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COLOURED SUBJECTIVITIES AND BLACK AFRICANNESS

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2007.

ABSTRACT

Racial identities in South Africa reflect a highly complex history of how people have related to each other. They also illustrate how power has been used to validate different identities, along a racial hierarchy that attached the most value to whiteness and the least to black Africanness. These structural validations have played themselves out in everyday interactions between people both in terms of how they are seen and how they see themselves. In particular, this study draws on psychoanalytic literature to help to explain the workings of race and the recalcitrance of racism. In South Africa, conceptualizations of blackness and whiteness have dominated discourses on race and on racism. Set in Cape Town, this study by contrast, focuses on coloured identities and how these are experienced and understood particularly in relation to black Africanness. It uses participants' life histories to explore the workings of race and racism in coloured households and communities, examining relations between family members in this regard in particular. It illustrates the tensions that characterize coloured subjectivities especially in the post-apartheid era, showing how coloured identities articulate themselves in opposition, as well as in relation, to black Africanness. Importantly, this study reveals how associations with black Africanness have threatened the security of many people who identify as coloured. The thesis also explores indices of sexuality and gender as they relate to the broader topic of race and racism. The key argument of the study as a whole is that by exploring the meanings of race racism in the realm of the intimate, or the intrapersonal, we will come closer to understanding these notions and practices and in the case of racism, some of the reasons why it persist after social and political transformation, even as its meanings change.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

…….

…… day of ……., 2007.

DEDICATION

To Tshepo, my son, for sacrificing time with Dad, just so that this milestone could be achieved.

‘Look on the rising sun; there God does live,
And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in noonday

‘And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learn’d the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice,
Saying: “Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.”’

(William Blake)

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