

# Racism

By Tembile Ndabeni

The past and the present respectively bears evidence of racism Africans suffered in their country and abroad. Slaves were not only Africans, but the majority of slaves were. As a result many Africans abroad cannot be exactly sure which part of Africa they come from.

Slavery is degrading and painful because it is one of the most evil stages of development in human history, followed by feudalism and capitalism.

Whites were masters to the natives regardless of their status and that inculcated a master race mentality. The end of colonialism was not the end of racism. This manifests itself in many ways, in sport for example.

Before the start of Euro 2012 racism towards Blacks was anticipated. Bananas were thrown at Balotelli in a bar in Rome. He expected offensive racist gestures; as a result he said, "I will go to prison because I will kill him" (*Sunday Times*, 3 June, 2012).

In South Africa initially racism was more about Whites discriminating against Blacks but presently Black population groups discriminate against each other. Africans are still victims, but now of Black on Black racism with the 'K-word' used. One of the worst scenarios is when people are discriminated on their deathbeds. In 1996 my son, six years old then, was racially discriminated against on his deathbed by Coloured nurses at Red Cross Hospital. This happened after the birth of a supposedly rainbow nation and the year of the birth of our new constitution. These are people who smile in front of Mandela. My son told me they would stop when he threatened to tell the doctor, a White person.

This also happened to me when I was in Kuils River Hospital in 2005. The Coloured patients with minor injuries got better treatment. Not all nurses were racists but the majority were. Like my son, I was treated better by a white person than my fellow black ones, Coloureds.

Racism is a thing of the past to those who are not affected. It is the Africans who always compromise while the others do not. Daniel, Habib and Southall (2003:112) write "Such racial fault lines have also played themselves in the schools and in the criminal justice system. In Vryburg in the mid-1990s, a black high school student, Andrew Babeile, was sentenced to a prison term for stabbing a white schoolmate whom he argued was being racist towards him. Yet when white school boys at Bryanston High School attacked a black fellow pupil and damaged his eye, they were simply suspended and no charges were laid against them."

There were many more racial incidents cited by the above-mentioned writers from the same book. For example, "... a white farmer who shot and killed a black baby on his mother's back because they were trespassing on his property, the white man who pulled a black man to death tied to the back of a van; and the group of Afrikaner right wingers belonging to an organisation known as the *Boeremag* were arrested for planting a series of bombs that rocked Soweto, killing one individual and disrupting public transportation in the township."

There are many more like "Racist spoof anthem in KFC ruffles feathers". A derogatory reference to Mandela is derogatory to the entire

nation especially Africans. A person who does not respect Mandela will respect no other African. The worst is disrespecting and undermining the national anthem. According to a report in the *Cape Times* (June 28, 2012) the national anthem, was played in a popular restaurant, in a way that was profane, racist and vulgar. At the same time the icon of our struggle and the world, Nelson Mandela, was treated with disrespect. The sad thing is how Mandela feels about every South African. Duke (2003:277) writes what Mandela said:

"Every day I go to bed feeling strong like a young man of twenty because I can see this rainbow rising in front of my eyes and that is what inspires me. As far as I'm concerned, there is no coloured, there is no Indian, there is no white person. There are only human beings, all of whom I love".

After two days at the national social cohesion summit, the DA MP and arts and culture spokesperson said people of South Africa need a "big hug" (*Cape Argus*, 6 July, 2012). I disagree because even hypocrites can give hugs. Something must be done. There should not be a people who suffer racism from slavery until now.

After 1994 South Africa was hailed as the rainbow nation. Under the title "Laying ghosts to rest: The dilemmas of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission" quoting Bishop Tutu, Ramphela (2008:46) writes "We are charged to unearth the truth about our dark past, to lay the ghosts of that past so that they will not return to haunt us".

It looks like ghosts were not really buried but hidden; this is why they are coming out now. To an ordinary African the 'k-word' is not strange. We are sitting on a time bomb because nobody will tolerate suffering from racism as suffered by their forbears. Instead of being ashamed of their forbears' action, the perpetrators are continuing from where they left off. It is the mind-set of the perpetrators that needs to change first and then hugs follow. Survivors must not tolerate something that is not natural. Wakeup South Africa before it is too late! ■

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