10

SOUTH AFRICA BEYOND “NON-RACIALISM”

Njabulo S. Ndebele

I

367 years ago, on 6 April 1652, a flotilla of three ships under the command of Jan van Riebeeck, landed at what would one day become the city of Cape Town. It was Van Riebeeck's second landing in Cape Town (Richards, 2018; Thom, 1952). South Africans today may not easily register the full sense of historic consequence of that landing. Over three centuries of incursion, invasion, conquest and occupation, layers of experiencing, remembering, and forgetting may have resulted in a kind of penumbra of history in which knowledge and ignorance coexisted in the half-dark and the half-light as a condition of living through imperial and colonial time. In this situation, life for the conquered nationalities of Southern Africa could be textured by anxiety, ignorance, half-knowledge, guesswork, speculation, desperate hope, and vengeful despair. Such is a state of living that conquerors impose on their subjects, and, unwittingly, on themselves! For either, though, the horizon of possibility is determined by what measure of control, or the lack of it, each has had over the course of their lives.

There would sometimes be more darkness than light, sometimes more light, in a fraught penumbra in which both conqueror and conquered lived, more prone to be in conflict than in peace. Ultimately, over time victorious European powers succeeded in imposing a tense, ordered stability – the result of an accumulative and steadfast imposition of their power and control over Africans in Southern Africa and other parts of the Africa. The nature and state of rule that ultimately emerged in Southern Africa drew from European experience and lessons learned in South America, North America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle-East where non-European people were invaded, conquered, and deprived of their lands (Falola & Roberts, 2008).

Technologically driven and therefore far more advanced than other parts of the world, the march of mercantile, and later capitalist European enterprise led to an unprecedented systemic, predatory hunger for human labour across the world, far in organisational scope than the Roman Empire and the world created by Genghis Khan (Weatherford, 2012). Europeans, increasingly under the spell of a conquering, technologically advanced culture, found it convenient to distinguish themselves from peoples they conquered on the basis skin colour, amongst other factors. That way, they could distance themselves from the common humanity they shared with those they sought to enslave. To establish themselves as a category of human above and beyond other humans, Europeans developed and fine-tuned categories of human differentiation according to what came to be known as “races.” Declaratively or through implicit forms of self-legitimation, they set themselves apart at the apex of humanity as the “superior race.”

In the resulting classification and hierarchical ordering of human beings and human value, the people of Africa and the Aborigines of Australia, came to occupy the bottom rung. Other “races” in various gradations of colour and culture in Asia, North and South America got to be variously stacked up below Europeans but above Africans. Thus are Europeans to this day able to carry their imagined high “white” value wherever they are in the world; while Africans continue to be associated with low “black” value.

Those “races” located in the range between “high” and “low” could suffer various forms of affirmation or de-affirmation according to which they could feel more or less human according to the dominant European norm of “the human”, depending on where they were located in the hierarchy of classification. Each could conceivably crave recognition from those “above” them; or, according to the contempt they received from “above”, dispense contempt towards those “below” them. Thus did the “races” in-between implicate themselves in the formal and informal regulation of global racial hierarchy. In this manner, this classification of humans, ironically

a part of the triumph of European modernism, and which took some five centuries to develop, became a norm in the modulation of human relationships across the globe to this day.

Over that five hundred-year time frame, in a global order supported by a mode of economic production which evolved governance and cultural institutions that justified it, the residual low “black” value of the peoples of Africa in contrast to the high “white” value of Europeans has had a resilient influence on economic and social order in countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and the United States of America where “blacks” are a statistically significant part of the national population. Perhaps South Africa is the proof of such resilience where the hegemony of racial thinking and conduct may be seen to retain currency even where “black” Africans are the overwhelming majority in a country in which they are indigenous inhabitants.

It may seem not to matter significantly that South African “blacks” have won the freedom to change their status fundamentally, both in their own country and in how they are viewed by the world beyond. Habits of discriminatory interracial behaviour cultivated and lived over five centuries of currency may prove difficult to discard even where the political conditions for changing them have been won and even established. An attitude of reflex reaction to hurt may be discerned in the very manner of self-assertion where the extent of activist anti-racist outrage may appear disproportionate to its actual cause by a white individual of ordinary pursuits, whose own “superiority” is elevated beyond its actual value and status. Such “resistance” may reinforce the sense of powerlessness even as the new sense of power is invoked. The resilience of systemic oppression tends to overwhelm resistance to it for as long its systemic authority, despite its being decried, is still embedded in the social and economic realm (Gumede, 2018).

At first emulating invader experience in other parts of the world, and then later creating a state designed purposefully around a hierarchical ordering of people according to race, the government of South Africa under Prime Minister Malan in 1948 consolidated “white” rule in the country into what came to be known as “apartheid.” Later, one of the system’s most renowned proponents Hendrik Verwoerd who became Prime Minister in 1958, described the system euphemistically as “separate development” (Venter & Koers, 1999). Systematic apartheid can be seen to be the logical outcome of the British government’s decision to grant dominion status to South Africa while leaving “black” South Africans to the fate of successive Afrikaner governments. In this way, Britain would maintain sovereignty over South Africa, reap attendant economic benefits while being distant from the ongoing brutal effects on Africans of its decisions (Ngcukaitobi, 2018). After the institution of slavery in the United States, the apartheid system in South Africa became the

most driven pursuit and achievement of institutionalised racial order in the world. The system pervaded the entire country, affecting every aspect of individual and group life. It was a manner of state design and ordering that needed to be imposed by its “white” initiators and beneficiaries as much as it would be resisted by its “black” victims. Seen against this, Verwoerd’s dream of a political architecture of “separate development” nursed a built-in fault line that would crack open along the path of the apartheid state’s determined attempts to enforce it.

The Euro-American dominance of the world, partly through “racial” ordering, was never a one-sided drama. It was always and continues to be resisted by its “black” victims. It is ironically in this resistance that something began to happen which called into question both the colonial and imperial Euro-American ordering of the world into their racialised exploitation of it. There emerged significant moments of intercession and intersection in which solidarities of resistance between some sectors of the populations in both the colonising metropolis and its distant colonised possessions found confluence in challenging and resisting racial ordering and its deleterious effects on relations between people at both the local and global levels. The abolitionist movements in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America are cases in point (Duberman, 1935). They show that there was no unanimity in the metropolitan centres on the necessity for the institution of slavery. The abolitionist movements may have been small, but they were led by remarkable people who over time exerted considerable influence against it.

Local movements of resistance in the colonies, often gaining traction across generations of anti-colonial struggles found common cause with traditions of enlightened thinking and resistance in other parts of the world, even more particularly in the metropolitan colonial centres themselves. Such common cause was based on more than moral and ethical grounds. They also recognised connections between racial ordering in the colonies and class ordering in the European metropolis. The colonised “races” in the colonies and exploited workers in capitalist colonising Europe shared an historic interest in collaborating to counter the rising impact of capitalism in its local and global manifestations. Communist and socialist movements around the world provided organised solidarities of collaboration. The enslaved, the colonised, and workers in a global order growing in its encompassing nature, increasingly saw themselves as important cogs in the ever-intensifying global competition for material resources and human labour. They saw in this realisation points of leverage in their common struggle for human dignity (Cox, 2014).

As a consequence of its rigorous, incisive, and strong moral resonance, the Marxist critique of capitalism resonated well with colonised and working people the world over. Marxism challenged the notion of “race” by highlighting its complex

interactions with “economic class”. From the Marxist perspective, capitalism was an economic system driven by an inherently antagonistic class interests between propertied “owners of the means of production” on the one hand, and on the other, workers who sold their labour for a wage. The “owners of the means of production” and various groups of the propertied class would grow and wield enormous power over both slave and worker. Thus, a common interest between workers in the metropolitan centres of colonialism and slaves in the colonies was easy to discern, even though slaves were owned and compelled to give their labour with no monetary reward, while workers were free to sell for a wage or withhold it.

Over time, colonial capitalism built and accumulated considerable wealth and assets as it also set up global institutions governed by laws that gave formal legitimacy to its collective interests and secured its historic advantage. It was able to achieve this feat despite the statistically small number of countries that benefitted from it relative the number of countries they subjected to their control. Equally so the populations of colonised countries far outnumbered the combined populations of colonising countries. Europe, and later the United States, compensated for their small demographic size with an enormous capacity to enforce their dominance over their “possessions” with both economic and military power behind government systems they imposed with a range of legislative compulsions on colonised peoples. The fundamentals of that relationship whose evolution Vladimir Lenin pondered are still in place in much of the world today (Lenin, 1963).

Over time, economic, technological and cultural dominance created conditions in which its benefits, both individual and social, were absorbed into patterns of daily lives of people in both the dominant metropolitan countries and in their colonial “possessions”. The compulsive effects of such overwhelming economic, technological dominance tend to be softer and potentially more lasting than naked projections of military power. This is despite the fact that since the 1960s and 1970s when many colonised countries won their freedom, the ability of the hegemony of dominant nations to universalise rationalisations of their dominance was considerably diminished when the power of the colonial order largely lost the appearance of permanence. The enormous inequalities in wealth running across generations both between and within countries became increasingly unsustainable on both economic and moral terms (Piketty, 2017). Climate movements around the world have come to underscore the perils that this situation poses for all peoples (Nixon, 2011).

These changes in global patterns of hegemony have important implications for what it means to be human today. Against the background of global disparities in wealth and standards of living, the voices and needs of billions of the world’s once repressed people seem poised to shift more and more towards the centre of the

world's consciousness. To be human today will be different from what it meant five hundred years ago. Invasions and conquests of old have given way to new forms of human mobility and a new global sense of right in which belonging to a country once colonised, includes an awareness of vital connection with wealthy countries in Europe implicated in the backward conditions of struggling countries. The concomitant moral rights to claim connection with Europe necessitate the search a joint search for balance between unsustainable extremes of wealth and poverty in the world. Modern human migrations, some of which have resulted in much stress in Europe, in some cases prompting new forms of nationalism and recidivist racism to reappear may be an adjustive evolutionary mechanism to achieve balance in ways that require new thinking about how people of the world should live together.

The 1960s in particular saw an historic shift in the evolution of relationships between colonising Western countries and their colonies. European countries which possessed colonies eventually yielded to irrepressible pressures from the colonies to be granted independence. The United Nations (UN) and its various agencies bound member states to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a context against which the rights of countries and their peoples to self-determination were universally acknowledged. European countries could not be signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and at the same time keep colonies and the inherent conditions of injustice by which those colonies were maintained. Indeed, the demand by colonised peoples engaged in various struggles for freedom had grown to irrepressible levels with mounting costs to their colonisers, making colonisation unsustainable.

In addition to economic costs, there were also profound moral costs. Against the background of two world wars in which they engaged in mutual slaughter, European countries and the United States profoundly shifted their moral sensibilities and in their different ways confronted the weight of the brutal history of their own colonisation of other countries. The reconstruction of Europe was accompanied by a greater trend towards democracy. Even in its various articulations in both capitalist and socialist governments the democratic ethos was recognised as a basis for universal participation in the governance of countries as well as in the resolution of global conflicts.

In retrospect, the era of independence for the new countries in Africa was the beginning of self-rule in which the first decade of freedom is perhaps best seen to be the first of many future transitions in the contemporary evolution of the African continent towards self-determination in whatever character that self-determination may take. For European countries the loss of direct control over their colonial possession would certainly have been accompanied by anxieties over their future access to mineral resources and trading markets they had access to by

rights of dominion. Continued access would now be negotiated. But the context of such negotiation was itself fraught with contradictions. Would it be possible to achieve fair balance in mutual benefit between negotiators unevenly balanced in a global economic and geopolitical climate in which tactical and strategic benefits would highly likely accrue heavily towards stronger European and North American negotiating partners, who had established over a long period of time the rules and cultures of trade and the governance systems to manage and maintain them?

In addition to global economic and geopolitical contradictions, the character of postcolonial independence was shaped by other imponderables. There were bonds between the post-colony and departed colonisers that could not be severed overnight. Colonial languages, now the official medium of communication, together with political, economic, military, educational, judicial, religious, and cultural institutions created during colonial times had all established for newly independent countries a practical necessity for continuous engagements with former rulers. In this context, structures of postcolonial influence for Britain and France would be respectively the British Commonwealth and the French Community as structured mechanisms of influence to manage changing degrees of sovereignty and calibrate continuities and discontinuities of practice with their former colonies.

Nine years after Ghana became the first country in Africa in 1957 to gain independence from Britain Kwame Nkrumah, its first Head of State, was overthrown in a military coup. Hardly a month earlier, Nigeria's first post-independent government was overthrown in a military coup. Such dramatic seizures of state power ushered in the era of military governments in Africa. Many newly elected civilian governments were overthrown in military coups (Japhet, 2012). The causes behind this historical development are many and complex, but it could be surmised that the first wave of democratically elected governments in Africa were unable to survive internal or external pressures to deliver prosperity faster through some measure of achieved internal autonomy, or to maintain exploitative relationships with departed colonist countries.

A chief characteristic of the era of military governments was how they reproduced repressive, centralised government reminiscent of the way European colonial powers had ruled their colonies. In this way, the model of repressive colonial government was re-imposed on nominally independent states by their own elites, military or civilian. This state of affairs also allowed departed colonial countries the convenience following their departure to claim to have no formal responsibility for the emergence of totalitarian regimes in their former possessions. Britain in 1910 achieved this kind of distancing effect in South Africa through an agreement with Afrikaners to establish the Union of South Africa. Thus, Britain handed over the fate of "black" people to Afrikaners. While military governments in other African

countries could exemplify the inability of newly freed nations to take care of themselves after having given up the saving graces of “white” colonial protection, Britain allowed racial capitalism to continue from a safe formal distance in South Africa to Britain’s economic advantage. Ultimately, it will not be easy for former colonising countries to distance themselves from the full economic and moral implications of their material successes.

In many newly independent African countries, citizens found it difficult to recognise and experience the expected benefits of independence. Their independence did not lead to capable states that could ensure security of well-being for citizens in their social, economic, and political lives. Visions of freedom that once energised struggles for independence seemed to be aborted by the experience of how things seem to remain the same even as they change. Many African countries entered the competitive global arena as nominally independent countries without the wherewithal to compete meaningfully. They remained dependent in their economic and political strivings even as freedom was proclaimed by their leaders. How could colonial history be transcended by a new and equitable relations between countries worldwide? In pondering the unresolved issue of global equity, Frantz Fanon opined that the “colonised, underdeveloped man is a political creature in the most global sense of the term” (Fanon, 1963).

II

What implications would such a situation have for countries such as Brazil, South Africa and the United States (Hamilton, Huntley, Alexander, Guimarães & James, 2001)? These countries are of some special interest for the theme of race and being human in the world. They have been the furnace in which the full impact of race in shaping global attitudes towards the experience and meaning of being human has burned furiously in the last 500 years of world history. In these three countries, the top and bottom rungs in the global hierarchy of racial order have coexisted and interacted in significant population numbers, locked to varying degrees in a fatal embrace. What lessons could they offer for the prospect of new human relations in the world?

Václav Havel speculates about the possibilities of a new world. “Above all”, he writes “any existential revolution should provide hope of a moral reconstitution of society, which means a radical renewal of the relationship of human beings to what I have called the “human order” which no political order can replace. A new experience of being, a renewed rootedness in the universe, a newly grasped sense of “higher responsibility”, a new-found inner relationship to other people and to the

human community – these factors clearly indicate the direction in which we must go” (Havel, Lukes & Keane, 1990). What would it take to achieve a world such as Havel envisaged?

The New York Times Magazine of 18 August 2019 published “The 1619 Project” (2019). It is a rigorously researched and incisive look at the legacy of slavery and how on this institution was founded the phenomenal economic prosperity of the United States. In its mechanisms, American slavery was as brutal on the slaves as it was inventive and hugely profitable for slave owners. From slave narratives and factual conditions described in “The 1691 Project”, we can discern how slaves in the cotton and sugar plantations of the United States were treated as non-human objects. In their non-human state, slaves could be bought, relentlessly driven to work in cotton fields from dawn to dusk, and then sold like any other commodity. American slavery exemplifies the dehumanisation of people in which they were subjected to a system of production that became so pervasive that it shaped how “a category of persons” (Jones & Dlamini, 2013) can be universally devalued. Against the American and global contexts of slavery, it is clear how the entire continent of Africa and its peoples became devalued in the eyes of much of the world.

Viewed against this historical context, a striking feature of the “The 1619 Project” is the assertion by Nicole Hannah-Jones in her essay that the American “founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written. Black Americans fought to make them true. Without this struggle, America would have no democracy at all”. She concludes her essay: “We were told once, by virtue of our bondage, that we could never be American. But it was by virtue of our bondage that we became the most American of all” (The 1691 Project, 2019). I understand this to mean that oppressed people in the world, by their relentless struggles to throw off the yoke of oppression in their quest for freedom and human dignity, show up to their oppressors impurities in the proclaimed civilising philosophies of goodness on the basis of which oppressors displayed their “superiority”. Most of the time, from the point of view of oppressed “blacks”, their “white” oppressors even as they induced fear in their victims did not appear so superior at those very moments that they displayed brutality, whether in the cotton plantations of the United States, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 in British India, the killing fields that King Leopold of Belgium created out of the Congo (Hochschild, 2002), or in the carnage of European “world wars”.

The full force of the profound change in the moral sensibilities of Europeans after the second World War emerges from their collective realisation of what two “world wars” had revealed of the state of Western civilisation. What Europeans saw of

themselves in the mirror of history was not a pleasant reflection. This may have contributed to a leap of moral imagination to recognise the humanity of those who until then had been lowly in the European estimation of what it meant to be human in the world. Europeans became more morally mindful of how the enormous wealth they created for themselves over the centuries was implicated in their degradation of other peoples in the world. Equally so, what white Americans may see of themselves in the twenty-first century against the mirror of history reflected by “The 1691 Project” will not be pleasant to them. Instead of facing squarely the moral dilemmas posed by an economic system whose mechanisms for generating profit at the expense of African Americans were founded on the practices of slavery, white Americans evolved ingenious ways of maintaining slavery by other subtle means (Blackmon, 2008; Duvernay & Moran, 2016). Over time, such resilient systems got embedded in political, economic, and social cultures that provide an important perspective against which to understand why white American police officers are likely to suspect unarmed “black” men as legitimate targets for what gets to be justified as legal shootings. It is as if the colour black worn by African American men, was itself a gun against which white police officers have felt by reflex a necessity to defend themselves despite the absence of an actual weapons threat against them (Tillman Jr., 2018).

From the foregoing, I seek to extrapolate the prospects for working towards Havel’s world in which freedom for South African “blacks” who have liberated themselves from racial oppression do not have to bear the burden of racism in their very understanding of the nature of their freedom. Casting off this burden may be harder for African Americans in the United States where they are not the majority population. The horizons of possibility will not be the same when the oppressed are the majority population as opposed to when they are the minority.

III

Section 1 of the South African constitution sets out the values undergirding the Republic of South Africa as “one, sovereign, democratic state”. The values are spelled out in subsections (a) “human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; (b) non-racialism and non-sexism; (c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law; (d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multiparty system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness”. I understand the order to be significant and, in all likelihood, intentional. Sections 1(c) and 1(b) are means to achieve the values in (a) and (b). There is in this resonant, unifying statement of national values an omission that is central to the thesis of this chapter.

What is missing in the values of the constitution is one of the most far-reaching social legacies of colonial incursion and settlement in South Africa. The discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1880s in South Africa led to one of the largest and probably the most significant subcontinental migrations in Africa. Hundreds of thousands of men across the Southern African subcontinent were forced by colonial legal compulsions to abandon their traditional agricultural economy to enter the nascent cash economy in which they had to labour for a wage and then pay tax. They were also compelled, mostly temporarily but sometimes permanently, to abandon their families. They walked or boarded trains from across South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, destined to become Africa's first working-class population in a nascent full-blown capitalist economy in Africa, centred in Johannesburg, the city of gold.

If the cotton plantations established the base of American capitalism, the mines were the base of the growth and enormous profitability of South African colonial capitalism. If, over time, millions of slaves laboured in the cotton fields of the United States and the sugar plantations in the Caribbean Islands, in South Africa millions of men across the subcontinent travelled to supply labour for the mines of South Africa under the most appalling conditions (Van Onselen, 2019). But something close to a miracle happened there in the mines and industries of Johannesburg that would be significant enough to be considered a formative element in the quest for social cohesion in nation-building in the distant future of a South African constitutional democracy over a century later.

The value that is missing in the South African constitution was first proclaimed by several hundred of representatives of conquered peoples in Southern Africa who convened in Bloemfontein in 1912 to establish the South African Native National Convention. The educated, nascent African elites (some of them educated in the United State in the first decade of the twentieth century) and traditional leaders who included those from neighbouring countries such as Swaziland, Botswana and Lesotho, congregated in Bloemfontein after the establishment of the Union of South Africa to ponder the future of Africans in the new country from whose governance they were excluded. They founded the South African Native Congress and called for the unity of conquered and oppressed people of the South Africa to unite across tribal identities. What they envisioned was to develop on its own over nine decades of organised resistance to South African state racism. In the mines and industries of Johannesburg, tribal identities became increasingly porous as people exchanged languages, traditions, cultures, and intermarried massively over the decades. Inter-ethnic conflict in South Africa diminished significantly in scale since the 1960s in the same way that war between European countries has not occurred since the second world war. Apart from Zulu nationalism, which has been

mobilised from time to time since the establishment of the Inkatha Freedom Party, there has been no significant tribal mobilisation for political ends in South Africa.

Against this background, it is significant that the legacy of an historical trend towards cross-tribal cohesion has not been affirmed in Section 1(b) of the South African constitution. “Non-ethnicism” ought to have stood in the constitution along with “non-sexism” and “non-racialism” as a national value. It is significant that “white” South Africans as a group are the missing “tribe” in this Southern African evolution of non-ethnic solidarity.

This is because “whiteness” from the colonial to the apartheid state was an imposed political, economic and geographic norm, but never a demographic one (Harris, 1993). To maintain the illusion of South Africa as a “white country”, the apartheid state worked hard to construct a majoritarian “whiteness” through land acquisitions that resulted in only 13% of the land declared as belonging to “black” people, and the rest of the 87% to “white” people. But it was impossible, except by genocide, to keep “black” people away from 87% “white” land. Indeed, genocide would have made no sense whatsoever because the vast sea of “black” labour was necessary to sustain South Africa’s growing capitalist economy for “white” profit. Thus, through a deft political psychology, “white” South Africans sort to separate themselves from people whose predominant presence they required in other ways.

To combat racism in South Africa based on how the demographic “white” minority has “minoritised” the “black” majority, is to focus on a fundamentally false reality. This false reality diverts attention from the real objective of the “black” South African struggle for freedom. Combating “racism” only made sense as a tactic for political mobilisation. The declared primary objective has been to create a new human order in the post-1994 South African nation-state. This latter objective became difficult to discern when the tactical means to achieve it assumed the apparent status of principal cause. Minorities with power, in this case the technological dominance of Western societies, are likely to maintain dominance over numerical majorities by violent means. But the fact of such dominance being unsustainable was recognised by all the negotiating parties in South Africa who agreed on a peaceful transition to democracy in 1994. Following that the “white tribe” of South Africa was presented with an historic opportunity find a space, from which it has not been excluded, within the predominant, horizontal non-ethnic human space that has evolved for over a century of cross-ethnic interactions across the industrial landscape of South Africa. Seen against this thinking, the constitutional value of “non-racialism” is not sufficient on its own to carry the full historic significance of the non-ethnic demographic legacy. Its main weakness is to suggest that the relationship between “black” and “white”, is the fulcrum around

which hinge future human relationships in South Africa. In reality, “non-racialism” accentuates “race” even as it strives to combat it.

This situation confronts “white” South Africans with a deep existential question: where do they really belong in the world? Are they fatally attached to global whiteness in its 500-year manifestation across the world such that they would prefer to continue to be subject to the burdensome moral problematics of its history in a setting where the relevance of that history is destined to be eroded? Or, are they capable of ditching global whiteness for a new identity in community with a horizontal non-ethnic South African human reality that continues to evolve? If South Africa in 1994 significantly challenged global notions of reconciliation, would they equally challenge global notions of identity?

I would argue that the prospect of white South Africans becoming part of the demographic legacy of a horizontal community of ethnicities is far more possible in South Africa than in the United States. In the United States, the population that has historically carried the moral conscience of their country, the African Americans, may ultimately only be able to project moral idealism and legitimacy but not be able to exercise a decisive influence on the psychic and moral transformation of the Euro-American community that may have coalesced into some form of cohesion similar to South Africa’s trans-ethnic cohesion but overwhelmingly dominant in projecting and maintaining the power of its collective benefits. It is precisely there that a significant difference between the South African and American trans-ethnic cohesions may be discerned. In the one case, the ethos of cohesion was based on a broad political, economic and moral consensus to tolerate the systemic oppression and exploitation of fellow citizens who were not seen as such despite being in the same country. In the case of South Africa, on the contrary, there was a “black” broad inter-ethnic consensus and commitment to combat racial oppression. The birth of the South African constitutional democracy in 1994 was an historic achievement of this consensus based on the moral idealism and political legitimacy of the majority population’s commitment to achieve freedom for all South Africans in an activist constitutional democracy.

At the international level, Europe and its transatlantic component in “white” America, as well as in Australia and New Zealand face the challenge of how to live in a world shared with billions of non-Europeans who have evolved considerably over 500 years of global history and can no longer be colonised and oppressed as they used to be. They have become far more aware of their potential to reshape the world in ways that push the global environment to become more democratic and just. In 2006, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa formed an association (BRICS) as major emerging economies. Between them, they account for billions of

people who can no longer easily belong to a vertical hierarchy of human value. This development strongly suggests that the biggest global challenge of the twenty-first century will very well be the quest for a horizontal human space across the world that effectively eliminates the terrible legacy of a hierarchy of races that has bedeviled human relationships across the world for so long.

IV

The European Union (EU) has pondered for some time the notion of “a supra-national democratic system” (Lamy, 2005). The idea has great merit in light of profound demographic changes in the global order. But it is an idea that can really make sense within a genuine space of equality in global discussion. A voice from the Caribbean speaks with great resonance about the global issues at stake. “The macro-reality of an ethnically non-white numerical majority being called upon to function as a cultural minority in a Eurocentric ethos laced with what has been described “the white bias” is part of the repertoire of concerns, apprehensions, resentments and frustrations of millions of Caribbean souls, from Haiti to Brazil” (Nettleford, 1993). *Inward Stretch Outward Reach*, the title of Nettleford’s book, speaks to a necessary condition for non-Western societies to enter into new and meaningful global conversations with Western powers. Non-Western societies face the imperative of the “inward stretch” by deepening their internal economic, technological, political, and cultural capacity to negotiate “outward reach” from a position of greater strength. In this connection, the outward reach of China and India might be seen to illustrate the full potential of a visionary, resourceful, and concerted “inward stretch”.

The African Union (AU), established as the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, agreed to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area after seventeen years of “difficult negotiations” (Krippahl & Welle, 2019). It aspires towards an ambitious “Agenda 2063 for a continental market with the free movement of persons, capital, goods and services, which are crucial for deepening economic integration, and promoting agricultural development, food security, industrialisation and structural economic transformation”. The success of such a continental initiative will ultimately depend on each member state of the AU “stretching inwardly”. Similar regional collaborations in South America, the Middle-East, the Caribbean, and Asia express a desire for the emergence of a global order to better manage seismic changes in human global relations such as have been occurring since the end of the Second World War, in reality a European War. In light of these trends, the UN organisation in its current form seems unsuited to respond creatively to the fullest implications of unfolding global demographic shifts towards a global

order where values of human equality, economic prosperity, and democracy are shared. In particular, the Security Council which has a strong representation of veto wielding colonial powers, is a cold war instrument that still connotes imperial hierarchies unsuited to the imperatives of horizontal interactions in the global community. It is unsuited to the evolving global times.

The appeal of democratic global institutions is that they offer the best chance for replacing legacies of race with the human pursuit of universal well-being. The challenge for bottom rung Africa will be in how the continent creates and leverages multistate capabilities founded on viable bases of internal trade within regional economic zones, as envisaged in the African continental free trade area, that cooperate with one another to harness a continental economy that can compete and collaborate with other global economies for shared benefits. Full human dignity will be better achieved and shared through collaborative human achievements based on new shared values as a foundation for a different and more human global order.

South Africans might well imagine a flotilla of three ships made in South Africa setting sail on their way to The Netherlands with a plan to dock at the port of Amsterdam meaningfully on 6 April 2022. The ships will be operated by a crew of young South African sailors under a South African commander who with his or her crew represent the country's constitutional demographic profile. Their mission will be significantly different from that of Van Riebeeck who landed in Cape Town 370 years ago on that day to establish a refreshment post for the Dutch East India Company for the convenience of company ships on their way to India. Young South African passengers will disembark in Amsterdam to meet their young Dutch peers and together to explore and negotiate new relationships between The Netherlands and South Africa that will contribute towards the evolution of new moral, intellectual, political and economic global order across the entire range of human endeavour. Havel's world might suddenly look real.

References

- African Union. 2018. *Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*. <https://bit.ly/361bdpZ>
- Blackmon, D.A. 2008. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Doubleday.
- Cox, L. 2014. Waves of protest and revolution: Elements of a Marxist analysis. Paper presented at the Alternative Futures and Popular Protest Conference. Manchester Metropolitan University, April 14-16.
- Duberman, M. (ed.). 1965. *The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400875160>
- Duvernay, A. & Moran, J. 2016. *USA*. Netflix.
- Falola, T. & Roberts, K.D. 2008. *The Atlantic World, 1450-2000*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Fanon, F. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Gumede, W. 2018. Institutional racism is alive and kicking in the workplace. *Mail & Guardian* [Online]. <https://bit.ly/3ahZEhF>
- Hamilton, C.V.; Huntley, L.; Alexander, N.; Guimarães, A.S. & James, W. (eds.). 2001. *Beyond Racism: Race and Inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- Harris, C.I. 1993. Whiteness as Property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106(4). <https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787>
- Havel, V.; Lukes, S. & Keane, J. 1990. *The Power of Powerless*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Hochschild, A. 2002. *King Leopold's Ghost*. London: Pan Books.
- Japhet, M. 2012. Military coups and military regimes in Africa. *Scientia Militaria – South African Journal of Military Studies*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.5787/8-4-756>
- Jones, M. & Dlamini, J. 2013. *Category of Persons*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.
- Krippahl, C. & Welle, D. 2019. Africa's free trade agreement: Curse or blessing? *Mail & Guardian* [Online]. <https://bit.ly/2R1ZFyA>
- Lamy, P. 2005. *Towards World Democracy*. London: Policy Network.
- Lenin, V. 1963. *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Nettleford, R. 1993. *Inward Stretch Outward Reach: A Voice from the Caribbean*. London: Macmillan.
- Ngcukaitobi, T. 2018. *The Land is Ours*. Century City, South Africa: Penguin Random House South Africa.
- Nixon, R. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674061194>
- Piketty, T. 2013. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674369542>
- Richards, R. 2018. *Bastards of Humans: Volume 2: 500 Years of Intimacy between South Africa and Europe*. Cape Town: Indaba Publishing.
- The 1619 Project. 2019. *The New York Times Magazine* [Online]. <https://nyti.ms/2R2hCwW>
- Thom, H.B. (ed.). 1952. *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck (Vol. I)*. Cape Town: A.A. Bakema.
- Tillman Jr., G. 2018. *The Hate U Give*. 20th Century Fox.
- Van Onselen, C. 2019. *The Night Trains*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball.
- Venter, J.J. 1999. H.F. Verwoerd: Foundational aspects of his thought. *Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 64(4). <https://doi.org/10.4102/koers.v64i4.511>
- Weatherford, J. 2012. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

SUNPROSS

VOLUMES IN THE SERIES