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Understanding non-racialism as an emancipator concept in South Africa

Raymond Suttner
Rhodes University - University of South Africa
University of the Witwatersrand

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This contribution starts with the assumption that ideas need to be treated as complex and uncertain (Codesria, 2011). This is sometimes unsettling, in that fixed meanings afford a sense of security. But scholarship, if it is to be emancipatory needs to grapple with such difficulties, where answers are by no means given.

When we try to understand non-racialism, we are not simply dealing with a clause of the South African constitution, or a word whose meaning is obvious. Meanings are not singular and how we understand such a concept affects the quality of freedom that unfolds. Non-racialism is linked to notions of unity, freedom and nationalism or the nation-that may-be, in the case of South Africa. The way we interpret these, the way concepts unfold and their interrelationship in the course of political development, will determine whether or not freedoms grow ever larger. Such an approach is counterposed to any notion that freedom has been *finally realised* at a specific point in time.

This is not a discussion of implementation or the empirical factors that may need to be put in place for realisation of non-racialism.[1] If the meaning of non-racialism cannot be taken as given then modes of realisation can obviously also not be assumed. Before we discuss the future of non-racialism in interactions between people, in relation to power and wealth, amongst other things, we need more debate over the potential meanings of the concept.

In the first place the relevant concepts are open to debate and require uncovering of a range of potential meanings, an orientation needed in order to achieve an emancipatory process and outcome. As with most social concepts, non-racialism is used by concrete individuals in a particular way and it deals with the interaction of people. None of us can provide a final, timeless understanding of the word. We may provide a definition, the lack of which is regarded as a serious deficiency by some (Everatt, (2009, 1, 4, 8). But a definition is usually aimed primarily at delineating the scope of a word. It is not as broad as a concept. The latter is a way of understanding social phenomena differing amongst people in their specific relationships and in changing conditions.

Non-racialism does not appear to be in frequent use in other countries. (Personal impression and Alan Emery, personal communication regarding the United States of America, 25 July 2011). The word is one of a category that may fall under what is sometimes called an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie, 1956 although he sets limits on the list of such concepts), though in my view every concept is subject to contestation and is not fixed as a

[1] There is a fairly substantial literature on non-racialism, race, ethnicity and similar questions. This contribution does not pretend to the field but draws on works illustratively for purposes of the questions that are examined.

definition may more readily be. (For further discussion of conceptual usage, see Hoffman and Graham, 2009, introduction, Hoffman, 2001, 2009, Bryson and Blakeley, 'introduction', 2002, 1-2, Bhargava, 2010, chapter 1).

While this paper draws on and interprets historical evidence in order to make some basic assumptions it is not a historical study (as is the case with Marks, 1994 and Everatt, 2009). On the basis of an interpretation of previous experiences I advance certain ways of understanding the concept of non-racialism and potential trajectories for its development. Divergences over terminology or details of early manifestations and the validity or otherwise of such illustrations are not probed (See Marks, 1994, references to early inter-racial contacts, at 6ff, on terminology, see Everatt, 2009). I do not have a stake in the word non-racialism as opposed to non-racism or anti-racism. What is said about the concept non-racialism is likely to be equally applicable to alternative contenders, whose scope has also not been delineated.

How should we approach understanding the word non-racialism?

The word non-racialism arises in reaction to the notion or practice of racialism/ racism. Much discussion revolves around the scientific status of 'race', but whatever that may be, it is nevertheless a social construct which has had and continues to have significant effects on people's lives. That notion has been a primary way of framing social inequalities between people categorised under 'race'-based terms.

Racism or racialism may refer to prejudice found in psychological outlooks and ways of seeing the Other. But it may also be institutionalised through laws and other forms of racial discrimination, buttressed by force in many cases.[2] This was the case under apartheid and much of that history remains part of our inherited inequalities.

But to banish the word 'race' or 'racial terms' or allusions from our discourse, as is suggested by much South African commentary, does not create equal relationships between people. It may in fact blind us to actual dynamics between people who have suffered under artificially created yet socially significant 'racial' categories. Whether or not individuals perpetuate racism in their conduct or in institutional structures does not flow automatically from using such terminology. Furthermore, that terminology or category is still required for measuring social relations over time, in particular what progress has been made in addressing inequalities.

[2]It may, arguably, be desirable to use a different term to connote such institutionalised structural oppression.

The word non-racialism has come to be part of South African democratic vocabulary, finding expression in many liberatory documents, including the constitution of 1996. (See section 1 (b), Statutes, 1996, where it is described as one of the values on which the state is founded).
While racialism is discrimination against one or other people, psychologically, legally or in other ways, non-racialism purports to render 'race' of no consequence in the allocation of rights and what one can and cannot do. Rights are accorded 'irrespective of race' and other bases of exclusion. The Bill of Rights in the constitution enshrines 'the rights of all peoples in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.' (Section 7(1)). Furthermore, the state 'may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race….' (Section 9(2)).
But for race to be of no consequence or become a merely 'incidental' phenomenon in life (See Luthuli, 2006, 102), it has to be transformed from being a basis for unequal relations into a situation where racial redress is achieved. One has to use the notion of race before one can assess what is entailed in realisation and assessing whether or not and/or to what extent progress has been made. The constitution recognises that proclamation of rights does not mean their effective realisation, (contrary to Everatt's claim, 2009, 4). Section 9 (2) declares that 'legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken…'

Political mobilisation and organisation, 'race' and non-racialism in the struggle

Part of the history that indicates the salience of race and evidence of different ways of addressing racial inequality is that of the anti-apartheid struggle. The relevance of the term non-racialism and racial categories arose in the course not only of opposing apartheid as a system but in deciding how to mobilise and organise oppressed people and democratic whites.
The use of the term and practice of non-racialism was seen by many in the Congress movement (used to refer to organisations allied to or loyal to the African National Congress) from the 1950s as preferable to the phrase multi-racialism. (Lazerson, 1994. For controversies around terminological usage in a range of organisations, see Everatt, 2009 generally, Peterson, 2000, 83ff). Multi-racialism accepted distinct racially organised communities within a broad overall unity. Non-racialism purports to organise, irrespective of race or other distinctions. In practice, non-racialism was seen by many (for example in the experience of the United Democratic Front (UDF) of the 1980s) as compatible with both

unified organisation of all racial groups as well as distinct organisation of groups on a range of bases including race.

What we may learn about political organising is relevant to broader understanding of relationships between peoples and empowering/disempowering peoples in such relationships. What is planned for other areas of human activity may derive some insights from political organising.

In organising on a mass basis one cannot simply dismiss the distinct, separate organising of whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans in many situations as being antagonistic to goals of equality between peoples. How one organises has an impact on the reach of any political organisation, determining who may or may not be brought into political activities in the context of constraints preventing inter-racial cooperation.

Organising different communities separately or together was based on recognition of the need for relating to people in a situation where apartheid oppression limited inter-community contacts. It also connected to the need to recognise the basis of individuals' lived experience (even if this was within racially defined areas). How people saw and may still see themselves (related of course to how they had been constructed by others) and amongst whom they lived. This had to be acknowledged in how their incorporation into politics was addressed.[3]

Such recognition of distinct identities and restrictions on freedom of organisation need not always have necessitated separate organisation. But, the argument that is accepted here is that when if ever it was or is justifiable requires reading conditions and barriers to access to people and the experiences and the wishes of communities concerned.

When people were working illegally it did not make sense most of the time to organise themselves on a multi-racial *or* non-racial basis. After the banning of the Communist Party in 1950, the organisation reconstituted itself underground in 1953. The ANC and PAC were banned in 1960 and also operated underground.

To have white and black people in the same unit would have heightened dangers. In underground work one tried not to attract attention. One may have been committed to the principle of non-racialism but it could not always or often be reflected in day-to-day political practice. (cf Indres Naidoo in Frederikse, 1990, 84, Jeremy Cronin in Frederikse, 1990, 126,

[3] This is said with recognition that there may have been and may still be many variations within this social existence.

Suttner 2001, ch 2 & 3). There often had to be a division of labour that reflected the racial hierarchy of apartheid.

Thus Denis Goldberg, a Rivonia trialist, who served 25 years in prison, recorded:

> When it came to buying duplicators, it was much easier for a white to go into a shop and buy a duplicator, or to buy hacksaws to cut iron tubes, or to buy a rope or whatever-it was just easier. And then there was always the question of access to cars, and time. Whites didn't have to work such long hours or travel so far, so you could do things... (Frederikse, 1990, 85).

And Max Sisulu has said:

> The peculiarity of the South African situation is that people live in segregated areas, and in order to mobilise we've got to go where the people are. It is a lot easier, for example, for an Indian to go and mobilise the Indians in his area, or a white amongst the whites. You can't as an African, go and mobilise the whites-it's impossible. [This may be an overstatement-RS] Part of the process of struggle is that you recognise obstacles and you find ways of bypassing them. How do you do it? You don't do it by sitting back and saying, 'We don't recognise these boundaries, we don't recognise race.' You actively fight against racism: that is the essence of non-racialism. (Frederikse, 1990, 78).

A commitment to non-racialism was seen in such situations as quite compatible with a willingness to organise on a `racial' basis at various times. Indeed, that may at particular times, be the most effective way of 'advancing' non-racialism or 'racial' equality. It is a paradox that must be engaged with in politics if one is concerned with application of one's ideas. Zig zags are required from political actors from a range of viewpoints, requiring a range of advances or retreats or taking distinct highways in order to reach particular goals. Brecht illustrates this well when he has Galileo say: 'If there are obstacles the shortest line between two points may well be a crooked line.' (Brecht, 1972, scene 14 [4]. On political tasks demanding separate organisation under conditions of the time, see also Joe Slovo, 1988, 148-9, Trevor Manuel in Frederikse, 1990,184, Kumi Naidoo in Frederikse, 1990, 200, Tom Waspe in Frederikse, 1990, 219).

[4] Although I had read the play some time ago I did not remember this until I saw it in Chatterjee, 1986, vi, vi)

Neville Alexander, (in Frederikse, 1990, 206) adopts a different understanding of the relationship between theoretical or ontological positions and the racialised spaces and conditions, when he states:

> The 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…. 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 the theory of race exist. We need, therefore, at all times to find out whether our non-racialists are multi-racialists or anti-racialists. Only the latter variety can belong in the national liberation movement. ...' (Italics inserted. He continues with this position over 20 years later. See Also Alexander, 1985, 2001, 2011).

By this characterisation, there is a negation of broad sections of the struggle against apartheid, under leadership of the ANC and including mass struggles of the 1980s under the UDF. These organised activities against apartheid were key factors in creating a crisis for apartheid and achieving democratic elections in 1994. (See Lodge, 1991, Suttner, 2005).

Many of these structures organised people at various times on the basis of their belonging to distinct communities –in the 1950s and the 1980s. Whatever other weaknesses there may have been, this was organisation in relation to what was considered and appear to have been the real consequences of racial discrimination. This was seen as the most practical option in order to 'be where the people were', to respond to their actual experiences. An abstract idea of the concept of race cannot be counterposed to organisational imperatives. Political organizing requires practical decisions, with full awareness of conditions being confronted.

Insofar as there is diversity and there are objectively diverse communities with distinct identities, not frozen in time and place but nevertheless distinct at any given moment, this is a social reality of which one needs to take cognisance. Consequently, considering politics as requiring engagement with concrete social relations, it is legitimate and indeed necessary to organise in a manner that is sensitive to this diversity.

Recognition of a racialised reality needs to be a factor in any attempted realisation of non-racialism in all conditions, in particular post-apartheid reconstruction. Given this basis for evaluation one needs to ask what is or was the best way of popularising the principles of non-racialism or ending social inequality between groups.

Much of the disagreement with separate organisation by critics from a segment of the left appears to have been linked to prioritising class over national struggle. (See for example Fine and Davis, 1990, 205ff). In contrast, the Congress movement made considerable progress in seeing race and class in an interrelationship, simultaneously linked and distinct. This connection was part of an attempt to address a range of identities, oppressions and exploitation and interests that people held (On the rationale, see ANC, 1984, Jordan, 1988, 1988a Slovo, 1975, 1988. For unstated problems and theorisation of these, see Hudson, 2009. On the limitations in addressing identities other than race and class, see Suttner, 2011).

Such attempts to prioritise left and class demands over other factors has continued significance in that any organisation that seeks purism, either of the left or of colour, narrows its base and thus its political impact. That mode of analysis and strategic approach also limits explanatory and emancipatory power by leaving some segments of the people and their ways of expressing their identities unaddressed.

Racial inequality within non-racial organisations

Acting out non-racialism is not simple and many members of non-racial organisations have never worked with other population groups. Consequently for them non-racialism is a policy but it is not of practical concern. Where black and white do work together, race does not become irrelevant within such organisations. Organisation of black and white in one structure does not automatically eradicate or cannot possibly eradicate intra-organisational inequalities deriving from different resources residing in whites and other minority groups, compared with Africans.

When white and black did work together in the UDF and in the Congress movement at various levels from the 1950s as part of distinct but allied organisations, racial and class dynamics were present. The skills and resources tended to reside primarily with whites and other minority communities. These were the people who had cars and provided the lifts for

people to attend and go home after meetings, or the individuals with money or who could access funds and knew how to obtain professional assistance where that was required. This has been observed for emerging trade unions from the 1970s, as creating a tension between the initially primarily white intellectuals and black workers. (Buhlungu, 2006, 2010, 36ff).

The concentration of such resources sometimes extended into political influence. The politics of the 1980s showed that political will was mediated by resources. One could not use the legal space that opened, subject to qualifications, without funds to rent halls, arrange transport, print T shirts, pay for burials and similar things[5]. In some cases funding resided in a small number of individuals and these tended to be primarily from minority groups. (Personal experience of what was known as the 'Freeway House' people, named after a building, run by young whites in Johannesburg in the 1980s. Professor Gail Gerhart in personal communication described this as a major example of patronage networks during the struggle, 2003).

Towards an emancipatory understanding of non-racialism

As indicated, this paper works on the premise that there needs to be grappling with conceptual questions before one can address processes of implementation or create meaningful projects for building non-racialism.

As suggested, a definition of non-racialism is not what is required (as sought in Everatt, 2009) since it may set boundaries which may be legitimately supplanted or displaced. Definitions, unlike concepts do not deal with categories of understanding, but tend to set limits on what is embraced within a term. A definition tends to be time bound and its starting premise is to limit usage. Concepts are wider and lend themselves better to developing dynamic notions, quite different to a definition, which may have connotations similar to legal categories. An emancipatory mode of conceptualisation requires openness to expansion in meanings, consciously used in the plural.

We need to understand non-racialism as a concept which embraces and may still embrace a number of factors operating at a range of levels. Non-racialism does not necessarily in itself imply emancipation or redress or transformation, though it may become an integral part of

[5] It was qualified in that the apartheid regime intended this opening to be a way of containing resistance, but the resistance forces used the space in a manner that threatened apartheid and led to successive states of emergency running during 1985/6 and again from 1986 to 1990, resulting in the arrest of thousands of activists. (Lodge, 1991).

these other concepts. It can and usually is conceived as part of the South African liberatory and nation-building project. This has opportunities as well as dangers, relating to the different tendencies of unity and nationalism. (See also Suttner, 2011. On another unstable tendency, the relationship between democracy and nationalism, see Hudson, 2009). Or the other concepts to which non-racialism is connected may be seen as providing substance to non-racialism. This may potentially be either liberatory or antagonistic to constructive, empowering and transformatory social relations.

In the meantime far from it bearing a clear and obviously positive meaning, the word non-racialism may be used in multiple ways, some that are problematic for those who wish to enjoy or engage as scholars with a view to an ever widening and broadening emancipatory order, (itself a vision that is contested).

Even if it is premature to finalise our understanding of non-racialism we are in a position to state some of the implications of rejecting racism and seeking to create conditions of equality between all the peoples of South Africa:

- If non-racialism means that we enjoy the same constitutional rights, there is nothing objectionable in itself, and it is an advance over apartheid, but we need to supplement this by ensuring that it is possible to make this more than words, that is, 'redress' is required. There is nothing 'worrying' about this or over which we should be impatient, in itself. (See manifestations of such impatience with 'transition' as a process whose end point needs to be delineated, in Everatt, 2009, 2-4).

  We all are constitutionally equal before the law, but in practice meaningful legal action, especially access to courts costs money. That connects the realisation of rights to inequalities of wealth or class divisions, which may in many but not all cases, coincide with racial divisions. Non-racialism has, in consequence, to address primarily black redress but also attend at an empirical level to the condition of those whites who are impoverished and experience hardship for a range of reasons.

- That is why we have to discuss amongst other factors *how* we redress historical disadvantages and whether affirmative action and black economic empowerment (BEE) are suitable measures or whether they are objectionable *in principle*, whatever the constitution states. Redress as a principle derives from a condition of inequality. Statistics of maladministration or flawed processes for affirmative action or BEE are

not a theoretical basis for rebutting the principle. If redress is a necessity then it must be because formal equality does not in itself establish substantive equality, as constitutionally recognised. (Everatt, 2009, chapter 1, simultaneously recognises the necessity to achieve substantive equality, while expressing great eagerness to discard 'racial categories' of apartheid.)

It may well be that other modalities should be used to address such inequality, but it is important to recognise if we admit that equality needs to be established, that one or other mechanism for 'redress' is required. The constitution advances affirmative action. How it is applied and for how long is a quite distinct examination from whether or not some such mechanism is required.

- That one needs to evaluate transformation away from inequality *increases* the need to attend to 'race' as a basis for measuring whether inequalities (specifically related to the apartheid past) have been addressed and to see this as a relatively total phenomenon. We need both qualitative and quantitative bases for measurement and assessment. Clearly not all inequalities can be subsumed under race or for that matter class and while non-racialism operates in relation to race, the goals of an equal society address wider questions, including gender. [6]

- In what is possibly an unintentional variation on the denial of race which has been mentioned for the struggle period, non-racialism is now sometimes said to mean that race does not matter, for we are all South Africans. (Boyle, 2011). In one sense this refers to a *desirable commonality* which many may feel in some respects or *come to feel in the future*. This was a fairly common part of the discourse of patriotism that reigned at the time of the football World Cup, hosted by South Africa in 2010. But it has a range of dangers:

- People are not only South Africans but also belong to racial groups whose experience is still with us, even marked on their bodies, from the struggle and from various attacks under

[6] Insofar as there may be ways in which the question purports to be addressed that may favour one or other group, I do not see any place in ANC documents on the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which has said that creating a national bourgeoisie is a 'historic task' in the view of many, as Everatt says (2009, 3, no reference provided). That the status of an emerging African bourgeoisie may have risen in relation to other forces, has not historically, been the formulation found in ANC strategy and tactics documents.

apartheid which has injured them in a range of ways –physically and psychologically, as the oppressors have also been affected psychologically.[7]

- But it has also meant that there is a hierarchy of wealth that tends to coincide with a hierarchy of those who have or have not experienced oppression, with the previously oppressed consequently less skilled and generally without advantages enjoyed by others. When people enter the market place or the broader social world it is on socially distinct bases. Where you live or work, the car you drive if you have one, the education you have received all bear some relationship to 'race' which generally coincides with class (including increasing disparities within racial groups, especially Africans). Poorer people tend to live further away from their work, use unsafe taxis, earn less, and do not have easy access to a range of amenities. This is not exclusively a question of race, though upward class mobility has been primarily amongst whites and collaborationist blacks until 1994. Obviously, this cannot be addressed through a focus on 'apartheid terminology'.

We cannot be impatient about knowing when the day will arise when 'race' is no longer salient. (Everatt, 2009, 2-3). How do we know when that will be? We can see how much more needs to be achieved and how far South Africa is from this. No purpose is served by speculating on dates for completing the transition or achieving redress where the criteria are not clarified.

Racism as attitude displayed in interpersonal relations

Racism may not exist as an ontological category and be unconstitutional but it continues to survive as a mode of relating to people and expressing prejudice in a range of informal encounters in private and public places. This coexists with many black people continuing to use the language and gestures of apartheid constructions of inferiority when addressing whites as 'Sir' or 'Madame' or 'baas' (meaning boss, often required by their employers). One also sees displays of friendly cooperation between many people. Uneven as the restoration of dignity has been one also finds many manifestations of self-confidence

[7] Apparently this is a factor amongst the torturers. There repeatedly appear reports of former apartheid security forces suffering post-traumatic stress, as earlier analysed by Fanon for Algeria, 2004[1961], Part V).

amongst young black people. (All of this is personal experience, what I have seen or observed).

Denial of the salience of race and the preoccupation with its status as a scientific category is at variance with the continued experience of people. When you are being 'klapped' (Afrikaans word for being struck) because you are black, speculation on whether the racial basis for victimisation is scientifically valid is hardly a concern.

Non-racialism and the nation to be

Non-racialism is generally depicted by the ANC and its allies as part of a unifying and nation –building project. This is found through the cumulative effect of consistent ANC formulations regarding unity, though it did not begin as a non-racial organisation, unlike the Communist Party and the smaller membership of other left groups. The ANC was initially open to African males only. (See Walshe, 1970 on the ANC, Simons and Simons, 1985 on the Communist Party, see documentation on Trotskyism and the Unity Movement in Drew, 1996,1997 and Lazerson, 1994 and Everatt, 2009 more generally). The language of the constitution and other discourse emphasises non-racialism. It is implicit in the Freedom Charter, adopted in 1955 and still celebrated as a foundational liberatory document in the ANC alliance and now more widely. (On the Freedom see Suttner and Cronin, 2006, and the document itself at 262ff.)

If this connection of the notion of non-racialism to the national liberation project is correct, then it also carries some of the apparent dangers and ambiguities of both unity and 'the nation to be' and currently associated concepts like 'social cohesion'. (See Suttner, 2011. For other dangers and theoretical problems, in particular in relation to democracy see Hudson, 2009). The notion of the national is said to coexist with a celebration of diversity, which enjoys legal protection (See Statutes, 1996, sections 9, 10, 15-19, 23, 29, 30 from the Bill of Rights) and which the ANC purports to celebrate (ANC, 2007, paragraphs 23, 38, 209). All cultures and identities are thus to be respected, but there is a qualifier. In political understanding these should feed into an overall national identity. (ANC, 2007, paragraphs 71,101.) This is not an invention of the current period of ANC politics, but can be found in the writings of someone like Joe Slovo (Slovo, 1988, 145-7) and earlier.

Along with the emphasis on unity in general, there are also tendencies towards exclusion and suppression of distinct identities. (See ANC, 2007, Suttner, 2011). What is called

'tribalism', which may include legitimate expressions of identity, cannot be allowed to rear its 'ugly head' (ANC, 2007). Gerhart and Glaser, (2010, 507) in a recent collection, include a document of the ANC National Executive committee Luanda meeting of 1981, referring to rooting out tribalism 'even as a word', preferring the word 'nationalities,' apparently deriving from Soviet debates. This opposition to manifestations of tribalism is of course found in many other parts of Africa, notably in formulations of the late Samora Machel, (in Machel, 1985, 77).

Unity has always to be read with difference. Unity can only be democratic if it has a constructive and dynamic relationship towards distinct chosen identities and differences. The emphasis on *dynamic* qualities allows for changing identities and avoids the essentialism that is an emerging feature in relation to cultural questions and 'traditionalism' in contemporary South Africa.

The way in which this question is addressed relates to a range of different identities, self-conferred and/or constructed, independent and in relation to how others construct individuals or communities.

Being *an African* and Non-racialism

Some of the prevailing disquiet about what is sometimes referred to as 'obsession' with race, manifests itself in statements about what it means to be an African. There is a sense of exclusion and resentment amongst many whites and other minority groups at being denied an African identity.

But the word African can and should legitimately be understood in two ways: first, in a broad sense of belonging to the continent. This is distinct from using the term to refer to one section of the population, the Bantu-speaking people (the languages spoken by the African peoples in South Africa). In other words, whites, Indians and Coloureds are not Africans in the sense of having experienced specific oppression, applied only against Africans, in particular having to carry passes. A white, Coloured and Indian could cross a street under apartheid without a policeman accosting them and demanding a 'pass' and being loaded into a police van for failure to produce.

Not being an African in the sense of not having that specific category of experiences does not mean that one is not an African in the broader sense of owing allegiance to the country and the continent, something that is important for the future if South Africans wish to build one nation, (which may now be premature, leaving aside debate over desirability or otherwise of nation states). Most whites, Coloureds and Indians would objectively and subjectively be Africans in this broader sense.

The distinction is not anachronistic. Today it remains a lived experience drawn from specific pasts and legacies of those pasts. If the two meanings of the word 'African' are to fuse that can only be in a situation where distinct and more generalised historical disabilities have been adequately addressed and the signifiers of race are no more. In such a situation interrelationships and social conditions would be fundamentally equal, a condition whose content requires a great deal of debate. Amongst others, it is necessary to articulate and establish understanding on bases for measuring equality in relationships between various peoples.

To simply say that we are all already Africans is to deny the pain that is still present in the scars and lived experiences of most South Africans. Being a white or whiteness is not primarily due to the population registration act (a position adopted by Ratele, 2007). Whiteness as a social category is in the first place manifested in relation to blackness, in the pain experienced by black people, marked on their bodies and psyches in scars of various kinds. Those of us who are whites have been historically constructed as whites not primarily by virtue of racial classification, which is a formalistic confirmation but by a range of practices and actions. (See Fanon, 2004, for a generalised depiction of this in colonial situations).

What is the content of non-racialism to be?

If South Africans are committed (and constitutionally bound[8]) to non-racialism it is necessary to elaborate on the meaning of the concept and its relationship to other ways in which people see themselves and are seen by others. If one is not a racialist non-racialism may be an important identity to embrace as it was in resisting apartheid and to work out what it means

[8] This is not to argue that the constitution is never to be changed. Change is desirable if it enlarges the scope of freedom.

in various areas of our lives. South Africa is 'exceptional' in Africa in terms of the number of permanently settled whites in the population and the substantial number of whites who participated in the liberation struggle, including famous Communist martyrs like Bram Fischer, who died a prisoner and Ruth First, a brave journalist and distinguished scholar, who was assassinated. (See Lazerson, 1994).

The Freedom Charter recognises the place of all peoples in beginning with a statement that South Africa 'belongs to all who live in it, black and white….' (Suttner & Cronin, 2006, 262). In relation to the present and the preoccupation with citizen's rights, this means that the currently enforced law operating against some who 'live in' South Africa, foreigners, especially foreign Africans may be contrary to the rights, for which many fought, 'side by side', that is, to enable freedoms not only for citizens but for all who live in South Africa. (Suttner & Cronin, 2006, 266).

It should be noted that people of Batswana origin like Michael Dingake spent long years on Robben Island (See Dingake, 1987,[9] and Fish Keitseng (1999)) worked in the ANC underground from Botswana.

There are examples from other African states, which are not documented. It should be recalled that the price of South African liberation has also been paid in surrounding states. In all of these, even the Swazi state, whose government was relatively compliant in the later years, apartheid raids cost the lives of many local citizens, many of whom provided assistance to resistance forces (See Suttner, 2008, where examples are provided of underground operatives who entered with local Swazi assistance[10]). The words, 'all who live in it' admits no exceptions. *It refers to human beings not only citizens*. Humiliating treatment of foreign Africans and xenophobia is obviously completely incompatible with living non-racialism as conceived in the Freedom Charter and by people like Chief Albert Luthuli, himself born in then former Southern Rhodesia. (Luthuli, 1962, 2006).

This indicates further complexity in the interrelationship of non-racialism with unity and nation building and also 'social cohesion', a term in continual use in contemporary South Africa. (See Suttner, 2011, 16-19, 22, 29-30). This interrelationship is part of what needs to be addressed in elaborating any future 'South Africanism'.

[9] There is a later autobiography, written about three years ago, whose manuscript I have read. But it was only published in Botswana and I have not been able to obtain it.

[10] Odendaal, 1984, photograph no 14, page not numbered records that Swazi royalty funded the South African Native National Congress (forerunner to the ANC) newspaper, *Abantu Batho*.

Non-racialism, unity and nationalism- incompatibles?

In addressing the meanings of non-racialism one needs to focus on the tendency to see nationalism, now especially African nationalism as standing in an antagonistic relationship to non-racialism. (Everatt, 2009, 4, Boyle, 2011). The logic is flawed and this is because the concepts of nationalism and non-racialism cannot be frozen in time with a particular meaning and supposed antagonistic relationship. Both need to be understood as conditioned by time, place and conditions that change over time, depending on issues like agency and various structural factors.

This is not to deny dangers in any exclusivism that may become a chauvinistic essentialism. One must see the dangers and other potentialities. Afrikaner nationalism was one of the main bearers of racism. African nationalism, primarily embodied in the ANC opened the way for democracy, irrespective of how it has now evolved. There were various strands, some of which broke away, most significantly over the influence of non-Africans in the case of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC. See Gerhart, 1978).

Though non-racialism, (whatever the difficulties in elaborating its meanings) is entrenched in the constitution, it is not necessarily an irreversible gain. Banishing racism from any quarter is difficult and the principle of non-racialism will need to be defended in all its complexity. It is not immune from attack. Walter Sisulu warned:

The principal target of [the Africanist] attacks is the broad humanism of the African National Congress, which claims equality but not domination for the African people, and regards South Africa as being big enough and rich enough to sustain all its people, of whatever origin, in friendship and peace. ...

The Africanists have thus far failed, but their mere appearance is an urgent warning to all democratic South Africans. In certain circumstances, an emotional mass-appeal to destructive and exclusive nationalism can be a dynamic and irresistible force in history. We have seen in our own country how, decade after decade, the Afrikaner people have followed yet more extreme and reactionary leaders. It would be foolish to imagine that a wave of black chauvinism ...may not some day sweep through our country. And if it does, the agony will know no colour-bar at all. (Frederikse, 80-81)

But Africanism does not have an inevitable trajectory. The PAC ultimately admitted non-Africans and the Black Consciousness Movement founded by Steve Biko was not anti-white.

Thus, all nationalisms cannot be treated as inherently flawed and potentially inimical to non-racialism and other supposed values. African nationalism and also Africanism like other concepts need to be engaged with through debate and mutual understanding. The cultural development of South Africa needs be influenced in a manner that resonates with its place on the African continent, which has an African majority which needs to be in a mutually constructive and respectful relationship with all sections of the population, culturally, socially and politically. (Suttner, 2010). It needs to be noted that only a few decades have passed since whites were referred to as 'Europeans' and those who were not whites 'Non-Europeans', implying that the continent to which whites belonged was not Africa.

Notions like the nation, unity, social cohesion and similar terms cannot be said to be good or bad, inherently emancipatory, essentially contributing towards enlargement of freedoms or diminishing these. The idea of unity guided the formation of the ANC and the struggle against apartheid, found in the UDF, formed in 1983, as part of reclaiming of the space for public mass and consolidated struggle against the apartheid regime. The notion of non-racialism was expressed in the slogan 'UDF unites, Apartheid divides!' (On the UDF, see Lodge et al, 1991, Seekings, 2000, Van Kessel, 2000, Suttner, 2005).

Non-racialism and redress

Attempts to erase the significance of racial categories are not merely semantic or questions of preference. It raises a danger of premature closure in addressing historic disabilities in all their dimensions. It can lead to undervaluing systemic racism and its legacies, which is an undeniable part of the present and the foreseeable future of the country.

Non-racialism can only be viable if it also recognises and is not in conflict with attempts to address distinct qualities and in particular disadvantage and disabilities of various groups.

That this may sometimes evoke fear and scepticism in 'less disabled' or 'already enabled' groups or those who benefitted from privileged positions under apartheid and others who fear what they see as 'racial thinking' have to be recognised. It must be dealt with not by demagoguery which is the case all too often. Anyone with organisational experience will know that one has to listen and explain and not be hasty or feel compelled to provide immediate answers. People need to know they are taken seriously, even if they may still disagree. That way their fears will be seen to be dealt with democratically.

Non-racialism now and in the future

At an ontological level we can say that race does not exist. But it does and does not exist. While it has no ontological status, it does exist continually in history and a range of social relations in various states, now and in the past. Historically the existence of race has been associated with oppression and the question is how it is addressed strategically.

To respond at the level of ontology is not to address the social and historical reality. There can be a number of strategic responses that acknowledge this reality. One response may be to essentialise race and see the emancipation of black people as having a continuing racialised quality, realising blackness and emancipating black people from apartheid and colonial oppression through embracing a black essentialist being. In this understanding race is an essentialist, non-contingent quality.

An alternative strategic approach is to use race in a non-essentialist manner, to reorganise the social order in a transformative process, promoting and advancing black people until a situation has been created where the colonial status of white and black is no more. When used in the context of transformation, race itself must be transformed and it must then be seen as being en route to becoming an insignificant factor in life.

Such a non-essentialist strategic approach, which is advanced in this paper, uses race in order to eliminate racially based oppression. In the course of transformation it aims to render race itself of no significance socially. This requires continual deconstruction in public discourse. It also needs to be embraced as part of a popular process[11].

Scholars and others cannot forecast what lies ahead. How nationalisms and democracy develop and how a range of forces interact with one another will depend on whether a culture of debate is developed/re-developed and whether and what type of organisations can be built to advance emancipatory goals. [12]

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[11] I am indebted to Peter Hudson for some of the formulations in this last section, though I cannot be sure that he will find them in accordance with his own understanding.

[12] I wish to express my appreciation to Peter Hudson, John Hoffman and Steven Friedman for helpful comments and Nomboniso Gasa for continued discussion of non-racialism and related questions.

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