



MAPPING GLOBAL RACISMS

# Futures of Anti-Racism

Paradoxes of Deracialisation in Brazil,  
South Africa, Sweden, and the UK

Nikolay Zakharov · Shirley Anne Tate  
Ian Law · Joaze Bernardino-Costa



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# Mapping Global Racisms

**Series Editor**

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There is no systematic coverage of the racialisation of the planet. This series is the first attempt to present a comprehensive mapping of global racisms, providing a way in which to understand global racialisation and acknowledge the multiple generations of different racial logics across regimes and regions. Unique in its intellectual agenda and innovative in producing a new empirically-based theoretical framework for understanding this glocalised phenomenon, Mapping Global Racisms considers racism in many underexplored regions such as Russia, Arab racisms in North African and Middle Eastern contexts, and racism in Pacific countries such as Japan, Hawaii, Fiji and Samoa.

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For Ian.

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# 1

## Introduction

The overall aim of this book is to assess the nature and extent of the project of deracialization required to counter the contemporary dynamics of racialization across four varieties of modernity—Sweden, South Africa, Brazil, and the United Kingdom (UK)—based on the original research on each of the four country’s contexts. Since it began to be recognized or identified as a problem, an assemblage of supra-national initiatives has been devised in the name of combatting, dismantling, or reducing racism. There has been a recent shift whereby such supra-national bodies have moved toward embedding strategies against racism within the framework of human rights and devolving such responsibility to other bodies at a national level. Increasing importance is therefore placed upon National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), but also on Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), other civil society institutions, and social movements/activists in struggles against racism in the particular national assemblages their operations cover. So, in this book we investigate the effectiveness of the roles played by the South African Human Rights Commission, the UK’s Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Race Disparity Unit, the Special Secretariat for Racial Equality in Brazil, and in Sweden, the National Plan to Combat Racism and the Equality Ombudsman.

NHRIs are constrained by external factors including the provision of resources, lack of real independence from the powers of governments and general functioning, and internal constraints including their purpose, role, and relationship with racialized groups which limit their ability to produce a radical agenda for transformation. Nevertheless, their constrained role, together with the activities and initiatives of other key state agencies and departments and social movements/activists, play a vital part in the development of national strategic approaches to countering racism. The book will contribute to theoretical knowledge on racialization and the (im)possibilities of deracialization, produce a new data set on contemporary interventions and institutions, and establish new principles and practices for national projects of deracialization and anti-racism, building on cross-national Global South/North learning.

Identifying, unpacking, and countering racial and post-racial logics in the nation-states and civil societies remain a fundamental analytical challenge, and this is a key starting point for this book. The uprising of #BlackLivesMatter in 2020 and the opening up of new spaces for such fundamental critiques globally bring fresh impetus to these debates. In this book, racialization is conceptualized as the dynamic process by which racial concepts, categories, and divisions come to structure and embed themselves in arenas of social life whether in thought, policy, and legislation or nation-states and regional and global systems (Goldberg 2002; Murji and Solomos 2005; Zakharov 2015). Racism in many states has been constructed as a moral, pathological failure which requires ‘treatment’, replacing one regime of truth with another, a readjustment of attitudes. In this book, instead, we view racism as a structural and institutionalized global phenomenon. In this sense, even as we recognize the everyday interpersonal practice of racism, we know that racism is also an organizational principle that constitutes practices of domination, social institutions, law, economy, forms of knowledges, subjectivities, and so on. In terms of subjectivities, racism plays a constitutive role whereby public and political subjects synoptically construct themselves in relation to prevailing narratives of racialization.

States bear primary responsibility for countering racialization with the Government, Parliament, the Judiciary, and other bodies enacting laws, setting policy frameworks, taking judicial decisions, and monitoring the

impact of their policies and programs. Civil society plays a central role, whether through the dedicated work of NGOs at the grassroots level or through religious institutions, community service organizations, professional groups or associations, trade unions, and anti-racist movements/activism. The media bring issues of racism to the attention of the broader public and provide a forum for discussion and debate in either shaping or countering racial hostilities. In the midst of all these actors, NHRIs are unique. They exist in a dynamic position between States, civil society, and other national and global actors, offering a purportedly neutral and objective space in which to interact, develop racism-related laws and policies, and exchange ideas on combatting racism. Debate over the development of effective national institutions to tackle human rights has produced a vast literature with a key focus on the question of how to bridge the gap between principles, formal rules, and practice (Pierson 1971). NHRIs have proliferated across the globe but relatively little is known about those factors that underlie NHRI effectiveness (Linos and Pegram 2017). In theorizing these institutions a combination of design-effect and context-specific conjunctures provides an explanatory framework for evaluating general outcomes and effectiveness across different states.

But the limitations of human rights frameworks in providing a coherent and wide-ranging platform to conceive, address, and tackle racism are also informed by critical race theory. The development of the UN human rights regime occurred primarily through the search for an effective international response to racism. But the racial configuration of law and the limitations of individual rights-based law indicate that such strategies alone cannot address the problem of racism at its roots. Legal remedies will never be able to provide a foundational challenge as they cannot adequately engage with either the wider social, economic, and political structures that re-work, re-invent, and re-shape contemporary global racisms or the scars, wounds, and legacies of racial histories of genocide, slavery, indentureship, colonialism, and Empire. The problem with human rights is not its ideal, the collectivist vision of liberty, community, and mutuality, but its institutionalization within a neo-liberal post-racial racism assemblage with their associated fragilities and limitations (Sian et al. 2013; Santos 2006). The examination of racialization and

deracialization is informed by these theoretical considerations. Racism is not just a history of ideas. It is a global system of political projects of domination and power which require monitoring, analysis, and measures for redress (Bethencourt 2014; Winant 2004).

Typically, human rights approaches to racism, such as the activities of the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights and the European Union Commission for Racism and Intolerance, work with somewhat problematic understandings of the problem at hand. What unfolds here is the privileging of legal vocabularies over the critical language of anti-racism. Preventing racism is equated with protecting particular kinds of rights and responsibilities (e.g., see Equality and Human Rights Commission 2015). Typically, racism is reduced to a generic form of injustice or violation rather than a specifically racialized permutation of this (Sian et al. 2013). It is positioned as interchangeable with other axes of discrimination such as sexual orientation, and thus the routes to tackle them should be the same (Sian et al. 2013), notable in a movement toward equality rather than anti-racism or racial discrimination legislation (Dickens 2007; Hepple 2010). This ‘de-historicises racism and fundamentally disempowers anti-racist struggles’ (Sian et al. 2013:40) and has been proven to be somewhat politically impotent.

We can thus consider alternate approaches and how they may or may not better tackle the problem at hand. The idea of anti-racism has gained significant scholarly attention (see Bonnett 2000; Lentin 2004) and is probably the most employed strategy against racism, positioned in various discourses as almost the axiomatic response. Typically, definitions position it as ‘those forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism’ (Bonnett 2000). This can be between more structuralist and more individualized approaches to racism (see Lentin 2004), or even more complex typologies demarcating different strains through different social movement structures (see Bonnett 2000).

The political struggle across all the contexts in this study remains that against racism. However, this focus on racism while it is a beneficial antidote to human rights evasion of the very need to focus on racism can also be said to fall short of addressing the issue at hand because of the

local politics in certain national contexts—the re-emergence of the discourse of racial democracy in Brazil under the right-wing Bolsonaro government, the declaration of the United Kingdom as a ‘post-race’ white majority state, in South Africa the call for decolonization and Africanization in the face of rampant anti-Blackness, and Sweden’s continuing exceptionalism where racism continues not to matter. ‘Race’ as a category is a social construct (Law 2010, 2012; Goldberg 2002, 2015) and racism emerges from it, so the argument could be made that political struggle should be over the category ‘race’ itself. The focus would then be on racialization, the process whereby categories of ‘race’ are mobilized to dictate the ordering of social life (Zakharov 2015; Murji and Solomos 2005). The commencement of racial categorization describes a ‘racial moment’ (Spickard 2009) from which particular forms of racialized life unfold and the foundations of racism from which racist institutional, structural, and interpersonal practices emerge. To struggle over the category of race is to delay the urgent need for anti-racist action as anti-racism struggles to combat racism within the contexts this book focuses on. Further, deracialization is stillborn in racism’s pervasive capture of nation-states, institutions, and minds. Deracialization as a term is employed in relation to political initiatives, campaigns, or actions which avoid explicit reference to issues of race while placing emphasis on issues seen as ‘racially transcendent’ (Orey and Ricks 2007). This is a method of avoiding dealing with racism which feeds into conservative ‘post-racial’ (Lentin 2014), ‘racial democracy’, ‘rainbow nation’, and ‘exceptionalism’ politics.

The conceptualization of racism utilized in this study involves breaking with contemporary accounts. First, it is necessary to examine the ‘colonial genealogy of racialised governmentalities’ (Hesse 2004, p.26) constructing racism not as an exceptional ideology located in the extremist margins, but as a social force at the core of politics, politics, and their forms of social administration implemented through specific technologies of racial rule. This challenges an earlier hegemonic Eurocentric account which failed to problematize Western modernity and its universalist narratives of human rights and democracy. Fundamental recognition of the intrinsic racialization of liberal democracies is a key starting point here. ‘Deep seated social and institutional change’ by states are

necessary as Sandra Fredman (2001) has argued in recognition of the inability of human rights frameworks to defeat racism. Second, in Europe and elsewhere racism is being reduced to a problem of human rights, and these frameworks and discourses are not only inadequate for the task at hand, but also working to obscure and fundamentally deny the contemporary power and significance of racism. This argument has been developed fully in a key output from a recent three-year European Union FP7 research project: *Racism, Governance and Public policy, beyond human rights* (Sian et al. 2013). This theoretical break derives from the long sociological tradition placing race at the center of the making of Western modernity, from Du Bois, Césaire, and Fanon to contemporary theorists including Hesse, Sayyid, Goldberg, and Winant, and this study will examine these arguments in relation to the varieties of modernity chosen for case study analysis. The proposal is built upon a foundational intellectual framework of intersectional critical racism studies locating the ‘problem’ of racism in social, political, and economic structures that were/are insensitive to racialized ‘difference’ and which were generally exclusionary in effect.

This book assesses the current state of political and policy approaches to racism in four case study contexts; the extent to which deracialization is a focus for anti-racist action in these contexts; the difficulties in revitalizing, reshaping, and renewing national anti-racist projects; and the emerging political discourses of decolonization which have assumed the anti-racist mantle. Some key questions and issues addressed in these case studies are set out below:

## **South Africa: Deracialization and Decolonization**

The debate on deracialization in South Africa has existed since the 1930s with the writings and work of the New Era Fellowship in Cape Town. It continues to be a current today within debates on decolonization, anti-racism, and Black liberation although it is also widely critiqued by activists and academics alike. Post-apartheid South Africa is officially committed to racial equality and promoting Black advancement,

individually and collectively, yet many questions remain. Can the post-apartheid state stabilize the process of political, social, and economic integration of the Black majority? Can it maintain an official nonracialism in the face of such comprehensive racial inequality? How can the vast majority of citizens—excluded until so recently not only from access to land, education, jobs, clean water, and decent shelter, debarred from Africa's wealthiest economy, and denied the most elementary civic and political rights—garner the economic access they so desperately need without reinforcing white paranoia and fear? How can the post-apartheid state facilitate the reform of racial attitudes and practices, challenging inequality, white supremacy, and the legacy of racial separatism without engendering white flight and subversion? As Howard Winant (2002, p. 26) has observed in the South African case, 'how can democratic, nonracial institutions be constructed in a society where most attributes of socioeconomic position and identity remain highly racialized?' Understanding these processes requires viewing South African racial debates from a global perspective, for example, in the debates over affirmative action, and exploring options for local actors who seek to change the terms of engagement as they restructure national politics and pursue de-segregation strategies.

## **Brazil: Competing 'Mixing' and Affirmation**

Political discourse around race and racism in Brazil has been historically focused on erasing the presence of Black populations through 'racial mixing', but, since the 1970s, has been interrupted by an increasing affirmation of Black political identities. Portuguese colonization of Brazil commenced in 1500 and initiated the traffic of enslaved people from Africa to Brazil in the mid-sixteenth century to work on the sugar plantations and later in the raising of livestock, mining, and coffee production. This process allowed Brazil to become the largest enslavement nation in the world at the time and it was the last, in 1888, to abolish slavery. After abolition, the state then committed itself to an emphasis on the dilution of 'racial difference' and 'division' through a policy of miscegenation, white European migration, and resultant 'whitening' of the population.



This was the precursor to Joao Batista Lacerda's remarks that, as a result of a century of 'inter-marriages', there would be no more 'mixed race' or Black people in Brazil. From the 1930s onwards, miscegenation came to be positioned as the key mechanism in Brazilian nation-building. When it emerged that this would not be a feasible policy, it therefore became positioned as a marker of Brazilian uniqueness and exceptionality among nations. Such affirmation of miscegenation and mixing allowed Brazil to be constructed, in national imaginations, as a 'racial democracy', exempt from prejudice and racism. This in turn allowed questions of racism to be evaded. However, this myth has been challenged and somewhat weakened with various enactments of affirming 'Blackness' and through the historical struggle against racism and racial inequalities. A turning point against racism in Brazilian history occurred in the late 1970s when there were various political and cultural movements that reaffirmed Blackness, as well as several political protests against inequalities and police violence. This was in tandem with Brazil's (re)democratization. As an outcome of political activities in the late 1970s, after the 1982 elections, several municipal and state governments established advisory bodies for the Black population. The objectives of those advisory bodies were to promote the rights and needs of the Black population. As a result of this the first Brazilian state institutions dedicated to the promotion of public policies were formed. In 1995, President Cardoso established the Inter-ministerial Task Force for the Promotion of Black People, charged with creating and forwarding policies to support the Black population's political and social participation. This was further developed by the establishment of the Special Secretariat for Promotion of Racial Equality during the Lula and Dilma Presidencies which, among other initiatives and in dialogue with activists and social movements, boosted the affirmative action programs. After the traumatic coup d'état against President Dilma Rousseff and the ascension of the far-right wing, racial equality policies have been under attack. The current government has threatened some achievements obtained from affirmative action and other public policies to counter racism and racial inequality (Bernardino-Costa 2015). This provides an interesting area through which to analyze anti-racist policies and their outcomes. Despite the reach of those policies in reducing racial inequality, the far-right wing government presents a narrative that there

has been an upsurge of racial animosities as they attempt to avoid mentioning racism. By doing so, it seems that the current Brazilian government is trying to go back to the myth of racial democracy, to remove racism as a national problem. Contrarily to this, activist and grassroots movements have continued to find institutional spaces from which to implement their racial agenda. The recent Brazilian experience is a true laboratory to study anti-racist and racial equality policies vis-à-vis deracialized policies. Is the act of not naming race enough to build a post-racial society or do we need to name race in order to face the hideous effects of racism? Who speaks and defends deracialization policies? Which interests are at stake?

## The UK: Aggressive Racial Majoritarianism

The political and social context in the UK has been characterized by a racialized aggressive majoritarianism, whereby those racialized as ‘white’ gain a particular primacy in institutional, political, and social situations. In terms of the broader social realm, there has been an increasing development of ‘cultural’ and ‘new’ racism, the growing stigmatization of explicitly racist language and praxis leading not so much to a demise in racist praxis but a transmutation of it into other forms. This has been accompanied by a rise in the emergence of Islamophobic street movements such as the English Defence League (EDL), as well as the growth of populist, neo-fascist political groupings like the UK Independence party (UKIP). Empirical evidence confirms the persistence of racism and discrimination, whether it be in violence (Athwal and Burnett 2014) or in educational attainment (Alexander and Arday 2015; Gillborn 2008; Tate 2020). Alongside this, in the field of state interventions, there is a removal of direct references to racism in state discourse and an attack on intersectionality, Critical Race Studies, and #BlackLivesMatter by members of the government who speak about not wanting to present as Black victims and never experiencing racism themselves. Legislations to address racist practices and configurations, in the form of various Race Relations Acts (which began in the 1960s), have been replaced by a movement away from discussions of race to a conception of equality where various

manifestations of discrimination ('race', sex, gender identity, age, sexuality, and disability) are imbued with equivalence. As such, they can be addressed under a single legislative banner (Sian et al. 2013). This has culminated in the 2010 Equality Act, the most recent piece of UK equality legislation, where 'race' is positioned as one of nine legally 'protected characteristics', tackled through a singular set of processes and mechanisms. This is in tandem with a continuation, by the state, of racialized apparatuses and policies intensifying 'racial' inequalities. Notable here are, among many other phenomena, the Prevent agenda, increasingly demonizing and regulating Muslim communities; or initiatives targeting certain racialized migrants, for example, the Home Office's 'Go Home' campaign and restrictions on recourse to state funds; as well as the continuing Windrush scandal. Rhetorically, this is compounded by dominant political articulations narrating the dangers and 'threat' of multiculturalism to national cohesion and security, the failure of multiculturalism, and various assertions of 'British identity' evading past and present colonial formations. This provides an interesting context in which to examine the roles of NHRIs, the most significant of which in the UK being the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), brought into being through the 2006 Equality Act. How, it could be asked, do they monitor racism given that they were brought into being by a state now evading the language of racism? How is this performed given that previous research (Sian et al. 2013) has shown the lessening focus of race in the publications and documents of the EHRC? What is considered to be racism, and does it include the policies of the state?

## Sweden: Paradoxes of Racialization

The political and social context in Sweden is characterized by one of the most thorough anti-discrimination legislation systems in the world. Statistically, however, it is also one of the most racially segregated societies in the Western world. According to sociological polls, the population in Sweden has a very positive attitude toward diversity and migration, but at the same time, among the OECD countries, Sweden has the highest level of segregation in its labor and residential markets. Historically,

Sweden shifted from a race-biology discourse, through the official ‘color-blindness’ of its non-racist, highly utopian social ethos (in a sense that race as a concept was abolished on the governmental level and in academia), to ‘the current era’s mourning of the past’ (Hübinette and Lundström 2014: 425). Given its long-standing social-democratic traditions, Sweden is characterized by association-driven anti-racism. The anti-racist public organizations are indeed rooted in civil society, but through their funding they are also closely tied to the government. Moreover, they are quite skeptical of other forms of funding. As was shown in Malmsten (2007), anti-racist organizations do not really challenge the structure of society or any racialized governmentality, since they collaborate with the government. The government and associations share an understanding of racial problems, and therefore they are rarely in opposition. Rather, they work with target groups believing that they contribute to deracialization by influencing citizens in an anti-racist way. What effect on deracialization strategies and practices would produce the refusal by the state, as well as by those organizations that are specially designed to fight racism, to address the lines of division other than ‘Swedes versus immigrants’? How can their necessity ‘to have a positive outlook’ and to promote human rights be coupled with a program of deracialization and anti-racism?

We have no coherent global strategy to challenge racism and no global monitoring system tracking and tracing the spread of racism around the world. The dismal reality of today’s regimes of denial, in the face of the weight of racial and colonial histories and new acts and structures of racial violence, hatred, segregation, and division, together with the dismal failure of the most recent three World Conferences Against Racism: Durban I, II, and III, demand a new response. Relational and comparative analysis of these projects and assessment of the successes, failures, and paradoxes that these cases reveal provides the basis for building some key principles for national projects to challenge racism. This book’s focus is on providing a foundational set of fresh, new insights to inform global, national, and local approaches to countering racism in the twenty-first century and how new responses could be shaped.

Dealing with escalating processes of racialization is a key challenge in the twenty-first century. A vision of the future is in sight—the total

dismantling of racism—through the mobilization of a series of global transformations in the way the world works. Yet, we are beset on all sides as racism ‘surges around us’ (Balibar 2010). Regimes across the world live in a perpetual state of denial. Racism is not here these states claim, from China to the Russian Federation (Law 2010, 2012; Zakharov 2023), across the Caribbean (Tate and Law 2015), the Mediterranean (Law et al. 2014), and from the Baltic to Central Asia (Zakharov and Law 2017; Law and Zakharov 2019). Racism is over there, somewhere else, or just simply over. Despite the advances that have been made and the dangers of overstating historical optimism, for many, racism is incomprehensible. There is a chronic crisis in grasping how this social force works in the world today. This book investigates the ways in which this global crisis has played out and what can be done. It provides a cogent analysis of deracialization and explores its value and applicability in the world today. Deracialization is the undoing of racism, the root and branch dismantling of the integral ways in which race has been central to both the making of the modern nation-states and their conceptual, philosophical, and material foundations and the contemporary operation and management of those states (as outlined by Goldberg 2002). It is not about the silencing of race as the process of deracialization requires positions of racial distinction, racial specification, and racial explication. It has been used to argue for putting race to one side, refusing to recognize and acknowledge racial distinctions, racial theories, and racist arguments, and for the construction of a non-racial humanism and allied political projects, but in our view, this is mistaken. Not talking about racism does not dismantle racism.

Putting a central focus on being explicit about the ways in which racism operates is at the core of deracialization. Recognition, truth, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the deep core of racism in states around the world today is the first step to deracialization. Achieving even that has been impossible in many nations where denial, rejection, and obfuscation have won out. Deracialization is understood as the act of dissolving the categories of ‘race’ and their mobilizations. This is a process whereby the focus of action is on facilitating the reduction of racial categorization and associated policies and practices. While there have been various decolonial movements (focusing on the production of knowledge, as well as state practices) this is insufficient to address the problem on a global scale

as not all areas experiencing racialization have witnessed colonialism or in particular the sorts of 'western' imperialist colonialism decolonial movements have focused upon. Contemporary understanding of global racialization processes is patchy and uneven with no systematic robust evidence base, no systematic international monitoring, and incomplete theorization. Principles and practices in relation to deracialization have yet to be specified and theorized. This book will provide improved theorization and production of new substantive evidence, from the four case study contexts, in relation to these two sets of debates and issues.

The book provides new substantive evidence on the nature and extent of national projects and interventions to challenge racism across four varieties of modernity, Sweden, South Africa, Brazil, and the UK, drawing on over seventy interviews with leading institutional and community actors. We have chosen these four contexts as they provide examples of some of the main ways in which national approaches to racism have developed. Firstly, where national strategies and associated agencies have emerged in a context where public discourse discourages any attempt to define inequality along racial lines and where a range of racial reforms have been developed largely in response to the increasingly visible *Movimento Negro* (Brazil). Secondly, where national strategies and associated agencies have emerged from official commitment to racial equality and to promoting Black advancement, individually and collectively at the same time as the institutionalization of nonracialism (South Africa). Thirdly, where national strategies and associated agencies have emerged in the context of a long-standing political and policy debate over racialization and where there has been a gradual absorption of the struggle against racism into a more generalized antipathy toward discriminations at a time when racial discourse and associated hatred is escalating (UK). Lastly, where national strategies and associated agencies have emerged in a context of new and escalating political and policy debates over racialization at a time when Afrophobia, antisemitism, anti-Gypsyism, and Islamophobia are increasing (Sweden). Principles and practices in relation to deracialization have yet to be specified and theorized. Cross-national analysis of these contexts has never been carried out and this book will provide a foundational set of fresh, new insights to inform global, national, and local approaches to countering racism in the twenty-first century.



# 2

## South Africa and the Struggle for Racial Equality: Debating Deracialization, Non-racialism, Decolonization, and Africanization

### Introduction

This chapter draws on interviews conducted in 2018–2019 in South Africa with research participants who were activists and organic intellectuals (Hall 1992) in the anti-apartheid era, post-1994 ‘Born-frees’ involved in student and community activism on decolonization and Africanization, academic anti-racist activists, and those who work within the human rights sector whether in NGOs or the state. It also draws on a literature review of key events from 2019 to 2021. White supremacy and anti-Black racism still texture South African life even within post-apartheid times as we see in the following research participants’ views:

What is racism in a settler-colonial context like South Africa where the poor continue to be black and the rich continue to be white? What is racism in a country that has a history of colonialism, also apartheid—a different form of colonialism? I think where commissions start their work is 1994. Anything before that, which actually are the driving events of the 1994 moment are discarded, and then you get a warped understanding of

what racism is, because everyone believes in this non-racialism and rainbowish notions of South Africa today. (Dayile 2019, Interview)<sup>1</sup>

In post-apartheid South Africa it's the continued delusion of white superiority that's very important for people to hold onto because it's had very real material benefits in South Africa to be identified as white, to be included in whiteness so that they can share in those material benefits. (van der Westhuizen 2019, Interview)<sup>2</sup>

Racism in South Africa is the belief that white people are superior to Black people. It changed after apartheid from white terror to white hegemony. Racism is structural, it's about institutionalized forms of discrimination, dehumanization, forced assimilation, and some people are still living on the underside of the society. Therefore, a Black government can perpetuate racism. (Madlingozi 2019, Interview)<sup>3</sup>

The extracts above on the topic of racism illustrate the racial divide dominating South African politics, that between white minority economic privilege and Black majority economic disadvantage. They remind us of South Africa's white settler colonial past which continues to influence the contemporary life of anti-Black institutional racism in the majority Black state. They tell us about the importance of looking to history for lessons on the present and future as anti-Black racism did not begin in 1994, nor did it end with South African democracy. Anti-Black racism continues to dehumanize because its institutionalization and long-term psychic/economic/political/social life mean that post-1994 Black governments perpetuate it because of continuing coloniality (Kelly 2000). Coloniality and anti-Black racism recreate a state against itself and its majority constituents.

Racism structures South African life so that the 'non-racialism and rainbowish notions of South Africa today' are inactive socially and politically and continually deactivated through institutional inertia.

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<sup>1</sup> Azola Dayile, Media Monitoring Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Christi van der Westhuizen, Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD), Nelson Mandela University (NMU).

<sup>3</sup> Tshepo Madlingozi Centre for Human Rights, Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution.



Non-racialism and the 'rainbow nation' are non-performatives (Ahmed 2006) because of the pre-1994 events which mean that there is still a pervasive delusion about and institutional activation of white supremacy. Although memories of apartheid might fade because of the discourse of non-racialism channeled through rainbowism and the Truth and Reconciliation processes, anti-Black racism is viral because the nation continues to be divided on racial lines. Apartheid legislation has been done away with, but the responsibility for the emergence of the 'rainbow nation' and reconciliation became Black responsibilities 'as a way of managing Black anger' while there is still 'no social cohesion and no change in terms of race relations' (Fatyela 2018, Interview).<sup>4</sup> Lack of social cohesion and white privilege mean that 'racism is inevitable. You know, to racialize and to see race and to be very aware of it especially in our context, with our history, is very present. It's not something that goes away not even with training or anything like that' (Van Reenen 2018, Interview).<sup>5</sup> Apartheid also produced race-scapes which continue 'in infrastructure and architecture that reinforce white privileged racialized realities, or that reinforce exclusion which is racialized within the poorer facilities of township spaces' (Mtimka 2019, Interview).<sup>6</sup>

As a concept, politics, worldview, and anti-racist strategy, deracialization is known/unknown, critiqued/valorized depending on political generation in terms of involvement in anti-apartheid struggle, decolonization, and Africanization movements. This chapter looks first at the Black-generated discourses on non-racialism which emerged from anti-racist, anti-colonial activism from the 1930s to the twenty-first century. It then turns to the current failings of state apparatuses, legislation, and initiatives to stem the tide of anti-Black racism, before focusing on what contemporary ideas on re-racialization and social justice transformation within the discourses and politics of Africanization, decolonization, and twenty-first century non-racialism can tell us about the (im)possibility of deracialization in South Africa. It shows that South African approaches to Black liberation and anti-racism, variously termed non-racialism, decolonization, and Africanization drawing on Steve Biko's Black Consciousness,

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<sup>4</sup> Awetu Fatyela, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) student activist.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Dionne Van Reenen, University of the Free State.

<sup>6</sup> Ongama Mtimka, Lawula Group.

are intertwined and critiqued. However, deracialization as a concept and politics has limited resonance today, perhaps because of its links to the apartheid state. Indeed, for Professor Nomalanga Mkhize (2019, Interview),<sup>7</sup> ‘South Africa has always been deracialized because you cannot run a majority population without its own people. Deracialization was started in the corporate sector by PW Botha. A lot of people that ascended into positions of power in these companies, post-94, were people who had been there in the 80s under apartheid. So deracialization is the same as the rainbow nation’. Nonetheless, Black liberation through anti-racism recognized by a variety of reparations approaches continues to be an important call within Black political, communal, and social life in South Africa. Let us turn to Black organic intellectuals’ development of the philosophy, politics, and practice of nonracialism in 1900s Cape Town.

## **Non-racialism: From 1930s’ Cape Town to Twenty-First-Century South Africa**

The early African National Congress (ANC) was established in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC). It established non-tribalism as a formative value for the Black oppressed and a counter-discourse to colonialism around which a broad constituency of South Africans could form a unified political movement (Suttner 2010; Manganyi 2019). In 1937, Cape Town organic intellectual activists established the New Era Fellowship (NEF), disrupting ideologies of inherent Black inferiority and white superiority. They rejected colonialism, saw race as a fallacy, and racialized hierarchies as oppressive. NEF study circles catalyzed new political formations, civil society, and social organizations (Soudein 2019:7).

NEF developed an understanding of white racial hegemony as a political and ideological project and illustrated how race-thinking results in mental enslavement. Race as false, racial oppression and white supremacy, and the psychic damage of anti-Black racism, formed the basis of their thinking around non-racialism as necessary for liberating South

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<sup>7</sup> Professor Nomalanga Mkhize, NMU.

Africa from apartheid. The NEF's aim was to use education in the 1940s and 1950s to end the mental enslavement of racially oppressed peoples, producing liberated humans. These new, modern citizens of South Africa would be constructed through the knowledge work of Cape Town's teachers (Soudein 2018, Interview). For the NEF, understanding non-racialism was important for understanding colonialism and apartheid through the process of re-education which countered existing knowledge streamed through white supremacy, a South African society structured through racial dominance, and institutionalized racism. Thus, 'non-racialism in the NEF built a counter-totalising world view in opposition to domination beginning from the "non-sense" of race' (Soudein 2019:18).

While aware of the effect race had on society, by the 1950s they ceased referring to themselves in existing racial terms—'Blacks', 'Coloreds', and 'whites'. As such, they were 'purposefully "post-racial" [because] producing a "non-racial" person was their goal' (Soudein 2019:167). However, NEF had a blind spot in terms of patriarchy, Africanness, and class, within its focus on the 'unconditional unity of the human race' (Soudein 2019:8). NEF ceased to exist in 1960, but its impact remained in the 'non-racialism' project being institutionalized today, for example, in the Centre for the Advancement of Non-racialism and Democracy (CANRAD) at Nelson Mandela University (NMU). Non-racialism also continues to have twenty-first-century currency as a political project carried in 'rainbowism' and in the political orientation and philosophies of former anti-apartheid activists.

The Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) was NEF's sister organization. For Crain Soudein (2018, Interview) both organic intellectual organizations were developing 'Southern Theory'. The NEUM was, 'the first organization to develop a political programme in the country, that's in '43 called the "10-Point Programme". The "Freedom Charter" came 10 years later in 1955. The NEUM became the New Unity Movement between '83 and '85 and now it is just referred to as the "Unity Movement". NEF intellectuals influenced thinking on Robben Island and so the ANC emerged from the island and at least on the surface embraced non-racialism as a concept' (Zinn 2018, Interview).<sup>8</sup> The NEF's and NEUM's

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Zinn, Director, CANRAD, NMU.

non-racialism was also about ‘non-collaboration with apartheid, [theirs was an] anti-imperialist and anti-racist position. It’s the whole question of one nation because the apartheid government was trying to divide us into different nations, different ethnic groups’ (Zinn 2018, Interview).

Unity against white supremacy and colonialism was central to the end of apartheid through the work of the Unity Movement. Non-racialism was taken into the Republic’s Constitution by the ANC and was explicitly named as such through ‘the rainbow nation’ metaphor. As a metaphor, ‘the rainbow nation’ shouldn’t be seen ‘as a description of what was happening on the ground, [but] as the elevation of what was possible, if we work really very hard to come together as people. And I think that aspirational notion of the rainbow nation still appeals, despite having a very fractured nation’ (Jansen 2019, Interview).<sup>9</sup>

In post-Apartheid South Africa, the discourses of modern racialization were pulled together under the umbrella term ‘Rainbow Nation’, coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to engender transracial unity as a South African nation despite diversity, and its racially fractured and apartheid past. After South Africa’s first democratic election in 1994, former President Nelson Mandela elaborated on the Rainbow Nation concept as a non-racialism approach to a nation in which all belonged. He said, ‘Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld—a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world’ (Mandela 1994). Mandela is also ‘quoted as saying, “We have no whites, we have no Blacks. We only have South Africans”’ (Suttner 2010: 523).

This ‘out of many one’ sentiment resonates with other British colonies on independence, which also had multi-racial societies formed through colonialism, Indigenous dispossession, enslavement, and indentureship, fractured by white hegemony and racial inequality (Tate and Law 2015). South Africa’s fair democracy was stillborn even though ‘the country did need a way to describe itself other than the apartheid state. So, in that sense, it’s a useful kind of framing for, helping people move their minds into a very different, almost a psycho-social mind space and life but I

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<sup>9</sup> Professor Jonathan Jansen, University of Stellenbosch, South African Institute of Race Relations, South African Academy of Science.

think it's a very empty vacuum kind of idea. But in terms of just helping to constitute a different imagination, it's a very evocative description of the alternative to apartheid' (Soudein 2018, Interview).<sup>10</sup> The rainbow nation reproduces the nation as psychically different from apartheid's racial categories but that is the extent of the change that it has engendered.

Unlike the NEF's non-racialism, rainbowism is embedded within apartheid's idea that identities can only be seen in racial terms, individuals then position themselves in 'racial inevitability', and 'race has been manipulated to function as the total explanation' for societal structuration, inequalities, and the way the world is (Soudein 2019:10–11). Rainbowism was repeatedly critiqued by participants as a failure, a metaphor, a national anti-racist strategy, and a reflection of 'how people engage interpersonally and as an integrative form' (Soudein 2018, Interview). It was seen to have failed because of existing racialized 'contestations on histories, presents, and futures', in a situation where reconciliation, social cohesion, and new social identities are needed within 'equalized distributive mechanisms of the state' (Keet 2019, Interview).<sup>11</sup> These contestations around rainbowism's failures have been inherited by the 'Born Frees', that is, those born after 1994. 'Born Frees' did not experience the hardships of apartheid but are party to a different set of challenges and experiences borne by rainbowism. While freely interacting with other racialized groups, they are still faced with its legacy of race-scapes and the lack of social mobility that comes with poor education, unemployment, and transgenerational poverty.

Based on its newly ratified Constitution, in 1996 South Africa's government touted ideals of freedom and liberty for all South Africans. For these to be implemented there were new school curricula aimed at promoting democratic and constitutionally based values. The Born Frees were supposed to be the embodiment of South Africa's newfound democracy. However, survey data points to post-apartheid generations being much less committed to rainbowism or non-racialism than preceding generations (Mattes 2012). This results from the continuing racialized

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<sup>10</sup> Professor Crain Soudein, Chief Executive Officer, Human Sciences Research Council.

<sup>11</sup> Professor André Keet, Chair Ministerial Oversight Committee on Transformation in South African Universities, Director CriSHET, NMU.

inequality in contemporary South African society in which ‘the colour of privilege and wealth continues to be white’ (Mzinelli 2018, Interview).<sup>12</sup>

By 2011, census figures showed that the Born Frees accounted for approximately 40% of the total population, a post-apartheid generation of citizens. Demographic change and the transformation in the political system in 1994 promised future renewed citizenship because of a generation with the values of a ‘new’ South African citizen. These newly emerged values were to have re-educated a society on democratic social norms, but civil liberties, political freedom, and many forms of democratic participation did not flow organically from legislation. The difference in the content, quality, and quantity of education also created a new experience for Black South Africans, resulting in higher levels of complexity regarding their human rights as citizens. Thus, the Born Frees envisage issues differently from earlier generations (Mabry 2013) as shown in critiques by student activists in the decolonization movement.

These activists have developed an evolving critique of rainbowism’s non-racialism as ‘a way of pacifying people making them not think critically about the kind of society that we want’ (Fatyela 2018, Interview). They have also re-racialized South Africa’s political life based on Black experience of racialized disadvantage and white supremacy even while using the NEF’s non-racialism idea that ‘we are all human beings. Race biologically doesn’t exist even though it has been elevated to a fictitious truth and has become an ordering principle in social, political and economic life which determines how we live as people. It exists and it keeps on shaping our lives as people. How one would turn out to be is fundamentally influenced from the racial background that they come from’ (Bizani 2019, Interview).<sup>13</sup> The politics of non-racialism contained in rainbowism has failed in South Africa because of continuing white supremacy and Black disadvantage. They produce ‘tensions along racial lines’ so even if non-racialism is believed in as ‘an end’, continuing racial disadvantage means that ‘we [cannot] turn a blind eye to what is happening now and how our lives are shaped and influenced by these social constructs such as race’ (Bizani 2019, Interview). Indeed, a Black

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<sup>12</sup> Pedro Mzinelli, ANC student activist.

<sup>13</sup> Aphiwe Bizani, activist.