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**Social Construction of Race
and Citizenship in South Africa**

Ben Magubane



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Social Construction of Race and Citizenship in South Africa

Ben Magubane

Paper prepared for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)
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“Africa is in general a closed land, and it maintains this fundamental character. It is characteristic of the blacks that their consciousness has not yet even arrived at the intuition of any objectivity, as for example, of God or the law, in which humanity relates to the world and intuits its essence. ...He [the black person] is a human being in the rough.” (Hegel 1830, 1975:176-7)

“The mind of man is capable of anything – because everything is in it, all the past as well as the present.” (Joseph Conrad.)

Historical Antecedents¹:

The use of “race” and “racism” has a long and ugly history. Hegel provides a logical point of departure. He reminds us that attempts to naturalize inequalities in order to justify slavery and oppression of Africans was made in the crudest terms eminent European philosophers could think of. In the construction of Africa as a Dark Continent and the African as ‘human being in the rough’, a lot was at stake. In 1517 Las Casas, the Spanish theologian feeling guilty about the certain destruction of indigenous Americans, (who were being forced to work in the mines and plantations), recommended Africans to be enslaved because they were plentiful and stronger. Since then, European Christianity, philosophy, biology and other social sciences, to justify the barbarism of slavery, orchestrated contempt and sub-humanity of the African, so much so that today their degradation have become accepted as well deserved.

Whilst the focus of this paper is on South Africa, it is my belief that to understand the essence and nature of racism, is useless, at least to me to focus exclusively on developments in any particular European country. Racism is inseparable from the advent of what Cornel West (1993:18), calls the Age of Europe. White supremacy and racism are but expressions of measures European adventurers and colonizers deemed necessary to colonize, expropriate and exploit and rule colonized peoples. In the colonies the structural injustices of foreign domination produced a cultural system of beliefs and images that inflicts ‘ontological wounds’ on colonized humanity, wherever they are in the ‘white’ world. It attacks their intelligence, ability, beauty, and character in subtle and not so subtle ways (cf .West: Ibid.).

Racism is not simply a discourse, but a practice which produces certain knowledge of the colonized, and indeed, exploited, that makes the practice of domination, restructuring, and having an authority on the colonized natural. And effective political ideas like racism and white

¹ A methodological note; In this essay I allow certain chosen text to define the essence and practice of white supremacy and its ideology of racism.

supremacy², according to Said, (1979), need to be examined historically in two ways: (1) *genealogically*, in order that their provenance, their kinship and assent, their affiliation both with other ideas and with political institutions may be demonstrated, (2) as practical *accumulation* (of power, land, ideological legitimacy) and negation of others, and their ideas of legitimacy? Although racism cannot be simply correlated with the process of *material* exploitation, the discourse produces forms of knowledge which are of great utility in justifying the degradation of the exploited. It serves to define the superior whilst at the same time serving to regulate the inferior and putting them in their proverbial place.

From the vast literature on this subject, I have selected two writers who have broached the subject of Europe's relations with its others – Adam Smith and Karl Mark. In 1776, Smith, described two events that he said “were the greatest and most important in the history of mankind: the discovery of America, and the passage to the east Indies by way of the Cape of Good Hope”. Asking, “What benefits, or what misfortune to mankind my hereafter result from these great events,” he lamented that “no human wisdom can foresee.” But it was possible even in 1776 for Smith, to foresee that “the savage injustice of Europeans” towards those who were in the process of being colonized would “render an event, which ought to have been beneficial to all, ruinous and destructive to several of those unfortunate countries.”

Almost a hundred years later, Marx, (1867), wrote about how the “discovery of gold and silver in America,” was a disaster for the colonized peoples everywhere. It led “to their extirpation, enslavement and entombment in the mines. For India it led to its conquest and plunder, and Africa was converted into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins.” These tragedies, “characterized the rosy dawn of capitalist production.” Marx (1976.:928), also reminds us that ‘while the cotton industry introduced child slavery in England, in the United States it gave the impulse for the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery’ into a system of commercial exploitation’. Indeed, he says, “the veiled slavery of the wage labourers in Europe needed for its pedestal the unqualified slavery of the New World.”

Marx depicts the origin of European capitalism as “written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire,” and the Western world exploitation of the rest of the globe, provides the appropriate historical context for understanding modern Western racism. If we are honest, we have to acknowledge that it is a horrendous story, and in it “the past weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living” (ibid.).

Using Smith and Marx as a point of departure, the term “race” and its ideology of “racism” should be understood, is a shorthand for inhuman social practices, exploitative and oppressive relations that brutalize, degrade and reduce people who are colonized and oppressed to less than human status. It is both a specific term, as in dehumanizing of a whole people, and a global social practice, i. e., elevating Europeans and/ or white people into ‘lords of humanity’. It also refers to direct actions, say murder and torture, and structural relations, such as exploitation and oppression of those whose means of subsistence have been forcibly usurped. Exploitation refers to the unconscionable extortion of some ones labour after they have been dispossessed of their means of livelihood or means of subsistence. Racism absolved the perpetrators of institutionalized injustices by blaming the victims. Race is the mask of class in the final analysis.

During the Enlightenment era, arm-chair philosophers, from Locke, Hume, Kant, etc. had made it a habit to speculate about the inferiority of Africans and Asians, which they

² I have substituted white supremacy for orientalism.

attributed, among other things, to biology, climate, despotic governments and of course to ignorance of Christian virtues. Indeed, the genealogy of the use of racial theory illustrate how in order to become the ruling theory of bourgeois civilization, it had to shed its feudal trappings and put on the costume and mask of the very latest philosophical and “scientific thinking.” “This change involved more than merely a change of dress. The later was only a reflection of a change in the decisive class character of the new racial theory. Even in its most modern form certainly, it was still a pseudo-biological defense of class privileges. But now the issue was no longer merely that of the historical nobility – as was the case with Gobineau. It concerned, on the one hand, the privileges of European races who were now exploited all so-called non-White races.” (Lukacs 1962:682)

The Dutch and the Khoisan:

In 1652, the Dutch first incorporated the Cape into the evolving world capitalist economy. The ideas of Enlightenment philosophers about the *other* were part and parcel of their ideological arsenal and informed their attitudes towards the San and the Khoi. The process had a material base: it was shaped by the strategic imperatives of developing capitalist economy and the savage injustice they would inflict on indigenous peoples. The Dutch East India Company (DEIC), itself was a parastatal multi-national, commercial slaving, “octopus” with international tentacles. The first settlers reflected this. They included Hollanders, Germans, Flemings, Poles, and Portuguese, who are described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as having been “for the most part people of low station and indifferent character, with a small number of higher class, from whom was selected a Council to assist the Governor.” (Quoted Olivier 1927;8)

There is a striking coincidence, according to Lord Olivier (1927:11) in the foundations of the slave civilizations of the United States and South Africa: both were laid by joint stock capitalist companies who provided the slaves for their colonists. In a slave owning white settler colony, freedom is defined by slavery of the other. The use of slaves in the process of colonization was a calculated strategy to ensure a captive labour force to reap high profits, on territory appropriated without regard to any rights of indigenous owners. Any resistance to this ‘savage injustice’ was dealt with as treachery, justifying extermination.

The career of Jan Van Riebeeck, (who headed the first Dutch colonizing expedition of the Cape), is informative. He had served the DEIC in Java, Sumatra, China and Japan from 1639 to 1649, when he was recalled and fined for trading on his private account in Batavia. Following his suspension, he went to Brazil, the West Indies and Greenland. He used his 10 year experience as a trafficker and corrupter in Tonkin, China and Nagasaki, Japan, to build up a DEIC trading post and slave colony in the Cape (CF. Jaffe 1994:380).

Van Riebeck discourse on the indigenous peoples of the Cape – the San- Khoi, is contemptuous. It put them outside the pale of humanity. Even before he was based in the Cape, he had warned the VOC in a memo, that he found the San-Khoi to be dangerous savages. “They are by no means to be trusted, being a brutal people living without conscience” (C. Louis Leipoldt 1936: 90). In various entries in his *Diary*, Van Riebeck, referred to the San-Khoi as “dull, stupid, and “odorous” and as “black stinking dogs.” (Ibid.:67) Wouter Schouten viewed the Khoi as heathen and Biblical descendants of Ham. “[A]lthough descended from our father *Adam*,” he wrote, “[they] yet show so little of humanity that truly they more resemble the unreasonable beasts than man... having no knowledge of God nor of what leads to salvation. Miserable folk, how lamentable is your pitiful condition! And Oh Christians, how blessed is ours!” (Cited Elphick 1977:195). The Khoi language was compared to the ‘cackling of geese or clucking hens’.

This collective and oft-repeated identification of Khoikhoi with the beasts, constitute an “elementary ethnology,” and was to have a sinister influence on the armchair philosophers. According to Mostert (1992:107),

It was gross and intemperate as any opinion held by one body of peoples against another. These ideas were formulated on the basis of accounts of travelers who were happy to use Khoikhoi as the link between man and animals in the Great Chain of Being. Indeed, these ideas led to a flow of racial abuse that has no equal in literature. It forms, a litany of declared revulsion that is quite remarkable for its continuity and unanimity, as much as for its idiom. It was the first obvious and extensive exercise by Europeans of a belief in the sub-strata within humanity: lesser species; and the word Hottentot would long be used as a synonym for brute or boor in many Western European languages. Its transferred value in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* remains: ‘a person of inferior intellect and culture.

In 1693 John Ovington, Master of the East Indiaman *Benjamin* set down with vitriolic emphasis a description of the Khoikhoi that might very well be seen as a consensus of those who called at the Cape: “Of all people”, he said, “they are the most bestial and sordid. They are the very reverse of human kind. So that if there’s any medium between a rational animal and a beast, the Hottentot lays the fairest claim for that species.” (Quoted Ibid.)

The broad social consequences of these racist beliefs are well known, terrible injustice and genocide against both the San and Khoikhoi. Even if granted human status, the San, mode of subsistence made it impossible for Van Reibeck to enslave or deprive of the means of subsistence. Thus, like the Tasmanians they became victims of the most successful act of genocide. Thomas Pringle (1966:226), who arrived with the 1820 British settlers, has left us this memorable account of one of the commando raids organized to hunt and kill the San. He says it is based on an interview with one of the Boer farmers who took part in the raid.

‘God forbid that I should deny we have much to answer for!’ he claimed. ‘I still often shudder, when I think of one of the first scenes of the kind, which I was obliged to witness in my youth, when I commenced my burgher service . . . , We had surprised and destroyed a considerable kraal of Bosjesmen. When the firing ceased, five women were still found living. The lives of these, after a long discussion, it was resolved to spare, because one farmer wanted a servant for this purpose and another for that. The unfortunate wretches were ordered to march in front of the commando; but it was soon found that they impeded our progress—not being able to proceed fast enough. They were, therefore, ordered to be shot. The helpless victims, perceiving what was intended, sprung to us, and clung so firmly to some of the party, that it was for some time impossible to shoot them without hazarding the lives of those they held fast. Four of them were at length dispatched; but the fifth could not by any means be torn from one of our comrades, whom she had grasped in her agony; and his entreaties to be allowed to take the women home were at last complied with. She went with her preserver, served him long and faithfully, and, I believe, died in the family.—May God forgive the land.

Pringle reveals the colonizer’s mentality and will to exterminate those whose lands they wanted to settle. By a strategy called Salami tactic, in 1657 some servants of the DEIC had occupied Khoi-San land in what is now Rondebosch. By 1679 they had reached the Hottentots-

Holland, off False Bay and Stellenbosch, by 1688 Paarl, along the Berg River, and in 1688 the French Huguenots, fleeing from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were brought to the Cape. Thus began a new campaign of dispossession and the harnessing of the dispossessed into serfs and slaves in the vineyards that still goes on even today.

The Advent of the British;

If events in England, America, Ireland and India after 1780, are taken into account, the aims and objectives of the Second British Empire emerge very clearly. The expansion was an answer to the loss of American colonies, but it seemed to gain a new momentum with the emergence of revolutionary France and domestic disorders caused by the Industrial Revolution. As early 1785 the Pitt government³ was looking for a settlement of its convicts on its "Caffre Coast". Shaw (1966:47-8) summarizes the arguments for the colonization of the Cape as follows:

The 'Caffre Coast' was obviously important for the route to India where the great expansion of English interests was beginning. Though the Cape itself produce no shipbuilding materials, it had a good base nearby for repairs, victualing and water would be a great asset. 'The Power possessing the Cape of Good Hope has the key to and from the East Indies'. Though any new settlement would incur 'great losses' in its early days, and even 'total Ruin' to some, this one would have 'great advantages' in the long run. Transported criminals could provide its labour force. The surrounding savage Kaffirs would prevent their escape, but they would be spared the horrors of the fever-stricken West Coasts, and England would avoid 'those daily Executions so shocking to Humanity'. If established, 'a settlement on the Caffree Coast would be of the most important consequence to Britain and the India Company... We should in a few Years derive every advantage from a Settlement here that the Dutch have from the Cape... We have lost America, and a halfway house would secure India, and an Empire to Britain.'

In 1809, explaining further the reasons why the Cape should be usurped from the Dutch Lord Caledon the first the governor of the new Colony wrote; "The true value of this colony is its being considered an outpost subservient to the protecting and security of our East Indian possessions" (Quoted James, 1994:251). From that time on, he goes on:

The strategic value of the Cape remained unaltered for the next hundred years. In the early 1900s, Admiral Lord Fisher, the First Sea Lord, designated Cape Town, along with Singapore, Alexandria, Gibraltar and Dover as one of the 'Five strategic keys [which] lock up the world. In 1887, nearly twenty years after the opening of the Suez Canal, Cape Town was chosen as the principle staging post for reinforcements bound for India in the event of a war with Russia. At that

³ 'For one man in William Pitt's government, his Minister of War, Henry Dundas', writes Mostert (1992:254), 'possession of the Cape of Good Hope by Britain was an obsession, as great as any strategy his office grappled with in the renewed war with France, and arguably the greatest. It was a preoccupation that entered office with him in 1784, and remained one of his highest priorities through all the difficult years he was there until 1804. The failure to take the Cape in 1781 led Dundas into a constant, nervous diplomatic worrying over the possibility of another French occupation, the risk of which, through the 1780s and into the 1790s, grew steadily more serious in its likely consequences for Britain'. He told the British Parliament in 1796: 'I would be glad to see the minister who should dare to give up the Cape of Good Hope on any account'. (258)

time the Cape was guarded by 4,200 regular troops, supported by 3,000 local volunteers. /If Britain was to rule the waves, Britain had to keep the Cape. (Ibid.)

In 1819 Britain appeared to be haunted by the specter that had haunted Bacon in 1606. The country appeared to be on the verge of the sort of upheaval that had swept over France in 1789. A Tory magistrate and Member of Parliament declared that disaffection in Lancashire had become ‘open hostility, not only to the government but to the higher classes, whose landed property is ... actually parceled out for future distribution’. (Quoted Mostert 1992:519)

‘Lord Liverpool’s government, struggling to hold itself together in the face of nation wide radical discontent that, one way or another, affected all classes, was pleased to encourage the export of at least some portion of the disaffected populace to new worlds’. (Ibid.) In 1819 the Earl Balhurst, under heavy pressure to resolve the class contradictions by providing assisted passage to the surplus population to North America, opted to deflect some of the traffic to the Cape Colony. *The Times*, (18.06.1819), supported the decision. After expressing some reservation that ‘the stream of emigration from the United Kingdom’ had taken ‘a westerly course’ to the United States’, the natural advantage of North America were far from perfect from presenting to the British emigrants the best resources.’ On the other hand,

Southern Africa has been often pointed out as the most precious and magnificent object of our colonial policy, and the most fruitful field of adventure for our emigrant population. ... *Our noble station at the Cape of Good Hope has the finest soil and climate in the world*; it is the centre of both hemispheres – it commands the commerce of the globe . . . It is the natural key to India, the bridge of America . . . Make the Cape a free part for the nations of Europe, and we banish North America from the Indian seas; carry out as settlers all the families who have not bread or labour here, and we lay for posterity another England (*My Italics*)

The laudatory comments of *The Times* were followed by even more extravagant claims concerning the potential of South Africa. On such ground as these, on the 12 July 1819 Parliament voted £50,000 for assisted passage to the Cape. Some 90,000 applicants, from all walks of life were received but only 5,000 were accepted. They came practically from every part of the United Kingdom, including Ireland and Scotland. One unusual feature of the exodus was that it took a slice section of early nineteenth-century British society, in all its layered complexity, from indigent to gentry, and set it afloat southward, as though Britain was set on planting a wholly rounded microcosmic representation of itself abroad. (Ibid.:520)

British imperial zeal in South Africa was boundless, their vision huge, and the ground work was soon laid for savage conquest. Pringle (1835:479), envisioned a grand empire ‘embracing Southern Africa from Kasai and Gareep to Mozambique and Cape Negro – and to which, per adventure, in after days, even the equator shall prove no ultimate limit’. He urged ‘Let us open a new and nobler career of conquest. ‘Let us subdue Savage Africa by justice, by kindness, by the talisman of Christian truth’. That was the voice of a so-called humanitarian. How does one explain the sentiments expressed by Pringle in this passage? Is it just another act of self-deception or ideological fantasy of a humanitarian imperialist, who thought that imperialism could be humane? The use of the phrase ‘talisman of Christian truth’ is, in the light of the role of the Christian missionaries in legitimating the Second British Empire interesting.

The introduction of British settlers to the Cape soon affected every aspect of life in the colony. More than anything, it meant the opening up of a new era of conquest and dispossession in the entire sub-continent. It was clear in 1806, that this new era belonged to the world system much more unified and purposeful than that to which the Dutch East India Company had belonged. Britain came to the Cape, writes Jaffe (1994:55) riding high on the wave of an Industrial Revolution stoked by fires of colonial cotton plantations in America, plantation slave labour in the Caribbean's and the destruction of the caste and Moslem industries of India. The two-front class-mode war opened by Britain in 1806 against slaves and communalism had behind it the drive not only of commercial but also, above all, of industrial capital. The colonial arsenal of industry was stacked higher than that of commerce. The latter used missionaries, settlers, commandos and more importantly the ideology of Liberalism. In the colonization of South Africa, Emancipationist, Liberals and Missionaries were used on a scale not known in any other colonial "civilizing enterprise. (Ibid.)

Thomas Pringle (1835:228) could not be accused of naivete or of being unaware of the savage deeds committed in the name of civilizing mission by empire builders of all nations. Even as he agitated for the conquest of Africa by the voodoo of Christian truth, he understood that: 'the knowledge of simply what is just and right ' did not 'induce men to act justly, or wisely, or humanely'. He reminded his readers look at the long and arduous struggles we have had in enlightened, humane, and religious England to obtain the abolition of the abominable Slave Trade, and of the not less abominable State of Slavery.

Look at the depth of ungenerous and unchristian prejudice in regard to the coloured race, which pervades free and religious America, like a feculent moral fog. I do not consider the Dutch-African colonists as worse than other people would be and have been in similar circumstances—not certainly worse than the Spaniards in America—not worse perhaps than the British in Australia. ... Let us look merely at the legalized butcheries of the Bushman race, which were incessantly going on while I was in the colony, and of which only a small portion has been recorded in the works of Thompson and Philip.

The career of John Fairbairn, who together with Pringle, was founder of the *African Commercial Advertiser*, is informative, it reveals how skin deep liberalism was among English humanitarians. During the War of the Axe in 1846-7, the vilified liberal of the 1820s and 1830s, had become a wealthy Chairman of The South African Mutual Insurance Society (later to become Old Mutual), and an advocate of a policy of war against the Xhosa, 'even if it should require some 10,000 troops to accomplish it' For Fairbairn, it was "not just victory but conquest" which should be the goal of the war. Liberalism, "Janus-faced" as ever, always new on which side its bread was buttered. Indeed, writes Keegan (1996:107), liberalism is not inconsistent with a racially repressive order. After all, deculturation and incorporation of the 'native' peoples as an ultra-exploitable class was always the humanitarian vision of their being "civilized". If that could not be achieved by moral suasion, then conquest and dismemberment of African societies might be the logical alternative means to the same end. Humanitarian sentiments, became convenient when disguised with abolishing slavery that had outlived its economic importance.

The interesting thing about humanitarians and imperialists, is that they came from the same class background, except that the imperialist, did not suffer from any illusions They were vehemently militarist and hard-hearted. During the so- Kaffir Wars they called for the ruthless destruction of the Xhosa. For Robert Godlonton, the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal*, the Xhosa were "the most barbarous savages, sunk into the lowest abyss of moral degradation." It

was a concept that was to remain fundamental to white settler brand of racism⁴ Alfred C. Cole (1852:195 ff.) was hard-hearted and unashamed imperialist. He referred approvingly to “The Spaniards who exterminated, on plea of heterodoxy, the natives of South America, who had never heard of orthodoxy!” which he felt was an extreme measure, besides being a peculiar method of making converts. Cole was skeptical about missionary work in South Africa: “Missionaries, with a laudable zeal, preach the gospel to men who are ignorant of the existence of a Supreme Being; or endeavour to teach, the theology of Christianity before they have taught decency and cleanliness. Is their system, with all its humanity, likely to be much more successful than the inhumanity of the Spaniards?” “He asked. Can we conceive the idea of man becoming a convert to Christianity before he has learned to cover his nakedness?” These doubts made Cole to reach this frightening conclusion:

The settlement of the Kafir question will be only effected by one of two means—they must be civilized or exterminated. Sir Harry Smith has promised to pursue the latter of these two courses—no easy matter, perchance, but far less difficult than the former; as to the humanity of the matter, it is revolting to every Christian-like feeling to say, “We will exterminate them;” and Sir Harry could only have used the expression in a fit of passion, to which he is so constitutionally subject; but that such will be the event I do not doubt; --not that I imagine England, or the colonists, will ever carry on a “war of extermination” against the Kafir people; *but their destiny to diminish gradually and disappear from South eastern Africa, is not less palpable to me. It has been so with the Hottentot in Africa, with the Indian in North and South America. Were these ever civilized? or have they not been slowly and silently exterminated before the progress of the white man?* The same progress of gradual decay has already commenced in New Zealand, and fifty years hence a Maori shall be as rare in either island as fifty years ago was a European. (My Italics)

The only reason, he thought the Kafirs had escaped the fate of other savages was because civilization had not set her foot into their land; but ‘their nationality must follow the doom of all savage tribes’. More importantly, for Cole (Ibid.), England could not submit to have a race of robbers forever on the frontier of one of the most important colonies, ready to rob and murder her sons.

It is right that she should *not* yield; for to abandon the Cape frontier under such circumstances, would be to abandon the cause of progress itself. The fate of the Black man is written in the history of the past: slowly but surely he passes away from the face of the earth—year by year his numbers diminish—his race is exterminated. The Kafir’s time is well nigh come

So pervasive and programmatic did the language of dehumanization and of extinction of the Xhosa become, that it made their brutal treatment seem logical, less shameful, and even appropriate. Sir William Harris (1839:346), considered the Xhosa of the eastern frontier to be a population of “eighty thousand dire, irreclaimable savages, naturally inimical, warlike, and predatory, by whom the hearths of the Cape border colonists have for years past been deluged in blood of their nearest and dearest relatives.” He went on,

⁴ At the end of the century an old settler lady could still angrily say to a missionary: “These blacks will always be blacks, a dirty murderous lot of Kaffirs, I call them, and none of your fine names will ever give them white hearts – they murdered my beautiful boys and threw their bodies onto a prickly pear [cactus] bush for vultures to eat.” (Quoted Mostert 1992:778)

It does indeed furnish matter of amazement to every thinking person, how such a state of things should so long have been suffered to exist; how those who have legislated for the affairs of the colony should not long ago have seen the imperious necessity, dictated alike by reason, justice, and humanity, of exterminating from off the face of the earth, a race of monsters, who being the unprovoked destroyers, and implacable foes of her Majesty's Christian subjects, have forfeited every claim to mercy or consideration.

A notable feature of the Cape after its acquisition by the British is that several early governors and senior civil servants had Indian and Australian experience, notably Lord Macartney, Sir John Cradock, and Sir George Grey. "The time of their administrations and the nature of their concerns was reminiscent of that of Cornwallis's India. The military element was strong. In 1810 there were already 6, 500 British troops in the Cape, more than in Gibraltar or Malta. In other words, the British came prepared for genocidal wars." (Bayly 1989: 202)

In the long history of British imperial colonialism, in South Africa they had perfected the art of double-speak. The passage of *Ordinance 50* of 1828, an ordinance that define the so-called *Liberal Spirit* of the Cape by English apologists of British imperialism, such as Theal, Walker, Mcmillan, Thompson, Bundy, Sparks, etc. ignore its racist cheap labour motive and praxis. For Reverend Philip, *Ordinance 50* meant one thing only – "All that is wanted for the Hotternot, more correctly for the natives of South Africa, is liberty to bring their labour to the best market" (quoted Jaffe 1994:59). The nine "Kaffir wars" were, in some respects the colonial version of the Enclosure Acts in England itself.

With the building of the port cities of Port Elizabeth and East London, South Africa entered a whole new epoch. The wool industry, to feed the British clothing industry grew tremendously. This increased the demand for more sweet-pasturage. The greedily settlers eyed what they regarded as the underutilized tribal land across the Fish River and wanted to avail themselves of it. John Milford Bowker (1864:123), a wealthy sheep commercial farmer, in his now notorious "Springbok Speech" of 1847 was quite explicit about the importance of the Cape wool industry for relieving England's unemployment problems: In a language reminiscent of Carlyle's "The Niger Question," he wrote:

The days when our plains were covered with tens of thousand of springboks, they are gone now, and who regrets it? Their place is now occupied with tens of thousands of merino sheep, whose fleece find employment to tens of thousands of industrious men: are they not better than the springbok? Yet I must own that when I see two or three of them on the wide plains, and know they are the last of their race, my heart yearns towards them, and I regret that so much innocent beauty, and elegance, and agility, must needs be swept from the earth. My feelings toward the Kafir are not of that stamp. I know he has disregarded the zealous missionaries for years. I know that rapine and murder are all his thoughts, and I see them in his looks, and hate him accordingly. If I am wrong, then it proves England has begun at the wrong end of her work, for *I* ought to have been taught better before she begun to teach the Kafir, for there is more "thought, heart," yea, "desperation" in me than in the whole gang of Quashees; and I begin to think that he too the Kafir as well as the springbok, must give place, and why not? *Is it just that a few thousands of ruthless worthless savages are to sit like a nightmare upon the land that would support millions of civilized*

*men happily? Nay, Heaven forbids it; and those dreamers who have been legislating for protection of the aborigines, have unwittingly been aiding in their downfall*⁵ (My Italics)

It was this calm, matter-of-fact, callous disdain of African life that would lead to conflicts tantamount to what Du Bois would describe as a devil's dance. These conflicts would last the whole century and in 1910 would result in the creation of what Lord Olivier described as a slave state unique in the history of the British Empire. In wars of 1835 and 1846, the British forces waged scotch earth campaigns. *The Grahamstown Journal* (April 10, 1847) the mouthpiece of the settlers would urge:

Let war be made against the Kaffir huts and gardens. Let all these be burnt down and destroyed. Let there be no ploughing, sowing or reaping. Or, if you cannot conveniently, or without bloodshed prevent the cultivation of the ground, take care to destroy the enemy's crops before they are ripe, and shoot all who resist. Shoot their cattle too wherever you see any. Tell them the time has come for the white men to show his mastery over them.

Africans, under the Britain experienced the full meaning of the application of master race theory. Here the rejects of British society and the Dutch settlers, led by the members of the British aristocracy learned that through sheer violence, they could subdue and create a 'race' and/ or class lower than themselves. What we should not lose sight of is that all the wars fought against the African chiefdoms and kingdoms were paid for by the British tax payer.

The plunder and destruction of the San and Khoi was intensified even more during the era of British rule. The "expeditions were ordered by the Government to repress the aggressions of the Bushmen; and this was the regular mode in which these affairs were managed. The kraal was surprised, the males consigned to indiscriminate slaughter, and such of the women and children as survived the massacre were carried into captivity. Scores of such expeditions have taken place since, and the system continues to this very hour but little, I fear, if at all abated its enormities. Nay more, atrocities still less excusable, because altogether wanton and unprovoked, are even now perpetrated with impunity" (Pringle 1966.:229). He reached this pessimistic conclusion:

The frontier colonists, be they Dutch or British, *must* of necessity continue to be semi-barbarians, so long as the *commando system*—the system of hostile reprisals—shall be encouraged or connived at; and so long as the colonists are permitted to make encroachments on the territory and natural rights of the natives, the colony can never have safe or settled frontier. Mutual enmity and reciprocal outrage will proceed as heretofore. The weak will gradually melt

⁵ The speech, in actual fact was an indictment of British official hypocrisy. In a paragraph prior to this, Bowker said: "Men never leave the land of their birth without heart-rending causes, which well deserve the attention of the Government they may have lived under; yet what has been the endeavour of our Government with regard to these men? Why to blurt forth false, infamous, and lying assertions as to the reasons why they left their homes, assertion which they knew tallied well with spurious philanthropy of Exeter Hall . . . Oh, that England would but look at home! Nothing can be more baneful either to her or to us, than these ignorant and ruinous good intentions; formerly she was satisfied with relieving the distress of her own door, but it is now the fashion to listen with intense interest to the tales of woe and oppression from afar. All ranks delight to have their feelings harrowed by stories of woe from distant lands. . . – the flogging of a sulky Negro, the wrongs of the Kaffir nation, the oppression of the Hottentots, are what they are now-a-days gulled with; these are the things which excite their pity and call forth charity;. . . In these things they better let us alone; we have hearts to feel for any misery that many be among us. They better turn to the poor house and prison house of their land, where guilt and poor misfortune pine; let them look to the back streets and alleys of their own unfortunate towns, the coloured classes within and without the colony have nothing to equal ours; amongst them there are no poor over-laboured wretched pullet, meagre crust, gaunt and half famished wives and children, to return to in the morn to the monotony of their task—the only things that bring change to which we are loss of health, the poor-house, and premature grave. (p. 120)

away before the strong; tribe after tribe will be extirpated as their brethren have been extirpated; and year after year, while we continue to *talk* of our boundless benevolence and our Christian philanthropy, fresh loads of that guilt the Almighty has denounced in awful terms—the blood-stained of oppression, will continue to accumulate upon our heads as a nation (Ibid.:231)

Biological Racism:

In the 1820s phrenology came into vogue as justification for Empire-building. It argued that social behavior was entirely dependant on the shape of the cranium. Phrenologist told the British that they were conquering and ruling races which were inferior to them. Thomas Baines in his *African Journal* (Volume 1, 1842-1853:44), posed the question, whether “the black man should ever regain possession of any part of South Africa which had been occupied by the white.” Even as he expressed the difficulty of forming any just estimate of the national character of the Xhosa who were fighting a life and death struggle against the British, Baines, on the basis of his observation of Africans body parts arrived at these conclusions. The lower portion of the Xhosa leg reminded him ‘of the taper, sinewy, limb of the race horse’. After meeting Chief of Kafirland (Bainess’ word), Sandile, whom he described as ‘a tall thin fellow with a long body, the motion of which reminded one of the writhing of a snake or eel’, he went on to point to Sandile’s physiognomy that he said was ‘of rather insipid cast’, and, who, ‘though he had, like most chiefs, a better nose than the commonalty,-I mean in shape, not in capacity for smelling out a farmer’s cattle—indeed, a rather aquiline one’, but ‘the effect of it was destroyed by a half idiotic smile giving him an appearance of low cunning which did not beseem [sic] once so mighty a potentate’. (Ibid.: 145).

These deficiencies of Sandile’s physiognomy, for Baines, entitled the English to colonize his country⁶. H. E. Macartney, author of a pamphlet *A Plan and Easy Way to Settle the Frontier Question*, advocated the removal and gradual extermination of the Xhosa. He based his arguments on his phrenological examination of “some Kaffir skulls lately received.” Phrenological examinations “proved” that the Xhosa utterly lacked the faculty of reason and authorized their complete subordination. At the same time their purported lack of reason, justified making the ‘aggressive’ and ‘bellicose’ Xhosa (who had proven to be formidable opponents on the battlefield), occupy the subordinate position of woman in the family of man.

This pseudo intellectual exercise had one aim only to justify genocide. *The Eastern Province Herald* (June 15, 1851) editorialized:

Home newspaper writers may denounce in language of the strongest condemnation such a system of extension of all that is British in South Africa. . . . Yet the spread of the civilized and more powerful man goes on; *for the moment is not South Africa but universal—is not of today, but is as ancient as the history of our race*⁷.

⁶ A pencil sketch in v. 26 of Baines African Collections, is inscribed ‘A query for phrenologists—was this man a cattle stealer? Kafir skull found on the banks of the Keiskama. Saturday August 25 1849.’ Baines wrote up this descriptive matter some years after the event he describes.(45)

⁷ I owe this and the above to Zine Magubane’s article “Simians, Savages, Skulls, and Sex: Science and Colonial Militarism in the 19th Century South Africa” forthcoming in *Race, Nature, and Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald Moore, Duke U. Press)

In the logic of phrenological studies Africans personify degraded *otherness*, which justified conquest and subordination to slave status. Fryer (1984:171) quotes Combe who claimed that:

...before Europeans took civilization to Africa that continent exhibited 'one unbroken scene of moral and intellectual desolation'. The rich phrenologist and physician Robert Verity, an admirer of Lord Kames⁸, predicted that 'the inferior and weaker' races would in due course become extinct and that within 100 years Britain, its wealth, population, and intelligence, would overshadow the whole world and British civilization and language would likewise be dominant. Of all the modern nations, the English had 'a greater and more proportionate admixture of the best races': 'eminently superior in their cerebral type, and their physical conformation, they join to these advantages the very best combination of temperament. Here in the main lay the secret of phrenology's' success. The British were already convinced of their destiny. Phrenology told them why they were lucky and how to remain so.

Galton's pupil Karl Pearson, Professor at London University and Fellow of the Royal Society, saw colonialism as a means of preparing '*a reserve of brain and physique*' for times of national crisis: 'Such a reserve can always be formed by filling up with men of our own kith and kin the waste lands of the earth, even at the expense of an inferior race of inhabitants.' From a generic stand point, the black race was 'poor stock', and struggle against 'inferior races' was the way to keep a nation up to a high pitch of efficiency. . . . Exterminated 'inferior races', Pearson added, were 'the stepping-stones on which mankind has arisen to the higher intellectual and deeper emotional life of to-day.' (Cited by Fryer 1984:180-1)

The Aborigines Protection Society and the Fate of Indigenous People:

The Second British Empire was packaged and promoted as a humanitarian effort to end slavery, promote Christianity, civilization and commerce in Africa. Among the forces that justified Empire, the Church and its missionaries, 'a powerful party' as it often was to be described and proved to be, was particularly conspicuous in the Cape. Almost all-European imperial powers were professedly Christian countries; their religion was 'by law established'; upon their national deliberations 'the blessing of the Almighty God' was constantly invoked as reason for colonization. All imperial countries maintained a huge hierarchy with the avowed aim of proclaiming the teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; in every village in every corner of every town her sacerdotal servants were to be seen (Cf. Godard 1905:155). The irony of the Church of Christ whose religion taught the brotherhood of man but became a hand-maiden of imperialism did not escape Godard:

The burden of the teaching of Christ was the brotherhood of man, irrespective of race; Imperialism is the subjection of man, based on the distinction of race. (ibid)

Evangelical religion, the emotional accompaniment to the Second British Empire in South Africa, was exemplified by Reverend, John Philip, Moffat, and David Livingstone.⁹ They

⁸ Lord Kames was highly influential patron of the Scottish Enlightenment, who argued that the different races of mankind were separate creations and constituted different species.

⁹ For the role played by Livingstone as an imperial agent see, Robert A. Stafford, (1998), *Scientist of empire: Sir Roderick Murchison, scientific exploration and Victorian imperialism*, Cambridge University Press, especially chapter 7.

all saw the country as a more practical gateway into the wealth of the rest of the continent, and serious missionary effort was more earnest than anywhere. Thus “South Africa, as humanitarian conscience came to select it,” writes Mostert (1992:287), “was a natural extension of the abolition campaign; and, in no time at all it became the principal theatre for radical missionary activity.”

Thus it is not surprising that the missionaries subverted African chiefdoms and kingdoms from within, while British imperial forces in the various so-called Kaffir Wars subverted them from without. In the process they sacrificed more lives than any other country. For a proper appreciation of the genocidal policies pursued by British settlers, it is important to bear in mind two major developments in the early part of the nineteenth century. Firstly, the slave trade in which the British had benefited the most had been abolished.¹⁰ That ‘humanitarianism’ was a factor in its abolition is not in doubt. Sir James Stephen whom the colonists considered to be their greatest enemy had been appointed Colonial Assistant Under-Secretary in 1834. In 1835 Lord Glenelg was Colonial Secretary from 1835 to 1839. He was a man of intellectual power (he had held a fellowship at Cambridge College) and humanitarian ideals. His period in office is significant - it saw a real attempt to base an imperial policy on “moral considerations.” His attempt was unsuccessful, and once this became clear the experiment was not repeated.

Glenelg's humanitarian policy centered on the belief that Britain had guilt to expiate. African people had suffered more than any other from British rapacity. It was his strongly felt belief that it would be a calamity if South Africa were added to the list of the regions in which the utter extermination of aboriginal races had taken place. In a communication to D'Urban on 26 December 1835, he put it as follows:

I know not that a greater real calamity could befall Great Britain than that of adding Southern Africa to the list of regions, which have seen their aboriginal, inhabitants disappear under the withering influence of European neighborhood. It is indeed a calamity reducible to no certain standard or positive measurement, but invokes whatever is most to be dreaded in bringing upon ourselves the reproaches of mankind and the weight of national guilt. (Quoted, Mellor, n.d.:)

He sent this memo to object to the aspersions cast by Governor D'Urban who describe Africans as ‘irreclaimable savages.’ He even ordered the abandonment of Queen Adelaide province that D'Urban had added to the Cape Colony. Glenelg feared that the inexorable expansion of British settlers, with proportionately multiplying human and material costs was inevitably unless some attempt was made to halt it as soon as possible. This was the moral challenge Glenelg posed to the British and their Empire.

In answer to Glenelg and his humanitarianism Dundas asked? “Where have you found that when people have power, they have not used that power? The settlers were ... sent to that country by government; and it was the right and . . . proper that the situation of these settlers should be rendered defensible and secure as possible.’ And if the Cape Colony’s boundary was to be returned to the Fish River, he said, then The British Government ‘should send out ships to bring every Englishman from that part of the colony to England. (Cf. Mostert 1992:758)

¹⁰The abolition of slavery reveals more than anything the nature of capitalist morality and the limitations of anti-slavery agitation. The British Government voted £20,000,000 to compensate the slave owners and the slaves themselves received not a penny. The money was given to uphold the rights of property and went to the deserving rich, such as the Gladstone family, which received £80,000 for their 2,000 slaves.

Glenelg's concerns proved an embarrassment, and were never repeated. Obviously Cape liberalism, in the damning words of Keegan (1996:94-106), turned out 'to be a shallow, tawdry, and deceptive conscience salving exercise'. The English humanitarians, who criticized the excesses of Boer pastoral farmers cruelty towards the San and the Khoi, was done, not in the name of anti colonialism, but of furthering colonialism: a 'civilizing' colonialism whose subjugation's, were culturally no better than that of the Spaniards, or, indeed, the Boers¹¹.

'Scientific' Racism: Theorizing Genocidal Colonial Wars:

Developments in the Cape provided raw material for anthropology and the development of scientific racism. In the eighteenth century, as white settler in North America engaged in wars of genocide against "Indians", theorists of white supremacy argued that their extinction was nature's way of making room for a higher race. This self-serving argument became a staple in Britain in the 1830s as discussion about the genocide against indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Tasmania and South Africa was being explained.(cf. Horsman (1981:53)

Anthropological discourse on the San and Khoi, as we have seen, was critical for evolutionary anthropology. In the new science of anthropology, there is a marked shift in thought from the universal to the particular, from an interest in what nations and people had in common to an interest in what made them fundamentally different. The supposedly 'scientific' comparisons of cranial capacities and angles, and a variety of other detailed physical features, resulted in an endorsement by 'scientific men' of what was being said by imperialist patriots, poets, and novelists. Because of the arbitrary nature of the criteria that were being used, there was no general agreement on what constituted a proper scientific study of *races*, all types of evidence were brought forward to support the general idea of inherent differences. (ibid.)

In 1839, whilst working on the rest of the volumes of his *Magnus opus*, **The Natural History of Man**. Dr. James Pritchard, published an important paper entitled: "On the Extinction of Primitive Races." From the title there is no escaping its programmatic logic. The metaphor of extinction of so-called primitive races contains its own power which it imposes upon historical developments called in South African historiography 'Kaffir Wars'.¹² Briefly, Pritchard thesis was that

Wherever Europeans have settled, their arrival has been the harbinger of extermination to the native races and tribes. Where ever the simple pastoral tribes come into relations with more civilized agricultural nations, the allotted time of their destruction is at hand; and this seems to have been the case from the time when the first shepherd fell by the hand of the first tiller of the soil. (pp. 168-9)

In discussing what was going on in South Africa following the arrival, first of the Dutch and of British settlers he wrote.

¹¹ For Crais (1992:3-7), the racial forms of domination following its take over by the British were not antithesis of liberalism, but integral to the construction of those forms. Here liberalism proclaimed liberty and practiced subjection, it ended slavery and peonage and created the 1841 Masters and servants Ordinance, the 1856 Masters and Servants Act, and the South African pass system.

¹² This is also true of Charles Darwin's book title, *The Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*.

A similar process of extermination has been pursued for ages in South Africa, formerly the abode of numerous pastoral nations of Hottentots, a peaceable and in-offensive race, who wandered about with numerous flocks, in a state of primitive simplicity, and whose descendants are now found in the miserable and destitute state. Bushmen are condemned to feed upon vermin and reptiles, and rendered savage and cruel by the wretchedness which their Christian conquerors have entailed upon them.

Prichard hoped that the newly formed Aborigines and Protection Society would be successful in stemming the tide of slaughter. However he was pessimistic that the holocaust could be avoided. It seemed to be the law of nature that. If this was inevitable, Prichard felt that it was urgent to establish an ethnographic science "to record the history of perishing tribes."

Prichard was a leading English ethnologist of the first half of the nineteenth century, a man of great learning, a humanitarian and a convinced monogenist. The resigned calm and matter-of-fact way in which he discussed the genocide against indigenous peoples can only be describe as sign of the times, though strange for strange for a humanitarian. The short piece is an important contemporary witness to the wars waged by the English in 1806, 1811-12, 1819, 1834-5, 1846-7 and 1850-3 . According to James (1994:254):these wars placed the Xhosa in the same position as the Red Indians of North America and, if the colonists had their way, were destined for the same fate.

This was brutally outlined in a letter written to the War Office by a commander during the 1846 campaign: 'The Kaffir must be driven across the Kei; he must be made your subject; he is wanted to till the colonists' land'. Another officer went further, and predicted the elimination of the Xhosa as the only outcome of the contest for land. 'They must recede before the white men - all attempts at civilization are futile. The great want here is a body of energetic colonists to follow in the backs of troops'.... *South Africa belonged to the white man and the black had a stark choice between submission or extinction.* (My Italics)

Then there was Charles Dickens the famous novelist, who published in the *Household Words; A Weekly Journal* (June 11 1853), a scurrilous diatribe "The Noble Savage" which echoed Thomas Carlyle's essay, *The Niger Question* of 1849. Like Carlyle's essay, Dickens' essay, is a benchmark in the new mood of racism in Britain. It is also one of the most offensive and vituperative essay that has been completely ignored by South African social scientist. It shows the extent to which racist views had gained currency and popularity in Britain.

The vehemence with which Dickens excoriated the idea of the noble savage has to do with the anger he felt at the neglect of the poor of England. "The idealization of dirty, subhuman members of other races," he felt, "impeded the far more urgent practice of charity at home" (Atlick 1978:233). Dickens proclaimed his disbelief in the noble savage. 'I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition. His calling me a pale face, wholly fail to reconcile me to him. I don't care what he calls me. *I call him a savage, and I call a savage something highly desirable to be civilized out off the face of the earth*'. Like Carlyle, Dickens found it extraordinary to observe "how some people will talk about him [the Noble Savage], as they talk about the good old times."

Think of the two men and the two women who have been exhibited about England for some years. Are the majority of persons--who remember the horrid little leader of that party in his festering bundle of his hides, with his filth and his

antipathy to water, and his straddled legs, and his odious eyes shaded by his brutal hand, and his cry of "Qu-u-u-aaa!" (Bosjesman for something desperately insulting I have no doubt) --conscious of an affectionate yearning towards that noble savage, or is it idiosyncratic on me to abhor, detest, abominate, and abjure him?

Dickens then turned his venom on "a party of Zulu Kaffirs" who were being exhibited at the St. George's Gallery, Hyde Park Corner, London. "Though extremely ugly, they are much better shaped than such of their predecessors as I have refereed to; and they are rather picturesque to the eye, though far from being odoriferous to the nose." Like the 'Bushman' the 'savage' Zulu's are treated to scorn and slender.

As early as 1810, Saartjie Baartman had been taken to London where she was caged and advertised for display as "The Hottentot Venus" or "the first imported savage" from South Africa:--"A most correct and perfect specimen of that race of people. From this extraordinary opportunity of nature, the people have an opportunity of judging how far she exceeds any description given by historians of that tribe." The interest in Saartjie, according to Altick (1978:268), "transcended mere titillation." It derived "from the fact that scientist had long regarded her race as the missing link." The imperialist discourse that accompanied the early *pax Victoriana* wove ethnological and geographical discourses and Britain's economic and geopolitical aspirations into a single seamless pattern.

The Hottentot low state of culture and their uncouth speech, "a farrago of bestial sounds resembling the charter of apes," seemed proof enough of their ambiguous position and on the whole unenviable position on the ladder of living creation, markedly below man but a little hire than the animals. The "brutal Hottentot" was the epitome of all the civilized Englishman, happily, was not. (Ibid.: 269)

Given the importance of the colonization of South Africa in the first-half of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that in 1845, two so-called Bushmen children, a fifteen-year-old boy and an unrelated eight-year-old girl provided 'living illustrations' to a paper read before the Ethnological Society. Following their use as specimens they went on display at the Egyptian Hall. Altick says that, while the display of the teenagers did not, seem to have enlarged the nation's store of ethnological information. What is significant is the fact that "the children "from the African bush were co-starred with "a fine and curious specimen of the GREAT URSINE BABOON, with some exceedingly rare varieties of the MONKEY TRIBE, from Port Natal" (ibid. 280). "Still, the young Bushmen's routine consisted of the very kind of tricks that monkeys were taught to perform " (ibid.). More importantly,

..in the newly established Natural History Department were thirteen life-size groupings of savages--the Eskimos across the aisle from the polar bear, the Red Indians next to North American birds, the West African Negroes along side the chimpanzee, and so on through the Bushmen, the Kaffir, Malays, Dyaks, Papuans, Australian, and Maoris. Although included under the rubric "Natural History," these exhibits were illustrations of a particular sub-discipline: "Ethnology," or "the Science of Human Races."

In 1847 an even larger troupe of 'Bushman' was displayed at the Egyptian Hall, "that ark of zoological wonders" as one paper put it. The arrival of this troupe became an occasion for a lecture delivered by Dr. Robert Knox, who, following his tour of duty in the South African frontier had studied with Dr. Cuvier who had dissected Sarjie Bartman after she died in Paris.

Dr. Knox's lecture was advertised in *The Athenaeum* of 15 May 1847. The advertisement, after giving the place and time of the talk and Knox's qualifications said:

This Lecturer is particularly addressed to those interested in the exciting events now going on in South-Eastern Africa, in the Kaffir War, in the great question of race, and the probable extinction of the aboriginal races, the progress of the Anglo-African Empire, and the all-important question of Christian mission and human civilization in that quarter of the globe. In illustration of the lecture, Dr. Knox will introduce to the notice of the physiologist and man of science Five Bosjeiemans or Bush people--two males, two females, and infant, the only specimen of this singular race of human beings that ever visited Europe.

The developments in the Cape, sketched above were extremely critical in the development of scientific racism. Dr. Robert Knox, the Edinburgh anatomist and eugenicist, whom Philip D. Curtin (1964:377) described as "the real founder of British racism and one of the key figures in the general western movement towards a dogmatic pseudo-scientific racism," wrote his key nineteenth-century text in biological racism: *The Races of Men* (1850)¹³ following his military service in South Africa. Poliakov (1967:223) referred to Knox as "he first 'racist' scholar." For Landquist (1992), Knox's book reveals racism at the actual moment of birth, just as it takes the leap from popular prejudice via Knox's conceded ignorance to "scientific conviction." Biddiss concurs (1975:247) "Knox belongs to a band of remarkable and mutually independent pioneers of racist theory. It includes such figures as Gustav Klemm and Karl Gustav Carus in Germany and still more famously, Arthur de Gobineau in France." Dr. James Hunt, founder together with Sir Francis Burton of the avowedly racist organization: *The Anthropological Society of London*. boasted that he had 'imbibed his views from Knox'. Thus, according to Evellen Richards (1989:413) "irrespective of his organizational role," Knox "was indubitably the Anthropological Society's intellectual mentor." In 1860-61 after being white balled in 1855, Knox was elected a Fellow of the Anthropological Society of London. And became the honorary curator of its Museum in 1862. That is, Hunt's "adoption of Knoxian biology and anthropology not only underpinned their racism and reactionary politics, but gave Hunt and his followers the intellectual strength to resist incorporation into the Darwinian anthropological model proffered by Huxley, and to offer considerable professional opposition to the take-over of the London science by the Darwinian "new guard" (Ibid.:376) . Dr. Robert Knox's ideas played, among others, a major role in pre-Darwinian Britain to "biologize" history (Harris (1968:99).

For Knox, (1862:v), "race" was 'everything: literature, science, art – in a word, civilization, depends on it'. In his view antagonism between race and race was one of the fundamental facts of human history. That is why when 'the Saxon race began to migrate over the earth, to establish free colonies, as they are called – free to the white man and their own race – dens of horror and cruelty to the coloured', racial conflict appeared in its 'terrible form' (p.546). Knox was haunted by what he saw in the "frontier" wars in the Cape. He spoke of the Bantu as 'a bold and noble race of men, ... fighting for all that men hold dear'. He predicted gloomily that 'the Saxon . . . pushing northwards will take possession of the entire continent' (p.

¹³There are been several studies and comentaries on Robert Knox's racism and his role in the development of British Anthropology. These include Reginald Horsman (1981), *Race and Manifest Destiny*, Cambridge, Harvard aunoversity Press; George Stocking, (1987), *Victorian Anthropology*, New York, Free Press; Patrick Brantlinger, (1988), *Rule of Darkness, British Litarature and Impereialism, 1830-1914*; Ithaca, Cornell University Press; Saul Dubow (1995), *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, to mantion a few.

552). On the fate of the “Kaffirs” and “Hottentots”, Dr. Knox predicted that both were ‘[d]estined by the nature of their race to run, like other animals a certain limited course of existence, it matters little how their extinction is brought about’. (P.224)

The Anthropological Society of London formed in 1863 became institutional arena in which “scientific racism,” the hand-maiden of imperialism was discussed without apology. Among the prominent members of the ASL were Sir Francis Burton, the Vice-president, Rajah Sir James Brooke of Sarawak, Governor Eyre of Jamaica, Sir George Grey, the first civilian governor of the Cape Colony¹⁴, etc. The vulgar, primitive, over-simplified expressions of racism by Knox purported to find in biology the inevitability of extinction. And given the prediction, why did the African in South Africa not suffer the fate of indigenous peoples in other white settler colonies?

The Discovery of Diamonds (1867) and Gold (1884)

Gentlemen, this is the stone on which the future of South Africa will be built.

The Colonial Secretary of the Cape spoke these words when he put on the table of the Cape’s House of Assembly in 1867 one of the earliest stones found in Kimberley (Mostert 1992:1243). The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1867 and gold in the Rand in 1884, provided for the final and most ruthless stage of British expansion in South Africa. The two events injected a new determination on the part of Britain and its Cape Colony to conquer the whole of South Africa and make it a permanent part of the Empire. By the 1870s the European settler minority was firmly rooted, if divided among themselves. The British control of the Cape and Natal seemed permanently established. There were some, as we have seen, who saw Cape Town as holding a pivotal position in the emerging British world order as ‘the true centre of the Empire . . . clear of the Suez complications, almost equally distant from Australia, China, India, Gibraltar, the West Indies and the Falklands.’ (Judd 1996:112).

The ‘revolution’ that the mineral discoveries caused, led to an ideological shift. Instead of ‘pessimistic’ talk about “native extinction” there was now talk about the importance of labour as a civilizing agent. Anthony Trollope (1973:368), the British novelist, who witnessed what he called these “black ants” (i. e. black miners hard at work in the Big Hole in Kimberley), was hypnotized by what he saw. The prospect of future use of African labour power in the mines and other industries that the exploitation of the minerals generally spawned he now saw as key to the future of Southern Africa. Waxing eloquent about the virtues of work as a civilizing agent, he wrote:

Who can doubt that work is the great civilizer of the world—work and the growing desire for those good things which work will only bring? If there be one who does, he should come here to see now those dusky troops of labourers, who ten years since were living in the wildest state of unalloyed savagery, whose only occupation was slaughter of each other in tribal wars, each of whom was the slave of his Chief, who were subject to domination of most brutalizing and cruel superstitions, have already put themselves on the path towards civilization. They are thieves, no doubt—that is, they steal diamonds though not often other things. They do not yet care much about breeches. They do not go to school. But

¹⁴ For Sir George’s career doing the “dirty work of empire”, see Stocking Jr,(1987:81-87)

they are orderly. They come to work at six in the morning and go away at six in the evening.

These observations prefigure the arguments to be made later by Wimot (1898) and John Buchan (1903) on the importance of ‘civilizing’ and ‘developing’ the natives through sweated labour. In a paragraph before the above, Trollope, after criticizing the slowness of “philanthropy and religion in civilizing the savages,” makes the point that “the seeker after diamonds is determined to have them [natives] because the making of his fortune depends on them; and the Kaffir himself is determined to come to Kimberley because he has learned the loveliness of 10s. a week, paid regularly into his hand every Saturday night.” (Ibid.).

The rapid development of diamond-mining industry required the final defeat of African kingdoms and chiefdoms. And this was achieved in a series of brutal wars that culminated in the crushing of the tax revolt 1906-8 by the Bambata. With the crushing of the Bambatha Rebellion white supremacy became an established fact throughout the four provinces. Following the defeat of the Boer Republics in 1899-1902, British hegemony was now a fact. It was reinforced by the “doctrine of white supremacy as a governing race” principle. This doctrine emphasized the fitness of Britons to rule inferior races by virtue of their “moral superiority” and their understanding of the rule of law. An institutionalized philosophical racialism became increasingly important as a rationale for constituting the ‘native’ as a subject race. And “Empire became a necessary component of British nationalism in a way that it had never been central to English patriotism.” (Bayly 1989:109)

It was upon the altar of the mineral wealth of South Africa that the citizenship of the so-called non-whites was sacrificed. ‘Can I believe that this colony [Cape] will ever degrade itself to prevent by law any Coloured men from having the right to vote for members of the legislature or to hold an acre of land, in this colony’, asked Saul Solomon Member for Cape Town in the first Responsible Parliament. The then Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Henry Barkly made the point explicit to Lord Carnarvon – the plans for confederation, he said, were seen by the Cape ministry as involving ‘the unmerited disenfranchisement of the whole coloured races: Kafirs, Hottentots, emancipated Negroes’. (Cf. Mostert 1992:1247)

British imperial policy towards South Africa was dramatically altered by the discovery of diamonds and gold. Following the surveys carried out by Livingstone, Burton, Speke and others, it was hoped, other treasures buried in the South African soil lay waiting to be discovered. Hence the imperative of confederation. Britain wanted the Dutch and British colonies federated so that a coherent native policy on the franchise, land ownership and labour could be formulated. Accordingly, in 1789 Sir Bartle Frere engineered the outbreak of the Zulu War, as Milner would do in the case of the Boer Republic of the Transvaal in 1899. In November 1899, just before the start of the South African War Milner wrote to Sir Percy Fitzpatrick that the “*ultimate* aim of the war,” against the Boers, was a self-governing white community, supported by well treated and justly governed black labour from Cape to the Zambezi. There must be one flag, the Union Jack, but under it equality of races [white] and languages.” (Milner Papers Vol. ii:35)

The questions, which hung over South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War, were, how would the mineral wealth of South Africa be appropriated; what role would the Boers play in the new British Empire? What would be the political future of the “natives”, as Africans were designated; and the Coloureds. Indian descendants of indentured labour, were expected to be deported back to their homeland – India. The terms of the Vereeniging Treaty offered the Boers to settle the war supplied the outline: the burghers were first obliged to recognize King Edward

V11 as their lawful sovereign. The most important Clause promised that ‘Military administration in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony will, at the earliest possible date, be succeeded by civil government; and as soon as circumstances permit, representative government, leading to self-government, will be introduced.’ (Cited Egerton 1922:6)

These terms generous by any standard, and received the enthusiastic approval of the white settler and self-governing Canadian, Sir Alfred Laurier. His country, together with Australia and New Zealand had sent troops to help vanquish the Boers. In 1901, he promised that if the Boers had lost their independence, they had not lost their liberty; and his words were made abundantly good when Chamberlain, the first British Secretary of State visited South Africa in 1901. ‘The terms of the Vereening Treaty’, he told the Boer delegates who met him, ‘are a charter of the Boer people; and you have every right to call upon us to fulfill them in the spirit and in the letter, and if, in any respect you think we have failed or that in the future we do fail, in carrying out these terms, bring your complaints to us and they shall be redressed,’ (Ibid.:7)

It is note worthy that at the meeting, where Chamberlain made these remarks, General Smuts was the spokesperson of the Boer delegation. He had come into the notice of Rhodes much earlier. In 1895 in a debate organized under the auspices of the De Beers Consolidated Political and Debating Association on the “Fundamental principles of the South African political situation”, he had argued that the two ruling, dominating problems in South Africa, were the consolidation of the white race into a homogeneous nationality for confrontation with coloured races,

Unless the white race closes ranks, its position will soon be untenable in the face of the overwhelming majority of prolific barbarism. . . . The theory of democracy as currently understood and practiced in Europe and America is inapplicable to the coloured races of South Africa. . . . You cannot safely apply to the barbarous and semi-barbarous natives the advance political principles of the foremost peoples of civilization. (Smuts 1940:1)

Such crude affirmation of the logic of white supremacy found application in the actual social practice in the diamond and gold mining industry. Race and class acted as way of organizing labour relations to conform to the profitability of the mining industries. At the same time it fed to the white supremacist beliefs of white workers. With the full capitalization of diamond digging, the owners of the mines demanded from the state that manual heavy work be the sole province of migrant black workers. In a white supremacist society, manual labour was scorned at. The landless poor white mostly Boers, had been socialized against manual labour. In their minds, it was associated with slave labour. Even those who had started as miners, preferred to sell their claims (except as prospectors and “driver-diggers”, each driving a ‘Kaffir boy’ or two). They kept out of mines, which paid low wages. In the meantime, engineering and other skilled workers were imported from Britain and other European countries at very high wages. A racist theory took root, and became firmly established that dirty, low-paid native workers had to be the basis of the mining industry, if it was to be profitable. On the other hand, there was no place for white workers in any but higher skilled categories.

Earlier a labour structure based on race and class had already made its first conspicuous appearance in South Africa in the Natal capitalized sugar production. As far as the internal structure of the sugar industry was concerned, there was no reason why it should not have been developed entirely with white labour. In Queensland, where, after beginning with imported “Kanaka” labour from the Pacific Island, the white wage workers, who had political power,

determined that it should be a white man's industry, paying white wages, and proved this possible. On the other hand, in Natal, the notion of plantation labour and unskilled work of a sugar factory, being done by white workers was entirely repugnant to the South African theory of white supremacy. (CF. Lord Olivier 1927:28) Indeed, as Fanon (1967:37), pointed out, in a colonial situation racism "stares one in the face, for it so happens that it belongs in a characteristic whole: the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached the highest stage of technical development."

At the time in Natal, African Chiefdoms and Kingdoms had not been subdued, and the idea of forced native labour, was therefore out of question. Voluntary African labour, even if it had been available, would not be docile or efficient for plantation work. Thus Indian 'coolie' labour was imported and the tradition of 'racial' work and 'racial' pay - the work untouchable to white man, the pay below what the man needed to live on - was established. The tradition was thus re-enforced in the Natal flank among English people that white man do not do manual work was entrenched in the mining industry and all the complex of industries which developed in connection with mining. As Lord Olivier (1927:28) put it:

De Beers produced and produces gigantic money power by the employment on the one hand a great number of low-paid black labourers under spells of from six to eighteen months close confinement, and a small number of highly paid white men to drive them, on a few, little, fortified enclosures of African earth, and on the other by exploiting to the full the persistent human conviction that diamonds are—as Rhodes himself reverently spoke of them—things of "intrinsic value." De Beers made the British South Africa Company possible.

The Transvaal gold-mining industry followed the lead of the diamond mines. There was no reason, except the desire of capitalist to make big profits and quickly. The Witwatersrand gold mines became the gigantic keystone of the arch of South Africa's racist state. The racist doctrine of Kaffir-work, the land monopoly by whites and the mines super-incumbent was theorized in this classic formulation by Lord Milner (1932:459). For him the racial divide was so essential to sustaining notions of white supremacy that whites had, by a process of social engineering to be constituted as racial aristocracy:

Our welfare depends upon increasing the quantity of our white population, but not at the expense of its quality. We do not want a white proletariat in this country. The position of the whites among the vastly more numerous black population requires that even the lowest ranks should be able to maintain a standard of living far above that of the poorest section of the population of a purely white country . . . However you look at the matter, you always come back to the root principle—*the urgency of that development which alone can make this a white man's country in the only sense in which South Africa can become one, and that is, not a country of poor white, but one in which a largely increased white population can live in decency and comfort.* That development requires capital, but it also requires a large amount of rough labour. And that labour can not to any extent be white, if only because, pending development and subsequent reduction in the cost of living, white labour is much too dear.(My *Italics*)

In South Africa, the politics and economics of Empire cannot be separated. 'The physiognomy of a Government', wrote Touqueville, 'may best be judged in the colonies, for there the features are magnified and rendered more conscious'. In South Africa the

physiognomy of bourgeois liberal democracy and its nature are laid bare. Here, the mystique of race was Democracy's vulgarization of an older mystique of class. (CF. Kiernan (1972:240):

Since the African, unlike the American Indian or the Australian aborigines, was expected to play a permanent role in future economic development, the foundations of racial supremacy were laid deepest. Consequently, after the discovery of minerals, theories justifying the extermination of the proverbial natives lacked utility, and accordingly were not employed. 'In essence, the use of evolutionary theories stopped at the point where their employment might have been detrimental to European interests' (Cairns 1965:238). In 1877, Sir Rutherford Alcock, the President of the Royal Geographical Society, dismissed social Darwinian ideas by which the "stronger and more civilized will supplant the savage—and that it is vain to struggle against this fatality." The danger of extermination by civilization was insignificant, for not only was the climate basically inimical to Europeans, but the vast numbers of Africans, which he estimated at one hundred and eighty million, "cultivating and hardy race, with the instincts of labour, tenacity, and resistance." Rutherford was now sure that:

Man of European race will not kill them off, as they do the Red Indians by destroying their prey, nor as they did the Caribs by working them to death, or the Australians by giving them drink, or the South Sea Islanders by introducing new forms of disease, and carrying them off in a new born slave-trade. None of these dangers are to be feared now for Africans. (Quoted Cairns 1965:191)

The mines of Kimberley and the Rand were guaranteed profitability, not so much because of their diamonds and their gold, but more because the availability on the spot of a supply of ultra-cheap labour. The truth of this is well commemorated by the terminology in use in The City which according to Strachey (1959:92) has always been, and still is, in the coining of its slang at least, delightfully frank.

How apt it is that South African gold-mining shares, are known as "Kaffirs". Thus in a single word the underlying fact is revealed that what is really being exploited in South Africa is not only gold of the Rand nor the diamonds of Kimberley, but the exceptionally cheap labour of Africans, or Kaffirs, conveniently embodied in the mined gold or diamonds..

The history of the systematized and planned exploitation of African labour and land, with racism as its operative instrument, can be traced to The Glen Grey Act of 1894 as the symbolic "starting point," even if the process had been long in the making – in the wars of dispossession and the concurrent destruction of the substance economy of African chiefdoms and kingdoms, which reduced them into helots and servants of the white minority, whether English or Afrikaners. The South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC), appointed by Lord Milner in 1903, which reported its findings in 1905, made it an instrument of policy for post 1910 white minority administrations. The recommendations of SANAC demonstrate that 'racism is not a constant of the human spirit. It is disposition fitting into a well defined system of deliberately constructed exploitation.

The centrality of cheap labour to the political economy of South Africa as a *white man's country* was affirmed by Sir Lionel Phillips (1905:63), a poor Jewish immigrant who made his fortune in the gold mining industry. It was frustrating, he said, "for a great industry to employ white labour to do black men's labour." The average white worker earned £295 per annum. It was the practice to provide most white employees with lodgings at rentals that pay a bare interest upon outlay, as well as with fuel at cost price and light at a nominal charge; "and in

spite of high wages and other advantages, artisans with families are able to support them in a style only slightly better than that prevailing in England. *This being the case, it is clear that white men earning only half that sum per annum could not support wives and families, unless their manner of living was reduced to a very inferior level. They would become, in fact, a very inferior class, degraded in the eyes of the Kaffir to the level of what in America is called 'poor white trash'.* (My Italics)

The importance of cheap labour is further illustrated by Milner's importation of Chinese indentured labour after the war. Because of the dislocation caused by the war, African labour supply proved temporarily inadequate. So Milner arranged for the importation of Chinese labourers. It was characteristic of imperialism, whenever faced with the shortage of black slave labour, to import Asian indentured labour. Therefore Milner was genuinely astonished that anyone in England found anything objectionable in his doing so in South Africa. He felt it would be very strange to have crushed Boer independence in three bloody years of war, fought primarily in order to get satisfactory conditions for working the mines, and then to let everything stand in the way of working them. (Cf. Strachey 1959:93)

The brutality that accompanied the conquest of the Boer Republic may seem strange in a country that valued Europeanness or white supremacy so much. Looked at in the context of the American Civil War, it tells us something about the priorities of capital. For Milner, what was at issue in South Africa was a 'a great game between ourselves and the Transvaal for the mastery of South Africa'. The object of the war was 'uniting South Africa as a British State'. Chamberlain asserted, with characteristic clarity and hyperbole. 'Our supremacy in South Africa, and our existence as a great power in the world are involved'. (Cf. Judd 1996:163)

The outcome of the South African War reveals, more than anything, the nature of African exploitation and oppression. They were the victims of two distinct layers of European imperialism - the in-rushing and crisis ridden tide of British imperialism wanting to get hold of the mineral wealth of South Africa which found itself obstructed by decadent Boer imperialism, content to exploit African labour on a relatively smaller-scale on the farms. The British, no doubt, were the more brutal and up to date of the two. Both sides were intent upon enriching themselves on cheap black labour, either in agriculture or in the extraction of minerals. The compromise they reached after the war about citizenship illustrates this fact. In 1889, Fox Bourne, wrote an article for *The Contemporary Review*, defending the role of The Aborigines Protection Society which was being attacked for its meddling in the affairs of South Africa. Fox Bourne argument was quite simply, and explains the nature Boer English imperialism's. Though true that the eighteenth century wars of genocide against the San-Khoi were not the responsibility of the English, Fox Bourne argued,

The worst incidents between the white men and Kaffirs have happened since the supercession of the Dutch in 1814, and, if the Dutch colonists must be held primarily responsible for them, in that they set the fashion which has been followed by their own descendants, the Boers, and their English supplenters in the Cape Colony, a full share of the blame attaches to the advisors and agents of the British Crown who sanctioned continuance of a vicious policy where they did not actually promote it. For the exploits of the Boers after they began in 1834 to "trek" northward in order to escape from the English rule, and in the process of building up their two republics between the Orange River and the Limopo, they alone are accountable. But on the authorities of Dawning Street and at Cape Town falls the shame of the Kaffir Wars, so-called, of 1835, of 1846-53, and of 1857-63, and of the later wars with Kaffirs which are

distinguished by the names of the tribes or communities which were assailed without provocation, or on whom for small offences we often been guilty of . . . The wars have been generally started by colonists, or by the civil or military officials sent out by the British Government, and the British Government, and the agents in terms as warm as those applied by Lord Glenelg to Colonel— afterwards General Sir Harry-Smith in 1835, before the Aborigines Protection Society was in existence; but they have been paid for by the British people. (349)

From the signing of the Vereening Treaty in 1902, the English and Afrikaner ruling classes would never allow their quarrels to disrupt the racial order of white supremacy. The outcome of the war revealed for the first time that the interests of English capitalist, were ready and even eager to concede political supremacy to the ideas and attitudes of their erstwhile enemy, provided always that the system from which they drew their wealth was thereby guaranteed. The settlement of 1902 is historical in this sense. Thus, at crucial constitutional stages – in 1902-7, following the war; in 1909-10, when terms of unification were being decided; and again in 1936, the year in which the token Cape African franchise was being eliminated from the common voters role – both white communities showed a determination to preserve unadulterated white power. In 1948, when the Afrikaners became the hegemonic force, they inherited a state in which white supremacy was not only a *fait accompli* but was taken for granted.

Apartheid's Racial Project

The above provides the context to understand the nature of apartheid. The basic structures that in 1948, would be baptized as apartheid, had been set in place by the passage of The Glen Grey Act in 1894. To achieve the terms of the Act, in 1903 Lord Milner appointed The South Africa Native Affairs Commission (SANAC), which reported its findings in 1905. SANAC's basic recommendations became the foundation, not only of the policy of segregation, but of apartheid as well. After the formation of the Union in 1910, a series of segregation "Native laws" were enacted in the 1920s and 1930s. These laws went a long way in laying the foundations of apartheid. When the Nationalists Party (NP) assumed office in 1948, its leaders argued that they had inherited an state whose white supremacist assumption had been laid down in by the fathers of the Union.

General Smuts would have agreed with the NP. Explaining the supposedly entrenched position of African and Coloured voters in the Cape stated that: "There was a majority of people in South Africa opposed to the Native franchiser . . . On the first occasion the Parliament met it could be swept away. It was found necessary that there should be some check, perhaps it was not a powerful check at all. It had been put there, but he did not think it meant much." (cited Thompson 1960:316-317). The recommendations and assumptions of the SANAC many writers have noted were thoroughly consistent with the post 1910 developing system and ideology that would be called successively segregation, apartheid and separate development. Indeed, it is difficult to read the report without calling to mind laws that reached the statute books after 1948: the Group Areas Act, the Representation of Native Act, or Bantu Education Act.

The haphazard application of the policy of segregation, especially during the wars had caused considerable consternation in certain circles. This was particularly through of the mine workers strike of 1946, which shook the Smuts government to its foundation. Apartheid laws now subjected apartheid practices to rigorous streamlining and application. The rigour with which apartheid laws were applied rested on the principle of white supremacy and domination,

which for the NP was not negotiable.. The entire Native Administration, now called Bantu Affairs was bureaucratized. No breaches in the application of policy were to be entertained, “whatever their specific and reasonable justification,” Verwoerd looked upon the mingling of “European” and “Natives” affairs with unmitigated disapproval. (cf. Evans 1997:64)

In 1905 SANAC had pointed out that it was unacceptable for Natives to occupy land randomly and recommended that they should be confined to the reserves, describing the reserves in apocryphal terms as “the ancestral lands held by their (Natives) forefathers.” (ibid:174) The 1913 Native Land Act, the 1923 Urban Areas Act, and the Group Areas Act were all intended to clear so-called “black spots” in both rural and urban areas. African traders while allowed to pursue small-scale retail operations in buildings they would rent from local authorities, state control over trading rights would ensure that these did not develop into “large commercial enterprises that would conflict with European-owned businesses.” Once they had accumulated trading skills and small amounts of capital in urban areas, Bantu traders would be “returned to the Native reserves where [they] will enjoy a monopoly in commerce” as soon as “the formation of towns through closer settlements in the [reserves] was underway.” (ibid:151:2)

White supremacy was the essential ideological anchor on which “white South Africa” was founded. And the Nationalist Party policy of apartheid pursued the logic without flinching. As the appetite for cheap black labour grew, and the process African proletarianization ensured, segregation evolved logically into apartheid. Grand apartheid, so-called, was an attempt by the white ruling class to have its cake and eat it too. Cheap, non-unionized African labour was essential to maximize profits of white capital. Hence, a permanent black proletariat in industries and cities they had spawned, that in 1923 were designated “the white man’s creation” was inevitable. Even as they grew rich on black labour, the rulers feared the political consequences of a class conscious black working class. Thus the scheme to control and making the black working class presence in cities as insecure as it would be possible. Since the passage of the Urban Areas Act in 1923, Africans lived in cities in conditions of institutionalized pathology, to use Cell’s apt phrase. (Cell 1982:244) That is, the basis in which the Bantu, (the name used by apartheid ideologues gave to Africans), were allowed in “white South Africa,” said M. C. Botha, the Minister of Bantu Administration, on August 20, 1976, was “to sell their labour and nothing else.”

Developments in the course of World War Two, were a watershed. The influx of Africans into the urban industries exacerbated all the social, cultural and political contradictions already imbedded in the political economy premised on white supremacy. The structural contradictions can be summed up in a few statistics. The proportion of Africans registered as “urban” stood at 19 percent in 1936 of the whole urban population, but had grown to 24.3 per cent by 1946, while in absolute figures, the number of Africans living more or less permanently in cities was more than half as large as the 1936 total. Seen from another angle, the number of Africans employed in manufacturing had risen by 57 per cent between 1936 and 1945 or from 156,000 to 245,400. This flow of African workers into industry continued, so that by 1948, when the full effects of wartime expansion could begin to be measured, urbanized Africans accounted for 80.8 per cent of unskilled employees, 34.2 per cent of semi-skilled and 5.8 of skilled in urban occupations and subject to wage regulations. (Cf. Davidson 1994:113)

It was this influx of black labour into “white areas” that constituted the “swaart gevaar” or “black danger” that apartheid social engineering would try to control.. Within the ethos of racist segregation this dependence of the “white economy” on black called for a drastic reorganization and reinforcement of the customary racial legal infrastructure. Logically for that

ethos and system, the year 1948, accordingly brought into power a government vowed to the installation a a full-scale system of white supremacy already envisaged by Lord Milner.

Indeed, looking back at the period 1948 to the present, apartheid provided the English-speaking and overseas owners of South African capital and economic power a means of increasing their wealth and influence, which you see reflected everywhere in this country. At the same time, it offered Africans capital a first real chance of preparing a serious challenge to the English minority's predominance in mining, manufacturing industry and in administrative control. Up to 1948, the government the country was carried on by the General Smuts United Party, a party in which the interests of the English minority were generally paramount, or were politically accepted as such (even if with Afrikaner participation). The war produced conditions that were to undermine that paramountancy in the political field, but also increasingly in the economic field as well. Indeed, apartheid offered Afrikaner capital a room to grow through control of State institutions; not at the expense of English capital, but of that of the so-called non-whites. For example, the Group Areas Act, not only enabled Afrikaners to appropriate the best real estate from Coloureds and Indians, but to exclude any competition in retail sector from these groups in so-called native areas.

It has become a common intellectual practice in South Africa today to blame everything on the Afrikaner and their practice of apartheid. The above synopsis, I hope suggests otherwise. If South Africa was to be a "white man's country," in the sense in which it should be, i. e., built on cheap black labour, the election of the Nationalist Party in 1948 constituted something of a referendum among white voters on the viability of Milner's assumptions. The post World War II. decolonization movement posed the question that Trollope had raised in his book, *South Africa*, even more sharply than ever before. "South Africa," he said, "was the country of the black men, and not of the white men—it has been so, it will be so." Thus even as the economy of "white South Africa" enriched itself on black labour, African, with his continued numerical majority of three to one, constituted what NP called the *swart gevaar* (black peril). Through its policy of apartheid the NP promised to be up to the challenge. And the white electorate, with hesitation at first gave them the mandate almost forty-years.

From 1948, the NP seized the initiative, pushing through the apartheid legislation that protected white interests behind still-net of laws that regulated every aspect of black life, while guaranteeing the availability and cheapness of black labour. The interesting about apartheid's legislative program is that it did not introduce white supremacy to South Africa, rather it built on a deeply rooted ideas of the Age of Europe as they had been adapted to the conditions of South Africa, where Africans who had been factored in as a permanent part of the labour force constituted the overwhelming majority of the population.

The various laws passed by the apartheid regime are well known to require rehearsing here. Suffice it for me to mention a few. The first series of Acts were intended to alter the demographic pattern of the country by formalizing unbridgeable divisions among so-called non-Whites—Africans, Coloureds and Indians. These laws included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, (1949), the Population Registration Act, and the Immorality Act. I say formalized, because Lord Selbourne, high commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony after the war had spelled out how to divide Coloureds from Africans in order to ensure cheap labour and to deprive Africans of what he called Coloured political leadership. Among other things he suggested that the object of policy toward the Coloured should be teach them to give loyal support to the white population by giving them benefit of their white blood. "It seems to me sheer folly to classify them with Natives.' For the

Natives the object of policy was preserve peace of the country and to force the Natives to work. The descendants of indentured Indian labour were to be deported. (see Magubane 1979:10-11)

The Group Areas Act by ensuring physical separation would enhance ethnic exclusiveness, and thus guarantee divisions and subordinate groups. In the political sphere the Suppression of Communism Act (1950) and the South Africa Act Amendment Act (1956) which removed from the common voting role the Coloured voters, tighten further the white minority political power, already enshrined in the South Africa Act of 1909. These measures should suffice to put apartheid in perspective. In the post World War II era of decolonization a “white South Africa,” let alone white supremacy had become an anomaly, hence the fiction of “granting” the “reserves”--reservoirs of cheap “independence” under the defunct chieftainship system. In the crazy mind of apartheid ideologues, the *bantustans* were to be only sanctioned outlets for African political participation. In the meantime *baasskap* legislation would control every movement of the African, limit his intellectual development through Bantu Education, which prepared him for certain subordinate positions in the “white” economy.

In no essentials, since the brutal wars of conquest and dispossession, has the logic of white supremacy changed the fundamental exploitative relations between “white” and “black”, (the latter term inclusive of Africans, Asians and Coloureds). Only the language expressing the reality of oppression became more Orwellian. Crude forms of outright enslavement were now expressed as “separate” development, to respect the cultural integrity of what was now called a “plural society”. This is the nightmare inherited by post-apartheid South Africa – racial categorization run-mad,

Conclusion:

The struggle between rich and poor ... is not merely a struggle over work, property rights, grain and cash. It is also a struggle over appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history (Scott 1985,xvii)

Now that I have sketched the principal events that made, *race* to use C. Wright Mill’s a master concept, to explain the exclusionary citizenship of white settler states: the meaning of the transformation of 1994 can now be put in perspective. The South Africa Act of 1909 was tantamount to political death for Africans, in particular, and Coloureds and Indians in general. With no legal status, social standing or public worth, except as pure labour, black people were politically alienated. They had no rights that signified being political subjects. In discussing the political exclusion of the Africans in South Africa, we cannot ignore the tragedy that befell indigenous peoples in white settler states, like Australia, Canada, New Zealand. Nor can we ignore the systematic exclusion of African Americans in the United States that occurred as South Africa was being constituted as a white dominion.

It is in this context that the defeat of white supremacist regime in 1994 was a major turning point; tantamount to what Nadine Gordimer (1994:8) calls a resurrection. The victims of what in the mid 1850s, seemed deemed for extinction rose from the tomb of the entire

colonial past shared out among the Dutch, the French, the British, and their admixture of other Europeans. Africans in particular, rose from the tomb of segregated housing, squatter camps, slum schools, job restriction, forced removals from one part of the country to another; from burial of all human aspirations and dignity under the humiliation of discrimination by race and skin, this people rose for the first time in history, with the right to elect a government to govern themselves. A sacred moment was represented in the act of putting a mark on a ballot

For Mr. Mandela, (1994:544), the first President of a democratic South Africa, 1994 did not mean *Uhuru* yet.: “The truth is that we are not yet free; we merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For, to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The task of our devotion to freedom is just beginning.”

If we consider the implications of what Gordimer and Mandela says the post 1994 challenge – the breath and depth of the transformation that needs to be undertaken is enormous. The preamble to the final 1996 Constitution posed the challenge for the future as follows.

We, the people of South Africa, recognize the injustices of our past ... [and] believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. / We therefore adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to heal the divisions of the past ... [and] to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person. (Cited Mbeki 1998:68)

This Constitution provides an historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterized by strife, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of humanity of the wretched of the earth. Democracy and peaceful coexistence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of class, colour, race, belief or sex is the new charter of the country. The pursuit of national unity, the wellbeing of all South African citizens and peace required reconciliation between ‘master and slave’ and the reconstruction of society. In its ‘Founding Provisions’, the Constitution says the ‘New South Africa’ has as one of its values ‘commitment to promote non-racialism and non-sexism’. This is the challenge that has faced the Government of National Unity (GNU) since 1994.

The speech in which the then Deputy President Mbeki quoted the above excerpts was entitled “South Africa: Two Nations”. The occasion was the opening of the debate on reconciliation and nation building. Benjamin Disraeli in his novel *Sybil* (1845), first used the metaphor of Two Nations to describe the ‘condition of England’ in the 1840s. The want and distress that afflicted hordes of the lowest and worst of the urban poor had constituted them into what was tantamount to two nations. The poor were forced to live in wretched conditions, which they had learned to call home. “Yet these are to be, some are the mothers of England! But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language, when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives.”

The Deputy President wanted to remind Parliament that in the squatter camps, townships, hostels of migrant workers, who produced the prosperity enjoyed by the white community, life for black people was bleak, and that reconciliation if these conditions were not alleviated, would come to naught. As he put it:

We therefore make bold to say that South Africa is a country of two nations. / One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or

geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economy, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility to exercise their right to equal opportunity, the development to which the Constitution of 1993 committed our country.

The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation. (Pp. 71-2)

The speech touched a sensitive nerve, and the opposition and its press, went ‘bananas’ so to say. The beneficiaries of white supremacy do not want to be reminded of the ugly face of the past. They accused the Deputy President (and now President), of being divisive, of reverse racism. And, indeed, of playing the race card! In the post 1994 era the accusations of racism hurled against the ANC were a way of avoiding confronting the real fundamental issues, by targeting emotional issues that frighten the white community. Tony Leon, the machiavellian leader of the Democratic Party, now the hegemonic opposition force, claims that his party stands for ‘colour blind’ society, in which ‘merit’ alone should be criteria for advancement, rather than ‘race’ based affirmative action.

Colour blindness, in a society riven by class, gender and spatial disparities born of the structural injustices of capitalism, themselves entrenched by a legal system of racism, which over a long period of white minority domination guaranteed white privileges, is disingenuous and bad faith. Far from being anti-racist, it uses the hard-worn democratic dispensation to deligitimize progressive social reform that can only be done by the state. Its appeal lies in the fact that it liquidates the long history of social injustices through the cynical use of the concept of ‘merit’. Like its counter-parts in the United States and Britain it works by circumventing classical anti-racist discourse by appropriating it for reactionary ends. By shifting criticism from the biological attributes of Africans to the criticism of affirmative programs, it dovetails well with neo-liberal conservatism with its anti-statism.

Analysis of Tony Leon and his Democratic Party’s ‘anti-racism’ must begin with the social classes that his party represents. The DP antecedents are the Liberal Party, which always saw itself as the ‘soft’ face of capitalism. Following the demise of the Nationalist Party, when it tried to re-invent itself as the New National Party (NNP), the DP rose to fill the void. Leon’s aggressive style is unabashed in its appeal to the worst fears capital re the Tripartite Alliance of the ANC, the SACP, and COSATU and those white voters who distrust a black government. One of the constant themes in Leon’s drum-bit, is that South Africa is mis-governed by the ANC, and is descending to the level of the rest of the continent; and that ANC talk of redistribution is frightening of foreign capital and investments. Indeed, in order to counter the ANC’s National Democratic Revolution, the DP counter revolutionary strategy tries to conserve the dominance of capital at the expense of the poor, who are mostly Africans. Its program aims to do the following:

- The rapid and large-scale privatization of the public sector;

- The weakening of the state, by making it ‘lean and mean’, through massive budgetary reductions of everything except its mean side (law and order), the better to protect private property;
- The massive restructuring of the working class through mass retrenchments, casualization, and the creation of a two tier labour market
- The re-integration of the South African economy into the imperialist network, through liberalization and the dropping of any impediments to the export of capital, and
- The partial de-racialization of the bourgeoisie and the professional middle strata. (SACP Politburo June 2000)

Tony Leon put the DP neo-liberal conservatism as follows:

Where the ANC's solution to almost every problem is to make a bigger government, we say let's make individual lives better. On the one side is the ANC, which believes in big, centralised government ... The DP stands for an opportunity society where individuals have the freedom and the physical means to improve their lives and lives of their children. We will continue to oppose the new racism. We want a country built on opportunity, fuelled by peaceful commerce, driven by the spirit of enterprise, founded on justice, fairness and merit, protected by the law. (Quoted Umrabulo, no 8:21-22)¹⁵

In South Africa, despite legal end of white rule, racial oppression, class inequalities remain deeply rooted. The impact of the DP program would be devastating. Colour-blindness criticizes government-sponsored programs to alleviate structural injustices of capitalism and ignores 350 years of white domination and dispossession. That fact alone is not surprising, what is shocking is that those who benefited from the injustices of white supremacy and colonial dispossession remain inured to their own privileges. They are unable to and unwilling to recognize the realities and the fundamental historical injustices of the society that gave them all the benefits they now take for granted. Indeed,

After a transition to democracy characterized by breathtaking magnanimity on the part of the black majority, after more than three years of devastating Truth and Reconciliation Commission testimonies documenting the appalling parameters of apartheid inhumanity, white society seems resolutely unwilling to acknowledge those truths or to respond with caring and generosity. Better to forget the past, deny the present, and to use a favorite phrase, “get on with our lives.” (Statman 1999:36)

The metaphor of ‘The Two Nations’ cannot be understood without understanding the class divisions inherent in the capitalist mode of production. The democratic breakthrough of 1994 makes this very clear. According to Marx, ‘every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as in the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power.’ This is the critical importance of 1994. The fundamental cause of powerlessness for the

¹⁵ On affirmative action and colour-blindness see Tony Leon, *Hope and Fear: Reflections of a Democrat*, Johannesburg, Ball Publishers, 1998:117-8, 133-4, 163-4, 183, 217, 225 . On ‘new’ racialism see pp. 132-4, 176-8)

liberation movement, it is now clear to every one, except to the Democratic Party, derives from lack of control of productive control, from class position, and not from the fact of being black. *The Strategy and Tactics of the African National congress* adopted at the 50th Conference in Mafeking 1997, analyzed the class nature of apartheid exploitation as follows:

In class terms, apartheid ensured that blacks occupy the lowest rungs of colonial capitalism: as the unemployed and landless rural masses; as unskilled and semi-skilled workers; as professionals squashed between the rock of poverty and the glass ceiling of job reservation; and as petty business operators confined to spaza retail trade and a disorganized mini-bus sector ... but never at the heart of the country's industry. Ranged against them, yet feeding on their condition was a collection of white classes and strata: workers, the middle strata, small business and, particularly, the monopoly capitalists

To create a society and/ or nation based on genuine equality of opportunity for all persons consequently requires examining the connections between racism and capitalist production and accumulation. Power derives from control over the means of production. Racists practices e. g., the denial of the vote intensified the degree of powerless among blacks. As West (1982:115-6) puts it:

Class position contributes more than racial status to the basic form of powerlessness... Only class divisions can explain the gross disparity between rich and power, the immense benefits accruing to the [white] and the depravity of the [black].

This does not mean, by any stretch of the imagination, that the category of class in the post apartheid South Africa should replace the category of race in the analysis of the conditions that constitute African life. In post apartheid South Africa, white racist, at home and abroad, hold the view that majority rule inevitably means authoritarian rule, incompetence and corruption. Nowhere is this view being cultivated than today in South Africa, especially by the ideologues of the Democratic Party

There is no question that 1994 represented a strategic defeat for the forces that were the main beneficiaries of white supremacy. However because this was achieved through a negotiated process, it means that forces arrayed against the strategic objective of creating a true non-racial, democratic, non-sexist and united South Africa still hold important positions. The ANC's policy of transparency, together with the freedom of the press, has given reactionary elements in the press unfair ideological advantage in the discussion of AIDS, crime, corruption etc. Blaming everything on the ANC has become to new hobby of the opposition parties and their press, Basking in the new freedoms, they have forgotten how venal things were when white supremacy was the governing principle in the country. Their preoccupation with preserving their still intact privileges tested Mandela patience, who described their whining as 'pessimism of armchair'.

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