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"So, what are you?": analysing erasure, shame and (mis) appropriation of coloured narratives in South Africa through social media

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Abstract

This study examines how Coloured people are constructing Colouredness and by implication, themselves through the Facebook web series, *Coloured Mentality*. Coloured identities have been a very uncomfortable part of South African race politics since colonialism and have carried a range of stereotypes and myths with them. Despite being constructed as monolithic and essential, Coloured identities have long undergone processes of creolisation under conditions of brutality to continue making and remaking themselves as political landscapes change. To explore how Colouredness is being constructed, this research employed critical discourse analysis to evaluate its relationships with history, blackness in post-Apartheid South Africa, language, culture and privilege. In particular, much of the sense making around Colouredness operates through a discourse of origin exemplified by the question: Where do we come from? Through the lens of creolisation theory, this research reveals Colouredness to be introspective in that Coloured identities are constantly negotiating possibilities for change and impossibilities of historical ways of identification that compete with each other for relevance. Coloured identities are sweeping through archives of information to inform a new way of telling their stories.Tensions and contestations within Colouredness are central to their making and remaking, as identities are made sense of through changing discourses which serve as a gateway to social change.

Keywords: Colouredness, creolisation, discourse, identity, social media