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Exploring and Exploding - Using theatre as a medium to confront racial tensions between Indian and black South Africans

Devaksha Moodley – 688738: Abstract:

> *"Even though members' of different races live alongside each other in schools, universities, workplaces and shopping malls, we still live lives apart. We are often disconnected, suspicious and threatened by each other. Our lives are profoundly unsettled by race"* (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011: 22)

The research investigates post-apartheid race relations between Indian and black South Africans through the writing and directing of a new South African play, titled *Race Trouble* (2012) that problematizes and thematically addresses this issue. Using an auto-ethnographic approach focusing on my identity and position as a South African Indian female and as a theatre artist in post-apartheid South Africa, this research highlights racial tensions and relationships between Indian and black South Africans, as I have observed it. Furthermore, as a starting point for possible future research, this project begins to explore post-apartheid playwriting and Indian experiences in contemporary South African theatre.

In examining the issues of race and racism, post-apartheid race relations and identity, the theory of *race trouble* has been a key component of the research. Theorists Kevin Durrheim, Xoliswa Mtose and Lyndsay Brown in their book *Race Trouble: Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2011), define race trouble as, "a social psychological condition that emerges when the history of racism infiltrates the present to unsettle social order, arouse conflict of perspectives and create situations that are individually and collectively troubling" (2011: 27).

Over a period of ten months, I wrote, directed and staged *Race Trouble* (2012) on three occasions. However, while directing is a part of the practice of this research, the primary component of this creative research project is playwriting. Both the playwriting and the academic research have simultaneously informed and supported each other in my work. Therefore the final script of the play itself is intrinsically linked to the research report and is attached as an appendix to it. Specifically, *Race Trouble* (2012) is the lens through which I have interrogated race relations between Indian and black South Africans.