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Coloured Identity in the Rainbow Nation: Historical Narratives of the Durban Coloured Community

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**Coloured identity in the rainbow nation:
Historical narratives of the Durban coloured community**

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School for International Training

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Abstract

South Africa is working to come to terms with the residual effects of institutionalized racist policies that governed all aspects of its citizens' lives during Apartheid. One struggle individuals and communities must wage is to define how they see their own racial identity in a post-Apartheid South Africa. There are many questions to ask. Is race no longer pertinent, or does it have a past that must be earnestly engaged and challenged, or does it constitute eternally fixed boundaries embodying cultural norms and biological traits? I, as I show in this paper, see the concept of race itself as a historical construct, one that must be engaged and challenged in order to understand it in its present form. Looking at the coloured community of Durban, this paper seeks to study the historical formation of coloured identity and the manner in which coloured people in Durban understand, or not, the formation of that identity. The aims of this paper lie in the belief that any race is a product of a particular kind of knowledge production that suited particular interests; race thus is a man-made creation and as such it has the potential to continue evolving. As South Africa attempts to forge a new national narrative, one where the idea of a "rainbow nation" plays a central role, it is important that racial categories be given the space by individuals and the government to evolve and be contested. I will show how coloured identity has come to occupy some of the meaning it now assumes. I will also show that though recent scholarship has called for a change in the way coloured identity is viewed, suggesting a move from an essentialist perspective to one that sees the identity as dynamic and shaped by history but also by those who presently own it, this consensus is missing in the broader community for various reasons. In conclusion I suggest that in order for South Africa to become a true

“rainbow nation” ordinary citizens need to create a space for one another other to construct their own identities. For this to be possible, the state must set the example and begin understanding its citizens as composed of a complicated, intertwined set of identities.

Introduction

The motivation for this project arose out of experiences I had during my time studying in Durban. I came to this topic late in the game and initially had reservations about pursuing it. Ultimately though, I felt compelled to take it on. It was a topic that both fascinated and confused me, and one that I thought was an essential sub-plot to the South African narrative. I have been stuck in many ways by the extent to which race infiltrates daily life. I became particularly interested in this phenomenon during my homestay in Newlands East with a coloured family; this was a portion of our study when we were meant to stay in indian or coloured homes as part of the program’s aim to show us multiple sides of South Africa. In that family race was crucial to way in which each person interpreted his or her own identity as well as the surrounding world. This was strange to me, especially because in the United States we do not have a racial category that corresponds to coloured. The newness of the concept for me highlighted the fact that the category is a construct. Race itself is a construct. We would not have entirely different sets of racial classifications in the U.S. than those in South Africa, if race was inherent and absolute. I thus set out to understand the historical construct of coloured identity in South Africa and the way in which people today understand, or do not, the construction of that identity. As I stated in my proposal, the theory behind my objective

is that understanding race as a historical construct frees one from the rigid boundaries of that construct because they become unnatural. I am interested in understanding old and continuing constructs of coloured identity as a means to form modern ones. It is not meant to reinforce ideas about race, but rather challenge them through understanding their historical origins and enduring salience.

This project unfolded in two components, which compliment each other in the sense that they shed light on each other, though they do always directly correlate to one another. The first component is a look at the historiography of coloured identity. Particular effort was given to research the historiography of the Durban coloured community; a difficult task considering much of the scholarship on coloureds is carried out in the Western Cape. The second component consisted of interviews with residents of Newlands East and Wentworth, two communities in Durban that have considerable coloured populations. The interviews revealed a disconnect between the racial understandings of my interviewees and recent, post-Apartheid, scholarship on the coloured community that attempts to frame coloured identity in a non-essentialized light and understands its creation as a positively defined product of a particular agenda but also the subaltern.

I will begin this paper looking at the historiography of coloured identity, a section that will include both a general look at coloured identity in South Africa and a more specific investigation into coloured identity in Durban. I have used a wide range of sources from recent scholarship to past population studies to literature and plays. I will focus on issues and theories that reoccur quite regularly throughout the literature, such as the essentialization of race, the question of where agency lies in shaping identities and

historical associations with the coloured identity that have proved significant even today. I will also show there appears to be particular issues that shape the Durban coloured experience and set it apart in some ways from the experience of coloureds in other parts of the nation. I will show there is multiplicity within the literature and so too within coloured identity. Next I will continue on to present my findings from my interviews and then analyze them in the context of the historiography. I will show there exists a disconnect between recent scholarship on the coloured community and the convictions of every day people. I will process what the existence of this disconnect means, and what might explain it. My advisor Prof. Maré once told me that the “rainbow nation” has only materialized in specific moments, which though they carry weight in a collective memory, do not reflect the day-to-day reality of South African life. I will conclude with my thoughts on how coloured identity and race in general can be approached in ways that are productive to goals of South Africa’s reconciliation and the real materialization, of a “rainbow-nation.”

NOTE: In this paper the term coloured, and any racial category for that matter, appears in lower cases. I have chosen to write the term as such to convey that it is a description and is, like any description, defined by the beholder. I shy away from using coloured as a proper noun because that would imply a singular definition, which is exactly the kind of essentialization I want to move away from.

Part I: Historiography

“A white person is one who in appearance 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. A native is a person who is in fact or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa. A coloured person is a person who is not a white person nor a native.”

Population Registration Act, 1950

“In other words, a group of human beings was defined and nominated by governmental decree.”

*Denis-Constant Martin,
“What’s in the name, ‘Coloured’?”*

“Tracy: There is a gap, an emptiness in the local history museum. That space waits for us. It is opening.

We must know where we come from, to understand how we’ve come to where we are. Our stories remain untold, our triumphs unheard of, our voices...unrecognized. We have to show ourselves or there will always be a hollow place where our pride should be.

I want my children and their children’s children to know of a coloured place not rotting with division and inertia, but a coloured place of power and diversity that they will not be ashamed to call...home.”

*Lueen Conning
“A Coloured Place”*

Introduction

Any discussion of coloured identity must begin first and foremost addressing the idea of race itself. Coloured is a controversial term and can be quite confusing, especially to non-South Africans. In America, the term black often refers to anyone who has African blood, regardless of how little or how much. In South Africa, there is a distinction between so-called “pure” blacks and those who have mixed ancestry. In both countries the distinction is messy and problematic, but often uncontested. Yet when an

American begins to try to make sense of the South African categorization, he will likely be perplexed, and given South Africa's history he might determine that it is altogether inappropriate. But thoughtful processing of South Africa's racial classifications will hopefully in time also convince Americans of the equally perplexing nature of America's racial classifications. Sometimes one has to go abroad to understand home. The ideas of race and racial purity can never be unproblematic because they take as innate a man-made philosophy.

A scholar studying coloured identities, histories, and communities is quick to define the parameters he works within. None of the current academics thrown into conversation in this paper espouse an essentialist notion of race. Rather, each sees race as an idea manipulated within a historical context. The other voices represented, who hail from previous eras as well as the fields of creative arts and literature, are still contributors to the scholarship as they are and/or represent influential perspectives on the creation and continuing evolution of coloured identity. Race is a construct therefore it cannot be absolute, however, it has immense power, which also cannot be ignored. Current South African scholars are keenly aware that though the country has entered a new phase in its national narrative, that of the post-Apartheid "rainbow nation," race became such a determinant factor in South African society throughout the country's colonial and apartheid history that in order to move beyond it in the present, one must understand it in the past. Race is therefore understood in this paper to be a construction rooted in specific kinds of knowledge production that suited specific agendas. It is with this in mind that those who contribute to the contemporary literature on coloured identity enter into dialogue with the past. The main purpose of the historiography section of this

paper is to analyze the relevant literature in order to understand the construction and maintenance of coloured identity as a way of contributing to the broader goal of investigating and complicating of how people who identify as coloured today perceive that identity.

Schools of Thought

Mohamed Adhikari, in his 2009 work *Burdened by Race: Coloured identities in Southern Africa*, categorizes three schools of thought surrounding coloured identity, categorizations which underscore the historical and present challenges associated with understanding coloured identity. The first category is the essentialist school of thought in which are included “traditionalists,” “liberal essentialists,” and “progressive interpretationists.”¹ “Traditionalists” analyze coloured history in the context of the “racist values and assumptions prevalent in white supremacist South Africa,”² seeing coloureds as merely spectators in a struggle between black and white South Africans. The only definition for coloureds that a traditionalist understands is a negative one; a coloured person is someone who is neither white nor black. Coloureds are defined by what they are not, rather than what they are. The 1950 Population Registration Act and others like it institutionalize this school of thought. Into this traditionalist category would fall Sarah Gertrude Millin with her work, *God’s Stepchildren*, a novel that defines coloured so negatively, that the only coloured character who is not portrayed as weak and

¹ Mohamed Adhikari, “From narratives of miscegenation to post-modernist re-imagining: towards a historiography of coloured identity in South Africa,” (ed.) Mohamed Adhikari, *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2009): 7.

² Ibid: 8

morally corrupt is Barry who, “contaminated” with blood from his black great-great-grandmother, decides to run away from his white English wife so his future “bastard” son will never know the truth about his roots.

Liberal essentialists, according to Adhikari, are scholars who point to the existence of a Coloured race as evidence that the oppressive segregation emblematic of apartheid was not always the South African standard. While taking a step away from the black versus white binary of traditionalists, the liberal essentialist school is, Adhikari argues, “nevertheless racialised in that it conceptualizes colouredness in terms of race and defines it as a product of miscegenation.”³ Aside from its negative connotations, the term miscegenation is built off an ideology that distinct and pure races do exist. It is a term many present day scholars treat with weariness, as it has often been associated with sexual immorality; the term will be addressed in greater depth later on as it holds a prominent place in literature surrounding coloured identity.

Adhikari says the final sub-category within the essentialist school, the progressionist interpretation, “accepted coloured people formed a separate race and were socially and culturally ‘backward’ compared to whites but did not regard this condition as innate or permanent.”⁴ This school also had followers within the coloured community who believed their conditions could be advanced by emulating the white community. Dennis Constant-Martin points out in his article, “What’s in the name ‘Coloured’?” that even when members of the coloured community were working in opposition to the colonial or apartheid power structure, they “sought to prove their level of civilization by demonstrating to what extent they had succeeded in assimilating to those very same

³ Ibid: 9

⁴ ibid

codes and values that the whites used as markers of differentiation.”⁵ This school of thought reflects themes of assimilation and the desire for White classification that are prevalent in literature on coloured identity.

The second school of thought Adhikari outlines is the instrumentalist school, which arose in the post-Soweto Uprising era and is composed of scholars who rejected race as the natural parameters for a discourse on coloured identity. In denying that race determined biology or culture, instrumentalists “regarded colored identity as an artificial concept imposed by the white supremacist state and the ruling establishment upon an oppressed and vulnerable group of people as an instrument of social control.”⁶ While taking a conscious step away from an essentialist perspective of race, the instrumentalist school still denies the coloured community any agency in the formulation of its own identity since it sees coloured identity as only the product of political events.

Finally, the last category Adhikari outlines in his attempts to make sense of the knowledge production surrounding coloured identity is the “Social Constructionism” school to which he belongs. He describes this school as understanding coloured identity as a “product of human agency dependant on a complex interplay of historical, social, cultural, political, and other contingencies.”⁷ Though acknowledging the ideological and political underpinnings of the construction of coloured as a race, the school also understands the identity to be dynamic and driven by those who bear it. Adhikari states that at its core, the school seeks to “explain how and why coloured identity came into

⁵ Denis Constant-Martin, “What’s in the name ‘Coloured’?” in (ed) Abebe Zegeye, *Social Identities in the New South Africa: After Apartheid – Vol. One* (International Academic Publications, 2002): p. 253

⁶ Adhikari: 11

⁷ Ibid: 13

existence and to unravel the intricate ways in which it has found expression.”⁸ It is this mission that this project seeks to work within.

Historical Foundations

“If many people still use that word [coloured] to talk about themselves, it is because systematic and recurring practices of designation and separation have cemented a distinctive community from heterogenous elements. It is also because the men and women who have been, so to speak, ‘locked in’ the same group for over three centuries had to invent a way of living together, which eventually contributed to consolidating their difference from the other South Africans.”⁹

Denis Constant-Martin

The creation of Coloured identity had its origins in not only politically driven events but also in the unmitigated movement of peoples from different places around an economic hub. The first slaves were brought to the Cape in 1658 and by emancipation in 1834; there were around 36,000 slaves. The slaves were a heterogeneous population, brought to the Cape from the East Indies, India, Madagascar, East Africa, and West Africa. As Cheryl Hendricks points out, from the beginning of slavery in the Cape, there were relationships, producing offspring, between slaves and Dutch East Indian Company employees. Despite the prevailing racial views of the period, Company officials turned a blind eye to interracial sex because it meant they did not have to bring over European women. When the slave trade was banned in 1808, they could continue producing slave

⁸ Ibid: 14

⁹ Denis Constant-Martin: 249

labor themselves.¹⁰ Even in 1671, 75% of children born to slave mothers had a mixed race background.¹¹ Most of these slaves and their descendants lived in the rural areas surrounding Cape Town until emancipation when they were allowed to move into the city. Constant-Martin argues that it was with this movement and subsequent interaction among former slaves and their descendents that the formation of a coloured culture began to take shape within the context of an “urban melting-pot.”¹²

Adhikari agrees with Constant-Martin that emancipation led descendants of slaves to develop a collective identity that eventually transformed into what is today known as coloured. Adhikari, however, elaborates that the formation occurred within an environment of shared economic and social status within the Cape colony. This class aspect of the identity became important later on in the 19th century when the discovery of diamonds and minerals in southern Africa served as a catalyst for the movement of large numbers of indigenous southern Africans into the Cape economic system and society. Suddenly faced with competition from a new population, coloureds began to attempted to consolidate their culture and identity as a means of coping with competition. The situation was ripe for a narrative of racial difference. The coloured community sought entrance into the dominant white society, asserting its European genes as indications of civilization. They were largely denied. The continued rejection of the coloured community from acceptance into white society further contributed to the development of a distinctive community despite its heterogeneous origins.

¹⁰ Cheryl Hendricks, “‘Ominous Liaisons’: Tracing the interface between “race” and sex at the Cape,” in (ed) Zimitri Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place* (Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2001): p. 38.

¹¹ H. F. Dickie-Clark, *The Marginal Situation: A Sociological Study of a Coloured Group* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1966): 50

¹² Denis Constan-Martin: 250

Though, as Constant-Martin says, the coloured community “had to invent a way of living together,” the evolution of a more unified identity did not negate the fact that the coloured community was heterogeneous, descending from slaves brought from different regions of the world. Shamil Jeppie addresses diversity within the coloured population as he looks at the Cape Malay community. The Malays are Muslim, yet so are coloureds who are not Malay. The Muslim-Christian divide within the coloured community, one that transcends cultural or ethnic classifications, is an example of the complicating elements within the Coloured identity. The Malays held an interesting place within colonial and apartheid classifications. They were brought to South Africa around the same time as some of the earliest whites and they came, in the words of D. F. Malan, having already “adopted the white man’s civilization.”¹³ The Malays became entangled with a fascination with the “orient;” Izak David du Pleiss, at one point the Commissioner of Coloured Affairs, was so intrigued by the Malay population that he founded the Cape Malay Choir Board, which was, according to Jeppie, “the re-invention of an imagined Malay tradition.”¹⁴ The Malay identity shows that the Coloured supra-identity did not create a homogenous group, even in the eyes of the state.

From the onset of colonial rule in South Africa sex was politicized, as sharing such intimacy between colonizer and colonized contradicted justifications for colonialism. As noted above, the Company overlooked sex between company members and slaves for pragmatic reasons, but within those relationships power resided with the Company member. The slave was still a slave. Contrasting the views of liberal

¹³ Shamil Jeppie, “Re-classifications: Coloured, Malay, Muslim” in (ed) Zimitri Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place* (Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2001): 85

¹⁴ Ibid: 91

essentialists who point to the existence of Coloured as evidence that segregation was not always the norm in South Africa, Hendricks argues, “[s]exual encounters between Europeans and the indigenous...threatened the necessary social boundaries which had to be maintained for colonial rule to be a viable exercise. As such, sex became something that had to be administered.”¹⁵ The politicization of sex throughout South African history, beginning with colonialism, created confusing feelings of inclusion and exclusion as well as shame within the coloured population, processes which, according to Hendricks, were very formative in the construction of coloured identity. An offspring of a company member and a slave was shunned from white society; furthermore, legally the father bore no responsibility for it.

As steadfastly as colonists rejected “mixed” offspring, Hendricks argues, they were equally ambivalent about grouping these offspring with the indigenous population. Instead colonialists sought to create a “buffer” between the majority indigenous population and the minority white population.¹⁶ Thus the coloured population was intentionally placed in limbo, foreshadowing the “not white enough, yet not black enough,” sentiment that some coloureds vocalize today. Hendricks says that as the 19th century wore on and increasing numbers of indigenous people came to Cape Town and other cities, the discourse around people of “mixed” descent centered more and more on ideas of contamination that threatened the survival of the white race.

The idea of Coloureds as an in-between or limbo race is reflected quite visibly in the literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. One of the most famous examples of these thoughts is Millin’s *God’s Stepchildren*. The novel traces the offspring of Andrew Flood,

¹⁵ Hendricks: 31

¹⁶ Ibid: 42

a missionary, whom Millin depicts as incredibly flawed and pathetic, and the “Hottentot” wife he takes in a failed attempt to convert a village to Christianity. Millin writes of Flood, “in the service of God, had betrayed his unborn descendants,”¹⁷ creating a “bastard” lineage never to escape the original sin of its founder. Millin’s use of the word miscegenation is highly charged and laden with assumptions of racial purity and sexual promiscuity. Her white characters that enter into relationships with people who are indigenous or have mixed roots, are degenerate or naive. Aside from Andrew Flood there is Hans Kleinhans who makes the teenaged mistake of sleeping with Flood’s daughter Deborah, yet is bright enough to run away when he realizes what he has done. In an action symbolic of what Millin sees as a coloured obsession with becoming white, Deborah takes Kleinhans name for her and her child despite his repugnance towards them. The younger Kleinhans has dreams of acceptance into white society, but learns early he is foolish and abandons his silly ideas of acceptance and marries another coloured woman. Their child Elmira, won the coloured lottery and can pass as white. But, Millin makes clear, appearance does not eradicate the sin; in every attempt to enter white society, Elmira is found out. Finally at age 16, she resigns herself to marry her family’s 65 year-old white landlord, Mr. Lindsell, who has been perversely obsessed with her since her birth. She soon runs away and Mr. Lindsell dies, but their child Barry has the greatest chance of any of Flood’s descendants to achieve the coveted status: white. Yet despite his Oxford education and English wife, he can never ignore the demons of his blood. The way Millin’s characters engage in “mixed” relationships, convey an illicit meaning on her miscegenation. It is a novel whose place within the historical narrative of

¹⁷ Sarah Gertrude Millin, *God’s Stepchildren* (Cape Town, Creda Press, 1924): 104

Coloured identity contextualizes some of the pain and shame that became embedded in that identity.

Durban

Most literature written on the coloured community originates in the Western Cape. Cape Town has a much larger coloured population than Durban, but another reason for the lack of scholarship on the Durban coloured community might lie in the apartheid era's education system. Aside from certain specified courses, coloureds in Durban were barred from attending the University of Durban-Westville or the University of Natal. Instead they were meant to attend the University of the Western Cape, something only those who could afford to travel to the university and could speak Afrikaans, the language of instruction at the university (all coloured schools in Kwa Zulu Natal used English as the medium of instruction) were able to do.¹⁸ Thus it is not surprising that little scholarship on coloured identity comes out of Kwa Zulu Natal given coloured students were not able to even attend the province's schools until the early 1990's.

One scholar who has contributed substantially to the literature on Durban's coloured population is Dickie-Clark, author of *The Marginal Situation: A Sociological Study of a Coloured Group*. Dickie-Clark's work argues coloureds in Durban do have in some respects a uniquely Durban history, and have, as a result, formed a different sense of identity and idea of their place within the broader South African society. The earliest

¹⁸ "Survey of Employment Patters and Needs in the Periphery of the Durban Metropolitan Region," Christine Roberts, Economic Research Unit, U.N., Durban July 1981, prepared for the Natal Town and Regional Planning Commission.

people who would eventually become coloured in Durban were products of relationships between the first British settlers, those who came with Lieutenant Farewell in 1824, and natives. The next group arrived in Durban in 1850 from Mauritius; about 50 immigrants from the island moved to Natal in search of economic gain from the sugar industry. They were skilled artisans, spoke French, and practiced Catholicism. About 15 years later another group arrived in Durban, though this one was from St. Helena. Like the Mauritians they were mostly skilled artisans, though they spoke English and were Protestant.¹⁹ Both Dickie-Clarks' study and S. Rankin's "A Pilot Study Assessing the Problems facing the "Coloured" community of the Durban Metropolitan area," are very explicit in stating the Mauritians and the St. Helenans were already "westernized" upon their arrival in Natal, and thus were seen as whites, at least legally, for many years. Though the Mauritians, Helenans, and those of Euro-African descent eventually formed the race coloured, it is not clear how and when these people assumed this identity. Perhaps it was the movement of ideas and peoples from the Cape colony, where a coloured group had existed since the 17th century and saw considerable consolidation of that identity in the 19th century that began to solidify the identity of Durban's Euro-African, Mauritian, and Helenan population as coloured.

Rankin and Dickie-Clark's work points to a general acceptance of coloureds by Durban's white society. Perhaps this is because coloureds were thought to have a "westernized" background, or perhaps because of their relatively small numbers. Durban's coloured population might have been too small for anyone to pay much

¹⁹ S. Rankin, "A Pilot Study Assessing the Problems facing the "Coloured" community of the Durban Metropolitan area," Occasional Paper no. 4., Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Durban-Westville: 4

attention to. Dickie-Clark and Rankin both mention a particular instance in 1875, when after two St. Helenans children were barred from attending a Durban School petitioners for the Aborigines Protection Society took the case to the Colonial Office in London expressing, “great surprise at the ignorance displayed by the Superintendent of Education in the matter of manners and customs of the St. Helena people, having no nationality of their own, their institutions being wholly English.”²⁰ Eventually the St. Helanan children were re-admitted to the school, though the Colonial Office recommended a separate school be built for them. Access to government school was one area in which the coloureds of Durban were set apart from those in the Cape. By 1861 government schools in the Cape enrolled white students only, but in Durban coloured students were allowed to attend government school until the Boar War.²¹

Another story in the in the history of the Durban coloured community that is significant and telling is franchise. When Natal became a separate British colony in 1843, it gained a degree of representative government, and “originally no mention was made of Colour qualifications and franchise was granted to all males over twenty-one owning immovable property to the value of 50 pounds.”²² Efforts were made in 1856 and then again in 1883 to ban blacks from voting and in 1893 Indians were also banned from voting in Natal. Coloureds however remained on the voting rolls. (See timeline in appendix 1) When the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, coloureds began to loose some of the political rights they had enjoyed; though again delegations were sent to the Colonial Office in London to protest the treatment of coloureds, this time the pleas

²⁰ Dickie-Clark: 56

²¹ Ibid

²² S. Rankin: p. 5

fell on deaf ears; Dickie-Clark says the British Government did not want to “intervene in the precarious agreement among the Whites.”²³ Coloureds in Natal could no longer be elected to legislative bodies nor were they counted in the voting population when electoral seats were distributed, though they did retain their franchise. Though extensions of voting rights like franchise for females and for non-property owners only applied to whites, coloureds still retained the right to vote in Durban until 1956 when National legislation removed coloureds from the common roll. Natal coloureds who were previously registered, however, remained on the common roll; about 500 coloured men from Durban continued to vote after 1956.

At the same time as coloured voting privileges were being restricted, Dickie-Clark says, indians and blacks in Natal were beginning to rise up the economic ladder and the “increasing acculturation of these groups reduced the usefulness to the Whites of Coloureds in semi-skilled, clerical and supervisory jobs for which there was now of course more competition.”²⁴ This trend coupled with the fact that their unique status within Durban’s socio-political framework could not withstand national Apartheid politics, contributed to a reversal of fortunes for Durban’s coloured community. While before they seemed to be able to resolve the black versus white identity conundrum by virtue of their general acceptance into the white community, even if on a personal level they were still discriminated against, by the mid-20th century it was clear that Durban’s coloured population would not be considered white.

It is important too to look at the theoretical background Dickie-Clark and Rankin come from. Rankin is a psychologist who is most interested in understanding the reasons

²³ Dickie-Clark: 58

²⁴ Ibid: 59-60

for psychological disorders and violence within the Durban coloured community. Rankin suggests that because of their position in limbo between the white and black races, and the obvious appeal of being white given the social, political, and economic opportunities it afforded, Durban coloureds were frustrated with their growing alienation from white society in the second half of the 20th century. This frustration, Rankin states, manifested in “horizontal” violence, that is violence against whoever is closest, even if members of one’s own community.

Dickie-Clark is a sociologist whose theory of the “marginal situation” heavily influences his treatment of the material. He may not see society as a paradigm of race, but he does view it as a paradigm of culture. It is because of their culture that Durban coloureds are different from blacks or indians. Durban coloureds are Europeanized in culture if not in appearance; they were Europeanized from the moment they arrived in Natal. Dickie-Clark is not unlike other Apartheid era academics who researched issues of race; he obsesses over physical characteristics at times stating the exact percent of the population that has frizzy or straight hair or an African or non-African nose.²⁵ Yet, though he never states it explicitly, Dickie-Clark implies disapproval with the way coloureds are treated at the time he writes, the 1960s. He disapproves that coloureds are judged solely on their race, instead of their culture. Dickie-Clark’s theory of a marginal psychological state revolves around the idea that people who “are placed in a marginal situation between two not entirely compatible social positions,”²⁶ develop a unique personality based on their efforts to cope with the situation of marginality. A person of mixed-race according to Dickie-Clark is one who will be confused and sensitive yet also

²⁵ Ibid: 79

²⁶ Ibid: 1

a conformist, attempting to move closer to one side than the other. He will also have a heightened sense of race-consciousness owing to his own insecurities. Sometimes it appears as if Dickie-Clark's theory of a marginal situation influences his views on Durban's coloured community.

Dickie-Clark seems to straddle two of Adhikari's schools of thought: the progressionist interpretation in the essentialist school and the instrumentalist school. He belongs to the progressionist interpretation because of his use of culture as the barometer of social status in South African society. He at the same time belongs to the instrumentalist school because as he shies away from race as a qualification, choosing culture instead, he sees coloured identity as something that was bestowed upon, rather than created by those who bear it.

The University of Kwa Zulu Natal has sponsored some research on coloured identity in Durban by a graduate student Aliya Vaid who conducted interviews with three generations of a coloured family in Durban, the transcripts of which offer telling information on how the city's coloured population lived during apartheid. While some aspects of Vaid's interviews support Dickie-Clark's theory of the marginal situation, other aspects contradict it. Most importantly, Vaid's interviews tell a story of a coloured community that pro-actively carves out a place for itself despite state restrictions. The confused, sensitive, and conformist behavior Dickie-Clark describes is missing from the interviews. Vaid's interviews do however, support some of Dickie-Clark's claims that Durban coloureds had a uniquely Durban experience under Apartheid.

One thing that is quite interesting, and not fully explored by much of the literature on coloured identity, except for Millin's problematic portrayal of it, is the

extent to which coloureds, to use Vaid's interviewee's terminology, "played white." Millin's work shows coloureds constantly attempting to gain entry into white society, always denied because they could never be white enough. Millin's sentiment that regardless of appearance, someone with indigenous blood will never be white is echoed by the Population Registration Act's definition of a white person: "[a] white person is one who in appearance 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."²⁷ Vaid's interviewees contradict Millin's ideology and tell of numerous people who "played white" in Durban, and played successfully. One interviewee says, "when you lived in Greenwood Park, you were lucky cause you used to get on the white buses cause the drivers were all play-white. So they couldn't tell you, you couldn't get on the bus because they shouldn't be driving."²⁸ Clearly the coloured community was still able to find ways to manipulate the system to their advantage.

While for Millin's coloured characters, being white was almost a fetish, Vaid's interviewees merely saw "playing white" as practical. The absurdity and unfairness of the apartheid system was never lost on the interviewees, yet they did not covet whiteness. Often members of the same family received different race classifications on their identity cards. Those who were able to secure a white identity card, did not forsake their coloured kin, as Millin's characters do. One interviewee describes what she saw as the main problem with "play whites": "your children grew up and you went down to the beach and you say to them, 'you can't swim here,' at the paddling pool and that. Then you had to

²⁷ Population Registration Act, 1950

²⁸ Aliya Vaid, Appendices A, B, C, D, Transcripts of Interviews for: "Generational Transmission of Identity: A study of Four Women of Colour.": 36

explain to them why and it was just that, the colour of your skin, you not allowed to. And then when you have a family gathering and you got these play-whites and they talking about these places and it confuses the children.”²⁹ The tragedy of this situation cannot be ignored; however it should also be understood that this tragedy did not paralyze the community. “Play whites” still remained connected to their Coloured community.

Changes in racial classification were not unheard of during Apartheid. As A.J. Christopher’s chart³⁰ (Figure 1) shows between 1983 and 1990, seven thousand people had their racial classification changed; the bulk of those changes involved movement to or from coloured, and this is significant considering the small numbers, relative to the whole, of coloureds in South Africa, yet understandable given the social context. Not surprisingly, while only 86 people were reclassified coloured from white, 3,455 people were reclassified white from coloured. 1,827 people were reclassified coloured from black, and 100 people were reclassified black from coloured. Since the Population Registration Act was vague, whether intentionally or helplessly, racial boundaries, particularly for coloureds, maintained some degree of permeability, despite their essentialized nature. Reclassification was no simple task; one had to undergo a series of crude tests such as, “curliness of hair, skin colour, and linguistic ability”³¹ and often families were split apart. Vaid’s interviews give a story to these statistics, demonstrating they were part of a strategy to survive as best one could under severe limitations.

Because methods for racial classification revolved around appearance and acceptance, the

²⁹ Vaid: 39

³⁰ Note: Christopher uses the term Cape Coloured in this chart as a national racial category.

³¹ A.J. Christopher, *Atlas of Apartheid* (London, Routledge, 1994): 103

line between races was naturally porous. In 1962, the National government attempted to patch some of those holes by legislating that appearance and acceptance alone were not enough to classify someone as white; in addition one had to prove the absence of any non-white ancestors. Yet, as Christopher’s chart shows, movement between races continued.

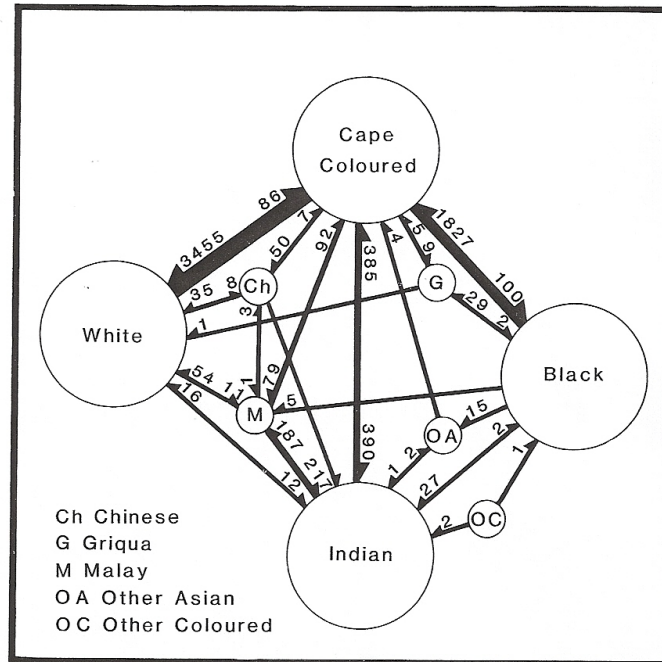


Figure 4.1 Changes in race classification, 1983–90

Source Based on statistics from Hansard, 19 June 1991, col. Q2009

Figure 1

Adding to the mix of voices of coloured identity from Durban is Lueen Conning, a playwright and native of Durban. Her play, “A Coloured Place,” while it does not center on its location, does assert a different experience for Durban coloureds than that of Western Cape coloureds. The play is extraordinary for its ability to convey multiplicity

³² Christopher: 104

within the coloured community. Stereotypes are engaged realistically and sometimes overturned. Agency is a central theme to the play. Several characters state the coloured community lives by definitions set by others rather than their own. One character Samantha says, “its not what they see that robs us our identity. We betray ourselves. We play the part. We stick to what we know, malicious when one of us chooses life beyond those confines. It takes courage to change your point of view and unashamedly do what your gut tells you to do.”³³ Throughout the play, the characters, who make up a montage of stories, search for their own path to chart their lives. It is a well-crafted response to the ideas of rootlessness and disgrace that have come to embody literature surrounding coloured identity throughout South African history.

Group Areas

One event scholarship on Durban is surprisingly silent on is the Group Areas Act and its aftermath. Constant-Martin says, as the result of the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act, both passed in 1950, “a group of human beings was defined and nominated by governmental decree.”³⁴ The Group Areas Act forced many South Africans out of their homes, mandating they live in specific government designated racial enclaves. Christopher’s chart below (Figure 2) of the model Apartheid city shows whites were meant to occupy the center of the city, while indians and coloureds provided a “buffer” zone in between white and black areas. Areas that were mixed racially were particularly viciously targeted by the implementation of the Group Areas Act – forced

³³ Lueen Conning, “A Coloured Place,” in (ed) *Black South African Women: an Anthology of Plays* (UK, Routledge, 1998):15

³⁴ Constant-Martin: 250

removals. It is surprising then that though Rankin and Dickie-Clark say before Apartheid, and particularly before the Boer War, many coloureds lived in the same areas as whites, they do not discuss the forced removals and the further segregation of coloured communities after the Group Areas Act was passed. Vaid's interviews as well as the ones presented in the next section also do mention of the Group Areas Act.

The Group Areas Act is featured quite prominently in some of the scholarship and literature written in the Western Cape. Sean Field, whose paper "Fragile identities: Memory, emotion and coloured residents of Windermere" based on 23 interviews, says of silences surrounding the Group Areas Act, "in the South African case, the interviewer needs to listen for silences, as they are often created by emotional legacies such as traumatic or painful events experienced by oppressed individuals and groups under the apartheid state. More specifically, the silences within the popular memory of coloured communities need to be carefully analyzed and not simply labeled as 'amnesia,' which is a way of pathologizing and stereotyping coloured communities. Rather, for generations of coloured residents, their feelings of loss, evoked by experiences of forced removals during apartheid, are significant."³⁵ Although in interviews and literature there is considerable silence on the impact on the Group Areas Act for coloured people of Durban, it does not take away from its significance in their lives. Forced removals could have been too painful a topic to talk about with an unfamiliar interviewer whether it be Vaid or I in post-Apartheid South Africa, or Dickie-Clark in the 1960's. It is thus, I

³⁵ Sean Field, "Fragile identities: Memory, emotion and coloured residents of Windermere," in (ed.) Zimitri Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2001): 97-8.

believe, still important to discuss the Group Areas Act despite the silences as far as the Durban coloured community is concerned.

One piece of literature from the Western Cape that features the Group Areas Act in the context of a coloured community is Pamela Jooste's *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*. The novel centers on a coloured family living in Cape Town's Valley that must decide how to best deal with the lives they have been dealt by the Apartheid system. For them, the Group Areas Act means they must move from their house in the Valley to the Cape Flats. Figure 3 illustrates how significant the forced removals were to the social landscape of Cape Town. *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter* is told through the eyes of 11-year-old Lily, whose mother, a woman who is too brilliant and motivated to live the life ascribed to her by the state, fights to keep the family's house in the Valley. In the end resistance is futile and Lily's mother turns to the last fight she thinks she can win, giving her daughter a better life than she will have in South Africa. Punished by the authorities for her activism, Lily's mother cannot secure her a passport to England; 11-year-old Lily is instead sent away with an exit permit, never allowed to re-enter the country. The story is one of the destruction forced removals caused to families. Though the record of the Durban coloured community is full of silences on this part, as far as I have been able to tell, it is likely that many of those silences contain stories like the one told by Jooste.

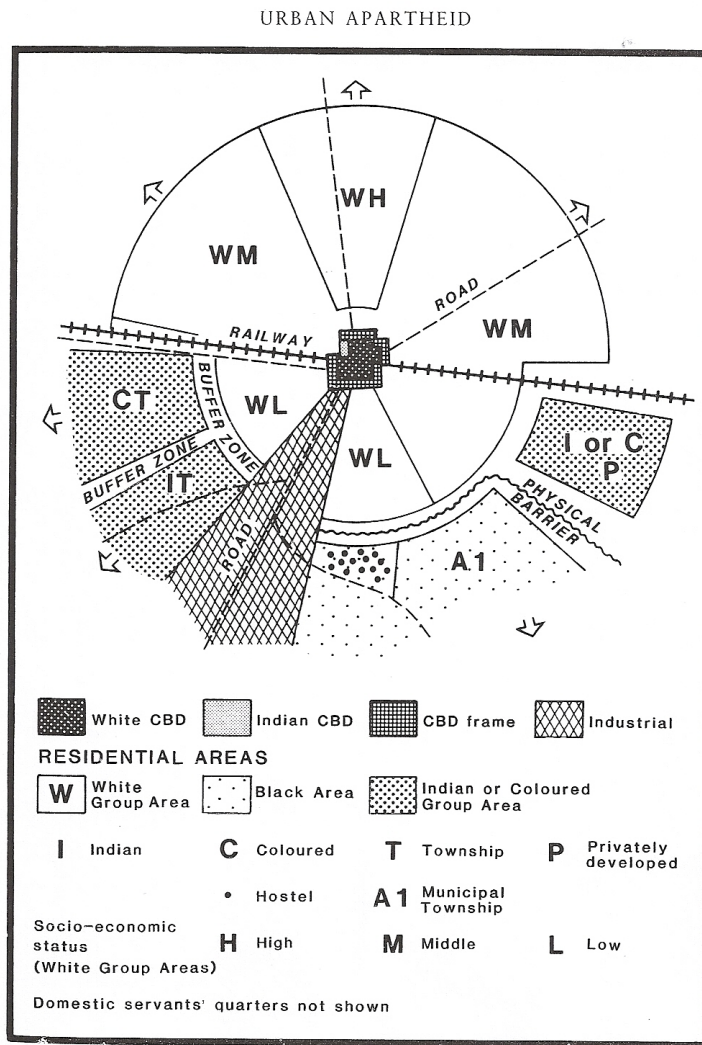


Figure 4.2 The model apartheid city

Source After R.J. Davies (1981) 'The spatial formation of the South African city', *Geojournal* Supplementary Issue 2, pp. 59-72

Figure 2

³⁶ Christopher: 107

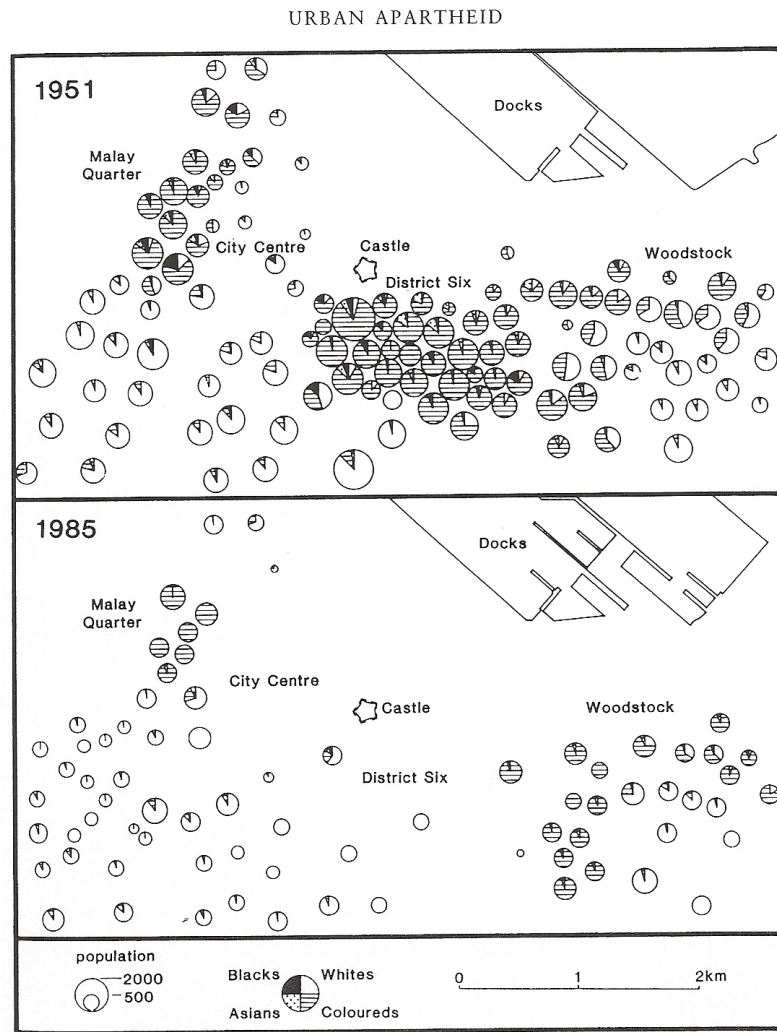


Figure 4.13 Distribution of population in central Cape Town, 1951 and 1985
 Source: Based on information extracted from the files of the central Statistical Services, Pretoria

Figure 3

Coloured Agency

Jeppie hits upon a difficulty for scholars studying coloured identity: what did the ancestors of people who now are classified as coloured consider themselves to be when they first arrived in South Africa. Speaking of the Malay community, Jeppie says,

³⁷ Christopher: 119

“because poor and politically powerless peoples’ voices are seldom heard it is hard to say for sure what they [Malays] called themselves between the arrival of the first Muslims in the latter part of the seventeenth century and the late nineteenth-century proliferation of names for them.”³⁸ Written histories can lack the voice of the subaltern, but that does mean his voice is nonexistent.

Adhikari argues that those who bear the identity are, “in the first instance primarily responsible for articulating the identity and subsequently determining its form and content.”³⁹ Since the origins of coloured identity, those who bear it have been responsible for its evolution. While particular laws and social structures might have set benchmarks for who could and could not be coloured, they could not create a culture. Constant-Martin recounts the historical origins of the Cape Town coloured New Year’s festival, which is an interesting case as it shows both a consolidation of Coloured identity as well as a public display of rebellion against the status quo. The festival, which began in 1907, was organized by working class coloureds, not the middle-class and educated elite. Entertainers wearing brightly colored costumes filled the streets of Cape Town occupying, temporarily, the spaces they were barred from because of their race. The festival survived the era of forced removals and continues today. One of Jooste’s characters says of the parade, “[t]he government can take away anything they like from us and goodness knows they’re doing their best but New Year is our time. That’s one thing they can’t take away from us in a hurry.”⁴⁰ Their message was that the city, in its entirety, belonged to them too. Constant-Martin says, “through the originality of their

³⁸ Jeppie: 80

³⁹ Adhikari: ix

⁴⁰ Pamela Jooste, *Dance with a Poor Man’s Daughter*. (London, Black Swan, 1999): 191.

music, their dances, and their dress, they proclaim the existence of their members as creative human beings. And by the same token...they paint Cape Town with the bright colours of Africa, Asia, America, and Europe. In doing so they assert that they are part of a wider world.”⁴¹ The message, reinforced by the physical act of occupying restricted space, that the community can transcend the restrictions that attempt to cordon it off, is powerful.

While the state, both during colonial and apartheid years, did dictate where people lived and worked, it did not, and could not, mandate how people adjusted to and lived within those boundaries. While it could regulate the histories and narratives produced by institutions, it could not regulate those passed on around a dinner table from one generation to another. To say the coloured community was completely formed via political and state-structured events is to suggest that the coloured community lived in a vegetative state. The idea that people did not think about their lives in relation to politics and find individual or coordinated ways of rebelling is exactly the kind of thinking an authoritarian and oppressive system relies on.

I wanted to couple my historiography component with an interview component as a way of further addressing agency. The best way, I thought, of investigating the agency of those who bear the coloured identity was to create a space in this project for their own voices. The interviews enter into the dialogue with the historiography in a complicated fashion, which is why the two components have been separated in this report. The interviews at times demonstrate the ways in which historical narratives enter into present-day thinking often unconsciously. Despite ongoing efforts to debunk them, some of the

⁴¹ Constant-Martin: 256

theories of racial purity and agency that permeated colonial and Apartheid narratives continue to be influential. Much as the characters in Conning's "A Coloured Place" demonstrate a multiplicity of viewpoints within the coloured community, so do these interviews. While many interviewees viewed race and coloured identity as unproblematic, some are engaging with ideas on race and do not take them as a given, something that hopefully signals an ongoing transition towards a new way of thinking about race and coloured identity

Part II: Interviews

Introduction

My objective for the interviews was to understand how people who self-identify as Coloured perceive the historical context and construction of coloured identity. Sub-questions to this objective included whether people understood coloured identity through a negatively defined lens, i.e. as something that is not white and is not black, and also whether people felt coloured identity was shaped by politics and the state or by those who, as Erasmus says, "bear" the identity. I was further interested in how people viewed the evolution of Coloured identity over time. I essentially came into the project with the rather naïve hope of engaging my interview participants with the theories of the historiography. These goals did not materialize. The failure of my expectations, as my advisor Prof. Maré helped me understand, were not indicative of a bad sample, but a broader obstacle, one that I did not at first want to acknowledge: even within the coloured community (here I am referring specifically to the people who I interviewed in Newlands and Wentworth) race is viewed in a highly essentialized and static manner. While they do

not advance my research in the sense they demonstrate ways in which coloured identity has been and continues to be shaped by those who bear it, the interviews do shed light on some of the obstacles facing understanding race in a more problematized way.

My original methodology for carrying out the interviews involved identifying coloured families to speak with in Newlands East utilizing a cross-generational approach. I received help from Shola in identifying the families. I specifically wanted to work with families that would be interested in my research; in this manner I manipulated the sample of my group. The interview process was a learning curve. I came out of my first set of interviews, after staying overnight in Newlands, disappointed. Though I had hoped to find a group of interviewees who could lend me insight into how they felt coloured identity had been constructed, I only came across one person who gave me information related to my goals. I had particularly wanted to talk to people living in coloured neighborhoods because I wanted to hear how they believed they had constructed their own identity, as a number of the historical and literary sources I found for my historiography did not assume the actual community who bear the coloured identity had and have agency in creating that identity. In many of my interviews, however, I found this idea reinforced by members of the community. “We have no culture,” was a phrase often repeated. I wondered if I had spoken to the right people. Prof. Maré however, was able to reassure me of the merit in my findings. While they may not engage with my historiography in the way I had hoped, my interviews still provided valuable insight. Initially unsure of how to continue with the interview process, my advisor and I worked out that I should continue as planned and finish the interviews I had set up using the same approach and questions.

Methodology

I set out to interview different generations because I believe the historical events a person lives through plays a large role in the way he or she understands coloured identity. Someone who lived the majority of his life under Apartheid is likely to have a much different understanding of his identity given his experiences than someone who was born during the last decade of Apartheid. I had hoped to interview three different generational groups. The first group was to be composed of people who had lived the majority of their lives under Apartheid, having been born around its start. The second group was to include people who were born around the 1970's a time I picked particularly because I had been told in discussions with people in Newlands during my homestay that the 1970's was the period when the Durban coloured community became conscious of many of the realities of Apartheid. Finally the last group I wanted to target was the generation born right after Apartheid, the so-called 'born-frees.'

I had originally wanted to set up focus groups for each generational group that would operate as discussions around history and identity, though I later decided it would be more interesting as well as more logistically possible considering time constraints if I conducted focus group interviews with generations of families. I believed this approach would foster dialogue between family members in which members could learn from one another. In the end, this method had its own set of difficulties and challenges, though I do not believe that they rendered the interviews themselves ineffective. The participants in each interview varied. In some cases I interviewed one person at a time, in others two or three.

One obstacle I encountered was that because the interviews were done within the family at their house, they seemed casual. In some respects this provided fruitful results as people felt comfortable opening up to me. With the younger generations, however, the casual environment seemed to signal that they did not really need to participate and in the end I only had two members of the youngest generation to interview. Another challenge was the typical dominance of one family member during the interviews; this was in some respects inevitable. In one case I was able to pull aside the mother of one family the day after the initial interview in order to hear her story without the influence of her husband, who had dominated the conversation the day before.

I also cannot deny the influence my own expectations and background had on my initial analysis of the material. I was an American coming into a South African home, something that automatically hindered the amount of rapport I could build. Additionally, no matter how much I research the topic, I will never actually understand what it is like to be coloured in South Africa. The extent to which I can connect with my interviewees is at some point, undeniably limited. Unfortunately, one of the lessons the experience brought home for me was the extent to which, when learning about a new culture or place or people, it is easy to essentialize. Despite the research I had done, making an effort to demonstrate the multiplicity of coloured identity and experience, I found that I had definite expectations for my findings based on my experience in my Newlands homestay.

I soon learned that I could not arrive at the information I wanted by asking direct questions like, “how do you view the historical construction of coloured identity in Durban.” To begin with most of my interviewees did not view coloured identity as a construction, for them it had a very finite and biological nature. The historical framework

for many of my interviewees did not reach beyond family stories, which they felt were not sufficient historical information, though they most certainly were. I discovered that in this instance, beating around the bush was more effective than getting straight to the issue.

Findings

During one set of interviews, I found myself helping out with We Help Our Children an NGO working out of Wentworth that runs leadership programs for children within schools. I had come on a day some of my interviewees were doing leadership training for students at a primary school; I went along for the experience. The program started with an ice-breaker in which the students walked around in a circle until they were told to break off suddenly into groups of a specified number. The goal of the exercise was to get the students to walk their own path throughout the circle, despite the direction taken by their friends or the majority of other students, and instantly form groups with those who were around them regardless of outside variables, like cliques. After a couple of rounds the director came up to me and explained the problem: when the groups were formed they were split along gender and race lines. The leaders stopped the exercise midway through to discuss this issue with the students, first prompting them with questions to see if they would realize the unconscious decisions being made on their own. The students were quick to realize the gender distinctions being made, but no one, despite much prompting, spoke up about the racial distinctions. After talking to the students about how a leader needs to be able to work with different people the exercise resumed, with slight changes in the outcome.

The way in which the ice-breaker materialized was indicative of a general essentialization of race that I found in my interviews. Most interviewees did not view race as a construct, and many also did not have a problem ascribing particular attributes and qualities to races in a very fixed way. This essentialization goes hand and hand with an often subconscious gravity to associate with only those of one's race, a phenomenon which was seen at the elementary school. Two interviewees, though, tended to challenge this essentialist notion of race. What set them apart from the others was that they saw considerable possibility and potential for improvement within their communities, whereas many other interviewees appeared to be of the mindset that there was little room for any change in their lives, whether it was getting a better job, or seeing future generations of their community live a higher standard of living than previous generations. Each of these two interviewees who challenged essentialist ideas of race, were quick to point out the diversity of coloureds from the start. "We are from Mauritius, St. Helens, Malay, African, White, you know. But people don't know, they don't know where they come from,"⁴² said one interviewee. The majority of people I interviewed did not have a sense of their family's history beyond their grandparent's generation. When asked how long their family had lived in Durban, most could only remember as far back as their grandparents. Within my small sample of individuals, the more an interviewee knew about his or her family and community history, the less apt he was to generalize the coloured race, or other races.

"We have no culture," was a phrase that often came up during interviews. I tried to get beyond that statement by asking interviewees about family or community traditions

⁴² Greene: 4/30/2010

or events, and was met with “we have none.” After being asked, “what do you think is the coloured people’s culture?,” one of Vaid’s interviewees said, “The thing is we haven’t got a culture. We so mixed up, so what do we do, we can be British, what British coloured (laughs), Cape coloured, or what. So we’re not, so we’re...er...we got no culture, lets be honest. What can we prove is our heritage? There’s no, we haven’t got heritage.”⁴³ One of my last interviews however, did shed some light on what was potentially underneath these statements. My interviewee said, “we have no culture, like the Zulus have lobola.” I realized that I had a completely different understanding of what culture means from my interviewees. They were attaching a purity to culture that is similar to that which racial purists attach to race. I understand culture to be made up of a set of commonly held practices, traditions, knowledge, and histories that unite a group of people. To me, culture can be practices and beliefs that have been held by a people for generations and generations, but it does not have to be.

When my interviewees said, “we have no culture” I think they were seeing culture through a particular lens. It was not that they saw their identity as void of any self-created defining characteristics. The idea of culture they used was one that came out of a specific kind of colonial knowledge production in which the natives had culture and the Europeans had civilization. Native culture was seen as fixed, originating from an ancient time of development and creativity, yet unchanged since (interestingly, none of my interviewees ever referred to a white culture either.) This view of a native culture can often be romanticized. To say that Zulus have culture and not coloureds is to say there is an overarching homogeneity amongst Zulus, which is not the case. If culture is seen

⁴³ Vaid: 23

outside of this, in my view, outdated definition, I think it would be quite easy for one to see the coloured community as having a culture. The trick though, is to keep in mind that culture is not completely defining of a person, in other words it is important to prevent the culture of a group of people from totally defining the individual. Someone who is Zulu is more complex than Zulu culture.

Though I was never able to get any affirmation of this idea from my interviewees, I believe their definition of culture is a residual effect of the racial terms used to classify coloureds by the Apartheid state. The famous Population Registration Act defines a coloured as “a person who is not a White person nor a native.” How does one define a culture of something that exists simply because it is not something else? This question brings up another theme that became common throughout the interviews: An identity formed on being neither black nor white. One interviewee said to me, “we are in limbo.”⁴⁴ A few interviewees expressed feelings that went beyond existing in between two groups, saying they could never be good enough for either group. This was an instance in which politics intersected with identity. Out of the four interviewees who were asked if they agreed with the statement that under Apartheid coloureds weren’t white enough, and now under the new government they are not black enough [this is a common statement that was heard in my and many of my peers’ Newlands homestay], three agreed.

After decades of being excluded from certain privileges on account of their race, many of the interviewees felt they are still being excluded from privileges because they are coloured. One conversation on the topic went as follows:

⁴⁴ Greene: 4/30/10

I: you know what, I'll be honest with you, its not an equal thing. Say I went to metric and they went to metric, my CV is pushed to one side, but theirs is looked over. So if you don't have a Zulu surname than you don't get a chance. And it used to never be like that. It used to be like 10 blacks, 10 whites, 10 Indians, 10 Coloureds.

M: When did it change?

I: I'd say like, when did the government change? Its been like in the past 20 years. They used to take one of each race. Now they just take all the blacks. And its true because my daughter works as a lawyer and she come back every day saying mom 'it just get worse and worse, they know nothing,' they must teach them and when they teach them they want to tell you how to do your work. I'm talking from first hand experience.⁴⁵

It is hard to understand why this interviewee believes that everyone had an equal shot at a job during Apartheid. Perhaps, for her and those around her it has been harder to find employment after Apartheid because sectors that had been filled predominately by coloureds during Apartheid, are now open to anyone, increasing competition. It is clear that the idea of affirmative action is one that carries emotional weight. Perhaps because of the historical preferences given to a particular race were so damaging, though that damage is not portrayed by this interviewee, installing a policy that for some resembles a race-based priority system, is bound to stir up discontent. The continual use of race as a benchmark by the government allows it to enter the political discourse in a way that

⁴⁵ Greene: 4/23/2010

might not seem altogether different from Apartheid to someone who is has been conditioned to think in a racialized manner.

Other interviewees felt the issue was more complicated. One said,

“You see the backlog, of the blacks not having to be able to get jobs to not get education all of those years and they are the majority. Now that you have affirmative action that gives them the first opportunities. And we as coloureds and indians in the old government we had a certain amount of help from the government. I mean when you look at the three races, the coloured and the indian were given more than the black.”

This interviewee continued to say, though, that giving positions to people who were not qualified brought, “the standard down of the country.”⁴⁶

The issue of “play whites” also arose in some of my interviews like they had in Vaid’s. Interestingly, one of my interviewees said some members of her family chose to move to Australia to “play-white” in 2007. The conversation went as follows:

I: I’ve got family from one side, their Coloureds but they play white. They say their white but both parents are Coloured, so I don’t see the difference.

M: did you say play whites?

I: yes, they say their whites. Both parents are coloureds. From my father’s side. They moved to Australia so they could be white.

M: So when did they move to Australia?

I: They’re in Australia now three years.

⁴⁶ Greene: 4/23/2010

M: And is that just because in Australia the same racial distinctions don't exist?

I: I don't know. But when they came down for the holiday they were like white people, you know they didn't communicate so much with the family they didn't talk to those who were on the darker side, they went to those on the lighter side. That's why I said I'm proud to be coloured because no matter where I go I'll still say I'm coloured.

M: do you think that they weren't proud to be coloured?

I: They were proud when they were here, but when they left they changed.⁴⁷

Vaid's interviewees had talked about "play-whites" during Apartheid as people who were attempting to cope with their circumstances; this interview shows the phenomenon 13 years after the new government took office. Perhaps the racial climate was so intense in South Africa for these people that leaving was not enough to escape it, they felt they had to escape their race as well. It is also interesting that the interviewee said she felt proud to be coloured and would remain coloured no matter where she went. This interviewee was very forceful in asserting her pride in her identity; she was proud because it represented her roots, where her parents were from.

As mentioned earlier, of the five interviewees to whom I asked the question, 'do you identify more strongly as a coloured or a South African, three chose coloured. Though all interviewees who were asked directly about the existence of a coloured culture said such a culture did not exist, they also all appeared to feel positively about being coloured. This pride in being coloured contradicts the picture of coloured identity painted by Millin and to some extent Dickie-Clark. My interviewees did not long to be

⁴⁷ Greene: 4/23/2010

something else. Yes, there was frustration, especially surrounding affirmative action policies, but that frustration did not fuel self-hatred, or at least no such sentiment was expressed.

The case of the interviewee whose family has moved to Australia to “play-white” is a confusing one. It suggests that though, my interviewees might not have expressed insecurity surrounding be coloured, it does exist, at least for some. It is a different circumstance from the stories of “playing-white” told by Vaid’s interviewees. Vaid’s interviewees were responding to state imposed restrictions and appeared to have found a way to exist in two different spheres of society: white society and coloured society. The fact that family members who “played-white” still attended coloured family functions on what appeared to be a regular basis implies they were not running from their race, but manipulating their circumstances. There were obvious benefits to “playing-white” during Apartheid. Children could attend better schools and families could have access to better resources and employment. “Playing-white” in 2007 in Australia is an entirely different story. There are no longer state imposed restrictions on access to resources and even if one believed the new government was repressive towards coloureds, moving to Australia without assuming a different racial identity would in itself be an escape. While none of my interviewees expressed, even implicitly, any shame with being coloured, for some a sense of shame must exist. This is another example of the multiplicity in viewpoints of coloured identity.

Apartheid is a subject for which there was considerable variance of viewpoints amongst my interviewees. For some interviewees Apartheid was a very painful subject, while others did not appear to be too affected by it. Some wanted to talk about Apartheid

for the entire interview, and continued to relate any question or topic back to Apartheid, while others shied away from ever addressing it. Overall, I found that those who had painful memories of Apartheid that continued to haunt them wanted to talk about the subject as much as they could. These interviewees were amongst the oldest. Strikingly, it was the middle generation, those who were in their 40's and 50's who seemed the least affected by and the least interested in talking about Apartheid. The interviewees of the youngest generation were willing to talk about Apartheid, but did not seem particularly interested by the subject. This trend surprised me. I had expected those in the middle generation to be the most opinionated and enthusiastic when talking about Apartheid as they had grown up and come of age in years of greater consciousness and heightened intensity in the anti-Apartheid struggle. All of the people who made claims of life being better during Apartheid were from this generation. I had expected the oldest generation to be the least critical of Apartheid, as having lived more of their lives under the former system than younger generations, I thought they would be most likely to look upon that time with nostalgia.

I am inclined to believe that other factors aside from generational differences influenced the break down of opinions. The members of the oldest generation I interviewed were men, while all the members of the middle generation, except one, were women. Two of these women in the middle generation said "I don't know anything about politics;" one pointed to her husband as the one who should answer questions on Apartheid and the other said she was just a housewife and could not speak to what went on outside her house.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Greene: 4/23/2010

I believe gender might influence conceptions of Apartheid for one specific reason: employment opportunities and gender role expectations. While I did not discuss gender dynamics with my interviewees, it was clear that in all the families I visited, the men provided the main source of monetary income. As I explained, the men were the interviewees who expressed most forcibly the pain of Apartheid. Many of the memories of inequality they told surrounded employment opportunities. Perhaps dealing with expectations of providing for a family compounded the discrimination they faced, as they were not able to live up to their duty as men in the family as well as they wanted. It just so happened that the generational lines also fell along gender lines.

The women of the middle generation remembered the Apartheid years as the years of their childhood; they thought their childhood was pleasant and altogether better than the childhood children today have. When asked about growing up during Apartheid one woman said, “I had a nice childhood, it was really nice. Not like today. Today’s children have nothing like we had. They watch T.V. and play video games all day. There’s so much crime and violence. In the schools they have violence. We never had it like that.”⁴⁹ Jacob Dlamini in his book *Native Nostalgia* looks at black South Africans who recount memories of their lives under Apartheid with fondness and nostalgia. He argues that despite the political oppression, black communities and townships created their own character and culture and were not morally deficient. When a person looks back at his life under apartheid with nostalgia, it is not nostalgia for the repressive state or amnesia (Field warns against writing off nostalgia as amnesia). There were aspects of the

⁴⁹ Greene: 4/23/2010

Apartheid years that had merit, even for those who were suppressed by the government's policies.

Unfortunately, though many of the interviewees had differing opinions on the past, most agreed that the future did not hold much promise for socio-economic advancement. They did not see space for coloured people to move into higher levels of government or their professional industries; there was consensus there would always be a cap on the advancement of coloured people. Race, the interviewees believe, had too strong a grip on South Africa's society for coloureds to be able to get to the top of any field when the country is run by a majority of another race. Three of the interviewees said that coloureds would stay in sectors that were considered coloured sectors, as they could have more chance for advancement. These sectors were healthcare (nurses, doctors), construction, and the police force. I did have a brief interview with a young coloured man who is attending law school. He was one of two people I interviewed who believed South Africa could become a society in which race did not matter to the extent it does today, however, each said this would take much time and much work.

Analysis

As I mentioned earlier, I was struck from the beginning by my interviewees' tendency to essentialize race. At first it was difficult to see my interviewees reinforce what I believed was a negative way of viewing their identity and history. Alexander says, "because ordinary citizens are not social scientists and are not aware of the processes by which their identities have been, and are being constructed, social, including racial, identity does have a primordial significance for them. This is the real reason for

the tenacity of these identities.”⁵⁰ Alexander is right; most people do not think about the historical construction of their racial identity nor challenge it. My interviewees gave a face to this characterization – but that does not mean they are ignorant. Because their race was bestowed on them from the outside at the time of birth, of course it seems primordial. One of the questions I asked my interviewees was whether there was a specific moment in their lives when they became conscious of their race, a moment when it became significant that they were coloured. I received probably the most unified response to this question. All said they had always known they were coloured and there was never a point when they first conceived it as an identity. If someone can’t remember being introduced to a concept, it is much harder for him to imagine that concept as a construction.

It is true that my interviewees who knew more about their family history were more likely to think critically of coloured identity. However lacking information about one’s family history makes sense given the historical background. First of all, this lack of information might have been a silence like those Fields discusses as he looks at memories of forced removals. The opportunity for some incorporation into white society, which also represented a higher economic class, might have also silenced the transmission of family histories. Additionally stories become lost in transit and the Durban coloured community began with the movement of British sailors, Mauritians, and Helenans into Natal. The legacy of Apartheid might also have affected the transmissions of family histories. The struggles of the Apartheid era might have been so difficult that living day-to-day became the norm. What was in the past was not so significant.

⁵⁰ Alexander: 3

The conception of culture my interviewees held was different from my own. I think re-evaluating what culture means is as important as challenging racial constructions. I do not mean to say my idea of culture is right, but I do think broadening the definition of culture from something that pertains only to natives is important. The Cape New Years festival, for example, is a strong statement of a shared culture. Time does not give culture more importance, that is to say a tradition that is generation old is no less a significant cultural component than one that is 10 generations old if they both carry similar importance in the lives of the people who practice it. The diversity within the coloured community could easily be seen as an indication of culture rather than an absence of it.

The historiography, which points to a unique historical experience for Durban's coloureds and the interviews in which some expressed nostalgia for the days of Apartheid raise the question of whether Durban's coloured population did enjoy a lesser degree of oppression during Apartheid than Cape Town's or other cities' coloured populations. Though national policies were rigid, Jacob Dlamini says that even in the black population people enjoyed varying degrees of hardship during Apartheid. Vaid's interviewee's story of "play-white" bus drivers begs the question of how strictly were these rules were enforced on the local level. My research unfortunately is not extensive enough to really come up with any answers to the question of whether life was really different for Durban's coloured communities under Apartheid, or whether my interviewees who are nostalgic had experiences that were outliers.

Part III: Conclusions

Conclusion

As a researcher, the most emotionally triggering part of the project was hearing some people express feeling alienated from their government and the majority race in South Africa. The historiography reinforced some of the historical foundations for this alienation; it is upsetting, although not surprising, that it continues to this day. The coloured community should be emblematic of South Africa and its history. One only has to look at the Afrikaans language to see how much movement existed between groups of people and the sharing and creativity that arose out of that movement. For instance, “an early development is Arabic-Afrikaans: Afrikaans written in Arabic calligraphy.”⁵¹ But the side effects, such as essentialization, of racial purity theories negate these important and interesting sub-plots to history. We take for granted the grip of racial purity ideas in our lives. Walking through the uShaka center the other day I saw a T-shirt that read, “100% Black.” Even if racial purity did exist, can one actually argue there is racial purity in South Africa given its history? Furthermore, the idea of a European racial purity that dominates historical writings ironically projects the same notions of static state of being that became synonymous with non-European populations during the colonial era, onto European populations. But of course any kind of knowledge production has its incongruities. Lueen Conning begins “A Coloured Place” with a monologue by the character Tracy who says,

⁵¹ Breyten Breytenbach, *Notes from the Middle World* (Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2009): 76

“Only He (referring to God) knew that when these nations met they would start wars over territory, Earth’s gold and even the colour of their skin.

(Talking to herself) Now that’s where we would have to come in, God’s answer. People who would form the bridge and prove that unity is possible. We are the overlappers, the people’s people. Yes, Man’s creation... All over the world, but especially hear and now, Coloured people represent a union...a blood bond. (Thinking aloud) Instead we are rejected for not belonging to either clan and then what to we do? Reject ourselves. And our next move?

We start copying someone else’s image...clutching any piece of evidence that we’ve got a great-great-grandfather on that side. What about the rest of our roots? (Writing) We must uncover them and take pride in the richness of our blood.”⁵²

Tracy is right. The key to a constructive creation of coloured identity for the 21st century lies in understanding and embracing the complex historical formation of coloured identity and using that understanding as a tool of liberation that promotes a non-essentialist evolution of identity. Understanding the complex historical formation of coloured identity will also foster an understanding of how it fits into the broader South African narrative.

While South Africans work towards understanding the history of racial constructions, it is also important that they work towards stripping racial identities of their extreme influence. I agree with Alexander when he says race can be misplaced in dialogues surrounding identity. Race seems to loom over all issues when it comes to identity even if those other issues, like class, education, and gender determine life chances more concretely than race. The problem though, is that until twenty years ago

⁵² Conning: 12

race did determine life chances. Thus it held immense weight in identity construction. Alexander says of the new government, “by compelling us to declare whether we belong to this or that so-called ‘race’ the state forces us into a racial mould, whether we like it or not. Eventually a racial habitus takes hold of us so that we take for granted that we belong to this or that so-called ‘race’ and we assume the relevant racial identity.”⁵³

Members of the new government lived under the same Apartheid ideologies as members of the old government did. It is not so much of a surprise that race infiltrates state policies. But however salient the past might be, it cannot be seen through the lens of the present. South Africa might be dealing with the residual effects of the past but there is a new set of policies in the present. Race does not determine life chances, other factors do. Though these factors might visibly coincide with race, race is no longer the determinant one. Because of this, intertwining race with governmental policy can be dangerous. I say dangerous because my interviews showed me that some people have a deep sense of alienation from the government because of affirmative action policies. Especially where the coloured community is concerned, because they too had limited rights on the bases of their race during Apartheid, affirmative action creates a hierarchy of oppression and also retribution.

There were different restrictions on account of race, but as Dlamini points out, even within races people experienced Apartheid differently. And today within races, people experience life differently. Dlamini says, “the anti-politics machine of the ANC has succeeded only in breeding political entrepreneurs and racial nativists. For this lot,

⁵³ Alexander: 3

there are no local histories, no differences within black and white.”⁵⁴ Alexander says the coloured community must not define itself into a “minority corner.”⁵⁵ This is true, but an effort of racial groups to see themselves as South Africans must go hand and hand with an effort on the government’s behalf to see its citizens beyond their race as simply South Africans. Because identity cannot be completely dictated by the state, new laws will not solve issues embedded in identities even if those laws seek to reverse the very laws that initiated those issues in the first place.

In *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen discuss geography as a social construct. East and West mean nothing without a vantage point to begin with. China is east of England but west of Japan. The “West” and the “East” are laden with both geographical and social meaning; they are created out of a knowledge production that originates in and is dominated by Europe. Europe is the vantage point. In South Africa, geography has taken on significant social and geographical implications. The physical spatial lines and categories drawn by the Apartheid government carry the weight of their social consequences. They thus began to assume the same kind of innate meaning that East and West in a global context do. Another point *The Myth of Continents* makes is that though the complex and heterogeneous nature of many classifications, geographic, racial etc, are often acknowledged, many even in academia and especially in every day life, continue to use these problematic terms in a non-nuanced way because it is simply easy.

Constant-Martin argues that coloured identity has been formed over the centuries because people who were “‘locked in’ the same group for over three centuries had to

⁵⁴ Jacob Dlamini, *Native Nostalgia* (Auckland Park, Jacana Media, 2009): 20

⁵⁵ Alexander: 8

invent a way of living together, which eventually contributed to consolidating their difference from the other South Africans.”⁵⁶ Much as geographical spaces take on a social meaning that is tied to a particular foundation and does not really make sense without that foundation, so too does race. One of the ways of overcoming some of the negative implications and stereotypes of a particular identity is to acknowledge that it only makes sense in a particular context. Then the individual can actively define the identity himself instead of being passively defined by it.

When Alexander says that ordinary people are not aware of the construction of their identities and attach a primordial essence to them he also implies that members of a society continue the work of the former government by boxing each other into neat and uncomplicated categories. I spent the majority of my childhood in the south of the United States, a region infamous in America for segregation and racism. While it has progressed from its past, race in the region, like in South Africa, can occupy a fixed and rigid position. I grew up being defined as a black person by those around me, so that’s the identity I assumed. When I went to college in New York City, for the first time in my life people asked me what my race, nationality, and identity were. It was liberating because even though I said black, I had chosen to identify as black. To become a true rainbow nation, South Africa does not need to become a color-blind society; it simply needs to be a society that gives its fellow members space to choose their identities.

Limitations of Study

In any research project time will be the major limitation forming the parameters within which the project must play out. Time constraints affected my project in three

⁵⁶ Constant-Martin: 249

particular ways. I would have liked to have returned to the families and individuals I interviewed for follow up visits. If I had had the time to do this I would have been able to delve much further into how my interviewees understood their identity, particularly because it was a subject that was difficult to approach directly with interviews. The rapport I would have been able to build with my interviewees had I had more time, would have yielded, I think, very interesting information.

While I attempt to show the multiplicity within the Coloured community, because of time constraints I was not able to interview a wide sample of members of the community. Therefore, while I can make reflections based on individual statements and stories, I cannot draw definite conclusions that implicate the entire community, nor would I want to. Thus I have erred on the side of caution choosing to define trends as possibilities rather than certainties.

One of the most difficult parts of my project was finding resources that discussed coloured history and identity in Durban. In the end I was able to find a few informative sources, though I am afraid the combination was a bit more disjointed than I would have liked. I am positive there is more material on the coloured community of Durban, though it might take a significant amount of time to dig it up. In order to do a really conclusive study on the history of coloured identity formation in Durban, one would need to devote oneself to searching for and exploring hidden details and stories in city records, archives, and reports. The dual nature of my project, in that it contained both a historiography and an interview component, meant that I had to sacrifice some depth in the research on either end. I felt that the duality of the project was necessary in order to have it speak to the

present day, however, one could complete a thorough topic on either component by itself and would likely be able to touch on areas that I was not able to reach.

Finally I understand that as an American and as someone who has not identified as coloured throughout my life, nor lived in the particular environment in which it has been constructed, I do not, cannot, fully understand all the nuances of the identity. This does not, I believe, invalidate my efforts, but it does present a caveat. The times when I struggled to get to the information and topics I wanted to arrive at with my interviews could likely be the natural result of coming into the situation as a foreigner. That being said, never once was I made to feel uncomfortable during an interview, I hope my interviewees can say the same.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are a few directions a continuation of this study can take. First of all, as I mentioned above, I believe there is more historical data and records pertaining to the coloured population of Durban that can be uncovered. Further study can attempt to uncover these records. I also think it would be interesting to complete a genealogy on coloured families in Durban. Again one would have to make use of public records, but also conduct substantial interviews with various members of a family. Since many of the responses gained from interviews broke down along gender boundaries, another way to further this study would be to split the sample into more specific groups like ‘coloured males of the “born-free” generation.’ The sample could also be split along lines such as employment status or educational level. Finally, I think it would be useful to look at what is taught about coloured history in South African schools. It would be interesting to

study how schools address race in general and how their angle fits in with that of the government and also scholars of race and identity.

Final Words

One of my interviewees said “So you reap what you sow, eventually. We’re reaping now. What they were sowing those years, we’re reaping now. In many ways if we were together in that time, the country would be much more together, everybody.”⁵⁷ The challenges South Africa faces today, including those of identity, are in a sense necessary obstacles, or growing pains, in the pursuit of its goals. Twenty years is miniscule in the life of a country. Benedict Anderson author of *Imagined Communities* proposes the nation as an imagined community – its members cannot possibly all know each other, yet they have a collective imagination of their mutual interests, unity, and history. Imagination precedes the construction and consolidation of identities and their communities. Because they are in a sense imagined South Africa and its constituent and overlapping communities have the power to re-imagine.

⁵⁷ Greene: 23 April, 2010

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Appendix A: Timeline

1652 – Dutch East Indian Company establishes a base at the Cape of Good Hope. In subsequent years, slaves are brought from Indonesia, India, Ceylon, Madagascar, and Mozambique.

1808 - The slave trade is banned.

1834 - Emancipation of slaves in the Cape.

1843– The Royal Charter of Natal makes Natal a Separate British Colony

1850 – About 50 immigrants come from the island of Mauritius to Natal, attracted by sugar industry. They were mostly skilled artisans, “westernized,” Roman Catholic and French speaking.⁵⁸

1856 – First efforts to exclude Africans from franchise in Natal.

1865 – Immigrants from St. Helens arrive in Natal after economic pressure on the island grows. Similarly to the Mauritius immigrants they were considered “westernized” but were members of the Anglican Church and spoke English

1880 – During the Boer War, Coloureds from Natal serve in White regiments.⁵⁹

1883 – Africans excluded from franchise in Natal.

1893 – Indians excluded from franchise in Natal.

1902 – End of the Boer War. Concessions made to ex-republics begin to revoke rights of Coloureds and other non-Whites.⁶⁰

1913 – Natives Land Act prohibits Africans from owning land off of reserves.

1904 – Coloured children are barred from White government schools.⁶¹

1910 – Union of South Africa. The African Political Organization holds a Congress of Coloureds. The congress decides to send a delegation to Britain to convince the government that their rights are in danger. The government does not intervene.⁶²

⁵⁸ “A Pilot Study Assessing the Problems facing the “Coloured” Community of the Durban Metropolitan Area,” S. Rankin, Occasional Paper no. 4, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Durban-Westville.

⁵⁹ Dickie-Clark: 55

⁶⁰ Dickie-Clark: 57

⁶¹ Dickie-Clark: 55

⁶² Dickie-Clark: 58

Coloured in Natal begin to lose their legal equality with Whites. While they did not lose franchise, Coloureds in Natal could no longer be elected to legislative bodies and were not counted in the voting population when electoral seats were distributed.

1924 - Millin writes *God's Step Children*.

1927 – Whites and Africans are prohibited from sexual intercourse.

1930 – White women gain the right to vote; Coloured women continue to be barred from voting, though Coloured men in Natal retain the right.

1931 – Property ownership is no longer mandatory for White voters, though it remains so for Coloureds.

1948 – New national legislation mandates that in order to register as voters, Coloureds must appear before an official.

1949 – Mixed Marriages Act prohibits marriage between any White and non-White.

1950 – Immorality Act prohibits sexual relationships across any racial lines.

1950 – Population Registration Act classifies people according to race.

1950 – Group Areas Act delegates specific areas for living and ownership to specific races. Before Group Areas, Coloureds in Durban were legally able to live wherever they chose.

1951 – National government places Coloureds on separate voting roll

1955 – The year Dickie-Clark's study begins. Minister of Interior ends Mauritians' classification as White. In Natal, male Coloureds still maintained the right to vote if they met property and income qualifications. Out of 5,000 Coloured men over 21 in Durban, 638 were registered voters. The Congress of the People meets and adopts the Freedom Charter.

1956 – National government appoints a committee to develop a uniform definition of race. A year later the committee reported that the task was impossible. National legislation removes Coloureds from the common roll and creates a separate political structure for Coloureds. Natal Coloureds who were previously registered, however, remain on the roll; about 500 Coloured men from Durban continued to vote after 1956.

1960 – Debate starts within the National Party over a "New Deal" for Coloureds. Some believe Coloureds deserve a reward for their cooperation with the government and argue for more rights to be given to the group. Arguments are made for Coloured M.P.s. The Prime Minister, however, says, "Coloured M.P.s would be only the beginning which would end in integration and biological assimilation." Instead a Minister for Coloured

Affairs is appointed and other smaller “advancements” are made such as job reservation for jobs that are seen as traditionally Coloured jobs.⁶³ Coloured and African representation in Parliament ends.

1961 – Upset at the governments disregard for the “New Deal,” Coloured leaders feel rejected by the White government despite their hopes of gaining advancement, more contacts are made with African leaders.⁶⁴ There is a partial boycott of Parliamentary elections for Coloured representatives. More cooperation with opposition groups than the government. In June of 1961, a national convention of Coloured people meets that commits to working for “the creation of a non-racial democratic South Africa.” Dickie-Clark says, “the question of whether to aim at the maintenance of a separate and different status for Coloureds, or to join the other Non-Whites in the struggle for equality for all is the basic issue in Coloured politics.”⁶⁵

1962 - The government amends its policy for identifying Coloureds. Appearance and “general acceptance” was not enough to classify someone as White. Instead, one had to prove that one had no Coloured ancestors. Before, a person could legally acknowledge having slight Coloured ancestry yet still be classified as white if he had the appearance and acceptance.

1966 – Dickie-Clark publishes his survey of the Durban coloured population.

1984 – Coloureds and Indians are given the right to participate in the national government by voting for their own representative bodies.

1990 – The Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act are repealed.

1994 - First non-racial national election.

⁶³ Dickie-Clark:67

⁶⁴ Dickie-Clark: 67

⁶⁵ Dickie-Clark: 69

Appendix B: Interview Questions

NOTE: I did not ask questions in a particular order and depending of how the interview unfolded asked additional questions as well.

Tell me about your childhood, a bit about yourself, your family, and your neighborhood growing up?

If you know, when did your family come to Durban and from where?

Was your neighborhoods all colored? Was your school coloured?

When did you become aware that you were coloured? What did you understand being coloured to mean?

- how did your awareness of being coloured change your perception of yourself and others?

What is unique about coloured people?

How has your life been shaped by being coloured? What about your parent's life?

Do you think coloureds should be seen the same way as blacks?

Is it better to look more white than black, even today?

Some people say that South Africa has entered a phase of post-racial politics, do you think that is true?

Which is a stronger identity for you, your coloured identity or your South African identity? Why?

What South African figure, present or historical, do you most admire and why?

How do you think what it means to be coloured will change in the coming years?

Appendix D: Sample Interview Transcripts

Sample Interview #1

M: do you think that the way you understand Coloured will change?

I: I think we've come from black and white and make coloured. So I don't think we should change anything, nothing will change that. You were born coloured, you will stay coloured. Throughout my entire life, I'm fifty, and I've never had any problems with being coloured. I'm very proud to be coloured.

M: What makes you proud about being coloured?

I: I think everything. I mean from the roots my parents, both my parents were coloured. And I've got family from one side, their coloureds but they play white. They say their white but both parents are coloured, so I don't see the difference.

M: Did you say play white?

I: Yes, they say their whites. Both parents are coloureds. From my father's side. They moved to Australia so they could be white.

M: So when did they move to Australia?

I: They're in Australia now three years.

M: And is that just because in Australia the same racial distinctions don't exist?

I: I don't know. But when they came down for the holiday they were like white people, you know they didn't communicate so much with the family they didn't talk to those who were on the darker side, they went to those on the lighter side. That's why I said I'm proud to be coloured because no matter where I go I'll still say I'm coloured.

M: do you think that they weren't proud to be coloured?

I: They were proud when they were here, but when they left they changed.

M: Do you think they'll ever come back?

I: Well my father's sisters here so they come a visit them when they want.

M: Do people do that here? Do people who are coloured play white here?

I: The people who are coloured here are proud, they're coloureds.

M: What sort of traditions did you have growing up?

I: Well I'm a roman catholic. That's what I'm saying the roots where we come from, both my parents are catholic. That how we grew up.

M: And is there anything else that you would say was particularly defining of your life?

I: Not really

M: Any other traditions that your family had or things that you enjoyed doing?

I: once a month my brothers and sisters get together and we visit our parents. They are still alive.

M: So you mentioned about your family in Australia that when they come back they like to be around people who have lighter skin. Do you think that amongst people who are here there is a preference for people who have lighter skin?

I: I don't think so. According to them, when they came back they only wanted to take pictures with the lighter skin people because in Australia they're white and they can't come back with pictures of people who are dark and say this is their family. You know. And yet we all grew up as the same.

M: And were the schools when you were growing up all coloured or were they mixed?

I: At first when I was growing up they were, the students were all coloured. Now, like with my granddaughter they're all mixed.

M: What was it like going to an all Coloured school.

I: It was nice but I think that the new generation is good because they're mixed with different languages and such. Because she's six years old and she's learning to speak Zulu at the same time.

M: So one of the things I've heard expressed by some people since I've been here, by some people not all, is that under Apartheid coloureds weren't white enough, but now their not black enough. How do you feel about this statement?

I: I can't really say but I can say that now there are a lot of whites like moving out of the country, the majority of the whites are actually like going away.

M: But do you feel like this new government represents you well?

I: Uh, I won't say well because because of Apartheid the blacks run it now. I'll be honest with you, when the whites were running things, it was smoother. But with the blacks running everything its not nice. Like even the jobs, they've got jobs and most of the

Coloureds now, they're out of work, because they've got first preferences. Everywhere they're on top.

M: Are there any places where coloureds have been able to get to the top?

I: I think mainly in the hospitals. I think mainly the hospitals that you can say we've got. And also the police force as well.

M: So is it the affirmative action policies that are disadvantaging everyone except for the blacks?

I: you know what, I'll be honest with you, its not an equal thing. Say I went to metric and they went to metric, my CV is pushed to one side, but theirs is looked over. So if you don't have a Zulu surname than you don't get a chance. And it used to never be like that. It used to be like 10 blacks, 10 whites, 10 Indians, 10 Coloureds.

M: When has it changed?

I: I'd say like, when did the government change? Its been like in the past 20 years. They used to take one of each race. Now they just take all the blacks. And its true because my daughter works as a lawyer and she come back every day saying mom 'it just get worse and worse, they know nothing, they must teach them and when they teach them they want to tell you how to do your work. I'm talking from first hand experience.

....

I: (pointing out pictures) See there that is my husband's grandmother, she was a white lady and she married a coloured man. My husband's coloured but his grandmother was white. And my mother's mother was a white.

M: And was that common back then?

I: It was common. But there were certain things, like how can I put...her children in those days, because they weren't fair fair, couldn't get into like white things. Like in our home, we had a lot of students. They're white, they're black, they're coloured, they're Chinese. And I don't care what color they are, when they walk in here they're part of us.

M: Who are some of your role models, or historical figures in South African history that were good role models.

I: I think our role model was Nelson Mandela. He was our role model.

M: Were you excited to vote for him.

I: Yes, he was our role model.

M: And what was it like on that election day?

I: It was a nice feeling, very good. Because we could for the first time go and vote, you know because we never had the opportunity. And you know its been good and its been bad, its been both. But we just have to deal with it. We can't blame him, we can't blame the new president. Its on ourselves, what we make of it.

M: Is there anyone else besides Nelson Mandela?

I: Just him, if it wasn't for him things wouldn't be where they are today.

Sample Interview 2:

I: What was your childhood and family growing up like. And what was your childhood like in the context of being coloured in South Africa?

F: I grew up in a small country town in the South Coast near Durban about two hours drive from Durban. And eh we grew up under very hard circumstances. We had to go to school without food sometimes, the school was a coloured only school because apartheid was very oppressive at that time. If we didn't have we just had to do without in those years. The system was so bad that even when we went to the post office we had to go through another gate, we weren't allowed to go in where the whites were. And then all other shops and things you were not allowed to have access if you were a person of colour during those years, it was very hard. We grew up eventually I couldn't even do metric, standard 8 because my parents weren't able to help me through because they were very poor those years. And eh coming out of school also at the end of standard 8 and I had to leave school because the conditions we stayed under were very hard, being poor and not having that privilege of being able to get ahead in school. So it's a it's a cycle, it continues in your life because once you end with education you struggle right through, if you struggle in the beginning and couldn't even get to metric its very hard to get on in your life. You struggle, you have to work for yourself, parents also, and eventually this eh eh thing of not having anything it goes with you right through unless you are able to get help from a scholarship or anything in that regard which we also had trouble getting then. I grew up, I left school, I started working in a garage auto mechanic. Through those years I couldn't get qualified because you had to have at least a standard 9 certificate in order to work in the garage. So I worked just to get knowledge and learn something at least. So I did mention, I did eh I was able to learn a trade in auto mechanics, I learned from a teacher who used to teach us. And eh from then on I eventually got married, I moved to Durban and I got married. My age now, I'm now 65 this year. And it was very good that I was able to have a family, but going back it was very difficult times under the apartheid system, very very difficult because there was a discrepancy between the races. So you find that even up to now it sticks to you even after all this time and the whites still have all the privileges they have and the non-whites suffer. Its like a...the world cannot understand this system of apartheid, unless you have lived through it you will not know exactly what transpired. What was the cause, the

apartheid government made those rules that you stay there and you stay there. So I would say that the foundation has been laid here, so that really will take very long for us to become one because apartheid is structured where people stay in different areas. And because your house is in that area that is where you'll stay. Even though we try to make it the rainbow nation where we are as one, from the beginning we've been separated so it's a thing of finding each other and finding common ground so we can be able to get on together. And different cultures with different languages. Its not going to be easy, it's a very hard thing. So we're hoping in praying in the next generation that's coming after us, that eventually they will be able to get together and live together and be able to enjoy all the privileges and benefits equally, equal, equal. But we haven't got it yet, definitely not, we haven't reached it. Its still a dream. It's a dream. It's a dream, but it may one day come to pass.

I: Is your family, as far back as you know from the area that you grew up in, or did they move there from somewhere else?

F: My family is many have passed on, but the children, some of the children are still there, but many have moved to the cities for economic reasons. But those who live in the small towns are those who are retired or have disabilities because they get a government grant. So they stay there and they try and make the best of it.

I: What was growing up in a small town like?

F: It was, well, a small town for me, growing up in a small town was all I knew. I did enjoy it in many different ways. Living in a small town is nice because everyone knows each other. But it has its disadvantage because there's no work, there's no work in small towns. Its mostly out when you go to the cities or bigger towns where you find employment.

I: Was your town mixed racially?

F: we were mixed, but we were not staying in one racial area, the blacks stayed one side, and the coloureds, and some of the coloureds used to rent behind the white and the Indian houses and then the Africans had a place where they use to stay.

I: And what were the relations between the different group like?

F: There were no social mixing, each one kept to himself most of the time, that's how the system worked, typed to type, that kind of thing. You keep to your type. There were no marriages no thing like that. A mixed marriage, that was very hard. If you wanted to marry a white, you couldn't do it.

I: Did you always have a strong perception that you were coloured, or was there a time in your childhood when that realization occurred? Or was it always present?

F: well, I grew up in that system, when I grew up, I realized after the time that it was a wrong system that was in place because we were not mixing with the Whites and so too with the Blacks. Each one kept to himself. It was total segregation. Everyone was staying on his own. So we also clung to our own people. Mostly family, so we didn't go out of, we had a boundary, that was our boundary and we didn't go out of it. You stayed with your own. I come from the apartheid years, we were brought up that way. Tough, very tough.

I: And uh what about you (turning to the wife) could you answer the first question I asked, about your childhood and growing up as a coloured person during Apartheid? What was it like to be someone who was coloured in South Africa and in your community at that time?

M: He remembers more about apartheid, not me. My childhood was alright. Coming from the two, from a Coloured and an Indian, eh but I grew up mostly with my Indian family because my mother was a Coloured and my father was an Indian. So, I found that time, when we were growing up, it was much peaceful, especially the schools not so much violence and things. And, but as you grew you hear things about apartheid. It was more cause of his age group because he remembers more about Apartheid I think. He's got that big chase from the post office, I never had that experience.

F: Can I just uh come in here?

I: Yes.

F: I remember coming from train from [name unintelligible] and I was in the white compartment and eh the ticket examiner came and he said in Afrikaans "get out, your not suppost to sit here." Never forget that, I heard that a lot. That was, and I had to go sit in the 3rd class compartment even though I had paid for a 1st class ticket, I couldn't sit there because there were whites there. It was for whites. On the beach too, you find that its whites only. You want a bench on the beach, you find they're all marked whites only. Those are the years we come from. It was an extreme. So you reap what you sow, eventually, we're reaping now. What they were sowing those years, we're reaping now. In many ways. If we were together in that time, the country would be much more together, everybody. Yeah.

I: Do you see positive change in terms of people coming together since the new government has taken over?

F: I... I can't really say, is it a fast pace? No, 2010, no. Its not at a face pace. Unfortunately now you have a black upper class, middle upper class, that wants to accumulate for themselves and they forgot about those of their country folk that are also struggling. Its now become established a little clique that's been able to gain, and they've forgotten about the history and the past. You find that those who come up to a level now forget so quickly the struggle. So its, it can be one side and then the other side. Everybody must have a share and be able to be happy and have a home. Even the service

delivery and the strikes, people are not happy. Every day we have the strikes starting and people are marching. The government may be trying to help the people, but the pace is very slow. Its not going to be quick its going to take time. Maybe not in our life time, but our children or our grandchildren because the backlog.

I: Do you have anything to add?

M: I don't think so. I think he said all [laughs]. I don't speak as much as he speaks. But I agree with everything he says. Yeah.

F: we do hope that after the world cup things will really work out, the work situation and employment will go away. That things will get better. This country is a miracle, it was on the precipice of a bloodbath. It's a miracle. It could have went like Rwanda, it could have went like the countries up north that have been full of bloodshed. It's a miracle which we are very thankful for. For the old man, Mr. Mandela who brought us to the place that we are now. But he can't do more, he's done a lot. He can't do more, its for those who are behind him to take up that yoke and carry on with it. If they fail they fail him and they fail the country.

I: So I've heard before that during Apartheid they weren't black enough, and now they're not white enough. Would you agree with that statement? Or do you disagree.

F: I don't see it that way, but I won't really say in my view it doesn't really affect me that way. I can't talk on other peoples behalf. But for a coloured not to be black enough, I can't I really don't see it in that light. I see the country transforming but at a very small place. You see the backlog, of the blacks not having to be able to get jobs to not get education all of those years and they are the majority. Now that you have affirmative action that gives them the first opportunities. And we as coloureds and Indians in the old government we had a certain amount of help from the government. I mean when you look at the three races, the Coloured and the Indian were given more than the Black. Education was given more to the Coloured and the Indian than the Black. The Whites first, than the Indian and Coloured, then the Black. So you have a surplus of doctors and teachers in those races and when you look at the Blacks, a very small amount was allocated to a black child in those years you know when I grew up. Hence those schools, they didn't have enough, they were still under trees where they were learning, they didn't have schools. So I've seen that benefit to the Coloured and the Indian. They had enough schools, a lot of things were given to them by the government and the Indian schools got their own schools. They spent more on them, the Indian child and the Coloured child than they did on the Black child. I don't mean a very big amount but the difference was there. And I wouldn't say now that we're not black enough when we interview for jobs and such. If that's the case it means we're not qualified enough. Because even in a system like this you need to be qualified to get a job or else you will not be able to do your job and progress in a proper way. You know. To be chosen because of the color of your skin and not because your qualifications it will backlash.

M: But that's what's happening now. They're not qualified for the jobs, but they get taken.

F: So that's what I've been telling her, you've got to equally balance things out. So if the job is yours through merit and not anything else. But if you put someone who is not qualified in, it's like putting a driver in a cab who can't drive properly, he can kill people. So we're still on the same pedestal where we were 8 years ago. We're still reaping what we sow. It takes time to get over, it won't be easy. Definitely not. Because we know the black government's in power. I want to say they are helping their people, they are trying to help them. But you are not helping someone when he is not qualified for a job. You have got to give that job to someone who has the qualifications for the job. If you're going to bring the standard down you're going to bring the standard down of your country. You're going to have people doing a job they are not qualified for. Unfortunately that's the history of this country. Deprived, deprived, deprived and now we've found that being deprived for so many years we're now going on another extreme on another side. Which is very unfortunate. The situation will take long for us to really come together in the sense that the Whites they still have it all and they stay behind really tall walls, put electric fences around them. And you wonder why the crime is so high because it's a cycle a vicious cycle, where the man goes out in the morning, there the other side of the story, the flip side. He sees someone in a car that he can hijack easily, he goes to these people with the second hand cars that will buy them from him. He's not working, he gets offered that amount of money, they even give him a gun sometimes and he hijacks a soft target and the syndicates can make money off of the parts of the car he hijacks. The man gets either shot or caught, or he doesn't get caught. And if he doesn't get caught he goes out the next day. It's a vicious cycle. And it's because of unemployment, no education, and a third one, utter laziness, don't want to work, all those things add up. Those things are all true in our day and age. And even if you are educated the number game comes into effect. There are a lot of people looking for work. It's like finding a needle in a haystack. Go to the gates, there's a long queue of people looking for work. You might have the qualifications but because of the numbers you might not be able to find work. So there are a lot of things that are working against you at all times. We have to pray a lot for this country. And if our politicians can stop filling their pockets and start thinking of the man in the street. Our politicians, where are they? It's such a, it's like another planet that you're on a total different planet. But in Mandela's time there was a lot of cohesion between the races. Although some of it might not have been really genuine, he was trying as best he could to bridge the nations together. As of now I find myself also struggling a bit when we play other rugby sides from overseas. I find myself struggling with our teams, especially if it's a white side, I must also get over, try and fight my own racism. Because our teams, the white teams have had good training from child through to college, good places to play and practice. And they were able to build them up into good sides. The rugby springbox and the cricket especially. And the other races lag behind. That's why we have it so hard today with the sports. Hoping that the other team will beat us...it's just that that thing is still there, it takes years to get out of it. Believe me if you lived through it, it takes years, if you can, to get over it. To forgive and forget. Not easy. It's not easy because even if you're at your workplace. You're speaking to a man whose very deep-seatedly hurt by Apartheid. And I can't forget it.

But I must try and rid myself of that, because its like remembering over and over what happened. You can't forget what happened to you. Your parents too, they struggled under that government. 1948 they came into power and from that time on, they didn't play. I remember also, the uprising in our little village. There was an uprising by the Ponto people on our border. And the defense force went in there in 1960 and they cordoned the area off around that uprising. They blocked all the roads and they went in and searched the houses door to door and they arrested the people they thought were the instigators of the uprising and they took them to jail. Army went in, not just the police, the army went in. You can call it the iron fist. Yeah. And that area was cordoned off and they took every woman and children off, I don't know where they took them to. Some of them were never heard of again. That was very very harsh, almost like Hitler, not really, but they come from there, they're part of that regime from Germany, Holland not Germany, Holland. But it was tough, in those days it was tough, because you couldn't do anything. Then I'm going to recount just one more little item I want to give you. Our town had a curfew, where I grew up that curfew at quarter to 9 a bell would go off and then you wouldn't see one black person in the route. When the second bell goes off at 9:00 than the police start patrolling looking for blacks they can pick up. They actually enjoy this, they actually enjoy picking up the blacks. They were locked up straight away if you were black, they'd put you away straight away. That is where I come from, it was quite horrible. And now we've reach the other extreme where the crime rate is so high unfortunately. It all filters down, the years, it comes from way back then. There again the Bible says you reap what you sow. What ever you reap, you can't sow green beans and think your going to reap maize.

I: Do you see coloured identity as changing in the future, how do you see what it means to be Coloured playing out in the South Africa of the future?

F: There are over 4 million here, coloured people. And I can't see in any short time anything changing here. We're made up of many different tribes, Coloured tribes. Some are mixed some are from the Cape, the Khoi Khoi, so they've been here for many many years, before the settlers came down from Zimbabwe from the north. So I can't just see things changing.

I: Well I mean how do you see the place that Coloureds have within South Africa's broader community?

F: Well we're not going to have a front seat, that's for sure. We've got a few ministers in this government in the ANC, but the Coloureds as a whole they've always been with Whites, with culture and language, whether with English or Afrikaans. They're not going to have, I think in the government, because the ANC are very strong and they have a very wide black support base. And they give their own people the priority. They're going to stay in power for a very long time. Unless there's a division between them. But even so, its going to take a very long time. The Coloured community here, your going to see them carrying on in whatever capacity like teachers or nurses that kind of thing. I can't see them going up very far, because it's an African country its Africa, they're in control like in Zimbabwe, like all the others around us. You won't have a Coloured government

never ever, like you won't have a White government any more, its finished. You'll never have an Indian government either. I mean for us the Coloureds we just have to work under this system of this ANC system and make the best of it. I can't see it changing in any way. A major shift, no. It will stay the same as it is now. A lot of them are going to Australia, a lot went already, Canada, New Zealand for they're own reasons they left the country. We did loose a lot. But we're not going to see a policy shift on the Coloureds. You have to accept that you are under this government. The Indians too, there's nothing they can do. Years ago my uncle told me that they would eventually take over once the Whites are through because they're the majority and the majority party always wins. No DA, no, the DA won't come in, with White colour in them. This will go on for years and years, they will stay in power for a very long time. And I can't see any shift for the Coloureds, which way they're going to go, they'll toe the line. The government that's in power has inherited a very big problem, they've inherited a very big problem. The race issues all these things must get out of our system, which is not going to be easy, unfortunately that's the South African today. And what's also unfortunate is the upper class the middle class blacks, everybody's seeing what they can bring home. No one thinks about what they should give back any more. They don't see the shacks any more. You only focus on what you can get. Not taking anybody with you, open your arms and assist. No. We should all work together like Mandela wanted and see where we can get this country. In this country there are people starving, its very dangerous. Yeah. But hopefully next time you come here we will have a better answer for you, but this is how we see it, this is how we see everything that has happened here. I will not run down any race group. I haven't got the right to belittle anybody and call them names. Like Mandala said, we must embrace each other and throw our spear in the sea. Those are his exact words. Throw our guns away. I don't think I will ever forget a person like that.