


'Not white enough, not black enough': On black theology and coloured identity in South Africa

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This article will suggest that the sentiments underlying the infamous phrase 'not white enough then, not black enough now', are of the wounds of colonial racism, the persistence of coloured-identity as exclusive (not white and not black), and a response to the perception of black-African exclusion of coloured people from democratic liberties. Considering this, the article will suggest that in terms of Christian theology, black theology is (remains) a suitable candidate to unpack the issues of coloured marginality and systematic exclusion. This reflection is therefore underpinned by the opinion that the phrase 'not white enough then, not black enough now' can be read as a theo-political statement. Thus, tensions surrounding coloured identity in a post-1994 South Africa could be constructively addressed by means of harvesting positive theological resources for articulating 'colouredness' from the reflection of local black theologians.

Contribution: The underlying conviction is that black theology is a theology capable of encompassing the present-day experience of 'colouredness' in the South African context, in all its diversity and complexity.

Keywords: phenomenology; black theology; coloured identity; colouredness; whiteness; blackness.

Introduction

Even after 30 years into its democratic era, South Africa still seems to be shaking off the ghost of its colonial yesteryears, and battling with the current storms of state capture, rampant corruption, rising unemployment, gender-based violence, and world-beating inequality. Despite our efforts, South Africa remains deeply racialised, segregation and marginality existing and strengthened by the colour of one's skin. In the case of coloured people in South Africa, little has been said from the perspective of Christian theology. Much of this is because dominant theories speak of people of colour in the general sense of being 'black'.¹ However, seeing that coloured identity persists as exclusive and often in relation to one identity or the other, there is room for this discussion. Coloured dissatisfaction and marginality are often expressed in the refrain, 'First we were not white enough, and now we are not black enough'. This phrase can be heard in public protests, TV interviews, at homes, and in secluded conversations. The author's (in)direct experience of systematic racism, inequality, and poverty, coupled with the observation of the unique coloured marginality and prejudice towards black-Africans (and vice-versa) have raised several theological questions.

Regarding Christian theology in South Africa, fewer theologies have shown the ability to address race, inequality and God's love characterised by the call for justice towards oppressed people of colour than black theology. Despite being accused of 'sleeping through the revolution', black theology has proven its 'capacity to be – vulnerable to the moods of the marginalized and powerless' (Urbaniak 2017:2,14 citing Maluleke 1995:11). In this article, I seek to explore coloured marginality and bring it into mutual dialogue with black theology. Since much of coloured history was written from a white gaze of Eurocentric origin (Adhikari 2013:7), this article deliberates coloured identity and experiences from recent contextual sources. Historical and sociological writings on colouredness from Mohammed Adhikari and Zimitri Erasmus will be consulted frequently. Phenomenology is also employed as the methodology that makes meaning based exclusively on people's experience (Jaison 2018:37).

1. I use the term 'black' in the Bikoist (which will be explained further in the article) notion of oppressed people of colour striving and/or fighting towards their liberation. For the sake of this article, there will be areas of distinction and unification made between black, coloured, and black-African people.

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The coloured phenomenological experience of 'not white enough ... not black enough' is a credible insight for the article. The article will unpack this infamous axiom and analyse it in terms of coloured assimilation to whiteness, coloured prejudice towards black-Africans on the one hand, and the credible case of current coloured exclusion on the other hand. Thereafter, it shall explore colouredness through the lens of black theology in relation to its historicity, the interpretation of blackness as a liberative tool, and the respective interlocutors of black theology in a post-1994 South Africa. If for reasons that will be discussed here, coloured people show persistence as being exclusively 'coloured', is true adherence to blackness in black theology possible? Should there be the possibility of something called 'coloured Theology' or a theology without racialised slogans? Such ideas will be considered. Finally, the article will explore the possible unifying aspects of blackness in a post-1994 South Africa and the realised Christian call to liberation, solidarity, and justice in terms of shared blackness.

Who is the coloured person?

During apartheid South Africa, there was a popular racial stereotype characterised as a joke which expressed the deep racial tensions in South Africa as well as the uniqueness and particularity of coloured marginality:

God made the white man [*sic*], God made the black man, God made the Indian, the Chinese and the Jew – but Jan van Riebeeck², he made the coloured man. (Adhikari 2005:20)

Adhikari (2006a:158) tells of another 'joke' that narrates the creation of coloured persons by the devil in a failed attempt in trying to be like God. In this 'joke', the devil seeks to create white people, but unfortunately creates brown people who, when put on earth, are seen wondering purposelessly, dancing and drinking wine. Yet another 'joke' talks of God baking figures of clay that will come to life as humans to be placed on earth. On various occasions, God could be heard yelling in frustration, 'Damn, I burnt another one!' These seemingly burnt pieces are then tossed into Africa, and depending on the shade or level of the burn, they would turn out to be either black-African or coloured, and conform to the necessary racial stereotypes.

These jokes reveal the racialisation of South Africa and how from the onset coloured identity is one of obscure understanding. In the last century, most of coloured history was written by white people from a Eurocentric perspective. Very often, this perspective affirmed stereotyping while denying the historical agency of coloured people. When mentioned, coloureds were portrayed as an anonymous part of South African history. Their ontological presence signified

²Jan van Riebeeck is infamously known as the original Dutch Settler (see Maluleke 2020:30) in South Africa. Born in the Netherlands, Van Riebeeck worked for one of the largest trading companies, *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC). Initially working in Japan, he was recalled and sent to set up a refreshment station on the southern tip of Africa (first called Table Bay, then known as the Cape and finally called Cape Town). Upon his arrival in 1652, Van Riebeeck was overtaken by the profitable possibilities in the Cape and decided to set up a colony in this region. He set up servants to work the land and brought in reinforcement to colonise through the introduction of Western knowledge systems, white religion, and slavery (Oliver & Oliver 2017:4–5).

the flaws (especially the immorality of miscegenation) in white people's process of conquest and establishment of a pure Christian civilised society (Adhikari 2013:7–8). The historic binary of us and them, that is the human (white and male) subject and the black object, largely left defining coloured people in terms of outsidership, and yet inside the realm of white and black. Think, for example, of the [false] preconceived notion that coloureds were exclusively children of miscegenation (white fathers and black mothers), and yet, one of the initial apartheid laws was the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Act No. 55 of 1949*, which prohibited marriages between 'whites' and 'non-whites'.

It is a misconstrued notion that coloured people have no culture and are solely the by-products of white-male miscegenation. Unlike most international contexts, in South Africa, the term 'coloured' does not loosely refer to black people in general; rather, it refers to a more specific 'phenotypically diverse group of people' whose descendance is largely from Cape Slaves, the indigenous Khoi and San, African, Asian, and European (Adhikari 2006a:143).

Reflecting on the works of literary poet Gabea Baderoon 'What do the two oceans tell us?', Erasmus (2017:2–7) notes that apartheid [intentionally] diminished South Africa's complex history contained in Indian and Atlantic Ocean into a racial category classified as 'coloured'. She adds that this history often focussed on the establishment of capitalistic modernity through African Slave trade, which sought autonomy through whiteness and thus other identities were washed away. For example, the island of St Helena was a significant meeting point for those from the Indian Ocean, Americas, Africa, and Europe. The epistemic diversity, culture, and religions of these people were erased or overtaken by British and Dutch colonial instituting of racialised category groups such as 'Africa/Negroid, Asia/Mongoloid, Europe/Caucasoid,' 'slave', 'Khoi' and 'free burgher'. The subsequent periods of emigration of St Helenians to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, and Durban later led to beings classified as 'mixed race' and then coloured. Hence, it is more suitable, although complex, to speak of 'coloured identities' as opposed to coloured identity. 'Identities' signifies the diversity of languages, politics, demographics, and customs, while maintaining the shared coloured ethnic consciousness (Du Plooy 2008).

As alluded to, the shaping of colouredness was done through the systematic marginalisation of coloured communities in general and non-white communities in particular (Adhikari 2013:viii). Coloured heritage thus comprises slavery, dispossession, and racial subjugation (Adhikari 2005:17). This marginality persists even in a post-1994 South Africa. High crime rates, gangsterism and poverty are some of the characteristics of coloured townships, the Cape Flats having among the highest killing rates in the world (Conway-Smith 2019). Du Plessis and Van der Berg (2013:74) note that according to the World Development Indicators and the Reconstruction and Development Programme, about one-quarter to one-third of coloured people live in poverty.

After black-Africans, coloureds have the second highest level of poverty. From 1996 to 2006, coloured inequality has increased from Gini coefficient of 0.48 to 0.56. In 2011, it was reported that while constituting about 8.8% of the population, around 41.6% of coloureds live in poverty. Also, of the 76.0% of income earned through salaries or wages, white people account for 46.0% while coloureds accounted for only 8.5% (Govender 2016:241–242). Numerous street protests are characterised by coloured people exclaiming their feeling of intentional neglect from the black African government who never come to their areas or address their needs. Large banners can be seen exclaiming ‘first we are not white enough, now we are not black enough ... Democracy failed us!’ (Maphanga 2018).

Coloured persistence

Adhikari maintains that coloured identity has persisted despite various transformations such as black Consciousness, radical coloured-rejectivism, and non-racialism also known as *rainbowism* (2004:167–178, 2006b:467–472 and 2013:7). The consequences of Social Darwinism and white religion ensured that coloured identity persisted in terms of being ‘less than white but better than black’ (because that is the way God intended things to be).

The role of black Consciousness will be discussed later. With regards to coloured-rejectivism, an early example of this thinking was in the 1980s when the likes of Reverend Alan Hendrickse, leader of the Labour Party, got into a heated debate with the National Party to which he exclaimed, ‘God made me a man, the National Party made me a coloured man’ (Adhikari 2006a:163). Former Western Cape African National Congress (ANC) spokesperson Lionel Adendorf offers a problematisation of coloured identity which leads him to the conclusion that there is no such thing as ‘coloured identity’. For Adendorf (2016), to call oneself ‘coloured’ is to affirm and even celebrate apartheid’s attempt to marginalise people by enforcing distorted labels upon them. He adds that the *Population Registration Act of 1950* defined the ‘coloured person’ as a ‘person who is not a white person or a native’. This was further affirmed by the late Marike de Klerk who said ‘coloureds’ were simply the leftovers once the system was done sorting all other race groups. For this reason, he maintains that affirming ‘coloured’ identity is dangerous because it is built on the premises of apartheid ideology. To accept apartheid’s labelling ‘coloured’ is to hinder one’s mental liberation and deny one’s own true heritage found in Cape slave, Malay, Griqua, Khoi and Bantu ancestry.

The non-racialism approach was a method to redefine South Africans outside racial lines and more in terms of a unified nation. Chief proponents of this movement were former Anglican archbishop, Desmond Tutu, and father of the nation, Nelson Mandela. Tutu often proclaimed that South Africa consisted of different cultures, languages, and races; still, he maintained that we are one nation, we are the rainbow nation of God (Adhikari 2013:106). However, the rainbow

nation narrative has been met with fierce opposition and has struggled to gain actuality in the public domain. The imagery of a rainbow is also problematic in that it implies differences as opposed to unity. Chikane (2018:5) notes that the colours of the rainbow truly depict South African reality in that the colours exist parallel to each other and never integrate and become a part of each other. The flaw of the ‘rainbow nation’ ideal is that it promotes ‘false integration.’ Considering South Africa is the most unequal country in the world (Mlaba 2020), it may be naïve to preach unity through diversity while oppressive power systems remain intact. While Tutu’s theology of considering unity in the ‘rainbow nation’³ as equal children of God is understandable, under close inspection, the lived experiences of the poor majority in South Africa fail to express the Christian vision of ‘no Jew or Greek, slave or free, women or men, for we are all one in Christ’ (Gl 3:28).

Shame and fragility

Zoë Wicomb’s *Shame and Identity: The Case of the coloured in South Africa* (1998) mentions the internalised embodiment of shame and anger as one of the key factors that [negatively] shaped coloured identity. Wicomb’s point of departure regarding the intricacy of coloured shame begins with the story of Saartje Baartman, the ‘Khoi/coloured’ woman ‘discovered’ in the 1890s and put-on display in London and Paris. Baartman’s exhibited body marked by the display of her steatopygia⁴ and subsequent medical discussions on Khoi genitalia represented the damaging and racist toying of black bodies. It also illustrated the perceived link between women of colour and sexual lustfulness. Wicomb asks if the burial of Baartman’s body could represent the burial of the thought of black women as icons of sexual lustfulness, as well as the burial of shame represented in females who have mated with the coloniser. So, ‘miscegenation’, ‘concupiscence’ and ‘degeneracy’ constitute the embodiment of shame in coloured identity, characterised by the apartheid strategy in naming the coloured race (Wicomb 1998:91–93). Consequently, coloured identities have been negatively associated with ‘immorality, sexual promiscuity, illegitimacy, impurity, and untrustworthiness’ (ed. Erasmus 2001:17).

Through a theological perspective, it can be argued that the internalised shame in coloured identity exists in a twofold manner: through a societal racist stereotyping and through white religion. In certain instances, the colonial impact on coloured people was because of the enhancement of white (culture) Christianity and thereby the distancing from Khoi-San heritage (Adhikari 2013:136). In other instances, colonialism meant English and Christianity took precedence over their Afrikaans and Islam (Adhikari 2013:169). Therefore, shame, especially shame related to miscegenation in coloured identity became interlinked with white, often

3. Feminist writer and scholar, Pumla Gqola notes that considering Tutu’s continuous resistance to apartheid, and the retaliation by the apartheid state to threaten and treat him antagonistically, his use of the rainbow narrative can be seen in the realm of prophetic black thought. Thus, Gqola wonders ‘if it is not Tutu’s formulation but its appropriation into rainbowist nationalism that is dangerous?’ (Gqola 2017:18–19).

4. What is described as large fat surrounding the large buttocks.

fundamentalist, Christianity. Societal shame also linked to religious shame in terms of being conceived by white fathers and black mothers (often through rape). Put differently, using the understanding of Augustine's notion of Original Sin, we can consider the thoughts of Sarah Millin's novel, *God's Stepchildren* (1924). For Millin, miscegenation meant that (coloured people) 'white children [*with 'black blood' came*] into the world with shame and sorrow in their blood' (ed. Erasmus 2001:17).

In the same vein, Don Matera captures coloured shame in his poem,

The eye of God
Looks down ashamedly
On the council shacks
That stand like men condemned
Before a firing squad
The stench of dead animals
Urine and human dung
Give the township its body odour
Dirty rags and debris
Provide floral decorations
In this garden of hopelessness
In the shacks or streets
Near some broken wall or tree
Wasted men and women love their slum
As they would sexual pleasure
It is one condition of being coloured
In Western Township,
Living without honour
Dying with shame. (Matera 2007:11)

Perceptions and politics of 'colouredness' 'Not white enough'

Coloured people's assimilation to whiteness was (is) an expression of vulnerability because they sought to be included in normal 'white' society which had gravely oppressed them. This assimilation led to the acceptance of 'white' racism (both physically and eternally) on the one hand, and deeply embedded prejudice towards black-Africans on the other hand. An early example of just how coloured fragility and racist bigotry manifested can be found in an interview taken of the coloured residents of Windermere. One of the interviewees said the following:

En 'n kaffir [sic] al dra hy 'n goue ring, bly nog steeds 'n aap ... Huile het niks, nulle se huile het 'n culture, huile het nie 'n culture nie, huile's rou. Huile se ons bruin mense is mixed masala, maar ons bruin mense staan [nader] aan die wit mense, as wat huile aan die wit mense staan. Want ons culture en die culture van die wit mense culture is een. [And a kaffir (sic), even if he wears a golden ring, still remains an ape ... They have nothing, they say they have a culture, they don't have a culture, they're raw. They say we

brown people are mixed masala, but we brown people are closer to white people, than they are to white people. Because our culture and the white people's culture are the same.]. (ed. Field 2001:105)

Erasmus (ed. 2001:13) notes that growing up coloured meant 'I was not only not white, but less than white, not only not black, but better than black'. Political analyst Eusebius McKaiser writes about the 'casual' use of anti-black-African racism which his late mother would use to get him and his sister to do ordinary chores like drawing curtains shut at night. McKaiser's mom would tell them that if they did not close the curtains, 'the Bantu' (racist term for black-Africans), a supposed monster figure would come and stare at them while they slept (McKaiser 2020). Vellem (2015:3) points out that racism affects not merely the physical sphere, but even more so the psyche, the way both its victims and its perpetrators perceive themselves and others. Thus, apartheid's privileging some minorities over others was part of the 'divide and rule' strategy to ensure that racism persists (Adhikari 2004:175).

The influence of whiteness on coloured imagination and the consequent perpetuation of personal inferiority of not being white enough along with anti-black prejudice cannot be understated. Jennings (eds. 2013:786–787) notes that through the colonial project, whiteness serves as the prerequisite for existence in a civilised society. Whiteness sets the standards for human maturity, enlightenment, freedom, and being made in the *Imago Dei*. He says, 'whiteness thus creates the stage on which people appear and directs the actors in their performance'. Whiteness also dictates the symbols of faith in alluding to whiteness and blackness as good and evil, light and dark, sinner and saved, and life and death (eds. Jennings 2013:787). It can be suggested that the hallmark of Christian whiteness is captured in the imagery of 'white Jesus', with blue eyes, God as white father, and the imperial kingdom.

Franz Fanon noted that whiteness exists by perpetuating the sense that all that is good is white; consequently, becoming white becomes the goal which can never be 'attained' because among other (obvious) reasons, whiteness gains recognition by projecting its negative side onto the oppressed; thus, the colonised becomes everything the West negates and despises (Maldonado-Torres 2008:107). From this, it is evident that attaining whiteness is both impossible and paradoxically attainable through the perpetuation of marginalising the humanity of the subjugated through annihilation. Thus, coloured expressions of not being white enough is historically understandable while coloured assimilation to whiteness is also the perpetuation of their oppression. Again, Fanon is helpful in this regard. He notes that in an imperial society, 'God becomes the privileged Other projected by the master in order to obtain recognition and to sustain the identity of the master and the imperial order of things' (Maldonado-Torres 2008:108). Therefore, without radical interruption,⁵

5. Scholars like Jodamus (2022:603–614) have rightly noted the radical interruptions in white Christianity by highlighting how certain coloured expressions of faith are sites for indigenous religious expression and sources for further reflection in black theology and African Pentecostalism.

coloured Christian identity exists by the continuation of a white theological imagination from a Eurocentric aesthetic, one which is embedded in racial stereotyping, which white Christianity helped to create (eds. Jennings 2013:788). For such reasons, Erasmus (ed. 2001:14–18) argues that for coloureds to be unshackled from the bondage of apartheid racism, they must confront their own coloured racism and complacency with whiteness.

'Not black enough'

Several social media web series like coloured Mentality, coloured South Africa, and The coloured African highlight the existential experience of coloured marginality in solidarity with other oppressed black bodies. They also reflect coloured people's dissatisfaction with the new democracy and their perceptions of not being 'black enough' to be able to participate, not to mention benefit from this new dispensation. In the Baxter Theatre production titled *The Fall* (2016), seven Drama students from the University of Cape Town share their experiences during the #RhodesMustFall and subsequent student campaigns (Urbaniak 2019:230). The play outlines the unity and tensions in the struggle for decolonised education. In doing so, *The Fall* is also an attempt to unpack the various forms of discrimination in the South African society. Even here, racial tensions between coloureds and black Africans are mentioned. During a heated debate about African culture and patriarchy, Camilla, the coloured character played by Ameera Conrad, tries to unite her cadres though their blackness, but is met with fierce racial retaliation by the groups radical patriarch Zukile-Libalele, played by Sihle Mngqazana:

'Camilla: Cadre, all I'm saying is stop selecting parts of African culture that only benefit the men. We blacks have the opportunity here to choose what empowers us and what oppresses us.

Zukile-Libalele: Blacks? (Laughs) Come on now, my sister! We all know coloureds have always had it better ... We've got different struggles ... blackness is a lived experience. Not a subscription.

Camilla: Cadre, you don't 'n fok know me. I come from the Cape Flats, bra; there are girls in my neighbourhood being raped and murdered as gang initiations, so don't tell me I've got it better or easier. My struggle doesn't end with being black. I'm also a queer woman and don't you fokken forget that. You are jas if you think this movement is going anywhere with this cis-heteropatriarchal-pureblood-blackness kak-gedagtes. [*Camilla exits*] Nee, voertsek, julle varke! Skommelaars! (Conrad et al. 2016:56–57).

If anything, this scene captures the deep-seated racial tension between coloured and black Africans that often captures public imagination. Another recent example of lived experiences of 'not black enough' can be traced in the story of Glen Snyman, a 'coloured' who applied to be a principal at Fezekile Secondary School. Snyman did not get the job and was charged with committing fraud in his application for writing that he identified as an 'African' person and not a coloured person which they 'discovered' he was (Jordan 2020). Snyman had no previous criminal record, and had a public campaign launched expressing his discomfort,

proposing the removal of the use of apartheid slogans for identity, and thus opting for identity in being first and foremost 'South African'. Still, he was accused of knowing the vacancy would give priority to black-Africans, and by identifying as 'African' he sought to deceive the system. What this case study illuminates are the disparities, beyond mere racial categorisation, but one of consciousness. Whereas in certain instances, most South Africans can and should classify as African, in other instances the usage of the term 'African' as not applying to coloureds (or anybody in South Africa except black-Africans) is telling. It can affirm W.E.B Du Bois' notion of 'Double Consciousness'. Du Bois describes double consciousness as 'the sense of always seeing oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape a world that looks in amused contempt and pity' (in Chikane 2018:3). Accordingly, in the American context, Du Bois saw this double consciousness in the disparity of being a black African and being an American. In the case of coloured people, there seems to be a similar case for double consciousness or disparity in being coloured and being African. For Erasmus (2017:6–7), this is not surprising, because of the historical epistemic racialising in colonialism which defined its subjects outside the hegemonic discourse, in what Enrique Dussel (2013:xix–xxii) called 'exteriority'. Thus, colouredness meant being outside whiteness, and inside non-whiteness. Subsequently, to be coloured also meant to be outside the framework of what it meant to be African or black (Erasmus 2017:7).

While there are skilled and well-educated middle and/or upper-class coloureds who have and continue to maintain economic stability in the new dispensation, the same cannot be said of the majority of struggling working-class and increasingly unemployed coloureds who find themselves equally at the bottom of the food-chain (Adhikari 2004:171). It is easy to dismiss coloured dissatisfaction as being entrenched in black-African prejudice; however, there is (some) truth to the claims. Adhikari (2004:172) captures the study by Stellenbosch University economists, Servaas van der Berg and Megan Louw who found that between the years 1990 and 2000, overall headcount poverty had decreased across all races except one. Only coloured poverty had increased in this period. Another nuanced characteristic of the social economic anxieties in coloured people is the increase in crime and violence in coloured communities. And while this is partly because of the historic breaking of family structures, displacement and internalised abuse, parts of what caused this then are perpetuated post 1994 (Adhikari 2004:173). In the new dispensation, there is the growing trend of white businesses incorporating black-African employees as means of attaining elite Black Economic Empowerment (B.E.E) status (Adhikari 2004:174). Such tendencies coupled with traces of black-African 'chauvinism' and directing derogatory remarks towards coloureds as being cultureless and 'products of rape' are worth (re)evaluation (Jodamus 2022:609).

Theo-political response to 'not white enough ... not black enough'

To unpack the political aspect of the phrase, 'not white enough then, not black enough now', let us consult Emmanuel Katongole's book *The Sacrifice of Africa* (2011). The phrase in question, despite showing the uniqueness of coloured marginality, also reveals the fundamental reliance on both the white colonial state then, and the black-African government now. However, for Katongole such thinking is problematic. This is because, both historically and currently, even black-African nation state governments have continued to sacrifice poor Africans. In this view, coloureds are not exempt from this sacrificing. Katongole (2011:10–20) uses the story of King Leopold's Ghost⁶ as a metaphor in understanding the way African nation state politics is shaped. For example, King Leopold's colonial conquest of Congo was characterised by violent brutality, murder, and corruption. Years after the demise of King Leopold, this brutal political rationale persisted and became the backdrop of politics in Congo (the same can be said of other conquered African states). A backdrop in the sense that part of the African political imagination could only envision stories of freedom through the lens of becoming the oppressor. That is why African leaders like Mugabe, Amin, and Bokassa were the reproduction of the colonial project (Katongole 2011:12).

Considering this view, we can make the claim that in the context of South Africa, coloured political shaping and reliance on not being white enough or black enough create a false dichotomy. This is because, like other African states, South African nation state politics have proven to be innately corrupt, violent, and built of the perpetual sacrificing of poor Africans. Similarly, the founding father of Liberation Theology, Gutiérrez (eds. 2005:97–98, 103) notes that state politics have become a place in which nothing of importance takes place. He adds that greed, selfishness, and envy are the driving forces of the economy, and as a result, solidarity and concern for the poor are seen as obstacles to economic growth. In this view, coloured people's feelings of not being black enough to benefit from the post-colonial government are valid in as much as the fact that the majority of poor black-Africans are also not 'black' enough to benefit from the new dispensation.

Exploring 'colouredness' through the lens of black theology

Philosophical groundings

Black theology in South Africa started during the struggles against apartheid. Its philosophical grounding is in the black Consciousness Movement (BCM) founded by Steve Biko in the early 1970s. For Biko, to be 'black' was not a matter of pigmentation, but to have awareness of one's oppression, and begin to work towards your liberation (Biko 2004:52). Biko's preliminary thoughts on blackness arose from the backdrop that Western knowledge has throughout the centuries stigmatised or darkened any form of knowledge

⁶The metaphor refers to the publication by Hochschild (1998).

systems that could possibly come out of Africa. Philosopher Friedrich Hegel believed that there was no historic movement or development that took place in Africa. David Hume added that 'Negroes' were naturally inferior to white people (ed. Mkhize 2004:31). Thus, Biko starts by redefining blackness in terms of defiance of the ontological predispositions on African humanity. This was underpinned in Biko's awareness of the twofold nature of racism as firstly an oppression of the external world in which black people are excluded from public discourse, adequate work, proper education, housing, and livelihood, and secondly that of internalised self-hatred. Here, through cognitive assimilation to whiteness as the standard of humanity, black people simultaneously lived in a perpetual sense of self-loathing. (Kobe 2018:291). From a Christian view, it can be said that Biko (being from an Anglican background) knew that with self-hatred, it would be impossible for black Christians to love their neighbour if they did not love themselves first, as the gospel alludes to (Mk 12:31). Hence, BCM is emancipation from white oppression, and the revolutionary self-love of one's identity, cultural history, religion, and role in creating a new social order.

Biko insisted that not everyone who is black-African or coloured, or Indian can be 'black', for as long as there were those who sought to maintain the status quo of calling white people, 'baas' or maintain their affiliation with whiteness at their own demise. These, he said, are 'non-whites' (Biko 2004:52). In reflecting on certain 'non-white' characteristics, Biko critiques how certain coloureds were still preoccupied with trying to look, act and become white. Notwithstanding, many coloured activists in the 1970s and 1980s sought refuge in the BCM. Coloured activist and author, Chris Van Wyk found refuge in the BCM in that it created the platform for 'interracial identification' in which colouredness could be affirmed under the banner of blackness which created a unified ideology and resistance towards white oppression (Adhikari 2013:37). Wicomb (1998:98) highlights the writings of Mtutuzeli Mtshoba's *Call me not a man*, and Don Matera's *Die bushie is dood*, which show the ideological solidarity between coloureds and black-Africans, and critiques the continuous suppression of coloureds by black-African majority, respectively. However, despite the great leaps of racialised unity of oppressed people of colour, there were still great divisions which tended to mainly centralise black-African experiences and view coloureds as black, but a secondary 'special kind of black' (ed. Erasmus 2001:19). This was one of the factors which perpetuated coloured exclusivism often characterised in the ideology of the coloured Labour Party. These tensions perhaps drifted from the soul of Biko's truest intentions. He maintained that black people must recognise the divide-and-conquer strategy which was put in place to constantly keep black people fighting among each other for certain 'freedoms and gains.' Thus, falling for this trap and adhering to the status quo is the equivalent of selling one's soul (Biko 2004:42–43).

Allan Boesak was a key figure in articulating black theology in Southern Africa. He emphasised the unified approach by insisting that coloured people be included within the discourse of black theology (Van Aarde 2016:2). Boesak's acknowledgement of blackness was marked by his upbringing and experiences. In the biography titled *The making of Allan Aubrey, Boesak* (2017), Maluleke notes that Boesak's family were so poor that his father would read his children biblical scriptures as birthday gifts (Maluleke 2017:66). Having lost his father when he was seven, Boesak's mother played an important role in the shaping of his theology. It was through his mother's teachings that he learnt of God's preferential care for the poor, the widow and the fatherless (Fortein 2018:506). Thus, his theological groundings in black theology arose out of an oppressive white society characterised by the Dutch Reformed Church that enhanced racism. Paradoxically, out of this, the black Church formulated with theological conviction of a God who is love and justice, a God who affirmed blackness in the struggle for freedom (Boesak 1984:90–91). Black political theologies are rooted in the cross of the crucified Jesus [Christology]. Through this stance, it is committed to God's justice and the removal of oppressive systems [realised eschatology] such as 'white supremacy [anti-blackness], anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, sexism, economic exploitation, violence, homophobia, and transphobia' (eds. Copeland 2019:265–266).

Boesak implicitly captures the essence of the post-1994 coloured and black-African discussions as both worrying and indicative of resurgence of the oppressive empire:

Before we knew it, we were once again saddled with the racial terminology of apartheid. We were once again coloureds, Whites, and Indians. But something had changed: now only black people were 'Africans'. Before we knew it, we had to prove that we were in the struggle. Suddenly there were layers of suffering during apartheid and hence layers of reward. Suddenly we had less right to speak and less of a claim on our history. Suddenly there was real anger among us, racial anger, and not just anger caused by that convenient and ubiquitous 'scarcity' of resources. But this makes the issue much more than just a coloured one, since all of us have been inflicted with these new contradictions, which are fundamental to our self-created dilemmas with race. We will now, all of us, have to deal with this if we want to honestly re-embrace our non-racial ideal. (Boesak 2009:12)

(Re)examining the interlocutors of black Theology

In Vuyani Vellem's, *Interlocution and black Theology of liberation in the 21st century: A reflection* (2012), he discusses the role of blackness in black theology precisely in relation to the 'least of these' as interlocutors for black theology. He starts by mentioning that whereas in Western orthodox theologies, the interlocutor is the 'non-believer', in black theology the interlocutor is the 'non-person' (Vellem 2012:3). Furthermore, he sites Maluleke's view that because of the vast distinction in the black community (rich, poor, and working class), not all black people can do black theology and not all theology done by black people is black theology. For Vellem, this is indicative that class is a major factor in who black theology chooses as its interlocutor. Blackness then, becomes an

important ideological stance in locating the issues of the 'non-persons' as opposed to being concerned with the black community in general.

To illustrate this point, Vellem examines Maluleke's (1996) article, *Do I, with my Excellent PhD, still need affirmative action? The contribution of black Theology to the debate*. The article critiques the government's policy Affirmative Action (AA). Whereas AA was intended to assist poor black communities, its interlocutor became largely black middle-class persons. Vellem (2012:4) notes that we must regrettably note the shift from interlocutor of the poor 'non-persons' to that of the black middle class. It is evident in Vellem's writings that authentic black theology should not and cannot fall into the trap of losing sight of the conditions of the poor to appease the black middle class. Vellem concurs with Boesak (1977:14) that to be black, is to be considered a non-person, less than human, and this usually meant being relegated to a second-class citizen in conditions of poverty. Therefore, blackness in black theology cannot be misappropriated to adhere to the status quo and primarily support privileged black-Africans, or even be restricted to mere pigmentocracy – meaning that poor coloureds and Indians are seen as illegitimate interlocutors, whereas all black-Africans are seen as truer adherents. Vellem attests to this by stating that 'black theology of liberation is not a pigmentocratic discourse, but a state of mind, a consciousness and existential project of blackness' (Laubscher 2018:7). Like pigmentation, blackness is not gender exclusive. Womanist theologians have noted the persistent patriarchal facets in certain schools of black thought and lamented the absence of women's voices and experiences coupled with the debunking of patriarchy as suggestive of marginalisation of black bodies within its own discourse (Kobo 2016:2–3).

Black Theology: Towards unity

The separatist tendencies of coloured people suggest that a proportion of them would not call themselves 'black' (Adhikari 2004:176) and therefore would not associate with black theology. Considering this, is there a need for opting for the proposal of what can be called 'coloured Theology', or a new theology without racialised slogans like that suggested by previous reconstruction theologies? Based on the exploration of colouredness through the lens of black theology, this article advises that black theology's deliberate choice of the word 'black' remains useful and worthy of re-explanation in our context. 'black' in black theology is open to redefinition and the additions of positive meaning (Maluleke 1998:1) which can and should encapsulate the coloured experience in terms of God's saving love and justice. Because the conditions that stimulated the creation of black theology still exist, namely racism [and patriarchy], poverty and cultural imperialism, black theology remains a relevant weapon of resistance and liberation for people of colour in a post-1994 South Africa (Adebo & Harold 2013:1).

7. Chief architects of Reconstructions theologies were Charles Villa-Vicencio and Jesse Mugambi. Their works include Villa-Vicencio (1992) and Mugambi (1995).

Baron (2022) paradoxically captures current coloured sentiments in the Bikoist caption, 'coloured, You're on Your Own?' He notes that coloured people continue to be entrapped in versions of the vicious apartheid nationalism now purporting as ethnic nationalism based on pigmentation as opposed to the Biko's vision of black as the oppressed. He further notes that the current focus on 'black-African in particular' in policies such as B.E.E raises the question of why coloured individuals should not pursue complete social and physical separation from other black communities in South Africa (Baron 2022:135–137). In answering this, Baron (2022:137–142) prophetically steers us back to the wells of black Consciousness, inviting coloureds to come to consciousness through their colouredness not as racial biology but as the acknowledgement of their wholistic subjection and aspirations of their liberation. Furthermore, to reinvigorate black solidarity as a principal tenet of our Christian ideological vocation. Here, blackness is a shared reality in which general and particular aspects of subjugation and liberation can be voiced. For example, returning to gender, Kobo (2018:3) notes that women navigate through empire being oppressed women, black, and poor. Along with white and black men, they also experience domination from white women. Thus, the othering of the black in general has facets within itself comprising secondary treatment of women in the category of black and the secondary treatment of being coloured in black. This comparison allows for possibilities of an (both/and) approach of analysing the particularity of colouredness/Womanism/Queerness (LGBTIQ+)/Africanness, among others, while simultaneously maintaining the vision of black solidarity in an anti-black world.

In her chapter titled, '*This blackness*', Erasmus (2017:24) notes that by saying 'This blackness', she 'defies attempts to give blackness a general, mono-logic and definitive meaning'. Therefore, black theologians would agree that to say 'black' is to be concerned with all who are oppressed. It is to theologise from the social conditions in Umlazi, the Cape Flats and Lenasia. Most importantly, blackness represents a shift in ideological and theological priorities, a shift towards solidarity with the oppressed and the achievement of liberation (Cone 1975:135). One suggestion from the perspective of black theology might be to expand on, and theologise literary representations capturing coloured marginalisation as well as coloured and black-African relations. Eleanor du Plooy creatively avers how coloured experiences should be located within the unified expression of African identity:

We must allow ourselves [*coloureds*] the space to sit with the discomfort that comes with confronting the ways in which our brutal, fractured past has come to shape our understanding of ourselves and others. In this way, we're able to, without denying its specificity, locate coloured identities within the larger African identity- validating it as an important part of the story of black and African experiences. (Du Plooy 2018).

Concluding remarks

In this article, I have attempted to tentatively unpack the said coloured axiom by discussing coloured identity focussing on the misconceptions surrounding it, the racial stereotyping, and

the historic marginality of this particular people. Both in the colonial and postcolonial movements, coloured identity has yet to be truly and positively expressed in the public domain. The sentiments of not being white enough in apartheid and not black enough in the new democratic era were examined. Here, coloured assimilation to whiteness is seen as a sign of fragility, of trying to be seen as humans and live that way. However, this has affected longstanding forms of internalised racism, racial prejudice towards black-Africans, and the persistence of their marginality. Through the lens of black theology, it contains not only the capacity to positively express colouredness, but also the ability to debunk whiteness, thus liberating the mindset of self-hatred caused by internalised racism. Accordingly, generally speaking, coloured people must critique their prejudice towards black-Africans (and vice versa) and complacency in whiteness. Considering the claims of not being black enough to benefit from democratic liberties, there is evidence revealing that coloured marginality has worsened after 1994 in higher rates than other race groups. However, in noting Katongole's political theology, the article made the point that coloured reliance on the white state before, and the black government now, will always yield a failed result because the African states are unfortunately built on the sacrificing of the poor. Thus, coloureds are not exempt from a system that distinctively sacrifices the vulnerable. While coloured racism must be critiqued, so too must black-African tribalism, chauvinism, and patriarchy.

By (re)examining the interlocutors of black theology, the article affirmed that black theology must start its reflection from the vantage point of the poor 'non-persons' as opposed to prioritising the black middle class. Blackness then, becomes less about pigmentocracy, but more about critical reflection of God's call to justice for the *least of these*. This article thus serves as a contribution to existing and further discussions on black theology in South Africa.

Aluta Continua!

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