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Race and Democracy in South Africa

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Introduction

Race and racism continue to form a core part of the identification and experiences of South Africans and the structural and ideological manifestations of a racialised order persist. Many South Africans believed that democratic rule would end racism and racialised interactions. Ten years later, these are ongoing. This chapter seeks to explain the persistence of racialisation and racism through an examination of the relationship between race and democracy.

Over the past two decades there has been an abundance of theoretical literature on race and democracy and their linkages to other social categories and periods. For example, there are texts theorising the relations between race and gender, race and reason, race and modernity, race and capitalism and race and enlightenment. Few texts, however, interrogate the nexus between race and democracy, or between race and development for that matter. This is odd for liberation struggles in the Third World, particularly in Africa, were simultaneously about the institutionalisation of democratic rule and the deracialisation of their societies.

South African academic writing on race and racism has largely been descriptive or based on a political economy approach which tends to portray race relations as epiphenomenal (though there are some interesting interventions primarily from the disciplines of psychology and English literature). There is a definite need for a more critical and theoretically informed engagement on race and racism in South Africa. This chapter contributes to such critical engagement by beginning to analyse the relationship between race and democracy in general and to illuminate their interaction in the South African context. The chapter argues that liberal

democracy's premise of equal rights-bearing citizens, and the focus on political equality, is problematic when applied to racialised formations such as South Africa. This conceptualisation creates tensions for it neglects, and, thereby, implicitly condones, the reproduction of racially inscribed structural inequalities. This problematic is replicated in the prevalent hegemonic ideologies of non-racialism, nation-building and 'rainbowism'.

On race and democracy

Social science has long accepted that racial identities are social constructs. It has only recently added the rider that this does not imply their irrelevance, for racial categories continue to shape the popular discourse of social relations and have acquired a material reality. Discrimination on the basis of skin colour persists, racial stereotypes remain ubiquitous, race still largely determines life chances in many countries and people are still politically mobilised on the basis of race. Essed (2002) has directed our theoretical lenses on 'everyday racism' for it is everyday encounters that relations of domination and ideologies are reproduced and consolidated. Essed defines racism as 'ideology, structure, and process, in which inequalities inherent in the wider social structure are related, in a deterministic way, to biological and cultural factors attributed to those who are seen as a different 'race' or 'ethnic' group' (2002:185).

In a similar vein, Omi and Winant (2002) coined the phrase 'racial formation' to capture the coherence of the multitude of racial projects (interpretations, representations, efforts to reorganise and redistribute resources along racial lines, and so forth), existent within a bounded space. They contend that:

a vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organisational forms in which it is routinised and standardised on the other. These projects are at the heart of the racial formation process... [For them] race is now a pre-eminently political phenomenon (Omi and Winant 2002:127-128).

To understand the nature of racism, its effects and the ways in which it has become 'common sense', one therefore has to engage in a context-specific socio-historical analysis. The conceptualisation of a 'racial formation' is used here to foreground the relationship between race and democracy in the South African context.

Goldberg (1990) highlights the continuously changing nature of racist discourse. He asserts that it has become 'more subtle in its modes of expression' but 'more central to the modern self-conception' (Goldberg 1990:ix). If race and racism remain central to conceptions of self and to the

ways in which societal structures function, then it becomes necessary to see in which ways liberal democracy (as a form of governance) incorporates or excludes this identity and practice in the organisation of relations and the mediation of competing interests.

Although political scientists studying Africa have been pre-occupied with the study of democracy, the above concerns have not been prominent in their debates. Instead, the debates have centred largely around the preconditions for democracy, its measurement (formal versus substantive), and, currently, the ingredients needed for its consolidation. If democracy was primarily construed as deracialisation of power and sovereignty during the period of decolonisation, it is now typically embedded in a minimalist universalistic rights discourse that emphasises procedures for selecting and alternating the political elite. Checklists for democracy are not concerned with relations between citizens, groups within a society, or relations between countries or continents. However, it is well known that 'racial formations' can continue to thrive in the absence of an overtly discriminatory legislation. Inequalities, based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, and so forth, if not explicitly addressed, co-exist with political equality within a liberal democratic order. When this occurs, the quality of the democratic project is compromised.

Democracy has become synonymous with modernity and liberalism and these have been shown to be intimately intertwined with the development and propagation of racist thinking (Said 1978; Bhabha 1994; Mudimbe 1988; West 2002). Conceptualisations of modernity developed through the colonial encounter and were predicated on the representation of a racialised savage 'Other'. Europe defined its modernity in relation to its depiction of those in its empires (as elaborated by many post-colonial theorists, for example, Pieterse 1992). Goldberg (2000, 2002) and others have elaborated the racist thinking of the 'fathers' of enlightenment and/or liberalism. Liberals could justify colonisation and non-democratic practices that pertained in the colonies by excluding the subjects through their portrayal as 'qualitatively different' (Fitzpatrick 1990:249). Fitzpatrick argues that 'Racism was, in short, basic to the creation of liberalism and the identity of the European' (1990:249). He illustrates how liberal legality purports to be universalistic but is ethnocentric and its practice often has racist outcomes. Goldberg (2002) brings a similar argument to bear on morality.

If racism was intrinsic to the development of modernity and was incorporated into liberal thought, then it is possibly still latent in the theorisation and institutionalisation of liberal democracy, the form of governance associated with it. It is not possible, due to space and time limitations, to tease this out. However, it is important to point out that an

ideology/practice may be racist in its original conception, but as it becomes universalised, may be modified and/or subject to indigenisation/domestication. This is why the oppressed people often buy into the modernist project (the essential elements being economic development via industrialisation, nation-state formation, and, more recently, a specific form of state-labelled democracy). They hope to achieve political and socio-economic development in forms appropriate to their local conditions; hence, the necessity for indigenisation of received development ideologies and practices. For this reason, democratisation and Africanisation have been seen as two sides of the same coin within the African context. However, as will be illustrated below in the South African context, the simultaneous implementation of the two processes in 'racial formations' can lead to socio-political tensions.

At this point it will suffice to note that liberal democracy can indeed function in a society that excludes others by virtue of race. This has been shown in the case of the United States and South Africa. Also, many of the explanations provided for the lack of political development in Africa (usually taken to mean the implementation of liberal democracy) have centred on 'culture' which is often a euphemism for race. A 'qualitative difference' between peoples is therefore often still used to frame debates on democracy.

In the last two decades, liberal scholars have been wrestling theoretically with difference in what has become known as the 'communitarian' versus 'libertarian' debate. The question at the heart of the debate is whether liberalism can give due recognition to cultural minorities or whether it is in fact the 'tyranny of the majority'. The 'communitarians' argue that liberalism cannot incorporate collective rights because of its key tenets of individualism and autonomy while 'multiculturalists' (liberals seeking to move beyond the doctrine of individuals as exclusive agents of politics), for example, Kymlicka (1995), contend that liberalism emphasises tolerance as well as autonomy, and is flexible enough to give recognition to minority cultures (through protection of languages, proportional representation, and so on). The 'multiculturalist' strand of liberalism is an example of the modification of theory to deal with the reality of differing cultural groups within a society. This debate is limited in that it primarily deals with minority cultures.

Angela Davis (1997) and Himani Bannerji (2000) provide a critique of multiculturalism arguing that multicultural liberal governments emphasise diversity within the borders of the state without questioning the representation of groups or taking account of power differentials between existing groups. Analysing the Canadian situation, Bannerji remarked: 'The multi-ethnic, multinational state, with its history of racialised class formation and political ideology, discovering multiculturalism as a way of both hiding and enshrining

power relations, provided a naturalised political language even to the others of the Canadian society' (2000:31). She argued that multiculturalism's 'articulating basis' must be 'an antiracist and feminist class politics... that would speak to multiplicities of tradition and power relations between them, marking the internal power-inscribed differences within the space of the nation, as well as in multinationalities' (2000:5). There is an ambiguous relationship between multiculturalism and the nation-building project. Zealous multiculturalism, with its continuous stress on difference, can undermine nation-building—a continuous and contested project whose framework and discourse shift with alterations in the balance of power, but nevertheless necessary in a racially divided context such as South Africa.

It is necessary then to identify more firmly the links between race and democracy, specifically liberal democracy. Liberal democracy, the chapter argues, may not be racist in intent but, if not sufficiently domesticated, can be racist in effect. Liberal democracy does not require a racist discourse to maintain race-based hierarchies. If one merely views liberal democracy as a procedure for the alteration of power it appears to be value-neutral. The tensions arise from its focus on political equality and its disregard for the structured inequalities arising from class, gender, ethnic and racial divisions. In short, liberal democracy does not seek to mediate material inequalities between citizens, rendering equality in 'racial formations' largely abstract. It is in the relations between citizens that liberal democracy's limits in moving beyond race-based inequities, or complicity in maintaining these inequities, are to be discerned. Rights matter most in everyday practices, yet it is here that liberal democratic procedures have the least bearing. If everyone is equal but a pervasive culture still exists, and is acted upon, that stereotypes blacks into categories of inferiority, or if the majority of blacks remain confined to the ghettos, then equality remains fictitious and racialised social orders continue to reproduce themselves at local, national and international levels. Racism is systemic, and an ideology or form of governance that distinguishes between the private and public realm, simply operating in the latter, will, 'irrespective of the attitudes of liberal democrats themselves' (Cunningham 2002:68), perpetuate existent relations of domination. It is precisely for this reason that, in 'racial formations', added measures need to be instituted to correct the entrenched power imbalances so that there is a congruence between political and socio-economic equality.

Race and Democracy in the South African Context

The history of race relations and the ideologies and structures that induced racialised power configurations in South Africa are well documented and

analysed (See Dubow 1989, 1995; Goldin 1987; Keegan 1996; Marx 1998). In brief, these 'racial projects' date to the onset of colonialism in South Africa where initially in the structuring of a slave-based society, and later in the subjugation and incorporation of Africans further inland, the basis for race-based hierarchies was entrenched. Liberalism's presence in the Cape, from the nineteenth century, did little to alter the racialised patterns of power. The 'colour-blind' policies introduced in the Cape, after the abolition of slavery, often used in South African historiography for the portrayal of fundamental differences between Anglo and Boer forms of rule, actually illustrate the limitations of this form of legislation within a 'racial formation' for the policies continued to reproduce a social order similar to that of the Boer Republics. Mamdani (1996) has clearly shown that the logic of controlling the native, through a dualism of customary/civic, was manifest everywhere in Africa. What was unique to South Africa, then, was not the method of rule, but the entrenchment of racist practices that accompanied the advent of sovereignty; hence, the term 'internal colonialism'.

The Act of Union in 1910 and the adoption of a policy of segregation were key 'racial projects' consolidating the 'racial formation' of the first four decades of twentieth century South African state building. The creation of the Union was an attempt to unite whites and consolidate their hegemony through the exclusion of Africans from the rights and privileges afforded to citizens of the nation-state. Officialdom was indoctrinated with 'bioculturalist' conceptions of race, aligning 'readings of bodily difference closely with differences of class, lifestyle and general repute' (Posel 2001:53 employing Gilroy's concept), in a way that was certainly not new to the twentieth century. The place of blacks was theorised through a discourse of civility: not only were they too uncivilised to be allowed the rights of citizenship, they were destined by their biological make-up never to be able to acquire those rights. This discourse was used to justify the confinement of blacks to 'pre-modern' forms of rule that were seen as naturally aligning culture and phenotype. It is in this psycho-social context that a democratic order could be established for whites, while excluding the majority of the country's inhabitants.

Dubow has defined segregation as 'a complex amalgam of political, ideological and administrative strategies designed to maintain and entrench white supremacy' (1989:1). These strategies can be conceptualised as 'racial projects', representing blacks as essentialised 'other'. The Mines and Works Act (1911), Native Land Act (1913), Native Affairs Act (1920), Native Urban Areas Act (1920), and a host of other legislations, constituted the foundation for the 'racial formation'. Despite this legislation African urbanisation continued and there were mounting pressures for the extension of democratic

rights from organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the African People's Organisation (APO). Though blacks were always viewed as a threat, a people to be contained, the discourse of *swart gevaar* (black danger) echoed loudly in the 1930s. Whites became scared not only that a black physical presence would threaten them politically but also that their very identity would wane through inter-racial social and sexual mixing. Dubow has argued that 'Interracial sex was indeed held to sap the fibre of white civilisation at its most susceptible point by undermining race "pride" and purity' (1995: 180). This demanded that further racial projects be set up to secure white supremacy. The leaders of the ANC and APO, in turn, enamoured of the liberal principle of 'equal rights to all civilised men' challenged the liberal government's own episteme by continuously pointing to their acquisition of the traits of civility. But the markers of civility, in the minds of whites/colonialists, were predicated on race from the start.

In the context of social and economic flux, apartheid became the dominant ideology for maintaining white dominance and 'purity'. Historiographers have been at pains to point out the differences between segregation and apartheid. However, apartheid should be seen as a refinement of the basis of an established 'racial formation' through a series of new laws that sought to clearly demarcate and consolidate the boundaries of groups, both in terms of identity and space. According to Posel:

Die apartheid-gedagte (the apartheid idea) offered the promise of heightened discipline, regulation and surveillance: boundaries were to be reasserted and spaces reorganised, the movements of people systematised and contained, races rescued from 'impurity', the notion of family rehabilitated and 'the savage discipline of tribal life' restored. At the core of this aspiration to order lay a vigorous and thoroughgoing reassertion of racial difference (2001: 52).

The Population Registration Act (1950) and the Group Areas Act (1950), along with a series of amendments to the Immorality Act and the Mixed Marriages Act, were legal foundations of 'racial projects' designed to create this social order. Race, by this time, had already constituted 'common sense.' Apartheid's novelty was to introduce race as a determining factor of all facets of everyday life. Through lived experiences race became more 'real' for the racial identity was invested with a materiality that simultaneously reinforced people's claims to identification (for continued access to resources or in solidarity/opposition) and gave credence to innate 'differences' (See Hendricks 2004). The political system operating here, though exclusionary, was procedurally democratic for those that it enfranchised. Maré notes:

The apartheid state inherited the Westminster model of parliamentary representative democracy established in 1910.... The fact is, however, that by the time of the transition, institutions of democratic representation had long been in existence in South Africa, attendant with a long undeniable tradition of democratic participation and representation of interests/even if applied to a specified margin of the population. It was thus why some analysts described South Africa as an 'herrenvolk' democracy... (2003:30-31).

Faced with the entrenchment of race discrimination, the liberation movement adjusted their modus operandi and ideology. A younger generation, inspired by the rising tide of anti-colonialism throughout the continent, embraced a new discourse of African Nationalism. Mandela notes in his autobiography:

African nationalism was our battle cry, and our creed was the creation of one nation out of many tribes, the overthrow of white supremacy, and the establishment of a truly democratic form of government. Our manifesto stated: 'We believe that the national liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves...The Congress Youth League must be the braintrust and power-station of the spirit of African Nationalism' (1994: 87).

The discourse of the African Nationalists in the Youth League had a Pan-African content, stressed national liberation as opposed to reform, and emphasised Africanisation, not non-racialism. This Lembede-inspired ideology was short-lived in the ANC, although it continued to resonate through principles like majority rule and through the formation of the Pan African Congress (PAC).

The events that led to an ideological shift within the ANC, that led to the adoption of a policy of non-racialism are well documented and will not detain us here. The Freedom Charter, adopted in 1955, laid the basis for a policy of non-racialism. The Charter's preamble affirmed the principles that South Africa belongs to all who live in it; that only a democratic state, based on the will of the people, can secure to all their birth right without discrimination on the basis of colour, race, sex or belief. It, furthermore, established the principles that 'the people shall govern', noting that everyone has the right to vote and to take part in the administration of the country; that all national groups shall have equal rights—in the bodies of state, courts, schools, including rights to have their own language protected and develop their own folk culture and customs; and that the land shall be shared among those who work it.

It should be reiterated that non-racialism was not 'an unbreakable thread' within the ANC (as argued by Frederikse 1990 and Walshe 1971). Its adoption

as principle was a 1950s phenomenon and really only gained widespread support through its popularisation by the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 1980s. Previously, the ANC largely conceived of South Africa in the liberal 'race-relations' mode of thought as a multi-racial society that needed to construct harmonious relations between the races. ANC documents and speeches, by leaders of the time, were littered with statements that South Africa consists of four races—at points referred to as nations—Black, White, Indian and Coloured (see the works of Neville Alexander in this regard, 1979, 1986, 2002).

The birth of the UDF, in 1983, was a decisive factor in the move away from a four nations thesis to that of one non-racial nation. Constituted as a 'broad church' of anti-apartheid activists, the UDF saw non-racialism as a method for mobilisation and a principle for governing societal relations. The content of non-racialism has, however, always been subject to debate. For authors such as Taylor (1996), and many within the liberation movement, non-racialism meant that race would no longer play a role in the organisation of society: people would transcend racial identification. But Alexander (2002) and Maré (1999) argue that the ideologues of non-racialism still accepted that there were four races in South Africa and that 'non-racialism will merely mean that such "racial" categories' will not form the basis of discrimination' (Maré 1999:247). Similarly, Marx comments that 'the UDF opposed the physical aspects of national domination and accordingly was concerned less with changing individual consciousness or identity than with mobilising material resources and followers across perceived racial divisions' (1992:16). Shula Marks noted that the discourse largely centred around rights and that it posited that an 'individual's citizenship, legal rights, economic entitlement and life chances should not be decided on the basis of "racial ascription"' (1994:2). There was, therefore, little conceptual difference between non-racialism and multi-racialism. Consequently, identities, during this period, remained racialised and entrenched.

Both the ANC and the UDF favoured a liberal democratic system. They were attracted to the guiding principle of the equality of all citizens and to the electoral procedure of one person one vote that would afford South Africa, through democratic elections, a black majoritarian government. The logic was influenced by Nkrumah's idea of 'seek ye first the political kingdom'. Seekings (2000) has argued that within the 'broad church' of the UDF different constituencies emphasised different aspects of UDF ideology (and one can extend this to the ANC as well). He argues that 'non-black' comrades were attracted to the equal rights aspects, while the township comrades were more animated by the idea of 'people's power', a euphemism for Black Power.

There were, thus, different interpretations of the structural implications of those espousing the ideologies of non-racialism and liberal democracy. For blacks the structural basis of the new state would have to lead to their habitation of the portals of power in all spheres and would have to produce social justice. This view of what a non-racial democracy was supposed to bring about was not necessarily shared across the racial divides. It is this tension that begins to play itself out in the post-apartheid state.

Post-apartheid South Africa

Throughout the latter half of the 1980s the call by the masses was for the establishment of one non-racial, non-sexist, democratic state. This vision became ANC policy during the transition period. Internal dynamics as well as external factors, which have been elaborated on by many authors (See Friedman 1993; Maphai 1994) necessitated that these be the principles governing a future society. It was the only vision that could bring a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The discourses of non-racialism, civic nationalism and multiculturalism were key to enabling the transition for they entitled all to see themselves as citizens of a reconstituted state with all the rights and privileges that universal democratic citizenship confers.

Bates remarked :

when citizens rebelling in the name of democracy stand on the brink of political victory, then tyrants convert. They seek the protection of the law and the courts, they demand due process, and, hoping to live out their natural lives in comfort and to die peacefully in bed, they propound the inviolability of persons and property. Formerly the most dangerous enemies of liberal government, they become some of its most fervent champions (1999:83-84).

The National Party (NP) could find common ground with the African National Congress in the pursuit of democracy and the creation of a non-racial society, and together form a Government of National Unity. The NP could negotiate the relinquishment of exclusive political power by whites in exchange for democratic governance that assured equal rights and continued access to resources. And, after the 2004 elections, the NNP could dissolve and many of its erstwhile stalwarts cross over to join the ANC. Transformation in South Africa was not to be the 'drive the foreigner out' phenomenon characteristic of the decolonisation of other African countries. Reduced political power did not represent as great a threat as once conjured in the imagination of whites. Through centuries of privilege whites have acquired the 'cultural capital' (to employ Bourdieu's concept) to continue to play a central role within the

newly formed democratic state that is premised on the protection of individual rights. Often-heard remarks that they are faring better within the post-apartheid society can be explained in the light of this.

A discourse of 'rainbowism' emerged to symbolise the new state that had been formed. The 'rainbow nation' conceptualisation was constructed to signify a new-found unity, and yet simultaneously recognise difference of both the racial and ethnic variety. Suddenly, all were enjoined not to 'move beyond' previously constructed identities but to celebrate their difference. Gqola has provided an insightful critique of the concept, stating:

The rainbow is also a reflection, a spectacular visual illusion. Within the boundaries of rainbowism there exists a series of possibilities that (potentially) rupture the ideal. Rainbows are a fantasy, yet they remain symbolic and constitutive of the new 'truths' in a democratic South Africa. Rainbows appear 'mysteriously', they are not dependent on human labour. They are transitory, fleeting and perpetually out of reach... Instead rainbowism is evoked at specific points where a certain kind of non-racialism, though not necessarily anti-racism, needs to be stressed. We are not always rainbow people, only some of the time when the need arises. Belonging to the rainbow implies that the members of the rainbow have equal access to the mythic pot of gold, wealth... social stratification makes nonsense of the argument that we all have access to (economic) resources (2001:99-100).

She further notes that the rainbow nation conceptualisation 'foregrounds difference at precisely the moment in which it trivialises it' (2001:99). Recognition of difference not only requires space for the re-capturing/reconstruction/celebration and essentialising of cultures but also the means to redress existing inequities between these groups. Though 'commodity spectacle[s]' (signs/symbols) (McClintock 1995) are necessary and quite easily accommodated within liberal democracy, structural changes need to be implemented. The Mandela-led government, pre-occupied with racial reconciliation, was conscious of this need and insisted on Affirmative Action as a means of redress. But it is under the Mbeki-led government that we have seen a more overt attempt to bring about structural change. It is also at this point in the South African democratic experiment that charges of 're-racialisation' have been levelled at the practices of Mbeki's government.

In the Mandela era, the contradiction of the non-racial rainbow nation was exalted: racial reconciliation was emphasised at the expense of broad-based black empowerment. Under Mbeki's leadership, the discourse in South Africa altered and a more concerted effort was made to effect the economic

equality of blacks. The 'coming of a new dawn', an African Renaissance both nationally and continentally, was the vision informing Mbeki's presidency. He boldly drew attention to the continued gap between whites and blacks in the economic realm and noted that little progress had been made in consolidating unity. Under his leadership there has also been an inquiry into racism in the media and an international conference on racism.

The Promotion of Equality Act, the Employment Equity Act and a policy of Black Empowerment denote a shift from the more neutral language of employing 'others', characteristic of Affirmative Action, to a racially qualified transformative programme. The Employment Equity Act stipulates monitoring and accountability to ensure black representation and speed up the process of change. Statistics released on Employment Equity indicate that there is need for far more policing of the system. The pace of change has been slow. In the year 2000 to 2001, whites were awarded 91 percent of all top management promotions, 92 percent of senior management promotions and 89 percent in the professional and middle management category (See the Department of Labour's Employment Equity Report 2001). From this report it is clear that 'government thus remains the key area where transformation is taking place while the private sector resembles the patterns of yesteryear' (Hendricks 2003). Black Economic Empowerment programmes have also had a limited impact in creating equality between the races. The benefits have been concentrated among too few blacks, in turn deepening class cleavages among blacks. The UNDP report (2003) is an indictment of the state of transformation in South Africa. The report indicates that the:

Human Development Index has worsened (from 0.73 in 1994 to 0.067 in 2003), poverty still engulfs 48.5% of the population (21.9 million in 2002), income inequality has increased (from 0.60 in 1995 to 0.63 in 2001), the majority of households have limited access to basic services, and the official unemployment rate has sharply increased to more than 30% in 2003.

These kinds of statistics have been employed by the left to make an argument that the transformation of South Africa has been restricted. Essentially, they argue that the ANC has limited the democratic project to political equality and that it is merely utilising the discourse of African Nationalism and race-based economic policies for a particular class project – the creation of a black bourgeoisie. That a black bourgeoisie has emerged as a consequence of state-led transformation is undeniable. This process of class formation is not a peculiarly African trait. The state has always been the site of accumulation for the bourgeoisie in Third World societies – even the Afrikaner bourgeoisie

was promoted in this way. However, the argument by the Left tends to render all change that has occurred as insignificant for the larger black community and, more damning, points to a binary division of a new black bourgeoisie, aligned to a white power structure pitted against the black masses. Things are not this categorical in post-apartheid South Africa. As in the era of apartheid, race and class cannot be neatly separated in the post-apartheid state. Any state intervention to deal with poverty or deprivation must invariably have blacks as the primary beneficiaries because the face of deprivation is not white. Black Economic Empowerment, Affirmative Action, even discourses asserting African Nationalism, are state strategies and ideology to effect change for blacks at large. Any attempt to reduce it simply to a class project is analytically and politically disingenuous, to say the least.

The centre-right and right have become recent converts to the non-racialism paradigm. They, too, critique government's corrective measures as leading to a 're-racialisation' of the society. The arguments revolve around government's use of the same racial categories as in the apartheid past: it is claimed that this reproduces racial difference of otherwise more fluid identities, or is reminiscent of the past when some groups were advantaged, and so forth. Maré notes that the 'unproblematic acceptance of the socially meaningful existence of races, furthermore, closes off the option of different ways of looking at the world and finding more complex and dynamic explanations for social conditions and social relations' (2001: 89). The centre right and right attempt to use the liberal democratic principles of the primacy of the individual and equal rights to counter group-based measures of redress.

As argued in a previous paper, 'to posit South Africa as "re-racialised" presupposes that at some point race had ceased to be a defining factor' and that equity has been reached (Hendricks 2003). Race has not ceased to be a meaningful category and continues to function as the marker of inequity. This is why it continues to structure politics, a factor evident in the recent elections where, despite worsening socio-economic conditions for the poor, the ANC was returned to power with an even greater majority than in 1999.

Political analysts have been concerned about race-based voting patterns, likening voting behaviour to a 'racial census'. They contend that this leads to one-party state dominance, and reinforces racial cleavages, and that racialism prevails and is displayed in the public discourse, the collection of race-based statistics, etc. (see Hendricks 2003). Race-based voting patterns are deemed to lead to the degeneration of democracy itself by limiting competition and the possibility for the alteration of power. In line with this reasoning, Giliomee and Simkins (1999) labelled South Africa an 'awkward democracy'. Within these arguments we see a neat separation between identity and interest where

blacks are said to be utilising primordial factors, as opposed to the supposed rational calculations that should inform voting behaviour (See a similar contention raised by Friedman 1999). However, identity and interest, in 'racial formations' especially, are not mutually exclusive. It is a rational calculation to assume that a predominantly black political party which has a history of advocating black empowerment/advancement, and which in very real terms over the last ten years has delivered the basics in addition to the intangible freedoms people now enjoy, is far more likely to deliver on its promises than those political parties previously linked to the apartheid state.

Amidst this lamentation on the recalcitrance of race there are those who argue that non-racialism was not what it seemed and that race-based consciousness could be liberatory. There is also the more obvious critique that race needs to be considered in order to rectify skewed patterns of distribution. Alexander asserts that 'Non-racialism meant that you had to become or be a black Englishman. And this is why I insist on saying that in fact what we did was to de-Africanise our understanding of the liberation struggle. The Eurocentric aspiration was in fact the most salient' (2001: 111). Xolela Mangcu urges us to see race as 'a cultural concept that gave people their identity [instead of] a problematic physiognomic concept, a burden that [has] to be transcended in a broader search for certain universal values such as freedom and justice' (2001: 22). Clearly, the theoretical space is beginning to open up for us to critically engage with issues of racial identity and its place or relationship to democratic governance in South Africa. Racial identification can no longer be dismissed as a false consciousness which, when used in policy formulation, inherently promotes racism, in much the same way as the continued use of gender distinctions (themselves social constructs) is not sexist (See Mosley 1997 in this regard). The continued usage of these categories of identification represents strategic choices so that inequality is not masked by an appeal to an abstract universalism. It is the meaning that we ascribe to or invest in these identities and the relations between their bearers that constitute the problematic—not the identity in and of itself.

Racism certainly still exists in South Africa and its dominant pattern remains that of the apartheid past, although it expresses itself within different forms. Antjie Krog's book, *Change of Tongue*, captures an aspect of this change when it depicts a multi-racial school sporting event. At the event she asks an official 'Why is everybody happy? The reply is "The blacks are happy because it is a black kid beating the whites. The whites are happy because the winning kid is from a white school and is trained by them"'. Later in the text a black school principal notes:

It doesn't matter how things have changed, before you know it, the whites have manipulated it in their favour. When you say your school does not have a track or long-jump pits or high jump or shot put equipment, they say you must stop blaming everything on apartheid. When you ask if you can bring your athletes to their school, they say that they must first get permission from the school board, and that only meets next term. And you dare not call them racist, because now they have a few black kids in their school (2003:18).

It is that competition between now supposed equals, when material conditions obviously belie that equality, that promotes racial tension. Those who can afford it send their kids to private schools, or 'historically white schools', not because they necessarily want their kids to be 'Englishmen': these schools remain the sites for class reproduction or class mobility. The hue of the upper classes has certainly diversified, but the hue of the bottom 20 percent remains unchanged. 'Racial projects' are being created in South Africa. Black empowerment is a 'racial project'. But there is a qualitative difference between the advancement of an excluded majority as opposed to a historically (and contemporary) privileged minority. We cannot ignore emerging class differences but also cannot make a claim that this should be our primary focus, to the exclusion of race.

Conclusion

The limits and contradictions of liberal democracy are clear in the South African context. The marker for the consolidation of democracy—the possibility of the alteration of power—will remain weak in the context of continued race-based inequality, for the issues that brought the ANC to power remain relevant. Relations between citizens are important and require a direct group-based focus. However, the policies for the redress of race-based hierarchies will produce the kind of defensive response that has developed where whites and other minorities now ironically employ the liberation movement's discourse of non-racialism to counter ANC-led government's redistributive policies and practices. For liberal democracy to thrive in a 'racial formation' like South Africa, it requires domestication where group-based corrective measures are brought to bear. It requires that we move beyond political equality to create the conditions where all have the ability to realise their potential. It requires the acknowledgement that despite policies of non-racialism and multi-culturalism, the dominant culture will reflect the numerical majority and government policies and practices will be aimed at the welfare of this majority. This is not racist. It represents the normalisation of the society.

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