my flesh, they are Khoikhoi children. They must survive. Yes, yes, they *stiek mes* [stab] and *kap jou in die kop* [stab you in the head]. We don't see it as terrible stuff.

¹⁹¹ The Soweto Uprising took place on 16 June 1976 when Black African children took to the streets to protest being taught in Afrikaans. The school boycotts spread to all Black areas across South Africa and workers started striking in sympathy and support of the students.

¹⁹² Mildred Lesiya was one of the ANC Women's League stalwarts in the Western Cape

Educated people are very opportunistic. Day after tomorrow you'll go there yourself. And you know what will happen to you? They will take your car, and your *sonbrillettjies, en horlosie*. *Dan hardloop jy poliesstasie toe. Dan kom jy na Boeta Joe toe* [sunglasses watch. Then you'll run to the police station. Then you'll come to Uncle Joe]. Uncle Joe will find your possessions. *Die groot probleem is die intelligentsia. Hulle wil 'n naam maak vir hulself*. [The big problem is the intelligentsia. They want to make a name for themselves]. They want to be an expert on gangs or sociologist par excellence. You make a film of Lavender Hill and ask gangs to pose with guns and it shows on tv. When that gang member looks for a job tomorrow and the employer hears he comes from Lavender Hill, he won't get the job. Our people look very pretty when they come out of their homes. Their homes aren't so pretty but they know how to dolly up. The employer won't give them a job because of the tv images.

It's all because the intelligentsia wants to create a name for it. They create the poor people, they go hungry, are marginalized. They can't get a job now. One thing about the KhoiKhoi they learn quick. They say they live in Steenberg. All those unnecessary contradictions cause problems. A person who works with the gangs must live here. A person outside the area can't work with those gangs because you don't have the feel for those gangs. You don't know the hunger *en die trane* [and the tears]. They must understand the '*taal*' [gang language]. *Ek sê vir die een intelligentsia, weet jy wat ou boeta, as daar een ding met gangs, dis so difficult, ek kan nie se almal kan dit doen nie. Ek behoort aan 'n ras wat hier behoort* [I said to one intellectual, do you know brother, if there's one thing about gangs, it's that they are difficult. Not everyone can work with them. I belong to a race that belongs here]. I belong here, I love this country. This is my people, this is my country. The gangs know me.

I belong to a people that belongs here. The Outeniquas never take something for nothing – we are a proud people. We're not like the Griquas who have an open hand policy. There are many chiefs - Cecil Le Fleur was made main chief of Griquas and other tribes. You said you come from Kokstad – Adam Kok V is chief there. Daar's baie chiefs and it's all about the open hand policy. They want and they get. The people are not educated. The Outeniqua are well educated. The Griqua are at Kranshoek because they collaborated so nicely with the boere and the National Party that they put [Anthony] Le Fleur there in Kranshoek. He was made the official chief. The Outeniqua has two chiefs – both are custodians of the tribe. Our chief is low on the totempole. The elders are the ones that rule. I always tell them that I was never a ruler because I was never an elder. I was always a chief. Chiefs have a symbolic role in oral history. The elders decide everything.

The Africans who came from the rest of Africa, they're not from here. I asked Nelson Mandela about the KhoiKhoi and Robben Island. He said "what KhoiKhoi"? Africans are our brothers and sisters. I told President Mandela "I am more African than you sir. I am here 37 000 years. You've only been here 1 000 years."

Our people don't know who they are.

Michael Weeder, 12 February 2004 – Priest St Phillips Church, Woodstock

I was born in 1957 at the Cape Peninsula Maternity Home. I was born in the Kramat Circle so that was supposed to make me a “True Capetonian”. We were living in the West end the city at that time with my father’s family in Amsterdam Street. My father’s side of the family always lived in close proximity to the harbor. My dad actually lived up in Loder Street but I mention that because in my present day remembering the place that has loomed very large and prominent is the harbor and the Waterkant area. If you go up there’s a place called the Cape Quarter. It’s very gentrified. There have been no significant land claims instituted by members of the community that lived there. There are no traces today of the community that lived there from 1912 onwards to 1970s except the Silesian Institute, Prestwick Street Primary, my dad went to school there, and the Prestwick Street burial ground that was discovered sometime last year. I only lived there until the age of four but it was a very interesting community. A lot of the people that lived there, were descendants of first generation immigrants. For example, my great-grandfather came from Reunion. I grew up with the understanding that he was a Frenchman and only later on I saw his death certificate. He was a French Creole fisherman who came here in the 1870s and got married to my great-grandmother, Sarah Edwards who was a country person from Pniel. Already those variants - in later life, that information starts making sense to you. My grandfather his dad came from St Helena Island. It was called District One. It was such a mixed area of immigrants and largely male immigrants from Reunion, Southern Europe, Madeira and those places, the Chinese and fafi. Ask Vincent Kolbe, the trustee of the District Six Museum, about fafi in District Six.

We moved to District one. My Father worked in chemical place next to the City Hall. My mother was a factory worker. I don’t think she went beyond the early years of high school. She came from Garden Village and was third generation city dweller on her side of the family. It was a dormitory suburb where domestic workers of Pinelands came from. My grandfather was a city council worker and my grandmother was a domestic worker. Anyway, my parents were a quasi-rural Afrikaans speaking woman and my dad was respectable working class from the west end of the City. We first lived in Bridgetown and then dad purchased house in Fracteton. We were the emerging middle class but that was disrupted when my parents divorced when I was six years old. My dad remained on in the house in Fracteton and my mom and my two brothers moved to a house in Elsie’s River.

It was an interesting situation because the road that we lived in 40th Street. It divided on the one side Cravenby, an Indian community, and on the other side we had Afrikaans speaking coloured community and a lot of the guys I became friends with had Xhosa fathers, Malawian fathers. They were very mixed. Nomaindia Mfeketo, the Mayor and Mildred Lesiya also come from Elsie’s River. It was the poorest end of that sprawling area. We didn’t have a sense of it being a township. It had a rural feel to it because a lot of the Namaqualanders came to Elsie’s River in the 1960s and 70s. Obviously the Group Areas Act moved people from over the railway line from Vasco and Parrow and so on. It was very difficult for a seven year old, six year old to integrate initially because of

language. I spoke spoke Cape Town English. My mother assimilated the language of the community she had married into. So the language of choice in the house was English. Because of appearance it was assumed that I was Muslim or Indian and the English that I was exposed to was that of the Indian community. It set me aside in relation to the coloured community because *nou is jy 'n coolie of 'n slams* [now you are Indian or Muslim]. So I was made very sharply aware of difference at that state. In Cape Town I have no recollection of being discriminated against. It was a farewell to innocence coming to Elsie's River: English speaking with a bit of Cape Town jive. By all appearances middle class but everything else, a child of a factory worker in working class poor Elsie's River. So my mother would always insist that we went to school outside the community which was a good thing. First there was language; we went to English medium schools. We would have the daily journey out of the ghetto to Parrow where there was a Catholic School, St Augustines, which isn't there anymore. In Standard One [Grade 3], I was at Belvenia Avenue where I was beaten up because I was English speaking. I was terrible, I didn't know how to fight, nothing. I was just a little kid who stuck out. I remember once hearing that the teacher talking about 'die engelsmannetjie [the little Englishman]. It was terrible, the nuns were a lot better than that. I had a brother, when he started learning language, he spoke Afrikaans. When we'd go to the shop and Mark would be bullied by somebody and I come along. We're standing in the *Babbie* [Muslim owned] shop and Mark would say "Michael, daar's hy" [there he is]. The guy would look at us and Mark would say "voetsak". I'd be beaten up and my brother's encouraging me. I went to the library and got into karate class. I literally fought my way into acceptance. Literally.

The other thing of distinction, of identity formation was the Anglican Church. It was at the far end of 40th Street. We had to go to church and my mother would go with us in the morning but she would come back after service and we would stay for Sunday school. So we literally had to fight and negotiate our way back to the Indian side of 40th Street because I spoke English with a brother who didn't know how to curb his tongue, and so after Sunday school we eventually were accepted into the community. But we were accepted so conditionally by acquiring Afrikaans, hanging out with the kids and I learned at an early age to negotiate my way between predominantly hindu, English speaking and the religious practices of that community, the different festivals. I have distinct visual remembrance goats being slaughtered and the goat's head roasted with a very green branch lobbed off and sharpened and shoved up the nostril. On the other side, the coloured community.

I grew up with a very sharp awareness of identity. I didn't understand it as that but those formative influences really made me always aware of where we come from. I asked my mother: Where do coloured people come from? She would say they were always there and I would say no. It would frustrate my mother because I had this perennial curiosity at the time when parents didn't encourage that. She would say "Why do you want to know?" I remember at fourteen, the same thing came up. My mother asked me "Do you want to know how many white people are in the family?" Mother's answer: "there always were. Do you want to know how many white people are in our family?" I said Oh, we've got white people in the family? I didn't know we had

white people in the family. So I took out the telephone directory and I said all the Weeders live in coloured areas. There's Weeders in Lavender Hill, Weeders in Grassy Park, there's Weeders in Woodstock, so all the Weeders are related. Where's the white part of the family? I don't think there're whites in the family.

About coloured identity. Coming from Cape Town from that mixed community where people had Irish grandfathers or Irish husbands, Portuguese as opposed to District Six which had a more intense assimilation of cultures. This community in District One seemed to have a strong awareness of themselves as Capetonians of mixed ancestry, the mixed ancestry as in white and black. European was close enough to name and have a photograph. Not so much in my understanding a celebration of whiteness but just an awareness of origins. It was a port. We were so close to the harbor. The fishermen lived there in close proximity to the harbor and there were fishermen from all over the world.

In Elsie's River I had to choose. The question is did I choose or were choices made for me. Choose to become coloured or you were *donnerd* [bullied]. By virtue of being a Christian, an Anglican at St Andrews, the choice was pulled in a certain way. If I was Muslim in a predominantly Christian area, only the shopkeepers at that time would have been Muslim and their families, I would have probably been assimilated more into the Indian Community. But because of this Christian marker as a feature of my coloured identity that determined my lot. It was the tribe I ended up with in Elsie's River. So I grow up with the understanding that I am coloured and it's entrenched at the school. I go to this catholic school which is a government school run by Dominican sisters and in Standard 8 we have vocational guidance and have to say our career choices. Guys want to become teachers, detectives and I said no, I want to become a game warden. It was the just the most remote, exotic distance from my Elsie's River reality. A nun turned to me and said "Don't you know a coloured like you can't become a game warden? It's for white people only". My self-awareness was always being informed by two things: my colour and my economic condition. I was a poor *laaitie* [boy] from Elsie's River. If I said I was from Athlone, Athlone still had a veneer of respectability or Kensington, but I could not run away from the fact, I was always being reminded that I came from Elsie's River. In the school I remember sports day we were given the colours of the school. The best was given to me and the woodwork teacher said to me "Don't sleep in it". You know the shame that washes over you; the shame that is endorsed. I don't know at what point one distinguishes but your primary awareness is *jy's arm, man* [you're poor man]. You go to church and then sit in the bus and you see the candle wax on your shoe and you're ashamed of it. There was a girl I really admired; she was a really pretty girl, until I saw how her shoe was separated from her sole. All the romance is gone. *Jy's mooi maar jy's arm* [You're pretty but you're poor] and that ended it. Poverty – we weren't proud of that.

My mother had a very strong influence on me. She was a very interesting person to talk to. I still want to do that with my mom. You're always a child but at some point you can talk to your parent as an adult. She had a strong awareness that she was different. When I look at her wedding photographs she's a very beautiful woman. Soft black hair and very lovely features. Brown skin who marries this dark skinned English speaking Capetonian.

That's the prize – he was from Cape Town. I think he was a bit of a player, if I look at my dad's history. She used to go to opera at the Old Drill Hall. She would read the *Personality*, a magazine. Ask your mother about the *Personality*. My mother could not read Afrikaans. She had a sense of self-improvement. She would tell us "I want you to become a lawyer, I want you to become a doctor, and I want you to become a priest. I think I had to become the doctor. She was allocating and instilling in us that we are not like the rest of Elsie's River, whatever that meant. You must improve yourselves. She had a slogan: you must choose your friends in a way that you can learn from them. One can also say it's a kind of elitism but it was using the language determined by the framework of your world view. She was not a starkly politicized person. She had internalized the virtues of respectability, of going to church, of having good manners. Of doffing your cap when you get into the bus. I had to do that. So it was that middle class respectability in a working class woman. I think she acquired that sense when she did invisible mending, which is a skilled way of repairing tears on garments. She was taught that by a Jewish woman, Mrs Myburg. I think those influences made her assimilate. She took on very eagerly listening to opera, which was an acquired taste, love of music, love of dance, theatre. I think Cape Town at that time was under the influence of the Eon Group and she was a great Eon Group admirer. I think being in the Anglican Church also made it easier to assimilate into those Anglo values, which comes with the white priests from England.

At the age of about 12 I became 'Brother'. The younger ones couldn't call me Michael. Except Mark, the second eldest, could call me Michael. Denise and John had to call me 'Brother' and that made the principal at seminary in my first year call me 'Little Old Man' because my mother instituted me formally as the man of the house. She said "You are now the man of the house". She endowed me with the authority that was hers. When she's gone and I said "the washing must be taken off, come in and do your homework", that authority was mine. Along with that she was a working mother. She leaves at 7 in the morning and came home at six at night. At five o'clock I would put on the primus stove and I would put on the rice so that it's boiling, cut up and braise the onions, so by the time it's cooked I'm making a serious pot of curry. The curry comes from the fact that Mrs Chetty them were from Durban and they brought very good spices when they so we always had good food. That's where I learned: the kitchen of the Chetty's, my mother's kitchen. Ok, we refined it later on. The washing had to be hung up and I did it. We lived in Mrs Singh's servant's quarters, which was a row of rooms with a bathroom and toilet. There were other people in the yard. I would be called "*haai meisie*" [hello girl] because I'd be hanging washing, but because I could fight, and I'm not saying this in a boastful way, that helped me have a sense of comfortableness about being called *meisie*. It wasn't to cower me or intimidate me. I had to learn domestic skills. If my sister had been the eldest she would have done the work. Because I was the surrogate parent in many ways, I raised those kids. I changed my sister's nappies. Before I went to school I had to make sure that the one child had to be dropped off at the crèche and the other children had to be dropped off at their classrooms. My younger brother John grew up with my grandmother. When my mother was more settled, he came to live with us. For a year when he came to live with us I had to drop off Denise at crèche opposite Elsie's River High School, go to Elsie's River Station, take the train with John to Maitland Station and walk with him from Maitland Station to near the Alexander Mental institution so that he could walk to school

because he still went to school in Garden Village, near to where my granny lived. Then I must go back to school in Elsie's River. I had a very busy life. I won't say it was a burden. It was the way. In the communities where I lived other kids were doing a variation of the same job. It wasn't a question of gender. It was an economic necessity and she had to equip her kids to do certain things at a certain age for us to survive as a family.

I was Brother, a senior altar server at St Andrews, I was in the senior Bible study class, my mother was a Sunday school teacher and I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. The strongest impetus to my value system other than the school was from the church. I was fundamentally conservative. Respectability and conservatism went hand in hand then. I remember when I finished my Junior Certificate [JC], as they called it then -St Augustine's was a Senior Secondary from Standard 6 to 8 [Grades 8 to 10] my mother insisted that she wanted me to continue school. So she enrolled me at Good Hope Seminary, an Adventist high school in Kuilsriver. It was a private school. Where my mother got the money for me to be there I don't know. That's one question I must ask her. She'll probably tell me I owe her money but also I was Brother, I was now 15 when I went to Standard 9 [Grade 11]. We were interviewed by Mr Du Preez, a short coloured guy. He asked my mother "Mrs Weeder why do you want your son to come to a private school?" and my mother answered "Because I want him to become a good citizen". In the land of the unfree, in the land of apartheid, this little coloured boy must become a good citizen and that was a wonderful answer. She wasn't bullshitting. She believed that. That also gives you a clue that it was a politics of conformity. These things are wrong and I remember in Standard 9 at the Adventist school I had my first introduction to *dinge is verkeerd* [things are wrong]. I remember when I was in Standard 5, I think, walking home coming from primary school and my friend Krishna Pillay we're walking together. He said to me "Verwoerd is dead" in Std 5 [Grade 7]. I knew I had to be happy but I didn't know why. Krishna knew or he had a sense of it but that was the closest twinge that there's something evil out there and a bad man has died but I had no consciousness about it.

We were in assembly and it was Republic Day and they wanted the school to sing Die Stem. I'm singing it and there are older boys and the teachers, some of them were not singing it. That was the first moment of dissent within the restrictions of a very conservative institution. It was an awkwardness, "a stuttered moment". The nature of that institution is that it was a boarding school. It had day scholars too. There were coloured kids from all over; from Zambia. There was a girl from Pietersberg, Blanche Moyla, she was a top runner in the 1980s. Only later I realized that she was a so-called African from the Northern Transvaal, but she was in class with me and we were very good friends. Doreen Morris we were good friends. We used to travel together on the Modderdam line from Elsie's River and she was a beautiful woman. She always kept her hair short, dark skinned and for some reason we were friends. I think it was because we were in the same class. She had a sister Moira who was very vivacious and outgoing. Doreen was very good in Afrikaans that's how she got into television. I understood that she was of Malawian descent but I've seen subsequently, in an interview, that she has Xhosa parentage on the one side. So you have these slivers of influence. A boarding school by its nature, a lot of children were sent there because they are problematic. So you used to

get a sniff of political *gatvol*-ness [fedup] and dissidence but it was in a very diluted form mixed with teenage agro and anxiety and identifying establishments. I became an editor at school and I wrote an editorial about the state of the toilets. The white school principal, I must have been in Standard 10 [Grade 12] because Mr Du Preez had been replaced by this white guy. He called me in and said there were people from other parts of the country and the magazine was not making a good impression. I was so chuffed that this white man was consulting me. He said: "I'm informing you that this magazine will not be circulated. The editorial committee members were very unhappy about it – firstly it was a good magazine, but the content". I thought "Wow, I've finally got somebody's attention".

When I finished Matric [Grade 12] I was looking for work. I went to a place in Bellville South where they were making tvs, tv was just coming into the country so they were looking for people to employ. I got the job as a technician. A friend of mine said he was going to Coloured Affairs because they have good benefits and job security. Both of us went for the interview. They asked us how much we want to earn and I said R400 [about \$48 at today's exchange rate]. They laughed at me and said I should work at the bank not there. I earned R120 and had to start immediately. I had to go home to change my white bunny jacket and come back the next day. I was a welfare clerk in Roeland Street at Head Office. In that year we moved to Kraaifontein. My mother remarried. My dad died when I was 17 and in Matric. In 1976 I was working at Coloured Affairs. Interesting thing. I would have gone very far in that because I spoke English. I was working with Afrikaans speaking people if they heard a Wynberg English speaking person on Child Line they would call me. I had to learn the law related to work very quickly.

And then June 16, 1976. We would go lunchtime to town and be chased by riot police and then go back to work. There was no political thought to it. There was a call for a stayaway. No anonymous pamphlet would tell me not to go to work. I went to work. My friend and I were the only ones on duty in our department; my first act of collaboration with the system. I was really in the system. I got out of there. I worked there for 2 years. I got a bursary to study social work and I applied. In the interview they asked us "If you don't get this will you still work here?"¹⁹³ How do you answer that? Of course we didn't get it. I just got out of there. I met a guy John Esterhuysen, he got the bursary. To repay the bursary John had to work on holidays. John used to play with Ely's Coming, he used to play music at the Jolly Kaap. That was part of the unleashing of this conservative little boy from Elsie's River, going to the Jolly Kaap with John Esterhuysen and Bennie Ludsky who works for *The Argus*. So a whole crew of five guys would carry the sound system. John and I would sit and watch. They would pick up these women and we go to Cozi Corner [a fast food outlet in Wynberg] at one in the morning. It started my little social world that I was living in. my first introduction to jazz was Michael Franks. They would play it in the car. All those accumulative influences. John became involved in the jazz business. He played an important role in my appreciation for music. I developed an ear

¹⁹³ Coloured Affairs administered all bursaries for social work, education and nursing students from the coloured communities.

for other jazz. I heard ‘Mannenbergs’.¹⁹⁴ It opened mind for other things. I began reading, Martin Luther King and others. I was there for three years, 1976 – 1978.

Our church had a movement called “The Nomads – Give a Year of Your Life” where they send you for youth training. I was accepted but I didn’t have a driver’s license so I couldn’t go on the Nomad course but there was a course in Durban called National Youth Leadership Training Program. Three months in a place called Koinonia. There were twenty participants with a racial breakdown of 3 white women, 4 coloured men from Cape Town, and the rest was Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana and so forth. It blew my mind. We were introduced to Black consciousness, class analysis and history. It was an intense grounding; anything from spirituality, economic, small is beautiful by Schumaker, different. I went from the Weeder’s well behaved boy to a boy who drank Old Brown Sherry.¹⁹⁵ It was a more deliberate forced intervention of a political influence. I went was *gatvol* [fedup] with everybody. I was really this rebel. Anything that represented authority, or spoke to me in an antagonistic way; I was against authority. When I came off the course three months later there was no work for me. The Anglican Church wouldn’t employ me. Koinonia was a place for radicals. It wasn’t helped by my attitude. You’ve been exposed for three months to another world and when you come off that, I’m Black and I’m proud, I’m from a working class. Thank God for class analysis because that gave me such a great pride. Nothing the church ever taught me. The church taught me to be ashamed of my color; it didn’t explain my poverty so I internalized that. It is a religious framework of conservatism so I had a very low self-esteem. The Black consciousness said “*Jou moer*, this is not right” [Fuck you!].

I couldn’t find work and then the Young Christian Service, the YCS, recruited me and offered me a job. I was a school organizer and tried to set up SRCs [Student Representative Councils] at St Columbus, Alexander Sinton and I did that for a year and then the local Anglican Church, we had moved to Mitchell’s Plain by then, in 1980 I was employed by the Anglican Church to work from church but amongst the community. They were concerned about gangs. At that time a whole third generation of township boys had moved into Mitchell’s Plain and had gone to university. Bernie Peterson was studying social work; Trevor Oosterwyk was studying history and a whole lot of other guys. We were “the great unwashed of Cape” *gooied* [thrown] together. I was getting my politics at YCS. The politics was the mass boycotts of 1980s, Fattis and Monis strike and so on. We were introduced to a guy called Marcus Solomons. He was our first Robben Islander. He draws us into study groups on basic Marxist Leninism. We thought he was ANC. So that was another influence, those Mitchell’s Plain years. In our minds we formally became an outlying part of ANC. It was a wonderful thing. We didn’t know about the Unity Movement. We didn’t go to schools that were very radical. The teachers just *bliksemed* [beat us] and kept law and order at the schools. Suddenly here was the politics, we were revolutionary coloureds. Here was something that made sense to us. Bernie came from Heideveld, Trevor from Bonteheuwel. I was suddenly with a band of

¹⁹⁴ ‘Mannenbergs’ was a seminal jazz piece recorded in 1974 by Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahiem), Robbie Jansen and Basil ‘Mannenbergs’ Coetzee, musicians from coloured townships in the Western Cape.

¹⁹⁵ This is a typical Western Cape drink of sweet sherry popular during the long, wet winter months in the Cape.

people, with my dissidence, my individual rebelliousness, I found a camaraderie. We didn't here the word comrade at that time. I was suddenly flung into such a strong sense of belonging. With all my alienation and my religious church, and my Elsie River days, all that came together in that Mitchell's Plain year. That one year was the consolidation of different strands of experience. I always had a lovely sense of history. Before I went to Seminary we brought out a magazine, it was called *Spokes*, a youth magazine. It was a wheel that signified the unions, the community, the youth. When I came back from my first term at Seminary, Trevor [Manuel] asked me "Why didn't you tell us this was an ANC thing?" I didn't know that the Congress Alliance had a wheel symbol. It was something that was invented in the 1950s and resurfaces in Mitchell's Plain in a coloured consciousness.¹⁹⁶

I went to Seminary with the idea that I'm ANC and the nature of my politics. I went to a traditionally conservative, white seminary. Its constitution had a 'Whites Only' rule but when I went there they changed it. Eventually when I came to seminary our College used to play against the Army and against Rhodes University. Eventually myself and Charles Williams we pushed SACOS.¹⁹⁷ Seminary became another radicalization in the face of the conservatism of what I was experiencing there. For the first time I was encountering white, middle class Christians so we had to sharpen our debate. There was a student component of 55 of which 20 was Black. The average age was 23/24, our highest qualification was Matric. I was one of the few English speaking Blacks there and we formed the Black Students Society. It freaked them out. It was three years. I am still not recovered from that because I was so demonized because they knew I was ANC. I remember a guy from Kensington who was my senior by two years. He asked me whether I knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was my personal Savior. I swore at him because he was scratching at a raw nerve, my own insecurity about my belief because of my politics. Does God approve of this? You suddenly realize that you're in an ideological and institutional wilderness. There's your Trevor Huddlestones and your Tutus that were individuals. But suddenly we're part of a movement of young, working class, Christian laities but who also believe in struggle. But there's nothing to guide us. We had to take a little Liberation theology here, a little Black theology there. A lot of politics. Being in the Eastern Cape made it possible, because you go to a worker meeting in Mdantsane in an old bioscope and 300 workers singing revolutionary songs. Before the meeting starts formally *madala* [an old man] would get up and read from the Bible and say a prayer. And when you start visiting in the Pedi district, there's a whole new way of being Christian. People had family on Robben Island, in prison and they were religious beings. It concretized my religious belief in terms of political expression. It was the organized African that gave me such a lovely sense of belonging.

I remember going into Grahamstown at night, you came in by car and I'd go into town the next day to phone my mother to say I'd arrived okay. I realized there was something

¹⁹⁶ The United Democratic Front (UDF) eventually in 1983 adopted the wheel symbol to signify working together in the community against apartheid.

¹⁹⁷ The South African Congress of Sport (SACOS) believed that normal sport would not be played in an abnormal society therefore did not participate in white organised sports at predominantly white clubs, colleges and universities.

wrong and I was looking for something. Where are the coloured people? That was also a place where Africans were in the majority and comfortably so.

The Black Consciousness Movement sharpened my awareness of being a Black person. I was very antagonistic towards the term 'coloured' because we're Black, you're not coloured. Coloured is a nothingness. I didn't have a sense of doing it for the ANC. The ANC was about me, what it did for me, what it equipped me with, the realization that there was a place for me in the struggle. There was a struggle for us, not for them. It was a crucial understanding. I wasn't fighting anyone's war but I was fighting a liberation struggle. But the non-racialism of the ANC I think undervalued the differences. They wanted to maximize a broad united involvement, a broad united anti-apartheid front. It wasn't about the color of your skin but about the nature of your commitment. Gradually this sense of Blackness was blurred beneath it, qualified in limited detail non-racialism. But I started imbuing a sense of African-ness but it was in a limited form also: Africanness as in a political Africanness; Xhosa freedom songs. An awareness of a Nguni Africa. I can tell you about Bambata and so forth. With this embrace of Nguni-dominated resistance there was a bashfulness about Afrikaans, about the patois. We used to sing "Ons swart mense, seuns van slawe, wil ons land terug hê" [We Black people, sons of slaves, want our land returned] and we sang it to "Oh my Darling Clementine. *Ons het gelag.*[we laughed]; we were so shy about it because the hallmark of our revolutionary commitment was our ability to sing Xhosa freedom songs. We had become Nguni-fied. It is a process, and I have no regrets about it. It made sense in that context.

There was an awkwardness about slaves. They were not real. Slaves were *mak-mense* [docile people]. The fact that they were slaves in the first place means that they were beaten. Whereas the African working class was the heart of the revolution, and that's right. But by appreciating Africanness compromised our own identity because there was a very underdeveloped self-awareness about our Ndi'mlo [this is who is am]. Now which way am I African – now that was a post-liberation question. Pre-liberation was about what are you doing to change situation and how are you going to do it. We didn't even think of ourselves as African. We had a political identity and for me Blackness as a political expression is limited whereas African has a much more comprehensive thing about your spirit. About the essence of who you are. The coloured's overwhelming commitment to the National Party woke us out of a great illusion about people's consciousness. Were they now really being racist people? What craziness are they responding when they go the way they did [in 1994]? Many leaders from the UDF days were meeting to look at that. They felt that the ANC with its uncritical application of national question, the fact that the revolution must be led by the majority, the view was that the ANC should have contextualized that piece of dogma in the Western Cape where a national minority were a regional majority. What does it mean in terms of leadership, programs and issues? We realized with the UDF, those imbalances in social conditions meant that when you call a rent boycott in Guguletu doesn't necessarily translate into what those people in Mannenberg can identify with. There were other issues there. There was rampant gangsterism that surfaced occasionally in the African townships but in the coloured townships it was a way of life, it was a culture.

It is then that was I enlightened. I used to get irritated with them because they always used to meet when I was in church. This one Sunday they extended it to a later time and I was asked to give an input. These were all people I knew and I just took then down memory lane, the Mitchell's Plain years and the little glimpses of consciousness in terms of post-apartheid. *Ons swartmense* [our Black people] and slavery. I said let's look at pre-apartheid. Maybe that's the problem we have that we gave apartheid excessive responsibility and power. It doesn't make sense to limit it to apartheid, we need to go before that. I spoke about slavery, what it affects, how we remember. There's almost an instinctive remembrance. I feel it in my life. Once, about two years ago, I went to a yoga class and I was early. I went to walk around the garden. When I came back there were white people and I greeted them and they nodded; they were cold. I went back into the garden and I came back and the whole room was full of white people. I stood up against the wall and I felt myself sliding down. I went into a total retreat and that is an ancestral remembering. Afterwards when the class was over there was a total transformation. They came over and said how are you, you did well, you must come again. I realized they enter into a space that I enter in church. I am a bit withdrawn focused on why we are there and afterwards there's an easing of the moment. I remember walking across the Waterfront. It was a lovely day, I had just had a cup of coffee, browsing around Exclusive Books. So I had done all the things I love doing. Out of the blue I had a momentary intense hatred of white people. That blew my mind because I don't think in terms of hatred and it's got nothing to do with my Christianity. It was blazing, searing. I spoke to a friend and explained that to him. He said "maybe somewhere in your life, in your background, some white person did a bad thing to a member of your family and you have an imprint of that, the awareness of it. It makes sense.

This thing of slavery, I'm wondering off now, it partly how we imbibe certain instincts in the body. If it reflects in the body it also reflects in the mind of your collective memory of what you remember. Under stress and under trauma when the familiarity of fascism and the regularity. Fascism is illustrated in the biblical story of Exodus. The Hebrews are liberated and they're in the desert. They have freedom now but freedom means that they don't know what's over the next hill, or where the next meal is going to come from. *Gaan hulle nou dood in die woestyn* [Will they die in the desert]? They say they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. In that fleshpot there was meat, the slave master woke you up at five o'clock and walked you to where you had to work. Everything was regulated. Even if you're oppressed that conformity settles in on your mind. There's a lovely statement that Nigel Worden makes in a book of slavery where he says the slaves with muskets standing guard shows the slave has come to terms with his lot in life. A slave with a musket is a good image of the musket on guard in you consciousness. What are you protecting, who are you protecting? Who is the enemy? I think that has seeped into the coloured body politic. We have a slave paradigm, because of this neglectedness. It's not like in Haiti history where the mulattoes stood up and did the impossible. It's not how slavery is remembered in the US. White America fought for other reasons but the flag for slave freedom was held high. White hegemony has also ensured that there's no downplaying of horror of slavery because you have to show how bad slavery was and how good the white people were for freeing slaves. We don't have that. The stories are there but they're scattered individual acts of resistance.

December First Movement, for me as an ANC person, looked at the national question. How it informed coloured consciousness and how the very basis of the South African economy, the social ideology that became apartheid and how all that was developed under the pressures of slavery. Let's incorporate that into the national narrative. When I am a Xhosa speaking person and I say I'm African I mean that as a boy I will go to the bush at a certain time, my foreskin will be cut, I will come out of there a man. At the moment of pain I shout "I am a man". Even if I board all the time in Guguletu, my ancestral home is there in the Transkei, Ciskei somewhere. Even if I grew up in the Karoo, Xhosa-land is there. There's a strong oral tradition that roots me, I am the child of the child of the clan. Whatever colonialism did, it did not take that away. In fact apartheid, in a strange way, secured that because of its Bantustan policies. The sound archives of the apartheid SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation] are rich with this information that has been preserved: the oral tradition, anecdotes, musical forms, and so on.

The nature of slavery is to disarm the slave, to strip him of everything that allows him to say "Ndimlo". You have to separate people who speak the same language from each other. Out of that almost *ex nihilo* comes the patois, it is a resistance language. This is how we are African. It's in its projection of slavery in its diversity. Slaves were also African from Mozambique, Madagascar, and so on. They were also Asian. The St Helenans who came here brought those slave genes with them from Ghana, East Asians and the Caucasian influence. Along with that, and the First Nation of who we are also, bring that together and this is niggers we are and this is how we are niggers in this land of ours. But it was mischievously the first Chinese wall that was drawn between the KhoiSan and slaves. Joey Little said to me there were never slaves in South Africa. The KhoiSan story is now presented in a revisionist way saying 'we were never slaves' as if it was something to be ashamed of. What is the difference between a slave on a farm in Durbanville and a KhoiSan homeless, detribalized there. There's no difference. That slave owner is not going to make a distinction between what the law says about the nigger who is Khoi and the nigger who is a slave. They don't make that distinction. Out of that, in the field there's the Bastard Hottentot who is a mixture of slave and Khoi.

I'm just saying how the December First initiative was aborted for ethnic politics' celebration of the First Nation in an idealized rewritten way. If all you can cite me are Van Riebeeck's diaries or what a missionary is saying about the KhoiSan and what they are doing under the moon [shakes his head]. You must have a critical hermeneutic of what you read. You can't quote Van Riebeeck's diaries uncritically; as if it's gospel. That's what they do. What you learn from liberation theology is that you have to be critical of the text. You have to be suspicious of the writing. Be suspicious of the agenda and try to discern the context within which the text was written. The same must apply to whatever was written about KhoiSan in the Victorian period. In this context there's been narrow reading. Joey Little is a chief, all the Boesaks are chiefs except Allan. Allan [Boesak] says 'n boesman met gladde hare is 'n chief? [A 'hotnot' with straight hair is a chief?]. I spoke to Allan about this and asked him where he was in all this. He said "You can't build a struggle on hearsay and theory and projection". The KhoiSan identity

becomes coloured by another name because the benchmark is Nguni definition of this is how we are a people. Or Zulu. It's a post-modern tribalism restaged and reconstructed and it's driven by impulse of separateness and a quest for purity. I can't be KhoiSan. You don't know who my grandmother is but they'll say *hy's slams* [he's Muslim]. It's a politics of ethnicity on appearance and it doesn't look at power. That was the second reason that the Movement was aborted.

The December First Movement was seen to be pursuing an agenda that makes this whole thing about who is African. It's not a question mark anymore. It's a statement. If we are fighting for this cappuccino cup and we've got equal access to it now, I've got to devalue your stake in this cup and I've got to use it to say that you're not fully African or you've not suffered as I have. Now whether my suffering goes back three hundred years time, I still bear the scars on my psyche. Because you were given a past in the 1950s and 1960s and is highly photographed, there's a whole visual representation of the documentation of the horrors of apartheid and my bearing a pass because I was a slave that had to go from Parrow to Goodwood farms, you my boss had to give me a *pasbrief* [pass letter] to say "this is the slave of Jan Hendrik Verwoerd and he is on legal business". You had to have that information.

December First was demonized and the biggest hatchet men in this thing were the coloureds in the unions and the ANC to show much African they are within the image of Nguni African: the African as noble and the African as pure. They had to show how they went for these narrow coloureds. So to show how big I am, I have to go against my own people. The reason why we aborted the project because we were lazy, middle class and we didn't want to deploy the energy you need to build a movement. We had ANC branches who wanted to come and join us because they want to pursue a coloured thing. It scared the hell out of us. We were five middle aged revolutionaries, all short guys, all pot-bellied. We weren't trying to make the revolution. We were intellectuals contributing to a debate. We didn't want to be activists on the issue. It was exaggerated. Trevor [Manual] understood. Tony Yengeni who was the ANC Chief Whip in Parliament at the time understood, Dullah Omar who was the ANC leader in the province at that time said we existed but he didn't appreciate it. Reggie September started Roots and Visions to discuss these issues.

[*Weeder requested tape be switched off*]

Conversation resumes on question of the coloured vote in 1994.

Creole is an awkward word. We need to move towards a point where African means we're cool being coloured. Generations of people infused coloured with a particular meaning. "*Ek is 'n mens en dit is hoe ek 'n mens is*" [I am a person and this is how I am a person]. Coloured identity need not be permanent, it is temporary, not even pro-breyani, or *tweede nuwe jaar* [second New Year which is celebrated in the Cape region only], Sunday lunch, church, coloured because *ek is nie 'n slams nie* [I am not Muslim], coloured because I'm from Cape Town. There is a contestation for resources, they reinvent themselves. Coloured identity is personal. It is an identity which people dip into informs them: *ons mense, boer maak 'n plan, hotnotskhoegoed, rooibos, Boland,*

Namaqualand, jy/hulle [our people, an farmer makes do, a KhoiSan medicinal herb, Red Bush tea, the Boland, Namaqualand, you/them]. What about those people who voted for other parties? Why does the Auntie who votes for the New National Party brought up? What about Mangope [leader of homeland of Boputhatswana], or other homeland supporters? What about those quislings? The New National Party, which says “*julle is bruinmense*” [you are brown people], it was not about ideology but about culture. That was the genius of the De Klerk thing. I was Saul now I am Paul. I was blind and now I can see. He spoke into that into a community that was not more religious than the Xhosa-speaking Methodist but you must remember when slavery had ripped everything from you and they gave you a name that says you are now John Smith, a member of the AME [African Methodist Episcopal Church] or Peter Henry, a member of St Phillips Anglican Church. *En gaan jy huisbesoek by die mense in Kensington en hulle haal ‘n ou Bauman’s biscuits uit* [And when you do a home visit in Kensington and they serve biscuits] and they take out a yellow baptism certificate, they cherish it. That is their identity. They cherish it because that yellow paper says Ndimlo, this is who I am.

It’s not about spirituality. It’s not your Christian frame. It’s what defines you. It’s all about your broad colouredness. It’s that thing I have when I go to the ceremony yesterday, the Homecoming, and there’s a banner on the stage behind. I say there’s a lot of Muslims [on the banner].¹⁹⁸ What does it say about the Homecoming? What does it say about the people who conceptualized it? That they can’t see. This is the summary of my own journey. At the end of the day, when I look at the struggle, when I read names, I would for where am I in this picture. When I saw books on the ANC from the 1980s and 90s, when they were in exile in England, I would open it up to the glossary of names or the index. I would ask where is Basil February. What do they say about Basil February?¹⁹⁹ That says something about yourself. All those people are my heroes, this broad pantheon, *maar ek wil myself daar sien* [but I want to see myself there]. I think that’s what the coloured masses were picking up in the UDF. There was Gasant Solomons, there was the imam. There’s the Auntie from the local community in Bredasdorp, she’s a midwife. *Hy was ‘n goeie skoolhoof in Calvinia* [he was a good school principal in Calvinia]. There’s the *dominee* [minister] with the *kroeskop en die Afrikaans* [with the nappy hair and the Afrikaans], Boesak. *Nie daai stywe Anglicans nie* [Not those still Anglicans]. It was a composite leadership. That’s what the coloured community was about. *Dit was liefde and jammerte* [It was love and empathy] and support but in its diversity. We didn’t have Dr Abdurahman, *daai was van daai jare* [that was those years]. Cissy Gool *van daai jare*. We’re talking about leaders of today and people could see themselves in the UDF. The UDF was strongly supported in the coloured community. The ANC suffers from the triumphal urge of the church: everything must be done in its name. It has to win. People operate on a smartie box complex sometimes. *Nie almal wil geel lekkertjies wees nie* [not everyone wants to be a yellow

¹⁹⁸ The Homecoming celebrations in 2004 marked the return of people to the District Six area that has been redeveloped almost 40 years after people were forcibly removed from the area.

¹⁹⁹ Basil February and James April were the first armed coloured MK soldiers and were involved in a Rhodesian attack in 1967. See Van Driel’s MA thesis on this at www.sahistory.org.za.

sweet]. We want to be *Liquorice Allsorts* [a popular variety of multi-coloured liquorice]. If I'm liquorice I know I'm there.

Focus group: 3 April 2004, Johannesburg
Cheryl, Belinda, Gail, Althea, Sandra

Michele: I spoke to a friend and when I said I am doing research on coloured identity and I said I'd like to interview her, her response was: "But I'm not coloured. I'm an Africanist – I've never been coloured". And she laughed at me and said "Why are you doing that shit?" I believe it was extremely important for people who have been disassociated from their own self for such a long time. We've been moved as communities. Bad things have been said about us. We need to find ourselves now. Whether we do it as an individual or at a group level, I believe it's a process that we have to go through.

Belinda: - I probably define myself as a working class, coloured, youngster and not so young anymore. The impact of apartheid on my life has been that I knew I was never going to be poor like my parents. I never wanted to work in a factory. I didn't want to get up at five in the morning. So I knew what I wanted. I grew up in a household with five siblings. In the 1980s I didn't identify as coloured. I looked at myself as South African, as a Black South African. At the release of Mandela there was this talk about coloured people. When Mandela referred to coloured he would normally refer to Cheryl [Carolus] and Trevor [Manual]. I understood where he came from because at the time when he went to prison there were all these different parties with the Freedom Charter. So I could understand. But there is a bit of resentment because I sometimes feel that the contributions that coloured have made are not recorded and we are responsible for that because we don't record those contributions. If we start recording those contributions they would be known. We are guilty of not defining those roles we've played. It's up to us to write our stories, the contributions we have made and the contributions the coloured community has made. There was an article in the *Beeld* [Afrikaans daily], this journalist went to the apartheid museum and they made mention of Allan Hendrickse. She indicated that they didn't mention Ashley Kriel. At the same time they built a tombstone in Cape Town for Christopher Cloete. If their stories are not told they get lost and it looks as if there was no contribution. There are lots of people who made contributions.

Michele: I don't know if anyone saw *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*? I saw it in New York. Gail participated in the project. My immediate reaction was it looked as if no coloured people participated in politics in the 1980s.

Gail – Have you seen *Deafening Echoes*? There was no publicity on it on TV. They just put it on. It was about Robbie Waterwich. It was incredible because it had fantastic archival material.

Cheryl – it was made by Eugene Paramoer, he was in our CAYCO [Cape Youth Congress] branch. They had fantastic archives. Children can now learn about our contributions.

Belinda – the thing about history is if you write it you write it, you write it from your own perspective. It's political and personal, if you were there. I can only tell my children now – they're doing life orientation and government and so on – it is only now that she can proudly say her father was in prison. We can show her the prison numbers and letters because that's what we have left. Very easily it can become forgotten if it's not written. It becomes our responsibility to write it. You don't have to write a book about it but you have to record it for the next generation.

Althea: - I never really thought of myself as anything. I didn't grow up thinking that I'm a coloured. I come from a working class family. I'm the youngest of 12 in a two bedroomed house in Cape Town. I still don't think of myself as that. I prefer to think that we are all the same. The only thing I knew growing up is that we were not exactly equal. We always had this thing about what white people have and what we don't have. Growing up it wasn't about thinking what others don't have. That's the big problem in Cape Town. Being in the middle in Cape Town we had what others didn't have. The one thing that was striking to me when I was teaching already was that it was just before the first elections, I had a poster of Mandela in my class. A child asked "*Hoekom het juffrou daai kaffir se poster in die klas?*" [why does teacher have a poster of a kaffir in the class?]. I asked *wat maak hom 'n kaffir?* [What makes him a kaffir]. "*Kyk hoe swart is hy juffrouw*" [look how black he is]. This child was darker than Madiba. I said *gaan staan langs die poster van Madiba dan kyk ons wie van die twee is 'n kaffir* [stand next to the poster and we'll see which one is a kaffir]. That was the mentality. Coloured people themselves, the darker skinned people felt inferior to fairer coloured people.

My first experience with exposure to what apartheid was – I was in church youth, very religious, when a we went to the beach. We got onto the train in Athlone. Myself and another friend who was a little bit fair. My very own sister was with the others behind us. They allowed myself and this guy without stopping us they allowed us to walk on the beach. My very own sister could not walk on the beach where white people walked their dogs, but coloured people couldn't go. Are you telling me that your dog is more important than my sister or me? That was very close to home. My parents were not very political. My father was very religious. The Bible says you don't speak out against the government of the day. And he thought that to be wrong. He would always say that especially when we were out on boycotts. He would be very angry with me. I never got involved with that until I met my husband. It wasn't a change of mindset I had to go through. It's not as if now suddenly I saw the world differently. I was always against inequality of any kind. Even now when we talk about white people, I think we shouldn't do that because we're doing the same thing. Also the contributions a lot of white people made are not recognized. We know about them. Inequality in any sense is unacceptable.

Sandra – I'm from Ceres originally. My father was a building contractor and during the holidays we used to spend time with him on site. I remember Melkbosstrand, not far from

Cape Town. My father was originally from Sutherland. The shops used to say ‘white only’ and ‘black’ and ‘coloured’. Myself and two of my brothers were light in complexion and the other two were darker. So they would always stop us and say, no you can go in this side but the other two must go in on the other side. At the time it was a joke for us. When we go to Sutherland on a family holiday the same would happen. Because he was known in the town we could all go in the same door. But you play with your friends and you’re with other family members and they must go in through the back. But it was nothing serious. I worked in Montagu at a community service and we were four sharing a house on the border of the Group Areas, white and coloured. We were removed from the house in late 1980s. You’re not allowed to stay in this house because you’re classified coloured. I could look back and say it was a joke at the time, a couple of years before, but what we were going through, pack up and leave it was not a joke.

Michele – my first experience with race, or one of the earlier memories I have of race is going to one of the beaches between Fish Hoek and Simonstown, Clovelly, in winter to burst blue bottles with my mother. We could only go in winter because the cops were not on the beach and neither were other people. It was a white beach. I must have been 9 or 10, so in the 1970s. Another memory I have is in 1976 when I was in Standard 4 [Grade 6], we were sent home early. I could smell teargas the air but I didn’t know what was going on. They said something was going on with the high schools. I grew up with the idea that there was something different about me and one of my mother’s favorite stories is from when I was four or five years old. We drove past Newlands swimming pool sitting upstairs in the bus. I asked why can’t we go there, because when you sit upstairs you can see over the wall. My mother said “no, that’s only for white people” and I said what are we? And she said ‘you’re black’. I stuck my arm out, and she loves this, and I said I’m not black I’m white. Those early things of not being something constantly followed me. You mentioned hair in passing. Hair was a big thing in my life.

Belinda – but hair was a big thing and also the way you got treated. When I was in Standard 4 I was allowed to read the teacher’s marks because I had straight hair. I had lice in my hair but that didn’t matter. My mother used to say with my hair she had to take so much care because I would get lice in mine and my sisters wouldn’t get in theirs.²⁰⁰ If you were fair or lighter you were treated differently. If you had straight hair, *gladde hare*, [which literally means smooth hair] you could go much further (*gladde hare*). I remember Mr Bell, he was the religious instruction teacher. He would cover up for me and I thought I was a rude little brat. Lillian was my friend and I would be nasty with her because she didn’t have straight hair. That would separate us. I would get away with murder because of the issues of hair. Our teachers inadvertently encouraged that difference. Some of the Muslim girls were much lighter. I remember this girl had a Purdy hairstyle. She wasn’t very bright but she’d get all these accolades and at that point you realize you don’t have to be very bright but you must be beautiful and have straight hair. You get a star, you get to go to the Principal’s office. You were lighter and had straight hair. I remember Norman, a leader of a gang, looked at me and said I’m going to be his wife. I said no way, you’re too dark. There was no way I was going to marry him. And his hair! And

²⁰⁰ According to coloured myths lice don’t like kinky hair because it’s difficult for them to crawl in.

even now that we live up here and my mother discovered a Thabo calls my daughter. She obviously used the 'k' word but I told her it's not used in my house. A Black child that's calling Tamsin, oh my you people must come home. And I think why? Half the people who call there are African youngsters and the children who come to the house. She says, what are we going to do about the hair? And my beautiful grandchild, kind of thing. It's new, it's weird. For the new generation those things don't matter. The issue of *lobola* doesn't matter. When you get to it we'll deal with it but for now it doesn't. We try to raise our children differently. My sisters would always say, you know the one with the straight hair was the favorite and would get away with things. That's why they treated me badly. When my mother and father were at work they would give us condensed milk and bread and they would eat eggs. But we were allowed to eat eggs in the first week of the month. We were allowed to eat eggs during the school holidays but I couldn't get it because of the hair issue. You kind of discriminated in the family and because you were disadvantaged. I got two Christmas dresses because my Aunt bought one for me. But even now you find it in families where the darkest of the lot is the most racist. I find it in every family. We never talk about the black part of the family history, of the fact that my grandmother was very dark but we talk about the German and the Philippino part of the family. They hid the fact that one of the Aunts was gay. My mother doesn't talk beyond my grandmother. They don't like to talk about further than what we knew. We also don't know my mother's father because the man who raised her was not her father. They die with their secrets. My grandmother was dark. I said surely there must have been Africans in the family and she said, "look at all your hair, there's no way".

Michele - My father's white. We also have the whole family thing where history stopped at my grandmother. She spoke about 'Mr Thompson' who was her father and a Scot but we never heard about 'Elizabeth', her mother who was Zulu. That I think was common in most families that they spoke about the white side and not the black side. My parents couldn't get married because of the Group Areas Act and Mixed Marriages Act. I heard a year ago that they tried to get married but the Greek Orthodox Church refused to marry them because which community would be married into. They split. I never identified with my white side. I was always black because the politics in the house was Black. My mother never defined herself as coloured. When I told my mother I was interviewing coloured people and wanted to interview her, she said "What? Who are they?" I said that's exactly why I should interview her. She said "I don't have a story and in any case I'm not coloured, I'm black. Why would you want to call yourself coloured?"

Cheryl - I grew up in Port Elizabeth, I supposed, by standards of the community that I grew up in, we would be defined as middle class because we were an educated family by coloured standards. My father was a [school] principal. We saw ourselves and were seen by the community as middle class. I come from a fairly politicized family as well. My father was a member of the New Unity Movement so we grew up with the NUM argument that there is no race except the human race. We were Black and not coloured. Coloured was a word that we didn't define ourselves by. When I was in high school I got involved with the Black Consciousness Movement in Port Elizabeth which at that stage was fairly underground in terms of where the coloured community was but it was because of my father's involvement in politics. We were also labeled the 'Muslim Potgieters'

because my father was Muslim and his whole family was Muslim. He converted when he married my mother and he went to church even though my mother wasn't very religious. All the cultural symbols of being Muslim we adhered to. We never had alcohol in our house, we ate only halaal meat and we didn't eat pork.

I remember my first experience of racism or challenging the law of racism was when I was in primary school. We used to go to church and I never liked church because even at primary school I didn't like being managed, or being in a group and doing everything that everybody else does. So I used to go to church and I used to sit in the back. There was a park outside. I used to say I'm going to the toilet but then would slip out to the park. The park also had a 'whites only' sign. We weren't supposed to play there. I used to play in the park with other children because I was fair. At that stage I knew I wanted to be in the park and didn't want to be in church. One Sunday I got two other little girls to go with me but they were dark. We played in the park and somebody must have called the police. They said we couldn't play there and they wanted to take us out of the park. I said my father said we can be anywhere we want. There was a whole commotion and they had to call our parents out of the church. Initially I got reprimanded because I was slipping out of church and I was teaching other children who wanted to be in church bad behavior. They said that I told them to come to the park and that I did it every Sunday. But when we got home my father said that I should be in church and not influence other people but because we're Black we're not supposed to be there.

In terms of race, we were four children growing up and I was the lightest skinned of all of them. Within my family I didn't get privileges. My sister, who is darker than me with straighter hair and sort of looked Indian, we called her Guru, she got special privileges because my father thought that she would be the most discriminated against outside. So she was very protected in the family. From the coloured community they would say "Oh you're the one with the curly hair". Or they'd say "Cheryl's the one with curly hair". Five or six years ago I bumped into someone at the Grahamstown Festival and she said "Oh, I remember you were the Muslim Potgieters and you're the one with the curly hair" and I said "I wasn't the one with the curly hair. We were the Muslim Potgieters but I was the one with the kroes [nappy] hair". And then I came to UWC [University of the Western Cape] politicized but from a NUM Black Consciousness. During my first year already I came into contact with people who were more ANC. Then I was schooled on the NUM 10 Point Plan alone, not on the Freedom Charter. From then until now I've been ANC. I always say I just flirted with the NUM.

During the 1980s and 1990s I always labeled myself as Black. I think when we were in political organizations I can't remember thinking of myself consciously or debating are we coloured or Black. It was 1992 or post-1994 when that came in. At this stage I have a schism. It's my own issues I have to deal with. In a grouping like this I would be comfortable to say we are coloured, and when we talk we say you know coloured this and coloured that but out there, in work circumstances, I always define myself as Black. People I work with would publicly define me as Black maybe some level they say coloured. Theoretically I haven't engaged as an academic with the debate on the coloured identity. Other people are doing it. It was easier not to engage. I know Gail has written on

issues and Zimitri [Erasmus] and a range of other people. I do think that the coloured community is not a homogeneous group. I think if we look at it we have something more in common with people that are classified as other than coloured. Class also comes in then. This morning I was at the launch of the book on the ANC in exile about the people who were at the Solomon Mahlangu College in Tanzania. There were lots of comrades and people in exile who were there. Black people engaged with me and then when they realized that I knew all the songs, they realized I'm a comrade. I am fairly confrontational at a particular point in time. I do know that people, white and African, pigeonhole us and see us as coloured and theoretically I don't know sure how do we engage with this. Do we talk about building a South African identity but then there's something lost because I do know that the ordinary working class, if you go to Bonteheuwel, Mitchell's Plain, Eersterus or so on, people say 'we are coloured'. As academics it's easier to engage at another level that's maybe not moving us anywhere. Do you capture history as coloured or do you say that Uncle Reg [September] contributed to transformation, they were in the New Unity Movement or in the PAC [Pan Africanist Congress]. Do we capture them as South African or do we say they were coloured?

Maybe if we think of it as coloured South Africans it might be good for people who are feeling marginalized because of their identity that has been imposed on them but I also think that people have internalized that identity. We're at a crossroads like the New Unity Movement at that stage they were more theoretical than practical and maybe by saying we're all black and not wanting to engage we're falling into a new unity movement kind of trap. At another level we need to build a South African identity. I'm more conscious of the fact that I've been labeled coloured at some particular point in time than I was in the 1980s. In Pretoria people assume that I am from Lesotho. Initially I didn't know why that was the case then when I read Zake Mda's book *Madonna of Excelsior* I realized that I might look like these people who had African fathers and white mothers. They speak Sotho to me and the white people think I'm white. I don't always want to get into race but at particular points I make it clear that I am Black, I'm not white. I think I differ from a lot of other coloured people in that I come from a politicized family. I don't come from a background where the 'k' word was used. In 1994 it was a natural progression that my whole immediate family would vote for the ANC.

Belinda – I remember when I was in Standard 6 with the 1980s boycotts I remembered somewhere in the 1970s when I went to school in Mannenberg that there was a flag pole. We did on one or two occasions, I remember, we stood there and sang Die Stem on 31st May on Republic Day. And then all of a sudden we didn't and there was no flag. I was traumatized when they burned the school. They could do anything but burn the school. But even as a child, there was no interaction with African people except on the train to Bonteheuwel, when we visited family. And Milkie was African.²⁰¹ Up to the age of thirteen, when we moved to Mitchell's Plain. The white people I saw were the ones who came to the door to sell those oil paintings of sad children. They never had money to buy

²⁰¹ A milkman would deliver milk to coloured homes every morning at five or six. I remember when I was at school greeting him in the early morning because I was the first one up and would bring in the milk to make coffee for my mother and grandmother. He was called 'Milkie' regardless of whether it was the same man every morning or a different man on some days.

those things so we didn't have paintings. The riot police were white. They were the only whites we saw. We stood on the roof to see what was happening and the riot police would chase us. They would stand with the army vehicles in front of the house and tell us to get off the roof. And that was the only interaction with white people. I went to Hewat Training College, a coloured college for teachers, and there was no interaction with white or African people. I went to teach English at a school in Mitchell's Plain. The only white people were the white liberals who wore strange clothes. I always said working class people were clean people, I don't know why these white people would walk without brushing their hair. For us we were raised that we might not have money but we were clean. My interaction was with these white activists who had holes in their clothes and we wouldn't be seen with holes in their clothes. We would go to their houses and see how they eat and we wouldn't put out food like that for anyone. Their dogs were all over the house. On the few occasions I went to the white activists' homes for meetings I would always say why don't they treat themselves. We might not have expensive furniture but you would never find our homes looking like that and you would never find us walking in the road with clothes like that. We weren't raised like that.

That's been my interaction even in teaching. I went back to the townships, taught in the townships and of course the student politics. We interacted with COSAS. One of Sicelo said "I love you" and I said we don't do that and later finding out that he just liked me. We don't say I love yous, we just know each other. That was my interaction with African people and at CAYCO meetings. Even at places of work. Later in teaching we had a white woman who came to teach at the school and we had white teachers. One invited her children to her home in Stellenbosch and gave children tin mugs. In 1984 I would go to school with pamphlets and wear my UDF t-shirt or badge. I got involved in youth at 17 and it's been my life. I never really worked closely, never had to work closely with white people (English and Afrikaners). My first job in 1989 had a white Irish boss. At that stage it was so confident that I could say "go back to your own country". One becomes racist and intolerant towards these people who bring their own and they don't think we have the expertise. They give us the job where they give us the actual groundwork and they write the report. I was very angry because I associated being coloured with being poor. I always said why did my mother have more children because my sister couldn't go to university. So when I look at her life now she's 42 years old and she went to Standard 8 [Junior Certificate] and then my mother wanted her to leave school. If they had waited another year to do a Teacher's Diploma her life would have been so different but now she's a working class woman. She can't get out of the whole cycle of poverty. I said I'm not working in a factory and I went to borrow money for my registration at Hewat. We weren't allowed to borrow money from anyone. If we didn't have we went without. As the middle child I made my own way. There were certain things I didn't want. I knew I had to study. My guidance teacher used to say we must marry our equals and not have more than two children. We should aspire to something better. I remember seeing the adverts about houses with grass and the townships didn't have grass. Those were the visions that stuck with me. I went to borrow money from my Aunt and went to college.

Cheryl – Cleanliness of poverty

Michele – Gail might have different experiences. We all grew up in the Eastern or Western Cape while she grew up in Gauteng.

Gail – Indeed. I do think there's a lot of stuff that geographic location brings to identity. I'm from Johannesburg. My father from KwaZulu-Natal and my mother's family is from the Cape for generations before. My experiences were mediated very much by the fact that my father is a very dark skinned man who speaks fluent Zulu and was raised in KZN by his grandparents. My father's family was Zulu but they were very middleclass and were classified as coloured and took great pride in it, I now discovered. For me prior to four or five years ago I would rather die than be called coloured. I would beat you up. I was militant that I was a Black person and you are not going to call me coloured. But I reached the point where I realized that if you speak against yourself it's very bad. You can't live in a negative space; you can't live in a negative identity. You can't constantly be embattled in terms of your identity and I just felt that I needed to embrace this identity and I needed to start talking about colouredness and I needed to start exploring it because I come from a community of people to whom I do feel I owe a debt. I do feel that I owe a certain degree of responsibility and I do identify with coloured people. It's the gaydar thing, you know when gay people recognize other gay people. We can do the same thing. You know! You may be looking white but I know your ass. You can see people, you're from Cape Town so there must be something to this identity. I work with this guy from Cape Town. A young, young guy, a writer called Yazeed Kamaldien from Cape Town. He walked past my desk and someone said something and his response was "That's so *gam* ne". Yazeed is a Muslim boy from Cape Town. He's fair skinned with straight hair. His family identity is so far removed from mine and yet there's a commonality of experience and a connection. For me there's got to be something with this identity thing.

For me it was important that I need to make peace with coloured identity, I need to start celebrating the good things, to move away from the negativity. In my work around Sarah Bartman I began to understand where this negativity came from, this whole idea of *Gam* [People of Ham] and people of mixed blood as being less than. When you begin to study the history you begin to understand the animosity between coloureds and Xhosa. It all starts to make sense. For me that was a big flip in terms of my own identity, beginning to write about it, speak about to other people about it and beginning to celebrate it. There are things that should be celebrated. There are just wonderful things about being coloured, and sometimes they're difficult to quantify and to explain. I can't explain it, it just is. A word, a phrase, a song.

Belinda – it doesn't matter where you came from. It might have to do with being coloured and poor but I think it's similar with African people also. If you were raised poor there were certain things that we were familiar with. You were raised with brands, and clothing. You were raised in a certain way. The issue that you were coloured was never raised in the home. We had to go to church. My father didn't go to church but my father had to go to church. I want to agree with you. We need to celebrate. Experience in the Western Cape, I never felt I was a minority. You could walk into place and not feel

strange. But here in Pretoria I am a minority. I would realize that I hadn't seen coloured people for days. Where are they? I am a political activist, my God!

Gail – I grew up here so I don't feel that. I feel weird in the Western Cape. I struggle with Cape Town and Cape Town struggles with me.

Cheryl – I grew up in Eastern Cape. I always listen to people in the Western Cape who say they never had contact with African people. I had contact with African people. I'm not sure if it's my family or NUM politics. We grew up different. Father's sister married an African man.

Belinda – it's the geography of the place. In Cape Town you were divided completely. If we didn't use the train we would never have been in contact with African people.

Gail – I have African family. It was inconceivable. My first cousins are Lindiwe and Yolisa. My father speaks Zulu and my whole family from KwaZulu. At funerals and weddings they would come out of the woodwork. The diversity in my family is one of the most important things about being coloured. I'm much more comfortable about being coloured and it makes people profoundly uncomfortable. I say things at work and I can see they're not comfortable. For me, one of the blessings is being comfortable with diversity. I have family that looks like [Cheryl] and I have family that are pitch black. As a child you learn to accept that diversity. That is one trademark of colouredness. In one family you can have blonde, red head, and you're Black. I celebrate that diversity and give thanks for it.

Cheryl – we always say that if a coloured woman is pregnant that you don't know what the child is going to look like, it's a lucky dip. I wonder when we talk about symbols about colouredness like poverty and cleanliness. We laugh about it but you take a coloured house, I'm not sure if it's working class or what, but you see symbols like plastic on the sofa, emboya, hang their pictures high, the doilies, they have a wall cabinet. These are class indicators. African people have the same thing. Poor whites have the same. It's more a class thing than a coloured thing. In Michele's mother's house there are no pictures hanging.

Michele – my mother was a purist. My grandmother was the doily woman. People always used to give her doilies, and she'd starch them religiously and iron them. My mother moved away from that completely. My mother grew up in a very middle class family even for Kokstad. We came from Kokstad, the heart of the Griquas. My grandfather was Griqua. My grandmother was half white and half Zulu and grew up with a white family, the McCords. She could never speak Afrikaans so language was never an issue in our house in the sense that we never had to battle with English and Afrikaans because English was The Language. I could never speak Afrikaans at home because my grandmother didn't allow it. She pretended never to understand. My grandmother died at 92. She wasn't from Kokstad originally, she came from Natal. She grew up with the McCords who started the McCord's Hospital in KZN and they were from England. She had an aspiration to be white, to be respectable, to have status. When my mother came

along, she's the only girl of five children. She was extremely strong woman. She brought me up alone. She was politically active. She was a member of Apdusa and the TLSA [African People's Democratic Union of South Africa and the Teacher's League of South Africa). I never had the separation of coloured, African and white while I was growing up. I went to SACHED [South African Committee for Higher Education] and used to see white people and see African people but I lived in Grassy Park. So when I went to school at Cressy and got on a train that only had white and coloured people. I never came in social contact with white people until I was at Rhodes [University].

Cheryl – where did the people from Nyanga and Langa get on the train?

Belinda – they came from the squatter camps. Nyanga Station was the last station. You had Mannenberg on the one side and Nyanga Station on the other. African people were on that side and we were on the other side. And the only time there was that mix was when they had to get to Bonteheuwel where all the factories were and Langa Junction because Langa also had factories. That was the only kind of interaction.

Michele – for me living on the border of working class, I must admit I used to say I lived close to Wynberg. Grassy Park was not the Southern Suburbs in any stretch of the imagination. It was the Cape Flats. I aspired to be part of the middle class. I was running away from this negative coloured identity of the Cape Flats. It was drugs, gangsters, young girls with children.

Gail – When I discovered I was a coloured woman was when I was at university. Some Black boy was trying to get it on with me. I said 'not me'. He said "You're not so special because everyone knows that coloured women are easy." I'd never experienced that before.

Althea – I grew up in Athlone, the youngest of 12 children. I had a very protected childhood. I didn't see coloured people as promiscuous or drug addicts or drunks. But when I met Ash I said I've never seen so many bad people and they're your friends! Even in Matric [Grade 12] sex wasn't on my mind. For me meeting Ash showed me a whole new side of life than what I was exposed to as a child. Being the youngest of twelve I don't understand why I didn't know these things. Only myself and my sister are like me. The rest drink, they smoke. They lived. My one brother is a druggie, the other one is an alcoholic. It's not as if my family was so, you know, like I'm trying to say I am. I didn't see that. I didn't see coloured people as being like that.

Gail – I denied that that's why I was so stunned I almost fell off my chair. What are you talking about that coloured women are promiscuous. But that is a very common stereotype among Black people that coloured women are seen as easy.

Cheryl – working class Indian men also see coloured women as promiscuous.

Gail – my work around Sarah Bartman helped me make those connections. About the genitalia thing, it's about the big bums, it's about the Khoisan being the missing link

between apes and humans. It's a very deep historical thing. It's about mixed race women around the world. I don't know where that stereotype came from. It's so deeply ingrained. It pushed me to the other extreme. I was *togeknoop* [chaste]. I was a virgin going into Rhodes, I came out a virgin. I went the other way.

Michele – Gail was Catholic girl at university. Rhodes University has a saying that if the sword on the main statue of campus falls then a virgin has left Rhodes.

Gail – I was raised by a single parent because my parents got divorced when I was very young. She was a teacher. My mother is a very strong woman. She said to me that there's more to you than your sexuality. There's more to you than what's between your legs. Don't let people define you like that. Then when I heard about us being cheap I said "I'll show you cheap". I just never did.

Belinda – I found that experience in Durban. We were a group of students and a guy asked me to sleep with him. I said no way. He said I was from Cape Town and that's what Cape Town women do. It's a stereotype of coloured women. When we started talking about it you only realize how coloured women are perceived.

Gail – There's a lot of that coming from the Western Cape. For me it goes back definitely to attitudes to the Khoi and San. We were sexualized like animals. We were fucked indiscriminately because that's what animals get. When you look at what was written about them and their obsession with genitalia, you begin to realize that we were not people, we were just genitalia. A coloured woman is just her genitalia. There's nothing more to her. She's not an intellect, not emotion, she's just what's between her legs.

Michele – I think that probably comes from the fact that coloured people are seen to be a mixture of white and black that are produced through sex. When you look at the myth of origins of coloured people they say the settlers slept with the local people. We're surrounded by the sexual experience and as women we've been given that and taken on that sexual identity in a sense. Because we were sexually conceived, miscegenation, which is a bad word for me, obviously we must be easy. Surely we can't have any pride after coming from such bad seed.

Gail – If you read the "Black Peril Commissions", those commissions contained much information about this country that we need to go back to.²⁰² The white federations were coming from all over the country to give testimony to the commission about how they were so scared of the black male rapist. Coloureds tried to give their little five cents by saying that they were very concerned about the fact that their women were being raped by white men. The commissioner chair laughed as said that no white man in his right mind would want to have sex with a woman of colour, so you must be wrong. So it exists in reports, this idea that we are undesirable to them but they can have unlimited access to our bodies at any time.

²⁰² These commissions heard cases that were about interracial sexual relations. It's also known as the General Missionary Conference of 1912 in which interesting information was obtained about sexuality, the national question and politics of identity between whites and Blacks.

Cheryl – It’s also interesting that the African American women are also seen as oversexed. I think it’s probably the same because most African American women would be labeled as ‘coloured’.

Michele – When I was in the US I explained to my students. I spoke about my own experiences very often. I said that I am coloured. They looked at me and said “That’s a bad word” and I said that it doesn’t mean the same thing as it does in America. In American everyone who has one drop of Black blood is Black. Now there’s this three pronged thing – Hispanics, African Americans and whites. In the coloured community you feel you don’t belong anywhere. I couldn’t explain to them that coloured people were ‘not white’ in America. Coloured people were mixed people – it doesn’t matter what mix or parents were mixed. It’s beyond their conception. They couldn’t understand that.

Cheryl – I was always asked which parent is white. I think African American identity is problematic.

Gail – I think it’s much more problematic than coloured identity. A lot of African Americans come here with that attitude about coloured people. Sarah Jones, a poet who came here. She’s so clearly biracial. She said “You guys have an identity called coloured?” The tension in the venue! I just wanted to say “coloured in the house!” Yes we do have this identity called coloured. So what, what do you know about it? People can treat us with such contempt and disrespect. No one would make those comments about Xhosa people but we are fair game.

Althea – We do that amongst ourselves. When we discriminate about hair it’s the most ridiculous thing. We went to Port Elizabeth for the first time after Ash and I got together. We had a baby at the time. We went to visit his best friend. The mother is blind. She comes to me and feels my hair and she says “Ash, *jy ’t mooi gevat*” [you married well – because Althea has straight hair]. She can’t see me. She doesn’t know who I am. Fortunately Ash’s mother supported me. We ridicule colouredness amongst ourselves. How we evaluate/validate each other. I grew up being called Ginger by the *Babbie* [Muslim shop owner]. In the area where I stayed every second corner had a *babbie* shop. He would treat the other children quite badly. He treated me well because I was fair. We do it to each other. We don’t respect each other. Who would respect us?

Cheryl – We internalize what the oppressor says about us. Coloured people need to challenge those perceptions. Certain times one has to reclaim the negative and make it positive but it depends on who is using that language. Reclaim the word coloured. Language is power. If Gail says she’s coloured she does it in a positive way. It means terrible things for a lot of people. This African American says it and how she says it is a problem. It’s like the term ‘*moffie*’ [queer]. It’s who uses the term and how they use it. We need to reclaim the negative and make it positive.

Michele – It’s like like the word nigga. African Americans have reclaimed that word in American even though it’s still contentious.

Gail – It's like the word *gam*. A Xhosa friend was using the word and I said to her that would never ever use the word kaffir. You need to know the genesis of word. They need to know this to get the right to use the word. I can say *gam* but she can't. I don't understand how black people don't understand the pain they cause when they are prejudiced towards us.

Belinda – We cling to coloured identity

Gail – There is the pain of being coloured – dispossession of the land, of language. I'm struggling to come to terms with the dispossession of the land, the language. I am deeply bitter about the fact that I can't speak Zulu. I really feel that generational schism. I'm struggling to reconnect. Things were taken from us. There's not an understanding of the loss that our community in very diverse ways suffers. The fact that the dark skinned ones were hidden away. Imagine the trauma. It's those sorts of wounds that people don't acknowledge. It's not that I'm calling for people to be regarded as victims but that is part of our reality. We need to acknowledge the pain. It's part of our reality. People always talk about us as how we benefited as coloured people. What about the black people who colluded? The Mangopes and the Matanzimas?²⁰³ Those complexities will never come into play and the more we stand back from coloured identity the less those things get discussed, which is why I made that decision about my identity. I am going to claim this identity, and I am going to be who I am. We are the only people where people tell us who we are. Nobody will go to a Latina and say 'this is who you are, and you're like that'. Identity is a choice, not an imposition.

Michele – When I moved to Pretoria people thought I was Portuguese and were very respectful. When I was living in the US many people spoke Spanish to me. When I went to the States people thought I was Brazilian, Mexican, Dominican, never South African. Not in my wildest dreams would I look Mexican. I suddenly realized that we're in this amazing position of being between cultures, of moving between places, connecting people, of being the person we need to be within a context. It's an amazing place of strength. As women we even have a stronger position. As women we're non-threatening and we can be even stronger when people confront us because we come in under the radar. People think ag let's give the affirmative action position to the little coloured girl. This is what I'm in at Rhodes. But we have the power to upset the system. We have the power to change stereotypical ideas about who we are and we need to use that.

Gail – But you encounter coloured people who are prejudiced. I don't mind infiltrating like the guerilla. What do you do when you come across somebody in this day and age who is totally reactionary? I have it in my family where they call people kaffirs.

Belinda – My younger sister lives with me and she put in braids and she looks beautiful. The African women don't think it's great but the African men are very interested in her.

²⁰³ Mangope was the 'Prime Minister' of Bophuthatswana, Matanzima 'ruled' Transkei and the Mandela's were the royal family of the Xhosa. These were beneficiaries of the Bantustan system which called for homelands for ethnic groups.

Coming from Cape Town and where she was she didn't think the African guys would be interested in her. My sister went into the township to do her hair. She's never been involved in politics but she's just embraced this new way of being. She was never exposed to African people, nothing, her circle of friends, church, nothing. My daughter went to Pretoria city center; they were asked whether they were South African. They get more exposure here than in Cape Town. My son remarked that when they went to Cavendish there were no African people there.²⁰⁴ When you walk on the beach there wouldn't be any African people on the beach. You see few African people at the Waterfront. My children are getting more exposure to difference here than in Cape Town.

Gail – It's not just about race and class. It's about cultural currency and competency. It's about how you were raised. I was lucky my parents sent me to a very politicized predominantly Black school. By the time the change happened I'd be running into old school mates who were highly connected politically and economically. People who keep their children separate are not doing their children a service. It's a class thing.

Althea – The Gauteng kids are at a greater advantage than the Western Cape kids. The Western Cape kids are all separated by the highways.

Gail – I struggle with Cape Town. I have a huge kroes Afro. My hair causes such a ruckus in Cape Town. It causes such consternation. I walk into a shop and within three minutes the cashiers would be in a clutch talking among themselves, looking at me. They are not sure how to react. I find it so bizarre. That doesn't happen in Johannesburg. People come up to me and say your hair is nice.

Cheryl – I was going to *The Argus* to do give something in. I was parking in the car. My hair was wild and loose. The parking attendant said to me “*Jy't so 'n mooi kar, jy kan daarem by die hairdresser gaan visit*” [You have such a nice car, it would do you well to visit a hairdresser]. My friend says to her daughter who has beautiful curly hair “don't let your hair look like Auntie Cheryl's”.

Belinda – My sister used to harass my daughter. I used to curl my hair to get curly hair. I used to use my grocery money to have curly hair. My sister would say why did God punish you and give the good hair to the boys and the bad girls to the girls.

Cheryl – Do you people know Ebony hairdresser? Remember you could open up an account. Apparently when [Allan] Boesak and Elna's child was born someone phoned and asked how's the hair? He said, “she would have to have an account an account at Ebony.

Michele – Ebony was an institution. You could have an account at Ebony and they treated you in three treatments. You'd go for your straightener and then a conditioner and then you'd get a free treatment. I used to travel far to get to Ebony.

²⁰⁴ Cavendish is an upmarket shopping mall in a predominantly upper middle class neighbourhood.

Cheryl – Now in PE [Port Elizabeth] there was a hairdresser that everybody used to go to for years. They used to roll my hair in and then blowdry it [blow out]. They never put the bucket thing on because it wasn't *kroes genoeg* [nappy enough]. It was the Wella thing, a straightener.

Belinda – Parents would encourage their daughters to marry poor white men than African educated men for good hair.

Michele – I've always had long hair. My hair is not kroes or straight, it's inbetween. It needs a relaxer not a straightener. When I shaved my hair like this [very short] my mother looked at me and said "A man is going to run away when he sees your hair. No man will never marry you with hair like that". For me it was that if this man doesn't like me it's because my hair's like this. It wasn't that if this man doesn't like me it's his problem. But because hair is so ingrained in me you had to look respectable. You know nice coloured girls have to have straight hair and neat. I took on that whole thing that if my hair is like this nobody is going to find me attractive.

Cheryl – It's interesting, Michele, that when everyone was washing and leaving it you still used to take time to roll it.

Belinda – I wasn't allowed to cut my hair until I went to college. My father didn't want me to cut my hair. It was such an issue with my hair. He hated my hair so short.

Michele – Now more coloured women are wearing their hair like this. But in 1997 I went to a party with Audrey [Brown] and Siphon Hotstix Mabuza asked her who her lesbian lover was. Hair and sexuality in the coloured community are very linked.

Belinda – Parents encourage their children to have relations with white men.

Michele – What I find strange is that my mother is extremely militant. She is more militant than I am. Cheryl and Gail know my mother. But one of the things she said to me "You always go for these African men. They won't marry you. If they don't respect you they'll never marry you." I always happen to like African men. I haven't gone out with coloured men in I don't know how long.

Gail – I've never gone out with coloured men. They don't like me because I don't want to do my hair. I would really like to have a relationship with a coloured man. Something about me, I was too militant or too bookish. They didn't feel they could take me home to mummy.

Cheryl – They are conservative. Coloured men don't want to marry women who talk back at them. My male friends say they would never go out with me. It's too much stress.

Gail – A friend when I was growing up said to me this is how it works. You speak back to me, I hit you and then we make up and it's all part of the fun. He had to repeat it three

or four times. I said no, you hit me, my whole family will come and find you. And he was really taken aback.

Cheryl - Feminists haven't theorized about violence in our society. They don't do it with white women.

Belinda – the violence against women is not seen as violence against women. You hear about “*Slaan die liefde in*”. If I beat you then I love you. If he doesn't beat me up then he doesn't love me. It's a class thing. Lots of working class people are coloured. Young women allow their boyfriends to beat them up. It's related to a patriarchal society.

Althea – It's women who don't have a sense of self. I don't think it's just working class people. We know middle class women who are abused. Not so up in your face. This guy comes and you're so in love with him that you believe his excuses.

Belinda – I would say to my students why would you ever let anyone hit you? It's not allowed and then they still sleep with them. *Slaan die liefde in*.

Cheryl – It's interesting that Gail has not dated coloured men. Michele has dated a few coloured men. Aronette, an African American friend, didn't want to date white men. She said in recent years that she dates mostly white men even though it's against her political theory because they eat the same food, she's vegetarian, and they listen to the same music. While African American men eat pork and want her to cook and clean and she doesn't want that. In South Africa a lot of coloured men expect that. African men would eventually expect that but in the middle class there's a veneer that we go out. Some of them fall back on that. Coloured men are more overt. I don't think that any African man who is up and coming will not say that he wants his woman to cook and clean for him.

Gail – My love of my life, an African man, dumped me because he didn't want his children to grow up on Nandos. He had a child. It was a big thing. Dating black men in this country is a problem as a coloured woman in this country is a problem because there is a level of non-acceptance from the family. We are people you dabble with. We're not necessarily people you marry. I'm never going to be a *makoti* [a traditional married woman]. I'm not interested in being a *makoti*.

Belinda – your mother will say that to you. Come home with a white boyfriend *hy sal jou net uitslaap* [he'll just have sex with you] he won't marry you.

Cheryl – I sit and wonder if I wasn't in a relationship who I would date.

Michele – You'll be struggling to keep them off.

Gail – The whole weight thing, one thing about the body shape. I was very thin then I put on 14kg and I was suddenly so voluptuous. Black men loved me. I got so much play.

Michele – I hadn't seen Gail since January 2003. it was this figure. She wears it, she carries it and she sashays. It's not only your figure, it's the assurance, the don't fuck with me attitude.

Gail – it's not like I had them lining up outside the door.

Althea – Men don't like attitude. They say there's no way that I'm going to have a relationship with a political woman.

Cheryl – How many single men in Joburg do you know women will want to date?

Gail – This is a country of post-traumatic stress disorder so you might get a lunatic. I can introduce you to a lovely man that might be bipolar, he might have an axe in the bedroom. You're just not sure what you're going to get. I'm not of the opinion that there's a drought of men out there. Me personally, this is Africa. There are too many men out there. The country's borders are flying open. Now you can have Ghanaians, Cameroonians, they're all out there. I'll go for Nigerians.

Michele – I've always gone for tall dark athletic men.

Gail – You're all the same height lying down. It doesn't really matter. People don't like us because we are so interesting. People try to pigeonhole us but we shouldn't feel threatened. We lead interesting lives.

Curriculum Vitae

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Educational History:

- 1992 Rhodes University, Master of Arts (International Relations)
- 1989 University of the Western Cape, Bachelor of Arts Honours (Political Studies)
- 1987 Rhodes University, Bachelor of Journalism and Communication Studies (Politics, Journalism, Afrikaans, Economics)

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- 2003 – 2006 Lecturer, Rhodes University, Department of Political and International Studies
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- 1993-1996 Secretariat Officer, Secretariat for the Economic Community of Southern Africa
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