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Black consciousness and non-racialism : contradictory or complementary?

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Abstract

The Black Consciousness philosophy with its focus on black solidarity, the exclusion of whites from the black struggle for liberation, being consciously black and black self-determination, amongst some of the principles espoused by the Black Consciousness philosophy may prima-facie seem to be advocating a parochial politics of race or even a racially exclusionist politics obsessed with cultural authenticity and racial peculiarity. Black Consciousness from such an optic may seem to be more in line with other race centred systems such as apartheid based on white superiority as opposed to a politics that rejects a race centred approach to political life. Certain readings of Black Consciousness reflect the philosophy as espousing a more regressive as opposed to a progressive liberatory politics. Furthermore, Black Consciousness with its focus on race its critics will argue is not in line with a politics of non-racialism which seeks a total rejection of race.

However, such an understanding of non-racialism is a very limited and unsophisticated one as it entails a rejection of race without first engaging with the concrete reality of race, while also assuming that a rejection of race entails integration. Indeed, it may be a great goal to attain a society in which race does not matter and in which it is not a determining factor in the life of any individual. Yet, to not see race when race has had and continues to have a profound impact on South African society, especially the poor black majority, may serve to be more regressive than progressive. In a society where inequality manifests along racial lines a hastily sought integration may not serve to attain the desired outcome of a genuine non-racial society. Equality thus becomes a central perquisite to make possible the attainment of a non-racial society unhindered by the limitations of white superiority and black inferiority. With the persistence of inequality accompanied by white domination and acquiescing blacks a non-racial society will serve to be an illusion.

Biko, through his articulation of the Black Consciousness philosophy sought the attainment of a radical egalitarianism; this from the Black Consciousness optic being the condition upon which a non-racial politics and society could be forged. Black Consciousness has the ability to create a truly non-racial subject, its sophisticated conception of race which conceives of race as being consciously contrived can serve to illustrate the implicit non-racial outlook of the Black Consciousness philosophy. Through the project of Black Consciousness the end goal could indeed be perceived as being a radical egalitarian non-racial society. The overall tenor is that Black Consciousness complements non-racialism more than it contradicts it.

Key words: Black Consciousness, Non-racialism, Steve Biko, race, blackness, whiteness.

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Introduction

> 'The two defensive logics of black victimhood and white denialism collude and collide, often in unexpected ways. Together, they gradually foster a culture of mutual *resentment,* which, in turn, isolates freedom from responsibility and seriously undermines the prospects of a truly non-racial future' (Mbembe, A 2008: 7).

Does the scientific rejection of race entail that with it we reject race in its totality and by so doing we can be said to advocate non-racialism? Indeed, such a stance is very simplistic. While race has no scientific basis it continues to structure the lives of many people, the effects of race socially created are very real. Thus we are faced with the paradox of race, that is, race does not exist, yet it does (Guillaumin 1995).Advocates of non-racialism need to engage with the paradox of race for by accepting that race does not exist while not showing how it does and claiming to advocate non-racialism reflects an unsophisticated conception of race and for that matter non-racialism. On the other hand, philosophies that focus on race and that place race at the centre of their analysis are often critiqued as being regressive and advocating a parochial racial politics and thus in opposition to non-racialism. Such critiques should not be taken at face value for such critiques may in themselves be conservative. Do they not imply that any talk of race should be rejected for by emphasising race are we not rejecting the idea of non-racialism? Such critiques can be said to advocate a colour-blind conception of non-racialism. Such a conception of non-racialism is highly flawed for it ignores the social effects of race. Black Consciousness while it places emphasis on amongst other things black solidarity, self-reliance, in effect race, it does engage with the ideal of non-racialism; one may even go further and state that it possesses a sophisticated conception of non-racialism.

C.R.D Halisi (1997) highlights that the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) was the most dramatic attempt by a new generation of intellectuals to redefine black identity in terms that undermined the ideological foundations of apartheid. By undermining the ideological foundations of apartheid Black Consciousness automatically distances' itself from racial

essentialism. Yet is this really the case when ethnic identities are rejected in Black Consciousness thought only for emphasis to be placed on a black racial identity and solidarity. Black Consciousness places significant emphasis on black solidarity however, such a black solidarity is not based on an impenetrable exclusivity. The mere fact that Black Consciousness rejected apartheids ethnic politics and sought to unite black resistance against the apartheid system as a whole reveals its revolutionary intent, both politically and in terms of how it engaged with black nationalism. Here black nationalism was made superior to ethnic – African, Indian and Coloured nationalisms (Halisi 1997). The constructed superiority of black nationalism should however not be conceived as an end in itself. The superiority of black nationalism was a conscious effort at the creation of a unified black resistance to apartheid structures of domination, and its long term objective being that of wanting to minimise inhabiting obstacles to the creation of a non-racial society. Thus while advocating a racial-consciousness such consciousness was not regressive, that is, the racial-consciousness advocated is not one that lapses into essentialism. Thus '[l]ong before the phrase became a cachet, Biko comprehended both race and racism as social constructs and nothing more' (Halisi 1997: 76).

Biko and Black Consciousness thus conceive of race as a product of society, that is, as a social construct. This is significant as it serves to enunciate Black Consciousness' non-racial character in so doing automatically challenging any essentialist conception of race. Yet, by adopting a non-essentialist approach to race does Black Consciousness then not ignore the consequences of an essentialist understanding of race? Black Consciousness' acknowledgement that race does not exist does not entail that the effects, socially created, of race are ignored. As Foster and Taylor argue '[t]o avoid any confusion it is imperative to stress that to say that 'race' has no factual basis in the natural history of humankind is not to deny the fact that a belief in 'race' has been part of history with no real and severe historical consequences' (Foster and Taylor 1999: 331). Indeed, to accept the scientific rejection of race without engaging with the social reality of race and racism would merely entail the denial of an asymmetrical history of race and racism in which unjust enrichment and unjust impoverishment (Feagin 2006) were simultaneously accompanied and manifested themselves along racial lines. Being cognisant of this and wanting to address it is essential if a non-racial society is to become a very real possibility. Black Consciousness in recognising the social reality of racism not only as personal prejudice but more importantly structurally sought to

address it. Yet, the manner in which Black Consciousness sought to challenge the falsity of race left it open to claims of racism and promoting a regressive racialised politics which was perceived to be in direct opposition to non-racialism, and therefore as against the goal of seeking to attain a non-racial society.

Black Consciousness is not a static philosophy but rather a work in constant progress; this research report aims to make a contribution to its construction. The Black Consciousness ideas expressed by Steve Biko (Biko) are more progressive than have been historically, and currently assumed thus making Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception/vision of a genuine non-racial society one of the most sophisticated conceptions we have had in South Africa's political tradition.

The focus of the research report is to highlight the sophistication of the Black Consciousness philosophy as expressed in the writings of Biko, while also illustrating that the Black Consciousness philosophy is genuinely non-racial in its outlook and conception of a social vision. Thus the main arguments to be engaged with here are Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception of race; it will be illustrated that Black Consciousness possesses a highly sophisticated conception of race which distances Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception of race from the conception of race within South Africa's political tradition. Biko places race within a social constructionist optic. Here race is seen as being consciously contrived this immediately draws a gulf between the Black Consciousness conception of race and that of the traditional conceptions of race in South Africa's political tradition, such as that of the African National Congress' (ANC) which takes race as a given. Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception of race have significant political implications for how a non-racial society is conceived. Focus is also given to Biko's conception integration; integration for Biko cannot be genuine for so long as feelings of superiority and inferiority continue to manifest amongst whites and blacks respectively. In other words, Biko eschews integration that entails the assimilation of blacks into a society where white is deemed the norm. This also links to Biko's critique of white liberals and the exclusion of whites from the black struggle for liberation. This is reflected in the tension between the liberal dialectic of emancipation and the Black Consciousness dialectic of emancipation. Biko conceives white racism as the main thesis which must be balanced by a strong black solidarity; in contrast liberals conceive the thesis as apartheid and the antithesis as non-racial integration. The research report will also assess the extent to which Biko continues to be relevant in post-

apartheid South Africa. This will not be done by explicitly indicating that Biko and his expression of Black Consciousness ideas are relevant by giving particular examples. But this will be done by engaging with literature that challenges and brings a critical approach to post-apartheid descriptions of South Africa, which has come to be dominated by metaphors such as the 'new South Africa' and the 'Rainbow nation'. Such metaphors implicitly assume or rather, portray South African society as one in which equality reigns and in which race difference and racial privilege have all disappeared. It was the dominance and persistence of such conditions in South Africa that made Biko sceptical of the possibility of attaining a non-racial society and engaging in an 'integrated non-racialism' which was predominantly seen to be the chief means of opposing a racist apartheid state. Biko saw genuine liberation and the possible attainment of a non-racial society both in material and psychological terms. Thus political liberation was essential but was to be coupled by the psychological and material emancipation of blacks who have for centuries been the objects of material and psychological colonialism. By emancipating blacks psychologically and creating an environment of radical equality blacks and whites would have the opportunity to genuinely integrate into a non-racial society. For a non-racial society to become a real possibility the concrete effects of race have to be addressed first. A non-racial society cannot exist whilst conditions of vast inequality persist and continue to persist along racial lines; this is essentially what Biko and the Black Consciousness philosophy understood.

The hypothesis of this research report is that Black Consciousness possesses a sophisticated conception of race which offers the possibility for a truly non-racial subject; while equally possessing a highly sophisticated conception of a genuine integrated non-racial society. Engaging with the concrete social effects of race and racism Biko and the Black Consciousness philosophy seek to address first the factors which, if left uniterrogated will make the attainment of a non-racial society ever elusive. In a society where race and poverty remain dominant non-racialism will remain an illusion, such a society will in fact remain multi-racial as opposed to moving toward non-racialism. Therefore the question that seeks to be explored is thus: **Is Black Consciousness and Non-racialism contradictory or complementary?**

To better comprehend the research report it would be useful to briefly clarify how some of the terminology, particularly those terms around which the research is structured is used in the research report. When speaking of Black Consciousness, this is specifically done by

focusing on the writings of one of the philosophies most articulate and fearless activist: Steve Biko. Focusing on Biko's conception Black Consciousness, I use a capital C throughout the research report as reference is particularly made to Biko's conception of the Black Consciousness philosophy and not to Black consciousness in general in which case the c would take a lower-case c. On the other hand, when speaking of non-racialism writings in general on non-racialism are considered. The paper however, evinces a strong leaning toward a critical conception of non-racialism which aims to engage and address the social reality and effects of race while simultaneously remaining cognisant of the falsity of race. In this regard the paper is critical of a regressive colour-blind approach to non-racialism which fails to engage with the concrete effects and social reality of race. Race under colour-blind non-racialism is taken not to exist both socially and scientifically, that is, if race is not spoken about it does not exist; colour-blind non-racialism has conservative political implications for the attainment of a genuine integrated non-racial society.

Chapter one engages with a brief history of non-racialism and its varied interpretations and uses in South Africa's political tradition. Thereafter, the chapter looks at the dominant interpretations of Black Consciousness which conceive of Black Consciousness as enunciating a regressive, unoriginal politics of particularism. To highlight this, the all inclusive non-racialism of the ANC is juxtaposed to what is dominantly perceived as the sectarianism of Biko's Black Consciousness. It will however, be illustrated that the Black Consciousness conception of what a non-racial society entails is more sophisticated than that of the ANC.

Chapter two begins by engaging with race in South Africa's political tradition more so; it highlights the divergence of Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception of race from the traditional conception of race in South Africa's political tradition. The chapter also highlights the relational character between blackness and whiteness; while also revealing Biko's non-essentialist understanding of race; this has powerful political significance for how a politics of non-racialism is understood.

Chapter three looks at post-apartheid descriptions of South African society which to a large extent conceive of South African society as devoid of its oppressive past and its legacies. Thus metaphors such as 'rainbowism' and the 'new' South Africa come to predominate. The chapter also highlights that such metaphors and even the ideal of non-racialism are used by certain white South Africans to maintain their positions of privilege and to even oppose redistributive measures based on race by describing such measures as 'reverse racism'. The

chapter also highlights the contemporary relevance of Biko's thought with his warning and prescience that a change in the political without a subsequent change in the economic and material standards of living of the black majority would in effect entail a mere change in the colour of the governing class with the status quo largely remaining untransformed.

The conclusion provides a summary of the whole argument illustrating that Black Consciousness possesses a sophisticated conception of what a non-racial society entails, and in this regard is more complementary as opposed to contradictory with non-racialism. The chapter also illustrates that Black Consciousness is more relevant than is commonly assumed and that it can serve as a strong contributing force as we seek to build a more egalitarian South African society in which the qualifier of colour will indeed be obsolete.

Chapter 1

Black Consciousness and Non-racialism

Non-racialism has a long history in South Africa's political tradition ranging from a strategy to a principle and even a possible end goal for certain political organisations and philosophies; this can serve to illustrate that non-racialism means different things to different organisations and philosophies. This chapter commences by engaging with a brief history of non-racialism and its varied interpretations in South Africa's political tradition. This will be followed by a look at the dominant interpretations of Black Consciousness which conceive of the philosophy as enunciating a regressive, even unoriginal politics of particularism. To illustrate this, the all-inclusive non-racialism of the ANC is juxtaposed to what is dominantly perceived as the sectarianism of Biko's Black Consciousness. This chapter will however seek to illustrate that the Black Consciousness conception of non-racialism and what a non-racial society entails is more sophisticated than that of the ANC's which to a large extent leans toward a multi-racial outlook.

MacDonald (2006) traces the origin of the term non-racial to the mid nineteenth century in the Cape Colony highlighting that its hallmark was the non-racial franchise. However, the non-racial franchise was not racially neutral as it was premised on the criteria voters had to meet. Such criteria were primarily based on meeting western standards. Here race did not exist insofar as blacks became culturally white which was the established norm. Thus '[h]aving established European culture as the norm, Africans voted on condition they escaped their race by becoming like Europeans' (MacDonald 2006: 98). This was a superficial form of non-racialism in that it entailed the assimilation of blacks into European culture, and not all blacks were included in the 'non-racial' set up only those who met the conditions: that of westernised culture. Thus '[t]o qualify for the "non-racial" franchise, to become "non-racial" was to meet European standards, if not necessarily to reject African culture altogether' (MacDonald 2006: 96). Non-racialism was thus attained through assimilation of blacks who met the European standard. Such non-racialism can effectively be conceived as elite non-racialism as it would only be missionary educated blacks who would be able to meet the

European standard. Nevertheless, Frederikse argues that non-racialism has been an enduring factor of the African National Congress (ANC) since its formation in 1912:

> 'The popular democratic tradition is rooted in an alliance of all the oppressed. As workers began to organise against the racial system that took from the means of controlling their lives and the wealth they produced, they joined forces with others of all races and social background committed to change 'from below'. This popular democratic – and non-racial – tradition gave rise to the mass movement that has dominated South African resistance politics. Non-racialism runs like an unbreakable thread throughout the movement's history' (Frederikse as cited in Ndebele 2010: 134).

Non-racialism has a long history in South African political tradition it was used to varying, and deferring degrees as a political strategy in the fight against apartheid by a number of organisations. Non-racialism for some organisations more than being a strategy was a principle (Gillespie 2010). The race and class debate also has a similarly long history in South Africa's political tradition; the place of race has thus always been a contested affair. This debate can be traced through the history of one movement who sought to uphold non-racialism as a principle: The Unity Movement. Forming part of the movement the Leninist Club attributed a privileged position to class vis-a-vis race as the most significant material and theoretical social form. The privileging of class did not however entail a complete rejection of race, as Kelly Gillespie highlights '... the position of nonracialism as it developed from the 1930's, did not deny the social significance of 'race' or need to work on 'race'(Gillespie 2010: 67). By privileging class over race non-racialism assumes a methodical role, that is, non-racialism was used as a strategy, as a method of undermining racialised capitalism. Here is an implicit link between non-racialism and class politics, it can be seen that by taking a non-racial stance class politics was being placed above race and non-racialism in this sense could easily be taken as equating class politics by not focusing on race. This raises the question; does non-racialism therefore entail a rejection of race in a broad sense, that is, while race is rejected on a scientific basis it also happens to be rejected on a social basis? Seeking to undermine racialised capitalism race is taken as not having its own existence, here race cannot on its own be said to be the basis for an entire groups oppression it must be an appendage to a more prominent source, say, capitalism. Thus focus on race only

serves as a method; a means of seeking to undermine racial capitalism. Race therefore is not really engaged with, if it is, it is done secondary to capitalism which from a classist optic can be seen as the essence from which other exploitative and oppressive systems stem. Trying to reconcile the social existence of race with the irrelevance of race using the workers party, more so the Leninist Club Neville Alexander states:

> 'I think it is important to stress that denying the relevance or even the existence of race obviously doesn't preclude one from accepting the social reality of race. And I think this was implicit in the pamphlets, statements, analysis of the Workers Party [and the Lenin Club more generally].... But the point of the departure for tackling racial prejudice, and beyond that racism as an exploitative vehicle and ideology, is the non-existence, the irrelevance of race' (Alexander as cited in Gillespie 2010: 68).

Alexander's non-racial stance indeed has strong appeal. By denying the existence of race this automatically creates a principled non-racialist stance, indeed race has no ontological and normative existence. What however weakens Alexander's approach to the non-existence of race and further reveals a limited conception and approach to non-racialism is that he fails to acknowledge the historical significance of race. Race might not exist but it has concrete effects, it accords privilege and it takes away privilege this reveals the power of race, it places groups in differential positions within society creating racial hierarchies that have tremendous impact on how people live their lives and relate to each other. Race for Alexander does not exist insofar as it has no existence outside of the exploitative capitalist system; race thus only exists insofar as it is propelled by capitalism. 'Without capitalism racial groups would not have congealed in the first place, and without artificial racial groups capitalism would not reproduce itself' (MacDonald 2006: 95). A true non-racial stance for Alexander is based on the overall rejection of race; any talk of race will thus serve as an illustration of being caught in the confines of race. Alexander articulates thus on the non-racial ideal:

> '[t]he word 'non-racial' can be accepted by a racially oppressed people if it means that we reject the concept of race, that we deny the existence of races and thus oppose all actions,

> practices, beliefs and policies based on the concept of race. If in practice – and in theory – we continue to use the word non-racial as though we believe that South Africa is inhibited by four so-called races, we are still trapped in multi-racialism, and thus in racialism. Non-racialism, meaning the denial of the existence of races, leads on to 'anti-racism', which goes beyond it, because the term not only involves the denial of race, but also opposition to the capitalist structures for the perpetuation of which the ideology and theory of race exists' (Alexander as cited in Frederikse 1990: 206).

John Sharp highlights that in the 1980's non-racialism came to represent a popular commitment to eliminating apartheid practices and the subsequent system of race on which such practice rested (Sharp 1980: 243). Yet, David Everatt (2009) argues that the term was and continues to refer to formal equality between races in other words, what is really sought is equality of opportunity between the different race groups in South Africa, effectively multiracial equality. Everatt highlights:

> 'In the late 1940's and early 1950's multiracial, non-racial, interracial and similar terms were used interchangeably. 'Race relations' was the core focus of white liberals associated with the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) in particular, but the term was widely used in progressive circles. All these terms, at that time, referred to formal equality between the races – very similar to the way the 1996 South African constitution resolved the issue – although not necessarily substantive equality' (Everatt 2009: 4).

If this is the case than there happens to be an implicit acceptance of race as a given fact. Non-racialism has been used to varying degrees by different organisations in South Africa's struggle to liberate itself from the shackles of a repressive racist state. For prominent anti-apartheid activists such as Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela and more broadly the ANC, non-racialism can be seen to translate into non-racism that is, the absence of racism in South African society. From such an optic the possibility of conceiving race as a socially meaningless category is by-passed. What is sought to be eliminated is the idea that one race is more superior then others; here race is taken to exist in fact the prime objective than is to get rid of a racist state that systematically installed and privileged whites over blacks (MacDonald 2006). The category race maintains its relevance race is therefore taken as a

given, as an existing fact. Race as a socially constructed category is not grasped thus people come from and will remain members of existing races. For Tambo however, the 'fact' of races will exist in a non-racial society this will however not be a sufficient basis for racism to emerge or persist. Tambo in elucidating his understanding of non-racialism states:

> 'There must be a difference. That is why we say non-racial. We could have said multi-racial if we wanted to. There is a difference. We mean non-racial, rather than multiracial. We mean non-racial – there is no racism. Multi-racial does not address the question of racism. Non-racial does. There will be no racism of any kind and therefore no discrimination that proceeds *from the fact that people happen to be members of different races*. That is what we understood by non-racial' (Tambo as cited in Maré 2003: 1).

From this conception of non-racialism race cannot but be a socially meaningful category, while non-racialism may be used to describe the ANC's position at deeper interrogation the ANC's position leans more to the side of multiracialism (Maré 2003, MacDonald 2006). Tambo, while rejecting such a linkage between the ANC and multiracialism he implicitly evinces a leaning toward multiracialism by giving race a factual foundation, this stems from his assertion that it is a '... fact that people happen to be members of different races' (Tambo as cited in Maré 2003: 1). Such an approach to and conception of race does not reflect a break from how race operated within apartheid South Africa. In this instance race becomes trans-historical and omni-present insofar as it serves as a way of making sense of the world; more-over it becomes 'common sense' (Maré 2003) that people belong to and constitute the membership of different races. Race and race thinking comes to be embedded in everyday experience and thinking to the extent that it petrifies, race in a sense becomes a lived experience and insofar as it is a 'concrete' fact it 'cannot' be escaped from. With regard to the banality of race and its assuming the status of 'common sense' traversing both apartheid and post-apartheid society Deborah Posel posits that: 'Herein lies arguably one of the most intractable and uncomfortable legacies of the apartheid system: the extent to which official racial designators were internalised by daily experience, and therefore continue to live beyond the demise of the apartheid system itself' (Posel 2001: 25).

'The most radical form of non-racialism begins by challenging the existence of race altogether and ends by demonstrating the existence of races socially and politically' (MacDonald 2006: 93). However, other conceptions of non-racialism perceived it as simply entailing the elimination of oppressive apartheid barriers. Albie Sachs in line with non-racialism as the elimination of apartheid barriers states that: '[n]on-racialism doesn't mean that it is a society of 'non'-something. It means you are eliminating all the apartheid barriers, in terms of access to government, in terms of freedom to move, and then you feel that this is your country' (Sachs as cited in Frederikse 1990: 268). Here lies an implicit; one can even say an explicit acceptance of the givenness of race. What thus have to be eliminated are the racially discriminatory policies and the racial discrimination amongst different races. Once this is attained a non-racial society can be said to be the outcome. From this it can be gleaned that post-apartheid South Africa constitutes a non-racial society. Certainly, if one simply reduces non-racialism to the elimination of racially discriminatory legislation 1994 could then be seen as the inception of the 'non-racial society'. Democratic institutions thus come to be conceived as what makes the non-racial society possible. The liberation movements' (ANC) non-racialism can be seen to have been premised on the attainment of democratic institutions and a democratic state. MacDonald highlights:

> 'The non-racial nation must be invented, which summons the importance of the state in the ANC's thinking. The state becomes necessary as the source of the non-racial nation, drawing heterogeneous groups into one people and make them into South Africans. The nation is to form around the democratic state. Democratic institutions are what define the ANC's "non-racial" state' (MacDonald 2006: 108).

Democracy and democratic institutions are here seen to be the answer or rather, the source for the realisation of a non-racial society a system so conceived which does not discriminate on the basis of race but allows all people to take part in the democratic 'non-racial' state. Democracy therefore creates South Africans devoid of any colour, race bias, the 'non-racial' nation cannot be realised without democratic institutions that treat South Africans of all racial backgrounds equally. Govan Mbeki put the point out that '[t]he ANC is struggling to form one people, to be represented in one parliament in one country. In spite of various ethnic groupings in the country, black and white, the ANC is seeking to forge one nation, building a

non-racial democracy in a unitary state' (Mbeki as cited in MacDonald 2006: 111). Long lasting divisions would thus be addressed through the creation of a unitary democratic state; this state conceived as the source of creating a single South African people who have a common loyalty to the country. Common loyalty and the extension of universal citizenship and democratic institutions come to be seen as the unifying forces of the different races in South Africa. Democracy is thus seen as the *sin quo non* of a non-racial society, insofar as the democratic state does not formally recognise race race thinking will wither away. The ANC's non-racial nationalism MacDonald highlights rests on several key promises. 'All citizens would have the same political rights; race would not be recognised by the state; universal guarantees for all citizens would render specific protections for minorities unnecessary; and non-racialism would prevail, mostly because race would cease to matter formally' (Macdonald 2006: 112). Democracy thus erases racialism however, races continue to exist in the 'non-racial' democratic state albeit without domination of one over the others, democracy thus transcends race. MacDonald also notes the circularity of the ANC's position.

> 'Note however, the predicate of the ANC's thinking about non-racialism: real democracy would dissolve the appeal of racialism. Unfortunately, the ANC's reasoning verged on the circular: non-racial institutions would dispel racialism by ignoring race officially and ignoring race officially would prove that racialism had been dispelled. The catch is that the ANC could not and cannot prevent South Africans from harbouring racial affinities. It can demand only that the state keep racialism in its place' (Macdonald 2006: 112).

The approach adopted is one that assumes that race and racialism will effectively become meaningless in the lives of ordinary people in 'post-apartheid' South African society. It is assumed that democratic political change would entail an overall change in the visual, psychological and material makeup of the society. Yet, it cannot simply be assumed that the reality of race would instantaneously be eliminated with the advent of a democratic state and democratic institutions. Race is real not in a factual sense adopted by the ANC, race is real in the 'sociohistorical/political sense, race does exist as a categorization with massive effect on people's psychology, culture, socio-economic opportunities, life chances, civil rights' (Mills 1998: 77). Race certainly has a concrete effect and the mere assuming that the elimination of racially discriminatory legislation through democratic institutions and a democratic state

would automatically create a 'non-racial society' evinces a limited understanding of the character and place of race in society and in people's lives. It is assumed that with the advent of democracy the qualification of colour and racialism would automatically disappear. However, to assume a non-racial posture has political benefit as it portrays an organisation as all inclusive and opposed to racialism, and in so doing contrasting it to organisations and philosophies which at first glance assume a racially exclusivist approach to politics. Non-racialism can therefore be used as a political strategy and tactic. MacDonald notes that the ANC 'popularized the idea of non-racialism in the 1970's and 1980's, not because apartheids racialism intensified then, but because of the emergence of Black Consciousness (BC) as a major force in black politics. The ANC and its allies emphasized non-racialism to contrast themselves to BC' (Macdonald 2006: 115).

Certain readings of Black Consciousness can only be interpreted as indicating or propounding a conception of Black Consciousness that places it in tension with the principles of non-racialism. Howarth (1997) highlights this through what he refers to as the dominant interpretations of Black Consciousness in South Africa, dominant in the sense that it is representative of a combination of interpretive viewpoints traced from prominent academic accounts as well as popular appraisals during its emergence and existence (Howarth 1997). Amongst such dominant readings of Black Consciousness is that it represented a parochial, particularistic black identity politics which at best sought a regressive '... retreat into cultural particularism, or at worse a form of 'inverse racism'' (Howarth 1997: 53). Howarth accounts how Donald Woods' initial conception of Black Consciousness conceived the philosophy and one of its disseminating organs; the South African Students Organisation (SASO) as symbolising the emergence of a racially particularistic attitude amongst blacks, that is, one of a '"Blacks only" mentality among blacks' (Woods as cited in Howarth 1997: 53). Woods thus perceived the Black Consciousness philosophy to be in accord with and thus not challenging the apartheid states racist policies. Howarth also highlights how in 1985 the ANC's political report of the National Executive Committee's Second Consultative Conference noted the limitations of Black Consciousness as a movement. The report noted 'the limitations of this movement [BCM] which saw our struggle as racial, describing the entire white population of our country as "part of the problem" (Howarth 1997: 53). Tarouk Meer, a prominent activist in the Natal Indian Congress also lamented; '[t]here is a genuine

danger of black consciousness leading to black racism' he continues. 'The safeguards against this eventuality seem to us to be very tenuous' (Meer as cited in Howarth 1997: 53).

Other readings conceive Black Consciousness as a mere reiteration of past forms of separatist ideology. Gail Gerhart argues that Black Consciousness was a mere reflection, if not totally, the same as earlier ideologies of the Africanist ideology espoused by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Thus Gerhart posits; '[a]lmost point for point SASO had arrived anew at the diagnosis and cure originally devised by Lambede and Mda [of the ANC Youth League] in the 1940's under the rubric of "Africanism" (Gerhart as cited in Howarth 1997: 53). In a word, Black Consciousness was a mere continuation of previous separatist ideology. What can be gleaned from this optic is that Black Consciousness could not offer a genuinely novel approach to counter the racist and racially obsessed apartheid state for it was itself radically separatist. In similar vein Nelson Mandela (1994) depicts Black Consciousness as mirroring earlier concepts that were espoused by the ANC Youth League at its inception. Mandela points out:

> 'These concepts were not unfamiliar to me: they closely mirrored ideas I myself had held at the time of the founding of the ANC Youth League a quarter of a century before. We, too, we Africanist; we, too, stressed ethnic pride and racial self-confidence; we, too, rejected white assistance in the struggle. In many ways, Black Consciousness represented the same response to the same problem that had never gone away' (Mandela 1994: 578).

Mandela carries on to juxtapose Black Consciousness' sectarianism, as he believes it to be, to what he refers to as the Congress Movements' inclusivity, Mandela also perceived Black Consciousness' focus on blackness as evincing philosophical immaturity. Mandela states; '[w]hile I was encouraged by their militancy, I thought that their concentration on blackness, was sectarian, and represented an intermediate view that was not fully mature' (Mandela 1994: 578).

Mandela, in what can be seen as his rebuke of Black Consciousness and its focus on black unity that is, Mandela implicitly rebukes Black Consciousness for assuming that its focus on black unity is a novelty in South Africa's struggle history. Indeed, black unity is an essential component of the Black Consciousness philosophy if not its central component. Yet, this component (black unity) and the significant emphasis Black Consciousness places on it somewhat perturbs Mandela. So much so that he goes to great lengths to illustrate that black unity was not a novelty of the 1970's and thus did not emanate from the Black Consciousness philosophy. Furthermore, Mandela also seeks to highlight that the notion propounded by the Black Consciousness philosophy; that of making blacks realise that they are on their own, and that they are to be independent of whites in itself does not emanate from the Black Consciousness philosophy. Thus Mandela traces the ideas of black unity and that of blacks to realise that they are on their own, both central components of the Black Consciousness philosophy, to the patriotic wars fought in unity by the Abathwa and the Khoi-Khoi toward the end of the nineteenth century (Mandela 2001). Thus by the middle of the eighteenth century Africans assumed their place in the battles against the colonialists and thus augmented black unity against the colonialist whites (Mandela 2001). Further highlighting the trajectory of black unity in South Africa's struggle history, Mandela argues that after the colonial conquest of South Africa the notions of black unity and that blacks are on their own were central in forging unity amongst South Africa's diverse racial population. Mandela thus states:

> [a]fter colonial conquest of South Africa, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) the African People's Organisation (APO) and the ANC, joined later by other sections of the liberation movement, rallied Indians, Coloureds and Africans in disciplined political struggle around the same idea of the right of the black man to live freely in his country, to plan his own life and to draw inspiration from his own past and culture (Mandela 2001: 27).

As if to lay claim to the origins of the idea of 'black unity' in South Africa's struggle history and to deprive other organisations and philosophies that hold black unity as a central tenet of their philosophies of intellectual and ideological originality; Mandela goes on to posit that:

> '[t]hat feeling of unity ['black unity'] enabled the ANC, the SAIC and the APO 30 years ago to bring together Africans, Coloureds and Indians in a common struggle against white domination and to sharpen the spirit of resistance. That unity has become the solid rock from which the people's struggle is directed. All organisations that now accept this principle are either legitimate heirs of the heritage created during that unforgettable period of Wars of Dispossession or offshoots who broke away because they rejected this principle, but who were later forced by events to eat their words. Few things illustrate an organisation's ignorance of our history and struggle better than to imagine that in this country the crusade for black unity only began in the 1970's' (Mandela 2001: 28).

The above quote highlights Mandela's explicit attempt to rebuke the Black Consciousness philosophy and its organisations of assuming that the 1970's was the birth of a united black resistance to apartheid with the Black Consciousness philosophy at the helm of such resistance. Mandela's criticism of the Black Consciousness philosophy further moves into an ideological and methodological attack insofar as he reduces Black Consciousness to a mere ideology of colour, 'embryonic and clannish' (Mandela 2001: 39). Insofar as the Black Consciousness philosophy and its organisations describe all whites as oppressors Mandela describes the modus operandi of Black Consciousness as mechanistic. Thus he asserts: '[b]ut, while they admit that South Africa is a country where both black and white live and shall continue to live together, they adopt a purely mechanistic approach and brand all whites as oppressors. For this reason whites are excluded from all matters relating to the black man's struggle' (Mandela 2001: 39). Mandela further goes on to reduce Black Consciousness to a simple importation of American ideology with no regard to concrete South African conditions. 'This dogmatism' Mandela states 'flows from the fact that the concept of Black Consciousness advocated by the BCM is imported from America and swallowed in a lump without regard to our concrete situation, in which progressive whites, including Marxists, liberals, missionaries, professionals and businessmen form part of the liberation movement and fight the enemy with the most militant methods' (Mandela 2001: 39). From Mandela's optic Black Consciousness is devoid of any novelty and is simply reduced to an imported ideology and as the heir to concepts which 'originate' in South Africa's long history of struggle of which the ANC and other organisations where at the forefront. Black Consciousness is thus relegated to a philosophy of adopted concepts with no intellectual

originality. Mandela also contrasts the nationalism of the ANC with that of the Black Consciousness philosophy.

In such a comparison of nationalism's Mandela contrasts what he considers to be the ANC's dynamic and progressive nationalism to what, in his conception, can be seen as the parochial and regressive nationalism of Black Consciousness. Mandela's critique of the Black Consciousness philosophy can be seen in the light of one political organisation (the ANC) seeking to establish itself as the 'progressive centre' in South Africa's struggle history. Mandela thus posits '... in the best traditions of progressive thought the ANC preaches a dynamic and progressive nationalism that seeks to unite Africans, to co-ordinate their struggle with those of the other sections of the people at home, including white, a nationalism that aligns itself with the progressive forces of the whole world' (Mandela 2001:40). It can be argued that Mandela possesses a cursory understanding of the intellectual sophistication of Black Consciousness insofar as, he praises the ANC's all inclusive 'non-racialism' he reduces the ideology of Black Consciousness to a parochial chauvinism insofar as it places emphasis on black solidarity while excluding whites from organisational participation in the anti-apartheid struggle. Black Consciousness' focus on race is thus used as a means of portraying the philosophy as a regressive identity politics based solely on the qualifier of colour; it is thus commonly assumed that a focus on race entails an essentialist understanding of the concept. Such an understanding of Black Consciousness' focus on race neglects to engage with the sophisticated conception of race that permeates the writings of Biko; the Black Consciousness conception of race in many ways contradicts the dominant conception of race in South Africa's political tradition.

Chapter 2

Biko's sophisticated conception of race

This chapter commences by looking at race within South Africa's political tradition more so; it highlights the divergence of Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception of race from the traditional conception of race in South Africa's political tradition. The chapter also highlights the relational character between blackness and whiteness; while also revealing Biko's non-essentialist understanding of race; this has powerful political significance for how a politics of non-racialism is understood. The chapter also engages with Biko's critique of white liberals and how this reveals how Biko and the Black Consciousness philosophy conceive of a genuine integrated non-racial society devoid of the qualifier of colour and the inequality based on it.

Race in most South African political traditions has long been taken as a given; 'certainly white supremacy, white liberalism, the SACP, and sometimes, the ANC as well – take race as a given' (MacDonald 2006: 117). Within these political traditions race and racial conscious is therefore already there waiting to be discovered and embraced. From such a political tradition there is a battle over the significance of race '... but they agree race is *ascribed,* that it is impressed on people (either by nature of culture) who lack much say in the matter' (MacDonald 2006: 117). Biko's and the Black Consciousness conception of race distinctly diverges from most South African political traditions on race. From the Black Consciousness outlook blackness was not and could not be something that inherently inhered in blacks just waiting to be discovered and embraced. It on the contrary had to be invented before blacks could become aware of it. MacDonald highlights;

> Biko's racial consciousness was not a process of self-discovery and self-awareness; blackness did not exist inertly, waiting to be found. It must be made first, must be invented by blacks before they could be become aware of it' ... Biko's racial categories are "black" and "white";

> they are not "African," "Coloured," "Asian," and "European" and his "whites" and "blacks" are not attributable to "nature" or "culture" (MacDonald 2006: 118).

Biko's racial categories: black and white, can be seen to exist only insofar as they are in relation to each other, that is, blackness only has meaning in relation to whiteness and whiteness only has meaning insofar as it is in relation to blackness. Biko was aware that blackness could not exist in and of itself, that is, it does not have the necessary and sufficient conditions of its own existence. In other words, blackness cannot exist as an independent category but it can only exist in relation to what it is opposing: whiteness. Blackness being a signifier it possesses no intrinsic meaning of its own. Thus deriving meaning from other signifiers blackness depends on a system of difference to derive meaning. What this entails is that blackness having no intrinsic meaning and deriving meaning from its relation to other signifiers, that is, its exterior, the signifier black can be resignified vis-a-vis other signifiers from which it derives its meaning. Speaking to the concept race Distiller and Steyn posit '[w]e take for granted that 'race' is a social category, not a biological one. As such, it is available to be constructed, deconstructed, resisted, subverted, and its artificial boundaries and divides challenged' (Distiller and Steyn 2004: 6). Blackness in Black Consciousness is marked by what it opposes; in this sense blackness has to engage with whiteness in order to be relevant. This should not be misconceived as entailing that whiteness necessarily gives birth to blackness, and thus is the necessary condition for the existence of blackness. If this were the case whiteness would be the 'determinant in the last instance' (Althusser 1970: 112), that is, there would be something about whiteness that made it the base from which all else stemmed from. Whiteness would therefore contain the necessary and sufficient conditions of its own existence. On the contrary, whiteness can only make sense in relation to blackness; the two interpenetrate each other with each one depending on the other for its existence. It can be said that Biko was aware of this interpenetration of blackness and whiteness as he posits '... the 'Black Consciousness' approach would be irrelevant in a colourless and non-exploitative egalitarian society' (Biko 2004: 96). From this it can be argued that whiteness itself would be irrelevant in a colourless and non-exploitative egalitarian society insofar as it only has meaning in an exploitative racialised society and in relation to blackness. MacDonald highlights that '[b]lackness is steeped in and develops out

of white racism' ... Biko's blacks come into being only because of and through interaction with whites' (MacDonald 2006: 121).

What can be inferred from MacDonald's analysis is the relational, that is, the relation between blackness and whiteness, albeit it is an asymmetrical relation of dominance. This can be related to Frantz Fanon's assertion with regard to the inferiority and superiority complexes that characterise the relation between blacks (the colonised) and whites (the colonisers). Fanon asserts: '[t]he feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative of the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: *It is the racist who creates his inferior'* (Fanon 1967: 93). What this entails is that it is whiteness, white supremacy that creates blackness. This creation takes place within politics in which blacks are oppressed, however, this should not be misconceived as entailing that blacks are only oppressed in the political sphere here the political encompasses the entire social. Biko thus 'had blacks being oppressed because they are black, but he did not have them as black *until* they were oppressed. Blackness was not innate and incipient' (MacDonald 2006: 121). It is whites that oppressed blacks thus making it possible for blacks to come into existence; it is oppression, white supremacy that creates blacks. Does this then not therefore entail that insofar as whiteness creates blackness, that is, white oppression being the founding condition of blackness that whiteness simultaneously determines what it means to be black. Whites may make blacks/blackness possible but it is blacks themselves who determine what it means to be black (MacDonald 2006). Blackness on the other hand may exist without whiteness but whiteness needs blackness if it is to continue existing. Blacks or blackness is the condition for whiteness, if blackness is eliminated by eliminating power disparities between blacks and whites the condition for whiteness disappears. The elimination of blackness means that whiteness loses its condition of dominance. 'Without blacks, whites cannot dominate; and without domination, whites are not white' (MacDonald 2006: 121). In speaking of the non-racial character of Black Consciousness MacDonald outlines:

> Biko's blackness is self-affirmation; his whiteness is domination. Blackness becomes independent of whiteness; whiteness, though, requires the existence of nonwhites. Where Biko's blacks become independent of race, his whites require it. Biko's whiteness is necessarily and unalterably racialist as well as racist; his blackness, however, can outgrow

> race. Black Consciousness, in other words, is implicitly non-racial in the full sense of the term. It forges people, black people, who define themselves without reference either to whites or to the concept of race. In eliminating power disparities between blacks and whites, Biko ultimately dissolves the race of blacks and abolishes the condition of whiteness (MacDonald 2006: 123).

Black Consciousness can here be seen to be a philosophy able to create a truly non-racial subjectivity, a pre-requisite for a non-racial society. What Black Consciousness seeks and what is necessary to make the attainment of a non-racial society possible is the elimination of power disparities between blacks and whites. The first step in this process has to be the elimination of blackness as a negative in relation to whiteness as a positive identity.

Black Consciousness entailed the production and fixation of blackness as an empty signifier defined directly in opposition to whiteness (Howarth 1997); blackness being an empty signifier entailed that all those groups ethnically defined and divided by the apartheid system could unite, not as distinct ethnic groups but as self-consciously black. Blacks are defined as:

> 'those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations. This definition ... that being black is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of mental attitude. Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road toward emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being' (Biko 2004: 52).

The Black Consciousness definition of black illustrates that the black of Black Consciousness is not simply based on phenotype but on a more sophisticated understanding of blackness, and more significantly race. Blackness is not merely attributed to all those who are phenotypically black. To become black, militantly black, is to choose to do so thus one has to make a choice to become black. Biko's conception of race certainly had powerful political ramifications. Insofar as blackness is not ascribed, not any black person that is, being

phenotypically black, can actually be considered black in the Black Consciousness sense of the term. Thus if one was phenotypically black, blackness being the basis of one's oppression, yet one did not resist or aim to resist such discrimination such a person was deemed a 'non-white' (Biko 2004). 'Non-white' is a derogatory term used to describe those who took part in and sustained their own oppression, basically one who wore the identity apartheid imposed on one. A comparison between black and 'non-whites' will serve to illustrate the non-essentialist understanding of blackness and its revolutionary character in relation to the conservative work within the system 'non-white'. Biko thus states

> 'the term black is not necessarily all inclusive; i.e. the fact we are all *not white* does not necessarily mean that we are all *black*. Non-whites do exist and will continue to exist and will continue to exist for quite some a long time. If one's aspiration is whiteness but his pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible, then that person is a non-white. Any man who calls a white man 'Baas', any man who serves in the police force or Security Branch is *ipso facto* a non-white. Black people – real black people – are those who can manage to hold their heads high in defiance rather than willingly surrender their souls to the white man' (Biko 2004: 52).

The distinction between blacks and 'non-whites' reveals that Biko does not only parochially criticise white liberals. But he also condemned 'non-whites' who do not seek radical change and any form of 'extremism' but whom on the whole are content with the marginal gains made by white opposition parties. These are phenotypical blacks who are content with having their liberation determined by the pace set by whites. Biko unequivocally condemns such blacks comparing them to their white counterparts. Biko thus asserts '[t]hese dull-witted, self-centred blacks are in the ultimate analysis as guilty of the arrest of progress as their white friends for it is from such groups that the theory of gradualism emanates and this is what keeps the blacks confused and always hoping that one day God will step down from heaven to solve their problems' (Biko 2004: 25). Here Biko does not only have a problem with white liberals, but with 'non-whites' who are in close proximity to whites and in so being derive a meagre sense of belonging insofar as they form part of white circles. Such blacks constitute a grave hazard to the progress of the black totality for by their association with whites and the sense that they are being treated as equal to whites, they adopt a slight

sense of superiority toward other blacks (Biko 2004). Such blacks not only wish to be white they have become white for they, unlike, other blacks who are not acquainted with whites have gained slight access to the white world. Oppression has inferiorised such blacks to such an extent and for so long '... that for them it is comforting to drink tea, wine or beer with whites who seem to treat them as equals ... These are the sort of blacks who are a danger to the community' (Biko 2004: 25). What is significant of Biko's critique of such blacks ('non-whites') is that it serves as an illustration that he did not only oppose gradualist whites but gradualist blacks as well. In doing so this can serve to weaken claims that Biko and the Black Consciousness philosophy are racist, for Biko not only rejects white patronage he also rejects blacks who derive an illusory comfort from mixing in white circles, and who adopt a gradualist approach to the repressive apartheid regime. Thus Black Consciousness does not obliviously accept any phenotypically black person as black but only those who are militantly black. Here, claims of racism that might be labelled against Black Consciousness lose tremendous credibility; for Biko and Black Consciousness criticise blacks who live in a system from which they do not derive any benefit, but who, on the basis of being treated as equals by some whites lose all urgency in wanting to transform the status-quo.

The Black Consciousness distinction between black and 'non-white' and the definition of black, automatically opens the possibility for those who were classified as Indian and Coloured by the apartheid state to identify with the Black Consciousness philosophy and to self-consciously identify themselves as black in the militant sense. Insofar as Indians and Coloureds self-identify as blacks, there is an automatic challenging of the identities that were imposed on them and used to keep them in racially segregated communities. Black Consciousness in this sense became a 'transformative social action' (Gibson 2011:58). Black Consciousness aims to reappropriate blackness and to imbue it with a revolutionary thrust. Blackness comes to serve as a call to all blacks (who militantly identify themselves as part of the struggle against their oppression) for revolutionary unity; blackness is thus positive in relation to the negative 'non white'. However, Mamphela Ramphele highlights that it is '... possible for one to remain 'non-white' by virtue of failure to identify with the struggle for liberation – a rather interesting twist of logic which shows up the ridiculousness of 'race' definitions and exposes their perilous political foundations' (Ramphele 1995: 59). Blackness comes to serve a revolutionary utilitarian purpose, yet, not with parochial exclusionist black nationalism as its end. Biko asserts '[w]e are oppressed because we are black. We must use

that very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group. We must cling to each other with a tenacity that will shock the perpetrators of evil' (Biko 2004: 108). Black Consciousness thus brought about a liberatory conception of race insofar as it conceives race as a contrived consciousness.

If then, race is a contrived consciousness and thus not to be solely based on phenotype, and insofar as one of the defining traits of being black is that 'it is not a matter of pigmentation – being black is a reflection of mental attitude' (Biko 2004:52); would this imply that whites who identified themselves with the black struggle could therefore fall within the category black? By interpreting blackness in such a manner would be a vast simplification of blackness and how it originates. Blacks come into existence as a result of the experience and response to oppression, such oppression being the result of white domination. Whites on this basis can never relate with the black experience insofar as the system of white supremacy accorded them privilege at the expense of blacks. Whiteness from this optic can never reconcile with blackness. MacDonald clarifies this point by articulating:

> 'Racial privilege, in other words, bound whites to their racial group, whatever their predilections; the parameters of whiteness were fixed and given. Whites, having been spared discrimination and protected by racism, could not become black, whatever choices they took as individuals: blackness was not that elastic, it could not be constructed that inclusively ... Blackness, presuming objective determinates, was not universal in scope. It could not integrate whiteness' (MacDonald 2006: 120).

Biko's rejection of white liberals in the struggle for black liberation can be seen as one of the prime critiques labelled against Black Consciousness bringing with it claims that Black Consciousness is in itself racist. Black Consciousness' rejection of any collaboration with white liberals is not and should not be conceived as racist or 'reverse racism'. Black Consciousness' rejection of white liberal's in the struggle for black liberation is premised on the recognition of the vastly divergent material conditions of existence between blacks and whites (Fatton 1986). More than being an ideology of psychological and cultural renaissance, Black Consciousness recognised the centrality of material conditions and the impact this had

on black liberation and how and who were to be at the forefront of black liberation. Insofar as whites do not experience the same meagre material living conditions and oppression that blacks did, whites could not fully appreciate the black experience and thus engage in the struggle for black liberation. Robert Fatton argues '[b]ecause whites did not experience first-hand and could not 'feel' the predicament of being black – not simply because of their pigmentation, but above all because of their exclusive and abusive bourgeois privileges – they could not join in the struggle of the black masses' (Fatton 1986: 58). This illuminates that Black Consciousness is not based on and does not focus on parochial biologically deterministic conceptions of race. If Black Consciousness took parochial, biologically deterministic conceptions of race as the essence of its philosophy and agenda, Black Consciousness would be merely engaging in racial politics as an end, this would severely impede its non-racial outlook. Black Consciousness' exclusion of whites from the black struggle is essentially based on the structural privilege and advantage that whites attain from their pigmentation. Whites are thus excluded on the premise that they gain from the very structures that oppress and exploit blacks. (Biko 1978)

Furthermore, Black Consciousness as expressed in the writings of Biko exclude whites on the basis that white privilege is woven into racist structures. It is in this light that Fatton argues: '[a] white could sympathise with a black, yet economic advantage almost inexorably kept him white, as such, he remained at best a problematic reformer and worst, a conscious exploiter' (Fatton 1986: 58). From this optic blacks and whites cannot meaningfully engage in the transformation of a social order that structurally accords privilege to whites. The social position of whites in a structurally racist society differentiates them from blacks, that is, whites are in a hegemonic position vis-a-vis blacks. In so long as such a hegemonic position is maintained black and whites cannot struggle for the emancipation of blacks nor can they genuinely integrate into a genuine non-racial society. If such integration were to occur blacks would merely be assimilated into white society dominated by white norms and standards. Such a 'non-racial' society would essentially be white and as David Howarth illuminates: '[f]or Biko, liberal hegemony is grounded on an inadequate concept of political change centring on the notion of integration' (Howarth 1997: 58). The problem Biko and Black Consciousness have with white liberals is fundamentally based on the premise that full integration is the panacea for black liberation. 'They propose for example, that integration is the correct step towards the total liberation of blacks. The supposition here is that the problem

can be solved by racial reconciliation' (Chipkin 2007: 111). The integration proposed by white liberals is for Biko disturbingly flawed.

Does Biko's rejection of integration then entail a simultaneous acceptance of segregation as the natural order of things and with this an implicit rejection of non-racialism? Biko's rejection of integration is not to be interpreted as an implicit advocacy for segregation. However, Biko's rejection of integration is not a rejection of integration *per se*, but rather a rejection of the sort of integration proposed by white liberals. Biko himself hastens to say that he is '... not claiming that segregation is necessarily the natural order; however, given the facts of the situation where a group experiences privilege at the expense of others, then it becomes obvious that a hastily arranged integration cannot be the solution to the problem' (Biko 2004: 22). It can be said that Biko and Black Consciousness are against a colour-blind approach to an integrated non-racial society. That is, it is accepted that race does not exist scientifically and socially the effects of race are however, ignored, not addressed, relegated to the background in a 'harmonious colour-blind' society. The implication, of which it can be said Biko is aware, is that a clean-slate attitude is adopted insofar as race and its effects are not engaged with race then effectively becomes unimportant. Such an approach to seeking to attain a non-racial society is indeed an unsophisticated one as it assumes that by not engaging with race a non-racial society will be automatically attained. Thus if we do not talk about race it is then taken as something that does not matter, that did not and does not continue to influence the lives of many blacks who were the subjects of decades of racial oppression. In this regard, the material inequalities that shape the lives of people along racial lines are then simply transplanted onto the 'integrated non-racial' society. It is on such a premise that the ideas of Black Consciousness can be seen to come into tension with the ideas of non-racialism, that is, non-racialism conceived from a colour-blind optic.

Black Consciousness as enunciated in the writings of Biko believes that an integrated non-racial society cannot be attained under conditions of grave inequality (inequality here, can be conceived as psychological, social, economic and political) in which people are merely integrated into what is conceived as a 'non-racial' society while the conditions upon which a genuine non-racial society are to be built have yet to be attained. Such an integrated non-racial society is effectively built on false foundations. Indeed, Black Consciousness does not

seek a 'non-racial' society in which blacks are merely assimilated into white society dominated by white standards and cultural norms, if this is what a 'non-racial' society is to be premised on Black Consciousness opposes the idea of such a flawed integrated 'non-racial' society. From this it can be inferred that Black Consciousness is not opposed to, or in tension with non-racialism and the attainment of a non racial society *per se* but rather, that it is opposed to the concept of a 'non-racial' society in which the concrete realities do not allow for black people to meaningfully participate in the building of what is conceived as the 'integrated non-racial society'. The flaw here is that a post-racial approach is being pursued under conditions which in reality do not allow for a post-racial condition. To adopt a post-racial stance in a severely racially unequal society can have the effect of leaving South African society untransformed. It can be argued that for Biko, white liberals were in fact advocating a post-racial politics at a time when the concrete conditions made it impossible to assume such a stance.

For Biko, white liberals were effectively engaging in a denial of the socio-political and economic space that exists between whites and blacks. The mere fact that white liberals claimed to '... feel the oppression just as acutely as the blacks and therefore should be jointly involved in the black man's [and women's] struggle for a place under the sun' (Biko 2004:21) does not eliminate the material reality of a great divide between whites and blacks. By claiming to feel the oppression of racist structures as acutely as blacks do white liberals consciously or unconsciously gloss over the space between them and blacks, a space that nevertheless remains wide open. By denying the reality of such a space white liberal's mask the structures realised in them. Pierre Boudieu refers to such a denial of space as strategies of condescension. Strategies of condescension are articulated as 'those strategies by which agents who occupy a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance between themselves and others, a distance which does not thereby cease to exist ...' (Bourdieu 1989: 16). Biko's critique of white liberals and their call for an integrationist 'non-racial' opposition to apartheid needs to be comprehended in the context of Biko's analysis of the totality of white racism. For Biko, white racism could not and cannot be dealt with by not recognising or engaging with race and its effects. A just non-racial society cannot be attained by ignoring racial inequality in a society where race had for centuries determined and, continues to determine the life chances of blacks. Non-racialism can itself be used for implicitly racist purposes (Wale and Foster 2007); in so doing it is assumed that the way to fight racism is located in not seeing race. Thus, if race is not

discussed it does not exist, and therefore we are assumed to live in a non-racial society. Not seeing race results in the inability and rejection to engage with racism on a structural level with the subsequent consequence of perpetuating racist structures. A colour-blind approach to non-racialism can only serve to aggravate racism while also keeping racist structures intact, while those who focus on race and reject colour-blind non-racialism are labelled racialist.

Biko's critique of white liberals or rather, his exclusion of whites from the black struggle for liberation can be directed to whites in general. That is, not only to whites of a liberal predisposition but to the entire white community. Biko asserts that all whites based on the colour of their skin are all part of the oppressor camp (Biko 2004). Is Biko not at risk here of homogenising an entire group, does he not neglect difference amongst and within white society? It may be true that any group is internally differentiated, that whites have a wide range of experiences and that not all whites lead identical lives. However, race gives privileges and it takes privileges away, it also advantages and disadvantages. It is on such a basis that all whites cannot escape being part of the oppressor camp. Biko posits '... no matter what a white man does, the colour of his skin – his passport to privilege – will always put him miles ahead of the black man. Thus in the ultimate analysis no white person can escape being part of the oppressor camp' (Biko 2004: 24). Insofar as the white man's skin is his passport to privilege this can be inverted in the black instance as entailing: his black skin – his passport to disadvantage. It is only insofar as whites are systematically privileged that blacks are systematically disadvantaged. Such a relationship illustrates the asymmetrical relationship between blacks and whites. Skin colour thus correlates privilege and oppression, who derives privilege, and who is oppressed and not oppressed hinges on race. In addressing whites, Biko addresses them as a group, a group that is structurally advantaged and based on such structural advantage a great gulf exists between the black and white experiences. Irrespective of individual white experiences 'all whites are placed above all persons of color when it came to the economic, social and political hierarchies ... without exception'(Wise 2008: 3). By observing that the white person's skin is their passport to privilege Biko does not adopt an individualist approach to black oppression and racism but, he rather points to a structural approach. He states '[w]e blacks are in the position in which we are because of our skin. We are collectively segregated against. What can be more logical than for us to respond as a group?' (Biko 2004: 27).

Biko, through his Black Consciousness writings compels whites to interrogate their own racial position; he forces them to examine their white experience. Being the dominant group, basically having the society they live in being constructed in their own image whites are to a large degree ignorant of race. Being the dominant group it is easy for whites to ignore how race shapes their lives (Dyer 1997, Wise 2008). As Tim Wise posits '[f]or those of us called white, whiteness simply *is*. Whiteness becomes, for us, the unspoken, uninterrogated norm, taken for granted, much as water can be taken for granted by a fish' (Wise 2008: 2). What Wise addresses here is the total embodiment of white power, the being born into belonging of whites, the norm that comes with being white in the world. This state of affairs deracialise's whites, race therefore comes to be applied only to the other, to those who are not white, to those who fall outside of the 'norm' (Dyer 1997). Insofar as being white is conceived as the 'norm' whites do not interrogate their position within the social, being the norm there is no need for whites to do so. However, Biko's exclusion of white assistance in the struggle for black emancipation is a blow to white narcissism. Biko forces whites to recognise that '... unlike people of color, [whites are] *born* to belonging, and have rarely had to prove [themselves] deserving of [their] presence here. At the very least [they] can say that [their] right to be here hasn't been questioned, in most part, for a long time' (Wise 2008: 3). Biko directs whites to interrogate their right to belong, not in a negative sense but in the sense of recognising and accepting that race has been and still is responsible for their position of power and privilege vis-a-vis blacks. In so doing Biko wants whites to come to terms with their role in the oppression of blacks, he thus calls for whites to fight for justice within their communities. Directing white liberals to such a task, Biko states: '[t]he liberals must realise that they themselves are oppressed if they are true liberals and therefore they must fight for their own freedom and not that of the nebulous 'they' with whom they can hardly claim identification. The liberal must apply himself with absolute dedication to the idea of educating his white brothers that the history of the country may have to be rewritten at some stage and that we may have to live in 'a country where colour will not serve to put a man in a box'' (Biko 2004:27). Black Consciousness as expressed in the writings of Biko evinces the ability to transcend temporal constraints; writing at the height of oppression Biko addressed post-colonial concerns (MacDonald 2006), he already recognised and sought a vision of the good society in which the qualification of colour would no longer have an impact on how the individual would live its life.

Black Consciousness' conception of race was markedly distinct from the racial politics in which it found itself. Biko, through his Black Consciousness writing takes race as problematic in itself. 'Once 'race' and 'ethnicity' are seen as categories invented in a social process to pursue social differentiation and perpetuate inequality, it is clear that 'race' and 'ethnicity' do not exist outside meanings imputed by people' (Taylor and Orkin 2001: 72). Biko does not reflect South Africa's racialised order for if Black Consciousness merely sought to do this it would effectively be reinforcing even constituting South Africa's racialised order in which race is seen to have inherent meaning. In so doing Black Consciousness would only serve to reinforce racialised power and privilege; it would be reinscribing '... a history in which 'racial' and ethnic conceptualisation [had] been socially constructed to serve as ways of ordering, controlling and ruling society' (Taylor and Orkin 2001: 72). Black Consciousness essentially opposed such a strategy that sought to divide and rule South Africa's black oppressed, that is, Black Consciousness opposed the regressive and divisive ethnic and racial categories. For as Taylor and Orkin argue 'to use them ['race' and 'ethnicity'] *uncritically* is to engage in inscription, not description, it is to use words that uphold investments of power and privilege' (Taylor and Orkin 2001: 72).

While the apartheid state sought to separate and keep distinct the racial groups in South Africa by dividing them into four distinct categories: African, Coloured, Indian and European. Black Consciousness undermined such categories by adopting a conception of race that was not premised on natural or cultural traits, but one that was based on the conscious construction of race. Race for Black Consciousness was consciously contrived (MacDonald 2006). Thus if the concept black, just like '[r]ace is not a fact, but a concept' (Hiernaux as cited in Guillaumin 1995: 100) blackness then is opened to be reappropriated; empty to be filled with ideological positivity. Black Consciousness aims to resignify the meaning of black in a society where black has been deemed undesirable, stuck in the 'dark' of the cave and to imbue blacks with a sense of confidence and enthusiasm in the course of their struggle against white racism. If this point is recognised it can serve as an illustration that Black Consciousness is not premised on an essentialist, biologically deterministic understanding of race but rather, that Black Consciousness conceives race as a political phenomenon with concrete implications as it is used to privilege one group at the expense of another, that is, race is a political tool.

Black Consciousness and Biko did not aim to turn blackness into a fixed exclusionary identity, for if it were to do so this would be a mere affirmation of an essentialist conception of race thus not distinguishing it from the system it sought to oppose and defeat. Thus '[b]lackness ... was a positive racial consciousness that opposed racial oppression' (MacDonald 2006: 118). Blackness in the realm of Black Consciousness is an identity/ideology that seeks to unite black people in their struggle against white supremacist structures as it is by virtue of their skin colour that blacks find themselves at the sharp end of white supremacist structures, essentially white racism. Blackness instead, should be seen as in direct opposition to white racism which has placed blackness in a negative relation to it. For Biko the chief problem within South Africa is white racism, this is the main thesis to which black resistance is opposed. Biko also conceives white racism as a totality oppressing blacks and dictating their response to their oppression. Focusing on the immediate situation of being dominated by white racism Biko states:

> 'In terms of the Black Consciousness approach we recognise the existence of one major force in South African society. This is White Racism. It is the one force against which all of us are pitted. It works with unnerving totality, featuring both on the offensive and in our defence. Its greatest ally to date has been the refusal by us to club together as blacks because we are told to do so would be racialist. So, while we progressively lose ourselves in a world of colourlessness and amorphous common humanity, whites are deriving pleasure and security in entrenching white racism and further exploiting the minds and bodies of the unsuspecting masses' (Biko 2004: 54)

For Biko, white racism can and must be opposed by an unceasing black solidarity, black solidarity is paramount for Biko and Black Consciousness as failure to do so can only lead to the further and perpetual oppression of blacks. In calling for a strong black solidarity to oppose white racism not only did Biko seek to address the immediate dangers of black fragmentation and being differentially incorporated into the apartheid system of domination; but in so doing Biko saw the perils in the future emanating from the immediate condition of being differentially incorporated into the apartheid system of domination. Engaging with the perils of working within the apartheid system of domination and criticising the Coloured Labour Party (CLP), Biko asserts: '[f]uther operation within the system may only lead to

political castration and a creation of an 'I-am-a-Coloured' attitude which will prove a set back to the black man's programme of emancipation and will create major obstacles in the establishment of a non-racial society once our problems are settled' (Biko 2004: 42). The Black Consciousness strategy of a strong black solidarity sought to have and create a strong opposition to white racism and the racist apartheid state. Black solidarity can be conceived as actively wanting to oppose the racist apartheid state not by working within it, as this 'working within the system' (Biko 2004) necessitates the fragmentation and has been specifically designed to fragment black resistance. This is not in accord with the aims of Black Consciousness. Within the Black Consciousness philosophy fragmentation of black resistance can only have the negative effect of making it increasingly difficult to build a future non-racial society. And for Biko, the danger of the present situation was that black fragmentation would inevitably mean that blacks would remain in the grip of apartheid structures of domination. What is significant here is Biko's and the Black Consciousness understanding of the major cleavage in South African society: the totality of white racism. Racism is not reduced to individual prejudice but rather, racism is concieved as inhering in racist structures which position groups in differential positions of superiority and inferiority, privilege and disadvantage.

Black Consciousness' call for black solidarity, black self-reliance and self-determination may seem at odds with a progressive non-racial politics and non-essentialist conceptions of race, yet such calls merely serve utilitarian purposes and should not be conceived as being ends in and of themselves. Such ideas, espoused by Biko and Black Consciousness can be placed under the rubric of what Tommy Shelby refers to as weak or pragmatic black nationalism; in which '[t]he political program of black solidarity and group self-organisation functions as a means to create greater freedom and social equality for blacks' (Shelby 2005:27). Pragmatic black nationalism can be contrasted to strong or classical black nationalism, with strong black nationalism entailing that 'the political program of self determination is a worthwhile end in itself, a constitutive and enduring component of the collective self-realisation of blacks as a people' (Shelby 2005:27). Black Consciousness can truly be seen to fall under the rubric of pragmatic nationalism for Shelby goes on to highlight '[w]eak nationalism ... urges black solidarity and concerted action as a political strategy to lift or resist oppression ... it could also mean working to create a racially integrated society or even a "post-racial" polity, a political order where "race" has no social or political meaning' (Shelby 2005: 28). Despite

the ubiquity of the concept race in the Black Consciousness philosophy the concept is used in such a way as to eventually make possible a society where race will have a real possibility to be irrelevant. There is a clear awareness of how a focus on race has the potential to have negative consequences. Indeed, focus on racial exclusivity does have the ability to turn into a parochial chauvinism. This is not the outcome that Biko and the Black Consciousness philosophy desire. Biko points out that '[w]hile it may be relevant now to talk about black in relation to white, we must not make this our preoccupation, for it can be a negative exercise' (Biko 2004: 108). Going on to explicate the mission of Black Consciousness, Biko states: '[w]e have set out on a quest for true humanity, and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize... In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible – a more human face' (Biko 2004: 108). Here Biko makes an explicit reference to a vision of the good society and it would not be a fantasy to think that such a society would be an egalitarian non-racial society.

Chapter 3

Biko's continuing relevance

Descriptions of post-apartheid South Africa assume an uncritical acceptance of a society devoid of its oppressive past and its legacies, post-apartheid 'integration' and 'unity' is thus uncritically accepted and embraced. Heralded to a large degree as the rainbow nation and the new South Africa, a discourse has emerged which portrays South Africa as a country of great equality and happiness. This chapter highlights that the discourse of rainbowism and the new South Africa, even the ideal of non-racialism are used by wealthy whites to maintain their positions of privilege and to thwart redistributive measures based on racial redress by describing such measures as 'reverse-racism' (Wale and Foster 2007). Here, progressive ideals such as non-racialism if uncritically engaged with and accepted can be used for regressive purposes. This chapter also aims to highlight the contemporary and continuing relevance of Biko, particularly his warning and prescience that a change in the political without a subsequent change in the economic and material standard of living of the black majority would entail a mere change in the colour of the governing class with the status-quo remaining largely untransformed (Biko 2004).

The white liberal's desire for unity premised on an integrated non-racialism may have served as an antidote to the colonialist apartheid states objectives of total division. However, what this desire entailed for Biko was that it threatened, even ignored engagement with race difference and power between those they sought to unite (black and white). The desire for unity in this regard may serve as a means of disguising, even perpetuating power differentials between blacks and whites. Biko recognised this in the liberal call for an integrated non-racialism and on such a basis rejected integration that was premised on an uncritical embracing of unity. Biko's thought on the uncritical embracing of unity transcends temporal constraints. For in contemporary South Africa the notion of the rainbow nation which dominates post-apartheid descriptions of South Africa, or which people are made to believe post-apartheid South Africa is can to a large extent be seen as entailing an uncritical embracing of unity with the subsequent ignoring of history on the contemporary.

Rainbowism possesses the potential to be regressive in that it can be used as a mechanism of not allowing or even silencing rigorous engagement with racial matters. Metaphors such as the rainbow nation may be well intentioned, that is, it may serve to symbolically highlight South Africa's diversity while simultaneously seeking to construct the idea that great difference can live in harmony and unity with each other. However, such unity if uncritically accepted presupposes the automatic disappearance of 'past' disharmony and disunity. In so doing those who benefited over many centuries from such disharmony and disunity; mainly white South Africans, use the metaphor of the rainbow nation among other metaphors to describe South Africa as a means of maintaining their privilege, and it may even mystify differentials of social and economic power (Gqola 2001, Wale and Foster 2007). While the metaphor of the rainbow nation may symbolise unity and the success of South Africa's democratic dispensation its benefits continue to be elusive for the majority black. As Malusi Gigaba highlights '[t]he fact is that the democracy dividend is yet to be experienced by most South Africans, which means the racial characterisation of poverty and wealth in our country persists' (The Star November 2011). The notion of the rainbow nation remains but a mere metaphor transferred to that which it does not literally apply: South African society.

The notion of the rainbow nation coupled with the metaphor of the 'new South Africa' further gives the illusion of a pervasive equality in South African society and may even, unsuspectingly, serve as a means to negate endeavours to rectify unequal relations of race and class domination in South Africa (Gqola 2001). Phumla Gqola thus observes that

> 'not only does rainbowism hide race difference it reduces it to a non-entity, so that ultimately white supremacy, which drove apartheid and remains reflected in institutional racism, albeit not state sponsored, becomes a phenomenon that is whitewashed of all meaning. Further, whiteness is not seen as a racialised identity which needs deconstruction because white people are not racialised in the same way as black people. When viewed as an issue, 'race' becomes a problem for the latter not the former' (Gqola 2001: 103).

What Gqola also highlights is that insofar as race is a concept that is only applied to black people whiteness will continue to function as a norm, as 'just' the human condition. Richard

Dyer thus posits: '[a]s long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people' (Dyer 1997: 1).

Metaphors that serve to describe post-apartheid South African society such as the rainbow nation and the 'new' South Africa can unsuspectingly serve to mystify persistent racial inequalities that accompany them. Indeed, such metaphors can serve as a means of inhabiting measures that aim to address race difference and a redistribution of the country's wealth. Thus the unity that metaphors such as rainbowism seek to portray or give an impression of is not genuine. It can be said to be based on the premise that South Africa is no longer legislatively divided along racial lines and that this entails that South African society is united. What thus happened in the past is thought of as 'past-tense', as having no bearing on the contemporary. Prefixes such as 'previously' come to dominate the discourse of post-apartheid South African society. What thus happened in the past happened 'previously' and thus cannot be said to have an effect on the current state of affairs; race difference may have dominated under apartheid South Africa this is not the case now in the 'new', 'rainbow' South African society. The domination and disadvantage black South Africans were subjected to under apartheid come to be labelled as 'previous'. Black South Africans themselves come to be labelled as previously disadvantaged, racism also comes to be conceived as something that occurred in the past and it is also seen as something that happened previously and no longer exists in a 'united' South Africa. 'This new classification [previously] insinuates that all the injustices of yesterday have been completely done away with. Since racism was a significant part of the past, this new label implies that racism is gone. If performed frequently enough, it assumes the status of fact and is relegated to the realm of 'truth'. In other words, it becomes our 'truth' (Gqola 2001: 104). Discourse which speaks of black South Africans as previously disadvantaged can be said to entail a move toward collective amnesia; that black South Africans were for generations psychologically, physically and materially oppressed while whites were protected from any possible black competition and on such a basis accumulated tremendous amounts of wealth and privilege is relegated to an unrecognised past which should not be engaged with. Yet, a change in political power is deemed sufficient to have erased the effects of interlocking systems of apartheid that kept blacks locked down at the lowest tiers of South African society. One could

go so far as to argue that discourses of denial are being mobilised in post-apartheid South Africa (Wale and Foster 2007).

What discourses of denial effectively ignore is that while legislative apartheid may have ended and with this arose a blurring of the lines between race and class inequality, the legacy of apartheid remains persistent. White South African identity is to a large extent characterised by the denial of white privilege (Wale and Foster 2007). 'This denial of white privilege can be described as a discursive strategy mobilised by white South Africans to deny the ways in which they were implicated in the apartheid system and to deny the effects of this system that continue to structure the present' (Wale and Foster 2007: 55). What is done here is that white privilege is being constructed as something that no longer exists in South African society. What follows is that post-apartheid South African society is constructed as a meritocratic society in which individuality is seen as the basis of achievement and a privileged position, it becomes intolerable to think that the colour of one's skin had, and continues to have an impact on one's position within the social. Peggy McIntosh thus argues that 'a white person is taught to believe that all that she or he does, good and ill, all that we achieve, is to be accounted for in terms of individuality. It is intolerable to realise that we may get a job or a nice house, or a helpful response at school or in hospitals, because of our skin colour, not because of the unique, achieving individual we must believe ourselves to be' (McIntosh as cited in Dyer 1997: 9).

Equality of opportunity comes to be hailed as illustrative of the level playing fields that characterise 'post-apartheid' South Africa, a society that is 'not' dominated by unequal power relations and race difference. Such a discourse functions as a strategy of reification, reification is understood as a 'strategy of denying history and presenting the state of affairs as if it was permanent, natural and existed outside of time. This strategy functions to ideologically separate the current state of affairs from the history that informs them' (Thompson as cited in Wale and Foster 2007: 49). To address the legacy of apartheid, policies which aim to address and redress the continued privilege enjoyed by white South Africans within the economic sphere, such as Affirmative Action (AA), amongst others are deemed to be acts of reverse racism by white South Africans. What in effect is being done by such claims of 'reverse racism' by whites is that the claims of 'reverse racism' are being used against attempts to redistribute the wealth of the country. In other words, white South

Africans, by mobilising the discourse of reverse racism are in fact challenging attempts at the equalisation of economic power within the South African economy. Wale and Foster (2007: 62-63) on their research on how wealthy white South Africans mobilise meaning to maintain privilege interestingly reveal how claims of 'reverse racism' are used to stifle attempts at economic redistribution in a country in which inequality continues to manifest itself along racial lines. What follows below is a brief illustration of how the discourse of reverse racism is mobilised by some white South Africans against attempts at economic redistribution (See Wale and Foster 2007: 62-63).

> Jenny: Nothing should be decided on the colour of your skin as in the old government. It was wrong then and it is wrong now. It's wrong that you are being given jobs because you are black. It's as bad as it was before. I don't know how they can say that that's so bad in the old government and then bring it in to the new government and say it's a good thing. We're ten years down the line; it's no longer a necessary thing.

> John: It's an absolute bucket of bullshit. You can't use reverse discrimination. If somebody is suitable for the job, then dammit, you can't not give them the job because it's an affirmative action position. Especially because children coming out of school now, if they are white children, they really had nothing to do with the sins of their parents; so they shouldn't be discriminated against.

> Annie: I don't agree with removing somebody because they have got a white skin, to give somebody the job with a black skin. If they've worked for it the gap is there, be my guest ... and let's live together, and if you deserve a position, get the position, as long as you deserve it. Or create a position, but don't make the people who have built the country up suffer, because if it wasn't for previous white government and wealthy whites, the country wouldn't be where it is today. Let's integrate, let's share, let's respect. Like a river meets the sea you get a mixture. That's really what it should be – happy integration.

> Kate: I don't agree with Affirmative action, and I'll explain why. If we are going to move from a racial society to a non-racial society, which is what supposedly this country is aspiring

to do. You cannot appoint somebody on the basis of their skin colour; you must appoint them on the basis of their ability.

What these participants reveal is a complete renching out of South Africa's history from its present. It also illustrates an inability to understand the position of the majority of black South Africans who were the objects of generations of oppression. This can be seen as what Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera refer to as 'social alexithymia' – that is, '[e]ssentail to being an oppressor in a racist society is a significantly reduced ability, or an inability, to understand or relate to the emotions, such as recurring pain, of those targeted by oppression' (Feagin 2006: 28). 'Social alexithymia' Feagin notes 'seems essential to the creation and maintenance of a racist society' (Feagin 2006: 28). Thus policies that seek to structurally challenge inequality are conceived of as in tension with the notions of rainbowism and non-racialism, what prevails here is that the problem of race and racial inequality can only be solved by not seeing race. Thus we get rid of racism by not seeing race, furthermore, insofar as inequality is seen to correlate race you get rid of inequality by not seeing race. 'Happy integration' from the optic of the participants comes through the maintenance of the status quo, that is, by not disturbing the privilege and wealth of white South Africans for after all, as Annie, one of the participants posits: 'If it wasn't for previous white government and wealthy whites, the country wouldn't be where it is today.' White identity through the optic of these participants is depicted as the innocent victim of the post-apartheid state that continues to be obsessed with race. To counter such a state of affairs whites aim to attain the moral high ground by invoking notions of non-racialism to place themselves in opposition to the race 'obsessed' post-apartheid state. 'However, to not 'see' race when racism is still built into the structures of South Africa is in fact racist, as you are allowing these structures to continue ... By reifying race as something that exists in individuals, rather than something that is historically built into the structures of South African society, the power structures that operate independently of individual attitudes are glossed over' (Wale and Foster 2007: 63). Insofar as racism is individualised and disassociated from a structural totality race is easily sought to be abandoned yet, by abandoning race racism is sustained and it is saved. This can be seen to be what David Theo Goldberg refers to as 'born again racism', Goldberg articulates born again racism thus:

> ‘Born again racism is racism without race, racism gone private, racism without the categories to name it as such. It is racism shorn of the change, a racism that cannot be named because nothing abounds with which to name it. It is a racism purged of historical roots, of its groundedness, a racism whose history is lost... Born again racism, then, is a racism acknowledged, where acknowledged at all, as individualised faith, of the socially heart, rather than as institutionalised inequality. In short, it is an unrecognised racism for there are no terms by which it could be recognised: no precedent, no intent, no pattern, no institutional explication’ (Goldberg 2003: 273).

Regressive practices through the use of ideals that appeal to an equal and liberated society can themselves be masked as progressive and liberatory yet, through a critical analysis oppressive practices can be exposed for what they are. Christine Qunta thus observes:

> One of the more disturbing trends in the last few years has been the use of the racism label by whites against Africans who speak out against the manifestation of white racism. It is in effect a trivialisation of something that has been, and continues to be, very painful for black people. If one is to be cynical, it may be an attempt to silence those voices likely to disturb the status quo. What we end up with then are just shouts of racism from both sides of the fence. It is the appropriation of a term and using it in such a way that it becomes ineffective to convey a particular idea. It renders it harmless (Qunta as cited in Gqola 2001: 103).

What can be gaged from Qunta’s observation are attempts to gloss over and bury race difference that continues to haunt South African society well into the post-apartheid era. Here attempts are being made by whites to silence blacks who observe continuing racial inequities in South African society. Those who speak out against racial inequities if they are black are deemed racist and may be seen to fall into the same category as someone that consciously maintains, or seeks to maintain racial inequities. The persistence of white supremacy, the basis of apartheid, comes to be devoid of any meaning. The implication here or rather, the underlying assumption, is that in post-apartheid South Africa insofar as race and race superiority is no longer state sanctioned race does not matter and thus should not be noticed or even taken into account. ‘Thus, one who points out racial inequities risks being characterized as an obsessed-with-race racist who is unfairly and divisively “playing the race

card"—one who occupies the same moral category as someone who consciously perpetrates racial inequities' (Cho 2009: 1595).

In South Africa, a society in which the black majority was for decades oppressed by a racist minority, the end of such oppression comes to signify that those who suffered can come to be labelled as exactly the same as their oppressors: racist or on the other hand as occupying the same socio-economic status as their oppressors. The end of decades of legislated oppression and apartheid is erroneously conceived as transcending race and entailing racial progress has been attained. Apartheid is thus conceived '... as F W de Klerk and others would have us believe, "an experiment that failed" and that should now be consigned to the history books...' (Taylor: City Press, August 28: 2011). Taylor also highlights the political naivety of such an outlook by stating that 'it [apartheid] also created and sustained a racist system of social structures that resulted in unjust enrichment for white people while exploiting and repressing the human potential of all blacks' (Taylor: City Press, August 28: 2011). Such a racist system based on the systematic privileging of whites and the disadvantaging of blacks does not disappear by mere sleight of hand. It goes much deeper than that, racism to a large extent continues to manifest itself in the structures of South African society; this can be seen in the persistence of racialised communities. This can further be observed 'in the way in which societal institutions and structures continue to interlock and mutually result in racially unjust outcomes is evident in wide range of statistical indicators – be it with respect to ownership and inheritance of productive resources, barriers to mobility in the labour market, patterns of residential segregation or educational access and outcomes' (Taylor: City Press, August 28: 2011). Apartheid as a system was premised on the prominence of racial identities, people were accordingly so defined, that is, all people were defined and classified on the basis of race and South African society was similarly arranged along racial lines. Race came to dictate the daily lives of all those people within the geographic area of South Africa, who lived in which areas, who would succeed and who would fail was all determined by race. Being based on the notion of race and the existence of distinct races the South African state kept apart like from unlike and that which was different from each other (MacDonald 2006). Social and spatial distances were themselves manifested along racial lines.

Richard Ballard (2004) argues that social and spatial distance is mutually constitutive. What this indicates is that one's sense of self and belonging is to a large degree affected by spatial boundaries, identity formation can therefore be seen to be affected by the proximity of those who are different from one's self. Thus in order to maintain a sense of one's 'pure' identity uncontaminated by that which is different from one's self, residential segregation serves as a means of doing exactly that. Segregation to a large extent continues into contemporary South Africa where the market has come to serve as a regulator of who lives in which area, goes to which school and gets a high quality of education, the market has come to serve as a means of keeping out the undesirable other. With the disbanding of official segregation more covert and nuanced means of segregation have emerged, this can be witnessed in the proliferation of enclosed neighbourhoods; entire areas cordoned off by boom gates and hired security guards. 'These urban forms then, represent to some extent the privatisation of what was previously a state project: urban segregation' (Ballard 2004: 63). This desire for a sense of comfort, that is, racial zones in which one's sense of self does not feel threatened by those who are culturally, socially and racially different from one's self can be interpreted as a nostalgic desire for a time in which segregation legislatively maintained one's 'comfort zone' (Ballard 2004: 63), and excluded those who did not fit one's racial identity and cultural practices, basically the black underclass. Race continues to be resilient in post-apartheid South Africa, and as Jeremy Seekings highlights '[p]erhaps the most striking evidence of the resilience of race is the fact that patterns of residential segregation have hardly changed since the transition to democracy' (Seekings 2008: 11). Gated communities therefore serve a dual purpose: inclusion and exclusion. 'At one level, the barriers regulating access to neighbourhoods are physical statements regarding the kinds of people who belong and the kinds that do not. They are an attempt to restore a certain sense of 'our' identity through boundary maintenance, prompted by the disturbing presence of others which "threatens to overwhelm the boundaries of individual and collective identity"' (Ballard 2004: 63). Race therefore continues to have spatial and social form. And in post-apartheid South Africa where legislated segregation is not directed by the state, economic privilege and advantage have an inertial effect in that racially exclusive communities remain as such and new forms of residential segregation emerge. Thus 'the vast majority of the urban population continues to live in highly segregated suburbs ... most new housing areas established after the end of apartheid are as segregated as the older neighbourhoods established (or remade) under the apartheid Group Areas Act. 'Choices' about where to live are, of course, severely limited by economic inequalities' (Seekings 2008: 12). And with white South African's continuing to control the largest share

of South Africa's economic largess; 'white spaces' that is, spaces that remain predominantly white continue to form part of South Africa's visual landscape. While on the other hand, black spaces; those spaces that remain predominantly black and poor continue to persist into post-apartheid South Africa. What effectively persist are zoned spaces based on different races and a reflection of the economic advantage and disadvantage, racially conceived.

The power that accrues from economic advantage allows for zoned spaces in which the property of whites is protected and where they are allowed a sense of control over these spaces (Ballard 2004); property can therefore serve as a means of perpetuating racial inequalities. It may be true that inter-racial inequality may have decreased as a result of a new black elite having joined an old white elite, forming a racially mixed middle class (Seekings 2008). However, as a group whites possess massive amounts of resources, and '... the majority of the poor in South Africa continue to be black, and the wealthy white elite continue to represent a significant resistance force to distribution along more egalitarian lines' (Terreblance as cited in Wale and Foster 2007: 45). Space thus remains largely racialised, Maré adequately observes:

'[w]ho is seen in which streets and in which dwellings and in which regions at which times of day or night, who utilises which transport routes; who frequents which recreational facilities and so on, still largely confirms a certain colour coding. The visual landscape was racialised, and will continue to be so for a very long time to come despite fairly rapid spatial realignment on the basis of class, and rapid urbanisation' (Maré 2001: 85).

If and when blacks who are capable of moving into affluent 'white areas' do so, whites who have the means to move to more exclusive areas do so. This can serve as an indication of the 'social value of blackness' (Conley 2006: 605) in post-apartheid South Africa. This reinforces Maré's (2001) analysis that despite fairly rapid spatial realignment the visual landscape will remain racialised for a long time to come. An increase in the number of blacks moving into a certain suburb that is predominantly white is seen as bringing down the value of that particular suburb and therefore is no longer 'appropriate' for white people to reside in. Mark Heywood aptly captures this state of affairs by describing an encounter with a

white man in his mid 50's on an early Saturday morning run. '[O]n an early morning run, I was overtaken by a white male athlete in his mid 50's. After a few minutes of runner talk he revealed that he had completed 35 Comrades Marathons. My heart filled with admiration. But then, after asking where I lived, he lamented that Orange Groove and other suburbs are now "all black" and not good places for white people to live. My heart sank. I walked away' (Mail & Guardian September 2011). Racist ideology can be seen as having a link to the economic realm in the valuation of property (Conley 2006). In post-apartheid South Africa equal citizenship rights may have been extended to all South African's; this has not necessarily entailed the attainment of social justice and equality, particularly economic, leading to or rather, maintaining the unequal status of groups in South Africa. Insofar as 'economic life is not sufficiently under the control of citizens to meaningfully affect the unequal status and treatment of groups' (Young 1989: 251); race difference continues to persist into post-apartheid South Africa with the effect that the extension of universal citizenship tends to reproduce existing group oppression (Young 1989). South Africa remains a highly unequal society well into post-apartheid South Africa, despite decreasing inter-racial inequality white South Africans continue to enjoy a highly privileged position vis-a-vis the black majority. Here Biko's thought resonates into the post-apartheid era; his prescience remains unchallenged by the contemporary state of affairs. Speaking of the mere change of the governing class without an equivalent change in the distribution of the country's wealth Biko foresaw and warned that no genuine change in the status quo would be realised. In this instance, race would remain a highly relevant point in South African society; while not legislatively determining who is privileged and who is disadvantaged, but that inequality in South Africa would continue to manifest itself along racial lines with the black majority remaining poor and the white minority remaining wealthy.

Biko's prescience cannot be ignored in this instance. Speaking of the implications of only political change without a change in the economic distribution of the country's wealth, the latter having the ability of limiting the significance of the political change. Economic power has the ability to radically alter a group's standard of living, opening more options and allowing for more actions for that particular group. Speaking of the prospects of a post-colonial era while speaking to the conditions of his time, Biko states:

> '...there is no running away from the fact that now in South Africa there is such an ill distribution of wealth that any form of political freedom which does not touch on the proper distribution of wealth will be meaningless. The whites have locked up within a small minority of themselves the greater proportion of the country's wealth. If we have a mere change of face of those in governing positions what is likely to happen is that black people will continue to be poor, and you will see a few blacks filtering through into the so-called bourgeoisie. Our society will be run almost as of yesterday. So for meaningful change to appear there needs to be an attempt at reorganising the whole economic pattern and economic policies within this particular country' (Biko 2004: 169).

Here Biko was addressing a central issue that had the potential, if addressed, could make the attainment of a non-racial society seem attainable. Biko's thought and his warnings on political change without subsequent change in the material living conditions of the majority black certainly introduces a discordant note into post-apartheid notions of the 'rainbow nation' and the 'new' South Africa. Economic inequality manifesting itself along racial lines serves as a tremendous hindrance to altering the social landscape of South Africa, for so long as people continue to live in racially segregated communities, attend racially segregated schools, race will continue to be seen as a self evident obviousness. What Biko thus illuminates is that without a radical change in the structures of South African society any change would in reality be limited, even futile, because the past will penetrate into the contemporary. What Biko thus illuminates and warns against can be related to what Joe Feagin articulates as the 'law of social inertia' (Feagin 2006: 34). Feagin argues that 'there is a strong tendency for social oppression's exploitative mechanisms, resource inequalities, basic norms, key images and buttressing attitudes to remain more or less in force, until a major unbalancing force counters or challenges that oppression' (Feagin 2006: 34). Insofar as racism and oppression are conceived as inhering in structures, the counterbalancing force has to be one that challenges in fundamental and foundational ways the racist structures of society. For as Feagin argues once 'the system of racism does finally change significantly, the law of social inertia typically operates to keep that system more like it was in the past than the ideal "new" society that many ... analysts like to celebrate' (Feagin 2006: 34). From this it can be inferred that without radical change in the structures of South African society the dire conditions in which black South African's lived under apartheid, dominated by unjust

privilege and unjust impoverishment will continue well into post-apartheid South Africa making political change meaningless for the vast black underclass.

Unjust racial privilege for whites was an intentional creation of apartheid, the creation of such intentional white privilege was accompanied by the intentional impoverishment of blacks. Thus while race may have no scientific basis this does not entail that the concept cannot be used in a destructive manner at least when in the service of evil hands. Race categories can themselves be abused and manipulated to privilege a particular racial group to the detriment of others. The manipulation of race so as to intentionally benefit one group with the adverse effect on another group both psychologically and materially reveals that race while biologically fraudulent; it does manifest itself in a very concrete manner. Race may be false but it was the basis of a structurally racist system (Feagin 2006, Bonilla Silva 1997). Apartheid was a system that had its foundation built on the false notion of race yet, the mere falsification of race does not necessarily diminish its use, or at least, in the immediate future the effects of its use. How the effects of race are dealt with within a post-apartheid era will determine how South Africa moves away from a society that was and in many respects continues to be determined by race. When it is acknowledged that apartheid was a system based on systemic racial discrimination that disproportionately benefited whites and of which most whites continue to benefit from; the approach adopted to deal with this issue will have to be one that engages with race and racism and not one that seeks to refute race on the basis of its biological fraudulence, and in so doing assuming that racism will itself disappear. For so doing would merely be condoning the status quo. Race cannot be reduced to the level of the psychological, that is, the significance of race cannot be simply reduced to individual prejudice.

If racism is merely reduced to the level of the psychological that is, to the individual level, what this entails is that the structures that constitute society are perceived as neutral and thus in themselves incapable of sustaining racism. What this therefore entails, Bonilla-Silva (1997) contends is that; ‘If racism is not part of a society but is a characteristic of individuals who are “racist” or “prejudiced” – that is, racism is a phenomenon operating at the individual level – the (1) social institutions cannot be racist and (2) studying racism is simply a matter of surveying the proportion of people in a society who hold “racist” beliefs’ (Bonilla-Silva

1997: 467). Thus if the aim is to get rid of racism, measures should be implemented which appeal to the individual's moral consciousness and try persuade them that their racist, prejudicial views are not in accord with a liberated society. If simply reduced to 'irrational' prejudiced views racism can possibly have no material impact against those groups whom racist attitudes are directed at. The inequality in power and material living conditions that manifest themselves along racial lines can thus not be attributed to racism insofar as racism has no solid social basis. Indeed, such an approach to racism has the ability to maintain inequalities in power and privilege insofar as racism is isolated from broader societal structures.

During the apartheid regime racial prejudice was worked into the laws of which resulted in a system that privileged whites (Fredrickson 1981). What this entails is that whites did not necessarily have to '... think prejudiced thoughts to experience their privilege, as it was part of a larger system that advantaged them' (Wale and Foster 2007; 46). What this illustrates is that it was not necessary for whites to have been racist at the level of consciousness as the privilege that was granted to them was a result of the structural embededness of racism. Thus far from being reduced to the level of personal prejudice apartheid was a structurally racist system that functioned to privilege white South Africans over black South Africans. This can be extended by adding that racism cannot be relegated to the level of personal prejudice but it is something far deeper than that and located at a deeper structural level. If racism is accepted to reside at a deeper structural level and not merely at the level of social discontents, that is, at the level of individual prejudice; deeper analytical insight can be derived and the persistence of race and class dominance in contemporary South Africa can be better comprehended. With the effect that an effective measure to the problem would be structural change. The white group were privileged by institutions and structures that simultaneously disadvantaged the black group. Privilege is said to 'exist when one group has something of value that is denied to another group simply of their group status and not because of anything they have done or failed to do' (Wale and Foster 2007; 46). White privilege can here be regarded as a system of unearned benefits that have placed whites at the zenith of South African society. Engaging with white privilege McIntosh;

> ‘describes the system of white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that white people can count on each day. Understanding racism and classism as systems of privilege means that these systems do not simple comprise individual acts of meanness, or legalised discrimination. These are also the invisible systems that confer unsought dominance to one group from birth while at the same time allowing that group to be oblivious to their dominance’ (McIntosh as cited in Wale and Foster 2007: 50).

This description of privilege adopts a structural approach, that is, by engaging racism at a structural level privilege is not reduced to or engaged with at the individual level. Rather, it is placed within a structure that allows for one group to derive and perpetually enjoy privilege and a privileged position in relation to other groups for who privilege is denied. Structural racism can serve to account for the persistence of apartheids racial legacy. South Africa, despite decreasing levels of inter-racial inequality (Seekings 2008), ‘... is not free of the racial legacies of colonialism and apartheid. These are the legacies of white cultural privilege, as well as continued white economic privilege by virtue of inherited economic advancement. Economically speaking, white South Africans no longer need to rely on active discrimination, as they can rely on the way in which race functioned to position them within the class system’ (Wale and Foster 2007: 48). Racial discrimination legislatively sustained over generations can come to sustain itself; racial discrimination need not be legislatively maintained *ad infinitum* for racism to continue to have an impact on the life chances of individuals. Thus based on the head start that a white child received from previous racially discriminatory policies that placed earlier generations of his/her family in a highly privileged position vis-a-vis the family of a black child, the white child will continue to be miles ahead of the black child well beyond the period of racially discriminatory policies were being actively implemented and maintained.

Say a white South African recognises that apartheid was a structurally racist system, yet he/she is sceptical about addressing its effects by engaging with race. That is, such a person refuses to accept race based remedies/racial redress for historical racial injustice which, continue into the present, and by arguing, that race does not exist and that by continuing to focus on race, what is actually being sought to be destroyed is merely being reinforced. Such a person’s diagnosis of the problem is indeed questionable. If race was used in a socially and

politically coherent manner to systematically advantage one group to the disadvantage of another, then why should race not be at the centre of addressing, redressing the effects of the systematic manipulation of race that maintained white supremacy. For as Kimberle Crenshaw highlights 'a society once expressly organized around white supremacist principles does not cease to be a white supremacist society simply by formally rejecting those principles. The society remains white supremacist in its maintenance of the actual distribution of goods and resources, status, and prestige' (Crenshaw as cited in Mills 1998: 102). Crenshaw also emphasises the importance of distinguishing between 'the mere rejection of white supremacy as a normative vision' and 'a societal commitment to the eradication of the substantive conditions of Black subordination' (Crenshaw as cited in Mills 1998: 102).

Thus the end of racially legislated apartheid does not entail the end of the effects that such a system created, the end of a political system does not necessarily entail that all the effects of that system will similarly disappear with it. Apartheid may have ended but racial inequality and difference in power persist well into post-apartheid South Africa. The persistence of such elements serve to indicate that the political is not a self-sufficient essence for if it was a self sufficient essence residues such as racial inequality and difference in power would not exist. The persistence of elements such as racial inequality and difference in power cannot be said to be residues if the political is taken as an essence, the persistence of such elements is only possible insofar as the political is not a self sufficient essence. Such elements would not be possible if the political was a self-sufficient essence for a change in the political would modify the entire society at one blow. If indeed the political was an essence all spheres of South African life would have changed at the instance the political was modified for everything would be an expression of the political; the essence. If then, the political is not an essence which it is not, this leaves open room for contingency, that is, while the political may have changed that is just one part of the social structure that did and other spheres remain unchanged. The metaphor of the 'new South Africa' may be conceived as taking the political as an essence insofar as it can be assumed that the change in the political ushered in an entirely 'new South Africa', thus with the change of the political structure all structures changed with it. South Africa may have had political change with the political having been previously confined to one group, racially defined. In post-apartheid South Africa the political has been broadened to include the previously denied majority. What this entails is that a radical egalitarianism is found at the level of formal political identity yet, the same

cannot be said for the other spheres of the social structure, especially the economic. Thus while blacks govern, economic power continues to controlled by a white elite 'thus delimiting the real possibilities for independent action and the democratizing of racial access to socioeconomic opportunities' (Mills 1998: 103). And as Biko pointed out political change without a change in the economic position of the black majority would effectively entail a change in the colour of the governing class with society remaining largely untransformed (Biko 2004).

Conclusion

Assuming a colour-blind approach to non-racialism entails a de facto acceptance of the non-existence both scientifically and socially of race. From such an optic it seems the effects of race have been ignored, not addressed and even glossed over in a 'harmonious' colour-blind society. The implication of not addressing race and purporting to be guided by the ideal of non-racialism is that a clean-slate approach is adopted, that is, the effect of centuries of racial oppression in which the white group was systematically advantaged over the black group is not engaged with. It is assumed that under democratic institutions and in a democratic state centuries old racial legacies evaporate and in is ushered a non-racial society. Such an approach to non-racialism is indeed an unsophisticated one as it assumes that by not engaging with race a non-racial society can be attained. Thus if we do not talk about race it is taken as something that does not matter, that does not continue to have an effect on the life chances of groups who were the objects of centuries of racial oppression. Any talk of race comes to be perceived as awakening racial hostilities, as regressive and as being in tension with the ethos of the 'rainbow' nation and the 'new' South Africa where race does not matter; as if the effects of the 'old' South Africa have been addressed and dispelled with and ushered in an era of unbridled equality. The subordination of race and the subsequent lack of robust open public engagement with race make the attainment of a truly lived and internalised non-racialism ever elusive.

Black Consciousness is not blind to the reality that the effects of the concept race are very real for the struggle that Black Consciousness engages in is as a result of the concrete effects that race has had and continues to have on blacks. Black Consciousness engages with the paradox of race; it acknowledges the scientific rejection of race by so doing accepts the non-existence of race while also remaining cognisant and acknowledging the constructed socio-political existence of race. It is within the social-constructionist realm of race that Black Consciousness struggles against a system of structural racism for while race does not exist it oppressors people at worse it dehumanises those who are conceived within racist structures as 'racially inferior' in relation to the 'racially superior'.

Black Consciousness sees racism and white supremacy as entrenched in social structures and conceives that the only way to emancipate blacks from their inferiority complex and whites from their superiority complex is by transforming the structure of society. In an interview with Lanning (1971) Biko constantly affirms that blacks are fighting against the entire system that is, Black Consciousness does not seek to establish a counter racial prejudice to a long entrenched white racism as '[b]lacks have had enough experience as objects of racism not to wish to turn the tables' (Biko 1978: 108). Black Consciousness transcends an understanding of racism as found within active principles, that is, racism as a purely overt manifestation acted out by racist whites. Black Consciousness it can be argued, assumes a structural approach to the attainment of non-racialism, a genuinely non-racial society becomes possible and can indeed be attained when systemic racism is radically challenged and destroyed. Far from being a narrow black nationalism Black Consciousness is a revolutionary ideology which, albeit with the seminal agenda of black solidarity and emancipation it can also be seen as seeking to emancipate whites by forcing them to recognise that their privileged positionality is a result of the impoverished, oppressed positionality of blacks. This is itself perpetuated by the perpetuation of systemic racism which positions whiteness as a golden standard to which all the 'rest' are to aspire yet, paradoxically cannot ever genuinely become. Whiteness, unlike blackness, (in the Black Consciousness sense) can never be revolutionary as its relevance is based on the maintenance of the status-quo. Whiteness has a vested interest in the perpetuation of racist structures as it is racist structures that assure white privilege and black disadvantage. Black Consciousness is premised on the radical transformation of society and with that the destruction of fabricated identities of white as enlightened and progressive and black as unenlightened and regressive. Black Consciousness espouses the attainment of a radically non-racial society based on Biko's hope of a true-humanity and not one based on the assimilation of blacks into white dominated structures.

The socio-political implications of an uncritical approach to non-racialism is that it neglects the differential positions in which race has placed individuals within society and its oppressive racist structures, such an approach to non-racialism is highly flawed. Such a simplistic approach and understanding of non-racialism and for that matter the effects of race are that 'it abstracts people from the concrete, segregated societies in which they exist, along with 'their in-built complexes of superiority and inferiority', and assumes that these can be by-passed in a non-racial, integrated structure' (Howarth 1997: 58). Non-racialism

parochially conceived as simply the rejection of race and the adoption of a colour-blind attitude is that it assumes a clean-slate approach to history. It assumes that the effects of centuries of racial oppression, subjugation, and oppressive structures which have for centuries placed whites in superordinate positions and blacks in perpetual subordinance can be simply ignored in the bliss of an integrated 'non-racial' society, indeed it neglects the concrete realities and effects of an artificial concept: race. Zimitri Erasmus aptly reminds us that '[d]ropping the scientific category of race does not, however, address the continued historical inequalities, brutality and power relations for which it stands' (Erasmus 2008: 174). Black Consciousness engages with the unequal power relations which stem from race, this it has to do if a genuinely integrated non-racial society is to become a possibility. Simultaneously oppressive structures have to be challenged and transformed for the possibility to arise in which people can engage as equals in conditions of mutual respect and recognition.

Black Consciousness articulates a non-racialism that is not a mere integration of blacks into white dominated society and structures for this would essentially entail the attainment of an illusory 'non-racialism' through the meeting of white standards by blacks. The implication being that unequal power relations are not addressed and transformed as those (whites) who have benefited from centuries of racial privilege maintain their privilege in relation to those (blacks) who were systematically disempowered and who come to be merely assimilated into white dominated structures under the guise of 'non-racialism'. In the definition of Black Consciousness, Biko rejects such an assimilationist approach of blacks into the status-quo. He posits that '[b]lacks no longer seek to reform the system because so doing implies acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves. Blacks are out to completely transform the system and to make of it what they wish' (Biko 1978: 53). Black Consciousness in this sense seeks to establish 'Blackness – as – Presence in a world overdetermined by Blackness – as – Absence' (Wilderson 2008: 99). For non-racialism to come into the realm of possibility the structures that have and continue to place blackness in a negative relation to whiteness, whiteness conceived as presence needs to be confronted by a militant blackness which asserts its presence in a society which has always denied it presence. The aim of this should not be an aspiration to whiteness but a recognition of black as presence, as human, once such humanity has been restored both whites and blacks will be open to a more liberated future

with non-racialism being a real possibility. To attain this possibility racial inequalities and the structural conditions which permit its perpetuation have to be challenged.

Black Consciousness challenges the asymmetrical power relations between blacks and whites thus effectively challenging inequalities between blacks and whites. This permits the possibility to transcend racial definitions equally making an integrated non-racial society possible. Despite Black Consciousness' radical non-racialist orientation, its call for black solidarity can easily and has been criticised as a form of 'reverse racism' effectively engaging in racial politics. Such an interpretation of Black Consciousness' call for black solidarity can be seen as a severe misinterpretation of what black solidarity is to achieve. Black solidarity for Black Consciousness assumes a strategic significance not a fixed condition. Commenting on Biko's conception of black solidarity Achille Mbembe points out that '[h]e believed that black solidarity would one day make it possible for the members of all races to live together free in one nation ... he saw black solidarity as a temporary strategy for realising a political community that fully embodied democratic ideals' (Mbembe 2007: 137). This reveals Black Consciousness distance from constraining biologically deterministic notions of race which limit the fluidity of the individuals identity as race, naturally conceived comes to predetermine the individuals identity and his/her ability to engage with other forms of identity beyond narrow notions of race. While Black Consciousness retains the category of race it does not take it as a given it instead uses the concept specifically, 'blackness as an emancipatory weapon' (Mbembe 2007: 141) to open the possibility of an alternative future in which race will not in the least determine the life chances of individuals. Blackness assumes a transformatory agency that challenges the status-quo and aims to attain a genuinely integrated non-racial society.

Black Consciousness espouses a deeper more sophisticated conception of race and a vision of a non-racial society as opposed to an illusory non-racism premised on artificial integration, in which differentially positioned individuals as a result of their racial characteristics are unequally integrated into a so called non-racial society. In such a situation blacks and whites are simply integrated unequally into a colour-blind 'non-racial' society without addressing the deep seated effects of racism which are beyond the political and extend into the personal, the spiritual and the psychological. Black Consciousness seeks to address the asymmetry of

power between blacks and whites, by so doing allowing for the possibility for blacks and whites to engage on an equal footing of mutual respect and recognition devoid of feelings of inferiority and superiority. Black Consciousness aims to attain conditions in which racial definitions are transcended and people come to engage with each other as true human beings. In such a situation identities become fluid, constantly changing, individuals come to reach a point where freedom is enjoyed in both a formal and substantive manner. In such a situation integration is not based on an artificial premise in which the status-quo is maintained yet manifested differently integration comes to be based on the premise of equality, in this regard the possibility of a non-racial society comes into sight. While Black Consciousness is premised on black solidarity this should not be misconstrued as another form of parochial exclusionist African nationalisms. Blackness in the Black Consciousness sense assumes a strategic significance it is reappropriated and all the negative connotations assigned to blackness are dusted off, destroyed and blackness is sought to be imbued with a revolutionary agency which challenges white supremacist structures and aims to also challenge the racial inequality that such structures entail. The liberatory implications of such an approach to race and non-racialism by Black Consciousness is that it allows for the attainment of a future society in which identities can be formed devoid of the constraints of parochial biologically deterministic conceptions of race. The vision of the good society is that of a genuine non-racial society.

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