

Abstract

This thesis explores the different ways that identities are negotiated and renegotiated in different spaces. It intends to unearth the contradictions, tensions and complexities that occur as a result of racialised subjectivities. This study unpacks the socially constructed term "Coconut" and challenges the existing dominant discourses that speak of "Coconuts" as inauthentic Black people who have lost touch with their heritage. What it means to be Black today in South Africa is being contested and there is resistance towards binary and rigid understandings and conceptualizations of blackness. In the intersection of race and class, class is often the silent signifier of distinction and difference post-apartheid but proves to be significant in understanding the different nuanced lived experiences of the Black subject. This thesis is specifically interested in how the inability to comprehend or communicate in an African language further complicates and adds another layer of complexity to not only the lived experiences of Black monolinguals proficient in English only, but also to their personal sense of self. Being a "Coconut" is experienced in conflicted and precarious ways. On the one hand it is experienced with alienation and rejection and in other contexts, it holds significant value and serves as social cultural capital necessary for maneuvering social, political and economic spaces.

Key words: Identity, Coconut, Blackness, Class, Cultural capital, Monolinguals, Language, Accent, Racial subjectivity