



GAWIE BOTMA

**RACE
TALK**

in the South
African media



Race talk in the South African media

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SUN  PRESS

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Vir my ouers,
Gawie en Corrie (Pieters) Botma

In 2000, the Human Genome Project finally answered one of the most fundamental questions about race: What, if anything, is the genetic difference between people of different skin colours — black, white, Hispanic, Asian — The answer: nearly nothing. As it turns out, we all share 99.99 percent of the same genetic code — no matter our race — a fact that, geneticist J. Craig Venter claimed, proves that race is a social concept, not a scientific one.

Thomas Rogers

FOREWORD

Race is a hot topic in the South African media, and this has been the case since the days of the first “blogger”, Jan van Riebeeck. Of course, he was not a South African and was actually writing in his official dairy to report back to his masters, the colonising Dutch East India Company (VOC). But the way in which Van Riebeeck approached his task reminds one of a committed current day blogger, because he recorded in great detail and with some flair the day-to-day happenings during his stay at the Cape of Good Hope between 1652 and 1662. Of course, some of his entries, especially about race, will shock and annoy current sensibilities. To be honest, to even mention Van Riebeeck in South Africa in the 21st century has become a sign of right-wing political reactionism, because as former President Jacob Zuma famously declared: The trouble (of colonialism, apartheid and its aftermath) started with him. But the argument can be made that local journalism and the recording of history in writing can also be traced back to that time (as long as you do not imply that colonialism contributed in any way to something positive).

Journalism is certainly a double-edged sword, and some people argue that journalists are very low on the scale of public trust and appreciation (despite being “watchdogs”

for democracy and all that). Journalism has also been called “history in a hurry” and the “first rough draft of history”, and our media products provide a constant stream of clues for curious readers looking for insight and truth. Of course, to claim that journalism or history can ever be written objectively to reveal the absolute truth, is very problematic, so it is safer to argue that different versions of the truth emerge in particular historical contexts.

“Race” is a very slippery concept and it would have been better if this book, or South Africans in general, were able to do without it. The quotation at the beginning of this chapter indicates the lack of biological grounds. Yet, in practice, it has been used to create and maintain relations and structures of power that are still operational today. In short and in general, most whites still benefit from once having had the power to racially classify the South African population and structure society accordingly, and many blacks still suffer.

References to race sometimes overlap with ethnicity and is mostly used in this book to refer to the general racial classifications and terms as they emerged in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid eras. In the post-apartheid period, with the support of many and to the bewilderment of some, four of these categories have been maintained to affect affirmative action, empowerment and redress the injustices of the past. Hopefully, if and when that happens, “race” will be finally laid to rest, but that is probably a pipe dream.

A generally accepted current definition of “racism” is discrimination based on skin colour, appearance and/or ethnicity. It is akin to prejudice, a characteristic common to human beings. It has been argued that prejudice derives in part from the ability to generalise and categorise information from the environment quickly; a necessary skill developed through evolution as the fittest fought for survival. But racism also goes further than individual prejudice, because it can become part of the culture and structure of a society, with enormous consequences for groups and individuals.

In this book references to race in the media will simply be called “race talk”. It refers to what was said (written) in the media about race since the early days of European colonialism and apartheid, in order to better understand the origins of current perceptions and expressions. Today’s news is part of tomorrow’s accounts of history. But reading back into media content is also

a bit like following a beam of starlight to a far-off galaxy, in the full knowledge that the sun there has already set.

This book focuses on the content circulated by media as they display and contribute to a “common stock of knowledge”¹ in society. It thus follows the lead of Vale,² who argues that “while historical and political events matter, thinking about how history and politics emerge in the minds of societies may matter more”. Thus, an important point of departure is that the media both displayed and contributed to the “thoughts” of South African society as they emerged over time.

In both popular and academic discussions, the word “media” is often left open, and can refer to a constellation of communication producers, platforms and products, or a single outlet, such as a newspaper. In this book, unless otherwise specified, the term is used inclusively to refer to the professional and non-professional producers and circulators of public networks of symbolic meaning, including journalists and social media users. When referring to the “South African media”, I do not mean to suggest the existence of a network of producers that is completely closed off by national borders, but simply wish to convey some sense of the perception, based on real experiences, that many media discourses tend to suggest a certain nationalistic centre.

The debate about the role of mass media in society is probably as old as the technology that makes it possible to communicate with numbers of faceless, dispersed individuals at the same time. For the purposes of this discussion, it suffices to go back briefly to the invention of the printing press in the 15th century. According to a seminal scholar of nationalism, Benedict Anderson,³ the rise of print capitalism, by using vernacular languages, was a central contributing factor in the construction of European nation states. In other words, when it became possible to print and distribute texts in their own languages amongst people who did not know each other, but could identify with the same causes, they were also able to imagine a nation, an “imagined community” as Anderson called it. He also argues that, through colonialism, the model of the nation state was “exported” to and implemented in other parts of the world, including Africa. Although the Eurocentric nature of this theory has been criticised, by inter alia Chatterjee,⁴ it is indisputable that the history and current national boundaries of Africa were profoundly influenced by European colonialism.

It is easy to see why media scholars like Anderson's theory; it places the construction and distribution of media texts at the centre of the rise and maintenance of nation states. The invention of other "new" media technologies, such as the radio, TV, and most recently the internet and social media, complicated but not completely altered the view that the media are important in the life of a nation. Various studies have confirmed that despite increasing global connectedness of various media channels and users, the promotion of national sentiments and unity has not completely disappeared off the media agenda. Consider, for instance, the daily mainstream media selection and framing of topics such as politics, sport and the weather in a location, and it becomes clear that the frame of reference is most often the geographical region and the political nation state. The global connectedness to information and influence of millions of users, for instance through social media, exist alongside and often feed into national imaginings. Furthermore, even on these open networks relatively closed circuits of meaning often develop around national issues and debates. The focus on race talk in the media is part of the story of how both the "old" and "new" South Africa came about.

A note on theory and methodology

As an introduction, I include (with permission) the following observation from the renowned South African cultural studies academic Keyan Tomaselli, who read the manuscript:

This book develops an evidentiary historically based narrative, but not an explicit method or a theory. Definitions are not always provided, and the analysis initially is not overtly framed by the theoretical literature; and explanations of relexification of race namings are not provided in terms of linguistic theories. The author rather allows the meanings to emerge from their specific everyday historical usage and linguistic contexts in an organic kind of way that traces changes, shifts, re-articulations and when they move from being positive to pejorative. This method that arises out of contextual readings is an evidentiary foraging of written texts read through historical periods rather than the more conventional theory that leads-by-nose where the 'data' is forced into, or mechanistically read through, predetermined explanatory frameworks that presage a priori conclusions.

But this does not mean that theory and methodology were side-lined. The inspiration for the form of historical and contextual reading-analysis in this book

is taken from the French philosopher Michel Foucault and his theories/methods of archaeology, genealogy and beyond, which he kept on developing throughout his career, and did not leave behind as a final blueprint.⁵ Thus, I incorporated some of the ideas tied to discourse theory but did not attempt to emulate a specific Foucauldian analysis.⁶ The concept “race talk” communicates the key theoretical and methodological insight which was distilled from the above-mentioned theoretical readings. Also drawing on Foucault, Stefan Sonderling, a South African academic, formulated the idea that “communication is the continuation of war by other means”.⁷ Although this book did not attempt to prove or disprove this tempting hypothesis, especially as it relates to the role of the media in society and history, it informed a basic departure point. Lastly, the arguments in this book were enriched by a critical reading of colonial, post-colonial and Black Consciousness theory, as it has proven to be a constant companion in South African race talk.⁸ The work of Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon provided insights into the psychological and linguistic struggle against colonialism and its legacy, while the concept of hybridity, theorised by inter alia Homi Bhabha, was accepted as it argues against a static view of the colonial past and the racist theories of miscegenation.⁹

I acknowledge the understandable sensitivities and taboos when racist terms are used. The currently accepted alternatives and euphemisms were therefore used where possible, but where historical texts were quoted directly, these words feature in their full historic context – in the interest of accuracy and intellectual freedom. In this decision I refer to Magubane,¹⁰ who states under similar circumstances that the “lexicon may be offensive to modern sensibilities, but it would be a-historical to tone down the language used”.¹¹ Readers will also note that references to skin colour (white, black) are generally not capitalised, except in quotations. The preference for the spelling of “Coloured” is suggested by Adhikari.

Because race talk in the South African media is such a broad terrain to focus on and the selected time frame stretches from colonialism to the post-apartheid era, some other limiting choices had to be made.

Bowman's¹² argument is accepted that in an analysis inspired by Foucault all data are “considered primary” and take “many forms”. This includes “newspaper articles, formal academic publications, forensic documents, court transcripts

... advertisements and photographs". Considering the inclusive definition of "media" provided above, data from these and other sources, such as social media postings, were thus included as source material.

Firstly, a range of academic texts, including books and peer-reviewed journal articles, were manually and electronically accessed for an overview of historical media analysis and a literature review of the concepts of race and racism. These sources were found by using the electronic search facility of the Stellenbosch University Library, as well as Google and Google Scholar. The library also provided access to the comprehensive EBSCO database of international academic texts, as well as Sabinet, with its collection of South African academic and media texts. Various keywords, including "race", "racism", and various versions of the K-word and other hurtful and controversial terms were used, as well as specific searches pertaining to the various other topics mentioned above.

Secondly, various electronic databases were searched specifically for discourses of race and racism, including the operational use of the K-word and other controversial and hurtful terms in media texts, ranging from historic books to popular internet texts, such as could be found on news outlets and in magazines. Search engines such as Google and Google Scholar were utilised, as well as the electronic databases of various media institutions.

For newspapers specifically, the SA Media collection, with clippings from all newspapers since 1977, hosted by Sabinet, as well as the Digital Archives of the Stellenbosch University Library, with its few colonial newspapers, were central sources. The original SA Media archive from 1977 to December 2014 contains 4 251 175 articles from around 204 publications (including newspapers, magazines, periodicals and journals). Although most of these publications discontinued publication, some of them are still in print. Of these a few originated in the late colonial era and were published throughout the apartheid years as well. They form part of the 37 publications that were still operational on the new SA Media database, which grew by approximately 2 500 articles per week.¹³

Digital archiving and search functions mean that more material for analysis became more easily available closer to the present, and especially since 1977 in the case of South African newspapers. This does not necessarily imply a

scarcity of media material from the colonial and early apartheid eras. Given the inclusive definition of media in this book, and the huge time span from 1652-1977, much has been published which could potentially relate to this topic.

Book, journal, newspaper, and magazine texts not electronically available were accessed manually from the Compact storage collection and the Africana collection of the Stellenbosch University Library. Thus, a sampling strategy had to be devised for a manual search for discourses of racism which would be regarded as comprehensive enough to be convincing, while by no means claiming to be exhaustive. In short, manual searches concentrated on the chronological sampling of texts in which the K-word featured prominently (from earliest to later dates of publication), with the aim of establishing turning points (for example variations in frequency, and changes in the meaning and context of use).

Throughout, the data collection process was guided by the sentiment as expressed here by Bowman in reference to Foucauldian genealogy as method:

While the genealogy requires a vast collection of materials for analysis, it cannot insist on the collection of all appropriate texts. The genealogical project is therefore always selective and cannot claim a kind of comprehensive representivity. Such, one might argue, is the integral limitation of genealogy. The corpus is however always available for re-reading and new analysis.¹⁴

The argument, however, is that despite the limitations of the approach, the findings will still contribute to a new understanding of how our past experiences may not only contain the roots of our present dilemmas, but maybe also some of the answers that we may have forgotten.

The aim is therefore not to provide a complete overview or history of racism in South Africa, but to investigate how race talk in the media since colonialism contributed to our current understanding of ourselves as South Africans. This approach guards against "presentism" or "anachronism" – in other words to project current ideas into the past or to rewrite them in terms of the present.¹⁵

A personal note

A media polemic developed when an article by a Rhodes University academic was interpreted as suggesting that white people in South Africa should rather retreat to the background and leave the talking and doing to black people (to paraphrase loosely).¹⁶ This view corresponds with the expressions of some intellectuals and students who present themselves as adherents to the philosophy of Black Consciousness, as the discussion later will show.

I am not totally unsympathetic to the view that the white minority should move to the backseat, even if it is just effective as a metaphor to change the mind-set of both white and black in South Africa. Many whites still need to realise that they do not own, dominate and control the country and its spaces and cultures, while many black people still need to shed the sense of inferiority and passivity which centuries of colonialism and apartheid ingrained in them. But I am not going to stay silent, that much should be clear by now.

I reject racism on the principle of common humanity. Thus, this book is certainly not devoid of normative assumptions regarding the preference of peace to conflict, and explicit support for the eradication of unfair discrimination based on skin colour, ethnicity, gender, age, class etc. My own position implies being a white, middle-class, middle-aged, Afrikaans male teaching journalism and media studies at a formerly exclusively white Afrikaans university in South Africa. My perspective is thus obviously different from that of a poor, uneducated, homeless, unemployed black person in one of the country's townships, and, for that matter, also from someone in the ruling black political and economic elite or rising middle-class. Furthermore, as one anonymous reviewer of this manuscript provocatively suggested "the fact of being black provides no fail-safe guard against holding equally toxic racial bigotry, just as being white does not foreclose chances for whites to embrace a politics of racial tolerance and justice".

In terms of academic literature my reflexivity is informed by inter alia Tomaselli and the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.¹⁷ The latter argues that the researcher should consciously situate him or herself in the narrative, while Tomaselli provides a recent example of what is called an autoethnographic position in research. Although my story is not so overtly part of this book's

narrative as both these scholars perhaps would have liked, I have also tried not to present the findings as a value-free and neutral observer.

Few subjects are as emotive and divisive in South Africa as race and racism. Yet, it is often taken for granted that everybody has the same understanding of what they are talking about, especially when referring to the past. Hopefully this book can contribute to a discovery of a shared history of contested and shifting meanings, and a more informed and nuanced understanding of our troubled present.

Ignorance about what could be regarded as common knowledge of South African history is not restricted to the general public. The renowned activist, political adviser and writer Martin Plaut wrote that his 2016 book, *Promise and despair: The first struggle for a non-racial South Africa*, was inspired by an "obscure reference" that "there had been a non-racial vote years before the end of apartheid ... as early as 1853 ... in the Cape ... any male person could vote, as long as he had sufficient income or property. Race was not an issue". According to Plaut he was "astonished" and upon sharing it with his friends all thought he "must have been mistaken". Plaut was clearly totally uninformed about an aspect of the history of the Cape Colony that is covered in standard works, which is widely available.¹⁸ Thus, although this book does not simply want to repeat facts that are well documented and (or at least should be) public knowledge, especially amongst those who call themselves intellectuals, a certain degree of historical context is necessary and important as we go along.

The time needed to research and write this book was made possible in the form of extended leave granted by Stellenbosch University, and especially the chair of the journalism department, Prof Lizette Rabe. I also received a generous H.B. and M.J. Thom Award from the university, which afforded me the opportunity to travel for research and the time to complete the manuscript. Finally, publication costs were for the most part covered by a grant from Subcommittee A of the Research Committee of the university. My heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved for the wonderful privilege and opportunity. They are not to blame if the reader should judge my time misspent.

None of this would have been possible without my whole family, and especially Riëtte, Emma and Clara, all of whom had to face many challenges since this project began.

Outline of the book

It is obvious that the division of the book into these chapters presents a challenge. The colonial period identified here spans 258 years and the era(s) of segregation and apartheid about 84 years. In the following chapters I often present the information in rough but not strict chronological order.

Chapter 1 deals with race talk in the Dutch colonial era from 1652 until the British finally became the masters in the early 19th century. Then follows a discussion of the white colonial press during British colonialism (Chapter 2), which dominated race talk and set the trends for centuries. The history of the marginalised black press stretches as far back as the colonial press, but was often underrepresented in South African (media) history texts and is the topic of Chapter 3.

Continuing on this track, Chapter 4 will focus specifically on how Black Consciousness was represented in the mainstream press, from its emergence in the 1970s to its suppression and demise, but also how it was rediscovered in the post-apartheid era. This is followed in Chapter 5 by a look at the Afrikaans press during apartheid, because they were often close to and supported the system, but also introduced and supported various efforts to change public perceptions about race talk.

On the other hand, as Chapter 6 will show, most of the English and alternative press often openly opposed apartheid and added different dimensions to the debate. The discussion then moves to the law and race talk in the media (Chapter 7), because the legal framework of regimes influenced how the media approached race talk, also after apartheid ended. The changes in media content when the end of apartheid was in sight is the topic of Chapter 8, and Chapter 9 looks at how the digital era influenced race talk in the media. Academics, through the media, played a pivotal role in how race was talked about from the start, and an overview will be provided in Chapter 10. Chapter 11 concludes the book.

one

DUTCH COLONIAL RACE TALK

(1652-1795; 1803-1806)

Introduction

In 21st century popular media, some commentators (including former President Jacob Zuma), have identified the arrival of a group of about 90 Europeans under Jan van Riebeeck of the VOC in 1652 as the point where “South Africa’s problems started ... because this opened the way for racial discrimination”.¹⁹ This statement, although part of perspectives which romanticise the relationships between indigenous peoples before the arrival of Europeans, cannot be dismissed out of hand. It is obvious that “... if there were no whites in South Africa”, as the prominent journalist Ferial Haffajee²⁰ hypothesises, then white (on black) racism would not exist here. Arguably, internal competition, rivalry and prejudice would still have been present amongst the indigenous ethnic groups, as was the case before European colonialism.²¹

This can, however, not be used to defend or justify European colonialism but invites the open question whether aspects of prejudiced behaviour between different indigenous ethnic groups would have occurred and what it would have been called. An overview of the history of race talk in the media shows that the term

“racism”, as we understand it today, is also an invention which went through different stages. A popular view is that the origins of racism lie in white colonialism and black suppression and slavery. In post-apartheid South Africa this perspective is important because it explains why a marginalised black majority still experiences abject poverty more than two decades after their liberation from colonialism and apartheid in 1994.

Zuma's pronouncement also stands in sharp contrast to colonial and apartheid versions of the arrival of Van Riebeeck as the “founding” of (white) South Africa.²² Although this racist ideological interpretation has been opposed by a long tradition of informed and contextualised research and historiography, it is arguably still alive in the hearts and minds of white racists and supremacists in the “new” South Africa as well. On the other hand, the settlement of a VOC refreshment centre at the Cape, and the addition of European colonists to the population dynamics of Southern Africa, was certainly a watershed moment with long-lasting consequences.

A focus on race talk in the media is complicated by the fact that a popular press in the Cape Colony was established only around 1800, nearly 150 years after Jan van Riebeeck arrived in Table Bay. This century-and-a-half corresponds roughly with the Dutch (VOC) colonial period, which lasted until the end of the 18th century. During this crucial period, referred to by some historians as the “long silences” of the 18th century,²³ much of what became more visible in the 19th century was forged. Continuous expansion and increasing conflict between colonists and indigenous people occurred while a relative scarcity of different forms of media documentation and scrutiny existed. Add to that the inability of a despotic and greedy commercial enterprise like the VOC to manage the permanent colony it did not want in the first place, and the foundations were laid for an often bloody conflict between various individuals and groups.

But the media “silences” were certainly not total. Those remaining in the vicinity of colonial Cape Town relied on international newspapers and magazines and letters from abroad, or accounts from visiting seafaring passengers, for news about events such as the American Civil War and the French Revolution.²⁴ Some events in the Cape Colony were recorded faithfully by VOC officials, such as Van Riebeeck, and visiting travel writers contributed significantly (see discussion below). Another source of news about the Cape was regular letters sent by

inhabitants to Europe. A prime example still accessible today is the letters from Hendrik Cloete, called “Caabsche Nouvelles”, sent to Hendrik Swellengrebel Jr, who lived close to Utrecht in the Netherlands in the late 18th century.

The perspectives are those of colonists and other Europeans during the VOC era, and not the indigenous population. But this fact also needs to be contextualised: In the mid-17th century the white colonists in the so-called border districts were described as resembling “a bunch of blind heathens” by a Dutch official, because of their lack of literacy and education.²⁵ At the beginning of the 19th century only about 100 out of 3 000 white children in the Graaff-Reinet district received a formal education, while most children of the colonists were only taught basic literacy and some Calvinistic principles.²⁶

Van Riebeeck’s Dairy

One of the primary records of his ten years (1652-1662) as governor is provided by Jan van Riebeeck himself, in the voluminous journal (later published as *Daghregister*) he was instructed by his masters, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), to keep.

Some controversy about the authorship of the *Daghregister* arose when the English translation first appeared. In the Foreword the claim was made that “Van Riebeeck should not be regarded as the author in any strict or absolute sense”.²⁷ This conclusion was based on the fact that some passages of the *Daghregister* are written in the third person, and because the journal also contains about 100 pages by other authors, such as travel accounts, letters, a petition by the Free Burgers in 1658, and at least some council resolutions.²⁸ Nonetheless, after presenting different counter-arguments, it is argued that despite being unable to conclusively show that Van Riebeeck personally wrote the *Daghregister* “from A to Z”, the view is that the journal is largely, if not in fact in its entirety, the result of his own efforts.²⁹ Whatever the case, for the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to note that Van Riebeeck was in charge when the *Daghregister* was written, and thus at the very least approved the entries.

The aim was to gather information for the benefit of the VOC, who was interested in financial profits above all. Van Riebeeck thus had in mind an official and not public readership. Bosman³⁰ views Van Riebeeck as an eternal optimist who

displayed enthusiasm and energy, worked hard, was restless and always on the move, making plans. But Van Riebeeck was also ambitious and very keen – “nearly slavishly” – trying to please his materialistic, stingy VOC masters.³¹ The possibility must thus be considered that some of the *Daghregister* entries were motivated by what Van Riebeeck thought the VOC management would have liked to hear.³²

Nonetheless, for researchers the *Daghregister* provides a wealth of information because, as Plant says in his (1961) review of the English translation:

In this splendid edition, Jan van Riebeeck’s Journal extends to over 1,300 pages. There is not one which lacks interest. Perhaps no other Dominion had a more difficult birth and infancy: certainly none other is so fully and reliably documented.³³

Whether Van Riebeeck’s account is as comprehensive and reliable as Plant enthused above is to be seriously doubted. Suffice to say that in current media idiom Van Riebeeck was probably closer to an in-house blogger than a disinterested citizen journalist, but no one can deny that he executed the task with great enthusiasm.

On first reading the journal one is again reminded of the common mistake to seek for clear beginnings and endings in the “story” of history. For instance, Van Riebeeck’s arrival on 6 April 1652, a moment often dramatically portrayed as the start of colonialism, was not his first visit to the Cape. Van Riebeeck already spent 18 days there in 1648, when a ship on which he travelled to the Netherlands (from the East, where he was relieved of his post after a misdemeanour) was tasked to collect the crew of the *Haerlem*, which was shipwrecked at the Cape in 1647. Reports written after this event, including by Van Riebeeck in an effort to get back into the good graces of the VOC management, convinced the company to send him to the Cape as the commander of a permanent refreshment station.³⁴ Interestingly enough, the *Daghregister* also records how Van Riebeeck investigated the indigenous forests on the slopes of Table Mountain and found evidence of Europeans who carved their marks into the bark as far back as 1604.³⁵ Contact, with some commercial and inter-cultural exchange and conflict between the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape and Europeans, in fact occurred periodically over more than a century before Van Riebeeck arrived, and left their signs in various ways.

Although Van Riebeeck as writer might have been restricted by many factors, including the social mores of his time and the critical eyes of the envisaged company management readership, he was not bound by the same socio-political boundaries as 21st-century company bloggers would experience. The journal thus displays numerous signs of prejudice towards and records acts of injustice and cruelty against the original inhabitants of the Cape. It also records the often harsh punishment of European employees of the VOC who transgressed. Furthermore, the word "race" had a different meaning for Van Riebeeck and his contemporaries. For instance, the Dutch of the 17th century viewed the French and English also as different "races", although on a higher level of "civilisation" than the "Hottentots". Van Riebeeck certainly considered especially the English and the Portuguese as enemies and he was ever vigilant and ready for a fight, be it on the high seas or on land.

Furthermore, once the Dutch became better informed about the language and culture of the Khoi, the *Daghregister* reflects some of the diversity and complexity of the indigenous groups, inter alia by recording the various clan names they used to distinguish themselves, rather than referring to them by the blanket term "Hottentot" (which also still occur regularly). Some of the Khoi were also educated in Dutch language and culture and were uncomfortably stuck between their own traditional and the emerging Dutch colonial society.

According to the *Daghregister*, Van Riebeeck was forced to deal with various Khoi clans as equals in order to ensure the safety of his small landing party and to entice them to trade with him. This aspect of initial contact between the parties is fascinatingly recorded in the *Daghregister* and resembles the intrigue of any modern-day international diplomatic thriller. Alliances were continuously made, switched, broken and repaired between the Dutch and the different leaders of the various Khoi clans, and between these leaders themselves against each other and the Dutch. The Khoi operated according to their own internal hierarchical system established by past conflict and contract. They were thus not unified as "black" people against the "white" intruders, but were internally divided, each clan jockeying for the best position to deal with, and benefit from, the European presence. As such, it would be a mistake to view the initial contact and conflict between European

colonisers and indigenous Africans in simple binary terms of white and black. As Keegan states:

There is ... a tendency to reduce South African history to a morality play, in which a long series of calamities and degradations is visited upon the local people by the evil forces of colonialism. There is enough truth in this. But Africans were never passive victims, stripped of agency, and the invasive forces were never omnipotent.³⁶

In dealings and negotiations, Van Riebeeck experienced the Khoi as friendly, fair and courteous at times, and he treated them accordingly, and often with great patience and restraint when conflict arose (possibly more often motivated by self-preservation than empathy). But miscommunication due to cultural differences and pure greed (on both sides) was also frequent. Van Riebeeck was also quick to become despondent about the “shrewdness”, “dishonesty” and “barbarousness” of the Khoi, while ironically displaying some of the same unsavoury characteristics to the contemporary reader.

Van Riebeeck, for example, unashamedly reported on tactics such as buying slaves with fake money, or dressing up his troops in English, French or Portuguese uniforms and mistreating natives in Madagascar, after which the same troops would return in their normal Dutch attire and behave exceedingly well – to trick the natives into preferring the Dutch in their dealings.³⁷ On occasion he would provide enough alcohol to the “Hottentots” to make them inebriated and then subjugated them and stole their livestock. He would also order the slaughter of livestock “not totally healthy” and present the meat as gifts to foreign ships’ captains.

It is clear from the above that Van Riebeeck’s targets were not exclusively black or indigenous, but that he tried to outmanoeuvre all the competitors of the VOC and form alliances with all who would potentially further their cause. In addition to descriptions of what Van Riebeeck considered to be treachery, thievery, assault and murder by members of the Khoi clans, some of whom became assimilated within the Dutch settlement and culture and lived in or close to the VOC fort, the journal also mentions similar transgressions by VOC employees, and the penalties awarded according to the company’s harsh judicial system.

The first shipload of slaves arrived at the Cape in 1658 “in response to the white settlers’ clamor for servile help and to the scarcity and unreliability of the indigenous population for this purpose”.³⁸ The number of slaves belonging to the white settlers rose from 52 in 1670 to more than 25 000 in 1798.³⁹ The decision to import slaves in 1685 is described by Giliomee⁴⁰ as “disastrous” because it determined the “ethos of society” and defined “freedom and status”. Only company employees, free burghers and free blacks could own land or earn political power in the official hierarchy of the colony during the VOC period, although free blacks had lower status than the burghers.⁴¹ The “burgher-slave distinction” was further entrenched by the church, that did not baptise many non-Europeans.

Apart from the odd mention of African slaves, the *Daghtregister* mainly records the tragic demise of the thriving Khoi community as the original VOC directive of establishing a small refreshment station for visiting ships morphed into a colonial settlement. Van Riebeeck’s decision to allow the first privatisation of land in 1675 by a group of discharged VOC employees set in motion an unstoppable expansion that destroyed the existing Khoi civilisation in the end. Van Riebeeck records how Khoi leaders frequently protested the invasion of their pastoral grounds, on one occasion asking him whether they would be able to go to Holland and simply occupy land in the same way, but he calmly referred them to the law of the conqueror. Some of the Khoi clans tried armed resistance, and although major skirmishes occurred, the momentum of more land occupations never ceased.

Van Riebeeck monopolised good agricultural land belonging to the Khoi along the Liesbeeck River in February 1657 and handed it to the first “Free Burghers”.⁴² The Khoi challenged this occupation in 1660, but were “militarily too weak, without leadership and internally too divided to fight effectively against the colonists”.⁴³ In turn, because of their numeric vulnerability and dependence on the surrounding Khoi for meat, the first group of Dutch settlers tried to maintain “good relations”, but conflict occurred almost right from the start.⁴⁴

Although the Western colonists were technologically advanced in key areas such as travel, manufacturing and weaponry, they were numerically far in the

minority, especially at first, and struggled to adapt to local conditions and survive on a basic level.

According to data cited by Streak⁴⁵ the total number of the white population in 1652 was about 100 people. In 1700 the figure was 1 245, and it remained below 10 000 until 1778 (9 507). In the twenty years up to 1798 the total had grown rapidly to 21 746, and in 1813 it was 33 968. Thereafter the acceleration continued: 42 217 in 1819, 55 355 in 1830, 88 490 in 1849 and 102 156 in 1855. By comparison, the slave population, which numbered 838 in 1700, grew to 29 546 in 1805, while the Khoi population was estimated at 28 000 at the time, according to Van den Berghe.⁴⁶ In other words, around 1805 both the slave and Khoi populations respectively were larger than the group of white settlers, which totalled 25 757.

The pattern of a struggle for survival and a mixture of conflict and cooperation with the indigenous population extended far into the interior, where employees of the VOC were sent to look for opportunities and fabled treasures. Van Riebeeck and his successors were under continuous and increasing pressure to deliver fresh produce to the visiting fleets and thus kept on expanding agricultural activities and territories into the interior. Also, to guard the farming colonists who were moving further into the interior, so-called *buitenposten* [outposts] were created and staffed with military personnel, workers and slaves.

The official reports from these outposts, as well as accounts from travel writers, provide the next sources of information about race talk in the media of the early colonial period.

Official reports and travel writing

Official VOC documents provide some of the earliest examples of race talk during the Dutch colonial period, but other valuable sources are the various European travel writers interested in different aspects of Southern Africa. Although the early Cape settlement expanded relatively slowly at first, frequent European travellers explored the interior almost from the start.

On the part of the VOC these explorations were motivated mainly by commercial gain. Still, the at least eleven journeys from the Cape to the north western interior in the 17th century "ensured an accumulation of geopolitical information"

and “[B]it by bit a picture could be constructed, with each next expedition knowing more when it departed than the previous one”, writes Huigen.⁴⁷ This information was “not only circulated within the VOC network, but was also used by geographers ...”⁴⁸

In 1725, in a report by an expedition of the VOC exploring the interior from Fort Lijdszaamheid (currently Maputo in Mozambique) in search of gold,⁴⁹ the writer De Cuijper refers to contact and conflict with groups of “negroes”.⁵⁰ According to Huigen⁵¹ the “indigenous population knew that the expedition depended on information and guides and made attempts to withhold these from the travellers or “incorrect information was supplied”. The indigenous population seemingly coordinated their resistance as “each group warned the other” and it was also “well considered because the response was intensified stepwise: first incorrect information was provided, then guides were withheld, then violence was threatened and then armed conflict followed”.⁵²

During the 18th century purely scientific goals were also included,⁵³ but a cosmopolitan group of travellers had to “go deeper and deeper into the interior, up to the outskirts of the colony or even further”⁵⁴ for ethnographic research of indigenous populations “who had not been influenced by the dominant colonial Dutch culture”.⁵⁵ Thus, we see that along with the disappearance of traditional Khoi civilisation a new hybrid society developed.

At the end of the 18th century it became especially difficult to find examples of traditional Khoi cultural communities because “those living in the south-west had been decimated by a smallpox epidemic in 1713 or had been absorbed in the colonial economy as labourers”.⁵⁶ In the case of the San (Bushmen) “[I]arge numbers ... had been killed during punitive expeditions”.⁵⁷

Some of these travellers’ accounts were widely published in Europe and became influential sources of perceptions, views and debates about the indigenous populations of Southern Africa.⁵⁸ Although their distribution and consumption was obviously far less amongst the small local colonial readership, these books set the agenda in European scientific, political and even popular circles at the time of publication. For instance, accounts of travellers and missionaries such as Barrow (1797-1798), Lichtenstein (1806), Campbell (1815), Philip (1828) and others “made available for the first time detailed information and provided

them [philanthropists in England] with their evidence of the abuse the Blackman allegedly suffered at the hand of the colonists", writes Streak.⁵⁹

Travellers in the 18th century basically employed two criteria from an ethnocentric European perspective: the level of civilisation and moral qualities. These "sometimes produced contradictory evaluations", according to Huigen.⁶⁰ On the civilisation scale the "Kaffirs" (Xhosas) and "Beetjuanen" (Tswana) were respectively rated "half-mannered" and "more than semi-civilised" by the traveller Lichtenstein, much higher than the "Hottentots", who inter alia lacked "physical strength and external beauty, poverty of language and mind, the absence of laws and because property is partly unknown to them".⁶¹ Lichtenstein wrote that the "Hottentots" are as different from the "Kaffirs" as the Moslem is from the Briton⁶², thus illustrating the view expressed earlier that "race" in this era referred to human "variety" in an often contradictory system of prejudice that cannot be fully equated with modern racism.

This argument is further supported by the fact that when the moral criterion is used, the civilisation hierarchy, with north-western Europeans on top, is partly contradicted. The Dutch colonists, who are "higher up the (technical) ladder of civilisation ... are to most travellers morally the most repugnant group", according to Huigen (see also the discussion below). The Bantu-speaking "Kaffirs" and "Beetjuanen" are "at the top of the moral hierarchy", while "Khoikhoi groups, such as the Gonaqua, displayed qualities that made them superior to the colonists and the 'Bastaards' who are descended from the colonists and the Khoikhoi".⁶³

A combination of the criteria of civilisation and moral qualities "arouses in the authors a hierarchy of sympathy and repulsion", and in this regard the Xhosas were amongst "the darlings of the European travellers"⁶⁴ at that time. The first ethnographic monograph with a South African population group as subject, writes Huigen, was about the Xhosas, in the form of *De Kaffirs aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (The Kaffirs on the South Coast of Africa) by Lodewijk Albertini in 1810. Towards the end of the 19th century, as the discussion below will show, the realities of the challenges faced by the 1820 Settlers and successive "Frontier" wars against the Xhosa in the eastern Cape rather fuelled existing narratives of the group as "savages" instead, also in Europe.

On the other hand, the “evaluation of the Hottentots (Khoikhoi or Khoekhoen) is more equivocal”, to put it mildly, because “visitors to the Cape had depicted them as stinking, stuttering and repugnant creatures for more than two centuries”.⁶⁵

One notable exception was the traveller Peter Kolb, who in his book *The present state of the Cape of Good Hope* in 1719 “did his best to improve their image”.⁶⁶ This effort has a significant legacy, because the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau used this “favourable representation” to “lay an empirical basis for his representation of the noble savage”.⁶⁷ In turn, the French traveller François le Vaillant applied the idea of the noble savage to the Gonaqua, of mixed Xhosa and Khoi descent, who are to him “the ideal type of human being in his natural state”.⁶⁸ Huigen continues:

Le Vaillant ... to the annoyance of some of his readers – even dramatises his representation with a romance between himself and a Gonaqua girl he calls Nerina (“flower” in the Gonaqua language). This romance is a suitable means of reversing the negative image of the Hottentot that had prevailed since the sixteenth century, a reversal that was still necessary despite Kolb’s efforts. Whereas the Hottentot woman was generally held to be particularly unattractive, Nerina made an overwhelming impression of beauty.⁶⁹

But, adds Huigen, this type of enthusiastic representation of the Khoi is also uncommon amongst the scientific travellers, who in the main repeated existing notions such as “the most wretched of the human race”, “scarcely differing from the wild beasts”, low down “on the scale of humanity” and “a lot of incorrigible savages”.⁷⁰ Even the early French traveller Tavernier, who published his account in 1679, and “... is able to show respect and gratitude to the Khoikhoi for their potentially life-saving skills in the use of medicinal plants”, according to Sienaert and Stiebel,⁷¹ soon reverts to nasty stereotypes about their appearance and conduct.⁷²

Johnson, however, describes a general shift towards more favourable representations of the “Hottentots” from 17th-18th century French travel writing.⁷³ The descriptions generally changed from the Khoi as “beasts” and “brutes” to “children of nature” and as “potential useful citizens”. Johnson adds insightfully:

Over the same period that the aesthetic representations of the Cape “Hottentots” improved ... their material existences deteriorated

dramatically, as they declined from being significant independent communities in 1650 to being scattered handfuls of impoverished servants in 1800. This history suggests that there is no inevitable or necessary correlation between being represented-as-portrait in positive terms ... and an improvement in material living conditions ...⁷⁴

This conclusion points to the fact that race talk should not be delinked from its specific historical political economic context. It always remains part of and is influenced by larger contestations for power and dominance.

About the "Bushmen (San), there is "even less inclination to express a favourable view ...", writes Huigen,⁷⁵ although it is "also realised that the Bushmen have been treated badly and unfairly". This is underlined by descriptions, such as those of particularly Barrow, "of the behaviour of a punitive commando consisting of Europeans and Bastards".⁷⁶

Tellingly, and already indicated above, "the group who comes off worst amongst scientific travellers in many regards" is the "Dutch colonists, sometimes already called 'Boers' at this time".⁷⁷ The very influential John Barrow for instance viewed the colonial Dutch as "the most indolent and prodigal of all nations",⁷⁸ because they acquired slaves as soon as they had the means and then stopped doing any work themselves. According to Streak, Barrow "was not alone in his criticism of the idleness of the Cape Dutch" because Percival had much to say in 1804 on the matter and even the sympathetic Lichtenstein referred to the Cape Dutch as "men who have no excitement to activity".⁷⁹

The Cape Dutch or Boers were inter alia viewed as advancing a "sick civilisation" and putting at risk the "blissful life" of the "noble savages" or "through the glasses of the English coloniser with a high humanitarian self-esteem", who regarded "the degenerate state of the Dutch colonists in South Africa as proof of the superiority of British colonialism", writes Huigen.⁸⁰ Huigen concludes that the "image of the colonists was strongly influenced by the travellers' ideological preferences".⁸¹

Giliomee discusses the Boers as a race and their racism and mentions in reference to the historian Cornelius de Kiewiet that they were formed in the "long silences" of the 18th century.⁸² The Boers were isolated from European civilisation and culture in the interior and many observers commented on and

warned against their “degeneration” into a “wild nation”. Part of that “silence”, as this book shows, is the lack of popular media during the VOC period.

It is clear from the discussion above that 18th-century travel writing race talk cannot simply be reduced and rejected as (just) racist and ethnocentric. Similar to the various possible different readings and interpretations of Van Riebeeck's *Daghregister*, these travellers' texts were also constrained and influenced by certain contextual factors, including political, scientific, commercial and cultural motives, but in some ways they also challenged and broke conventions, shifted boundaries and set trends for the future. Thus, Huigen suggests the existence of a “critical Western ‘counter-discourse’ besides a [suppressing] colonial discourse”, or at least “a variety of colonial discourses instead of a Western discourse”.⁸³ He argues that in post-colonial theory “the way in which the experience of the strange world undermines the discourse about it has received little attention ...”⁸⁴

This argument supports the view in this book that even during a time when limited media options were available, like the Dutch colonial period, race talk cannot be reduced to a singular interpretation or simple binary between white and black. Such a reduction can only occur retrospectively, by ideological writers of history. This does not mean that some of these texts were in all respects revolutionary or not part of a certain repressive colonial system, but only that they should be read and interpreted in the context of their production.

Amongst the possible influences of 18th-century European travel writing can be included the humanitarian and abolitionist movements in Britain in the 19th century, the negative perception of “Boers”, and later Afrikaners, in British and South African English media circles, as well as the idea of a civilisation hierarchy contained in the apartheid categorisation of Whites/Europeans, Indians, Coloureds and Blacks after 1948. Chillingly, the negative consensus around the low status of San (Bushmen), even amongst these educated visiting Europeans, corresponded with practices on the ground which amounted to authorised extermination of most members of the group by the Dutch colonists.

RACE TALK IN THE WHITE COLONIAL PRESS DURING BRITISH RULE

(1795-1803; 1806-1910)

Introduction

Mostly parallel strands of development during the colonial period have led scholars to distinguish between the English press, the Afrikaans press, the black press, and the alternative (also sometimes called multi-racial) press in descriptions of South African media history.⁸⁵ Developments during apartheid continued but also complicated these trends.

Since the founding of the colonial press, newspapers (even if they were initially bilingual for commercial reasons) identified with one of the dominant white language groups, with particular interests, cultures and philosophies, and reflected the power struggles between these groups.⁸⁶ Because the English press was identified early on with the humanitarian view of white liberals in South Africa, the more conservative Dutch press viewed the terms “free press” and “independent press” as “organs hostile to their philosophy and way of life”.⁸⁷ The black press, as the following chapters will show, developed through different stages from their missionary beginnings and displayed different ideological positions amongst them. The 20th century saw the rise of publications aimed at the racial categories of Coloured and Indian populations.

During apartheid the Afrikaans press in general supported versions of Afrikaner nationalism while the English press often acted as informal political opposition (although in some cases closely tied to the protection of white economic capital). But, as Louw and Tomaselli indicate, there are also some contradictions and complications, which undermine efforts to neatly categorise a complex reality.⁸⁸

British colonialism significantly influenced South African history, and race talk in the media particularly. On the one hand British rule brought an end to slavery and tried to improve conditions for indigenous people, but it also oversaw various bloody wars and paved the way for formal racial segregation. In this context it is ironic that the “large English force” which occupied the Cape in 1806 had to overcome a “mixed” Dutch army “consisting of Dutch soldiers, French sailors, Cape Malay gunners, Khoikhoi infantry, German mercenaries and Cape citizen cavalry at Blaauwberg, north of Cape Town”.⁸⁹

When the British finally took over from the Dutch they were at pains to introduce law, order, administration and government to a mismanaged colony which started as a “refreshment post” and was never intended to expand to the degree that it had. Their negativity extended to the Dutch colonists or Boers, and included criticism of their treatment of indigenous people, both those in their service and those who stood in the way of colonial growth and expansion. But, as Streak indicates, a shift occurred gradually. Observers like Collins, in his report of 1809, Burchell (1822-1824) and the Commission of Enquiry (1825), “paved the way for a revised outlook on the Boers when it was held that their condition was not nearly as degraded as had been alleged previously, nor was their general treatment of the Blackman anything as severe”.⁹⁰

Collins, who was dispatched to investigate conflict at the frontier by colonial authorities in 1808, stated that “in the face of constant thieving from Bushmen and on finding it impossible to draw them into their employ as servants (like the Hottentots), the more distant and turbulent Boers represented the Bushmen to the authorities in far-off Cape Town as ‘unfit to live’”.⁹¹ The “belligerent attitude of the Bushmen towards the colonists had been assumed in order to ‘withstand the encroachments’ of the latter”.⁹²

After the British Settlers arrived in 1820, they developed some empathy for the Boers, but still “... there existed in the minds of the Settlers as a group a

belief that the Dutch *had* treated the Bushmen and Hottentots most severely ...".⁹³ Streak adds that "... this, it was felt, had all happened a long time ago and under very different circumstances".⁹⁴ This probably points to events and conditions in the 18th century under VOC rule, because Streak continues with reference to the 19th century:

Any such irregularities, when instanced, were quite specifically reported to have originated in an individual or minority group without in any way implying that such practices were general.⁹⁵

This view above was certainly not shared by an influential work which appeared in 1828 from the pen of the missionary Dr John Philip, *Researches in South Africa, illustrating the civil, moral and religious conditions of the native tribes*.⁹⁶ As was indicated in the discussion above on European travel writing, Philip's work continued an example of critique of the European colonists set by Barrow in the 18th century. In addition to commenting on current relationships between colonists and indigenous peoples, Philip also severely criticises the European colonists in the VOC period for their treatment of "Hottentots", who "... had been driven from the most fertile tracks of country, and deprived of their independence ... their numbers began greatly to decline ..."⁹⁷ Philip also wrote that "in the year 1774, the whole race of Bushmen, or Hottentots, who had not submitted to servitude, was ordered to be seized or extirpated".⁹⁸

Prompted by great unhappiness amongst the European colonists, Governor Benjamin D'Urban tasked a senior state official, Donald Moodie, to find and investigate relevant state and other documents in order to find out the truth about Philip's accusations.⁹⁹ The result was *The Record, or a series of official papers relating to the condition and treatment of the native tribes of South Africa*, a book that seriously influenced the historiography of the 19th century.¹⁰⁰ It disputed the accusations of Philip, which led to heated correspondence between the two authors.¹⁰¹

From 1824-1840, *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaanse Tydschrift (NZAT)* published parts of Van Riebeeck's journal stretching from 1651-1658.¹⁰² Although the magazine did not attempt to interpret the first years of VOC rule, it indicated an interest in history amongst its Dutch/Afrikaner readers.¹⁰³ In 1825, a Dutch official at the Cape, J. Suasso de Lima, published *Geschiedenis van de Kaap de Goede Hoop*, an "uncoordinated and fragmented" historic overview

with the aim to be used as text book in schools, and to justify the actions of Governor Lord Charles Somerset.¹⁰⁴

A major work, compiled largely from official sources and trying to interpret the VOC period, was *Three lectures on the Cape of Good Hope under the Government of the D.E.I. Company delivered at the Cape Town Mechanics Institute*, by E.B. Watermeyer, "an Anglicised Afrikaner".¹⁰⁵ He presented a sombre picture of the VOC period in comparison to the more "wholesome" influences of British rule.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, in 1854 the Dutch historian Prof U.G. Louts, without ever visiting the Cape, but through archival research, published a much more sympathetic, even "naïve", account of treatment of the indigenous populations by the European colonists, called *Geschiedenis van de Kaap de Goede Hoop, Nederlandsche Volksplanting, 1652-1806*.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, Magubane agrees with Wilmot who wrote in 1895 that "the Bushmen, the Hottentots, and the Kaffirs" were seen as "the natural enemies of Europeans in South Africa", against whom "the war of extermination was vigorously pursued".¹⁰⁸

Because original source material and related sources in archives were not properly catalogued or readily available, relatively few archival researches were done in the 19th century.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, most of these writers were overtly biased, as the brief overview above indicates. In the decades and century that followed, more archival research was done, but it did not necessarily eliminate prejudice, as the discussion later will show.

The white colonial press

Under Dutch rule, no newspaper was established, but the British annexation of the Cape provided impetus to establish a printing press.¹¹⁰ Ironically in terms of the focus of this study on race talk in the media, the first colonial newspaper, *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte*, was started in 1800 by two slave dealers, Alexander Walker and John Robertson.¹¹¹ It was published in both English and Dutch under sanction of the colonial government, and used as its mouthpiece until 1826, when it became the *Cape of Good Hope Government Gazette*. As was the case in other colonies, such as Australia and Canada, proponents of a free press first had to overcome resistance from colonial authorities.¹¹² In the Cape Colony the figure of the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, looms large as initial

opponent of press freedom. He made life difficult for the likes of early pioneers Thomas Pringle and James Fairbairn.¹¹³

But finally, in 1824, the independent *South African Commercial Advertiser* was established and “[D]espite further difficulties, the fight for an independent press at the Cape had in effect been won”.¹¹⁴ By 1929, the “last irritating restrictions on the press” had been removed, and thereafter “expansion was rapid”. In Cape Town and then Grahamstown new newspapers were started, followed by others as the Settlers moved north and east. By 1881 a list of names of 125 “assorted journals” was filed with the Colonial Office in Cape Town.

Although independent English newspapers initiated by the Settlers led the way, soon thereafter Dutch colonists, “whose interests were threatened by the newcomers, felt a need for journals to express their point of view”.¹¹⁵ In Dutch the magazine *NZAT*, edited by the Cape Town cleric Abraham Faure, first appeared in 1824.¹¹⁶ At around the same time, as the discussion below will show, newspapers for indigenous readers also emerged, first at mission stations and later independently.

Government mouthpiece

Press history in South Africa started against the backdrop of a protracted war between Britain and France, and the British government wanted to prevent the spread of “revolutionary ideas” by way of “press propaganda” at the Cape.¹¹⁷ Thus, while the first newspaper, *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte*, was started on private initiative, it was sanctioned and given a monopoly by ordinance of Governor, George Yonge (who was suspected of sharing in the profits).¹¹⁸ The newspaper regularly published news from abroad (although very dated), government notices, advertisements about products, sales and transactions, shipping news and information about marriages, births and deaths.¹¹⁹

After Yonge was recalled in 1801, the government bought the press from its private owners and published the newspaper as its official mouthpiece. The paper continued to publish laws, ordinances, government notices and various advertisements, as well as news of events and transactions.¹²⁰ It undertook to refrain from “offering ... comment or opinion of our own on political subjects;

it being our principal aim to render this Paper, as much as possible, a register of facts, when given in their original and simple dress, are less liable to mislead or bias, than if attended by speculations" .¹²¹

As bilingual channel for commercial advertisements and direct government communication, *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte* set a trend which would later be followed across South Africa.¹²² English merchants and financiers in urban centres who were greatly dependent on a majority of Dutch rural readers initially needed a bilingual paper, while the hand of the state in press affairs and its news selection was also telling. On Saturday 11 July 1801 (p. 1) the newspaper published the sort of typical "good news" story one would expect:

By private Letters recently received from the interior, we can announce the agreeable intelligence, that there has been a seasonable and abundant fall of rain. Our correspondent states, that the different kinds of grain are in the ground, and in several instances have already sprung up, with the most healthy appearance; and that, with the blessing of Providence, there is every possibility of an abundant harvest. It is also confidently stated, that the Caffres and Boschesmen, on the different confines of the colony, manifest the most serious good-will towards the Colonists, and the British Government.¹²³

Economic activity included the slave trade and the newspaper also carried such notices, for instance in the edition of 2 January 1808, where it advertised "two separate public auctions of newly imported or 'green' slaves from Mozambique".¹²⁴

As was suggested before, both slaves and burghers were often harshly punished at the Cape. *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte* regularly published the decrees by "the Honorable Court of Justice". A report on 20 June 1801 dealt with 22 prisoners who "received their punishment on Saturday the 13th of June, 1801".¹²⁵ Most of the offences were related to theft, with some cases of violent action, including resisting arrest.

A relatively unusual case involved a "Hottentot", Platje, who "abandoned a child, intrusted in his care, which child was afterwards found dead". He was "flogged and chained" and also sentenced to "work with the convicts for the space of 15 years". Also less regular was the case of Coetoe, "born

at Madagascar, a slave, property of Government, flogged and branded, legs chained, and condemned to labour at the public works for the space of 15 years – for having attempted to poison [it does not say whom]”. His alleged accomplice, “Thea, from Sambawa, slave woman of Mr Hohne”, was “flogged” and sentenced to “wear chains for the space of 5 years”.

The slave “Zeeman” from “Boegies, slave to Commissary Maynier, Esq.” received 15 years of hard labour in chains for “having wounded a slave, and carrying offensive arms, with which he resisted those who apprehended him”. Also punished for resisting arrest was Caefar, “slave to Paul Roux, one of the Heemraaden of Stellenbosch”. His sentence was a flogging and chains for three years.

The “theft group” include three “Hottentots”, Appollos, Africa and Jan Piel, who were flogged and branded” and made to “wear chains and labour 25 years at the public works”. Two “Hottentot” women, Lys and Magdalena, were flogged and sent to the Slave Lodge for life. The slave Adonis was flogged and chained and sentence to five years hard labour. Two “Hottentot” women, Lena and Sunna, were sentenced to 15 years, and another to 10 years in the Government Slave House, for being “an accomplices to Apollos (sic)”. Scipio and Hector, slaves to Mrs Geyer, were flogged and put in chains for 5 years. Some slaves, such as Frans, of Cape Town, slave to Mr G. Gie; April, slave to J.H. Greene; and Rynier, of Cape Town, slave to Mrs Holtzmeyer, were “only” flogged for theft.

Only three accused were not described as either “slave” or “Hottentot” and were treated markedly different (although, admittedly, their crime was also a bit different). But it is still very noticeable that this group escaped the harsh physical violent punishment of the “Hottentots” and “slaves”.

Two accused, Carel Vogel and Johannes Signatius Herbert, were described as “inhabitant” and sentenced to be “exposed to the view of the public at the place of execution, wearing a board with the inscription RECEIVER OF STOLEN GOODS, and to be banished from the colony for 5 years”. Hendrik Lampe was described as “European” and imprisoned for three months, also for handling stolen goods.

But there were cases where Europeans were treated very harshly as well. Of interest in the edition of 30 August 1800, is the notice that 18 farmers from

the border area were detained in the Castle to be prosecuted, as well as a teacher, Cornelis Edeman, for "having stirred up the farmers at Graffe Reinnet, and written them false news for the Cape".¹²⁶ The arresting officer recommend that Edeman be chastised by whipping on the scaffold, branded with a hot iron, and permanently exiled from the colony. As was suggested above, this case should be judged against the backdrop of the ongoing war between Britain and France at the time. In the same edition of the newspaper an article about the French Revolution stated that it is "certainly one of the most awful events of which history affords any record. The crimes with which it has been accompanied will remain a stigma on the Supporters".¹²⁷ One could imagine that any sign of "revolution" amongst the burghers of Graaff-Reinet reminded the British of the possibility that such a fearful event could occur under their rule as well, and aid their French foes in the process.

Besides the violent treatment of those in service of or attached to the colony, ongoing conflict occurred with indigenous people on and outside the ever-shifting borders of the colony. Although Cape Town was geographically far removed, the popular media still reflected its influence on Capetonians. *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte* reported on Saturday, 13 January 1821 that "certain Caffre Prisoners, lately arrived from the Frontier" was send to the "Prison Depot at Robben Island."¹²⁸ Because it was deemed of

the greatest Importance to the Tranquillity of the Interior, that the said Caffre Prisoners shall not have it in their Powers to effect their Escape from the said Island, as has in many former instances been the case, owing to the Negligence of those, who have not properly secured the Boats which have frequented the Island: Notice is therefore hereby given that, in future, no Boat or Boats, of any Description, will be permitted to be hauled up on any part of the beach of the said Island ...¹²⁹

But in-between periods of violent conflict efforts were also made to establish a theme of "neighbourliness" with the Xhosas. On 21 July 1821, *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte* reported that the "Landdrost of the Frontier & District of Albany" had an "interview with the Caffre Chief Gaika, for the purpose of cementing the friendly

relations which happily exists between the Caffre People and the Colony".¹³⁰
The report continued that

an Annual Fair shall be held on the Banks of the Keiskahamma River, for the purpose of supplying the Caffres with such articles as they have been in the habit of obtaining from the Colony, through the channel of Government; but which they have not regularly procured since the period at which the disturbances of the year 1818 broke out ...

Thus, it becomes clear that in addition to the ongoing search for more and better land, the motivation for contact with the Xhosas was economic (to trade), but that interim wars ("disturbances") made it difficult. In this context the reference to "friendly" relations above is ironic, but the statement is interesting for its pretence to display a relationship between more or less equal partners. The report also states that it "shall be the duty of the Superintending Magistrate, to annul all transactions at the Fair which shall appear to him not to be just towards the Caffre People ...", which pretends a certain typically English sense of legalistic fair play and justice, but is more probably also motivated by greed and a history of exploitation by the colonists. It conveys the paternalistic attitude towards the Xhosas and the extent to which they were victimised by the white traders.¹³¹

With *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte* South African newspaper publishing not only started, but it was also the beginning of direct and indirect government involvement in the press, and media in general, until the post-apartheid era. Censorship was thus always a factor for the media to negotiate and arguably reached a climax in the apartheid era.

Independent press, partisan commitment

The independent Cape Town-based *South African Commercial Advertiser*, established in 1824, was characterised by "philanthropic attitudes and interest in missionary work".¹³² As editor, Fairbairn had "for some time been interested in race relations" and was "closely associated with the liberal missionary, Dr John Philip, who was renowned in the colony on account of complaints he had made to London about the brutality of the Boers towards the slaves".¹³³

In response, Dutch colonists set up *De Zuid Afrikaan* in 1830 “not only to fight against ‘the radicalism of the negrophilist philanthropists’ but frequently ‘to defend the good name of the Dutch residents against the libels of a hostile English party at the Cape and in England’”.¹³⁴ *De Zuid Afrikaan* was started by P.A. Brand, a “Dutchman of slave-owning stock ... determined to expose ‘hambugs’ and amongst the first of these were a free Press and the missionaries”.¹³⁵ The terms “free press” and “independent press” acquired the meaning of “organs hostile to their philosophy and way of life” to the Dutch, according to Hachten and Giffard.¹³⁶

In the 1870s, *De Zuid Afrikaan* amalgamated with J.H. Hofmeyr’s newspaper, *Volksvriend*, and was to become more closely drawn into the struggle for “taal” and “Volk”.¹³⁷ Hofmeyr, “one of the most important leaders of the Cape Dutch community and a central figure in the growth of the Cape Dutch Press, started his own newspaper, *Het Volksblad*, in 1849”.¹³⁸ Hofmeyr was supportive of “racial” separation but also wanted the two “white” groups at the Cape to co-exist harmoniously, which made him less popular amongst some Dutch colonists.¹³⁹ He also came into conflicts with some Dutch/Afrikaner colonists because of his support for the maintenance of High Dutch as a literary language, while the Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners (Society of True Afrikaners) started the newspaper *Die Patriot* in 1876 to propagate the view that Afrikaans should be developed instead.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, *The Graham’s Town Journal* (1831) was situated near the Eastern Cape “frontier” and established when “the interests of the English (and Afrikaner) colonists were no longer reflected by the Cape Town press”.¹⁴¹ To the colonists on the “frontier”, the terms “philanthropist or negrophilist had the same loaded meaning as the modern ‘nigger lover’”.¹⁴² In a scathing attack in the March 1851 edition of *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines’ Friend*, a British philanthropic magazine, *The Graham’s Town Journal* is called that “eminently Anti-Kaffir paper”.

As a result, “great disharmony” existed at times between the newspapers of the Cape Colony. “*De Zuid-Afrikaan* ... and the *Commercial Advertiser* were engaged in a non-stop slinging match, while *The Graham’s Town Journal* and the *Commercial Advertiser* were at continual loggerheads with each other.”¹⁴³ As was suggested above, the major disputes centred on the issue of the abolition of slavery, which the *Commercial Advertiser* campaigned for, as well

as the conflict on the Eastern “frontier” and the general treatment of indigenous peoples by the colonists. But also amongst these relatively liberal voices shifts of alliance and support occurred, especially after slavery was abolished in 1834 and humanitarian fervour lost public support in Britain.

Particularly the 7th and 8th Frontier Wars between 1846 and 1852, and “the decision of the Hottentots to side with the enemy [Xhosas] ... was perceived in the Colony as a direct slap in the face ... [and] paved the way for the new conservatism amongst the colonists respecting the Blackman ...”, according to Streak.¹⁴⁴ One of the consequences was the decline of the philanthropic *Commercial Advertiser* (closed down in 1867) and the rise of “typically colonial newspapers such as *The Cape of Good Hope Observer* (1849), *The Cape Monitor* (1850) and *The Cape Argus* (1857), while in 1850 *The Friend of the Sovereignty* established itself in Bloemfontein under the auspices of *The Graham’s Town Journal*”.¹⁴⁵ In Pietermaritzburg, Natal, in 1846, a young teacher and lawyer, David Buchanan, founded the *Witness*, and “ran off the weekly paper by hand at a rate of two hundred copies an hour” with the help of “a black assistant”.¹⁴⁶

The discovery of diamonds in 1869 led to the establishment of no less than six newspapers in Kimberley in the Northern Cape during the 1870s, including the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* (1878). Similarly, when gold was discovered in the Transvaal in the 1870s, “different political factions [besides the official government gazette – GB] ... had their own news sheets, most short-lived”.¹⁴⁷ According to Hachten and Giffard:

The influx of Uitlanders [Foreigners] coincided with a change in British policy towards the Boer republics. Britain, for economic and philanthropic reasons, now wished to incorporate the independent Boer countries ... The idea met with strong opposition from the republicans, and from the Dutch press at the Cape. But it was supported by the merchants in the Cape and Natal, and by “liberals” who charged that the Transvaal still practiced slavery.¹⁴⁸

In response to Uitlander newspapers in the Transvaal, who called for British rule, *De Volksstem* was founded in 1873 to support the Boer cause, and became a “major force in inciting the Boers to armed resistance”.¹⁴⁹ Two newspapers that amalgamated in Johannesburg in 1889 as the *Standard and Digger’s News*, were also sympathetic to the Boer government “rather than the English-speaking mining interests”.¹⁵⁰

The Standard and Digger's News wrote that it "stood up for the Boer, for his right to be master in his own house and hold what he had" and defended the Boer against "the agitator, against the covetous encroachments of Capital with its dollar-domination and tyranny of millions".¹⁵¹ In turn, according to Butler, the pro-British "English journals in the Transvaal were outrageous in their language of insult and annoyance. Threats and menace were being used every day against the government of the republic and the people of the Dutch race".¹⁵² In response to this history, Hachten and Giffard observes:

There is little doubt that these newspapers served to exacerbate the conflict between the Dutch and the English communities they represented. A journalist who had worked for newspapers supporting both sides commented later that the Transvaal had been "particularly unfortunate in its newspaper press". This, he said, applied to both sections of the press, Boer and Uitlander alike.¹⁵³

In the Orange Free State, the local newspaper *The Friend*, established in 1850 to serve the "English-speaking merchant community in Bloemfontein" supported the Boer side when the South African War started in 1899.¹⁵⁴ After six months the British were in charge, the editorship changed and the paper now stood for "the maintenance of British supremacy in South Africa".¹⁵⁵

During the South African War, the Boers maintained a siege of Mahikeng (then called Mafeking) in the current North West Province for 217 days before the British defeated them on 17 May 1900. During and immediately after the siege the British-supporting *Mafeking Mail* published no fewer than 143 so-called Siege Slips, "shells permitting", as the editor, G.N.H. Whales, defiantly declared in the masthead.¹⁵⁶

But, despite clear indications above (and in the following discussions) of internal divisions and contradictions amongst the members of both the Afrikaans and English colonial press, specifically regarding race talk, Hachten and Giffard still declare that:

From an early stage, then, the English press was identified with the humanitarian views of white liberals in South Africa, while the Dutch (and later Afrikaans) press presented the more conservative views of that language group.¹⁵⁷

This basic differentiation was strengthened during apartheid when the English press in general adopted an anti-apartheid stance while the Afrikaans press

mostly supported the NP government (see Chapter 5). The history of the independent colonial press indicates that publishers had specific political and commercial aims from the start. Although the professionalisation of journalism (with its aim of “objectivity”) developed over time, a sense of partisan commitment characterised South African newspapers to varying degrees throughout the apartheid and into the post-apartheid era.

Race war propaganda

Post-apartheid race talk sometimes included references to growing tension and even the possibility of a “race war” between black and white. Traces of this view are visible in some colonial media texts which responded to the conflicts and wars between the colonists and the Xhosa kingdoms in the Eastern Cape.

In contrast to the fast vanishing traditional Khoi and San communities, the Xhosa nation was “expanding, aggressive and self-confident” by 1800.¹⁵⁸ “Its outriding chiefdoms lay on the Sundays, the Mbashe and the sources of the Kei [rivers]. Voluntarily or involuntarily, individually or collectively, the people of the surrounding nations – Thembu, Sotho and Khoi – were adding their strength to that of the Xhosa nation”.¹⁵⁹

But, by 1847, after the 1820 Settlers had strengthened both the numbers of the Eastern Cape colonists and British imperial resolve to finally bring to an end the series of armed conflicts known as the Frontier Wars, “things were very different”.¹⁶⁰ The Xhosa kingdom “had shrunk, and in shrinking it had lost vast tracts of its most fertile territory. The Xhosa were driven across the Fish in 1812, out of the Kat River valley in 1829, and right past the Keiskamma in 1847”.¹⁶¹

The Graham’s Town Journal of 10 April 1847 articulated the war propaganda clearly when it declared:

Let war be made against the Kaffir huts and gardens. Let all be burnt down and destroyed ... Tell them the time has come for the white man to show his mastery over them.¹⁶²

This statement signals a lack of restraint, and that the war is not limited to the battlefield but is aimed at extinction. In the context of an ongoing war (or series of conflicts) this report might well be in response to similar Xhosa

attacks on settler farms and homesteads, but it is clearly premised here on racial superiority.

According to Keegan the settlers always “had at the forefront of their minds the possibilities that forward imperial policies would have for land grabbing”.¹⁶³ He continues:

Thus for Godlonton¹⁶⁴ at *The Graham’s Town Journal*, Providence had assigned to the Albany settlers “the task of colonizing Kaffirland”. A Graham’s Town petition submitted that in “Kaffirland ... there is a wide and most fertile tract of country which must, to preserve the advantage the British forces have gained over the Kaffir tribes, be occupied by British subjects.”

Seemingly the other side of the coin of white superiority, a fear of imminent white settler extinction, is the theme of a newspaper report in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, on Thursday 30 January 1851, on page 3 under the heading “The Frontier”. It stated that “there has been no aggressive movement of the enemy either in British Kafiraria, or within the limits of the Colony”, but that the danger persists that the “Kaffirs ... will ... overrun the Colony”. The report continues:

Their first rush will be tremendous, and will be withstood only by the most populous towns and largest fortified camps. Looking at them at this obvious probability, it is earnestly and anxiously recommended that all the small lagers that may exist throughout the country should be at once abandoned, and that all preparations be completed without delay in every town and village, to repel the enemy, for in the present state of affairs, no man residing in any of the border districts, can count upon his safety for a single day.¹⁶⁵

The report continues that the “present war is not a cattle war”. The object of the war, it is stated, is to *exterminate* the *white* man [original emphasis]. The theme of fear of white extermination became a mechanism for Afrikaner nationalists to build their ranks and consensus for the policy of apartheid in the decades leading up to taking power in 1948. In this process Afrikaner nationalists often referred to wars in which a tiny minority of white settlers were threatened by hordes of black warriors (and ultimately defeated them by the grace of God, such as in 1838 at the so-called Battle of Blood River between a group of Afrikaner Voortrekkers and members of a Zulu army).

Importantly in terms of an analysis of race talk, the above-mentioned *De Zuid-Afrikaan* news report of 1851 (30 January) calls the envisaged conflict between the British Settlers and the Xhosas “a war of race” and states that “struggle will be fearful, and blood will flow as water”.¹⁶⁶ The report also introduces the theme of a righteous and ordained war in calling on those not directly affected to join fellow members of the white race:

But the issue cannot be doubted; although the horrors of the contest could be much mitigated, its duration much shortened, and its devastating ruin and dreadful results confined to a comparatively narrow space, if the inhabitants of the colony, who are *at present* [original emphasis] removed from the seat of danger, promptly responded to the call of honor and duty; and, making common cause and sharing the common danger with their more exposed fellow colonists, joined the front ranks of colonial defenders, and thus become the instruments under a righteous God, of inflicting a summary and signal retribution on the barbarous and formidable savages who are now threatening to tear out the heart of the colony.

The binary introduced above between white civilisation and black “barbarous and formidable savages” signals a biological (phenotypical) dichotomy (and link) between white racial supremacy and a perceived fear of settler extinction in the face of a distinct numeric disadvantage. Thus, at this stage in British colonial history, some media outlets used categories of race to present simplified versions of a complex and often chaotic reality in which different role players competed for dominance and survival. In this era a simple racial binary was mobilised as part of a strategic campaign of war propaganda.

Allies and contradictions

Despite the movement towards the simplistic binary of biological racism based on skin colour described above, there were also colonial media texts which displayed complicating, alternative race talk. An example is to be found in the case of an indigenous group called the “Fingoes” in colonial times, but who is now known as the Mfengu (or amaFengu). They were closely related to the Zulus but were assimilated into the Xhosa kingdom, according to various sources.¹⁶⁷ Internal tensions with the Gcaleka Xhosa meant that the Mfengu became allies of the Cape Colony in the “Frontier Wars” against the Xhosas. Bundy accounts how in 1835 around “16 000 Mfengu [who brought with them

22 000 head of cattle] made formal entry into the Cape Colony, crossing the Kei River at Governor D'Urban's bidding, and under the missionary James Ayliff's watchful eye".¹⁶⁸ Part of the settlement deal (near Grahamstown, now Makhanda) was that they provided military support and "act as a human buffer between the colonists and the Xhosa foe".¹⁶⁹ But they were in the end "more than a buffer" and acted as "combatants in the wars of 1846, 1850-1853 and 1877-1878 on the imperial side".¹⁷⁰

In April 1851, the British *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines' Friend* reported that the "Fingoes are mentioned as having been remarkably efficient in repelling the incursions of the Kaffirs, though opposed to vastly superior numbers".¹⁷¹ The distinction made here between "Kaffirs" and "Fingoes" indicates that the former was still more or less a synonym for Xhosa, and was not yet used inclusively for black people. The journal then referred to a report in the *Cape Town Mail* of 1 February 1851 which stated:

On that morning (25th Jan.) a fierce and prolonged attack had been made not on the wagons, as has been anticipated, but on the post itself, or rather the adjoining village of Alice ... The number of the Kaffirs is variously estimated at from 3 000 to 6 000, amongst whom were many horseman. The first attempt was on the cattle; afterwards upon the village in a most daring manner. They were bravely repulsed by the Fingoes, with whom rests the honour of the victory.

The editor of the *Cape Town Mail* (1 February 1851) then considered the role of the Fingoes (Mfengu) as allies in the following manner:

Another sharp action has taken place on the frontier, exhibiting in a striking manner the superiority of European arms, intelligence, and energy, over the mere physical strength and wild fury of barbarian warriors. It is true that the Fingoes, who are of the same race as the Kaffirs, bore the brunt of the recent conflicts at Fort Hare. But how, one may ask, did it happen that three hundred Fingoes and about one hundred Hottentots of the Cape Corps proved themselves more than a match for three thousand Kaffirs? ... It is evident that the native combatants derive their spirit and resolution, which ensures to them the victory, from the spirit of their fellow combatants and leader of European race.

With this example in mind, the editor of the *Cape Town Mail* (1 February 1851) argued that "the fidelity and good conduct of the Kaffirs may be secured by measures similar to those which have proved effectual in making the Fingoes

good subjects – that is, by breaking up their clannish organisation, settling them on separate allotments under the colonial law, and treating them as fellow subjects and friends. In this way it seems not unlikely that every 'hostile Kaffir' may be converted into something like a 'faithful Fingo'".

During the 9th Frontier War (1877-1879), which allegedly started after a bar fight between Mfengu and Gcaleka guests at a Mfengu wedding, the Cape government appointed the Mfengu captain Bikitsha as co-leader of the colonial forces (mainly consisting of Mfengu, Thembu and Boer commandos) in the war. In about three weeks they managed to defeat and disperse the enemy. Notwithstanding, Governor Sir Henry Bartle Frere forcibly disarmed the Mfengu, who were not exempted from increasing persecution by the colonial authorities. These humiliations by their former colonial allies might have played a role in the fact that the Mfengu subsequently identified more with the Xhosa and became integrated with them over time.

A telling news report, reprinted from the *PE. Telegraph*, appears in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (1 December 1859). It tells of the discovery of the drowning of the driver of a post cart between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown in the Coega river by one Mr Wilmott on horseback. The cart was swept away when the river was in full flood, and Mr Wilmott rode downstream and saw the cart "fixed" in the river, along with drowned horses. According to the report:

Some Fingoes who were near entered the river at his [Mr Wilmott's] request to examine the cart, and in doing so one of them stepped on something soft ... the body of the driver, perfectly dead. The unfortunate man was a Sweed, of the name of Peters, unmarried and without any relatives here ... The cart was quite empty of its contents, but one bag was afterwards discovered washed up against a sand bank ... A reward has been offered to the Fingoes for 5s. for every bag recovered; this will no doubt induce them to exert themselves. Great praise is due to Mr Wilmott for the promptitude with which he has acted in this case.¹⁷²

Besides the fact that the ethnic association of the black participants is specifically mentioned ("Fingoes" and not "Kaffirs") it is interesting that the focus of the report is otherwise firmly on the white participants in this tragedy. Although the (unidentified) Fingoes ("upon request") entered a river in full flood to make the gruesome discovery of the deceased, the report in the end rather sarcastically suggests that a monetary reward is needed to mobilise them.

Mr Wilmott, who no doubt showed some initiative, is also the only participant singled out for praise.

The reference above to a monetary reward as motivation for the Mfengu to act might also be part of another 19th-century racist theme. Besides their role as soldiers and farm labourers of the white settlers, and due to their apparent industriousness in trade and agriculture, the Mfengu were dubbed "the Jews of Kaffirland" by 19th-century observers such as Ayliff and Whiteside.¹⁷³

This interpretation is supported by another reference in the April 1851 edition of *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines' Friend* to a report in the *Cape Town Mail* (1 February 1851) which stated:

In the apprehension of Kaffirs suspected of being in the Colony as spies the Graham's Town Fingoes have, during the past month, been very active; and the magistrate having established a rule of giving the captors all the property found upon the prisoners works well, stimulating our allies to great energy.

In response, the April 1851 edition of *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines' Friend* made the following telling prediction: "The Fingoes are described [in the report above] as rendering themselves useful in another capacity; but the rectitude applied to excite their exertions is very questionable, and their want of morality may hereafter be complained about by the parties who have promoted it".

Despite the unequal and conditional alliance with the Mfengu, colonial authorities also employed other members of indigenous groups in questionable activities.

According to a letter which appeared in the *Port Elizabeth Mercury* on 12 October 1850 (and reprinted in the January 1851 edition of *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines' Friend*) a "detachment of the Kaffir Police" including "four Hottentots and ten Bushmen surprised a Bushmen Kraal, shot some Bushmen, but took no cattle ... fell in with another Bushmen Kraal, killed four men, took one man, nine women, and eight children prisoners, because they had some cattle and horses". The writer bemoaned the fact that the government were allowing Bushmen ["... capable of instruction as well as other natives of this country"] to be killed indiscriminately over cattle and stated that he had "heard Boers regret much the carelessness and recklessness in

which they had spilt their [Bushmen's] blood in former times: it left a sting on their consciousness they could never fully eradicate".¹⁷⁴

The Kaffir Police was started in January 1847 with a hundred men and stationed at Alice in the Eastern Cape.¹⁷⁵ Their numbers were steadily increased to 446 men, but in 1851 most of them deserted to the enemy. While operational, they were in two divisions.¹⁷⁶ In each division there were "four European officers, three European sergeants, and eight Kaffir corporals".¹⁷⁷ The principal task of the force was to prevent cattle theft, but they also took part in military operations. The force was praised by some high-ranking officials, including the governor, Harry Smith, but "the colonists were very suspicious of its fidelity and regarded the training of the men to the use of arms as an experiment fraught with danger".¹⁷⁸

Thus, despite signs of cooperation, support and integration in colonial affairs, members of indigenous groups were generally regarded with suspicion, and increasingly presented as a homogenous "out-group".

Surveillance

The media select and process specific content from a virtually borderless universe of possibilities and in the process construct and circulate meaning. The media therefore cannot simply be regarded as truthful "mirrors" of society. But, as race talk occurs within specific historical contexts and are thus not "timeless" or "universal", some functions of the media, like surveillance, seems to be "reflective" of a particular society. Surveillance includes actions where the media "patrol" the boundaries of acceptable behaviour by providing criticism of unacceptable behaviour, or a platform for others to do so. While one can argue that a large part of editorial content in the media falls in this category, as reports and debates about politics, law and order and morality are central to news coverage, the role of advertisements must also be considered. In other words, what a newspaper allows its readers to announce is telling about its editorial stance and what its readers might find acceptable (or at least not totally unacceptable).

The issue of labour, and the position of indigenous people in the developing colonial economy, was centrally important. The Khoi and (to a lesser extent) San were systematically subjugated as a labour class as the colony expanded,

but the confrontation with Xhosas in the Eastern Cape led to new challenges and regulations.

Ordinance 49 of 1828 provided for the entry of Africans seeking work in the Colony, a measure “aimed not only at coping with greater demands by white employers, but also reflecting an attempt to control the influx of Africans over the boundary between ‘white’ colony and ‘black’ Kaffraria”.¹⁷⁹ In addition to the pressing of settlers and traders towards the areas occupied by the Xhosas, Bundy also lists internal violent struggles and displacements inside the communities of “Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa”,¹⁸⁰ particularly the *mfecane* (or “forced migration”), as reason why a class of Africans emerged “who found access to land (the primary means of production) denied to them, and they – like the Khoi before them – were forced to enter into the labour sector of the colonial economy”.¹⁸¹ The flow of labour was “greatly accelerated by a scheme, allegedly requested by the Xhosa themselves, whereby ‘Kaffir youths’ were indentured for three years’ servitude in distant parts of the Colony”.¹⁸² According to Peires:

Ordinance 49 of 1828 had given Xhosas passes to seek work, thus enabling them to squat on white farms and to change employers with relative ease. Under Ordinance 3 of 1848 ... the Xhosa was firmly indentured to particular employers before they even enter the Colony, without necessarily specifying the wages they would be paid.¹⁸³

On Thursday 30 January 1851, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* carried a notice signed by J.J. Beck:

Absconded on the 22d instant, January, from D’Urban (Tygerberg), the Undersigned’s Negro Apprentice, named Manuelle, marked C on the left breast, rather stout, stature about 5 feet, dressed in leather trousers, brown moleskin jacket, white shirt and had a straw hat on. He is supposed to have gone to the Paarl or Banghoek. Any one lodging him in prison or with the Undersigned will be rewarded and those harbouring him prosecuted.¹⁸⁴

In 1857, the Kaffir Employment Bill was introduced in the Cape parliament, because the “influx of Xhosa from across the Kei in search of work and succour ... alarmed the politicians”.¹⁸⁵ The bill enforced five-year compulsory contracts of indenture on African job-seekers, who had no say in the terms of the contracts. At the end of that year “nearly 30 000 Xhosa had registered

as labourers in the colony, with perhaps an equal number entering the colony unregistered".¹⁸⁶ Keegan writes:

For the first time, Xhosa in large numbers travelled as far as the western Cape to work. John Fairbairn, son-in-law and former ally of the humanitarian Philips, protested that the introduction of a large mass of Africans would "form a savage element in the population", and that "the armed savage was even less to be dreaded than the domestic savage". *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, mouthpiece for progressive Afrikaans opinion, warned that "every mountain and kloof would be infested with prowling savages".¹⁸⁷

In *De Zuid-Afrikaan* of Thursday 1 December 1859, ironically exactly 25 years to the day after the official abolition of slavery at the Cape, the following notice appear under the name of "J.H. Neethling, Sen." of "Neethlings Hof, Nov. 29, 1859".¹⁸⁸

Absconded on Sunday night, 27th November, 1859, the undersigned's indentured Kafir named *Sinandilie* or *Nandilie*, about 18 years old of black color and dressed in check jacket, new drab trowsers and Leghorn hat. His teeth are wide apart. Whoever lodges him on my farm or in the goals of Stellenbosch or Cape Town will be rewarded. He is without a pass, and parties are therefore warned not to employ him. Corn farmers will also be on their guard, as he has gone in that direction. [original italics]¹⁸⁹

These examples in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* show that after the official abolition of slavery in 1834 the colonial government made it possible for white employers to treat black labourers effectively as slaves. The fact that it was acceptable amongst the publishers and readers of the newspapers is indicated by the submission and publications of these notices of surveillance.

RACE TALK IN THE BLACK PRESS DURING COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID

Introduction

The first mass media platforms for and by indigenous people developed more or less at the same time as the white colonial press, but they were restricted by several factors. These included limited resources and literacy, as well as continued colonial investment, oversight and control. An internal ideological schism also developed between a small Western-educated elite and the indigenous rural population at large and hampered the formulation of a united political vision.

Switzer identifies four phases in the history of the "alternative" press in South Africa before the end of apartheid.¹⁹⁰ The first period is the African mission press (1830s-1880s), followed by the independent protest press (1880s-1930s), the early resistance press (1930s-1960s) and the later resistance press (1970s-1980s). In turn, Hachten and Giffard¹⁹¹ also identify four stages, which roughly correspond with the outline and time frame of Switzer. They are: a missionary period, an independent period, a white-owned period, and a multi-racial period. Johnson refers to three states: missionary beginnings (1830-1880), the elitist press (1880-1930) and black readers-white capital (1931-1977).¹⁹²

The missionary period: Cooperation and resistance

Numerous scholars agree that the emergence of a black press¹⁹³ in South Africa is tied to the work of Christian missionary stations. The missions not only supplied the “skills and technical tools of journalism, but under their influence black progress was defined in terms of the assimilation of Western ‘civilisation’”.¹⁹⁴ Thus the “first known series of publications aimed at black readers, Tswana religious tracts entitled *Morisa oa Molema*, by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Kuruman in the early 1830s” contained features like “an elementary spelling book, a small catechism [and] some hymns”.¹⁹⁵

In 1857 William Ashton of the LMS, manager of the printing press in Kuruman, started a Setswana newspaper, *Mokaeri oa Becuana* (Instructor/Animator of the Batswana).¹⁹⁶ Ashton’s “stated purpose was to promote Tswana literacy as well as Christian teachings”, therefore “a significant portion of each issue was devoted to news and reports submitted by or about Africans”. Ashton was critical that the British reluctantly allowed Boer expansion without much protest and provided coverage and discussed various resultant armed conflicts in Southern Africa in the course of 1858, which he described as a “major function of the newspaper”.¹⁹⁷ In July war also reached the readers of *Mokaeri oa Becuana* when “a few Batlhaping from Bodigelong joined a group of Kora in an attack on some Boer farms”¹⁹⁸ along the lower Vaal River. The Boers retaliated and “first destroyed Bodigelong and beheaded its leader, Gasebonwe, and then attacked several other African communities in the area”. At Taung, “over 400 building were destroyed, including the church, and many women and children were captured”.

From August 1858 to March 1859 this newspaper published a summary of events, reports and treaties, as well as a series of correspondence between role players, including Ashton; Mosweu, a Kora leader; Mahura Molehabangwe, a major Tswana leader; Paul Kruger, Marthinus Pretorius and Jacobus Boshof of the ZAR; George Grey, Governor of the Cape Colony; and the Griqua leader Nicholas Waterboer.¹⁹⁹

In the letters the Boers claimed that they were defending their property and “imposing order on a lawless land, but ... Mahura denied guilt and instead blamed others for instigating the fighting”.²⁰⁰ Mahura, “as the most powerful ruler on the lower Vaal River ... condemned the violence and insisted that

he, with God's help, was doing his utmost to avoid conflict". But the Boers were "[U]nmoved by such entreaties" and "continued to enforce their claims, and despite publicity of their plight, Batswana would continue to lose control over their land, cattle and labour, eventually succumbing to European colonial control".

At the same time, the attitudes of missionaries were shifting. Volz and Mgadla writes that despite the missionaries being sympathetic to the Batswana, they were "also shocked by the violence and the potential disintegration of their missions".²⁰¹ They therefore adopted an "increasingly colonial perspective" and "became critical of Tswana military activity as provocative and futile, and they advocated instead an expansion of British government into the interior to settle disputes between Africans and Europeans".²⁰² This angered the Batswana, who became "mistrustful of all Europeans", and although "some Batswana would continue to espouse the avowed humanitarianism and Christianity, after 1860 they would do so more often as individuals within colonial society than as intact African-led communities".²⁰³

Important for the focus of this book the Batswana would "increasingly employ literacy as a tool in their dealing with Europeans ..."; "texts would soon take precedence over face-to-face negotiations and ultimately leave a more lasting record than the recollections of individuals".²⁰⁴ Also noticeable is that while "the Boers complained that *Mokaeri's* coverage was partisan and exacerbated tensions, LMS missionaries insisted that they only sought to foster peace with their 'little monthly newspaper'".²⁰⁵

On the eastern "frontier" and before *Mokaeri oa Becuana* played its role in the northern interior, the first newspaper aimed at a black audience was *Umshumayeli Wendaba* (Publisher of the News), printed in Xhosa by missionaries in Grahamstown from 1837-1841.²⁰⁶ Thereafter, the missionary station Lovedale played an important part in the future development of a black press, by publishing *Ikwezi* (Morning Star) between 1844 and 1845 and establishing *Indaba* (The News) in 1862. The Lovedale Press also monopolised early book publishing in Xhosa.²⁰⁷ It, for instance, published the novel *Mhudi* by Sol Plaatje in 1930 (see discussion below).

The newspaper *Indaba* was written in Xhosa and English and published the work of Tiyo Soga (1829-1871), described as "the first great black literary figure

of the nineteenth century".²⁰⁸ He was "the first African to obtain his education in Europe", according to Masilela, and despite being heavily influenced by Western modernisation, also initiated "the tradition of intellectual resistance to colonialism".²⁰⁹ Thereafter, it was the following generation of "Xhosa intellectuals of the 1880s, some of whom had been his students, who laid the foundation for the transformation of European modernity into New African modernity". Masilela continues:

This monumental transformative process was the *raison d'être* for the existence of what we may term the "New African Movement" which arched across South African cultural history from Tiyo Soga in the 1860s and terminated with Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele (a member of the Sophiatown Resistance of the 1950s).²¹⁰

One of these early intellectuals, Gwayi Tyamzashe, argued that "the various Associations and Societies founded by African themselves were searching for ways to disengage African people from European domination and patronage".²¹¹ Tyamzashe argues firstly that Christianity was "the fundamental achievement of Western Civilisation" and "an essential vehicle for the realisation and attainment of modernity". Secondly, English language and literature "was necessary for any people moving beyond tradition to modernity". The third factor he deemed important was "native newspapers", such as *Isigidimi Sama-Xhosa* (The Xhosa Messenger).

Isigidimi Sama-Xhosa emerged in 1870, also at Lovedale, as the Xhosa section of the *Kafir Express*, but became independent in 1876 and is thus considered as the "first African newspaper to be edited by blacks in Southern Africa; a harbinger of the second phase of the black press"²¹² [the elitist press – GB]. At this stage "nascent elements of political opposition" were visible, although "extremely muted".²¹³ But still the newspaper, under the editorship of first John Tengo Jabavu and later William Wellington Gqoba, was considered to be an expression of the "black man's point of view".²¹⁴

The fact that the missions dominated the emergence of black publishing had "profound implications", according to Johnson, who writes:

Once can already distinguish a widening gap between the minority black elite which had received mission education, and the rural-based majority which had not ... black leaders, who found themselves "walking ... a tightrope between collaboration with and resistance against their white oppressors" [in reference to Switzer and Switzer]

... The gap between the “blanket people” and the “school people” ... stemmed for this time.²¹⁵

From around 1880 onwards elements of the black elite broke away from the mission oversight, which opened the way for criticism of both the colonial and religious establishment.²¹⁶ John Tengu Jabavu, who edited *Isigidimi Sama-Xhosa* in 1881, made “the symbolic break from mission control” when he founded *Imvo Zabantsundu* (African Opinion) in November 1884. Now ownership and control were also in black (elite) hands for the first time. Johnson describes *Imvo Zabantsundu* as “an important catalyst for independent black publishing, and something of a political archetype of the period”. The newspaper accepted “principles of non-violence” and that blacks necessarily had to work together with “liberal” whites to reform “a white-dominated, multi-racial society”.²¹⁷

But in the late 1890s “young Xhosa intellectuals” such as S.E.K. Mqhayi and Allan Kirkland Soga “disagreed with the reactionary political line” expressed by Jabavu in *Imvo Zabantsundu*, and launched *Izwi la Bantu*²¹⁸ in 1897.²¹⁹ *Imvo Zabantsundu* went in decline and *Izwi la Bantu*, edited by, amongst others, Songa, was viewed as more radical than *Imvo Zabantsundu*, inter alia by stressing that Africans should assert themselves and affect their own improvement. Songa was involved in the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), a direct forerunner of the ANC, in 1912 and “*Izwi la Bantu* can be seen as an important ancestor of the host of organisation-supporting publications which were to emerge in the early part of the 20th Century”.²²⁰ Whereas “most of the Xhosa Intellectuals of the 1880s argued for the primacy of English in their definition of modernity, the *Izwi la Bantu* intellectual group, and especially S.E.K. Mqhayi, postulated the inevitable necessity of African languages not only in the construction of new forms of literary expression but also in the forging of the emergent national consciousness”.

In Natal, John Langalibalele Dube founded *Ilanga lase Natal* (The Natal Sun) in 1903. The newspaper developed “largely within the tradition established by *Imvo Zabantsundu* and *Izwi la Bantu*, becoming politically involved but carefully nurturing a reputation for ‘responsibility’ and ‘moderation’...”.²²¹ According to Johnson, Dumbrill remarked:

Dr Dube’s first test of courage in his new venture came in 1906 when the Bambata rebellion hit the country. As the sole mouthpiece of the Zulus, suspicions abounded, especially in official circles, that *Ilanga*

might have instigated the rebellion. A close watch was kept on what the newspaper disseminated. But through his able pen and clear-mindedness, Dr Dube dispelled all fear and suspicion that his paper was out to cause trouble.²²²

Dube is cited as follows by Ukpanah:

My grandfather was a powerful Zulu chief. He was a reformer and did not agree with Chaka ... the leading Zulu king who believed that the only way to have power was always to be on the warpath ... I think it was better than being a king, to be a Christian, because Christianity is the greatest civiliser in the world.²²³

Ukpanah thus supports the view that the missionary trained early African *petite bourgeoisie* served as "political and cultural ombudsman for the 'uncivilized' African masses".²²⁴ According to Ukpanah these intellectuals "would react primarily to events that were initiated by those who ruled, and they would not seriously challenge the racial order until the 1940s". For example, Tiyo Soga (already mentioned above), "one of the first Africans to be trained abroad and the first Xhosa missionary to his people, was quoted as saying that: 'British conquest was legitimate because it was a vehicle for civilisation ordained by God for the salvation and elevation of the blacks. [African] society should be purged of all that was obnoxious to Christian morality'".²²⁵

Masimela states that it was "English capitalism, imperialism and colonialism that brought European modernity to South Africa".²²⁶ But right from the start the project "was contested in one form or another by Africans and indigenous people (the San and the Khoe Khoe)". Masimela writes that English imperialism eventually defeated these traditional societies and "positioned them in a state of permanent cultural and political crisis". The defeat of traditional societies allowed capitalism to spread. He continues:

The implantation of this system of exploitation imposed challenges to African people while paradoxically and simultaneously providing pathways for African people to overcome these challenges through appropriation of modern European intellectual, political and cultural inventions. European modernity constituted itself as a great historical enigma in oppressing African people, yet at the same time providing them – however unintentionally – with the tools of their own liberation.²²⁷

The important role of the missionaries is addressed by Masimela, who states that they were "undoubtedly complicit with European imperialism in oppressing

African people” but also established the conditions “that enabled Africans to overthrow the hegemonic forms and structures of European modernity”. The provision of the English language, modern education and Christianity “enabled Africans to not only overturn their oppression and domination, but also to transform themselves into modern agents through political praxis”.²²⁸

Masimela’s argument thus works against the idea that an authentic, essential, pure traditional African culture must be “rediscovered” before and in order for Africans to be “decolonised”. His argument connects to theories of hybridity, and, ironically enough, also to a basic departure point of the philosophy of Frantz Fanon, a popular reference point for students who rediscovered Black Consciousness in post-apartheid South Africa, namely that the colonists and colonised remain inextricably linked.

What both current-day African essentialists and European supremacists forget, is that Western “civilisation” resulted from processes of colonisation and hybridisation over millennia, during which Europeans were also at times regarded as the “barbarians”. The same processes were also at work in Africa, and the invasion of the Dutch at the Cape in the 17th century was part of the never-ending ebb and flow of humans across the globe.

The Union and beyond

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 took place after inter alia the military defeat of the Xhosa and Zulu kingdoms in the Eastern Cape and Zululand and the Boer republics during the South African War (1899-1902). With the period of colonial war and resistance thus at an end, power against colonised peoples was henceforth exercised via a centralised state. The birth of the Union can therefore be regarded as the birth of South African state racism, which reached its pinnacle in the apartheid state from 1948 onwards.

The first major blow against the rights of indigenous people in this era was ironically struck by a court of law of the Union, according to Cornwell:

On 14 December 1911 a full bench of the Union Appeal Court handed down a judgement ... specifying that the phrase “of European descent” in the South Africa Act was intended to mean “of wholly European parentage or extraction” ... At a stroke the colour bar was erected at the highest level of the Constitution, and the social fate

of millions of South Africans of colour, henceforth excluded from all facilities and institutions reserved “for Europeans only,” was sealed.²²⁹

Next, the 1913 Land Act limited black South Africans to ownership of approximately only 13% of the country's land, which meant that their subjugation was formalised in practice. Besides the issue of “race relations” the policies of the Union were dominated by its relation to Great Britain.²³⁰ Many Afrikaners wanted a republic while the English wished to remain close to the British Commonwealth. In 1931 the Statute of Westminster was enacted as “an attempt to persuade Afrikaners that South Africa had really achieved independence from Britain”,²³¹ but not all were convinced. The beginning of World War II further divided those in favour of supporting Britain from their republican opponents, some of whom harboured sympathies for Germany.

These decades were thus characterised by intense power struggles between different English and Afrikaner political, economic and cultural factions, and the election victory of the National Party (NP) in 1948 was a major upset. At the same time indigenous resistance continued in various forms and became increasingly militant as the century progressed. The NP ruthlessly entrenched its power and finally united Afrikaner and English interests in the main by putting into motion its grand vision of a white South Africa, prosperous and safe, with cheap labour available from the independent black homelands at the margins. Some initial success (in economic terms for whites particularly) resulted in optimism, especially when the Union officially became the Republic in 1961.

But the local and international backlash against the racist state gained momentum, and the unjust and unrealistic social engineering project slowly grinded to a halt and collapsed under its own weight. Despite extreme militarisation to suppress various resistance movements and desperate measures to sidestep boycotts and sanctions and keep the economy afloat during the 1980s, the NP had little choice but to start negotiations with representatives of the black majority. In 1990 Nelson Mandela was released and the process to end apartheid and white minority rule officially started. The first inclusive, non-racial democratic elections occurred on 27 April 1994.

The elitist independent black press (1910-1930)

The formation of the ANC in Bloemfontein on 8 January 1912 is described by Johnson as “an organisational turning point”.²³² Most of the pioneering journalists of the era were involved, and one of the first actions was to establish a newspaper, *Abantu-Batho*, as mouthpiece in 1913. While it may have been “radical within the context of the period, the ANC ... saw itself as a ‘consulting’ body rather than as a liberation movement, the struggle being for ‘... European acceptance of Africans, not power’”.²³³

Another prominent publication in this era was the *Worker's Herald*, organ of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), which was published from 1923-1928. It is described by Switzer and Switzer as “a self-styled radical journal which cited segregation and capitalism ... as the twin oppressors of the African people”.²³⁴

There were also “church-based publications”, such as *Izindaba Zabantu*, *Ikanyiso Yase Natal* and *Izwela Kiti*, which broadened the scope beyond traditional boundaries of denomination and ecclesiastics.²³⁵ The Zulu newspaper *Izindaba Zabantu*, for instance, was founded by Abbot Gerard, Provost in the Marianhill Monastery in Pinetown in 1911, and edited by Father John Baptist Sauter from 1923.²³⁶ It published predominantly in isiZulu, but also included regular English reports and articles. In the edition of 2 January 1925 the article “Social Considerations for the Native” states that “[T]he Native is often described as a big child and unfit for anything, but the lowest scale of humanity, as the phrase goes: a hewer of wood and a drawer of water”.²³⁷ The article continues:

Not as if these occupations were necessarily in themselves dishonourable or degrading, as no honest labour deserves either of these supercilious expressions. As a fact, in Europe the white man not only has to engage in these inferior occupations, but even far worse ones, for the simple reason that there is nobody else to do them for him.

The article goes on to argue that “there is absolutely no reason why he [the native] should not rise in the social scale, and very considerable too, if he earnestly endeavours by using his opportunities to improve himself and doing his utmost to develop the hidden faculties at his disposal, faculties for which

many a European may justly envy him". As "proof", the article refers to the fact that "some Natives have succeeded to make a good name for themselves known far beyond their country, for instance Booker Washington, Professor Jabavu, and many others". In America, the article states, "they have risen in every sphere of life, and have achieved independence, fame and fortune in a manner as to command our esteem and admiration".

On 9 January 1925, there appears an article written by "Our Own Correspondent" with the triple headline "Meeting of Natives at Harding: Faction fighting must be stopped: Whiteman's Liquor not wanted".²³⁸ According to the report "[A]bout a thousand natives assembled at the Chief Jolwayo's Kraal ... to welcome the President of the Natal Native Congress (Mr J.T. Gumede)". He was welcomed by "Mr H.C. Sehole, an educated native who speaks English fluently". An interpreter, Mr R.R. Mayne Zulu, from the "Magistrate's Office, Harding, was also present".

According to the report, Gumede said that "he had accepted the position of President of the Natal Native Congress and leader of the Natives in Natal to endeavour to show the natives that the time had come when they must realise their position in the land in which they live". The report continues:

The whiteman had done his share in teaching the natives, and the natives must now wake up and imitate and emulate the whiteman. The Europeans retained his land by improving and working on it, and producing for the markets. That was the only way the natives could hold their land securely. It was the way that every nation advanced.

According to the report, Gumede then stated that although many might not believe him, the "early Britons were far more ignorant and uncivilised than the present natives". They "went about in skins and lived in mud huts, and it was not until the Romans came amongst them, as the Europeans had come amongst the natives today, that the British went ahead". He continued:

If the early Britons could work their way up to the position they now held, there was no reason why the natives could not do likewise. The British at present owned more territory than any other nation, and the sun never set upon the territory of the British Empire. In Africa there must not be Pondos, Zulu, Basutos, Mashonas, etc. but a (sic) must be Africans. The white race in Africa came under one heading, viz, Europeans. In times of trouble or war they were not English, Scotch, Dutch, etc., but all Europeans.

Gumede also addressed the “native question” which was “a difficult one and was being considered and discussed all over the world”. He said that he had visited different European countries, and that the “British were slow in moving, but when they did move, they took a lot of stopping”. Gumede urged that “[F] action fights amongst natives should be stopped” because it “dragged natives down to poverty”. The government was “thanked ... for prohibiting the sale and supply of intoxicating liquor to natives”, because they must “never be allowed to drink the whiteman’s liquor”. He stated that the natives “must continue their loyalty to the rulers of this country, and never forget what the late Queen Victoria did for the natives”. Also, the “services rendered by the natives during the last great war were appreciated by the Government and all the British people. Last August, they in South Africa had a visit from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who has the ear of the King, which showed that England had not forgotten the natives”.

Gumede, according to the report, referred to a policy of segregation which would be brought before Parliament in 1925. He said that it “has been reported in the press, but he did not know if it was true, that a Mr Barlow, of Bloemfontein, had suggested that all the natives should be removed to Basutoland”. In relation to existing legislation such as the Native Land Act, the Native Affairs Act No. 23 of 1920 and the Native Urban Areas Act No. 21 of 1923, as well as the “proposed native taxation” a deputation of the Natal Native Congress had “last month waited upon the authorities in Pretoria and submitted a number of resolutions”.

Izindaba Zabantu also published articles in 1925 under the headings “Psychology”²³⁹ and “Social History”²⁴⁰, written by European clerics, clearly as a part of the European civilising mission. Another regular was “Teachers’ column”, which focused on topics like “The Negro in America: Race problem”.²⁴¹

Rising militancy amongst black workers between 1917 and 1920, which culminated in the 1920 mineworkers strike, alerted whites in “official” and “liberal” circles to the fact that it “represented a threat to the status quo” and “[B]lack newspapers were identified as part of this threat”.²⁴² The establishment by the Chamber of Mines in 1920 of *Umteteli Wa Bantu* (The mouthpiece of the people), with a wide free distribution, can be seen as an “early warning” that the first phase of a black independent press was

coming to an end. It set the trend for the next period of white ownership of the black press.²⁴³

At the time the South African Communist Party saw itself as a potential ally of the emerging black proletariat and in general seemed to refrain from using the K-word, preferring "native" and "Bantu" instead, and suggesting alternatives such as "Ethiopian". In 1923 Jones writes to the Executive Committee of Communist International (COMINTERN) that:

The term "Negro" is not used in South Africa. The word "Bantu" is an inclusive term for the negro races South of the Equator. This word "Negro" has also the stigma of slavery and association with the word "Nigger" attached to it, although it is the widest understood. But if the COMINTERN should popularise the far more inclusive and dignified term "Ethiopian" as the sign of the race emergence to proletarian consciousness, it would be an achievement. But perhaps this had better be left to the congress.²⁴⁴

But there were many practical problems in joining forces. On an earlier occasion, in 1921, the South African delegation to Communist International states that:

Normally, all the activity of the South African Communists is among the whites, although the subject matter for propaganda largely includes the native labour question. Our members and supporters find themselves in white Trade Unions and are preoccupied with the fight against class collaboration there. There are hardly any native linguists among the white Communists (White Communists with the knowledge of African languages). The common medium of expression between whites and natives is "Kitchen Kaffir", a very inadequate kind of native esperanto. On the occasions when we have issued leaflets in the native languages we had to depend on translators.²⁴⁵

Besides the language divisions, the South African delegation to Communist International also noted as obstacles to a unified Communist Party "the two widely standards of life" between the white and black proletariat, and the "very primitive character of the Negro race, just emerging from the tribal system".²⁴⁶

It is thus informative to see how even those sympathetic to the plight of black people in general, like members of the SACP, were struggling to break out of the restrictions of colonial perspectives, in part due to the lack of a different vocabulary. It is part of a theme of modernisation and will be further illustrated

with reference to the work of one of the finest black intellectuals, writers and journalists of the first half of the 20th century, Sol Plaatje.

Sol Plaatje's race talk

Plaatje (1876-1932) was a pioneer of the black press and a founding member of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which later became the ANC. Besides a volume of journalistic works, pamphlets and letters, he wrote three books, his eyewitness account of the siege of Mafeking during the South African War, called *Mafeking Dairy* (1899-1900), the political manifest *Native life in South Africa* (1916), and the novel *Mhudi* (1930).

Native life in South Africa was the result of Plaatje's campaign against and criticism of the 1913 Natives Land Act. He famously wrote in the opening paragraphs of the book: "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth."

Thereafter he ceaselessly wrote and spoke out against the deteriorating state of affairs for Africans as segregation between whites and blacks in the Union were further entrenched. Plaatje's rich literary legacy deserves more individual attention and analysis, but for the purposes of this book the attention turns briefly to *Mhudi*, a multi-faceted historical novel which illustrates the perspectives of not only its talented author, but arguably also those of a generation of black intellectuals.

Like others of his pioneering generation, Plaatje was trained at a mission school, at Pniel near Kimberley in the current Northern Cape Province.²⁴⁷ He started *Mhudi* already in 1920 in England, while he was campaigning internationally for indigenous rights, but he could not secure a publisher until a decade later.²⁴⁸ The novel, in part the love story of the title character and her husband, Ra-Thaga, is set against the backdrop of first contact between the Barolong, the Boers or Voortrekkers, and the Matabele (as Plaatje called the Ndebele). The book clearly demonstrates how a member of the colonised indigenous population is caught between colonial and African perspectives and tries to resolve the tensions between traditionalism and modernity in search for a unique, liberated voice.

Mhudi

Plaatje inter alia fictionalises the complex relationship between a 19th-century Morolong (plural Barolong) man, Ra-Thaga, and a young white Voortrekker he encountered and befriended, called de Villiers. The book illustrates tensions between different competing perspectives on many levels, but is especially informative as an early 20th-century example of race talk amongst black intellectuals, often caught between the pressures of western colonisation and modernisation and efforts to maintain links to their own African history and way of life.

On the one hand the story retells and brings to prominence the marginalised history of the “Bechuana tribes” who “inhabited the extensive areas between Central Transvaal and the Kalahari Desert”.²⁴⁹ Plaatje accounts how “they led their patriarchal life under their several chiefs who owed no allegiance to any king or emperor”. He recalls that Kunana, “near the present boundary between Cape Colony and Western Transvaal, was the capital city of the Barolong, the original stock of the several tribes, who also followed the humdrum yet interesting life of the other Bechuana Natives”.²⁵⁰

But if Plaatje is regarded here as an example of a “subaltern” who is empowered by literacy and thus finds his voice to “talk back” to colonialism, the results are not always predictable. The idealised idyllic pastoral life of the Barolong is initially not disturbed by white colonists, but, writes Plaatje, by “one Mzilikazi, king of a ferocious tribe called the Matabele, a powerful usurper of determined character who by his sword proclaimed himself ruler over all the land”.²⁵¹ They broke away from the “Zulu nation which Chaka once ruled with an iron rod” and facing westward, drove “terror into man and beast with whom they came in contact”. Plaatje writes:

They continued their march very much like a swarm of locusts; scattering the Swazis, terrifying the Basuto and the Bapedi on their outposts, they drove them back to the mountains at the point of the assegai; and, trekking through the heart of the Transvaal, they eventually invaded Bechuanaland where they reduced the Natives to submission.

These descriptions of the “Matabele” are reminiscent of colonial and apartheid accounts of South African “tribal” history, especially the upheavals of the Mfecuna. According to Plaatje’s book the Matabele established the city

of Inzwinyani in Bahurutshe territory as their capital and the "Bechuana inhabitants were permitted to remain on condition that their chiefs should pay tribute to Mzilikazi". They also gradually enlarged their dominion, and "enforced taxation first upon one and then another of the surrounding Bechuana clans, including the Barolong at Kunana, whose chief at the time was Tauana". But the "new discipline was not stern; and as long as each chief paid taxes each spring time in acknowledgement of his fealty to Mzilikazi, the Bechuana were left in undisturbed possession of their old homes and haunts".²⁵² Over time though, tensions developed, as Plaatje describes:

... unfortunately the conquerors not only imported a fresh discipline but they also introduced manners that were extremely offensive even for these primitive people. For instance, the victorious soldiers were in the habit of walking about in their birthday garb thereby forcing the modest Bechuana women and children to retire on each appearance of Matabele men ... Needless to say, this outrage so shocking to local susceptibilities was resented by the original population and became a perpetual source of discontent.

Plaatje firstly refers to the traditional "Bechuana" as "primitive" people and thus activates a colonial reference of distinction between "civilised/developed" and "savage/traditional" behaviour and culture, which also became part of modernisation discourses in the early 20th century. But he furthermore creates a hierarchy of "civilisation" between the "Bechuana" and "Matabele" as well. When the relative peace between the two indigenous groups eventually ended, Plaatje, for instance, writes:

... they noticed with horror that the Matabele were not fighting men only; they were actually spearing fleeing women and children. Ra-Thaga saw one of them killing a woman and as she fell back, the man grasped her little baby and dashed its skull against the trunk of a tree. The sight almost took his breath away.²⁵³

During the rise of Afrikaner nationalism similar tales about the "savage" conduct of warring indigenous peoples became part of the popular imagination. But the important difference is that these accounts united all "blacks" under the same rubric, while Plaatje is idealising one group above another. This does not imply that he paints the Barolong as pacifists, for at one stage he writes:

To speak the truth, Ra-Thaga and the other young bloods were glad (about the prospect of war). Old men liked to recount their wondrous deeds of valour in the wars they had fought, and young men were

always pining for an opportunity to test their own strength in a really good fight.²⁵⁴

At this stage of the story the Boer character de Villiers is introduced. After the Boers were also defeated by Mzilikazi's Matabele army, they found refuge amongst the Barolong at Thaba Nchu. Plaatje writes:

... there sprang up a lively friendship between de Villiers, the young Boer, and Ra-Thaga ... They made up their minds to learn each other's language ... they both made very good progress. There was one special bond of fellow-feeling between them, namely, their mutual aversion to the Matabele. Ra-Thaga could never forgive the sacking of Kunana, nor de Villiers the loss of his cattle and those of his relatives.²⁵⁵

Plaatje also conveyed a sense of the mind-set of this "friendly" Boer, which did not seem to bother his Morolong acquaintance, seemingly because the latter were placed on a higher scale of civilisation than the Matabele:

His Boer pride was repeatedly hurt when he recollected how badly they had been worsted by the wild folk whom his people called "nude kaffirs" ... Sometimes he would burst out ... saying: "Oh that our cattle were captured by friendly Hottentots, or reasonable Natives such as the Barolong, instead of those wild savages!"

Ra-Thaga seemingly agreed that the Boers' way of life was superior in some respects, as Plaatje describes:

Almost every time he went up to the Hoek he returned to his house with tales of fresh virtues he had discovered among the Boers. Their unerring shooting, their splendid horsemanship, the dexterity of Boer women with the needle; the beautiful aroma of the food they cooked (possibly due to the fact that their iron pots were always systematically scrubbed and cleaned), and the lustre of their eating utensils.²⁵⁶

His wife, Mhudi, did not share his enthusiasm, and on visiting the Boer settlement one day she witnessed the vicious assault of a "Hottentot maid" which confirmed her suspicions. She first saw "a grizzly old Boer who started to give a Hottentot maid some thunder and lightning with his tongue". The story continues:

The episode which began rather humorously developed quickly into a tragedy. The old lady pulled a poker out of the fire and beat the half naked girl with the hot iron. The unfortunate maid screamed, jumped away and writhed with the pain as she tried to escape. A stalwart young Boer caught hold of the screaming girl and brought her back to the old

dame, who had now left the fireplace and stood beside a vice near the waggon. The young man pressed the head of the Hottentot girl against the vice; the old lady pulled her left ear between the two irons, then screwed the jaws of the vice tightly upon the poor girl's ear. Mhudi looked at de Villiers' mother, but, so far from showing any concern on behalf of the sufferer, she went about her own domestic business as though nothing at all unusual was taking place. The screams of the girl attracted several Dutch men and women who looked as though they enjoyed the sickly sight.²⁵⁷

De Villiers and Ra-Thaga, who were not part of this scene, then returned and the former intervened on the victim's behalf, after Mhudi pleaded her case to her husband. She concluded that her husband "... apparently had the sense to make friends with the one humane Boer that there was amongst the wild men of his tribe". Mhudi told everybody about this encounter and often proclaimed:

My husband's friends! They looked at the girl squirming with pain, with her ear between two irons and they peacefully smoked their pipes like a crowd of people watching a dance. Give me a Matabele rather. He, at any rate, will spear you to death and put an end to your pains.
*My husband's friends!*²⁵⁸

At this stage the hierarchy of civilisation is restated, with the Barolong still on top, but the Boers even below the Matabele.

After his wife's demonstrations Ra-Thaga noticed "several instances of severe flogging of Hottentots ..." and that "compared with the larger population in the Barolong town, the rate of flogging amongst the small population at the Hoek was disproportionately high". He also remarked that "the Boers inflicted corporal punishment by using the birch upon their own children very much like the Barolong; and that, like them, when a Boer child was chastised, someone always shouted pardon, though not as readily as the Barolong did". In contrast:

.... no Boer ever interceded when a Hottentot was flogged; that in punishing Hottentots the Boers used dangerous weapons, the most familiar being the sjambok made of sea-cow hide, or the buckle end of a belt. Further he noticed that the number of lashes they applied to their servants was excessive and sometimes appalling. In these cases, the Boer onlookers would gather round and even assist the castigator. So he was obliged to admit the justice of his wife's allegations.²⁵⁹

One day, Ra-Thaga was himself a victim of the Boers' animosity when he picked up a drinking vessel at the well near their settlement to quench his thirst:

He had hardly stopped drinking when the loud cries of a Dutch boy interrupted him. The boy, howling at the top of his voice, was yelling "the Kaffir, the Kaffir!" Soon a number of Boers were scrambling towards the pool, gesticulating so rapidly and loudly that his Boer vocabulary proved useless to him. With the exception of a few abusive terms he could not distinguish much of what they said, but it soon became clear that the loud profanity was meant for him. For a while things looked very ugly, for he had never seen the Boers so angry.

A few days later Ra-Thaga was called by de Villiers, who assured him that "no Morolong could be hurt by the Boers while they enjoyed Barolong hospitality". He then explained what had happened at the spring:

The cause of the rumpus, he said, was that Boers at their own homes never allow black people to drink out of their vessels. The Boers cannot understand why black people when visited by white men show no such scruples. De Villiers added that whenever Ra-Thaga had been served at the Hoek it was always from vessels reserved for the use of Hottentots, and were he not a Morolong he would have paid for his presumptuous action with a lacerated back. After this information, Ra-Thaga's visits to the Hoek became less frequent.

But the two men remained friends, and Ra-Thaga and de Villiers both agreed not to let Mhudi hear "anything of the latest escapade of 'her husband's friends'".²⁶⁰ In turn, de Villiers were also suspiciously regarded by the other members of the Boer community for his friendly treatment of the "Kaffir and his wife".²⁶¹ They even doubted whether the young man was sane, because the Boers were "God's chosen people" and they "remonstrated with de Villiers and held that it was unnatural to reward a Kaffir for anything he did as liberally as if he were a baptised Christian". But de Villiers responded by referring them to the words of Paul when he said to the Galatians: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, male nor female, White nor Black, but are all one in Christ Jesus".

At the end of the novel, after Mzilikazi had been defeated by the alliance, de Villiers failed to convince Ra-Thaga to "break with his people and remain with him"²⁶² and the two parted as friends. Mhudi had been gifted an old wagon by de Villiers as she is described as "the happy proprietress of a valuable 'house on wheels'".²⁶³ Ra-Thaga and Mhudi were sitting side by side watching the "team

of tired oxen lumbering along slowly in the direction of Thaba Nchu, where a warm welcome was awaiting them". Plaatje writes:

He mused over the hallowed glories of being transported from one end of the country to the other like White people, in their own waggon. Gone were the days of their primitive tramping over long distances, with loads on their heads ... Was it real, or was it just an evanescent dream? These pleasant thoughts occupied their minds in the gathering darkness while the old waggon meandered along and the racket of the waggon wheels on the hard road made a fierce yet not very disagreeable assault upon their ears.²⁶⁴

In sum, the novel paints an often idealistic but still complicated picture of interactions between the various characters, both indigenous and colonial. The Morolong character admires the Boers and teams up with them to defeat the Matabele, but it is made clear that de Villiers is an exception amongst the cruel Boers. Still, the process of paternalistic modernisation unleashed by Western colonialisation is seemingly embraced at the end, as the black characters travel "like White people" in a wagon gifted by a kind Boer. The humane and inclusive Christianity of this Boer would probably also be acceptable to his black friends. Still, Ra-Thaga resisted the pressure to side with (and probably then be in the service of) the white community and returned to his own people.

What has not been mentioned thus far in this brief overview, is that Plaatje also spent time developing the story from the perspective of the dreaded Matabele. An important speech is made by Mzilikazi:

Chaka served us just as treacherously. Where is Chaka's dynasty now? Extinguished, by the very Boers who poisoned my wives and are pursuing us today. The Bechuana are fools to think that these unnatural Kivas (white men) will return their so-called friendship with honest friendship. Together they are laughing at my misery. Let them rejoice; they need all the laughter they can have today for when their deliverers begin to dose them with the same bitter medicine they prepared for me; when the Kivas rob them of their cattle, their children and their lands, they will weep their eyes out of their sockets and get left with only their empty throats to squeal in vain for mercy. They will despoil them of the very lands they have rendered unsafe for us; they will entice the Bechuana youths to war and the chase, only to use them as pack-oxen; yea, they will refuse to share with them the spoils of victory. They will turn Bechuana women into beasts of burden to drag their loaded waggons to their granaries, while their own bullocks are fattening on the hillside and pining for exercise. They will use the

whiplash on the bare skins of women to accelerate their paces and quicken their activities: they shall take Bechuana women to wife and, with them, breed a race of half man and half goblin, and they will deny them their legitimate lobolo. With their cries unheeded these Bechuana will waste away in helpless fury till the gnome offspring of such miscegenation rise up against their cruel sires; by that time their mucus will blend with their tears past their chins down to their heels, then shall come our turn to laugh.²⁶⁵

This elaborate evil prophecy, written at the beginning of the 20th century, would seem to indicate that Plaatje's optimism about the advantages and prospects of modernisation and a common humanity was seriously tempered by his fear of the dark side of Boer "civilisation". The fact that it is put in the mouth of the "savage" Mzilikazi, makes it even more ominous.

Aftermath

Significantly, on 4 March in 1924 (in other words, after *Mhudi* was completed in 1921, but before it was published in 1930) Plaatje wrote an article in the *Cape Argus* in which he disputed the statement by a white government minister of the Union, referred to as Mr Malan, that the Barolong "were settled at Thaba Nchu as a reward for its service to the voortrekkers".²⁶⁶ Plaatje wrote that "as a member of this tribe" he would like to "point out that the voortrekkers found us in permanent occupation at Thaba Nchu, duly acknowledged as owners by King Moshesh of Basuto, at that time the only authority in the neighbourhood". He continued that a certain "Villiers was the first of the voortrekkers to visit our people in the early thirties [of the 19th century]". Plaatje then accounted how Villiers was attacked by "King Mzilikazi" at Vechtkop, and how Chief Moroka of the Barolong took in and protected the Boers at Thaba Nchu afterwards. In 1835, according to Plaatje, "a larger company of voortrekkers, with the aid of the Barolong under chieftain Motshegare, besides Griquas and other Natives, attacked the Matabele stronghold at Choenyane (now western Transvaal) and forced King Mzilikazi to move further north and settle in what is now called Southern Rhodesia".²⁶⁷

The striking correspondence of this narrative to that of *Mhudi* indicates that Plaatje employed actual accounts of Barolong oral history in the novel. The article in the *Cape Argus* also displayed his irritation with what he regarded as treacherous and dishonest dealings by white leaders past and present,

who were systematically forcing black people off their lands and making it difficult for them to make a decent living. He takes exception at a statement by prime minister Hertzog that the Barolong is “as destructive as baboons” because “they do not leave a mealie standing”. Plaatje then accounted how some Barolong in 1911 [before the Land Act was promulgated] “cultivated their lands to such good effect that they reaped as much as 3,000 bags of wheat in several places while their Boer neighbours reaped from 200 to 500 muid”. He then stated bitterly:

If, as General Hertzog so forcibly pointed out, this be the character of baboons, political economists would retort that it were better to let baboons get to work and flood the Free State with food than have a lot of hungry poor whites groaning at the treasury gates for relief.

The tension visible in *Mhudi* between a positive interpretation of Christianity, as embodied by de Villiers, and the cruel application thereof by most of the Boer “tribe”, is made explicit in the article in the *Cape Argus*. Plaatje writes:

Not long ago the Prime Minister was wondering why the new Native was losing his respect for the white man and Christianity. The Prime Minister was right. Numbers of Natives openly say that Christianity is a fraud. Self-styled Native experts, of whom South Africa has not a few, ought to have told the premier the question asked by nearly every Native. One of them is: “When a body of Christians come together and pray to God for legislative powers to expel the aboriginals from their Native haunts and make it a crime for them to till the maiden soil, who can reconcile that with the biblical saying that ‘the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof’”.²⁶⁸

Opposition and resistance in the black press (1930-1960)

The period of the elitist black independent press was followed by a “white-owned period”, and a “multi-racial period”. White capital investment in the black press on the one hand curtailed their independence, but it also led to the development of a so-called multi-racial alternative press during the second part of the 20th century. Johnson adds that the “intervention of white commercial interests did not necessarily lead to the cessation of all black-owned politically-orientated publishing ventures”.²⁶⁹ Thus, running parallel to the white-owned period, Johnson also specifies three phases: opposition and

resistance (1930-1960), Black Consciousness (1960-late 1970s) and the community press in the early 1980s.²⁷⁰

According to Ukpanah, the African nationalist press could not compete against the monopoly of the white-owned Bantu press (see discussion below) and “remained weak and relatively powerless throughout the critical years of political transition between the loss of the Cape franchise in 1936, the banning of the main African national organisations (the ANC and its Africanist off-shoot, the Pan-Africanist Congress [PAC] formed in April 1959) and the declaration of a white South African republic in 1960”.²⁷¹

Noticeable partisan journals developed during the 1940s and 1950s, such as the official organ of the Communist Party, *Inkululeko* (Freedom), and the socialist newspaper *The Guardian*, the “most widely read and longest lasting journal between the 1930s and 1960s”.²⁷² It was banned in 1952, but continued amid different forms of intimidation until 1963. *The Torch*, the official organ of the Non-European Unity Movement, was a “militant weekly published in Cape Town that would play an important role in helping to mobilise resistance in various parts of the Cape during the 1940s and 1950s”.²⁷³ The South African Indian Congress produced “at least five journals covering the Indian passive resistance campaign ... during the 1940s” of which the weekly *Passive Resistance* (July 1946-October 1948) was the “most important”.²⁷⁴

Also of importance was *Inkundla ya Bantu* (Bantu Forum), “the only independent African nationalist publication that would play a significant national role in African political life ... between the late 1930s and the early 1950s, when the African nationalist movement began to emerge in its modern form”.²⁷⁵ *Inkundla* remained committed to “a liberal ideology and a non-racial South Africa, but it was an outspoken, albeit unofficial mouthpiece of Congress [the ANC] during a period of substantial reform within the organisation”.²⁷⁶

When *Inkundla* ceased publication in 1951, it “symbolized the end of an era that had begun in the 1880s”, because although one could situate “all its contributors on what one might call the ‘radical’ left (of the time), it was actually a moderate organ of opinion”, writes Johnson.²⁷⁷ Other publications in the 1950s, such as the Springbok Legion’s *Fighting Talk*, and a number of ANC support organs such as *Spark*, *The Africanist* and *The African Lodestar*, came closer to the criteria of an “effective alternative press”.²⁷⁸ These criteria

included “editorial policies that espoused the cause of South Africa’s black majority, and consequently modified or rejected traditional notions of objectivity, the role of the press as a neutral mirror of events, and so on”.²⁷⁹

The conflict between Africanism and multi-racialism, illustrated by the ideological differences between *The Africanist* and *The African Lodestar* respectively, was the basis for the split in the ANC when Robert Sobukwe formed the PAC in 1959.²⁸⁰

Black voices, white capital

As was mentioned above, the period of the first independent black protest press ended round about the 1930s, in part due to adverse economic conditions internationally. But the adult reading market was growing. Literacy rates amongst Africans rose from an estimated 6,8 percent of the adult population in 1911, to 9,7 percent in 1921 and 12,4 percent in 1930.²⁸¹ In 1946, around 21,3 percent of the adult African population was considered literate, and 23,8 percent in 1951.²⁸²

In 1931, the non-profit company Bantu Press was started by two white South Africans “to increase the scope of the non-White population and to guide their political and commercial development”, writes Potter.²⁸³ Their first newspaper was *Bantu World* (later *The World*), which grew to be the largest black newspaper by 1968.²⁸⁴ In due course the Argus Company obtained a significant share in Bantu Press, which made it “impossible for any independent African newspaper to survive the competitive power of the White-controlled Bantu Press”.²⁸⁵ By 1950 Bantu Press owned 12 African weekly newspapers and it also “controlled the printing, distribution and advertising for 12 non-newspaper periodicals in 11 languages”.²⁸⁶

In due course *Bantu World*, that accounted for about 25 percent of the African newspaper circulation in 1950²⁸⁷, also reflected a “shift from an elite publication to a popular mass press”.²⁸⁸ They thus “concentrated on social news and leisure activities and deemphasized partisan political news” and were experimenting with “pictorial journalism in the 1930s – foreshadowing popular tabloid publications like *Drum* and *Post* in the post-1950 generation”.²⁸⁹ The now famous *Drum* magazine, aimed at “the urbanised African” was started in the 1950s by J.R. Bailey, the son of the mining magnate Sir Abe Bailey, but had

dwindled by the end of the 1960s. It was acquired by Nasionale Pers (Naspers) in 1984, along with the magazine *True Love* and the newspaper *City Press*.

Towards the end of apartheid newspapers such as *Sowetan*, owned by the Argus Company, *City Press*, owned by Naspers, and *Imvo Zabantsundu*, owned by Perskor, can be named as part of the white-owned black commercial press.²⁹⁰ The Argus Company also owned *Post*, aimed at Indian readers in Natal. These anti-apartheid newspapers created tensions between the interests of the owners and the "demands" of the "market". The result was a press which "had mixed messages: some supportive, some critical of the existing order".²⁹¹ Nonetheless, white-owned newspapers like *The World* and *Sowetan*, and even *City Press* after it was obtained by Naspers, achieved a relatively high level of editorial independence and integrity and were strongly supportive of black liberation, including the philosophy of Black Consciousness.

BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND RACE TALK IN THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

(1960-1977)

Introduction

The philosophy of Black Consciousness in South Africa is closely tied to the short life and violent, controversial death of Steve Biko (1946-1977), which was extensively covered in the media. As alternative newspapers supporting the cause of Black Consciousness were progressively banned by the state, the debates were visible mainly in the mainstream press, including (white-owned) black newspapers.

The rhetoric of Black Consciousness showed strong parallels to that of the PAC before its banning after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, writes Johnson.²⁹² Black Consciousness can be traced back to the 1968 breakaway by politicised black students from the non-racial National Union of South African Students (Nusas), to form the South African Students Organisation (Saso).²⁹³ It acted as "a catalyst for the re-emergence of independent, non-commercial alternative publications", such as the *SASO Newsletter*, founded in Durban in 1970, *Black Review* (1972), and *Black Viewpoint*, edited by Biko.²⁹⁴ *SASO Newsletter* was "an aggressive publication, forcing racial issues to the foreground of the black political agenda, and set the tone for the emergence of

similar communicational channels".²⁹⁵ The official organ of the Union of Black Journalists, *UBJ Bulletin*, was established after black dissident journalists broke away from the multi-racial South African Society of Journalists (SASJ), but banned after only two issues.²⁹⁶ By 1977, Black Consciousness, "which undoubtedly played a role in the Soweto unrest of 1976", had "incurred the wrath of the State". In a "sweeping move, its organisations, publications and leadership were banned ... and the vacuum re-appeared".²⁹⁷

The following sections will discuss race talk around Black Consciousness in the media leading up to Biko's death, coverage of the event and its aftermath and legacy.

Black power and rising tensions

Before Biko's death on 12 September 1977, sporadic coverage of Black Consciousness occurred. In the English press it was at times compared to "Afrikaner consciousness", with the implication that Afrikaners, and particularly the apartheid government, should be able to understand black frustrations and aspirations considering their own history of suffering and loss.

The Argus (5 September 1977, p. 4) published comment ("Voice of moderation") in which it stated that whites would "do well to weigh carefully the moderately expressed opinions" of the former Dean of Johannesburg, the Rt Rev Desmond Tutu, who was then Bishop of Lesotho". He said that "there is still time for a reasonably peaceful solution to the problems of South Africa", but pleaded with white South Africans for "a South Africa that is truly free, a society that is genuinely open and just".²⁹⁸ The newspaper continued:

He deplores violence in any form – whether it be in Soweto or in the form of "structural and legalised violence which separates husband from wife" – and points out that black consciousness is no more sinister than Afrikaner consciousness, that it is essential to awaken in the black person a sense of worth.

But considering the reported influence of Black Consciousness on students who initiated the Soweto uprising in 1976, which led to subsequent nationwide unrest, the apartheid government seemed already set on a different course – confrontation. The Soweto uprising was undoubtedly a significant turning point in the struggle against the apartheid state. Just after the event

in June 1976 *Die Burger* commented as follows in its editorial titled “Nou het dit gebeur” (Now it has happened):

It is an unfortunate truth of life that especially a black mass of people are prone to hysterics without limits, which would not let it be contained by even the possibility of a loss of life ... It is a phenomenon which is unknown to people in many other countries, and it would achieve little to try and create an image of it in their minds. But we know the circumstances, we know how a black mass of people could be incited to mindless violence by the smallest event. This is what we live with and against which it is difficult to take preventative measures ...²⁹⁹

Thus, *Die Burger* blamed the uprising on the nature of black people, rather than the apartheid apparatus of exclusion and repression. The comment above also indicated a sense of directionless fear about what to do about growing black resistance to apartheid.

More than a year later, the *Cape Times*, in an editorial titled “Where the blame lies”, referred to the minister of justice, Jimmy Kruger, who told parliament that the Soweto riots were the result of “black power” and that white liberals were responsible for enabling it.³⁰⁰ The newspaper argued instead that “black consciousness – and black power – flow directly from Nationalist policies which have deliberately polarised the South African population into strongly group-conscious separate communities”. The editorial stated that as “Afrikaner nationalism was a reaction against British imperialism, so too is black nationalism – or black power – an inevitable reaction to Afrikaner nationalist domination”. It continued:

Of course, it is an excellent thing to be proud of what you are. To this extent every Afrikaner nationalist will recognize the positive value of black consciousness ... But it is a fact of history that nationalism, born in idealism and self-sacrifice, often denigrates into self-seeking arrogance, oppressing those outside the fold ... Soweto demonstrated the cruelty and folly of Nationalist policy once and for all. As its policies collapse and its leaders quarrel amongst themselves about what to do next, the Nationalist Government is seeking diversionary scapegoats.

Around the same time in 1977, the *Daily Dispatch* commented on government actions against Black Consciousness leaders and organisations in the editorial “Mr Kruger's vendetta”.³⁰¹ It asked whether it is “coincidence that 24 hours after the Minister of Justice launched yet another attack on the black consciousness leaders a number of them were detained by the Special

Branch". The editorial noted that "one of the detained is the widow of a detainee who died in a police cell a year ago" and called for an end to the law and practice of detention without trial. According to the editorial Kruger said that the movement was "racist", to which the *Daily Dispatch* responded: "a Nationalist cabinet minister is hardly the person to talk about racism and, in any case, it is to be doubted whether the movement is racist in the sense that Mr Kruger uses the word".

In a front page news report in the *Rand Daily Mail* a few days before Biko's death, the minister of justice is quoted as saying that the Black Consciousness movement is planning to "cooperate with the banned African National Congress [ANC]", that have "encircled" South Africa with bases in neighbouring countries, "to polarise blacks against whites".³⁰² Kruger said that "the present problem in Soweto schools was not really an educational problem". He had access to "'documentary proof' of plans to introduce a socialist system of education under which accepted Western concepts would disappear" and of "a similar socialist plan to redivide land".

The Weekend World also gave front page coverage to a report that student newspapers were targeted by the apartheid government.³⁰³ According to the report at that stage in 1977 "at least 42 publications issued on student campuses have been banned, compared with a total of 26 for the whole of 1976". A few were banned under "obscenity" laws, but most for "being undesirable because they are prejudicial to the safety of the State, the general welfare of peace and good order". Some have also been banned for "being harmful to the relations between any sections of the inhabitants of the Republic". An interesting case in light of current debates of "white privilege" is the banning of *National Student*, a publication of the student organisation Nusas, because "white consciousness" implied that "the white man should become conscious of himself as oppressor of the black man and that both are a part of Africa".

Meanwhile, the Black People's Convention (BPC) explained what they understood Black Consciousness to be and attacked "white liberals", according to another news report in *The Weekend World*.³⁰⁴ The BPC said that white liberals "sought their solution in non-racialism" and provided a "watered-down version of the truth". According to the report the Black Consciousness

answer to the white impetus was “a strong solidarity amongst blacks”. The report continued:

It depicted the balance [between black and white] as similar to that which exists when two strong nations dare not attack each other because conflict would lead to the destruction of both.

This analogy is interesting in the context of discourses about the Cold War (nuclear) standoff between the USA and the Soviet Union, but also because it echoes the idea of a “race war” between black and white, which can be traced back to some (white) colonial perspectives, but also continued to feature prominently in the arguments of Black Consciousness adherents since then.

On the day of Biko’s death (before it became public knowledge), the famous South African author Nadine Gordimer joined the debates about black and white consciousness – and the role of white liberals – in an article in the *Evening Post*.³⁰⁵ It was an extract from an address at the University of Cape Town in which Gordimer “examines issues and questions involved in being White in our changing country”. According to Gordimer a “lot of cant is talked about Whites suffering on full stomachs the psychic damage of over-privilege; but if we try to discover whether there is any validity in the concept of white consciousness, we have to discover how privilege subconsciously hampers the will to change”. Gordimer stated that she was “not prepared to dismiss White-consciousness out of hand as merely the acceptance, Black-dictated, of racialism in reverse”. She admitted that the “rejection of young and not-so-young Blacks of the White spectrum from liberal to radical is a traumatic experience ... for Whites”, but believed that the “thread that leads out of the labyrinth of the Black struggle towards self-hood will one day turn out to have been in the hands of both Blacks and Whites”. Gordimer discusses the rejection of especially white liberals by Black Consciousness adherents and ascribed it to the failure to make a real difference:

... failure in the ranks of those who have power is not forgiven by those without power. Yet the failure of Whites has become one of the most important factors in Black consciousness – the form of the realisation that liberation cannot be gained on one’s behalf, by others.

Gordimer’s insightful and in many ways prophetic words were dwarfed by Biko’s death in police custody, and from the following day onwards the local and international media were flooded by coverage of the event and its myriad

consequences, including the banning of three black newspapers and 18 related Black Consciousness organisations just over a month later in 1977.

Biko's death

The death of Biko in police custody on 12 September 1977 unleashed a series of events that was not only reflected in the media, but which affected the apartheid media profoundly. For many white South Africans Biko may have been a marginal and even unknown figure before his death, but the news dominated local and international headlines for weeks. It followed the Soweto uprising just over a year before and was preceded by a rising number of reported deaths of activists imprisoned under the infamous detention without trials laws. Furthermore, the handling of the affair by the minister of justice, Jimmy Kruger, added fuel to the fire. He first suggested that Biko was on a hunger strike (for about a week), and then told an NP congress that he was "neither pleased, nor sorry", but that Biko's death left him "cold".

The World responded angrily in a defiant editorial, titled "Detentions leave us cold, Jimmy".³⁰⁶ The editorial stated that Kruger's "callous words" tried to dismiss "the man who stands revered as one of the country's greatest leaders" and "the hundreds of thousands of blacks who regard Mr Biko as a martyr who died for the cause of liberation". It stated that "Mr Kruger and his whole department must bear full responsibility for this fatal incident" and that if the government is "too scared to undertake this full-scale inquiry to establish the cold sober truth behind these very disturbing events in our country then they are not fit to govern and direct the destinies of millions of people". It called for the immediate change of the "whole security network to preserve the safety of anybody who is placed in detention". In another edition *The World* also reported that "more than 400 commissioners, elders and others gathered at Pietermaritzburg for the Presbyterian Assembly" unanimously accepted a resolution for Kruger to apologise to the "people of South Africa and the Biko family" for his remarks.³⁰⁷

In turn, the *Rand Daily Mail* expressed its "shock and outrage" at the death of Biko on the front page and stated that he was the "20th person to die in 18 months".³⁰⁸ But this was "the first time a major black leader died at the hands of the Security Police. Perhaps the most important black leader in South

Africa". The newspaper stated that Biko, as "the spiritual leader of the whole black consciousness movement" had a "vast" following, "particularly amongst the youth", and was "also an international figure" who was "regarded by some as a man of potential greatness".

The Natal Mercury wrote that the "domestic and international repercussions, which are by no means over, add up to one of the worst setbacks the country has ever suffered".³⁰⁹ In turn the *Sunday Times* stated that the death of Biko "hangs over this country like a sword".³¹⁰

Die Burger called the media reaction to Biko's death "hysterical" and was worried about the "harm to South Africa" due to this "unfortunate history".³¹¹ *Die Burger's* regular political columnist, Dawie (traditionally the editor), wrote that South Africa's critics and enemies exploited Biko's death to the maximum in order to "dismantle South African authorities".³¹² Dawie argued that "wild accusations" were being made without the cause of death being known and an official investigation being conducted. He wrote that every "thinking person" will despair at the "level of public debate" considering "the delicate situation that exists in this country that will only become more difficult". Dawie praised the prime minister, B.J. Vorster, for stating in an interview "with an American publication" that he was "very unhappy" about the incident and "positive over the necessity of an inquiry". Dawie continued:

Of course this was a very unfortunate incident and Mr Vorster's words helped a lot to neutralise another statement which could have created the impression that the authorities viewed such cases rather coldly.

Thus, Dawie criticised the minister of justice in a roundabout way, without mentioning him by name. Dawie also called detention without trial "a necessary evil" but asked for the system to be overhauled and the Biko case to be investigated until the "truth, and nothing but the whole truth" emerges.

Die Transvaler reported that a number of prominent South African academics called for the "reinstatement of judicial oversight over the actions of the executive power" after the death of Biko in custody.³¹³ Prof Johan Degenaar of the department of political philosophy at Stellenbosch University also expressed "deep concern over the shameful state of affairs", and especially the "heartless reaction" of Kruger.

Kruger's and Vorster's handling of the affair was furiously attacked by the Afrikaner right wing, who accused them via an article in *Die Afrikaner* of undermining the important work of the police.³¹⁴ The newspaper added that there was an "orchestrated effort by government newspapers and the English press to try and put the Police in a bad light". The newspaper said according to "political spokespeople" the attitude adopted by government was leading to a situation where "agitators and underminers" were fast becoming "protected game".³¹⁵

In the furore of reactions Kruger and the government had to scramble to contain a public relations and image disaster, and the minister even went to Washington in the United States to try and appease international critics. *The Daily News* reported from Washington that Kruger told *Time* magazine that "his first statement was not correctly interpreted" because he "used an Afrikaans expression (dit laat my koud) which means that I was not emotionally involved, the same as if you would say to me that your aunt died yesterday, I would simply say, 'Well I am sorry'".³¹⁶ In the interview Kruger stated that Biko would not have been arrested if he believed him not to have been a danger to society. He added that he believed that the security police would not hit a prisoner, unless perhaps provoked. Kruger said he had "the pamphlet for which Biko was arrested", and it contained a violent message to beat and kill opponents and burn their cars, shops and books.

The day after Biko's funeral, 26 September 1977, *The World* reported in an article titled "Barriers and machine guns" how "thousands of people from all over the country" preparing to attend Biko's funeral in King William's Town were intimidated, assaulted and turned away en route, inter alia by a series of armed police roadblocks.³¹⁷ Amongst those searched were members of the Union of Black Journalists, whose literature was confiscated en route, as well as reporters of the *Rand Daily Mail*.

Die Burger had access to the funeral and reported on page 2 that "various black speakers launched scathing attacks on the Government's policy of separate development and presented it as the cause of death of Steve Biko, founding member of the South African Students' Organisation (Saso)".³¹⁸ According to the report, "between fifteen and twenty thousand blacks yesterday packed the Victoria sports grounds and continuously gave the clenched fist salute of the BPC while repeatedly shouting 'Amandla' (power)". The report presented a

detailed summary of the speeches by Mr Keneth Rachadi, chairman of BCP, Dr F. Mabombo, local community leader, Dr Farouk Meer of the Natal Indian Board, and Mr Faith Matlaupane of Saso. Rachadi for instance “praised those present for their courage and conviction to establish a better way of life for all races in Azania”. Dr Meer said, “we may not now become stagnant and let go of the cause of all races, because then Biko died in vain”. Matlaupane stressed that they will engage in “peaceful methods for the right to live” but he added that “nobody could guarantee that the methods would always remain peaceful”.

The next day, 27 September 1977, *Die Burger* reacted in an editorial (“Die wrange vrugte” [The bitter fruits]) to the killing of two policemen in East London and the resuming of “unrest” in various townships after the funeral.³¹⁹ The newspaper blamed the “crass” language of critics of the government, who “fuelled emotions to high heavens”. According to *Die Burger* “only a fool would not have foreseen the possible consequences”. The newspaper continued:

Will those who objected so without measure to the Biko case now also raise their voices against the murder of two innocent policemen? Will they condemn the lawlessness and anarchy that were created and that the servants of the law were the victims?

The newspaper guessed that “chances are good that the wait will be in vain”. It then referred to the attack on Kruger for his “it leaves me cold” statement and stated that “although he expressed his regret, it keeps on following him around”. The editorial continued:

But cannot it be said that the people who were so passionate about the death of Biko, now stand cool and detached from the death of the policemen? It is noticeable that some English newspapers treated the murders very low key, or tucked it away in such a manner that it virtually had to be searched for with a magnifying glass.

A similar sentiment was expressed in the English press. After the funeral a letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* attacked the newspaper for its lack of “fair play” and “apparent lack of interest and compassion shown at the horrible deaths of Sergeant Mtsintsi and Constable Mrasi at the hands of a savage groups of mourners returning from the ritual burial of Mr Biko, of whom probably very few had ever heard prior to his death”.³²⁰ The writer, Mr Harold J. Ashwell (Rome Farm, Sir Lowry’s Pass Road, Somerset West), said he wished to show

practical support for the victims and suggested that a fund be started for their relatives. Mr Ashwell continued:

To what depths of depravity and double standards have certain sections of the English language press sunk that no voice is raised editorially in revulsion and condemnation of the deaths of two off-duty but uniformed members of the police force when for weeks the public has been subjected to a sanctimonious lament at the death, during detention, without the facts being known, of one whose claim to posthumous fame came as a surprise to the otherwise well informed readers?

The editor of the *Cape Times* responded at the bottom of the letter that Mr Ashwell's assumptions are "unfounded". The editor referred readers of the *Cape Times* to "a front-page report on 28 September ('Police killed by mob were waiting for a bus')" in which the details of the victims and their families were provided. The editor stated that "[A]ll decent citizens naturally deplore their brutal murder and many will no doubt wish to show their sympathy for the dependents of these men in a practical manner". The postal address of the South African Police Widows' and Orphans' Fund is then provided. In closing the editor wrote:

The Biko controversy is a matter of immense importance in South Africa's internal and external relations and has naturally attracted considerable editorial comment in all sections of the press. The fact that many white South Africans had never heard of Biko till his death, is largely irrelevant.

In the end, under all the local and international pressure an inquest into Biko's death was ordered by the state and promises were made to ascertain whether members of the security police were responsible. As could be expected, this process and its findings provided yet more controversy.

The Friend (3 December 1977) wrote in an editorial that "[W]hile the inquest did not level an accusing finger at the security police, it did not absolve them of implication in his death".³²¹ The newspaper stated that "South Africans and the world have heard too many chilling details during the three weeks of the inquest to feel complacent about yesterday's finding".

But *Die Burger* chose to focus in its editorial comment ("'n Tydige herbesinning" [A timely review]) on the fact that Kruger "declared his willingness to review

certain aspects of the country's law on detainees".³²² The death of detainees "created a general need to review the regulations, but it is especially the Biko case, cleared of the emotional stream of propaganda which accompanied it, which necessitates action". The newspapers called for "applicable medical and legal oversight to ensure that detainees receive fair and humane treatment". The editorial concluded as following: "There may be no suspicion that something else will happen. As a civilized and Christian society South Africa owes this to itself."

Around the same time, *The Argus* wrote that an independent observer of the British Law Society "has accused the South African police of not investigating Mr Biko's death properly".³²³ Although the inquest was deemed thorough, the newspaper wrote, it still left unanswered questions such as "how Biko was injured, and how, after several medical examinations, he was allowed to be taken 1000 km to Pretoria in the back of a police van, naked and without medical attention for 18 hours, though (as was later established) he was already dying". The newspaper called for the detention laws to be reformed, not that it would make detention without trial more acceptable, but to "help protect the lives of and physical safety of detainees". South Africa's name should not "again become besmirched by a Biko incident", *The Argus* said.

In the following year, 1978, *Die Burger* wrote that the "very unfortunate Biko history" also delivered "positive results" when new regulations for detainees were announced in parliament ("Ná Biko: nuwe reëls" [After Biko: new rules]).³²⁴ It stated that "certain aspects of Steve Biko's detention and treatment bothered the Minister of Justice" and that he "realised that errors of judgement were made". Of the greatest importance, according to *Die Burger*, was that "the cloud of suspicion and slander which gathered over the Police Force due to the Biko incident, has to be removed". The newspaper argued that "dedication to the new rules will contribute to this aim".

Nearly two years after the death of Biko, the *Sunday Express* published an editorial, "Biko: The file isn't closed".³²⁵ It stated that "the State this week agreed to pay R65 000 plus costs to Steve Biko's family and that 'the file on the Biko affair has been closed', according to the new Minister of Police". This happened after the Biko family instigated a civil claim and the state initially indicated that it would contest the suit but settled in the end before the hearing could

“cast further light on the actions and behaviour of the central participants”. Noting that the amount settled on was “the biggest yet made after the death of a detainee in prison”, and that the SA Medical and Dental Council has still not investigated charges against three doctors who were involved, the newspaper concluded that a “full-scale official enquiry” is needed into death and injuries in detention, and “not a closing of files”.

Also in 1979, *Die Burger's* correspondent in Washington, USA, reported that an American group, Accuracy in Media, found that the American press, and specifically *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, “gave a distorted view of the condition of human rights across the world and often singled out South Africa with extremely baseless attacks”.³²⁶ According to the report, “V.S.A.-pers verdraai toestand in S.A.” (USA press distorts conditions in SA), South Africa were in 1977 “second only to Russia as the biggest violator of human rights” when coverage in the *Times* and *Post* was analysed. These newspapers wrote more about “so-called violations in South Africa than in Uganda or Cambodia”, the report stated. *The New York Times* published “291 negative human rights articles, editorials or letters about South Africa, while only 34 such reports about Cambodia appeared”. In turn *The Washington Post* published 194 negative reports about South Africa, 60 about Uganda and 10 about Cambodia, the report stated. The report continued:

The Washington Post published 30 reports over the death of one man – the black leader Steve Biko. It was three times as many as all the reports published about Cambodia, where there were according to estimates between one and two million deaths.

Accuracy in Media argued that the American media were creating negative images of countries that were “positively inclined” towards the USA rather than investigating totalitarian regimes such as Russia and China. The American public should rather hear more of the “strategic value to have these countries in the hands of leaders who are positively inclined”, but instead were “psychologically preparing us to give up important sources of indispensable raw materials as well as strategic areas without a fight”, according to the report.

This decidedly right-wing conclusion suggests that the Accuracy in Media report probably originated in the American and/or South African establishment. Still, if the numbers are correct, it indicates the extent of newsworthiness

of Biko's death in the USA. The theme of "outside interference" into South Africa's "domestic problems", and that the white minority government was "poorly understood" and "unfairly treated" is also apparent in the selection and presentation of the article in *Die Burger*. The irony is of course that two esteemed leaders and colleagues in the news business, the *Times* and *Post*, were indirectly accused of the same practices of selective selection and presentation (framing) of news content and opinion which *Die Burger* (and every other professional journalist) were clearly all too familiar with.

End of *The World*

Not all black newspapers survived the Biko furore. *The World*, that furiously attacked the apartheid government and especially the "callous" minister of justice personally, became the next victim when on 19 October 1977, the State launched its "Crack down day", as the front page heading of the *Rand Daily Mail* announced the next morning.³²⁷ It reported that besides closing down *The World* and two other publications, the government banned 18 organisations and a number of individuals, including the editor of the *Daily Dispatch* in East London, Donald Woods (a close friend of Biko), and Beyers Naudé, critical Afrikaner cleric. At least 40 individuals, including Percy Qoboza, editor of *The World*, were also detained after widespread raids.

Besides the events of 1977, *The World* is also remembered today as the newspaper that published the iconic photograph of Hector Pietersen, taken by Sam Nzima during the Soweto uprising of 1976. It was founded in the 1930s as an independent paper, but not long thereafter became part of the white-owned Argus Printing Company, which basically monopolised the black press during the 20th century.

As was discussed above, during the 1970s *The World* positioned itself as a critical voice of the black community, but had to tread a fine line between the regulations of the Press Council, of which it was a member, and the apartheid government security apparatus, ever ready to pounce. In addition to the coverage of the Biko incident already referenced above, a brief overview will be provided below of the general type of criticism circulated by *The World* in the time leading up to its eventual banning.

In August 1977, the newspaper reacted favourably in an editorial to an announcement by athletics officials to form a non-racial controlling body ("Now's the time for open sport").³²⁸ *The World* described the move as a "healing sign in these times of bickering in sport circles" but wondered "just how far the controlling body will be able to carry out its stated intentions – namely of running athletics on a non-racial basis and opening clubs to anybody – without being hampered by official red tape". The latter included the Group Areas Act and the Liquor Act. Besides, the editorial continued, "too often black athletes have complained of treatment they get from white counterparts" and this is "obviously a social malady which only change in government policy can remedy".

On 22 September 1977, the newspaper asked "What about us?" in an editorial in reaction to the announcement of the "surprise snap announcement of a white election by the Prime Minister".³²⁹ *The World* argued that it clearly "does not take long to get even the full machinery of a general election into gear" and that authorities should "speedily acknowledge the need for a proper local election in Soweto". It asked that the authorities should lift their ban on the Committee of 10 (which was installed after the Soweto uprising) and let it "put its blueprint for the government of Soweto to the vote in a truly democratic election".

On 4 October 1977, *The World* published a news report ("Gandhi's path of protest recalled") of an event at the University of the Witwatersrand where three speakers "hit out at the Government's 'consistent and continued denial of basic human rights to the majority of the people in our land'".³³⁰ It was part of the Transvaal Gandhi Centenary Council's commemoration of the 108th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth. The speakers were chairman of the Soweto Committee of 10, Dr Nthato Motlana, director of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, Dr C.F. Beyers Naudé, and Dr Manas Buthelezi, Bishop of the Central Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Southern Africa. According to the report Motlana told the "mixed audience" that Gandhi, who "refused to be brow-beaten by a white man", was "a non-violent man" and that Motlana believed that "we in South Africa can solve our differences peacefully". He called for Bantu Education to be scrapped immediately and said that the "heroic struggle" of the students of Soweto showed that it was possible.

Naudé said that the current crisis is due to a “racial conflict between black and white, especially between the Afrikaner on the one hand and the African on the other”. Thus, the “deeper issue is a clash between two nationalisms”. He said African nationalism is “broadening into black nationalism as more and more support for the cause of black consciousness is emerging from the coloured and Indian communities”. Buthelezi, in turn, said that “change is inevitable” and “the cause of justice and freedom will ultimately triumph”.

On 7 October 1977, Thami Mazwai reported from Pietersburg (Polokwane) on the front page of *The World* that “[A]bout 1 000 Hwiti High School students were yesterday ordered home after boycotting classes in protest against Bantu Education”.³³¹ According to the report, this school was the fifth to be closed in Pietersburg. Furthermore, University of the North ordered 1 000 students off its nearby Turfloop campus the previous week. The students decided on a “complete boycott of this evil system until things get better” and to show solidarity with Soweto students, whose “schooling year has come to a complete halt”. The reporter spoke to the head of the Security Police in the Eastern Cape, Colonel F.J. Goosen, who was unable to confirm that two teachers and two pupils of the Hwiti High School were detained. He did give names and status update information about other detainees, however, which *The World* reporter included in the article.

An editorial, “A tragic blow for the Tswanas”, *The World* (13 October 1977, p. 4) attacked the Bantustan policy of the apartheid government and the fact that “[A]ll Tswanas will become citizens of BophuthaTswana on December 6 and will lose all citizen rights of the country of their birth – South Africa”.³³² It stated that it “can be accepted as final fact that the status of Tswanas in South African will be exactly the same as that of the Xhosas who were forced into the Transkei”.

The World and the Johannesburg Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* had an arrangement by which the two newspapers exchanged editorial and opinion articles. In the case of *The World* it was published in a column, titled “Afrikaner viewpoint” (see for example on 7 October 1977 [p. 8], where “Afrikaans comment on black affairs” from the editor of *Beeld*, H.J. Grosskopf, on “the present impasse in urban black administration” is presented).

On occasion, like 23 September 1977, *The World* agreed with *Beeld*'s views.³³³ The article states that "[O]ur Afrikaans partner-in-dialogue, *Beeld*, yesterday made an unequivocal call in its editorial column for the authorities to seek contact with the Committee of 10 [in Soweto]. *The World* fully support this call from a government-supporting newspaper and echo the appeals we have already made this week – the authorities must speak to the Committee of 10 if there is to be any hope of solving the worsening crisis in Soweto's civic affairs".

But *The World* differed sharply with *Beeld* on 14 October 1977 in the editorial "Hollow victory for apartheid" on the issue of the Bantustan BophuthaTswana, which, as we saw above, was a serious point of principle for the newspaper.³³⁴ *The World* wrote that while they did not expect the Afrikaans press to "denigrate BophuthaTswana's final moves towards independence, we are disappointed that they neatly ignored the very crucial and serious problem of enforced Tswana citizenship". The article states that in the regular column "Afrikaner opinion" it is "noted with glee that the 'battle' to prevent the territorial fragmentation of South Africa" has been lost by "the leftists and liberals". The editorial concludes:

Does the Afrikaans press condone the arbitrary stripping of South African citizenship from millions of people without even attempting to get their opinions about it? We challenge the Afrikaans press and *Beeld* in particular to fully and frankly discuss the implications of this horrendous act.

The day before the ban, *The World* (18 October 1977) "strongly condemned" the "action of a group of Pretoria youths who went around several lower and higher primary schools, beating up small children and burning their books ..."³³⁵ The newspaper said that this was an "act of hooliganism directed at young children whose ages at these schools meant that the real issues in today's South Africa are not yet clear to them". The newspaper, "for all it is worth" renewed its "urgent appeal to government to take positive action to help reverse the escalating school crisis in the country". It asked the government to introduce a new system of education which enjoyed the "confidence of students and teachers alike". The start, said the newspaper, was "full consultation" between the authorities and parents. It continued:

And for heaven's sake, the Government must abandon the childish notion that they can only talk to certain people while rejecting others

– in spite of pleas by their supporters and newspapers supporting their policies ... For the final analysis, the Urban Bantu Councils and such like pitiable bodies have not been able to play a positive role in the crisis. Talk to the people who matter and inject new ideas into the education scene, and the problem will vanish overnight. But we must act now before it becomes even more difficult. The ball is in the Government's court.

The violent response by the apartheid government the next day is now a matter of historic record (remembered each year as Black Wednesday in post-apartheid South Africa), and although *The World* perished in the process, many of the ideals it expressed were realised in the end.

The day after the banning, *Beeld* (20 October 1977) tried to defend its "partner-in-dialogue" in an editorial, "Sterk stappe" (Strong steps).³³⁶ *Beeld* "regretted that the day arrived in our press history that a member of the Press Union was banned, even more so because it was a partner-in-dialogue – we exchanged opinions on Fridays for the last few months – and this ban means that this point of contact between white and black is disrupted". *Beeld* argued that the Press Union should remain the forum where conflict between the public, and government, and the press should be resolved. It called on the Press Union to talk to government to have the ban on *The World* lifted. However, *Beeld* stated that not all members of the Press Union, including *The World*, always used press freedom with the necessary responsibility. According to *Beeld*, *The World* was "one of the newspapers who ... provoked confrontation". There could only be freedom of speech if media "across the colour line accept that the government was not against change, but that the processes must happen orderly otherwise anarchy will result". The editorial continued: "Along with this there must be acceptance of the philosophy of group politics; those who put themselves against it, will get confrontation." In other words, according to *Beeld*, *The World* had to disown its beliefs and principles and start toeing the line (even more).

Legacy

But, as we know, Black Consciousness as an inspiring philosophy is not that easily repressed. When some political mobilisation again occurred not long after the traumatic events of 1977, one of the staunch supporters of black

liberation during apartheid, the *Rand Daily Mail*, conveyed a mixed message of support and caution.

The *Rand Daily Mail* (2 May 1978) published an editorial, "The dragon's teeth of black racialism", in which the formation of the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) is discussed.³³⁷ According to the newspaper this new organisation is a "striking indication of resilience of the black consciousness movement". It argued that you "can't deal with black consciousness by banning it. You can't ban the idea". The newspaper thus argues that the government will have to realise that the idea "has taken root, is spreading throughout the black community and must be taken into account". But, regarding the launching of Azapo, the *Rand Daily Mail* noted "one disturbing feature of its launching – the expulsion of white reporters from Saturday's meeting". The editorial continued:

This is pure racialism, and the leaders of the new organisation might care to ponder the fact that by sanctioning such action they are violating their own credo. Black consciousness is supposed to be pro-black without being anti-anybody else ... There is much to commend the black consciousness philosophy of self-sufficiency, self-pride and emancipation from the psychology of oppression. But let those who cross the line between that and pure racialism be warned that they are sowing dragon's teeth.

Whereas especially members of the white English press earlier disregarded or tried to explain the role of "racialism" in Black Consciousness, as Gordimer also did above, the *Rand Daily Mail* in this instance read the exclusion of white reporters as "pure racialism", which is an argument normally used by far more conservative critics of the movement than this newspaper.

For instance, the right-wing *Die Afrikaner* stated that while Afrikaners are often accused of being "race haters", Black Consciousness is "nothing else but racial hate of the purest kind against the White man".³³⁸ This movement does not "distinguish between different nations, but between two races – White and Black".

But although the conclusions were somewhat similar, the comment of the *Rand Daily Mail* above was clearly inspired by a different philosophy than the identity politics of the conservative right wing. The *Rand Daily Mail* reflected the liberal consensus on "non-racialism", precisely the point of criticism by the Black Consciousness movement.

After the banning of *The World* and *The Weekend World*, staff members moved to *Post Transvaal* and kept Biko's name alive. In 1980 the *Post Transvaal* for example published an editorial, "Biko makes us stronger", around the third anniversary of his death.³³⁹ It longed for the day "when his works, some of the most beautiful stuff every written by one so young, will one day become available to all South Africans". But the *Post* also ran into trouble and was replaced by *Sowetan* in 1981.

Sowetan provided continued coverage of and support for the Black Consciousness movement, for instance in positively framed news reports (e.g. "Seminar to look at BC philosophy" – 21 May 1981, p. 2; "BC counters white racism" – 2 June 1981, p. 4; "No place for whites in the struggle?" – 24 July 1981, p. 11; "Azapo's BC week kicks off" – 7 September 1982, p. 6; "Unity a Biko tribute" – 13 September 1982, p. 5; "Azanian Students' Movement in move to strengthen links with black workers" – 17 April 1986, p. 18).

The revival of Black Consciousness ideas amongst students and intellectuals in the post-apartheid era recycled many of the discursive struggles of the apartheid era. Key areas of contention, such as the role of white liberals in the struggle against white capitalist oppression, and the argument that "white consciousness" need to develop around the structural advantages of "white privilege", all stem from this period. This is also true for the standard criticism from both white liberals and conservatives that Black Consciousness could lead to "racialism", later called "reverse racism". It is also noticeable that a Black Consciousness students' movement in the 1980s proposed a strategic alliance with black workers, which also occurred in post-apartheid calls for "decolonisation".

The discussion above does not mean to imply that Black Consciousness was a dominant or unifying ideology of black resistance during apartheid. The animosity between for instance the PAC and the ANC is well documented.³⁴⁰ Newspaper content, including in the black press, often reflected these divisions, for instance *The Sunday Star* (6 April 1986, p. 14 – "Contagious intolerance") and *City Press* (18 June 1989, p. 8 – "Regina Mundi booing makes a joke of unity"). The dilemma, from a liberal perspective, was summarised by *The Natal Witness* (25 September 1979, p. 8 – "Wider loyalties") as follows: "The fundamental

question which must be asked ... is whether in the long run Black consciousness can be reconciled with wider loyalties and a common South Africanism”.

The death of Steve Biko, however, transcended sectarian divisions between opponents of apartheid at the time and influenced race talk in the media for decades to come.

RACE TALK IN THE AFRIKAANS PRESS DURING APARTHEID

Introduction

Towards the end of apartheid, this category included titles like *Die Burger*, *Beeld*, *Volksblad* and *Oosterlig*, owned by Naspers, and *Vaderland* and *Transvaler*, owned by Perskor. The Sunday paper *Rapport* was co-owned by the two groups.³⁴¹ One English newspaper, *The Citizen*, belonged to the category “conservative English-language Press ‘linked’ to the NP, and supportive of apartheid”, according to Louw and Tomaselli.³⁴² This paper was taken over by Perskor after the so-called Information Scandal in 1978-1979, when it came to light that the newspaper was “secretly established by the government to counter the liberal English-language Press”.

Although this classification is accurate in broad terms as a conclusion, it masks a long and intricate history of Dutch and Afrikaans press development, before and especially after the South African War (which is commonly regarded as a major impetus for the development of Afrikaner nationalism). The exact details how Naspers and Perskor became the dominant Afrikaans newspaper owners during apartheid are well recorded³⁴³

and are not at issue here, but it must be noted that it was in part the result of an intricate set of partisan power struggles amongst Afrikaners.

For example, after Naspers established *Beeld* in 1974 as a morning paper in Johannesburg, where *Transvaler* of Perskor was already established, they were accused by Marius Jooste of Perskor of coming to the Transvaal to cultivate liberal ideas amongst the Afrikaners there.³⁴⁴ Between 1976 and 1980, the two groups were involved in a “circulation battle”, during which, it later emerged, Perskor provided fabricated figures for especially *Transvaler*, but also *Vaderland* and *The Citizen*, in order to prevent its Naspers rival, *Beeld*, from establishing itself in the market.³⁴⁵ Afterwards, when *Beeld* emerged as the leader in the morning market and Perskor was charged with fraud and fined R20 000, the two groups eventually agreed to formally “divide the market between them” in the “general interest of the Transvaal Afrikaners”,³⁴⁶ as the official perspective had it. This episode, however, was “a major setback for Perskor”,³⁴⁷ and the agreement masked an often-fierce battle for what Muller calls “the soul of the ‘real’ Afrikaner”.³⁴⁸ On the one hand the Afrikaner press infighting was based on traditional geographical divisions between North and South, but “the aspirations of class groupings”³⁴⁹ was always a factor and become more visible as the apartheid era progressed.³⁵⁰

During the press restructuring deals of the 1990s, Perskor disappeared, while Naspers monopolised Afrikaans newspaper journalism and went from strength to strength to become Africa’s biggest media company after 1994 under the name Naspers.

Nonetheless, despite internal differences and disputes between Naspers and Perskor when the Conservative Party (CP) broke away from the NP in 1982, the mainstream Afrikaans press in general remained loyal to the latter, and consistently attacked, discredited and vilified the far-right for the remainder of the apartheid era (and beyond) – (see *Die Transvaler*, 15 August 1984, p. 12 – “KP-NRP alliansie?” [a CP-NRP alliance?]; *Die Burger*, 23 February 1983, p. 18 – “Konservatiewe drogredenasies” [Conservative illogical arguments]).

It is thus safe to say that diversity and variety of opinion (and choice for readers) in the mainstream Afrikaans newspaper market diminished as the apartheid era progressed. On the other hand, Hachten and Giffard describe

a countermovement in the attitude and conduct of the remaining Afrikaans newspaper editors and journalists as the era progressed:

At first, while the National Party consolidated its power, the papers did little more than toe the party line. As the party became more firmly entrenched, they increasingly ventured to step over the line. Lately, they have begun to suggest where the line should be drawn.³⁵¹

While the description above might be regarded as too emphatic with the benefit of hindsight, it indicates a movement towards the professionalisation of the Afrikaans press, as they "began to adopt a more Western concept of the role of the press".³⁵² This does not mean that their basic loyalty to the NP was jettisoned, but, as one of the relatively more progressive Naspers newspaper editors, Schalk Pienaar, described the relationship, it was seen as "freedom within commitment".³⁵³ For Pienaar,

... press freedom was not a watertight concept but part of the various liberties enjoyed by every free and independent state. It was the power of political or constitutional freedom that guaranteed press freedom – not the other way around. There could be no thought of elevating press freedom to a position where the stability of the state could be endangered.³⁵⁴

While the content of the statement above and the context in which it was generated is very specific, it is nonetheless interesting to compare it to ideas about press freedom and conduct expressed in the post-apartheid dispensation by members of the ruling black elite, especially towards the beginning of the 21st century. In short, while media freedom is enshrined in the Constitution of 1996, some ANC politicians have argued that a statutory media appeals tribunal should be created to handle complaints of press misconduct, because the existing mechanism of co-regulation with the public was deemed "toothless". The suggestion was that the state was the truly elected centre of power, and not the self-appointed watchdogs of the press, which was seen by some as a disruptive and destructive (racist) force.

Adding insult to injury

Early in the 20th century, the Afrikaans press was strictly partisan and provided colonial perspectives. These included crude ethnic discrimination and racial identification as the norm in popular media texts, including news reporting, and lasted well into the 20th century.

For instance, in *Die Burger* of 30 July 1921 it was reported that “two coloured maids” (the Afrikaans derogatory term “meide” was used) were sentenced on charges of immoral conduct.³⁵⁵ On the same page it was reported that two wagon drivers, Joseph Corea, “a coloured”, and Johannes van Eyssen, were both fined the same amount for failing to display any light on their wagons half an hour after sundown. Van Eyssen was not identified by his race, which probably means that he was white. Also noticeable is that, despite the different labelling, they were treated equally before the law in this case. This is of course ironic in the context of institutional racism, as displayed by the racial differentiation in the newspaper.

The early part of the century shows interesting shifts in the meaning of particularly the K-word, as it lost most of its particular colonial references and became (even more) generally derogatory. As was indicated earlier, it initially referred to Xhosa-speakers in the Eastern Cape and was applied to a vast number of place names (e.g. “Caffraria”) and fauna and flora (e.g. “kaffirboom”). Contrary to the belief that the term was not received as an insult until after the colonial period, Hughes quotes the Reverend William Shaw writing in his diary in 1847:

“Kaffir” is not a term used by the natives to designate either themselves or any other tribe ... The Border’s Kaffirs know that the white nations apply the term to them and many regard it as a term of contempt.³⁵⁶

It is of course tellingly ironic of the colonial mindset that the reverend continued to use the term immediately after establishing its reception and impact. A similar dynamic was seemingly often at work in press coverage of the early and middle 20th century.

The word “Caffir” was thus frequently used in the popular media, sometimes as a reference to Xhosa people, as in the original sense of colonial race wars. An example is the newspaper *Die Burger* of 5 August 1921, which reported that a “Caffir captain”, William Msingapantsi of the “location Oemzimkoeloe” in East Griqualand, was given clemency after he was previously sentenced to death in Kokstad.³⁵⁷ His sentence was changed to life imprisonment with hard labour in East London. His crime was not mentioned in the report, and it might not have had anything to do with his leadership role.

The same newspaper also contained another news report which indicates that a shift had occurred around the word "Caffir". Under the heading, "Gemeenskap met Kaffer" (Intercourse with a Caffir), it was reported that a white married woman [full names provided but omitted here – GB] of Pretoria was found guilty of "unlawful intercourse" with a "native called Kleinbooi" [included here because it arguably does not provide actual individual identification].³⁵⁸ Evidence was given that they had intercourse frequently, that the women "asked him for it" and that a child was born eventually. The women denied the charge and said that Kleinbooi strangled her and then raped her while she was unconscious. The jury took "a few minutes" to reach the verdict, and the judge called her crime a "nameless moral transgression" and sentenced her to nine months imprisonment with hard labour.

It is noticeable that the report itself did not contain the word "Caffir" but used "native". The headline writer clearly editorialised by using "Caffir" in a derogatory fashion, seemingly in support of the moral outrage expressed by the judge and jury. The fact that the white woman was convicted, and her accusation of rape against the black man rejected, indicates overwhelming evidence against her, otherwise one could have expected the word of the white woman to have carried more weight than that of the black man (only half-identified in the report). It is of course also significant that the white woman needed to deny the relationship and accused the father of her child of raping her.

The hierarchical distinction between people based on race is also expressed in the language used by *Die Burger* (4 January 1928) in the report "Onweer tref dame" (Bad weather hits lady).³⁵⁹ According to the report two people were injured by lightning, the "female owner of a café in Lichtenburg and a Kaffir maid [the derogatory 'meid' in Afrikaans]". Both were knocked unconscious, but "the 'meid' quickly recovered, while the lady was unconscious for nearly an hour".

The unequal, violent and derogatory subjugation of black people, tied to the use of the word "Caffir", was also represented as natural in fiction in the popular media in this period. The magazine *Die Huisgenoot* of 3 April 1936 published a story by J.S.B. Marais which tells of the patriarch "oom" (uncle) Berend, who gets annoyed because he finds that his favourite but frail horse Old Spot has

left the stable counter to his clear instructions to his black servant Ghwai.³⁶⁰
The story continues:

He grabs the sjambok [heavy leather whip] tighter. "This morning I will make the bugger jump." In front of Ghwai's hut, uncle Berend calls out to the Caffir ... On the second call the poor creature answers and a second later he crawls from the door of the hut ... He feels how uncle Berend's sjambok eats into his back and ribs, twice, three and four times. "Caffir", uncle Berend calls out, hoarse from annoyance, "didn't I tell you to see that the stable door is closed?"

As the story continues, it quickly emerges that Ghwai in fact obeyed his master's instructions and that the horse might have been taken by someone else. Berend storms off to investigate, his rage suddenly cooled, but without even bothering to apologise to the hapless employee.

The fact that this scene is presented as a natural and small interlude in a bigger tale of general entertainment aimed at white readers, is telling. The storyteller (J.S.B. Marais) gives the black character a name (Ghwai) and seems to display some sympathy for him ("poor creature"), but also refer to him as "Caffir". The character Berend uses the word "Caffir" to emphasise his anger and disgust. Another later example occurs in popular fiction in *Die Huisgenoot* (6 April 1945), this time authored by C.L. Marais, in a story dealing with the adventures of a "prime ox", Swartland, who, according to the narrator, "never had time for a Kaffir or a dog".³⁶¹

In other forms of popular entertainment in *Die Huisgenoot*, a mixture of derogatory, humorous and fearful references to black people also occurred regularly. A good example is the regular column "By die uitspanning" (At the outspan), with its logo of Trekboers around a fire at night with their wagons in the background. In this column readers contributed tales of all sorts, often personal experiences and stories delivered over generations. In the edition of 5 April 1940 two readers accounted incidents of attacks by black men on white women.³⁶² In the first story, an aged white woman woke up in the middle of the night with a black man on top of her, with her husband snoring undisturbed next to her. Even after the fearless woman fought off the intruder and woke up her husband to chase after him, the husband protested that the night air would not be good for his bad chest. The woman thus took a gun and went out in search for the perpetrator, but to no avail. In the stables she discovered evidence that the

“unknown” intruder was none other than their “huiskaffer” (house “kaffir”), who had since departed in haste. In the second story a reader accounted how she and her mother-in-law spent a fearful night while “Kaffirs” banged on the door and demanded access. While the narrator stood her ground and threatened to shoot anyone who broke in, the mother-in-law fainted.

The rise and triumph of Afrikaner nationalism

In 1940, *Die Huisgenoot* published a review of the academic book *The Cape Coloured People (1652-1937)* by J.S. Marais.³⁶³ The reviewer was H.B. Thom, historian and later rector of Stellenbosch University (1954-1969). The headline of the review, “Afkoms van die Kleurlinge: ‘wetenskaplike’ studie wat soms baie subjektief is” (Heritage of the Coloureds: A “scientific” study which is very subjective at times) summarises his first point of criticism. Thom takes issue with Marais’ claim that he engaged in detached “scientific” research, and then attacked the “liberal” stance in the book. It is clear that Thom supported the further separation of “Coloureds” from “white” society, something that Marais seemingly objected to. Thom concluded the review as follows:

From what is said, it emerges that with regards to race relations in our country Dr Marais belongs to the so-called liberal school. The spirit of his book is clear: he is against restricting measures as far as the coloureds are concerned and stands positive towards “liberal” rights and freedoms for them in correspondence with the rights and freedoms of the whites.

Thom also referred to predictions by Marias that further repression and suffering would be in store for Coloureds if current segregation policies and practices were strengthened (a clear reference to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism based on apartheid policies). Thom rejected these claims and added that there was no evidence that for instance separate Coloured areas would necessarily have negative consequences. Thom was thus rejecting Marais’ conclusions as liberal and unsubstantiated, while defending a conservative ideology of racial segregation (which already had far-reaching negative consequences by then for all black people, and, as Marais correctly predicted, would only intensify).

During the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, the student newspaper *Die Matie* was formed in Stellenbosch to support the cause. In the inaugural edition of

1 August 1941, the chancellor of the Stellenbosch University, Dr D.F. Malan (who became prime minister in 1948), and the rector, R.W. Wilcocks, wrote supporting letters on the front page.³⁶⁴

A week later, *Die Matie* reported on its front page that the Stellenbosch town library had been "invaded by Coloureds".³⁶⁵ The report stated that the previous week "a number of coloureds forced access into the reading room of the Public Library, because, according to them, they had the same right of use as whites". According to *Die Matie* the "coloureds" were denied access on a "preliminary basis", while the case was being investigated. The newspaper accused the town council of supporting integration.

Below the report, the newspaper published "their point of view" in which they affirmed their rejection of "equality between whites and non-whites", although they "recognised the right of existence of indigenous non-white groups" and accepted a "Christian stewardship" over them. They called for "a total segregation on a social level" and the segregation of residential areas in towns and cities. The paper stated:

This propaganda war (against segregation) is being strengthened by the rise of communist ideas in our country as a result of the new war situation overseas [probably a reference to the Second World War – GB].

It is significant that the students in 1941 already accepted key parts of the policy which D.F. Malan and the NP introduced formally after their election victory in 1948. It is highly ironic that it was a claim to library access from the "Other" which triggered the students' anger.

Apartheid "civilisation"

An interesting development and noticeable finding of this book is that the use of ugly derogatory terms, such as "Kaffir", decreased substantially in the mainstream popular print media after World War II and especially after the NP's election victory in 1948. I am not thereby suggesting a sudden change of heart amongst politicians and media gatekeepers, or any significant enlightenment amongst ordinary white readers. It is obvious that the use of the K-word and many others and the ideology of white superiority were as alive as ever in society on all levels, and that racism only intensified over the

next decades as both small and grand apartheid measures and visions were realised in laws and practices.

My hypothesis is that both politicians and media gatekeepers acted strategically when they started to sanitise media discourses. For the media supportive of Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid the progressively negative image of Afrikaners and South Africa because of the apartheid policy meant that the "civilised" and "rational" aspects of "separate but equal" development based on "good neighbourliness" as Verwoerd called it, should be propagated. At the same time opponents of the NP government and apartheid in the media had ample reasons to avoid derogatory references to black people, and indications are that especially the English media in general developed a sensitivity in this regard much earlier than the Afrikaans media. Of course, given the fact that racism is much more than the use of signature derogatory words, signs of racism based on white superiority in the media during apartheid occur frequently in both the Afrikaans and English press.

An informative letter, which illustrates the gap between media content and personal experiences – and supports my hypothesis above –, was published in *Die Huisgenoot* in July 1948, with the heading "Behandel hulle soos mense" (Treat them as people).³⁶⁶ The writer, Ms T. Adams of Citrusdal, stated that "someone in *Die Huisgenoot* recommended that we should speak to the natives in their own language in order to educate them". But, said Ms Adams, while she spent "a few months in the Transvaal she noticed that amongst the [white] children were two terms of abuse, "jou Kaffer" en "jou hond", and any one was enough to lead to a fist fight". She continued:

And to call a native swartnerf ("black skin") or rubbish or a hundred times worse is just commonplace. On our farm the brown people were addressed as outa and aia and as children we were taught to be the first to greet "good morning Outa" or "good evening Aia". To this day when we arrive on the farm, we are still greeted by our old "aia" with the hand. No wonder that the old aia's great grandchildren are still working for our father. I think if we treat the natives as people, is it enough and can they keep their language.

In line with the argument in this letter, *Die Huisgenoot* at this time started refraining from publishing the K-word, and used alternatives such as natives, Bantus and blacks instead. Just a few years earlier, around 1945, as the discussion above indicated, *Die Huisgenoot* did not hesitate to publish the

K-word in various contexts, as had been the practice since the inception of the magazine in 1916. But, of course, the content of the letter also indicates the strict racial hierarchy which existed, whether people used derogatory language or not. In fact, the use of "softer" and endearing-sounding terms like "aia" and "outa" also signalled a lack of individuality, agency and standing which contradicted the respectful attitude of the white children towards the "brown people".

But if changes in attitudes towards black people were slow in coming, a telling editorial in *Die Huisgenoot* (2 July 1948) throws more light on Afrikaner conservatism at the time when the NP came to power.³⁶⁷ The editorial, "Huwelike tussen Engels- en Afrikaanssprekendes" (Marriage between English and Afrikaans speakers), refers to an article in the same edition of the magazine about the question whether it is desirable for "two members of different races to marry each other". The writer of the article (under a pseudonym) is described as "someone who had thought a lot about the issue and experienced closely the problems which arise" in such cases. Readers are invited to contribute their ideas and experiences as part of a competition, labelled "Gemengde huwelike" (Mixed marriages). Thus, if the popular conception of race included the differences between whites who spoke Afrikaans and English at that stage, one can imagine the huge mind shift needed to consider any sort of social union between white and black in this context.

Another incident involving students occurred at the University of the Orange Free State in Bloemfontein in 1950, which was reported on prominently by the Stellenbosch community newspaper *Eikestadnuus*.³⁶⁸ It stated that a [white] male student suffered a nervous breakdown after being submitted to a vicious initiation ritual at a student hostel. Amongst others, the student was apparently taken into the medical faculty of the university, where a "number of dissected native corpses" were kept, and then forced to taste a piece of human organ. It is difficult to speculate about the motivation of a community newspaper in Stellenbosch to report this story as its front page lead – and thus bring a scandal at another Afrikaans university to light – but the actions of the offending students indicated an extreme level of institutionalised racism and dehumanisation. It is also difficult to establish whether the story was covered because the sympathy of the paper (and the projected readership) was with the

white student victim, and/or because of outrage that the initiation practices included such a heinous act.

The ingrained idea that whites remained rational, civilised and superior despite even the most bizarre circumstances and counter indications is visible in the coverage of a case under the infamous Immorality Act in *Die Burger* in 1962.³⁶⁹ The heading of the report is "Shakespeare se woorde aangehaal in ontugsaak" (Shakespeare's words quoted in immorality case) and refers to Advocate G.S. Frank for the defence, who quoted a Shakespeare poem and told the magistrate that, although he had much power, he should not dispense it "tyrannically". The case involved a "white" British sailor of 19 (identified in the report) and a "coloured" woman (also identified in the report) who were found guilty of an "immoral act" after being "caught by a constable in a car in Camps Bay". Magistrate W.P. van Breda sentenced each to four months in jail, suspended for three years.

When South Africa defiantly left the British Commonwealth and declared a republic on 31 May 1961, the Afrikaans media portrayed the event as the culmination of the struggles of Afrikaner nationalism since the defeat in the South African War (1899-1902). The peace treaty in 1902 was signed on 31 May, and the Union of South Africa in 1910 also came into existence on 31 May.

Just a few days before this landmark date in 1961, *Die Huisgenoot* published a full-page celebratory portrait of a man on horseback, with a rough nature scene behind him, looking out at the sun rising over a modern industrial-looking landscape.³⁷⁰ The date 31 May 1961 is printed below, as well as a few lines of inspirational poetry, referring to (roughly translated) "our knowledge that human courage will keep its value in the presence of the righteousness of God, as does gold in fire, and that our deeds in this land must stay as a light that beckons, a flame that scorches". The same issue also contained a full-page message from the prime minister, H.F. Verwoerd, written "specifically for *Die Huisgenoot* at their request".

During that time, *Die Huisgenoot* also published numerous articles and stories about the South African War, to such an extent that a student from the University of Natal, Gustav S. Preller, complained in a letter about the extensive coverage³⁷¹ ("Is dit nou nodig?" [Is this now necessary?]). The writer, while acknowledging that the "War of Freedom" was one of the most important

events in South African history, also questioned the timing of retrospective coverage in *Die Huisgenoot*. Preller stated that “emotions were running high” and Afrikaners were sending the wrong message to others.

In 1961, *Die Huisgenoot* also encouraged “[o]ur whites to have more children ... and be proud of it” in an article by H. de G. Laurie.³⁷² The conclusions of the article are that “we cannot place our hope for the maintenance of the white group on immigration alone; the raising of the standard of living amongst poorer groups means little if the birth rate is not brought under control; grants to bigger families are not the answer; the developed part of the population should marry earlier; and white parents should have more children – preferably five or more”. If this is not done, the white population will be numerically insignificant by the year 2000, the article predicted.

That does not mean that some “positive” images of the “Other”, did not appear in popular Afrikaans outlets, although it was still framed in typical racialised terms. For example, *Die Huisgenoot* of 20 July 1962 published a gallery of picturesque and flattering photos of the “Coloured town Elim” in the district of Bredasdorp.³⁷³ The town was founded as a mission station and was praised in the captions and accompanying text for its order and tranquillity. The fact that it was a successful “Coloured” town fitted into the apartheid propaganda myth of “separate but equal development”. *Die Huisgenoot* also focused on the Cape Malay or Moslem community in Cape Town on a few occasions, while traditional African culture and tensions with Christianity were discussed in articles such as “Reënmakers” (Rainmakers).

The self-assumed role of the media as a faithful diarist of events meant that in 1965 it published a short syndicated report of an unnamed “seven year old Bantu boy” who died of exposure near Loskop in Natal (today KwaZulu-Natal) when he was sent out by his parents to find cattle.³⁷⁴ In such a case, the important indicators are what are not mentioned in the report, for instance the name of the boy or his parents. The use of the word “Bantu” also indicates a shift towards the hegemonic NP political discourse of that time. According to Hughes the NP adopted the word between 1953 and 1978, but black South Africans rejected it because of its “political contamination”.³⁷⁵

In 1971, *Rapport* published a letter by G.J. Smit of Virginia, who teased/criticised the newspaper for referring to a Japanese tennis player as “non-

white" in a front-page report on 21 February of that year.³⁷⁶ The reader informed the newspaper that the government had recently informed South Africans that people from Japanese descent would be classified as "white" in future. The letter continues:

When then is someone a WHITE and when is he a NON-WHITE, or is it according to the pleasure of his honourable magistrate? No wonder then that us whites were even called Non-Bantus by the *Government Gazette* of 9 February 1971.

The incident indicates how the newspaper at the same time circulated the official hegemonic message (calling the player "non-white" in a sport report) while allowing a measure of counterargument from one of its readers on the letters page. But the reader's ridicule seems to centre more on the fact that the newspaper made an error in classification, and that classification seems arbitrary, rather than distancing himself from it altogether ("us whites").

Self-fulfilling prophecies

As more African countries gained their independence, South Africa became increasingly isolated. The "fall" of Rhodesia to the north, with whom white South Africans had many ties, were thus closely monitored in the local media as an example of what could follow here.

Barritt, for instance, reported in *Die Huisgenoot* on the continued emigration of whites after Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980.³⁷⁷ He spoke to whites who were generally unhappy and told anecdotes of how black nurses left their posts even during operations when their shifts were over, and how schools were negatively affected by the influx of black pupils and teachers. Barritt concluded that amongst the often petty-sounding complaints of a white minority who in many cases still enjoyed a higher standard of living than whites in South Africa, he could detect the larger and much more serious problem: it had to do with the "physical reality of a sophisticated white group who now had to mix with a black group who had totally different cultural values".

Barritt also remarked that racism was "close to the surface" and that the whites were not "totally blameless": he noticed that many whites still referred to blacks in offending terms, such as "houties", "muts", "afs", and "of course, kaffers". President Mugabe, he reported, was so disturbed by the fact that whites had

not changed their attitude towards blacks after independence that he told a recent gathering that they have his permission to hit anyone who called them “kaffers”. In turn, some blacks started to use their own derogatory terms for whites, such as “Boer” and “White Pigs”.

Barritt concluded the article with an anecdote of a black teacher who joined an all-white sports club after independence and was called a “kaffer” by the children of white members on his first day as member. After two years he was still the only black member and still ignored or treated indifferently. The black member, Kennedy Mapondera, believed that he was a trail blazer who tried to show whites “that we *can* live together”. But Barritt concluded the article rather pessimistically: “Not many whites in Zimbabwe agree with him ...”

Such an article undoubtedly confirmed the fears of many white *Huisgenoot* readers and strengthened the perception that apartheid provided the only viable protection of their interests. But the contemporary reader will also notice that at least some of the seeds of the subsequent failure of Zimbabwe under an increasingly militant and anti-white Mugabe can perhaps be found in the uncompromising attitude of many whites after independence, at least as they were portrayed by an otherwise sympathetic Barritt. A comparison to post-apartheid South Africa can be drawn in this regard.

They are the racists

The further break-away of the Afrikaner right wing from the NP in 1982 to form the CP (following an earlier break-away in 1969) meant that the Afrikaans press increasingly had to fight on two fronts. On the right was the fierce internal struggle between different Afrikaner sections, the one so-called *verlig* (more “liberal”-minded supporters of change initiated by the NP) and the other *verkramp* (right-wing conservatives). The two biggest Afrikaans media groups, Naspers and Perskor, entrenched support for the NP and frequently attacked the conservatives in their different media outlets. This was often done by exposing extremism. At the same time the traditional stand-off between the more conservative Afrikaans press and the generally more liberal English press continued, while the latter found allegiances in sections of the so-called alternative, black and multi-racial press.

At the beginning of the turbulent 1980s some Afrikaans newspapers, like *Vaderland*, still detected "a small flame of patriotism" around the controversial Day of the Covenant, celebrated annually on 16 December to commemorate the defeat of Dingaan's Zulu army in 1838 by a small group of Voortrekkers at Blood River in Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal).³⁷⁸ The report repeats the familiar story of how the Voortrekkers vowed to celebrate the day as a holy Sabbath in future if God should grant them victory against the odds.

But, tellingly, the report is also full of contradictions when analysed against the context of a country in crisis because of resistance to apartheid and the efforts of the NP to maintain the fragile unity amongst its constituents. On the one hand the report states that while many will indeed spend the day as a Sunday, for others it will just be another day off. It quotes sources who stated that even amongst the English in the Cape Colony the Blood River victory "restored the prestige of the white skin and gun powder after whites were previously defeated in Natal" and the "doubtful issue of the Caffer wars". Chris Heunis, minister of internal affairs, is quoted as saying that it was not "an exclusive Afrikaner festival or an exclusive white festival". The report further mentions that although most of the 470 men were Voortrekkers, "there were also a few British settlers and a handful of black servants in the laager". The report also refers to a statement by prime minister P.W. Botha that the Battle of Blood River "was not a race conflict but a clash of civilisations" and that at Blood River the "pursuit of freedom found a balance between the use of weapons and the creation of an opportunity for peaceful co-existence".

It is noticeable that a leader of the NP, who built apartheid on the basis of racial discrimination (white and non-white), was at pains here to deny that the Voortrekkers and Zulus were involved in a "race war", and chose instead to call it "a clash of civilisations". During colonialism the main boundaries were often drawn between white civilisation and black savagery and barbarism, and one can argue that for many whites, especially within the NP, change, if any, occurred very slowly during most of the apartheid era. But grand apartheid depended at the same time on an ethnic division of the black population, in order to enable Bantustan fragmentation and the realisation of a white South Africa where blacks had no citizenship rights. Botha thus had to describe the Zulus, and other black "tribes", as equal "civilisations" on their path to national independence in their own nation states. The greatest threat to this

ideal was black unity and a “race war”, hence the ruthless clampdown on Black Consciousness and Biko described earlier, and the denial by Botha that history should be interpreted as a clash between white and black.

After De Klerk announced the formal scrapping of apartheid in 1990, the Afrikaans conservative backlash intensified, and so did efforts by Naspers publications to discredit them. An example is Kemp, who wrote as introduction to a long interview article in *Huisgenoot*:

In the new South Africa where tolerance is so necessary, there are still hardliners who believe that black people are despicable. They say they will rather have their children die than allow them to receive the blood of black people during a transfusion.³⁷⁹

The article chronicles and criticises the racist views and actions of a family of “diehard” supporters of the AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement). They are quoted as saying that they “are not racists, but just do not want anything to do with kaffers”. They want to live segregated from black people, whom they considered dirty, the source of Aids, rude, and destined to be menial labourers because of the curse of Noah’s son Ham in the Bible.

Neo-fascist pro-apartheid (right-alternative) press

Publications in Afrikaans such as *Die Afrikaner*, *Die Patriot*, and *Die Stem* served right-wing sectors, which broke away from the NP.³⁸⁰ *Die Afrikaner*, for example, consistently attacked both black and English media resistance to apartheid and the “liberal government press”, as it referred to the Afrikaans newspapers of Naspers and Perskor that supported the NP (to various degrees).

Several English-language publications, often suspected of being fronts used for government propaganda, like *Veterans for Victory* (later calling itself *Stand To*), also appeared. The latter tried to counter the influence of the End Conscription Campaign, that was founded in 1983 to oppose compulsory military service and published a regional newsletter in Durban, *At Ease*.³⁸¹ At one stage in the 1980s, *At Ease*, that tried to function despite the restrictive legal environment, published a finding by the Media Council against “the right wing” *Aida Parker Newsletter* after the ECC lodged a complaint of unfair reportage.³⁸²

According to a report by the Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit at the University of Natal in 1988, media outlets like *Aida Parker Newsletter* did “not necessarily have connections to the state, but could merely be an initiative by conservative elements in civil society, reacting to a threat to dominant ideology”.³⁸³ The report mentions the publications *Signposts* and *Frontline Fellowship* in the same category as *Aida Parker Newsletter*.³⁸⁴

At Ease is described as a member of the “alternative media”, which “sets out to fill gaps in coverage given by the official Afrikaans media”, but the report also criticises the English mainstream media, who are “much more critical of state violence, but are inconsistent”.³⁸⁵ The report mentions that although the commercial English press in general do not publish derogatory racist language, they contribute in other ways to the status quo, such as downplaying “the massive internal support for the ANC, UDF [the populist United Democratic Front movement], and socialism”.³⁸⁶

But, as the discussion above showed, most if not all news publications, left or right, had to comply to at least the basic rules of the apartheid system in order to survive.

RACE TALK IN THE ENGLISH AND ALTERNATIVE PRESS DURING APARTHEID

Introduction

Although the end of the previous chapter indicated several nuances and contradictions, the English press in general gained a reputation as opponents of apartheid and racial segregation. But there were exceptions and altogether did not present a coherent picture. Not only can different categories be identified in the editorial stances taken by the English opposition press, but the rise of an alternative press (including Afrikaans-language publications) had different models of ownership and funding than the mainstream press. To the list must also be added student and community publications, which were not unified in their approach.

Conservative-liberal

Two sub-categories were identified in a section of the English press that, at the end of apartheid, could be called conservative-liberal.³⁸⁷ One was “linked to monopoly mining-finance capital” with titles like *The Star*, *The Argus*, *Daily News*, *Pretoria News*, *Eastern Province Herald*, *Evening Herald*, *Business Day*, *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Tribune*. The owners were the Argus Company and Times Media Ltd. (previously known as SA Associated

Newspapers – SAAN). The second subcategory was “publications not directly owned by companies controlled by monopoly capital” and included titles like *The Natal Witness*, *Daily Dispatch*, and the *Natal Mercury* “until it was bought out by Argus in 1987”.³⁸⁸

According to Hachten and Giffard, the structure of the conservative-liberal English press towards the end of apartheid originated after the South African War.³⁸⁹ While some of the major English newspapers already started publishing during the colonial era, the post-war period provided fresh impetus and opportunities. Over time ownership concentration occurred, and by 1968 the Argus Group (founded in 1866) was “the largest newspaper group in Africa, with interests throughout Southern Africa”, writes Potter.³⁹⁰ Within South Africa, at the time, the group “owned three dailies and three periodicals, one Sunday, and controlled three more dailies and three periodicals. In addition, the group had major interests in Bantu Press (Pty.) Ltd., which gave it influence in one African bi-weekly and two weekly papers owned by Bantu Press”.³⁹¹

Newspapers of the Argus Group were often accused that the mining interests of the owners prevented them from “attacking mining administration and particularly from campaigning against low mining wages and conditions of non-White mine labour”.³⁹² But, in other respects, even the critics agreed, these newspapers “had been vigorously critical and demanded social reforms for non-Whites”.³⁹³

The other big English newspapers owner, Times Media Ltd., was started as SAAN in 1955 and had an intricate interlocking ownership structure with other newspaper interests, which meant that “the majority of the country’s newspapers had a vested interest in protecting each other’s privileges”.³⁹⁴ For example, in 1968, SAAN and the Argus Group together owned “nine of the thirteen English-language dailies (all the evening and four of the eight morning newspapers) and all the English Sunday papers”, which accounted for “77 percent of the total circulation of all the English dailies published in South Africa”.³⁹⁵

Notwithstanding the complicated, often changing and protectionist structure of the press companies during apartheid, the editors and journalists employed there in the main claimed a high degree of editorial freedom. Potter agrees that “[J]ournalists rather than proprietors produce newspapers” and concludes

that “[N]ewspapers in the mould of the English press invariably acquired an existence independent of their promoters, especially when the concept of editorial independence was so highly valued”.³⁹⁶ Furthermore, after the NP won power in 1948 “the English Press and its promoters saw a Government which was hostile to the interests it had for so long represented” and they became “more rather than less watchful”.

Thus, Potter argues that the English press was “identified increasingly as the opposition by the Government, and through a growing and positive vision of itself as the sole institutional representative of the African ... within the limits of the political system itself, functioned as an external opposition”.³⁹⁷ But because of the vested economic interests of the owners, it is far less certain, in fact doubtful, whether all Africans saw this section of the English press as their strongest champions.

The history of some newspapers not owned by mining interests often goes back to single-family ownership (*Natal Mercury* and *Natal Witness*) and a charitable trust (*Daily Dispatch*, whose editor, Donald Woods, became a famous anti-apartheid figure). Interestingly enough, J. Robinson, a member of the owner-family who was the editor of the *Natal Mercury* in 1968, “for a period of time supported the NP, [at the time – GB] the first and only English-language newspaper to do so”.³⁹⁸ Later, *The Citizen* emerged clandestinely from within the NP government, as the discussion above showed.

The impression should thus not be created that conservative and racist ideas were restricted to the Afrikaans-language media during this period. In 1955 the *Cape Times* for example reported that the “Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Verwoerd, is to be invited to Umtata to a meeting of public bodies ... to hear the views of the Europeans in the Transkeian territories on the Government’s policy in the territories”.³⁹⁹ This report refers to the implementation of “grand” apartheid policies in which so-called Bantustans were granted “independence” and some whites had to leave these areas. In reaction to this policy, the newspaper published a letter by a reader, under the non de plum “Thoughtful (Cape Town)” under the heading: “Can the Native do without the white man?”⁴⁰⁰ The letter states:

To the man-in-the-street the removal of all the Whites from the black areas of the Transkei, Tembuland, Pondoland and East Griqualand seems quite fair and logical in view of the removal of the Black man

from White areas. But that is a very, very shallow view. The Native simply cannot do without the White man. If everything White were removed tomorrow – trading stores, transport, doctors, hospitals, etc. starvation and disease would stalk the land almost at once. The Native is no farmer ... Please do not regard this as a “hymn of hate”. It is very far from that, as I am a firm believer in “live and let live”. It is simply that I realize the weakness and needs of the Natives.

Although the publication of the letter does not mean that the newspaper necessarily agreed with the reader, the fact that it was selected for publication indicates that these views were considered to be part of and included in the mainstream political conversation.

Race war revisited

In 1978, the *Weekend Post* wrote in an editorial that “Chief Buthelezi of the Inkatha movement” warned “Nationalist leaders to meet the demands of responsibility by taking whatever steps remain from time to time to avoid a race war”.⁴⁰¹ Buthelezi was speaking as part of an alliance between his movement and the Labour Party, “which claims majority support of the coloured people, and the Indian Reform Party”. The *Weekend Post* commented that it was “not surprising the Government is uneasy about the alliance” but warned that it “would be wise not to antagonise a sizeable body of blacks by acting against the alliance parties”. According to the newspaper, the “time has long passed when black opinion can be totally ignored”. Instead, the government “should give serious attention to what is being said by the alliance about growing bitterness and anger amongst our black population”.

The following year the *Cape Times* reacted to the execution of “ANC activist Solomon Mahlangu for his part in the Goch Street killings in Johannesburg” and argued “if violence escalates, at some stage the general conflict overtakes all else. There is a state of war. Terrible things happen on both sides. If a race war comes, the question of capital punishment will become pretty academic”.⁴⁰² But, concluded the editorial, fortunately the prospect of a race war did not seem likely at that time, and hopefully it will never happen.

Interestingly enough, some key international observers seemingly shared the idea that a “race war” could occur, as a report in *The Citizen* in 1977 illustrates.⁴⁰³ The title was “One man, one vote ... or race war, says Carter’s

man" and it referred to an interview with the national security advisor of Pres Jimmy Carter of the USA. He said that "movement [for reform in South Africa] has to accelerate if it is to outpace the twin Horsemen of the Apocalypse, racial war and ideological war".

Social-democratic independent press

In this category, publications such as *Weekly Mail*, *Vrye Weekblad*, *Indicator*, and the monthly *Die Suid-Afrikaan* are mentioned as examples towards the end of apartheid.⁴⁰⁴ Interestingly enough, it includes two Afrikaans-language publications, which may have had a relatively small circulation but drew much attention from government and the conservative Afrikaner community and press for their criticism and exposure of apartheid atrocities.

This press "was different from, and alternative to, the approach, form, and particularly content of the establishment media", writes Louw and Tomaselli.⁴⁰⁵ It "aimed to achieve independence from the financial control of capitalist interests", and although "generally supportive of the broader democratic tendency, they remained independent of specific political movements".⁴⁰⁶

Weekly Mail "arose out of the closure of the progressive *Rand Daily Mail* in 1985";⁴⁰⁷ and "pioneered South Africa's first-ever commercially viable leftist press".⁴⁰⁸

Progressive-alternative community press

Newspapers like *Grassroots*, *Saamstaan*, *Izwi Lase Rini*, *Ukusa* and *The Eye*, as well as anti-conscription publications like *The Objector* and *At Ease* (see Chapter 5), belong to this category towards the end of apartheid.⁴⁰⁹

Grassroots, founded in 1980 in the Western Cape, is described as a "pioneering effort to forge a new genre of local community newspapers".⁴¹⁰ As its name indicated, it was "very much part of the political strategy envisioned in the Freedom Charter [of the ANC] of building community based organisations to oppose apartheid", writes Adhikari.⁴¹¹ It was published by a "new generation of energetic, young, and generally well-educated political activists who regarded themselves as Marxist". Although they "were predominantly Coloured and Indian, they eschewed any ethnic or racial affiliation in accordance with Marxist

principles":⁴¹² Nevertheless, some ironies arose, as the paper was "with some justification, viewed as a Coloured paper in the African townships", because "[N]ot only did Coloured activists continue to predominate in the running of the publication but there was a clear Coloured bias in its reporting":⁴¹³ The newspaper also occasionally carried "advertisements for hair straightener and skin-lightening treatments":⁴¹⁴

The staff saw themselves as media activists, not journalists, and besides political coverage, concentrated on community issues such as "everyday struggles involving rent, housing, the cost of living, labor and health":⁴¹⁵ But by the middle 1980s, various factors contributed to its marginalisation, including state repression by raiding and burning of the offices, detaining and targeting of staff members for assassination and by forcing others into hiding:⁴¹⁶ *Grassroots*, and its offshoot *Saamstaan*, were cut off from its community and shifted its content from "community organizations to straightforward political reporting as a mouthpiece of the UDF":⁴¹⁷ Its circulation and distribution were limited, and activists "increasingly believed it would take a mass-circulation political newspaper to provide the democratic movement with an affective channel of communication ... to counter the biased and watered-down reporting of 'struggle news' by the establishment press, which either openly supported the NP government or practised a high degree of self-censorship by complying with state curbs on the media and reporting only anti-apartheid news that was safe enough to avoid retribution from the state":⁴¹⁸ Therefore, a left-wing commercial paper, *South*, was established.

Left-commercial press

Besides *South*, in Cape Town, newspapers such as *New Nation* (Johannesburg) and *New African* (Durban) also belonged to this category towards the end of apartheid:⁴¹⁹ By the end of the 1980s, the three newspapers "had established a co-operative news-swapping system", of which *New Nation* was "the central player ... because it had a national distribution of 60 000, which represented about 50 percent of the total sales of left-wing weeklies in 1989" and was situated in an important hub of the country, write Louw and Tomaselli:⁴²⁰

New Nation "held itself accountable to the UDF" and "attempted to facilitate dialogue between grassroots communities ... and the editorial department", but

was "severely damaged by the states of emergency", writes Adhikari:⁴²¹ But, "even at its height, the extent of dialogue never reached the levels found in the alternative press (or even the level of regional papers like *South*)".

South was launched in 1987, during a series of states of emergency to repress extra-parliamentary opposition. It was the "first left-wing newspaper to be published in the western Cape in twenty-five years, after papers such as *The Guardian* and *Torch* had been snuffed out in the repression of the early 1960s". The anti-apartheid cleric Allan Boesak helped secure funds from the Interchurch Organization Development Co-operation (ICCO), a Dutch nongovernmental organisation.⁴²²

South claimed independence from financial and political interference, but was "in effect the mouth piece of the United Democratic Front in the western Cape and thus firmly within the camp of the ANC".⁴²³ But, the journalists also guarded editorial autonomy and were "less partisan than one might have expected". The editors "walked a tightrope in deciding the limits to which they could push censorship laws without having the paper banned".⁴²⁴ Nonetheless, despite exercising a degree of censorship, several issues of *South* were banned and it faced numerous lawsuits brought by the state. Journalists were under surveillance by the security police and harassed and intimidated. It was also under serious financial pressure and understaffed.

Like *Grassroots*, *South* "adopted a nonracial stance and avoided references to racial and ethnic identities whenever feasible".⁴²⁵ The newspaper for instance "studiously avoided the word *Coloured* throughout the 1980s" and references were "usually subsumed under the generic term black or included in some wider categorisation such as 'the people', 'the community,' or 'the oppressed'".⁴²⁶ Nevertheless, *South* "consciously targeted the Coloured working class" and justified it on several grounds, such as that it "made business sense", that it was unable to reach an African working-class audience because of barriers such as language, skills and resources, that it was avoiding competition with African papers like *New Nation* and *City Press*, and that it wanted to spread the message of nonracism to the Coloured working class who "tended to be racially exclusive and politically reactionary".⁴²⁷

Significantly for this study of shifting editorial positions in the media regarding race talk, the political changes of the early 1990s were also reflected in

South when “it became more acceptable to use racial terms and ethnic labels in public discourse”.⁴²⁸ From 1991 it “started shedding the politically correct pretence that racial identity did not exist and began confronting the issue of Coloured exclusivism, particularly racism towards Africans. The practice of putting the word *Coloured* in quotation marks was dropped, and racial identities and labels were much more commonly used in its reporting”.⁴²⁹ *South* even became “adventurous” enough in the 1990s to “refer to the earliest Coloured recruits to the NP as ‘Hotnats’ – a play on the racial slur *Hotnot*”.⁴³⁰ However, concludes Adhikari, in general “the paper avoided gratuitous use of racial and ethnic labels, and remained true to its objective of fostering a nonracial democratic ethos in the society”.⁴³¹ By 1994, *South* had run its course and was liquidated.⁴³²

Student press

A number of “radical” English-language university newspapers existed during apartheid (and were banned at times), while Afrikaans-language universities “produced publications similar in tone to that of the Afrikaans Press”, according to Louw and Tomaselli.⁴³³ Although this distinction is true in general, some complications should also be noted. At the conservative Stellenbosch University, for example, the independent student newspaper *Die Matie* was in the 1980s often seriously in conflict with management, the student council and a large part of the student body because of its “liberal” views, including criticism of the NP and its leaders, such as prime minister P.W. Botha, who was also chancellor of the university. But to be fair, *Die Matie* was, notwithstanding several attempts, never closed by the university or government, and at most the editor would be pressured for publishing severe criticism of the Afrikaner establishment.

As the introduction in Chapter 4 above showed, the situation of black students was markedly different. The emergence of Black Consciousness in the 1960s was closely tied to politicised black students, who used existing organisations and media outlets and formed new ones. The apparatus of the state often clamped down viciously on the English student press and their allies in the ensuing decades. While students like Steve Biko played a major part at times, alliances were also formed with various other community groups.

These trends mirrored events in the post-apartheid era around 2015-2016, when mostly black students, who were at the forefront of often violent demands for free education and restructuring, found common cause with university workers. In this case social media platforms, rather than the traditional student press, played a major role in communicating the cause (see Chapter 9).

THE LAW AND RACE TALK IN THE MEDIA

Introduction

In 1976, much less noticeable than the Soweto uprising and belatedly it seems, South African legal precedent was set regarding the use of the K-word as derogatory term. The case *Ciliza v the Minister of Police and Another* dealt with the matter of a white policeman who had used the word in addressing the plaintiff, who was a black man.⁴³⁴ Judge President James in the end awarded the plaintiff the sum of R150 in damages and stated:

It follows that in my opinion one of the recognised meanings which the word “Kaffir” now bears in South Africa is that such a person is uncivilised, uncouth and coarse and that if one calls a person a “Kaffir” this will in certain circumstances constitute an injuria.⁴³⁵

Other cases during apartheid that followed this *crimen injuria* precedent was *Mbatha v Van Staden* in 1982, in which the plaintiff, a black man, sued the defendant, a white man, for injuria after the defendant had repeatedly called him a “kaffir” and assaulted him.⁴³⁶ Judge Diccott awarded the plaintiff R2 000 in damages and stated:

The tirade’s worst feature was the use of the epithet “kaffer”. Such alone can amount today to an actionable wrong, according to the decision of the Full Bench here in *Ciliza v Minister of*

Police and Another 1976 (4) SA 243 (N). Everything depends, of course, on the context in which the word is uttered. Settings which make it innocuous can no doubt be imagined. Ordinarily, however, that is not the case when, in South Africa nowadays, a Black man or woman is called a “kaffer” by somebody of another race. Then, as a rule, the term is a derogatory and contemptuous one. With much the same ring as the word “nigger” in the United States, it disparages the Black race and the person concerned as a member of that race. It is deeply offensive to blacks. Just about everyone knows that by now. The intention to offend can therefore be taken for granted, on most occasions at any rate.⁴³⁷

In 1983, in *S v Puluza*, Judge Van Rensburg also referred to the *Ciliza* and *Mbatha* cases, and added: “(W)hen a black man is called a ‘kaffir’ by somebody of another race, as a rule the term is one which is disparaging, derogatory and contemptuous and causes humiliation.”⁴³⁸

One could argue that this legal development did little to change the condition and status of black people on the ground. It did, however, mean one of the most popular “weapons” of white racists had been outlawed, or at least curtailed, especially in formal publication circles.

At the same time, the NP was struggling to present a human face to its inhuman social engineering project through linguistic adjustments. Officially the Afrikaans press supporting the NP, like *Die Volksblad*, hailed these developments as significant. *Die Volksblad* noted in 1978 in an editorial that:

[I]f a name is no longer acceptable, and even causes offence, it is simply good manners not to call a person, group or nation by that name. In such a case the state should take a lead ... and the Bill in this regard before Parliament at the moment will hopefully give final form to the naming of the largest colour group in South Africa ... It will also be handy to counter certain stigmas which opponents and enemies of the Government attached to certain names, such as Bantu homelands ... Through the names kaffer, naturel and Bantu we have now arrived at black, as it should be, as we have been talking of white and whiteman for a long time. Hopefully Coloured will now also make way for brown (“bruine”) and will a proper name be found for Indians here ...⁴³⁹

But specific *crimen injuria* accusations still had to be proved in court, and press reports over the years indicate various outcomes, as well as the general attitude of reporting media outlets.

In 1980 Johannesburg magistrate J.D. Jonck acquitted William Attwood on two counts of *crimen injuria* and malicious damage to property after allegedly calling Edward Mangope a “kaffer” during an altercation in a parking garage, reported *Die Burger*.⁴⁴⁰ Ironically, the plaintiff was the son of a Bantustan leader, Pres. Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana. Although the accused more or less admitted his guilt to another magistrate at a previous court appearance, Jonck found Mangope’s testimony “contradictory” and rejected the previous admission of guilt on the grounds that Attwood apparently felt threatened by the “tone of voice and posture” of the previous magistrate. Jonck is quoted in the news report as saying: “During a verbal confrontation a man can get so angry that he speaks without intentionally trying to insult someone.”

Also noticeable is that *Die Burger*’s headline for the story “‘Kaffer’-saak: Beskuldigde vrygespreek” (‘Kaffer’ case: Accused acquitted) indicates little sensitivity for the offensive nature of the word amongst the journalists and readers. Emphasis is clearly placed on the technical aspect of whether the use of the word is intended as an insult or not, thus the journalist felt free to use it as label for a public incident – in other words, the best case scenario is that they could not imagine that they were also insulting black people. At worst they used the word deliberately to be provocative.

Around 1983, *Oosterlig* in Port Elizabeth reported that steel factory owner Andrew Coetzee (44) was found guilty of *crimen injuria* and fined R50 or 50 days imprisonment for calling Abether Nduna, a black inspector of the Eastern Cape Administration Board, a “kaffer” and for stating that his white colleague, André Saaiman, was “like a kaffer”.⁴⁴¹ Magistrate M.J. van der Vyver said in his judgement that “South Africans must learn to respect the dignity of people of colour”. As in the case above, the newspaper also used the term “kaffer” prominently in the headline of the report.

A similar pattern is visible in another court report in *Oosterlig* just over a year later. The headline of the report is “PE man moet R2 250 opdok oor “kaffer” (PE man must fork out R2 250 over ‘kaffer’).⁴⁴² The accused, George Kotinas, assaulted Welcome Tshona with a sjambok and called him a “kaffer” while chasing him out of his supermarket.

The reporting of these and other court cases show that the public was informed about the increasing taboo of and legal sanction against the use of

the K-word. But at the same time the way the reports were framed, particularly by the headlines, indicated that white popular opinion perhaps did not share and appreciate the concern.

Post-apartheid legal debates

It came as no surprise when in 2016 President Jacob Zuma announced on Human Rights Day (21 March) that the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill would be introduced in Parliament later that year.⁴⁴³ The Bill complemented a “national action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances”, drafted by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.⁴⁴⁴ According to Zuma the plan was designed to “raise awareness of anti-racism, equality and anti-discrimination issues amongst public officials, civil society and the general public, mobilising support from a wide range of people”.⁴⁴⁵

The announcement came after the year opened with (yet another) series of much publicised racist events and various calls by individuals and groups to criminalise racism.⁴⁴⁶ In one instance the ANC took the lead in laying charges in the Equality Court in Johannesburg and criminal charges in regional courts against four individuals: the KwaZulu-Natal estate agent and Democratic Alliance (DA) member Penny Sparrow, who called black beachgoers “monkeys” on her Facebook page; Dianne Kohler-Barnard, DA MP, who shared a Facebook post by someone else who suggested that South Africa was better off during the apartheid era reign of NP prime minister P.W. Botha than under the ANC; Chris Roberts, DA municipal council member in Port Elizabeth, who allegedly called a black council member a “baboon”; and Velaphi Khumalo, employee of the Gauteng provincial government, who called on Facebook for the “ethnic cleansing” of white South Africans.⁴⁴⁷

In a founding affidavit in the Equality Court case against Sparrow, ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe said “there had recently been a dramatic increase in incidents of open racism and hate speech” and that his party had “a moral and legal duty to demonstrate leadership and prevent racial conflict or warfare”.⁴⁴⁸ Mantashe’s conclusion that incidents of racism and hate speech have dramatically increased of course completely rested on the fact that these pronouncements were made on social media and were picked up and widely

circulated in the mainstream media as well. The common impression that racism was still a problem in post-apartheid South Africa led to the calls for even stronger prohibition of racism and more severe punishment of racists.

However, some commentators argued that the ANC was using racism as a mobilisation tool for the municipal elections in 2016⁴⁴⁹ At least one writer took the media to task for being “inadvertently dragged into this election ploy by making mountains out of molehills and reporting on politicians screaming ‘racism’, especially when screaming racism makes no logical sense whatsoever”⁴⁵⁰

Writing from a totally different, Black Consciousness, perspective, Modiri argues that the criminalisation of racism was “another form of race denialism”⁴⁵¹ He states that the “insults, degrading racial slurs, the wounding words as well as the beatings that whites mete out against Blacks are ... manifestations of broader social dynamics, activated by unequal power relations where the perpetrators seek to reaffirm their sense of social position and privilege”. He continues:

It is therefore puzzling that the mooted solution to this problem as proposed by the ANC government is the criminalisation of racist and other hate speech. If the history of racism is best understood historically as one of oppression rather than mere hate or aversion, why would the solution be to criminalise expressions of racism rather than to address, finally after 22 years, its root causes and endemic effects?

Modiri states that “[o]ne has to wonder what kind of liberation this is when Blacks are not only routinely labelled monkeys and kaffirs but also experience a deplorable standard and quality of living either through the abject poverty that defines rural and township life or the debt and psychological trauma of urban middle-class life”. He called for a “... critical race literacy of the type that defined the black radical Africanist politics of Robert Sobukwe and Steve Biko. Such critical race literacy – an understanding of racism as a question of power and not of behaviours – would immediately reveal a number of blind spots in the government’s plan to criminalise racism”.

De Vos writes from a legal perspective that “[W]hen somebody engages in racist, sexist or homophobic speech, human rights – especially the right to free speech – are often invoked in an attempt to turn attention away from the content of what was said”⁴⁵² This allows the person invoking the right to free

speech “to avoid dealing with the structural racism, sexism or homophobia which produced the circumstances that made it possible for bigots to believe that they were entitled to think and say what they did”.

De Vos refers to the typical liberal rights argument which states that “I do not agree with racism, sexism or homophobia” ... but everyone “has the right to express his or her opinion”. It further states that “[O]nce we place limits on the exercise of speech by attacking that speech too vigorously or by placing some legal limits on it, we descend on a slippery slope into censorship and authoritarianism”. According to De Vos, this argument may be attractive, but only superficially.

De Vos continues that “... not all forms of speech make any contribution to democratic debate or enhance our personal well-being. In fact, some forms of expression harm individuals or groups with no discernible benefit for society, for individuals or for our democracy”. He then refers to laws which place “limits on our right to defame others ... to incite others to commit crimes or to commit fraud by lying to others in order to benefit from it”.

But, argues De Vos, “just because it is difficult to decide where to draw the line, does not mean that no line should be drawn. As many different types of speech are already regulated or even criminalised, it is also nonsensical to argue that we should not regulate or even criminalise freedom of expression because of a ‘slippery slope’ argument”.

Assuming for the moment that it is “possible to define racist, sexist and homophobic speech precisely and narrowly enough to catch only the speech of the bigots and to avoid limiting the speech of those who challenge bigotry, one could make a good argument for the criminalisation of such speech”, writes De Vos.

Amongst the critics of the proposed criminalisation of racism was the Afrikaans civic rights organisation AfriForum. Its deputy CEO, Ernst Roets, says “that AfriForum is committed to the principle of freedom of speech and that the organisation is also in favour of legislation regarding hate speech in the South African context. ‘The challenge is to find a healthy balance between encouraging free speech and combating hate speech. We believe that the Bill will fail miserably in this, as it suggests that mere offensive speech should be regarded as hate speech. This is a violation of the principle of free speech.’”⁴⁵³

RACE TALK AND WINDS OF CHANGE IN THE MEDIA

Introduction

A general accusation levelled in the media against some white people in post-apartheid South Africa was that they did not take the hurtful legacies of colonialism and apartheid seriously enough. Included in calls in the media for transformation was the issue of offensive and insulting racist terms and names, such as the K-word. Its continued presence in the public domain was symbolic of the powerlessness of black people to shape their environment in order to reflect their own history with dignity.

The previous chapters showed that in both white-owned Afrikaans and English newspapers some sensitivity developed over time regarding the public use of these offensive terms. The more liberal anti-apartheid English press led the way, but some members of the Afrikaans press close to the NP government also tried to educate their readers, perhaps as part of a general propaganda campaign to present apartheid and Afrikaners as rational and civilised in the midst of a “total onslaught” against and international condemnation of the regime.

Slow change

After the unbanning of the ANC in 1990, the Afrikaans press close to the NP argued for a “peaceful transition”

to democracy, *inter alia* by advising readers to refrain from using offensive terms such as the K-word. Even before the 1994 elections, some Afrikaans newspapers registered that winds of change were inevitable, but the seriousness of the issue for black people was clearly not always realised or demonstrated.

In 1992, die *Transvaler*, for example, reported rather light-heartedly that “people of Kafferkraal and others with the K-word in their name should start to think of new ones” and “also those along the K-river should start to think”⁴⁵⁴ The reason was that legislation was being prepared to enable the government to change names if the minister was convinced they were offensive. The report concluded in the same not-so-subtle deliberately irreverent manner: “In the Hottentotsholland and along the Boesmansrivier this plan will certainly draw attention”.

Just before the 1994 general election *Volksblad* commented positively in an editorial, “Terwyl daar tyd is” (While there is time), on a group of farmers who “requested that the name Kafferrivier should be changed to Tierpoort”⁴⁵⁵ *Volksblad* said that the farmers deserved “a pat on the back” and that “good sense has prevailed”, because “the word ‘kaffer’ has become an insulting term” and “one of the realities of the new South Africa is that names that are regarded by sections of the population as humiliating will not be tolerated in terms of the Human Rights Act”. The editorial concluded that the farmers’ pro-active deed should be emulated by others, “while there is still time to do something like that”.

The truth, of course, is that farmers of the Free State, and everywhere else, were aware that the K-word was offensive long before 1994, thus the timing of their move described above smacks of opportunism.

It was inevitable that change would characterise the “new” South Africa after 1994, but the nature and extent of change led to heated debates in the media and elsewhere. It is an open question whether white people in general anticipated the level of change that would be demanded, or understood that signs of resistance would be equated with the desire to maintain white domination.

Furore were routinely directed from left-radical quarters at those who sought to reintroduce discredited apartheid-era leaders into the pantheon of the

honoured, such as the City of Cape Town when it voted to name a street after former President F.W. de Klerk, who received a Nobel Prize along with Nelson Mandela, whom he was pressured to release from prison in 1990. On critical social media platforms influenced by Black Consciousness, such as Africa is a Country, much was made of the fact that the city was run by the “neo-liberal” DA, which was reportedly dominated by white racists longing for the days of apartheid.⁴⁵⁶ As the discussion below will show, this was part of a discourse in which Cape Town was constructed as a particularly racist city.

It is generally understood that the naming of people, places, fauna, flora and things was a central part of the historic processes of European colonisation in Africa. The power to name signals the power to categorise and control a “new” territory and its inhabitants. In accordance with changes on various other levels of society, the changing of names therefore constituted a central part of “transformation” and “decolonisation” after apartheid ended. It also went further than the removal of obviously racist names.

The process was launched legally through the South African Geographical Names Council, which included as criteria “offensive linguistic corruption of a name, a name that’s offensive because of its associations, and when a name replaced an existing one people would like restored”⁴⁵⁷ It was possible for “[a]ny government department, provincial government, local authority, the post office, property developer, or other body or person”⁴⁵⁸ to apply officially for a name to be changed.

Most noticeably, the four provinces were redivided into nine and all received new names. Some towns were renamed, including a few originally named after Afrikaner leaders, such as Louis Trichardt (to Makhado) and Potgietersrust (to Mokopane). Airports in major cities were renamed, including Jan Smuts (to O.R. Tambo) in Johannesburg, and D.F. Malan (to Cape Town International). The suburb of Triomf in Johannesburg, built on the ruins of Sophiatown after the forced removal of its black inhabitants in the 1950s, reverted to its original name.

More than a decade after 1994, however, the issue was clearly still not resolved, according to the *Sunday Times*.⁴⁵⁹ An editorial dealt with the “ghosts of colonialism and apartheid” which “still haunts the South African landscape” because the country’s “maps of rivers continue to reflect relics of a racist

past, with names such as Boesmanskloof Spruit, Boesmans River, Hotnots River, and Kaffer Spruit". It stated that despite the "mammoth responsibility" and "sterling job" of the South African Geographical Names Council and its provincial counterparts, "there is still much to be done in the face of cynicism and harsh criticism from those still wanting to pay homage to the dark days of apartheid". The minister of water affairs and forestry requested premiers of the nine provinces to attend to the listed "27 rivers with offensive names, urging them to expedite their name changing programmes". The editorial asked why "we still have these ugly names 10 years down the line" and "[A]re we content to sit back and allow our people to visit rivers such as Hottentots River in the Western Cape and the Kaffersleege in the Eastern Cape". The following sentence, however, introduced a bit of a complicating shift which could partly explain why the process took time: "The offensive names of South Africa's rivers, mountains, towns and cities should not be changed without consulting affected communities, but we believe that these names should be given the chop as soon as possible".

Thus, by 2019, the map of the country still showed many unchanged Dutch, Afrikaans and English colonial place names, as well as names honouring white leaders and heroes from various eras. In some areas, representatives from different communities fought tooth and nail about suggestions to change these names as well. The protracted legal battle, with blow-by-blow media coverage, between the Afrikaans civil rights organisation AfriForum and the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality Council about proposed street name changes in Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa named after the Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius, was perhaps the most visible.⁴⁶⁰ The case caught the attention of the media, arguably because of the importance of Pretoria as a seat of national government and because it represented a microcosm of the clash between entrenched white, and especially Afrikaner, influence and power and the aspirations of a rising black political and economic class.

In 2016, after four years of legal wrangling, the case reached the Constitutional Court, which "set aside a High Court interdict preventing the City of Tshwane from renaming certain streets."⁴⁶¹ Chief Justice Mogoeng is reported to have "rejected as 'mind-boggling'... AfriForum's argument that looking at names

linked to other race groups would cause 'harm and toxicity' to white Afrikaners". The judge reportedly continued:

This leaves very little room for the acceptance of black people as fellow human beings deserving of human dignity and equality, talk less of honouring them for their pursuit of justice and freedom in South Africa ... It is divisive, somewhat selfish and does not seem to have much regard for the centuries-old deprivation of "a sense of place and a sense of belonging" that black people have had to endure ... South Africa still looks very much like Europe away from Europe. A very insignificant number of names of our cities, towns and streets gives recognition to the indigenous people of this country and other black people. Very little recognition or honour is given to their heritage, history, heroes and heroines in their own motherland.

The city decided to rename streets in Pretoria in 2012, "following a public participation process in several wards". After AfriForum approached the High Court for a restraining order, the city was ordered to keep the old street names below the new ones for six months. AfriForum filed to have the original decision reviewed and the process unfolded from there until the decision by the highest court in 2016.

Significantly though, and illustrating the divisive nature of the issue, is that Justices Johan Froneman and Edwin Cameron "disagreed with Mogoeng's judgment and a concurring one by Justice Chris Jafta". They argued against the implication that "any reliance by white South Africans, particularly Afrikaners, on a cultural tradition founded in history, found no recognition in the Constitution, because that history was rooted in oppression". They reportedly continued:

The oppressive history is there. But the constitutional discountenancing of a cultural history many continue to treasure has momentous implications for a substantial portion of our population. It invites deeper analysis.

The dissenting judges "wished to see a longer, gentler and more accommodating debate than what had been heard in the present case".

(Not so) new ways of talking

The so-called born-free generation of activists, also called Fallists in reference to the various social-media driven movements (#RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall) they were involved in since 2015, are too young to personally

remember the debates and struggles of the immediate post-apartheid era. In the following overview a few telling incidents covered by the media in which the notorious K-word featured centrally, will be summarised. The discussion includes incidents in which Nelson Mandela set a characteristically unusual example, certainly much different from the attitudes, pronouncements, strategies and actions of many of his contemporaries and the 21st-century Fallists. In fact, one could argue that this Mandela attitude had become the benchmark the Fallists were rebelling against from around 2015 onwards.

Although most reported incidents in the media in the immediate post-apartheid era dealt with anti-black racism by whites, some tensions between blacks were also highlighted. The discussion below will touch on the issue of Coloured (or black) racism, which was denied by some activists in post-apartheid debates who argued that "blacks could not be racists". For those who denied the possibility, the argument turned on a definition of racism that included a structural dimension of persistent unequal power relations. Being powerless against and victimised by white supremacy, blacks could in this sense not be racists.

But in the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994, Chris Bateman reported in the *Cape Times* that the rector of the Peninsula Technicon, Franklin Sonn, "publicly apologised to ANC leaders Mr Nelson Mandela, Mr Walter Sisulu and all local township dwellers on behalf of coloured people who used the K-word"⁴⁶² He delivered "an emotive speech" and "attacked the NP's 'divisive' racist election tactics and said the K-word was 'not Cape language – this is Transvaal language'"⁴⁶³

The reference above to apartheid political divisions is important, because the system solidified, if not created, the racial category of Coloured. Some historic ethnic animosity may have existed before apartheid between Coloureds and blacks, but it was certainly exploited and enhanced by apartheid distinctions and practices, which advantaged Coloureds and positioned them higher on the socio-political and economic ladder than blacks (Africans). In the context of being structurally advantaged above blacks during apartheid, even if it was beyond their control, could Coloureds thus be considered racist, or should one rather talk of ethnic prejudice? A further complicating factor is that anti-apartheid activists who rejected "Coloured" as a label argued that

all “non-whites” of the apartheid system were in fact “black”.⁴⁶⁴ This latter argument had been generally accepted in post-apartheid debates on race, although some people who still self-identified as Coloured often engaged the slogan of being “not white enough (during apartheid), and not black enough (in the post-apartheid dispensation)”.⁴⁶⁵

After the 1994 elections, according to Lucas Meyer in *Rapport*, President Mandela requested all South Africans in the National Assembly not to use the “controversial” K-word.⁴⁶⁶ Ironically, Mandela himself was later the target of the same racist slur – coming from the Coloured people on whose behalf Sonn apologised during the national elections. This incident happened during the provincial elections in 1996. Colin Cruywagen reported in *Rapport* that the NP “strongly condemned the conduct of certain people who referred to the president as a ‘kaffer’”.⁴⁶⁷ It happened “... in Mitchell’s Plain at a school and afterwards at a meeting of church folk”, when “the K-word was used and someone also yelled at the president: ‘Go home you black’”. According to the report apologies were made and “Pres. Mandela made it in turn clear that he was not bitter about the racist insults”, but that he “hoped that he knew who the people were so that he could tell them that he understands.” It is not made clear in the report what Mandela understood, but clearly his reaction stands in stark contrast to those of many other black targets of racial slurs.⁴⁶⁸

For example, a riot erupted in 1994 at a “black school near Bronkhorstspuit” after a white teacher allegedly told pupils they were behaving like “a bunch of kaffirs”.⁴⁶⁹ The teacher apologised for losing her temper, but denied using the taboo word, however some called for her resignation and started a riot. Police had to be called in and they used teargas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to “re-establish order”. The school was closed until further notice, according to the report.

The K-word also featured in a report in the tabloid newspaper *Vrydag* in the run-up to municipal elections in 1996.⁴⁷⁰ The reporter, Hilda Grobler, talked to the researcher, Mark Lowe, after he interviewed more than 2 000 people in Durban North ...” He found that “the k-word was used continuously” and that “[N]obody referred to ‘blacks’ anymore”. Apparently, the voters Lowe interviewed were “fed-up” with inter alia crime, affirmative action which discriminates against whites, labour unions, and “students who destroy campuses”.

This report is indicative of a reactionary anti-black discourse which gained momentum after the change of power in 1994. The list of complaints mentioned above (crime, reverse racism, labour and student unrests, and vandalism) has remained fairly consistent amongst anti-black racists in the following decades.

Sport scandals

Even before the emergence of social media, racism incidents involving prominent public figures received widespread attention and led to national scandals.

In 1997, a public scandal erupted around the then national Springbok rugby coach, André Markgraaff, when a recording of a telephone conversation was released in which he used the K-word. *The Star* commented in an editorial that there “are dangers in making too much of the Markgraaff affair and in making too little of it”⁴⁷¹. The editorial asked “those South Africans who have not let fly the odd racist slur” to show their hands, and argued that while this term is “insulting when emanating from a white mouth, apartheid’s legacy helps us find excuses when black people make such utterances”. *The Star* nonetheless hoped that “the rainbow nation is moving towards eradicating racism in all forms and phrases”. The editorial stated that it is “clearly unacceptable that anyone, including the national rugby coach, should use the tainted K-word in talking about anyone, especially public figures (his frequent interspersing of the F-word did not help)”. Markgraaff has done the right thing by resigning and apologising also to the “country’s President and his black compatriots”, the editorial stated.

Yes, he did let down the Springbok rugby team and all the country’s whites. He acknowledged this. Forgiveness will vary, but for Markgraaff (other than private shame) the matter will soon blow over.

Thus, the bigger issue, according to *The Star*, is that rugby, “above all, is associated with the era of sport apartheid and is perceived as being less enthusiastic about embracing the spirit of the new South Africa ... Goodwill gained when Madiba wore the No 6 jersey at the World Cup Final has been undermined. This is not good for Springbok rugby or the country”.

It is noticeable that the liberal *The Star* did not seem overly outraged by the fact that Markgraaff used the racial slur, and even referred to the (currently)

contested issue of "reverse racism", in other words, it placed black racists on the same level as white racists (in contrast to later post-apartheid arguments that denied the existence of black racists). In isolating Markgraaff and presenting him as someone who had "let the side down" (both Springboks and whites) the impression was created that this incident of racism was not that serious, and certainly not indicative of a bigger structural problem. It is rather about embracing a "new spirit".

The arch-conservative Afrikaans paper, *Die Patriot*, commented that "without defending Markgraaff's choice of language, it must be mentioned that this was a personal conversation between likeminded people and should never have been made public".⁴⁷² It is noticeable that *Die Patriot* quotes Markgraaff directly as saying "f... kaffers"; in other words, the f-word was not acceptable in print to the paper, but the k-word was. *Die Patriot* then tellingly directed its editorial criticism at Afrikaners who turn against each other and "trample on their principles and loyalties in the service of Mammon". Thus, despite the effort to present a civilised, anti-racist front, the paper clearly demonstrated that it did not really condemn anti-black racism.

It seemed that problems around rugby and racism persisted, because more than two years later *Beeld*, who viewed white Afrikaners as a central target market, complained about the behaviour of the crowd at the Loftus Versfeld stadium in Pretoria during a test match involving the Springboks.⁴⁷³ *Beeld* wrote that "within hearing distance of the guests of honour some members of the crowd asked loudly what the 'kaffer' (President Thabo Mbeki) was doing there". When Mbeki arrived, the crowd showed "little enthusiasm" and barely applauded. Others "waved around old South African flags with bravado", and when the national anthem was sung "virtually nobody sang the Nkosi-part, but they were in full voice for the Afrikaans part of Die Stem". *Beeld* wrote:

Apart from the reprehensible behaviour of individuals the general atmosphere in the pavilion was [also] not really conducive for the promotion of the game to communities who until now could not find much reason to attend rugby matches or support the Springboks. For a black South African who attended his first rugby test on Saturday, the events before and after the game probably left such a bad taste in the mouth that he would not put a foot there again anytime soon.

Before South Africa won the 2019 Rugby World Cup Championship in Japan, the Springboks were still a source of racial tension and division. Even after the victory, which seemingly "united" South Africans, similarly to spontaneous outpourings of public support after the Springboks won in 1995 and 2007, the mainstream and social media were still to an extent divided between drumming up support for the team and covering incidents of alleged racism involving team members and supporters.

Another of the country's main national sporting codes traditionally dominated by whites, cricket, experienced similar problems since 1994. Against this backdrop, *Die Burger*, who often argued against racial "quotas", reacted with a large measure of *schadenfreude* when members of the national cricket team playing in Australia were racially abused by people in the crowd at a test match⁴⁷⁴ *Die Burger* wrote about the "irony that Australia, that was in front of the choir to depict South Africans as racists, are now itself the target". But at the same time a deeper irony was also at work, which was not totally lost on *Die Burger*. There were indications that at least some of the perpetrators who abused South African black players by using the K-word might have been South African expatriates. As *Die Burger* observed: "Australia was a popular place of refuge for those who felt uncomfortable in a new non-racial South Africa." *Die Burger* concluded that the incident should also alert those campaigning for the return of expatriates to the fact that "such racists are not welcome here".

Reading between the lines

Away from sport, in the robust field of literature, a far more complex controversy arose when a teacher exposed his pupils to the work of a revered (white) South African author.

Beeld reported in 1999 that a teacher at the Cullinan Combined School near Pretoria "lost his job after he tried to illustrate the place of the K-word in South African literary history" to a group of eleven- and twelve-year-old pupils.⁴⁷⁵ The teacher used the story *Unto Dust* by Herman Charles Bosman, "literary champion of the anti-hero". *Beeld* wrote that "[R]acial hate speech simply has no place in today's post-apartheid society. People are hypersensitive about the K-word and everything it embodies about the past. It gives momentum to

racial tension and consequential further polarisation". But *Beeld* also pointed out that Bosman's story "was written as a statement against the absurdity of racism", because it describes "death as the great equaliser between the races". The editorial stated that this point was apparently missed by the parents of the pupils and the headmaster, because "certain fixed patterns of historic thinking have been entrenched with them – as with most other people". *Beeld* concluded:

South Africans are but at the beginning of a very long road to let go of their racial prejudices. Hundred years later, there are still remanences of prejudice between Afrikaners and English. The process of relaxation between white and black will probably take just as long. It is precisely in the hands of the curious eleven- and twelve-year-olds – the last generation born under apartheid – who must be schooled without the painful knowledge of the past in the doubtful legacy of previous generations. But to do that insulting terms such as kaffer, hotnot, coolie and white trash only belongs within the context of the recorded unhappy and discredited past. [original emphasis]

It is noticeable that *Beeld* chose terms to "represent" the major apartheid era categories of race, namely Black, Coloured, Indian and White, and that it placed the insult to whites, who enjoyed institutional power and dominance during apartheid, on the same level as the others.

The Citizen also responded to the Bosman incident in an editorial and argued that while the angry reaction of the parents "to the appearance of the word in an exam" is understandable, the "fallout could have been handled differently".⁴⁷⁶ The editorial agreed with *Beeld's* conclusion above in stating that Bosman "shows the folly of discriminating on the basis of skin colour" and then summarised the story as follows:

The bones of an Afrikaner and a black man become intermingled. The Afrikaner's remains are supposedly salvaged and buried. However, in a final twist, the faithful dog of the dead black man is seen near the Afrikaner's grave, indicating that the bones were incorrectly sorted.

The editorial conceded that the story "may be subtle for Grade 6 pupils, too young to comprehend the worst aspects of apartheid", but it is "unfortunate that their parents could not be persuaded of the merits of the absurdity of racism". The editorial argued that the teacher "should not have lost his job" and that the "implications are enormous" if this means that Bosman, a "rich source

of South African heritage" was no longer acceptable in schools. It concluded that there are "differences between maliciously calling someone a kaffir and explaining the use of the word in a literary, historical context".

This line of argument, with similar conclusions as above, was also followed in an editorial by *The Star*. It stated that the word "kaffir is deeply offensive and insulting" to a majority of South Africans, and that it is "not only insensitive to refer to someone as a kaffir, but it is a criminal offence, and is proscribed by our constitution".⁴⁷⁷ While the story by Bosman is "liberally spiced with the offending word" it makes a statement against prejudice and racism. *The Star* also recounts the story but adds that the two men were killed in battle against each other, and that the narrator observes: "Alive you couldn't go wrong in distinguishing between a white man and a kafir (sic). Dead, you had great difficulty in telling them apart". Thus, concluded the editorial, "[R]ead in its historical context, *Unto Dust* ought not to give offence".

Die Burger was quite scathing in its editorial comment on the Bosman affair.⁴⁷⁸ It started off by condemning "humiliating language use which affects a person's dignity" as "not belonging in a civilised society". But, it continued, although no one can deny that "there are names from the past which can give offence", it is also true that it is "inextricably part of the country's complete history". *Die Burger* found the "commotion" around the Bosman story "amazing". It stated that the story was prescribed by the Gauteng education department and the English teacher used an extract "to show to his pupils in grade 6 that all people are equal, despite their skin colour". *Die Burger* guessed that "some of the black parents probably complained about the occurrence of the word". The newspaper was worried about the impression that "books ... in which the totality of South African history is represented, will be sanitised in future", which, "of course, comes down to nothing less than censorship and is opposed to the principle of freedom of speech". The editorial concluded:

By saying this, the use of the hurtful words are not defended. There must however be guarded against a trend to extract such words from their context and label it as racism. Before you know where you are, books will be burned, as in the Nazi era.

The closing argument above is part of a campaign of suspicion against the "ANC-Communist Alliance", as *Die Burger* consistently referred to the government during the 1990s, in which the newspaper frequently alerted

readers to the dangers of a new (black) totalitarianism in the making.⁴⁷⁹ The irony, of course, is that *Die Burger* was one of the staunchest supporters of the NP, who established a draconian system of censorship against the arts, culture and literature, during apartheid.

Challenges and shifts

Also, in other sections of the Afrikaans media, like the marginally more “liberal” newspaper *Beeld*, the post-apartheid era brought challenges and shifts which often led to contradictions.

In 1999, *Beeld* carried a report by Pieter Malan in which it was stated that the NP never used “Die kaffer op sy plek” and “Die koelies uit die land” (“The kaffir in his place” and “The coolie out of the country”) as official slogans during its 1948 election campaign.⁴⁸⁰ The report was based on a reader’s complaint regarding an “incorrect” statement in a special supplement honouring President Mandela in *Beeld*. The report stated that Mandela wrote on page 104 of his autobiography, *Long road to freedom*, that the NP of D.F. Malan used these slogans. But, according to “Prof Willem Kleynhans, retired lecturer of Unisa and expert on South African political history, these slogans were [only] used in ‘crude colloquial’ language”.

This small news report displays several interesting tensions about the role and interpretation of history and debates in the media. In the first instance the NP was not a factor by that time (1999) anymore, but the report in its former media partner was still framed as a belated technical defence of the party, or maybe even more so, its Afrikaner supporters. Maybe the fact that a reader complained was an even stronger motivation for the report than defending the NP or Afrikaner in general, because although the party may not have used it officially as slogans, the expert did not deny that it was in common use. Ironically the “mistake” occurred in an honorary supplement for Mandela (after his term as first black president) in *Beeld*, which would have been unthinkable a decade previously.

The discussion above showed that the impression was created in some media coverage that whites were often targeted and treated unfairly in relation to blacks when racism was alleged. But in newspapers dominated by blacks after 1994 a counter-theme was visible, that whites were still beneficiaries

of a racist system in general. For example, in 2001 *Sowetan* reacted angrily in an editorial, "Kaffir bashers' got off lightly", to the judgement in the "Parys racially motivated double murder case involving three racists who planned to go on a 'kaffir bashing' escapade".⁴⁸¹ While the judge used "strong words" in his summation, he in the end sentenced the three to "a mere 20 years in jail for the two murders, a far cry from justice". The newspaper said that the sentence "must be viewed in light of similar cases in recent days", such as the one where "a black man was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of a white farmer". *Sowetan* concluded:

The sentence was welcomed in the spirit of cleansing the country of increasing violent crimes. The lenient sentence in the Parys case seems to suggest that, in South Africa, at the beginning of the 21st century, the life of a black person is cheaper than a white person. Such a message would be too tragic to contemplate.

This editorial is indicative of a developing theme in post-apartheid media debates, which also manifested internationally, for instance in the #Blacklivesmatter movement in the United States of America around 2013, which was picked up in turn by South African activists.

Networks and weeks of struggle

The upheaval around racism during 2015 and 2016 saw both a renewed public and media focus on incidents of racism and organised efforts to counter the phenomenon. The latter led to the formation of the Anti-Racism Network of South Africa (ARNSA), "representing more than 80⁴⁸² organisations around the country" in order to strengthen efforts to "fight racism by launching Anti-Racism Week from 14 to 21 March 2016".⁴⁸³ Facilitated by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, ARNSA specifically made a point of connecting its effort to the person and legacy of Mandela by announcing the dates of the first Anti-Racism Week on the "26th anniversary of the announcement to release Madiba and the unbanning of liberation organisations" [2 February 2016 – GB]. Since then Anti-Racism Week occurred annually from 14 to 21 March, but after the upheavals of 2015 and 2016 drew less conspicuous attention in the media. For example, the SA Media database of press clippings on Sabinet displays only 9 items for Anti-Racism Week in 2018, while the number was 97 in 2016.⁴⁸⁴ This could point to frequent criticism of the media as having a short attention span

and reporting sporadically on events rather than consistently about important issues. A measure of opportunism may also be at play.

Also noticeable is that the race talk above is dressed in the vocabulary of war, but it is also directly linked to South Africa's history of armed liberation struggle against apartheid. The implication is that the struggle for (political) liberation might have been won, but the enemy of racism was still very much alive. A new "army" in the form of the ARNSA was thus needed.

In a document of its "Guiding Principles"⁴⁸⁵ ARNSA states that their extended definition⁴⁸⁶ of racism is informed by that of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as presented in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of 2001. The definition *inter alia* states that "theories of superiority of certain races and cultures over others, promoted and practised during the colonial era, continue to be propounded in one form or another even today".

Noticeably, the definition does not identify "whites" or "white privilege" as a specific target, as for instance the student movements did. It did refer to "theories of superiority" and blamed the "colonial era" in general, which points strongly to "white" agency. But this attempt at a more "neutral" definition leaves open the possibility that black attitudes of prejudice in reaction to "white" colonial racism, such as "reverse racism", could theoretically be included.

Besides the fact that the mainstream media were united in their support of ARNSA, the network also accommodated and supported journalists extensively. On its website⁴⁸⁷ ARNS included various documents and "tool kits" to assist the organisation and media coverage of events. Supporters were also encouraged to popularise the "#TakeOnRacism Pledge", which reads:

I pledge to take on racism.
I will learn about racism,
talk about it,
speak out against it, and
act to stop it.

Media24, the publishing division of Africa's biggest media company, Naspers, announced that it had partnered with the Anti-Racism Network of South Africa

(ARNSA) in its campaign.⁴⁸⁸ In the statement, Media24 chief executive Esmaré Weideman stated that the company “plans to run various campaigns”. She said that “[R]ecent incidents of racism in our country were not only shocking but also showed we have a long way to go” and that “[I]t’s time for ordinary South Africans to tackle racism wherever it rears its head. Instead of turning a blind eye, we have to say, ‘Not in my name, not in my workplace, not around my braai’”. The statement continued:

As a country we have so much to lose if the dream of a non-racist, peaceful society goes down the drain. That’s why we joined this initiative, and that’s why Media24 urges all South Africans to get involved.⁴⁸⁹

The statement concluded that “ARNSA is the largest anti-racism campaign launched by civil society in South Africa, and aims to play an important role in fostering dialogue and reconciliation” and that the reader “will be able to follow the campaign on *News24*, *YOU*, *Huisgenoot*, *DRUM*, *Die Burger*, *Beeld*, *The Witness*, *Volksblad*, *City Press*, *Daily Sun*, *Rapport*, *Son*, Media24’s local newspapers, Netwerk24 and all Media24’s sites”.⁴⁹⁰

It is noticeable that Media24, who in the post-apartheid era often faced criticism because of its historic (and some less so) links to and support of Afrikaner nationalism, made such a public display of its involvement in “the fight against racism”. But it is not only current interpretations of Media24’s history that drew fire. The company became a popular target when critics argued that it provided a public outlet for many whites/Afrikaners, who clearly did not change their racist ways of the past, on their news website *News24*, coincidentally also South Africa’s leader in the field. Media24, as did most of its peers in the market, subsequently closed down the comments facility on the news website. Subsequently some were provisionally opened again and/or more strictly moderated.

In her statement mentioned above, Media24 CEO Weideman taps into the theme of exposing “private” or “hidden racism”, which only emerges once white racists start to socialise in their gated communities. She uses the term “tackle” instead of “fight”, which also neatly activates a sports metaphor for the stereotypical rugby-loving white racist male.

Because of involvement by Media24, Caxton, the Times Media Group and Independent Media, amongst others, both ARNSA and the first Anti-Racism Week in 2016 thus received wide media coverage. One can safely say that as far as the mainstream commercial press go, this type of public display of unity on the issue of race has not been seen in South Africa during colonialism or apartheid, or even the early post-apartheid era.

Of course, unity amongst the main commercial competitors in the press does not mean that alternative voices have been excluded from the public sphere(s). On the internet, and specifically on social media platforms, old-fashioned “race wars” still raged despite efforts to control this new “frontier”.

If Media24 seemed keen to get involved in the “fight against racism”, the commitment (and execution) of Independent Media, owned by the Sekunjalo Group, led by the often-controversial Iqbal Survé, can only be described as extreme. Around the same time as ARNSA gained momentum, Independent Media launched its #RacismStopsWithMe campaign, which included a website⁴⁹¹ and wide coverage in the company’s many outlets.

A keyword search on the SA Media database of Sabinet – using the words “racism” and “rassisme” – showed that newspapers of Independent Media carried far more articles on the first Anti-Racism Week in 2016 than those of Media24 (whose newspaper editors frankly seem to have ignored it for the most part, except for *Beeld* in Johannesburg, who had three articles). The newspapers of Independent Media also led the press corps in the number overall (they carried around half of all the South African press articles dealing with racism during that week). Perhaps this high level of commitment was the result of the fact that Independent Media’s own campaign (apart from being part of the ARNSA), was clearly important to Iqbal Survé, executive chairman of Independent Media (as the discussion below will show).

The *Cape Times* of Thursday 17 March 2016, for example, was published with a four page “wrap-around”, in other words the normal front and back pages were covered by extra pages, devoted to the campaign. On the front page, below the normal *Cape Times* masthead, the title of the campaign, RACISM STOPS WITH ME (in white), and a logo appeared against a pitch-black background. The logo consisted of a hand palm, half black and half white, within a red circle, on which the title was repeated, along with the address of the website.

The first inside page, also against the same black background, contained the words: RACISM STARTS WITH ME (in the first line) and IT CAN STOP WITH ME (the second line) above the following instructions: "To take the pledge against racism: Place you hand on the circle below; Take a photo; Upload and share it on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram using #racismstopswithme; Challenge your family and friends to use this pledge page to do the same, and help stop racism together." Below the instructions was a large red circle, half white and half black (but without the image of a hand palm on the front-page logo).

The second inside page had the words I PLEDGE TO: and the following white text printed against the characteristic black background: "**Remove** all prejudice from my heart; **Respect** the dignity of every individual regardless of race, in both word and deed; **Speak up** in situations of prejudice, racism and exploitation of any persons; **Stand** in solidarity with victims of hatred and violence; **Acknowledge** apartheid for the evil system that it was, and while I am not directly responsible for its legacy, I am responsible for how I respond today; **Listen** and join the dialogue on racial equality with patience, understanding and respect." (The words in bold here were in red on the page.)

The back page, also against a black background, had the words RACISM STARTS WITH ME in red in the first line, and in the second line, in white, the words IT CAN STOP WITH ME. Below that followed a lengthy message denouncing racism from "Dr M. Iqbal Survé, Executive Chairman of Independent Media".

Survé's extreme commitment to the fight against racism was seemingly part of a strategy to build a black-owned media empire. Like in the example described above, he was not shy to use his company's media assets for company and personal promotion. A wave of protest and criticism by former (mostly white) employees and competing media houses and journalists reached fever pitch by the end of 2019. Some commentators even suggested that Survé's media businesses may be under financial threat due to a lack of investor confidence.

nine

RACE TALK IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA AGE

Introduction

If the media can be imagined as a watchdog of society, an historic overview of the South African media since colonialism makes it blatantly obvious that its members always had their own agendas as well. Cowling, for instance, writes that “race and ethnicity have been inescapable factors for journalistic identity” in South Africa since the founding days of the “ethnic presses”:⁴⁹²

The end of apartheid has meant the blurring of some of these strict lines of racial and ethnic division in the media, but the ideal South African public sphere remained fundamentally fractured, even after more than two decades of change. Of course, it would be far-fetched to blame the media (in the main) for this state of affairs, or to argue that the media (alone) could affect change. On the other hand, the influence and power of the media should not be ignored or underestimated. In some instances, it would seem that the perception that the media held great power was enough to unleash struggles for its ownership and control.

The emergence of social media added a further dimension to debates about media conduct and power when ordinary members of the public became the “watchdogs of the

watchdogs". Social media platforms also amplified the views of influential media critics, including academics, politicians, pressure groups and NGOs.

In post-apartheid era debates, the print media were inter alia accused of complicity with apartheid, hostility to the ANC as an unofficial political opposition, an inability to provide an African perspective, lack of transformation and reflecting and/or promoting racism.⁴⁹³ In response the ANC proposed the institution of a statutory media appeals tribunal at different stages.⁴⁹⁴ The tribunal was envisioned as a "system of accountability" to "ensure redress whenever the media infringes on the rights of others", while the ANC also wanted to "revisit defamation law, and consider legislating the right of reply".⁴⁹⁵ Cowling notes that this proposal was "vehemently opposed" by the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) and civil society groups like Right2Know. On the other hand, not all journalists agreed on "what journalism should be". Cowling continues:

Recently, the editor of *The New Age*, veteran journalist Moegsien Williams, argued that the commercial press acts like a political opposition because of the dominance of the governing African National Congress (ANC) in political life. According to Williams, many journalists are closely identified with opposition parties. Another editor, Steven Motale, of *The Citizen* daily newspaper, publicly apologised to President Jacob Zuma for negative reporting about him.⁴⁹⁶

The question whether continued pressure from a party already in government for more than two decades was affecting journalistic independence and media performance by 2019 is thus a valid one. Cowling refers to research by Plaatjies in 2012, which shows that "reporters [at the SABC] receive[d] calls and text messages from government functionaries to pressure them".⁴⁹⁷ Similarly, Moerdyk asks whether the ANC was "forcing media into 'revolutionary mode'", and whether the media was "being conned over the racism issue".⁴⁹⁸ As the discussion later in this chapter will also show, particularly around discourses of (anti-black) racism in society, the South African media in general seemed eager to show that they were united in fulfilling an activist role in "eradicating the scourge", "fighting the cancer of/war on" racism.

Yet, importantly, Cowling also argues that the historic role of journalists to provide information and opinion is not only under threat "from an angry

state" but "even more so", from "global developments" such as the fact that "journalists now compete with bloggers, community reporters, entertainment websites, and citizens posting to social media". She continues:

While local passions flare, the global growth of social media promises to dramatically curtail journalists' power ... These writers are not bound by journalistic ethics and values. They cannot easily be held to account by governments ... Renegotiating the role of journalism in these times may be the biggest challenge yet.

Koeitjies en Kalfies⁴⁹⁹

An example of social media surveillance which led to mainstream media attention and official political and legal action was the case of alleged racism at a "pre-school in Pretoria" in 2016.⁵⁰⁰ It started when one of the parents reacted angrily to a picture, sent to her by the Koeitjies en Kalfies Kleuterskool (crèche) in Centurion, of some of the children, four white and one black, eating lunch. The white kids were at one table, eating cupcakes, while the black child was sitting alone at the adjacent table, with no cupcake in sight. The motive for sending the picture was initially unclear and led to some speculation in news reports, but it later emerged that it was sent routinely to all parents on a WhatsApp group maintained by the crèche.⁵⁰¹

But the parents of the 19-month-old black toddler in the picture interpreted it as a sign that their child was being racially segregated and marginalised and immediately removed her from the crèche. A family member posted the picture and allegation of racism on Facebook, which went viral as numerous news organisations, pressure groups and individuals responded. It led to political action and in-fighting, litigation and threats of interference and violence, accompanied by streams of vitriol by individuals and interest groups in the public domain.

A news report by Madibogo on the news website *Times LIVE* stated that a "woman who says she is the cousin to the black child, Kefhiloe Mokoka, took to her Facebook page to share the picture, which shows the child sitting alone during lunch with four white toddlers next to her together at another table".⁵⁰²

The picture was included in the *Times LIVE* news report (with the faces of the children pixelated). According to the report Mokoka said:

Someone please tell me what is wrong with this picture, or maybe my family is over-reacting. That child sitting all alone in the next table with no cupcake is my 19-month-old cousin at her pre-school somewhere in Centurion.⁵⁰³

Mokoka also said that the “picture was sent by the school to the mother. Either they really wanted her to take her child out or they are so blind they can’t see what is wrong with this picture”. Madibogo writes that the “Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza Lesufi, visited the Centurion based pre-school on Thursday afternoon”.⁵⁰⁴ The report continues by quoting Lesufi:

“I am here at the school with the principal. All kids are white taught by white teachers. Blacks are just maids here! Disgusting,” Lesufi said. “We have to act decisively so I’ve assigned a social worker to immediately do what is right.” Labelling the pre-school as problematic, he said: “It will change! Mark my words!”⁵⁰⁵

Also quoted by Madibogo is “Home Affairs spokesperson Mayihlome Tshwete” who said: “I think cadres must find that crèche and we must descend upon them with cupcakes in hand.” The report concludes by quoting “[S]ocial media user Nangamso Koza [who] commented: “Dear Black SAfricans. Stop sending your kids to these racists white-owned and -run creche. What do I think will happen? Build your own.”

The *Sunday Times*, parent publication of *Times LIVE*, sent out a tweet, “Pre-school under fire for ‘separating’ black toddler from white classmates”, as did the radio station 702, owned by Primedia, who tweeted a comment by Lesufi, which read: “I am deeply disappointed and disgusted at the same time. South Africans must learn that children can learn and play together, black or white”. The radio station *Cape Talk*, also in the Primedia stable, similarly tweeted: “Racism has shown its ugly head again ... this time on minors ... Share your thoughts”.

At the time of the incident, Lesufi provided running commentary of his investigation on Twitter. On 23 June (at 11:26 AM), he tweeted: “Don’t worry I am personally going there today at 1pm! Please join me.” On request for the address of the crèche, Lesufi then posted a link to their website and later commented: “I don’t play marbles with racists”, in reaction to MaKoza who

posted on his timeline: "@Lesufi is the worst nightmare of any racist operating in the education industry in GP. He is ever ready to DEAL!!!"

At 12:51, Lesufi tweeted a picture of the school building and playground with the comment: "I am here! Just arrived at this problematic pre-school". This post was retweeted at least 398 times and liked 144 times. He also posted a picture of himself with the comment: "Let's tackle this! Wearing jeans in case I have to jump fences."

Following his meeting with the school, Lesufi took to Twitter again with the comments quoted by Madibogo above, relating to the observation that the teaching staff and children were all white and that he was assigning a social worker to the case. Other news outlets also reported that he was "disturbed" by the fact that the language of instruction was Afrikaans. Neither Lefusi, nor many of the initial news reports in the mainstream media, mentioned if and how the crèche responded to the allegations. Lefusi later told *Radio 702* what the response of the owner of the crèche was, but he dismissed it because he argued that it used Afrikaans as a mechanism to exclude black children.⁵⁰⁶

Ndlazi, on the news website *IDL*, first summarises the incident and media storm and then writes that the owner, Anell Engelbrecht, is "singing a different tune".⁵⁰⁷ He quotes her as saying that: "People are reading too much into the situation. The picture is one big misunderstanding. We didn't do anything wrong intentionally". Engelbrecht said that that she "has received death threats and hate mail" since the incident went viral.

Ndlazi also refers to the teacher "who took the photo, Ane Muller, who is also the daughter of the owner", who "further reiterated that the photo was misunderstood". The report continues:

Muller said her class is normally made up of 10 children. On Wednesday two children were absent, leaving them with eight. The children were scheduled to have a party so she called all of the children out of the classroom and asked them out to the patio to sit at the table. "A table can only seat six children," Muller said. While the rest of the children walked straight to the table the black girl and another girl walked to the playground instead. After Muller placed six of the eight children at the six-seater table, she asked the assistant to bring the two girls from the playground and they were placed at different tables. As she was about to take the photo, the other little girl started crying and the teacher

asked the assistant to pick her up. “The picture was taken at that very moment,” Muller said.⁵⁰⁸

About allegations that “the black girl was not given a cupcake while all her other classmates had cupcakes”, Muller replied: “If you zoom into the photo you will see she is holding a cupcake in her hand with no icing because I removed it for her. She doesn’t like icing. We know this from previous parties we’ve had at the crèche”.⁵⁰⁹

The report mentions that Muller then sent the photo to the children’s parents on the WhatsApp group the crèche has created. According to Muller she “didn’t even look twice to check if the photo had any racial connotation to it”.⁵¹⁰ Ndlazi adds that the crèche “has been operating for six years and has two black children out of a total of 65. The medium of instruction is Afrikaans only and the alleged victim is the only black girl in her class”.⁵¹¹

Savides reported on 27 June on Times LIVE that “Lesufi was subjected to unprovoked racist abuse, and called a k****r and a paedophile by ‘Summer Starstead’, an anonymous user operating under the handle @uncucklord”.⁵¹² The report continued:

Using a picture taken from Lesufi’s Twitter feed – in which he was wearing jeans in case he had to jump a fence to get into a Johannesburg creche that allegedly separated white and black children during meals – @uncucklord said: “Here you have Gauteng MEC for education @lesufi ready to jump a fence to take pics of toddlers (sic). F****ing K****r pedo!”⁵¹³

According to the report, Lesufi said he “was obviously angry”, but “for the sake of my commitment to the country’s future I have to be strong”. He thus “showed restraint” and his “response to the tweet was short, and remarkably polite: ‘Don’t call me with a K-word, please’”. But the “abuse continued – and got worse”, when “Lesufi again had the K-word hurled at him and was asked why he was not wearing ‘piss-soaked animal skins’ as this was ‘traditional attire’”.

Lesufi again “resisted responding angrily”, and in a “two-part tweet, he later told his 27 200 followers: ‘Racists can insult me as they wish but my commitment to a nonracial, equal and quality education for all our children remains unshakeable.’ Their children will study, dance and play with our

children in one class and drink water from the same tap. If this hurts racists, hard luck!" Savides continues:

Asked how he kept his cool, Lesufi said his parents had taught him "to respect those who hate you, as it is through respect that you can change your enemy". He has needed this teaching because, he said, comments like those made yesterday were commonplace.⁵¹⁴

Subsequently, Dlamini reported that the conservative Afrikaner political party Freedom Front Plus (FF Plus) "has opened a [legal] case against Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza Lesufi, and demanded that he be fired for the manner in which he handled a matter of alleged racism at Koeitjies en Kalfies pre-school".⁵¹⁵

Anton Alberts, leader of the FF Plus in Gauteng, said they "did not have a problem with him intervening at the school but with how he had behaved when he was headed there". The report continued Alberts as saying:

He basically tweeted his own views. He said he was going there to face-off with racists. This means he had already decided that the school was wrong without proper investigation. Then he invited all his 26 900 Twitter followers to join him and confront the school. He also re-circulated photos of the toddlers, which enabled the public to identify them. Within a very highly racially polarised and charged environment he calls people to come with him and face off with a crèche. He put the children at the crèche in danger.⁵¹⁶

Alberts stated that "the matter constitute incitement to cause harm or violence, intimidation and assault with words and not physical assault".⁵¹⁷

Opinion on the matter was provided on the website *Politicsweb* by someone using the pseudonym, The Ratcatcher. The writer took issue with the fact that "the faces of the small children are clearly visible" in the picture circulated by "Mosinyi Wanatsha,⁵¹⁸ a Botswana national ... on both her housing estate's and her personal, but public, Facebook page ... and was then more widely distributed by a relative, Kefhiloe M Mokoka".⁵¹⁹

The Ratcatcher writes that the story received "wide play in the South African media", however, that "the faces of the children are blurred or pixelated" in the photo because the South African Press Code states:

The Bill of Rights (Section 28.2) in the South African Constitution states: "A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter

concerning the child.” The press, applying the spirit of this section, shall therefore: 8.1. exercise exceptional care and consideration when reporting about children. If there is any chance that coverage might cause harm of any kind to a child, he or she shall not be interviewed, photographed or identified without the consent of a legal guardian or of a similarly responsible adult and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child), and a public interest is evident.⁵²⁰

The Ratcatcher says that “Wanatsha and Mokoka may not know better, but government employees and public representatives certainly should. While they may not be bound by the Press Code, they are by the provisions of the Constitution”. It is “also a matter of common sense and common decency that you do not publish or republish images of children without the consent of the parents; and more especially when, by doing so, you are throwing them into the midst of a racial firestorm”.⁵²¹

The article also refers to a post on the Facebook page of the child’s mother in which she stated that “when she moved to South Africa ‘Never once did I anticipate to experience hate crime# racism on this level’”. It also referred to a statement by “amongst others, Mayihlome Tshwete, spokesperson for the Ministry of Home Affairs, which stated: ‘If I ever saw someone treating my child like this ... Jesu, I would be *Django Unchained*’. Tshwete also “published links identifying the crèche and its address and suggested it should be descended upon”. While Lesufi was meeting with crèche management, “Tshwete posted a gif of the whipping scene from *Django Unchained* with the comment ‘Some exclusive images of MEC Lesufi engaging with the management of the racist crèche’.”⁵²²

At around the same time, a report by the SABC indicates the high level of sensationalism in the reporting of alleged racist incidents.⁵²³ In the report Pillay states that “following another week in which racially charged incidents have grabbed the headlines, the [South African] Human Rights Commission has again called on South Africans to be more tolerant”.⁵²⁴ The report by Pillay then lists the “spate of explosive racial incidents across the country”, which led to the appeal by the SAHRC:

Last Monday, petrol attendant Johannes Monyela, was targeted in what is believed to be a racial attack. The attack was caught on CCTV footage. Monyela says: “I said you don’t have to insult me but he just came straight to me. When I look at him I saw he is going to fight, I just

go back. He shoot me with a punch in my face.” Just days later at a Pretoria crèche 19-month-old Nishani Mosinyi, made to sit by herself – apart from her fellow white playmates. Nishani’s mother Thobo says: “There were just so many things wrong with that picture. One, it showed me that my child could be undergoing a lot of segregation at that school, being side lined because of her race ... secondly, I don’t want my child to go to a school where she’s not integrating ... she’s being taught (that) this person is white this person is yellow.” All the recent incidents have the human rights commission outraged.⁵²⁵

This text above on the SABC website is a written summary of a news video report aired on SABC TV. The video, which can be viewed via a link on the website,⁵²⁶ only increases the sensationalist nature of the coverage because it contains edited footage of a violent assault, and the personal point of view of the alleged victims (and the mother of the child). The video also adds to the list of racist incidents⁵²⁷ and allows a spokesperson, Gail Smith, of the SAHRC to provide a more balanced perspective than the summary provided by Pillay, both on air and in print. For instance, where Pillay only summarises that the commission is “outraged”, the spokesperson adds that although she is not downplaying the “importance and the horror of racism” people must remember that “we are a country in process”. Thus, by selectively drawing on visual material which went viral on social media, various individual and quite divergent incidents, each with their own complicated history and context, have been subsumed under one label, (white) racism, and distributed nationwide by the national broadcaster as an “outrageous” news event lasting just over 2 minutes.

Watching the watchdogs

Social media pressure sometimes turned against the mainstream media, for instance in the case where eNCA removed an “Africa Day” story by journalist Nontobeko Sibisi from the TV channel “after she wore a doek (headscarf) on air”.⁵²⁸ After an “email circulated about the incident and then leaked”, a “nationwide discussion on social media” culminated in “the #RespekTheDoek hashtag where many Twitter users, celebrities and some media outlets, showed their support for Nontobeko”. In response eNCA’s editor-in-chief, Anton Harber, said he had “no problem with Sibisi’s headgear and the television’s policy towards head wear may need to be revised”.⁵²⁹

Another incident at eNCA with a similar dynamic, but with more direct official political involvement, was when senior anchor Andrew Barnes was “taken off air following his mockery of Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga’s pronunciation of a word on air”.⁵³⁰ After cutting back to Barnes after airing extracts from Motshekga’s speech she delivered when announcing the results for the 2015 matric year, he said: “Maybe someone should have a word with the Basic Education Minister about how to pronounce the word ‘epitome’.”⁵³¹ The report continues:

South Africans on Twitter have not taken kindly to the remark, after Sport and Recreation spokesperson Esethu Hasane posted a video clip on the platform questioning Barnes’ comment ... Some have since stated that the remark was unnecessary and unprofessional. Others highlighted that Barnes himself struggled to pronounce Motshekga’s surname in the same sentence.⁵³²

The report further quotes eNCA who said that Barnes’ comments were “not only hurtful and unnecessary, but deeply insensitive”. The channel apologised, as did Barnes, “shortly after the incident”.⁵³³ Barnes offered his “heartfelt apologies for the hurtful comment I made about the Education Minister’s English today. You all expect more of me. I’m sorry”.⁵³⁴ According to the report his “apology received mixed reaction, with some opting to forgive him, while others flat out rejected it”.⁵³⁵

Another senior journalist, sports writer Dan Retief, was ostracised after he tweeted “SA carried to victory by two White Afrikaners ... politicians and media commentators take note ... for what it is worth” after a cricket match between South Africa and England.⁵³⁶ According to the report, Cricket South Africa (CSA) “took strong exception to the tweet before accepting his apology”. Retief was also “heavily criticised on Twitter⁵³⁷ for his actions” and subsequently the Sunday newspaper *City Press* has “opted not to carry Retief’s articles in future”. *City Press* editor Ferial Haffajee was quoted as follows:

Dan Retief is a journalist of skill and dexterity – he has taught me a lot about journalism and rugby. I have enjoyed his work in our pages and our readers have been enriched by his excellent insights into rugby. But his tweet last Sunday was intolerable to *City Press*, which is built on the principles of black and African excellence, and of anti-racism and non-racialism. His work will no longer be appearing in *City Press*.⁵³⁸

It is ironic that Haffajee here had to discipline a (freelance) colleague whose social media activities offended some officials and members of the public, because she was notorious for her often un contemplated use of Twitter. In 2013, for example, Haffajee tweeted the details of internal newsroom conflict when she was accused of racism by members of the editorial staff of *City Press*.⁵³⁹ On Twitter, Haffajee denied allegations by aggrieved staff members that "her newsroom was untransformed, or that her staff had been charged or fired".⁵⁴⁰ Amongst the tweets Haffajee sent out at the time were the following:

I don't tolerate white racists, so what makes black racists any different? Today, I drew a line in that sand. Two sides: one awful coin. (7:18 PM – 16 Oct 2013)

So easily does the oppressed become the oppressor. Not under my watch. Sorry. (7:21 PM – 16 Oct 2013)

You asked: City Press has 8 editors (5 black, 3 white; 4 women, 4 men). We have 68% black staff; about 45% women and a vacancy total of 5. (6:33 PM – 17 Oct 2013)

Only person I've ever "fired" was for surfing porn for about eight hours a day. In 10 years editing, laid max 4 charges. Get to know me. (8:55 AM – 19 Oct 2013)

While an internal investigation was conducted, Haffajee went on leave. According to Sapa, Haffajee wrote a letter to staff in which she stated:

Your flintstone editor is out on leave. This will enable you to douse the fires I started ... For where the flames licked painfully, I apologise, but do feel that we are about to embark on a journey toward far greater clarity of what we are and what we believe in ... I want everyone to be happy all the time, to share my vision and join me in an exciting 21st century journey for City Press. But that journey is contested, fundamentally, as is the South African narrative of democracy and transformation. It is complex and painful ...⁵⁴¹

Haffajee subsequently returned to the paper and edited it until she resigned in 2016 to take up a position at the business news publishers, Bloomberg.⁵⁴² But the *City Press* newsroom incident dragged on even after that as four (black) staff members sued Haffajee for defamation for calling them racists during a staff meeting. The four claimed R3 million each from Haffajee and Media24, the owner of *City Press*.

The weekly *Mail & Guardian*, at one time regarded as the pillar of independent investigative journalism in South Africa, apologised profusely on 19 February 2016 to the DA leader, Mmusi Maimane, for an earlier report alleging that he received “political leadership” lessons from the last apartheid-era president, F.W. de Klerk.⁵⁴³ In the report, titled “Mea culpa: We should have done better,” the editor Verashni Pillay writes that “[I]t’s been just over four months in the job and I’ve made my first major error”. This followed after Pillay initially defiantly declared that the newspaper “stand by our story”⁵⁴⁴ after both Maimane and De Klerk denied that they had frequently met as the report alleged. But after a complaint to the South African Press Ombudsman, who ruled against the paper, Pillay admitted that:

... the *Mail & Guardian* should have taken further steps to verify these allegations before publishing them. The front-page summary and newspaper headline overstated the article’s analysis. It also may have misled readers and fell short of the Press Code ... We should also have told our readers that the main reporter on the story, Nelly Shamase, left the DA under acrimonious circumstances.⁴

The initial report did not only attract the attention of DA leaders, some of whom took to social media to express their dissatisfaction, but also strengthened the narrative of the party’s critics that it was a safe-haven for white racists who used leaders like Maimane to give it a “black face”. When the DA gained some ground in the biggest metropolises during the 2016 municipal elections, a popular “trending” Twitter hashtag was #IfDAWins, which was used to circulate jokes and insults suggesting that “white”, and especially Afrikaans and Afrikaner culture, and some forms of apartheid, might be re-introduced in the areas under the political party’s control. Amongst the numerous contributors was the South African minister of sport, Fikile Mbalula, who tweeted on 5 August that “#IfDAWins amplive will change to noot vir noot be careful”. The references in the tweet is to two popular music programmes on (two different) SABC TV channels, *Live Amp* and *Noot vir Noot*, aimed at audiences with different demographics.

A noticeable pattern developed in the interrelated dynamic between social and traditional media coverage of alleged racist incidents, for example the media storm involving the often-controversial radio and TV presenter Gareth Cliff at the beginning of 2016. Cliff reacted on 4 January on social media to the Penny Sparrow incident (who called black beachgoers “monkeys”) by tweeting: “People really don’t understand free speech at all.” He added a link to the

results of an internet survey⁵⁴⁵ on “racist social media posts”, which indicated support for its criminalisation. Cliff was immediately lambasted on social media as a typical white racist who supported Sparrow (because he did not emphatically denounce her), and numerous calls were made that he be “fired” as a judge of the reality TV show *Idols SA* on the subscription channel M-Net owned by Naspers’ DStv. On 5 January, Cliff issued a lengthy apology:

I have been an insensitive asshole many times. This whole saga with the idiotic comments of Penny Swallow (sic) has upset me, but I must acknowledge the pain and anger of so many on Twitter who thought I would in any way condone the things she said. If you thought I was on the side of a racist ... I assumed we were already in agreement about how you can't stand up FOR racism. If I did not make that clear, I apologise – sincerely. With regard to free speech and hate speech, I need to continue my education.

But many of Cliff’s critics on social media rejected his apology, and *Idols SA* announced shortly thereafter that he will not be part of the 12th season, scheduled to commence at that time. Cliff contested the decision in court, and won the case, in which the judge ordered that he be reinstated as part of the *Idols SA* panel. During the trial his advocate, Dali Mpofo,⁵⁴⁶ told the court that Cliff suffered “one of the worst forms of discrimination” because he was white.⁵⁴⁷ Mpofo’s argument was summarised as follows by Jordaan:

Mpofo contended that Cliff was discriminated against by “historically white supremacists” (M-Net) because he is white. Had one of the other *Idols* judges, Unathi Msengana or Somizi Mhlongo, sent the same tweet he or she would not have been fired, Mpofo said. Msengana and Mhlongo have both been lambasted by the public in the past for “offensive” messages on social media. “If you retain Msengana and Mhlongo, then retain Cliff,” Mpofo said. He said M-Net could not fire Cliff for exercising his freedom of expression.⁵⁴⁸

In turn, advocate Wim Trengove, on behalf of M-Net, said that “the public perception that Cliff is a racist was enough to justify M-Net saying it did not want him to represent it”.⁵⁴⁹ Trengove said it was “untenable to [ask to be reinstated]. He [Cliff] defended hate speech of a grievous kind. M-Net say they do not want somebody who defended Penny Sparrow”.⁵⁵⁰ But judge Caroline Nicholls in the end said that the case was “solely a contractual matter” and was not about racism. She found that the existing contract between Cliff and M-Net was binding.

Predictably, the court decision was a prominent news item, but it was arguably equalled and maybe even surpassed by the wide circulation of a photo by Alon Skuy of Cliff and Mpofo outside the building.⁵⁵¹ According to one report as “team Gareth Cliff celebrated his victory over M-Net in court on Friday [29 January] a single photo from this week’s proceedings is quickly going viral”.⁵⁵² The report continues:

Despite Cliff’s joy over the ruling a photo taken on Tuesday, 26 January outside the High Court in Johannesburg paints a whole different picture. The photo ... sees [a laughing] Cliff arrive at the court with his legal representative, [a laughing] Dali Mpofo, while a [shabbily dressed black] man in the background digs through a rubbish skip. Twitter users were quick to point out the drastic juxtaposition captured in the photo ... Those sharing the image on social media feel that it tells the story of the socio-economic divide in South Africa. Twitter user Basil Parker tweeted: “This powerful image says it all, nothing gained”.⁵⁵³

This picture of Cliff, neatly dressed and full of confidence on the way to seek redress from a court of law, with a prominent black advocate at his side, was thus seen as representative of the “neo-liberal consensus” between the still dominant white minority and a small black elite in post-apartheid South Africa, where the black majority were still poor and marginalised (literally and figuratively having to sort through the rubbish to survive).

This tendency to simultaneously reduce the complexity of a specific incident while elevating it as symbolically significant in general was also visible when the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* misspelled the surname of young South African cricket player Kagiso Rabada on a streetlamp poster. An angry Twitter storm erupted, and a dominant accusation was that the mistake occurred because he was a black African in a “Eurocentric” environment.

Confession

Surveillance of the population for acts of racism became a prominent role of the media in the first two decades of the post-apartheid era. As this chapter indicated already, examples are numerous, and were sometimes related, but certainly not restricted to the use of the K-word. The coverage covered the field from official legal action (for instance “Man in court for allegedly attacking magistrate, calling him the k-word”), while other reports dealt with allegations

of racism on the sets of popular soap operas on TV (“Tee glo gegooi in ras-relletjie op sepiestel” [Tea apparently thrown in race tiff on set of soapy]).

Related to the exposure of racists which is part of the surveillance role of the media, is the provision of platforms for confession. Both black and white South Africans were given the opportunity to plead for forgiveness for alleged racist behaviour. There were for instance the report “Forgive me South Africa, Khumalo pleads”, in which Velaphi Khumalo, “the man who called for black South Africans to do to white people what ‘Hitler did to the Jews’... apologised”.

Matthew Theunissen, a white South African who used racial slurs on Facebook, also promised in the media to “make amends”. Theunissen reacted to an announcement in the media that the minister of sport planned to block South African sporting bodies from hosting major international events until “transformation” has been fully achieved. The *Mail & Guardian* subsequently published an opinion piece, “A portrait of racism: The making of #MattTheunissen, by a former classmate”. It was also reported that the “man who posted a racist Facebook rant following the decision to ban SA sports bodies from bidding for major events due to poor transformation, will now do community service” (“‘Racist’ Facebook ranter to do sports community service”). The minister responded favourably to the apology, according to “Mbalula responds to Matthew Theunissen apology”.

In the report, “Racist school turns over a new leaf”, it was stated that “Bergsig Hoërskool in Rustenburg has been praised by the North West government for moving away from its racist past”. In turn, the infamous Penny Sparrow was interviewed at length on video by *News24*, who published extracts under titles such as “‘I am a poor white’ – Penny Sparrow”, and “‘I think black people are wonderful’ – Penny Sparrow”.

Even the seemingly untouchable South African cartoonist, Zapiro, had to apologise on occasion after his visual representation of a state official as a monkey (“‘It was a mistake’, says Zapiro about Shaun Abrahams monkey cartoon”). *Beeld* and *Netwerk24* did likewise after misspelling Kagiso Rabada’s name on a poster and for calling him a “drama queen” in a headline, a reference to his talent for acting at school, but which was judged disrespectful by leading social media racist spotters.

Everything in a hurry, including history

One of the defining features of social media, and its influence on more traditional journalism, was that speed to publication had become a mad affair. The rush to make public trumped in many instances considerations of verification, whether the information was in the public interest, and presented fairly, balanced etc. If journalism could be called “history in a hurry” in the past, it certainly has intensified beyond measure in the last decades. There are at least two consequences for the media, because its accounts of current actualities as well as popular interpretations of history may suffer in trustworthiness. Thus, the media’s role as popular educator of the public and as source for future historians is damaged.

As could be expected, many references were made in the post-apartheid media to South African history, but the versions and interpretations were sometimes suspect, according to some observers. The mobilisation of a certain perspective of history to further current objectives prompted Rudin to state that “race [was] reinvented for post-apartheid SA”,⁵⁵⁴ while Moguerane writes that the pursuit of African nationalism led to misrepresentation of the “history of race along the colonial frontier”.⁵⁵⁵ While the aim here is not to judge whether the media in general contribute to a balanced and nuanced perspective on South African history, this book is motivated by the belief that it is in short supply, and very important to provide.

Reverse racism

A constant theme in the media debates from a white perspective was that some blacks also acted racist, or that black (“reverse”) racism was not taken as “seriously” by authorities, the media and society as white racism. But some commentators argued in turn that blacks could not be racist because they were still structurally disadvantaged by the legacies of colonialism and apartheid. According to this argument racism was a white invention and a characteristic particular to white people. Thus the former leader of the DA, Helen Zille, could not count on much sympathy when she was called a “white bitch” on social media, but neither could the black leader who succeeded her, Mmusi Maimane, when other black politicians called him her “garden boy” and a “black human cloak for the DA”.

Still, the media did report on some instances where blacks were found guilty by the Equality Court for racist hate speech, but critical white observers then often used the opportunity to argue that whites received a harsher punishment in similar circumstances.

Deflection and denial

Accusations of “reverse” racism are often regarded by scholars as a strategy by white racists to deflect and deny the problem of white-on-black racism. Another form of deflection and denial occurred when companies and institutions with whom an alleged (white) racist were associated often immediately distanced themselves in public from that person once the media started to report on the incident. In one case the media reported that a parent of a woman accused of using the K-word during an altercation with police responded that “they did not raise her like that”.

Media commentators from a white perspective would also frequently write opinion pieces and editorials distancing themselves, and white people in general, from the racist perpetrators. However, in some cases a counter-movement occurred when members of the public supported the alleged racists, such as in the case of the infamous Penny Sparrow when calls went out, and were answered, to raise money to pay the hefty fine imposed on her by the Equality Court.

Some commentators, instead, argued that South Africa should get over its “obsession” with race, and quoted research findings which showed that racism was less of a problem than suggested by (social) media. Others called for tolerance and patience and argued that racism and prejudice were common human flaws.

The death of racial reconciliation

Voices of deflection and denial were often intermingled with pessimistic predictions regarding the bad state of race relations. Some commentators warned of a “race” and “cultural” war or revolution because of the building anger amongst black people. The recurring theme was that blacks had been forced into reconciliation, forgiveness and tolerance much too soon after 1994, and that the lack of reciprocation by whites had unleashed even more anger which

was only becoming visible more than two decades later. The most pessimistic predictions included the occurrence of genocide “like in Rwanda” in 1994, unless “something is done”. Common metaphors were that the country was a “powder keg ready to be sparked”, that the “race demon” was unleashed, and that the “founding ideals have been knocked into the emergency ward”.

One social media campaign, “#2016 – The year we mispronounce back”, indicated that “black people had had enough” of the lack of effort amongst whites to learn and appreciate the basics of African culture, like the correct pronunciation of names. In turn, the call was that black South Africans should “turn the tables on their white compatriots” by mispronouncing their names in turn. Some commentators urged whites not to be “reactionary”, while others argued that whites remained “arrogant”. A general theme amongst white commentators was that it was becoming “dangerous” for whites to express an opinion, because critics “always managed to find something racist” in whatever was stated.

The limits of freedom of speech

An important characteristic of post-apartheid race talk which seemed to gain support was the view that freedom of speech and the media have their “limits”. Of course, as was indicated above, this position is clearly informed by the Constitution of 1996, but the point is that with the dismissal of (white) liberalism as an acceptable normative framework, the emphasis has shifted from the ongoing quest for more freedom to the establishment and patrolling of the boundaries of its limitations. In other words, after more than two decades, many post-apartheid intellectuals have made peace with the idea that an unregulated media poses real danger to society and individuals. In this context the call for the criminalisation of racism made sense, and it could well be that social and mainstream media find themselves increasingly under regulatory pressure as the century progresses.

Keep calm and drink coffee

In the midst of conflict and confusion some media commentators would from time to time reassure themselves and others that “things are not as bad as they seem”, that there is a strong and larger “middle ground” between various

South Africans, and that the “noisy radicals” on both sides are actually in the minority. In this context promising trends are mentioned, such as successful cooperation at work, in some schools and universities, and on sport fields, even if these developments have not as yet really translated into radical social integration. Of course, the downside was that racially defined redress, in the form of black economic empowerment at work, transformation agendas at schools and universities and race “quotas” in some sports codes, also led to tension and resistance, especially from some whites.

Racist Cape Town

A series of events amplified by the media⁵⁵⁶ fed into an established discourse of Cape Town as a particularly racist city,⁵⁵⁷ which eventually prompted the local government, led by the DA,⁵⁵⁸ to initiate an anti-racism campaign.⁵⁵⁹ Examples of racism covered in the media include the case of a white UCT student urinating off a balcony on a “Khayelitsha taxi driver”; two men who were involved in a “racially charged altercation” at a mall during which the white man was captured on video using the “k-word”; a Cape Town salesman who reportedly “assaulted, racially abused and spat in the face of his ex-girlfriend’s domestic worker”; a Malawian national and gardener, was “allegedly beaten with a sjambok by a white motorist while on his way to work”; and two Stellenbosch University students, who went to a party dressed as the famous tennis-playing Williams sisters, “were accused of racism and ‘blackfacing’ after a picture of them wearing wigs with their faces painted brown was posted on social media”.⁵⁶⁰

According to news reports, criminal action was taken in three of the cases mentioned above, while both the fighting men were banned from the mall. The “blackface” students were reprimanded by university management after apologising. A central feature of these incidents was the role played by social media in its amplification and dissemination. Additionally, furious and often racist comments by members of the public often accompanied subsequent discussions and reports in the social and mainstream media (although the latter generally had some measures in place to moderate alleged hate speech and incitements to violence).

But racism allegedly occurred in the ranks of the institutional guardians of the public as well. Pupils from Philippi Secondary School claimed that members of the South African Police Service used “the K-word” and “assaulted” them outside the Western Cape Education Department offices in Cape Town.⁵⁶¹ According to the police the pupils attended an “illegal gathering” and “refused to disperse”. The pupils protested the alleged slow pace of providing them with proper permanent classroom facilities. It could not be established whether the complaint of the school resulted in any action against the SAPS members.

#ColonialismMustFall

In 2015, the year in which South Africa celebrated 21 years of democracy, the South African media were instrumental in what soon became known as “The beginning of decolonisation”.⁵⁶² A reporter and photographer of the Western Cape newspaper *Cape Times* were timeously on the scene of a “one-man faeces-tossing protest at UCT [University of Cape Town]” which “turned nasty when security became heavy-handed with students and members of the press, who watched Chumani Maxwele, 30, deface the statue of Cecil John Rhodes above the university’s rugby field”.⁵⁶³

Rhodes, a ruthless 19th-century British imperialist, businessman and politician in the Cape Colony, played a major role in the colonisation of Southern Africa and bequeathed a fortune in properties and scholarships to the nation in his will. Post-apartheid, his legacy and place in history were apparently sanitised by attachment to the legendary name of Nelson Mandela, in the form of the Mandela-Rhodes scholarships, and the anti-apartheid struggle credentials of a prominent Eastern Cape university bearing his name.

But now the statue and name of Rhodes were under attack and as the protests gained popularity and momentum and spread to other areas and symbols of white rule as well, it quickly became clear that the real target was the perceived lack of “transformation” of South African society since 1994. It was significant that institutions such as UCT and Rhodes University in Makhanda (previously Grahamstown), traditionally the intellectual homes of many white English liberals who opposed apartheid, were the initial targets of vocal, privileged and educated young black elites who modelled themselves on the Black Consciousness ideas of Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon. Thus, a central point of

contestation was allegations that the liberal ideology of non-racialism was instrumental in safeguarding “white privilege” at these and other institutions.

Extensive mainstream and social media exposure and the involvement of political parties and various interest groups soon elevated the “#RhodesMustFall” debate to a national (and even international) controversy. Subsequent research by Media Tenor found that journalists were “setting the agenda” for the debate, and that they and the students organising the initial protests were the key drivers behind the public profile of the campaign.⁵⁶⁴ When the statue was removed by university authorities on 9 April 2015, the event was televised live on eNews Channel Africa, and framed as a possible turning point in history, initiated by a “small group of brave students”.

This event provided impetus to lingering resentments on other university campuses, and using social media, #RhodesMustFall quickly morphed into a nationwide student unrest under the banner of #FeesMustFall, in other words, a call for free education. After a short and sometimes violent standoff which saw groups of students march on Parliament in Cape Town and the Union Buildings in Pretoria, the government capitulated and announced that university fees would not be increased for 2016. They also committed to engage with students on the demand for increased access and “transformation”. Subsequently more money was made available for free university education for poorer students in the national budget of 2018.

It is significant that social media and students were in some way the catalysts for these prominent calls for “decolonisation”. In the first post-apartheid decade similar sentiments and ideas were part of the rhetoric of “Africanisation”,⁵⁶⁵ but they in the main originated as part of official restructuring processes of the apartheid state and society by the newly elected ANC-led government coalition. How most members of the media shifted their editorial positions in relation to that theme is also an interesting phenomenon; for example in the 1990s the Afrikaans press was especially critical of what they perceived as the indiscriminate targeting of “Eurocentric” institutions, values and traditions.

In 2015, at least some members of the mainstream press, like the *Cape Times* and *Argus* of Independent Media in Cape Town, were initially rather supportive of the student movement, although debates raged about the correct strategies

and targets of “decolonisation” and “transformation”. The shifting focus to the issue of free education and the targeting of the unpopular Zuma government seemingly also drew wide support from members of the press. It was only when the student movement subsided after the government (partially) capitulated and violence was directed specially at university infrastructure by smaller groups of students and disgruntled staff, that the mainstream press withdrew its approval.

If you can't beat them, shut them down (and/or make it someone else's problem)

A number of South Africa's leading online news and opinion outlets, like *News24* and *Daily Maverick*, decided by 2015 to close the comment sections of their websites, while often providing longwinded justifications, only to change their minds a few years later and reopen the function (at least partially in some instances). Also noticeable was that some of these outlets simultaneously maintained a Facebook presence, and allowed readers to comment there. The rationale seemed to be that the risk of brand and image damage and liability was less when racist trolls were channelled to Facebook, while it relieved the actual news outlet of the responsibility and effort/cost to moderate comments on its website.

In 2015, Andrew Trench, *News24* editor-in-chief, explained the decision to close the news website's comment section.⁵⁶⁶ He refers to a quote by writer Anaïs Nin: “We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are”, and states that “online community managers and editors who grapple daily with the phenomenon of online comments” really “appreciate the profundity of this statement”. Trench continues:

The digital space demonstrates the phenomenon of our self-reinforcing tendencies like no other. This space, still vaunted for its potential for participatory democracy and fuel for free expression, also seems to amplify our darkest thoughts and extremity of views.

Trench agrees with a statement by William Bird of Media Monitoring Africa that “*News24* could publish an article about chickens being hatched on a farm and the comments would degenerate into a race debate”. He says, “[D]espite all reasonable efforts [of moderation], the comments on our platform align themselves inextricably with the extremes of South African discourse.”

He takes issue with critics who argue that comments “tell us where we are” and that *News24* was “closing off a barometer of our society”. Trench states:

But they are wrong. *News24* comments as they are now, and have been for some time, are no more a barometer of social mores than violent road rage is a barometer of our driving habits. Social psychologists have a name for it. It’s called deindividuation and it’s what happens when some people lose it behind the steering wheel of a car and when sane dads go mental at a soccer game. It’s also what happens online; we call it trolling.

This argument is rather ironic considering the frequently used metaphor of journalism as a mirror to society (“do not shoot the messenger”), which is often employed when journalists are under attack from a disgruntled public. In this case Trench is at pains to point out that the content provided by some readers on his website is not part of the mirror to society, while he would probably still argue that the news content selected and presented there by journalists “reflects” society.

The popular news and opinion website, *Daily Maverick*, followed suit in 2016 in an editorial article, titled “We tried. We really, really did”.⁵⁶⁷ The editorial stated:

Over the past six years, we have worked painstakingly hard to build a legacy brand of which we could be proud. Unfortunately, our comments section is tarnishing that brand ... One of the joys of the internet is that it provides near endless venues for the posting of marginalized opinions, and we urge those who feel slighted by our new policy to investigate options such as Twitter, Facebook, 4Chan and other sites which have so successfully offered voices to the voiceless.

When the *Daily Maverick* later reversed its decision, it published a “Comments Policy” that stated:

Don’t write stupid crap, hate speech or stuff that offends people. Also, use your real name. We reserve the right to remove your comments if you transgress these rules and your comments are flagged by other readers. The comments section is not there for you to spew forth the vilest thoughts you can dream of behind the anonymity of an internet connection. There are other sites for that, you know who they are and where you can find them. The quickest way to get our backs up is to abuse our journalists and opinion contributors. Disagree and debate, please by all means, but degenerate into name-calling and abuse and we won’t hesitate to let you know the bus is full. Name-

calling of other commentators is also a good way to upset us, get your comments flagged and result in a ban. Here, we don't pity the fool. We block them.

By 2019, many news online platforms, including the ones mentioned above, have revised and/or softened their stance on reader involvement, without opening up completely. Some of the options were to allow comments only in certain instances or to invite readers' contributions, in which case a level of journalistic gatekeeping is maintained.

ACADEMIC RACE TALK IN THE MEDIA

Introduction

The confusion and chaos created by grand apartheid idealism and social engineering are also visible in academic discourse between 1948 and 1994.

In 1978, Prof Ben S. van As, head of the Department of Development Administration and Politics at the University of South Africa (Unisa), published the article "Die posisie van die Swartman in Blanke Stadgebiede" (The position of the Blackman in White City Areas) in the 29(1) edition of the journal *Tydskrif vir Rasse-aangeleenthede* (Journal of Racial Affairs). He wrote against the backdrop of the "frightening" migration of black people to "white" cities (those outside the Bantustans) but still envisioned the realisation of the grand apartheid goal of a white state that peacefully and justly co-existed with its various black neighbours. But he pointed out that whites were already in the minority outside the Bantustans as well and warned against white economic and labour dependence on black people. Curiously, Van As ended his extended academic argument with the statement that as a "fighting Christian nation" we must believe that "God placed us here with a purpose, and that He will not forsake us in the hour of our need".

Hindsight is an exact science, but even to the learned scholar and his contemporaries it must have been an ominous sign that he had to involve a higher authority in his conclusion to a peer-reviewed academic article on political science. To the contemporary reader it signals the fact that some academic texts are just as often part of the official political ideology of a particular period as popular texts.

Slavery and Heese⁵⁶⁸

Situated against the backdrop of the apartheid state in crisis, a view of the discourses around slavery is provided by the academic journal *Kronos*, which published a telling extract of newspaper coverage of not only Emancipation Day on 1 December 1834, but also subsequent remembrances (with 50 year intervals) in 1884, 1934 and 1984.⁵⁶⁹

In summation, the editorial in *Kronos* observes that “the press in 1834 displayed a strong pro-imperial spirit” but with “diverging approaches”.⁵⁷⁰ The *South African Commercial Advertiser* “paid much attention to the success achieved by the abolitionists’ fervor, while *De Zuid Afrikaan* was much more worried about the way in which the former slave owners would be compensated”. But in 1884, 50 years later, this “memorable occasion received just a brief mention in the *Cape Argus*, and it was only with the centenary celebrations in 1934 that the English press again gave it prominence”. In their coverage, “the excitement in liberal circles and amongst the descendants of the slaves is clearly noticeable; as well as their emphasis on the religious-humanitarian spirit which characterized the emancipation and remembrance of 1934”. In contrast, “*Die Burger* chose rather to bring into memory the position of the colonists around the emancipation events”. By 1984, there was “noticeably little by way of a festival of remembrance in South Africa and a columnist in *Rapport*, Gus Adams, rightly observed that 1 December is not being observed”.

With the benefit of hindsight, one can agree in general with the brief summary provided in the *Kronos* editorial in 1984, although several observations arise as well. At the time, *Kronos* was situated at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), then part of the apartheid education system of separate facilities for different racial groups. Because of this, UWC, situated on the Cape Flats in Bellville, was sometimes derogatorily referred to as a “bush college”. At

the same time, a number of prominent academics, including white Afrikaans speakers, joined the ranks of academics at UWC, as can be seen from the editorial staff members of *Kronos*, who were listed as “Prof. J.L. Hattingh, Dr H.F. Heese, Mr H.C. Bredekamp and Mr J. Joubert” from the Western Cape Institute of Historical Research. The institute focused strongly on early Cape, and especially slave and “Coloured”, history.

While the emancipation of slaves went unobserved in 1984, the history of slavery was strategically mobilised in political and media discourses a year later. In 1985, Heese published a controversial book, *Groep sonder grense* (Group without borders), which showed that some Afrikaners descended from slaves. The public furore around Heese’s book was sparked by media coverage when he presented findings from the manuscript to a parliamentary committee investigating the scrapping of the infamous Immorality Act and Mixed Marriages Act.

The *Weekend Argus* reported that “[M]ore black bombshells are expected amongst race-conscious Afrikaner families soon when historian Dr Hans Heese publishes an A-to-Z of sex-across-the-colour-bar in his new book”.⁵⁷¹ The report, titled “Names that crossed the colour bar”, was written by Peter Fabricius, who mentioned alongside his byline that his “first ancestor in the Cape, Johan Fabricius, married his freed slave, Rosina, in 1785”. Fabricius mentions that Heese’s father, Dr J.A. Heese, first “rocked the conservative Afrikaner establishment in 1971 by announcing that the volk contained about seven present black blood ...” The younger Heese’s book will include an appendix “painstakingly detailing the inter-racial affairs – legitimate and illegitimate – of all the burghers of the Cape in the 17th and 18th centuries”. Fabricius writes that while “the father’s book, *Die herkoms van die Afrikaner* (The origin of the Afrikaner), shattered the complacency of the Afrikaners as a group, the son’s book is expected to pop the pretensions of actual families, including many arch-conservatives”. This includes the family of “a certain Conservative Party [CP] member whose feathers Heese have already ruffled with his tar bush” [by approaching him for information about his family history, upon which he was threatened with a lawsuit].

By using Heese’s book to ridicule apartheid, Fabricius also displayed contempt for especially “race-conscious” conservative Afrikaners. He proudly announced his own “mixed” heritage as a sign of his liberal anti-apartheid stance.

In *Die Burger*, Leopold Scholtz displayed a far more sober, academic approach, titled “Kollig op Afrikaner se ‘gemengde afkoms’” (Spotlight on the ‘mixed origin’ of the Afrikaner).⁵⁷² As the inverted commas in the heading indicate, the issue of whether and how many contemporary Afrikaners were affected by Heese’s findings, is deliberately underplayed in the report. Scholtz, a trained historian and member of *Die Burger*’s staff, seemingly tried to balance support for the move by the NP government to investigate the scrapping of the Immorality Act and Mixed Marriages Act with loyalty to the (white) Afrikaner community, the newspaper’s core readership. Scholtz wrote that Heese’s study had a strictly defined historic academic aim and therefore “carries no polemic character”.

The right-wing publication *Die Afrikaner* reported that a “huge” defamation suit was brought against Heese and the *Sunday Times* by 16 Afrikaners whose family names appear in the book and were republished in the newspaper.⁵⁷³ A following edition of *Die Afrikaner* then published a cartoon of Heese, covered in black paint, putting messy blots of black paint on the Voortrekker Monument.⁵⁷⁴

A reporter of *Die Burger* who attended the book launch, quoted Heese as saying that he refused to be intimidated by the furor.⁵⁷⁵ Heese said that “interest groups on the left and right were trying to use this academic work for their own goals”. He made it clear that “as Afrikaner historian I am very much disturbed by their goals, deeds and threats”.

The Argus published a report in which Heese directly criticised the media coverage of the book by saying that “by ‘making politics’ of a scientific study, the media had caused the book to be seen as an assault on the Afrikaner”.⁵⁷⁶ He said that he never intended “‘purely academic research’ to become a political football” and that the result has been “counter-productive”. If handled differently, the book “could have helped forge better relations between groups”, he said. Heese repeated that “marriage across the colour-line was part of the Afrikaner’s culture and should be accepted as such”. He concluded that he had “yet to hear more about the more than 60 claims for defamation he has received since the book appeared”, but that he could not believe that any of the claimants were serious, because if they should read his work they will realise that it was “an academic study and was not intended to be malicious”. In 1986 both *Die Volksblad* (8 January 1986, p. 4) and *Sunday Times* (5 October 1986, p. 19)

published reports about the fact that threatened lawsuits from aggrieved Afrikaners never materialised.⁵⁷⁷

Heese's criticism of the media had merit, because some of the coverage was sensationalistic, strategic and opportunistic. But at the same time, he must have considered the implications of presenting his findings in parliament in support of the scrapping of infamous apartheid legislation. Furthermore, the idea that even scientific research could be totally divorced from the social and political contexts into which it is embedded, is problematic, to say the least.

Heese's story in the media has an interesting post-apartheid footnote. In 1998, *Die Burger* reported that he was amongst 41 staff members, including senior lecturers and professors of the University of the Western Cape who were suddenly dismissed, apparently as part of a broad restructuring programme ("Skok, woede oor afdanking van UWK-akademici" [Shock, anger over dismissal of UWC academics]).⁵⁷⁸ According to the report the Afrikaans language department was affected the most, with a staff reduction of 62%. The report mentioned the controversy in the 1980s around Heese's book "in which he showed that many Afrikaners had slave ancestors". Heese, who was at UWC from 1976 until his dismissal at the age of 54, subsequently joined Stellenbosch University as archivist.

The subtext of this report mentioned above is that (even) Heese, who fearlessly antagonised the conservative Afrikaner political right during apartheid, also became a white "victim" of post-apartheid restructuring. As Botma indicates, a theme of crisis regarding the "Africanisation" of society frequently circulated in *Die Burger* during the first post-apartheid decade.⁵⁷⁹ Most noticeably, the huge controversy of the 1980s, the "mixed" heritage of many Afrikaners, is stated here as a matter of fact by the reporter, Jacob Rooi – who interestingly enough self-identifies as a "brown South African".⁵⁸⁰ Thus, these turn of events also show that the self-appointed apartheid-gatekeepers of the "purity" of Afrikaners and Afrikaans-language journalism have indeed been overcome, but new themes have also emerged, such as transformation and decolonisation.

Race obsession

There is consensus that South Africans are still “race obsessed”⁵⁸¹ and that racism remains an enormous problem in post-apartheid South Africa. McKaiser argues in an “enormously provocative”⁵⁸² book that racism has “never gone out of fashion in South Africa”.⁵⁸³ This conclusion is reached and defended in the “absence of trustworthy empirical evidence”, as McKaiser manfully admits, because “a few very public acts of racism tempt us to think there is a definite increase”. Interestingly, for someone interested in media research, McKaiser considers “one obvious possibility”, that “a few dramatic public acts of racism are highlighted more often in the media than before”.⁵⁸⁴ But he ignores this option because: “My gut sense is that racism never declined.”⁵⁸⁵

Even if empirical evidence were available that racism somehow declined, it would still be rather pointless to dispute McKaiser’s claim above and try to blame the media for South Africa’s reputation as a racist country. The country’s long history of colonialism and apartheid speaks for itself. Van den Berghe for example already stated decades ago: “If racism is an endemic disease in the United States, in South Africa it has become a way of life.”⁵⁸⁶

In this view, the figure of the racist still looms large as public enemy number one in not only the long and troubled history of colonialism and apartheid, but also in the democratic state more than two decades after apartheid formally ended. In fact, current commentators like McKaiser seem to suggest that perhaps the racist has never been a bigger problem, *inter alia* because he or she is standing in the way of “transformation”, in other words, to solve the problems left by the “legacies” of the past. McKaiser states his aim as follows: “[A] central motive behind this book is a desire to truly get under the racist’s skin”.⁵⁸⁷

In light of the country’s history, it is safe to guess that the primary target still has a white skin. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, the country has gone through various stages of “reconciliation” and “transformation”. However, after more than two decades, there is consensus amongst many critics that, while black people have taken political control to the overall benefit of a small black elite and growing black middle-class, most black people still live in poverty. Furthermore, in addition to the small white minority still maintaining its disproportionate economic power and affluence, the perception is that they

still actively discriminate against blacks to protect their "undeserved white privilege" and often display racist attitudes in private and public, in other words, their sense of "white supremacy".

However, a counter-view to this typical generalisation is offered by Durrheim, Mtose and Brown, who argue against a "globalising" analysis that is primarily directed at whites (and blacks) as collectives because their "attitudes are assumed to reflect their race-class interest".⁵⁸⁸ Instead, according to them, such analysis is "increasingly difficult to sustain as race-class interests are realigned in the post-apartheid context".⁵⁸⁹

Even McKaiser admits that "white people do not have a monopoly on racism" and refers to incidents of violence, connected to "xenophobia" and "Afrophobia" in which black people were involved, to pessimistically conclude that "racism, sadly, runs in our blood", because of "the legacies of colonialism and apartheid".⁵⁹⁰ In other words, when black people display racism in post-apartheid South Africa, it is due to "ingrained racism handed down from colonial and apartheid architects and foot soldiers".⁵⁹¹

Both psychological and sociological theories of racism have in the past focused almost exclusively on white people, which was "appropriate in the context of explicit white supremacy", but it "inadvertently treated whites as active agents and blacks as passive victims of racism", writes Durrheim, Mtose and Brown.⁵⁹² Thus, when the context changed in post-apartheid South Africa, "racism has mutated and the 'white-perpetrator-black-victim' frame of analysis is not so readily applicable".⁵⁹³ Because members of all groups may occasionally employ hateful stereotypes and racial violence, the question arises what distinguishes white prejudice from black prejudice?⁵⁹⁴ Sociological analysis that places racism in a structural context direct critical analysis at whites as a class who enjoy privilege and who have developed racist ideologies to preserve the status quo. But in post-apartheid South Africa black people "constitute the ruling elite and have interests in maintaining the status quo".⁵⁹⁵ In other words, an over-emphasis of sociological accounts of racism may also lead to distortions, according to this view.

In summation of their criticism of the use of the concept "racism" in post-apartheid South Africa, Durrheim, Mtose and Brown argue for it to be replaced by what they call "race trouble", which is visible in the form of "racial suspicion,

threat and conflict".⁵⁹⁶ In fact, they move close to describing racism as part of (a particular) culture in stating that "racism is a product of a way of life".⁵⁹⁷ This formulation reminds the reader of the famous definition of culture (as a whole way of life) by Raymond Williams, as well as the ideas of Goldberg, who developed a "conception of transforming racisms bound conceptually in terms of and sustained by an underlying culture".⁵⁹⁸ Durrheim, Mtose and Brown write:

*We see evidence of race trouble in the news and the media, we feel it on the streets, and we live with it in our homes and places of work. All of our lives are troubled by race much of the time.*⁵⁹⁹

The suggestion above to regard racism as "race trouble" and "racist culture", in other words as a way of life, is enlightening, because it bridges the divide between psychological and sociological approaches. In this holistic conception, the focus is not on isolating racists as individual deviants, but to understand the structures and cultures sustaining its manifestation. Yet, while the media, and some of these intellectuals working in the media, often preach that racism is multi-faced, the question is whether they ever get past the stage of "isolating racists as individual deviants".

While writers and scholars such as McKaiser, Haffajee, and Maré agree that racial justice and harmony in South Africa is the ultimate goal, they do not all agree on the way to achieve it. In this debate McKaiser (at times) represents a recent version of some of the Black Consciousness ideas made famous by Biko and Fanon. For example, Biko writes:

*The [white] liberal must fight on his own and for himself. If they are true liberals they must realise that they themselves are oppressed, and that they must fight for their own freedom and not that of the nebulous "they" with whom they can hardly claim identification.*⁶⁰⁰

Denying that Biko "hated white people" and stating that he was "deliberately misunderstood", McKaiser declares that Black Consciousness "was rooted in the need for black people to be genuinely autonomous, a project that requires us to be fully in control of our own projects, including the project of dismantling racism".⁶⁰¹ This means that "white allies must play second fiddle

to us in the fight against racism". This idea is also promoted by Samantha Vice, a philosophy lecturer at Rhodes University, who writes:

For white South Africans, work on the self, done in humility and silence, might indicate the recognition that any voice in the public sphere would inevitably be tainted by the vicious features of whiteness.⁶⁰²

Commentators such as Vice are seemingly caught off guard and more or less silenced by the intensity of rising black anger aimed not only at white racists, but in some cases at whites in general, including (and often especially aimed at) white liberals. This renewed (or maybe re-invented or even perverted) version of Black Consciousness has seemingly surpassed the ideology of non-racialism and the rainbow nation in some intellectual circles.

Haffajee⁶⁰³ is prompted to investigate the (for her) troubling rejection of non-racialism and preoccupation with whiteness and white privilege as a problem in post-apartheid South Africa. She argues that blacks as a majority have been liberated and should focus on constructing and living in the reality they want, rather than fixating on a dwindling white minority, whose economic power is still a factor but is also overrated and overstated.

Unsurprisingly, Haffajee's book is severely criticised in Black Consciousness circles for her perceived lack of understanding of structural racism and how the legacies of colonialism and apartheid entrenched white privilege, culture, power and norms. The main point of criticism in Molefe, for instance, is that "auntie Ferial", although described as a "warm, genial, caring elder", did not engage long and hard enough with the complex topic and therefore presented a "weak and flawed interpretation" which would only strengthen the ammunition of critics of the new generation and social movements like #ForBlackGirlsOnly, #OpenStellenbosch and #FeesMustFall.⁶⁰⁴

This criticism may be overstated, because while Haffajee is critical of some of the ideas of Black Consciousness, she also defends race-based policies aimed at eradicating the legacies of apartheid, such as black economic empowerment (BEE).

Maré, on the other hand, is vehemently opposed to BEE and any other (racial) classification of humans, which according to him, hold the potential for "categorical murder".⁶⁰⁵ Maré argues that "race thinking, and the practices

it gives rise to, have continued since 1994, with hardly a question being raised".⁶⁰⁶ According to him, the "ANC government's strategy of using race-based policies to bring about an equal society and economic redress has been unsuccessful, and has criminally detracted us from exploring alternative and much more widely inclusive ways of tackling our problems". Maré argues that these policies have instead "entrenched even further a racialized understanding of who we are as South Africans ..." Maré continues:

... the constant repeated phrase "the legacies of apartheid" stand in the way of addressing imaginatively, innovatively, realistically, the enormous challenges of the present ... The dominant political mindset is allowed to find refuge in the past. And when the present is confronted – for example, through service delivery protests – it is not possible to see these confrontations as opportunities for constructive, imaginative exploration of solutions to problems that go far beyond the local, in a shared national and even global conversation.⁶⁰⁷

While Maré refers to actual political conflict (of mainly poor black people against the black-controlled government) and has a different view from McKaiser and Haffajee on BEE, he seemingly conforms to the idea that some sort of rational consensus (and peace) is achievable through conversation on a very large scale. This is counter to the departure point mentioned above that these discursive struggles make more sense when viewed from another perspective: that communication is an extension of war.

The academic, Desmond Painter,⁶⁰⁸ identifies three "positions" in the post-apartheid race debate. The first he calls "conservative" and assigns to right-wingers who accuse blacks of "reverse racism" and political opportunism ("they are still/again blaming apartheid"), inter alia because of policies and action aimed at "transformation", such as "affirmative action, sport quotas and other race-based interventions".⁶⁰⁹ The second position Painter calls "liberal" and assigns to "columnists, radio presenters and self-proclaimed progressive Afrikaners", who argue that they must defend a "fragile, precious" post- and non-racial era of peace against "untransformed white racists and populist black demagogues". The third and "progressively radical" position in the debate, according to Painter, rejects both the conservative position of victimhood and the liberal position of "projecting racism to the outside".⁶¹⁰ Both positions "simply camouflage the extent to which white domination and privilege are still maintained and the mechanism through which it is sustained".

Painter, who clearly identifies with the third position, argues that racism in the South African context is a system which “not only advantaged white people historically, but that also have all of us stuck in an ideology which promoted whiteness as the norm”. Racism is thus “an unfinished narrative of white supremacy and black dismissal, and not simply the story of conflict between equal groups and mutual prejudice”. He continues:

Rather than bringing us to the brink of a race war, a new generation of student activists did us a favour by making race and racism a topic of debate again. They are right: Whiteness, in the ideological sense of a hierarchy of humanity, must fall. Our challenge is, however, to make sure that race does not become a renewed principle of political mobilization. The answer to whiteness is not blackness, but a renewed effort to give substance to a non-racial society.

Pienaar, in turn, identifies “three grand narratives” in post-apartheid discourses: “Afrikaners in search of what they might label ‘libertarianism’, English speakers seeking ‘liberalisation’ and black people demanding ‘liberation’”.⁶¹¹ According to Pienaar, “these political strands converged in 1994 to create the rainbow nation ethos, dispersed into their old grooves and converged again during the #RhodesMustFall chapter of the student uprising ... when, for a brief few months, consensus reigned and thousands of intellectuals of all stripes were united in one cause, vaguely defined as anti-colonialism”. Pienaar argues that because of the respective “bubbles” created by these different narratives, the “brave” #RhodesMustFall movement, “that promised so much to help clear South Africa’s heads of apartheid cobwebs, has degenerated into racial profiling of the crudest sort”.

Like Pienaar’s off-centre approach, Sonderling⁶¹² provides a fresh and radical perspective, also based on the Black Consciousness ideas of Fanon, but perhaps not with the same results that McKaiser, and for that matter Maré and Haffajee, would aim for. Sonderling is seemingly inspired by statements such as the follow from Fanon:

National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.⁶¹³

Applying the argument to intercultural communication in South Africa, Sonderling states that the demise of apartheid is conventionally communi-

cated as a “moral victory over evil and South African whites are persuaded to confess their past immorality”.⁶¹⁴ Instead, Sonderling argues that the demise of apartheid must be evaluated as a “political power game”. He refers to Fanon’s “rejection of moral evaluations and his conception of the violent dialectic of colonisation and decolonisation” and presents it as prototype for intercultural communication in post-colonial South Africa.

Sonderling’s approach is important because he draws in part on the same post-colonial literature that has inspired a new generation of South African Black Consciousness thinkers and activists. The ideas of Fanon, and Biko, are recycled by this generation of students and intellectuals with almost monotonous regularity in calls for decolonisation, restitution, redress, affirmative action, transformation and anti-racism activism. But as pointed out by Sonderling, two central points to Fanon’s philosophy are underemphasised in this recurring version of Black Consciousness.

Firstly, there is the central role reserved for violence in not only maintaining but also challenging and changing the master-slave dialectic, and secondly the view that the cycle repeats itself when the slave becomes the master and must be violently challenged in turn. In other words, it seems that a new generation of Black Consciousness thinkers is arguing that non-violent decolonisation is possible, which lead them to entertaining visions of a black-dominated (or even non-racial) utopia. But in order to get there, they cannot let go of the other side of the coin, the white perpetrator, who has the impossible challenge to not only “become” black, but also to be recognised as such.

McKaiser agrees that there is a “relational property”⁶¹⁵ to racism and, if Sonderling is right and communication is the continuation of war by other means, the descendants of the former slaves of colonialism and apartheid – the aspiring new masters – cannot fight a race war in the media on their own. We all need to be reminded of the permanent foe – the old (white) master’s voice.

Gouws argues that the student movements behind decolonisation rhetoric and actions, like #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch, shifted their approach to identity, and specifically race as mobilising factor, between essentialism and social constructionism.⁶¹⁶

Identity politics, according to Gouws, refer to activism around a chosen identity for political purposes. If identity is used in an essentialist way, it is viewed as unchangeable, while social constructionism argues the opposite, that social hierarchies can be viewed as the result of a history of oppression and can thus also be reformed.

The problem with an essentialist view is that it lacks a shared vision for change, for example between different race groups, because all that unite the members of a specific group is opposition to a shared enemy. The forming of coalitions is difficult in this scenario. Gouws refers to the feminist theorist Joan Scott who describes the exclusionary “dilemma” of identity politics as follows:

the usage of experience ... personal testimony of oppression replaces analysis, and this testimony comes to stand for the experience of the whole group. The fact of belonging to an identity group is taken as authority for one’s speech ... the only test of true knowledge.

Thus, those with opposing views are denied intellectual access and are silenced.

Gouws argues that a shared identity is necessary for a social movement to mobilise, and that essentialist identity politics as form of emotional expression can be used strategically to transform isolation and feelings of exclusion into anger, solidarity and pride.

Groups like #RhodesMustFall and #OpenStellenbosch used identity as socially constructed when they protested their exclusion from the institutional culture of the universities, but in an essentialist way in their criticism of white privilege, argues Gouws. In the latter case, white students are viewed as a homogenous group, all the same with the same experience of being advantaged, to the exclusion of black students.

If race is used in an essentialist way, Gouws argues in reference to the pedagogy specialist Henry Giroux, whiteness becomes a marker for white students that imprisons them in their ideas of dominance and racism. White students thus have no critical lens through which to look at privilege, inequality and power and are immobilised by feelings of guilt, a lack of vocabulary or imagination with which to envision a better world and view themselves as agents fighting for justice. Giroux argues that race should not be used in this essentialist way in order for white students to learn that it is construction which can change

and that identity can be rearticulated in order for it to become the basis for workable political coalitions and social movements. Whiteness does not have to be denied, but values which lead to exclusion should be unlearned in order that difference as threat can change to affirmation of difference in which the hierarchies of race disappear.

Mbembe⁶¹⁷ concurs that many black responses in the “age of rage”⁶¹⁸ were linked to “whiteness”, described by him as “the machine in which a huge portion of the humanity has become entangled in spite of itself”. Mbembe writes that the “winds blowing from our campuses can be felt afar, in a different idiom, in those territories of abandonment where the violence of poverty and demoralisation having become the norm, many have nothing to lose and are now more than ever willing to risk a fight”. He says that a “new cultural temperament is gradually engulfing post-apartheid urban South Africa. For the time being, it goes by the name ‘decolonisation’ – in truth a psychic state more than a political project in the strict sense of the term”. He continues:

South Africa is fast approaching its Fanonian moment. A mass of structurally disenfranchised people have the feeling of being treated as “foreigners” on their own land. Convinced that the doors of opportunity are closing, they are asking for firmer demarcations between “citizens” (those who belong) and “foreigners” (those who must be excluded). They are convinced that as the doors of opportunity keep closing, those who won’t be able to “get in” right now might be left out for generations to come – thus the social stampede, the rush to “get in” before it gets too late, the willingness to risk a fight because waiting is no longer a viable option.

Thus, concludes Mbembe: “There will be no plausible critique of whiteness, white privilege, white monopoly capitalism that does not start from the assumption that whiteness has become this accursed part of ourselves we are deeply attached to, in spite of it threatening our own very future well-being.” According to Mbembe, “new voices increasingly render old ones inaudible, while anger, rage and eventually muted grief seem to be the new markers of identity and agency”. He writes that to “say nothing has changed would be akin to indulging in wilful blindness”. Hyperboles notwithstanding, South Africa today is not the “colony” Frantz Fanon is writing about in his *Wretched of the earth* and “invoking Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko and countless others will come to nothing if this ethics of becoming-with-others is not the cornerstone of the new cycle of struggles”.

Nearly three decades after apartheid ended, “decolonisation” had become one of the popular discursive trends in the media. This concept, which is often vague and contested, included a number of sub-themes in South African race talk. Amongst these were calls for “transformation” and the eradication and criminalisation of racism.

The announcement in 2016 that the ANC-led government would introduce legislation to criminalise racism clearly was a reflection and result of past and continuing experiences of inequality, abuse and injustices by black people. Existing measures to repair the physical and psychological damage of colonialism and apartheid and prohibit and punish current offenders of their rights and dignity were clearly not satisfactory to a significant section of the black majority. For them, frequent media reports of random acts of especially “anti-black” racism seemingly became indicative of unfairly obtained “white privilege” and the persistence of “white supremacy”, which allegedly were virtually unchanged since the arrival of the first Dutch colonists in the 17th century.

In turn, some commentators warned that the official high-profile “fight” against racism, and the constant media attention to random acts of racism in society, amounted to a “witch hunt” of especially white South Africans, who were constantly scrutinised (also by and in the media) for signs of racism and often regarded as “guilty” until proven “innocent”. The question was posed whether there is a real danger that the victims of colonialism and apartheid and/or their descendants could become persecutors themselves in future, as a number of historic examples, including that of the defeated Afrikaners after the South African War (1899-1902), indicate. A related question was the long-term implications of an apparent shift in emphasis from pushing the boundaries of media freedom to policing the boundaries of acceptable public discourse.

Leading up to and following the announcement that the government planned to introduce stronger legal penalties for racist behaviour, media conduct and coverage of various incidents of alleged racism established certain discursive parameters. This will be discussed below.

Enter the SAHRC

Official inquiry into the conduct of the media occurred relatively soon after 1994. The chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), Barney Pityana, was amongst the most prominent critics of racism in the mainstream media, which led to a formal investigation in 1998.⁶¹⁹ The SAHRC hired researchers, who monitored the media for six weeks in 1999. The Interim Report found incidents of “racism and stereotypical reporting”⁶²⁰ in the media, but they were denied by lawyers who represented editors at SAHRC hearings.⁶²¹

In 2000, the SAHRC issued around 30 subpoenas to media organisations which ordered them to testify. The subpoenas were withdrawn after widespread national and even international reaction and condemnation by, amongst others, journalists and opposition political parties, who accused the Commission of attacking press freedom.⁶²² Still the hearings continued, and a final report was issued later that year. Again, the findings were damning: the media in South Africa could be “characterised as racist institutions”.⁶²³ The Commission’s recommendations included a statutory regulatory framework for all media, the recruitment and training of more black staff, workshops on human dignity and equality for journalists and cadet training programmes based on constitutional values for aspirant journalists.

Although not all responses to the report were negative, it was severely criticised by large sections of the media, as could be expected. But criticism also originated from academic circles and focused on the “badly flawed”⁶²⁴ methodology on which the report was based. The South African journalism studies journal *Ecquid Novi*,⁶²⁵ for instance, covered the debate in a special issue, while others published articles.

In retrospect, one influential scholar who also took part in the debate at the time, Keyan Tomaselli, observed: “[M]ethodological failure resulted in a moral panic that nearly ruined the print media. This is where the populist myth that ‘Only whites can be racist’ was discursively codified, though the Commission eventually conceded that the two reports were flawed. This myth continues to date.”⁶²⁶

Blame the media and politicians

A popular post-apartheid strategy was to blame the media and politicians for the centrality of race in public debates. Strong support for this position was provided through research by Holborn published by the South African Institute of Race Relations, based on media coverage of racism between 1994 and 2009.⁶²⁷ The institute, established in 1929, was regarded by some leftist critics as a conservative remnant of a bygone era. The research findings presented here were also criticised by some commentators for their alleged lack of methodological design and rigour. But while the findings may thus be suspect, they still indicate the outlines of themes in the post-apartheid South African media.

Holborn indicates that “while cases of racism and expression of racial sentiment have declined in many ... categories since 1994, the reactions to reported incidents of racism seem to have grown over time”.⁶²⁸ Furthermore, a “number of cases of inter-racial violence were branded as racist without sufficient evidence to prove such a motive, particularly in cases of violence perpetrated by white people against black”.⁶²⁹ According to these findings the “way in which the media reports an incident has a huge impact on the debate that follows. The media often inflames racial debate and racial divisions”.⁶³⁰ Besides the negative role ascribed to the media, politicians “who use racial rhetoric as a response to criticism” are also identified as culprits.⁶³¹ Holborn concludes that “different class, income, educational, cultural, and language backgrounds of people could go some way to explain tensions or lack of integration between races, something which should not necessarily be mistaken as poor race relations”.⁶³²

These research findings resonated with a common theme across the political spectrum to ascribe power and blame to the media as a negative factor in “race relations”, either because they were racist themselves or involved in a sensationalist “witch hunt” against alleged racists, especially whites. But, while blaming the media, the perception was also popular in some quarters that racist incidents were increasing. One explanation, offered from a more radical black perspective but gaining general ground, was that the immediate post-1994 “rainbowism” of Mandela failed to deal with the structural root causes of racism and allowed white racists not only to retain their privilege and prejudices, but in fact to flourish. A common response from whites was to accuse black politicians and other accusers of playing the “race card” and

to describe the conflict in terms other than race differences, as the report by Holborn suggested (class, income, education, culture, language etc.)

While not necessarily accepting any blame, the media in general certainly professed responsibility in its coverage of race (inter alia visible in codes of ethics) and assumed an activist role in official and unofficial campaigns against racism in some cases, as described earlier. But various critics still blamed the media for sloppy journalism, sensationalism, lack of accountability and transparency, pampering the (white) rich and ignoring the (black) poor, to name but a few.

RACE TALK: IN CONCLUSION

The previous chapters showed how race talk featured in the media since colonialism and resulted in white domination despite being contested to some degree. Black voices and bodies were marginalised in the mainstream mass media and had to find alternative ways to access the public domains dominated by whites. Looking back, it is also clear that indigenous resistance to European colonialism occurred right from the start, although its manifestation in written texts developed more gradually.

Some argue that all South African's problems started with Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. This might be true, but something else also "began" with him: the country's modern media history. In contemporary terms, Van Riebeeck may even be described as an avid "blogger".

After 1994, Van Riebeeck's name is mentioned less frequently and prominently in South African general history books at school than before. But you just have to broaden the scope of your definition of "media" and use your imagination a bit and the picture becomes clear: there he is, with a view of the beachfront at sundown against the backdrop of Devil's Peak, "blogging" away about the ups and downs of his day. He has a fort to build and vegetable gardens to design, and the Company could

profit from those beautiful stretches of forests on the mountain slopes ... but the lack of fresh meat is making his crew restless and the Khoi still would not trade even a few of their numerous livestock, grazing tantalisingly close on the stretches of grass on the flatlands. Maybe he should annex a few more pieces of land for farming ...

Of course, Van Riebeeck did not call the indigenous people “Khoi”, and he did not always resist the temptation to obtain livestock by other means than honest trade. Furthermore, in 1675, he awarded pieces of prime Khoi grazing land behind Table Mountain to several VOC employees, who were liberated from their contracts to become the first “free burghers”. Colonisation of the Cape officially started at this time, and through Van Riebeeck’s diary we have a revealing written account of it.

As this book indicates, initial conflict with indigenous groups did centre on rights of land ownership, and colonial debates reflected the tension between the rights of the original inhabitants and those of the colonial conquerors. Van Riebeeck’s diary records how he was directly challenged by Khoi spokespeople on the issue of land occupation, and although he certainly did not regard them as equals, he had to treat them as such in some respects, at least until he had the upper hand. Even with the might of the international conglomerate, the VOC, behind him, success was never guaranteed for Van Riebeeck. One can only speculate about the reasons why no groupings of indigenous people ever successfully united to repel white colonial encroachment from 1652 until the 20th century, but that is not the subject of this discussion.

Critics of Van Riebeeck, including former President Jacob Zuma, would rather not be reminded of what the Dutchman wrote. For them, the arrival of the Dutch is a symbol of colonialism and apartheid, which progressively led to the loss of land, culture, dignity and life of the indigenous people, and the numerous slaves the VOC imported. This view is understandable, because once the Dutch settlement started to expand, the consequences would reverberate for centuries, as they are still visible in the inequality between a small white minority and a black majority, and the millions of people living in poverty in South Africa.

Thus, do we really have to spend more time on the dated observations and ideas of a forgotten Dutch aggressor, who had the might of the pen and the sword at

either side and the power of the first multinational conglomerate at his back? He had his day in the sun when he was idolised as the “founder” of (white) South Africa, and now he is labelled as the first (white) racist and mostly ignored. Should we not let this history fade into the night? The short answer is no. We cannot only remember and refer to the history that we like.

The first interesting finding from such a history is that the word “racism” would probably not have made much sense to Van Riebeeck. This word was only coined at the beginning of the 20th century in relation to the rise of Nazi Germany. Van Riebeeck would have understood the word “race”, but to him it would have referred as much to the differences between the Dutch, English, Portuguese, French and Moslems as it did to those between him and the Khoi. This does not mean he was not prejudiced, but he had another frame of reference and vocabulary than we have today.

Van Riebeeck was certainly interested in “race relations” – relationships with friends and foes, allies and partners from different origins, cultures and associations. He tried to further his aims, and especially those of the company he worked for, by using his “race relations” to his best advantage. He preferred peace but was ever ready for war, and alliances kept on changing, including those with different groups of Khoi. In this context, it is misleading to view the contact between Van Riebeeck and the Khoi as the archetypical clash between white and black races in South Africa, or even, as some still do, as the first manifestation of an ongoing “race war”. A similar “error” in historical interpretation is to describe Van Riebeeck’s hedge, built to protect VOC employees and keep their livestock together, as the first apartheid structure. Yet, these and other perceptions about race persist in the media and society of today. But, as will be argued below, these current interpretations of indigenous contact with, experiences of, and resistance to colonialism seemingly fail to account for the complexities and contradictions displayed in the discursive struggles of the time.

The first Cape newspaper arose under authoritarian colonial conditions and predictably reflected the views of the authorities. Despite press freedom being achieved eventually and, much later, different versions of self-government and democracy, signs of authoritarianism and the tendency of some media outlets to act (formally and informally) as government mouthpieces remained part of

the South African media landscape until the post-apartheid era. But at the same time, dissenting individuals and movements, both within the colonial population and amongst the indigenous people, found various avenues of expression. The establishment of a free press introduced a crescendo of partisan voices into the public domain, and press debates often resembled a “war of words”.

Thus, the media during the colonial period was the site of various struggles between groups who competed for dominance. The fact that the power of literacy initially belonged virtually exclusively to the colonists, is reflected in the media products from this period available for analysis. Thus, many of the conflicting ideas were produced by different factions of colonists, for example those of Dutch and English descent. But competing interests did not always correspond neatly to rough ethnic lines of division (also sometimes called “race” differences at this time), as for example the Boers and the Settlers on the Eastern “frontier” had on certain issues more in common with each other than with their respective kinsmen and women in far-way Cape Town. The various missionaries and travellers in the Cape Colony also displayed different views amongst themselves, and vis-à-vis some of the colonists. Especially in the 19th century, the relative “silence” in the media of indigenous populations ended.

At some time during this early colonial period, the idea of a race war between black and white emerged as justification amongst some of the settlers for their decisions and actions. In addition to racist ideas of white superiority and that the indigenous people were savage and backward, the fear of being overrun by “black hordes” were often raised in justification for expansion, military action, violent suppression and extermination by the colonists (even if they were in fact motivated more by greed and personal gain).

References from literature thus indicate that it would be wrong to accept that the emergence of indigenous voices in the media during the colonial period necessarily contributed to challenging the dominant narrative. But it would also be a mistake to infer that the first generation of black intellectuals were simply clones of the white missionaries. Some post-colonial commentators, like Johnson,⁶³³ seemingly lost track of an important stage in the history of the development of black consciousness (deliberately uncapitalised here to indicate a general trend rather than the specific philosophy). This stage is

visible in the complex tensions expressed by the first generations of missionary-educated black intellectuals, and some of their protégées, of their experiences of contact between traditional African society and Western modernity. Current commentators often reflect critically to statements by these intellectuals which indicate their acceptance of 18th and 19th-century European values, informed by doctrines of Christianity and the philosophy of the Enlightenment, at the expense of traditional African culture.

Part of the problem, I would suggest, is the language in which these African encounters with European modernity was presented. Initiated by Europeans because of their lack of historical perspective and assumed superiority, the parameters of the debate were set between Western civilisation and African barbarism. In other words, while a first generation of African scholars had a unique and original experience of modernisation, they had little alternative but to express it in the terms set by the existing language of modernisation. Only over time could an alternative vocabulary be created by Africans, which influenced shifting European perspectives. But the colonial archives show that the processes of resistance and transformation started right at the beginning. Some Africans not only accepted Western ideas of modernisation, but also evaluated them against the parameters set by Christianity and the Enlightenment itself, as well as the ideals of indigenous civilisations. Soon, they found the performance of the colonists wanting.

From the start of colonialism to the beginning of the 19th century, a major shift occurred when “attitudes of the Whites changed from the antagonism of the Christian for the heathen to the antagonism of the White for the Black”.⁶³⁴ Contributing factors were “slavery, cultural differences, isolation, the numerical strength of the Blacks, and the psychology of a frontier society”, while “the increasing economic competition” of the 20th century, and the “disturbing expression on the part of the natives of their inferiority complex” should also be taken into consideration.⁶³⁵

As colonialism and eventually apartheid progressed and indigenous peoples became predominantly subjugated, race talk in the mainstream media indicated that unequal power relations have been established. In turn, racialised race talk in the media was part and parcel of the process of maintaining the subjugation of “inferior races”. At the same time, oppositional views challenged the grand

narratives of superiority, inter alia by referring to liberal non-racialism, and black consciousness. A war metaphor is still valid, although more in terms of a guerrilla war against overwhelming odds.

Thus, while the preceding colonial period was still dominated by references to a real war for survival and/or extermination, those in the 19th century displayed that the white race had won. White superiority was not only a matter of ideology anymore, but it had been affected in the practice of total dominance. In race talk in the media this is noticeable in the normalisation of the white gaze, in other words, the fact that being white (whiteness) was the norm, while a process of othering has become institutional.

It is noticeable that the crude use of derogatory names such as “Caffir” and “meid” becomes less frequent in mainstream media content towards the middle of the 20th century (when the NP gained dominance and introduced apartheid as official policy after 1948). They were substituted over time with more neutral and more “civilised” terms such as “Bantu”, “Coloured”, “non-white”, “native” and black. But the frequent occurrence of these terms in legal disputes, including press coverage of court cases and editorials in newspapers urging readers to refrain from using them, indicates that insulting terms for black people were part of everyday speech for many white South Africans.

After the end of apartheid, the mainstream commercial media unofficially liaised with powerful individuals and institutions to expose racists in public. The media also provided a platform for commentators to patrol the boundaries of acceptable race talk. However, on emergent new digital media platforms a measure of “lawlessness” persisted, until the authorities stepped in and punished cyber-racists in public.

Contemporary social commentators in South Africa frequently engage in debates about race, but little consensus seems to emerge about the state of relations between various oppositional groups after nearly 25 years of democracy. On the one hand, following the “miracle” transition to democracy and despite various challenges and setbacks, some optimism still remains for the ideals of non-racialism and reconciliation between the members of the “rainbow nation”. But, given widespread dissatisfaction about the slow pace of “transformation” to remove entrenched inequalities between South Africans,

some commentators now argue that polarisation between black and white has increased.

During colonialism and apartheid, indigenous peoples were subjugated based on racial discrimination and were often unable to protest against various forms of violence, including the symbolic violence of verbal racial abuse. Since the end of apartheid, the subaltern and their descendants can now speak freely, and it is perhaps to be expected that many voices will object to any symbolic reminder in the media and public domain of previous repression. Racist language is clearly able to reactivate individual and collective memories and feelings of hurt and shame at being exposed to violence, in some cases extermination, and the dispossession of land, culture, history and dignity. On the part of the oppressors and their descendants, acts and accusations of racism may simultaneously act as guilty reminder of a tainted history and secret indulgence in nostalgia for a receding era of power.

Post-apartheid calls for “decolonisation” are fraught with contradictions. The most glaring one is seldom discussed, namely that South Africa as a national state was a colonial construct. In fact, the map of Africa’s national states was drawn by colonial powers without any consultation with indigenous Africans. In the early 20th century some commentators expected that independent African states would perhaps engage in a debate about redrawing the map, but it was never seriously considered.

Benedict Anderson viewed national states as “imagined communities” and ascribed a central role to the (print) media in its construction. He also said that it was a European model exported to the colonies. One does not have to agree with all his arguments to see the value of accepting a theoretical link between nationalism, the media and Western colonialism in debates about the decolonisation of post-apartheid South Africa.

After 1994, members of the mainstream media embraced the new democratic constitution and were to differing degrees part of processes of “nation-building”. Much emphasis was placed on “reconciliation” between black and white, because apartheid-South Africa ideally viewed itself as a white republic and tried to exclude, control and marginalise black people. Decolonisation, therefore, included the mainstreaming of black people and their interests, also in and through the media.

The argument was that racial differentiation will only become insignificant once the imbalances created by colonialism and apartheid were corrected. Amongst the signs of successful “transformation” was that black people would be visibly present and represented as the majority on all levels of society, including positions of power and influence.

Influential commentators over many years have summarised the situation as follows, if I may paraphrase crudely: “This is a country in which the majority of people are black; accept it, make peace with it, and embrace it.” Especially in the context of white minority control and rule over centuries, it was difficult for many white people to come to terms with this fact. It became a goal to reach with its own name, “white consciousness”. It referred to an acceptance of the fact that by accident of birth you have received “white privilege” and was “unfairly advantaged” by colonialism and apartheid.

In turn, black people had work to do, too. They had to attain “black consciousness”, in other words (re)discover a sense of self-worth and pride in their African identity, heritage, history and culture. Ingrained inferiority to Western culture and values had to be shed, and lost African treasures re-inserted into the colonised public domain. Black people demanded respect from whites, who had violently suppressed and negated them in the past. Signs of white racism towards blacks were increasingly policed and criminalised, with the assistance of the media.

Thus, we see how the media were present and instrumental at different stages of the birth and building of the South African nation. The media play different roles, including taking part in the surveillance of both the government and the population, and providing platforms for debate and confession.

More than 25 years after the end of apartheid, racists were fair game in South Africa, and the media played a significant role in their pursuit and punishment. In some instances, a racist would post derogatory comments on social media, which would be picked up and distributed widely by activists on the prowl for any sign of offence. The mainstream media would then report that the latest racist incident has “rocked” social media, which would in turn lead to an even wider distribution of the incident on social media. Racists were also secretly recorded in the act, or incidents that appeared racist would be reported online, which would set in motion the chain of coverage described

above. Prominent media companies also involved themselves in open activism against racism.

The participating media, activists, politicians, and the supporting public all seemed to agree that these were necessary processes in the “fight” against racism, to “eradicate the scourge” and “stop the cancer from spreading”. The metaphors of war and disease were informative, because racism, and by implication then also the racist, was thus seen as a sick enemy within.

An important point not mentioned so far is that the target was clearly not so much racism in general, because racist ideas or acts by white people against black people received by far the most media, public and official attention.⁶³⁶ This tendency could be ascribed to the legacy of South Africa's colonial and apartheid history, where a white minority still displayed many signs of especially economic and cultural dominance after more than two decades into a democratic dispensation. Many black people seemed angry and frustrated at the lack of transformation and decolonisation of society, and signs that white people were not at least regretful and reconciliatory only fuelled the fire.

Ironically, the media itself was also often targeted for its perceived lack of transformation and decolonisation. According to some critics, the media mainly served the white affluent minority at the expense of the culture and interests of the black majority and thus acted as unofficial racist opposition to the democratically elected ANC-led government. The fact that the public broadcaster, the SABC and various other sections of media were not under white control any longer, did not convince all critics. The perception seemingly existed that centuries of colonialism and apartheid rule imprinted itself to such an extent that the existing structures remained tainted, even after black faces replaced white ones in the newsrooms.

Especially the persistence of white capital domination in sectors of the economy and culture and public (mediated) acts of racism in post-apartheid South Africa contributed to the rediscovery of the philosophy of Black Consciousness amongst black intellectuals and students. They displayed open antagonism against “white privilege” as part of what one (white) commentator called a “witch hunt” in which all whites were scrutinised for signs of racism.⁶³⁷ At one stage a prominent Black Consciousness intellectual, University of Cape Town sociology professor Xolela Mangcu, warned that “black people will not take the

racist abuse any longer and we will find ourselves in the racial civil war we averted in 1994".⁶³⁸

Although many political commentators disagreed with the "race war" theory, there was consensus that polarisation between black and white had increased since the heyday of the rainbow nation era embodied by President Nelson Mandela.

Thus, well into the 21st century, the South African media often registered that racism remained a potent flashpoint. The ability of social media to provide even more terrain for conflict and aggression between people who self-identified with different race groups, resulted in most of the country's leading online news platforms closing their comment facilities.

The debates surrounding these closures were informative. The move went against the ideal and practice of the "open architecture" with which the internet was designed and launched, in other words that it would be an egalitarian and democratic space for engagement across various boundaries. It spelled the end of a period of enthusiasm amongst many observers, including some journalists, about the ability of the people formerly known as the audience to "talk back" to the gatekeepers and opinion leaders and reduce their power to set the agenda.

The optimistic view that the internet represented the realisation of democracy for the masses had to be sacrificed for practical, legal and commercial reasons. It was not only difficult and expensive to moderate the constant stream of users' comments, but the offensive content of many contributions raised fears that publishers might be held accountable and were suffering brand reputation damage. In general, the commercial risks were underemphasised, while media owners and editors framed their decision to resurrect their protective editorial walls as in the public interest: to let these virtual "race wars" continue unabated online could lead to real conflict and hamper efforts to build a unified nation.

Declarations of disdain at the destructive level of racist comments did not prevent news organisations who closed their comment sections, and their mainstream colleagues in print and broadcasting, from picking up on numerous social media conflicts around race and contributing to their even wider

distribution. In turn, mainstream media generated their own quota of news around race and racism, which then often went “viral” via social media.

After a series of widely publicised racist utterances and actions (first on social media) by several ordinary and prominent South Africans, the government in 2016 announced that it was setting in motion the process of criminalising racism by law. The exact shape and consequences of such a law were still unfolding at the time of writing, but it would add to a range of formal and informal measures in post-apartheid South Africa to “eradicate” racism.

The overview above indicates that mainstream media outlets were taking an active and even activist role in post-apartheid race conflicts, despite presenting themselves otherwise (in their own ethical codes) as fair, balanced and impartial reflectors of “news” in society. Racism was thus regarded as a big problem, the origins of which were traced back to white domination during colonialism and apartheid. In other words, the general perception was that a long and painful history of agonistic relationships between South Africans remained at the heart of post-apartheid conflicts and tensions. White and black were called upon to change in several (different) ways, and to view each other differently. Of course, this simplified solution implied a number of unstated departure points.

Firstly, it accepted a shared and clear understanding of the difficult and contested concepts of race and racism. Secondly, it took for granted that post-apartheid conflicts could be reduced to a simple binary pair of black versus white races. Thirdly, it presumed that South Africans had a clear understanding of each other, and each other’s (shared) colonial and apartheid history. Fourthly, it presumed that the media had a positive role to play in solving the problem.

Apartheid South Africa was a textbook case of a racist state. In 1994, that dispensation officially ended, but individual and structural racism did not. It is easy to understand that the changing of the guard at state level would not change all personal prejudices overnight, if ever. But the argument that structural racism was still rife in South Africa by 2019 is more difficult to make. It boiled down to the relative affluence of people classified as white during apartheid, a minority, versus the relative poverty of those classified as black during apartheid. It was called “white privilege”. Affluence here did not only refer to material possessions, but also to other forms of “capital” that money can buy

– education, employment, social status and connections, leadership positions and influence.

Racism was the main reason being offered for a state of affairs where a minority became so dominant at the expense of the majority. The origins of South African racism were traced back to colonialism, and apartheid can be seen as both a continuation and intensification of that ideology and practice. The post-apartheid state thus considered it as its duty, inscribed in the Constitution of 1996, to address not only the consequences of racism, such as poverty and inequality amongst the majority, but to eliminate racism itself. The programme was launched on both the personal and structural level. There were for instance prohibitions on actions which might be interpreted as racist, such as the use of taboo words, while policies of affirmative discrimination – based on apartheid racial categories – were in place to advance majority interests.

The perception was thus that South Africa was founded on racism and was still steeped in it, and that transformation was needed. The ideal was that the majority would be liberated from the consequences, practices and memories of being the victims of white privilege. But the majority, whose ancestors fought against colonialism and believed that their “armed struggle” ended apartheid, seemingly wanted to achieve the goal of post-apartheid dominance peacefully. In fact, the minority was blamed for using violence in establishing colonial and apartheid dominance. There were calls for different forms of redistribution, redress and retribution, including nationalisation, confiscation, a wealth tax, quotas, admissions of guilt, charity work, donations, humility, withdrawal from public discourses, symbolic violence and silence. Members of the minority, in turn, alleged “reverse racism”, while forming gated communities of all sorts to enjoy their affluence and advance their interests. They criticised the state for its perceived malfunctioning and corruption as a way to relativise the stories of their ancestors’ misdeeds and neutralise accusations that their own talents and achievements are ill-begotten.

More than 25 years after the end of apartheid, a central theme in the South African media was that racism remained a problem and that the fight against it was part of a bigger campaign to decolonise and transform society. Propelled by a rediscovery of the philosophy of Black Consciousness by (aspiring) middle-class intellectuals, especially university students, a popular target emerged

in the form of entrenched white privilege, and white liberals, amongst others, were chastised as obstacles rather than allies in the discursive struggle against racism.

These developments to an extent restored and inverted the simplistic apartheid polarisation which pitched a white minority in a fight for survival against a black majority. In the post-apartheid version, the white minority was presented as endangering the full realisation of mass black economic and cultural emancipation, which was expected to, but did not, accompany political liberation in 1994.

Of course, as was mentioned above, the impression that all conflict in South African could be reduced to a simply binary of a (white) minority versus a (black) majority should be resisted. Obviously, the exact number of factions and fault lines in society would be hard to calculate, and it was changing constantly. But the argument here is that the simple belief that South Africa was founded on racism, and still was deeply troubled by it, created the perception in some quarters that we have a “race war” on our hands.

As was suggested above, much of this perceived “race war” occurred only in the media, but it is hard to say exactly what role the media played. Yes, the media were in some way reflective of the perception that racism is a problem, but at the same time it may also have been partly responsible for its creation. It would be difficult to establish with any certainty where the balance lies. Let us just except for the moment that the media had a vital role to play in race talk in South Africa.

Without oversimplifying the very complex developments in post-apartheid South Africa, it can be argued that a salient question emerged clearly after more than two decades into the new dispensation: when will the country be black enough to consider itself liberated from white settler colonialism?

Participants in mainstream media debates were initially slow to grasp the nature and implications of this question because the media remained white-dominated for some time after 1994 but it lurked in the background all the while. Not only were there problems in defining key terms such as “black”, “white” and “liberated”, and the different possible answers to the question highly contested and divisive, but disagreement about the best route to reach the stated goal

was equally charged. In other words, both the criteria for final “liberation” and the suggested measures to obtain it provided material for conflict, for the pen as sword, and not an alternative to it, to search for consensus and peace.

While the scholars Durrheim, Mtose and Brown do not disagree that poverty and racism are persistent in post-apartheid South Africa, they argue that existing theories and models of racism have become suspect.⁶³⁹ Accordingly, they argue that the media are often viewed through outdated lenses, and that there is a common, yet mistaken argument that the media are still racist because they are still “white-owned”.⁶⁴⁰ These authors do not dispute the fact that the media may (still) be racist, but they provide empirical support for the claim that most owners are not white any longer.

In turn, while acknowledging that media ownership was still heavily concentrated, Daniels indicates various complicating factors in response to reductionist criticism that the media were “untransformed” since the apartheid era.⁶⁴¹ Black ownership of some media companies, increased black editorial presence in newsrooms and the rise of a number of very popular tabloid newspapers amongst black working-class readers are amongst the most obvious counter-indications ignored by critics of the media.

Another one is the fact that the state-controlled SABC, with its public service mandate, broadcast in most if not all the official languages on TV and radio, which remained the medium with the highest national audience penetration. Although the SABC had officially been transformed from (apartheid) state broadcaster to public broadcaster during the 1990s, critics still called it “his master’s voice” decades later because of its alleged bias towards (factions within) the ANC-led government. While critics of the mainstream print media were correct that this sector often acted as vociferous opponent to the government, suspicion remained that the authorities were more interested in a compliant media partner than in transforming the print media and improving the quality of independent journalism in the interest of the poor black majority, as they proclaimed to do.

Furthermore, this book showed that while most sections of the Afrikaans media supported the government during apartheid, many other media outlets acted as informal “opposition” to the government. This history argues against the view that the post-apartheid press was opposing the ANC-led government

only because it is black-dominated, in other words on racist premises. Another possible complicating counterargument, based on the history of concentrated corporate ownership of the media not only during but also after apartheid, is that the commercial media always had capital accumulation as their goal. From this perspective, the media opposed apartheid as long as it did not harm its economic interests (mostly in mining, for the English media during apartheid), while the post-apartheid commercial press exchanged political partisanship for a defence of the entrenched economic system of “neo-liberalism” (which still favoured whites).

A noticeable schism, based on allegations of racism, developed between the owner of one of the biggest commercial media groups, Independent Media, and some other media owners. Iqbal Survé, executive chairperson of Independent Media, accused “competing media houses” of being part of a campaign against his company in order to protect “white interests and white economic control”.⁶⁴² This followed after an “avalanche of public opposition” when the Sekunjalo group, under Survé’s leadership, acquired Independent from its Irish owners in 2013 in what some observers considered to be a controversial deal in order to provide support for the ANC in the mainstream press.⁶⁴³ Since the acquisition, Survé has led a concerted editorial repositioning of the Independent newspapers, which often led the way in campaigns to “eradicate” racism.

Commercial broadcasters such as Naspers’ Multichoice offered expansive TV and internet services to more affluent subscribers, while the free-to-air e.tv tried to balance commercial imperatives with social responsibility. The superrich Gupta family, notoriously linked to former president Jacob Zuma, invested in a television news channel (ANN7) and a newspaper (*The New Age*) of which both drew criticism for their perceived lack of independence and editorial quality. These media outlets were sold to an alleged ally of the Guptas, Mzwanele Manyi, in a controversial deal in 2017, and closed in 2018 after the fall of Zuma.

Numerous commercial and community radio stations were scraping for audiences and survival and had to align their activities to include the massive popularity of social media platforms on the internet and the seeming ubiquity of smart phones amongst audiences. Debates centred not only on political and economic disputes and interests, but became really complicated when culture, and especially the role of social media, was added to the mix.

Another important issue to consider is the apparent shift in debates regarding freedom of speech and the media from libertarianism and social responsibility to the protection of “vulnerable” groups and individuals. Freedom of speech and the media were entrenched in the Constitution of 1996, although it also excluded propaganda for war, incitement of imminent violence, or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that which constitutes incitement to cause harm. Freedom of speech and the media could thus not be defended as an absolute right, because it always had to be balanced against other rights. Besides the issues of violence and hate speech, the media were also restricted in terms of rights regarding inter alia privacy, dignity, the portrayal of children, and the victims of sexual crimes. This book indicates that the use of racial slurs such as the K-word was successfully prosecuted under *crimen injuria* law from at least 1976 onwards (although not with great enthusiasm until after apartheid ended). Furthermore, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000 outlawed the use of words intended to be hurtful, cause harm or incite violence.

In response, various sections of the media, including the press and their digital outlets and broadcasting, formulated ethical codes based on these principles, and measures were put into place to deal internally with offending outlets. Aggrieved members of the public could also approach courts of law under various provisions. The media also frequently reported on incidents of transgressions amongst the public, especially when the K-word was used, and when an incident went viral on social media.

The frequent media coverage of racism arguably strengthened the perception that racism remained a problem and eventually led to a call for the criminalisation of racism as part of a tendency to create safe and liberated spaces for marginalised groups and individuals in a white-dominated patriarchal society. A central question that will be answered only by future developments is whether and how the fight against racism will influence perceptions and practices of media freedom and its limits.

ENDNOTES

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- 49 This history was celebrated from a Eurocentric perspective during apartheid when a small monument was erected in the mid-20th century near the presumed spot of one of these early confrontations to mark the occasion of "the first glimpses the European travellers had" of the area now known as the Kruger National Park. Subsequently, "in the tradition of the colonially tinted, older South African historiography", Punt published a travel journal, *The first Europeans in the Kruger National Park*, to coincide with the centenary of the nature reserve in 1975.
- 50 Huigen, 2009:69-72.
- 51 *ibid.*, p. 71.
- 52 *ibid.*, p. 73.
- 53 *ibid.*, p. 59.
- 54 *ibid.*, p. 13.

- 55 *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 56 *ibid.*
- 57 *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 58 *ibid.*, p. 14.
- 59 Streak, 1974:5.
- 60 Huigen, 2009:22.
- 61 *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 62 *ibid.*
- 63 *ibid.*, p. 24.
- 64 *ibid.*
- 65 *ibid.*, p. 25.
- 66 *ibid.*
- 67 *ibid.*
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- 69 *ibid.*
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- 71 Sienaert, M. & Stiebel, L. 1996. Writing on the earth: Early European travellers to South Africa. *Literator* 17(1):94.
- 72 Johnson, D. 2012. *Imagining the Cape Colony: History, literature and the South African nation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. p. 38.
- 73 See Johnson, 2007:544.
- 74 Johnson, 2007:544-545.
- 75 Huigen, 2009:25.
- 76 *ibid.*, p. 26.
- 77 *ibid.*
- 78 Cited in Streak, 1974:14.
- 79 Streak, 1974:15.
- 80 Huigen, 2009:26.
- 81 *ibid.*
- 82 Giliomee, 2004:27-32.
- 83 Huigen, 2009: 101 – footnote 32.
- 84 *ibid.*
- 85 While an analysis of race talk in the colonial period could focus more or less exclusively on products of the printing press, the 20th century saw the large-scale development of other mass media outlets, especially broadcasting and film. Still, print enjoyed a dominant position in many respects, because of the persistent perception that especially newspapers “set the public agenda”. Newspapers were historically also more competitive and less regulated than for instance broadcasting, in which the South African state enforced a virtual monopoly for a large part of the 20th century.
- This does not mean that an analysis of broadcasting and film would not yield interesting results in terms of shifting and/or opposing descriptions and debates. Where relevant and accessible, examples from these media will feature in this discussion. But in the main – for strategic and practical reasons – the focus remains on print content, especially newspapers, but also magazines and books.
- 86 Hachten, W.A. & Giffard, C.A. 1984. *Total onslaught: The South African press under attack*. Johannesburg: Macmillan. p. 21.
- 87 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:29.
- 88 Louw, P.E. & Tomaselli, K.G. 1991. Developments of the conventional and alternative presses, 1980-1989. In: K. Tomaselli & P.E. Louw (eds.). *The alternative press in South Africa*. Bellville: Anthropos. pp. 5-6.
- 89 Huigen, 2009:11.
- 90 Streak, 1974:39.
- 91 *ibid.*, p. 37.
- 92 *ibid.*, p. 36.
- 93 Streak, 1974:77, original emphasis.
- 94 *ibid.*, p. 77.
- 95 *ibid.*
- 96 Scholtz, P.L., Bredekamp, H.C. & Heese, H.F. 1976. *Historiografiese beeld van volkeverhoudings aan die Kaap tydens die Kompanjieberbestuur (1652-1795)*.

- Bellville: Institute for Historical Research, University of the Western Cape. p. 11.
- 97 Scholtz, Bredekamp & Heese, 1976:12.
- 98 *ibid.*
- 99 *ibid.*
- 100 *ibid.*
- 101 *ibid.*
- 102 *ibid.*, p. 11.
- 103 *ibid.*
- 104 *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 105 *ibid.*, p. 15.
- 106 *ibid.*, p. 16.
- 107 *ibid.*, p. 14.
- 108 Magubane, 2007:183.
- 109 Scholtz, Bredekamp & Heese, 1976:31.
- 110 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:21-22.
- 111 Wigston, D. 2007. A history of the South African media. In: P.J. Fourie (ed.). *Media studies: Media history, media and society*, Vol. 1. Cape Town: Juta. p. 28.
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- 113 Potter, 1975:32.
- 114 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:27.
- 115 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:21-22.
- 116 Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:96.
- 117 Muller, C.F.J. 1990. *Sonop in die suide: Geboorte en groei van die Nasionale Pers 1915-1948* [Sunrise in the south: The birth and growth of Nasionale Pers 1915-1948]. Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel. pp.2-3.
- 118 Muller, 1990:4.
- 119 *ibid.*
- 120 *ibid.*, p. 5.
- 121 Quoted in Muller, 1990:5-6.
- 122 Muller, 1990:7.
- 123 *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte*, 11 July 1801:1.
- 124 Ulrich, N. 2011. Abolition from below. In: M. van der Linden (ed.). *Humanitarian intervention and changing labor relations: The long-term consequences of the abolition of the slave trade*. Brill: Leiden. p.205.
- 125 *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte*, 20 June 1801.
- 126 Quoted in Muller, 1990:4.
- 127 *ibid.*
- 128 Where Nelson Mandela also spent time during his 27-year incarceration.
- 129 *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte*, 13 January 1821.
- 130 *The Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant en Afrikaansche Berigte*, 21 July 1821.
- 131 According to Bundy (1988:29) there are indications that "trade in cattle between Africans (Xhosas) and colonists (outside, that is, the formally permitted trade by the monopolistic merchant-butchers of the VOC) went on intermittently throughout the eighteenth century". During Dutch rule it was only in the Zuurveld (later Albany) in the Eastern Cape in the 1780s and 1790s that Xhosa societies were put under political and economic pressure by white settlers because "the context for land and resources was mainly directed at the Khoi and the San; imported and 'apprenticed' slaves provided much of the labour supply" (p. 30).
- The growing trade between settlers and the Xhosas further accelerated after the British annexation of the Cape, in the main due to the abolition of the Dutch trading monopoly and the

- infusion of British money and settlers (ibid.). Various administrative efforts were made to first forbid and then regulate trade, because of frequent skirmishes over cattle and land which "foreshadowed the large-scale conflicts known as the Frontier Wars" (ibid.).
- According to Bundy (1988:30): "In 1817, bi-annual trade fairs were set up at Grahamstown, and for their duration permission was extended to Xhosas to enter the colony to participate. By 1824, the fair was held thrice weekly, and had shifted to Fort Willshire, on the Keiskamma River, in the heart of the Xhosa Ciskei ... By 1830, traders were permitted to journey into 'Kaffraria' (east of the Keiskamma River) independently of the fairs ..." By 1835, according to Bundy (1988:31), Port Elizabeth was handling £80 000 in export produce, of which an estimated £50 000 to £60 000 of goods was obtained from Xhosa producers, and King William's Town had become a brisk trade centre.
- 132 Streak, 1974:83.
- 133 Potter, 1975:33.
- 134 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:29, in reference to J. du P. Scholtz.
- 135 Potter, 1975:33, in reference to Cutten.
- 136 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:29.
- 137 Potter, 1975:33.
- 138 ibid.
- 139 ibid.
- 140 ibid., p. 34.
- 141 Streak, 1974:83.
- 142 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:27.
- 143 Streak, 1974:135.
- 144 ibid., p. 209.
- 145 ibid.
- 146 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:31.
- 147 ibid., p. 32.
- 148 ibid., pp. 32-33.
- 149 ibid., p. 33.
- 150 ibid.
- 151 ibid., p. 37, in reference to Butler and different editions of the newspaper.
- 152 ibid., p. 37.
- 153 ibid.
- 154 ibid., p. 38.
- 155 ibid.
- 156 See <https://bit.ly/2PedWaL>
- 157 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:29.
- 158 Peires, J.B. 1982. *The house of Phalo: A history of the Xhosa people in the days of their independence*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 161.
- 159 Peires, 1992:161.
- 160 ibid., p. 162.
- 161 ibid.
- 162 Magubane, 2007:199.
- 163 Keegan, 1996:218.
- 164 Robert Godlonton was editor of *The Graham's Town Journal* and the "spokesman of the English Settlers", according to Giliomee and Mbanga (2007:117). Hy was a rich man, thanks to "thoughtful investments and speculation". He campaigned for more land appropriation from the Xhosas.
- 165 The Frontier. 1851. *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 30 January:3.
- 166 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 30 January 1851.
- 167 See Giliomee & Mbanga, 2007:126-127.
- 168 Bundy, C. 1988. *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*. 2nd Edition. Cape Town: David Philip. pp. 32-33.
- 169 Bundy, 1998:33.
- 170 ibid., p. 34.
- 171 *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines' Friend*, April 1851.
- 172 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 1 December 1859.

- 173 According to Bundy, 1988:33-34.
- 174 *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aborigines' Friend*, January 1851.
- 175 Theal, G.M. 2010. *History of South Africa since September 1795*, Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 47.
- 176 Theal, 2010:54.
- 177 *ibid.*
- 178 *ibid.*
- 179 Bundy, 1988:31.
- 180 *ibid.*, p. 31.
- 181 *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 182 Peires, 1982:167.
- 183 *ibid.*, p. 168.
- 184 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 30 January 1851.
- 185 Keegan, 1996:289.
- 186 *ibid.*
- 187 *ibid.*
- 188 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 1 December 1859.
- 189 Notices and reports appear in Dutch and English in the newspaper, and the respective versions do not always match exactly. In other words, it would seem that errors sometimes occurred during translation. This is the English version, which corresponds well to the Dutch one in the same issue.
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- 195 *ibid.*
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- 197 Volz & Mgadla, 2010:160-161.
- 198 *ibid.*, p. 161.
- 199 *ibid.*, pp. 159-160; 164-165.
- 200 Volz & Mgadla, 2010:161.
- 201 *ibid.*, p. 161.
- 202 *ibid.*, pp. 161-162.
- 203 *ibid.*, p. 162.
- 204 *ibid.*
- 205 *ibid.*, p. 161.
- 206 According to Switzer, quoted in Johnson, 1991:16; see also Hachten & Giffard, 1984:145.
- 207 Peires, 1982:176.
- 208 Johnson, 1991:16.
- 209 Masilela, N. 2010. In: P. Limb, N. Etherington & P. Midgley (eds.). *Grappling with the beast: Indigenous Southern African responses to colonialism (1840-1930)*. Leiden: Brill. p. 246.
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- 211 *ibid.*, p. 247.
- 212 Johnson, 1991:16; see also Peires, 1982:175.

- 213 Johnson, 1991:16, in reference to Switzer.
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- 215 *ibid.*
- 216 *ibid.*, p. 17.
- 217 *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
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- 221 *ibid.*
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- 224 Ukpanah, 2005:3.
- 225 *ibid.*, p. 3.
- 226 Masimela, 2010:245.
- 227 *ibid.*
- 228 *ibid.*, p. 246.
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- 231 *ibid.*, p. 19.
- 232 Johnson, 1991:19.
- 233 Johnson, 1991:19, in reference to Lodge.
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- 253 *ibid.*, p. 32.
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- 255 *ibid.*, p. 114.
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- 342 *ibid.*
- 343 See Beukes, 1992; Muller, 1990; Muller, 2000.
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- 346 Scholtz, 1992:298-299.
- 347 Hachten & Giffard, 1984:189.
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- 418 *ibid.*
- 419 Louw & Tomaselli, 1991:6.
- 420 *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 421 Adhikari, 2005:149.
- 422 *ibid.*, pp. 149-150.
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- 425 *ibid.*, p. 154.
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- 464 There is some irony in the fact that the prominent and often controversial anti-apartheid cleric Allan Boesak, one

- of the Coloured leaders who argued for inclusive "blackness", was accused of using the K-word in 2003 during an altercation with labourers at his home in Somerset West, according to a report in the *Cape Argus*. He denied the allegations and stated that "[A]nyone who know me or my politics would know that this type of language is not even vaguely in my thinking".
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- 470 "Ons is keelvol, sê kiesers" [We are fed-up, say voters]. *Vrydag*. 31 May:1.
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- 478 "Soos in the Nazi-era" [Like in the Nazi era] 1999. *Die Burger*, 28 June:10.
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- 480 "NP 'het nooit kru slagspreuke gebruik'" [NP "never used crude slogans"]. 1999. *Beeld*, 25 June:2.
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- 486 We recognise that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance occur on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin and that victims can suffer multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination based on other related grounds such as sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth or other status. ARNSA recognises that there may be different manifestations of racism which "continues to result in violations of human rights, suffering, disadvantage and violence". These manifestations may be institutional, structural, interpersonal, or be expressed or experienced by collective groupings.
- The Durban Declaration notes with concern "the continued and violent occurrence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that theories of superiority of certain races and cultures over others, promoted and practiced during the colonial era,

- continue to be propounded in one form or another even today". Drawing on these statements, ARNSA is similarly "alarmed by the emergence and continued occurrence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in their more subtle and contemporary forms and manifestations, as well as by other ideologies and practices based on racial or ethnic discrimination or superiority". See <http://bit.ly/2MKe7ZX>
- 487 See <http://bit.ly/2Pc4dC1>
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