



RACE *and* RACISM

IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: *A book project*

The continuing salience of race and persistence of racism after more than 24 years of democracy prompted the HSRC to host a series of racism dialogues during 2016. Flowing from those discussions, HSRC researchers and academics from several universities are collaborating to publish a book on race and racism in post-apartheid South Africa. *Dr Gregory Houston, Dr Yul Derek Davids and Prof. Modimowabarwa Kanyane* report on the progress made with this project.

Apartheid serves as a clear illustration that race is a social construct without biological meaning. The Population Registration Act defined a 'white person' as "a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, but does not include a person who, although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person." However, apartheid has led to the racialisation of certain groups that are culturally, socially and historically constituted. Therefore, while the idea of race has been under erasure, rejected and scorned, it has also been imposed, embraced and internalised.

We use certain racial labels in this article, because the focus in the planned book is on the consequences of the use of these labels.

A total of 26 contributors are involved in the book project, and 18 abstracts have been approved for inclusion in the book. Topics include race and racial privilege during the apartheid era; gender, race and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa; persistence of racial capitalism; racism in higher education; racism in cricket; racialised heritage; self-reported racial discrimination; racial attitudes and behaviour; the experiences of mixed race Indian/white South

Africans; #Feesmustfall; xenophobia; and decoloniality. Several research methods were used, including qualitative and quantitative methods and a combination of both. This is also an interdisciplinary project, drawing in researchers from a wide variety of disciplines. The following sections focus on the core arguments.

Where we come from

The most important thing that we need to understand about race is that it is used to dominate, and to justify, the disproportionate enjoyment by some people, of society's political, social and economic benefits. In South Africa, race has been used to justify

the exclusion of some people from political and economic power and the creation of a racial hierarchy. This racial hierarchy was entrenched in legislation and government programmes that denied access to land to some; restricted higher-paying professions to others; and ensured that some were paid more than others for the same work. It provided more funding per capita for education, health, housing, and social assistance for some people than others; and ensured that some were marginalised from certain opportunities and confined to lives of poverty.

Access to opportunities was based on race, giving rise to racial privilege, where an individual's position in the hierarchy determined what privileges he or she enjoyed or was denied. The centrality of race and discriminatory laws and programmes gave rise to racial stereotypes, and the consequent racism that most people of colour experienced during the apartheid era. Racism, and the experiences of racial discrimination and racism, have resulted, among others, in extremely negative notions of the 'other' in the racialised society.

Where we are

For many, the anti-apartheid struggle was premised on the notion that the goal was a non-racist society. From the outset, non-racism was defined in many different ways: by some as equality of opportunity for all, and by others as the elimination of race from every aspect of our society. However, almost all the chapters in the book illustrate the salience of race and persistence of racism in post-apartheid South Africa. For instance, Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment has not changed the racial character of the economy, but has instead resulted in the co-optation of a small black elite into the wealthy white capitalist elite, inherited from the apartheid era.

A chapter on race and class perceptions of poverty and trust illustrates how significant race,

compared with class is as a variable in determining public perceptions on these issues. Another chapter, on language of instruction at universities, draws attention to how imposed languages of instruction perpetuate racial inequalities. It is also demonstrated that there is a continuing presence of racism, racial privileges and exclusions in the higher education sector, especially at universities. Another chapter illustrates the impact of the continued use of racial classifications in official documents in post-apartheid South Africa on people of mixed Indian/white ancestry. Another chapter that makes use of data from public opinion surveys discusses xenophobia as related to racist perceptions among South Africans of who is welcome in the country.

The book will illustrate that in post-apartheid South Africa, racism persists alongside sexism and results in unequal outcomes for women in South Africa, and that race still plays a role in the production of heritage. Similarly, the persistence of racism is illustrated in chapters that use data from public opinion surveys on experiences of racial discrimination and on continuing racial behaviour and attitudes. The chapter on racism in South African cricket demonstrates how issues of racism and racial representation continue to haunt the game, as it does in many other sports. Based on qualitative and quantitative data, another chapter concludes that white and black university students have contrasting experiences of a lack of inclusiveness in a democratic context vis-à-vis continued apartheid oppression in a post-apartheid South Africa, under the banner of privilege.

Where we want to be

The book will deal with race as an important concept to use to achieve social justice, but also to demonstrate its irrelevance and therefore promote its erasure. Important suggestions include the need to develop economic strategies that are targeted towards

redistributive justice for the wellbeing of all those previously disenfranchised. There is also a need for a new way of presenting and narrating the country's history that takes into account the historical imbalances and racialised configuration of the heritage landscape of post-apartheid South Africa. We need to consider ways in which African languages could be used as the medium of instruction at universities; use hate crime legislation to reduce racial discrimination; and create greater awareness of the racist nature of xenophobia.

Striving towards reconciliation among the country's youth, South African students will need to listen to one another's views on their experiences as the 'born free' beneficiaries of the dream of a better life. Also, the social exclusion of the millennial generation in post-apartheid South Africa encourages deeper concern with racial identities than previous generations and we need policies to remedy this.

We also need to unlock cages of ascribed racial identities and free people to define themselves. This should include the elimination of all processes that require people to classify themselves by race, for example in surveys or official and unofficial documents.

Finally, we need to promote decoloniality – with its emphasis on African ideas and systems – as a solution to the continued salience of race and persistence of racism in post-apartheid South Africa.

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