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Three talks on the topic:

'What is Racism?'

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What is Racism?

Barney Pityana

South Africa's previous social and political structure, founded unashamedly on racist concepts, has taken a very long time to dismantle. For many years South Africa was ruled by a white minority, with most Blacks, Indians and Coloureds excluded from the political sphere. With apartheid we saw the phenomenon of institutionalised racism. The social engineering which took place over the past 50 years to entrench minority rule meant that most South Africans experienced a pervasive exclusion from society. But the racist system in our country did not begin with apartheid. It began way back, from the moment White people came as settlers from Europe and asserted their hegemony over the indigenous peoples they found here.

After 1994 we all believed we had overcome this racist system. We sincerely believed the fruits of the struggles of many South Africans, Black and White, to remove a system that had no place in civilized humanity, were at last born. Many paid a very high price for this victory. We looked forward to a system that was democratic, based on human rights and founded on human dignity. Many South Africans embraced the idea of such a society with enthusiasm. It was so different from the system we as South Africans lived with for such a long time and knew so well – the system of racial hierarchy which dictated that racial characteristics – visible or not so visible – bestowed value. Those essentials determined

what you were capable of, what kind of person you were, what your station in life was. This system of discrimination and differentiation led to the exclusion of many people from full participation in national life and from full enjoyment of what David Goldberg calls 'social goods'. Social goods were no longer available in the same way as they were to others who were considered to be of higher value.

There were many reasons why this system evolved. The main motivation was obviously power. Those in power wanted to safeguard their capacity to enjoy the social goods to the exclusion of others. But what started it all was prejudice – in other words, the act of making an a priori judgement about another person based on his or her physical characteristics, with no rational basis. Prejudice involves judging a person's capabilities, behaviour and moral codes, just by looking at them. But prejudice extends beyond the individual to the group. It also judges one moral universe espoused by a particular culture or religious group as lower or higher than another.

But we all know, and I think people have known for a long time, that we can't live in a system which has something mythical and untrue about it. It has served as a social construct for a long time even though people have known intellectually that it could not last. But because the system has lasted so long, it has become entrenched in many ways. And this is the difficulty that South Africans face. The system is not just about individual prejudice, about whether I like you or not. It evolved into a whole value system – a moral environment or universe that we have lived with for a long time. It is far greater than individual prejudice or individual power.

Paul Gilroy said that racism is prejudice brought to consciousness. In a sense all of us harbour prejudice. Not all prejudice is necessarily vile. It is partly what makes us human. But it becomes a matter of very deep concern when we bring those prejudices to a certain level of consciousness so that they affect the way we see and relate to other people.

We need to understand that prejudice has a lot to do with symbols, with the appropriation of symbols, with the interpretation and understanding of history, and with identity. And that is why it is crucial for us as South Africans to really challenge and interrogate the system within which we work and live. We need to interrogate our "value systems" – the things we take for granted, the things we live by that we bestow a "higher value" on than other things we don't truly know. We set ourselves apart from and at a higher level to other value systems.

Over 300 years a certain system with its own moral order was put in place in South Africa. It subverted a system which was in existence before, and established itself as the higher order in our society. But the African traditional system has continued to live, bubbling subversively under the surface. It has had to find a resilience and vibrancy to sustain itself despite the dominance of the system that sought to suppress it for a very long time.

Anyone who comes to South Africa is struck by how European everything about the country is. Njabulo Ndebele, a friend of mine, says that what strikes him most about Cape Town as an African, is how invisible Africanness is in the city. You go to the shops, the sports field at Newlands and as an African you experience a sense of invisibility. This invisibility of ourselves in our own country is actually very deep in our society. And most of us have learned to live with this.

We African people who are middle class, educated, and generally English-speaking, have had to live with this double consciousness, which W.E.B. Du Bois talks about. We are African because we cannot be anything else, because at the very least our skins tell us so. And underneath our skins certain cultures and traditions still exist. At the same time, however, we are part of another world which we must inhabit because it provides us with the key to social values. And so we live with this double consciousness all the time -- a major manifestation of the racist character of South African society.

The issue of racism has concerned modern human rights culture for a very long time. In 1965 the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination was adopted by the general summit of the United Nations. There racism was defined as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of private life". Over time we have come to interrogate this often-used definition of racial discrimination. We have come to realise that it is no longer possible to embrace a particular philosophy of life that suggests that people with certain characteristics, by virtue of those characteristics, are less and therefore have less entitlement to the social goods than anyone else. It is this philosophy that allows people to discriminate against and exclude others.

Many South Africans find it difficult to accept that discrimination exists at many levels and does not merely disappear because an individual has no intention to discriminate against another. Merely by operating within a system you bestow certain values on another to place yourself at a higher level than that person. Now this is what we are seeking to address in South Africa – the many different levels of discrimination.

We've removed evidence of the formalised apartheid system. We've removed the "Nie Blankes" and the "Non-European" signs. But racism continues to manifest in our society in more subtle forms. For example you can exclude someone from accessing a bond by simply saying, "The people in Hillbrow generally don't repay their bonds". So the bank redlines Hillbrow and the bank manager legitimately tells anyone with an address in Hillbrow, "I can't grant a bond for a flat there". Of course the people who live in Hillbrow are mostly black. Thus, without even referring to race, a whole group of people are excluded because of their race.

The police use this same form of discrimination all the time. If you walk in the street, in a crime-ridden area, as a black person, there is a suspicion that because you are black, you may well be involved in crime. So police stop and search you and demand all sorts of things from you.

Both direct and indirect forms of racism exist in South Africa and we are struggling to get rid of the latter. We need to focus on the systemic nature of racism. It exists at the very foundation of our society. To deal effectively with this we need to address some very fundamental issues about the way our society works. This is difficult because these issues involve deeply-held feelings, beliefs and perceptions about identity. We need to begin to open these up and say: 'do we really need to organise society in this way?', 'do we really need to understand excellence and achievement in particular ways?' We talk all the time about how we are a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious society,

but how do we take these facts seriously? In reality all other cultures are subservient, or what the African-Americans call "subaltern", to the dominant hegemonic cultures in our society.

Uprooting Racism: Dismantling a System Built on a Myth

Franz Auerbach

A. Racism and xenophobia

I suppose we are discussing the topic of racism because in a month's time South Africa is hosting the UN Conference on the same topic. But a word of caution: the international conference has a longer name, and that is certainly not accidental. It is a Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. And we should admit that in our country there has been such a wave of xenophobia that our Human Rights Commission has launched a "Roll back Xenophobia" campaign. And we must also admit that those who, in the area of racism, consider themselves to be victims both past and present, are among the perpetrators in the area of xenophobia, the dislike of aliens. (Admittedly many South African racists also express hostility to foreigners.) So if we are to prepare for Durban, we should really be looking at both racism and xenophobia because both are clearly endemic in our country at the present time.

Because of this, I propose to begin by stressing that both phenomena really result from a dislike of strangers which has been a widespread phenomenon in many human societies down the ages, including the present. In the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament, there are 36 admonitions to treat the stranger like the "homeborn" - and the reason given is "because you were strangers in Egypt." Of course the admonitions are a reflection of intolerance: the text wouldn't mention this so often if people didn't need reminding - as, alas, people still do in many lands of the world, including South Africa. Suspicion against strangers arises from the fact that almost by definition strangers are "different", especially when they first arrive among "us" - "they speak funny, they sometimes dress funny, they behave funny too.."

And so, because they are different, we see them as competitors, and easily accuse them of stealing from us - our jobs, our women and our houses - and we sometimes look on them as being criminals. Whenever a criminal is of foreign origin this is stressed in reports about him or her. Professor Omotoso, who teaches English literature in Cape Town and is well-known in South Africa because of the Yebo gogo TV advertisement, is a Nigerian, but this is rarely mentioned, whereas drug or currency smugglers from Nigeria have that label attached to them in every report. ("Most strangers have vile characters!")

This reminder about the need to include xenophobia among the intolerances we need to combat is not intended to diminish the importance of studying racism as a particularly obnoxious form of intolerance. Curiously, in South Africa, "darker" pigmentation is currently used by a variety of state officials to harass, arrest and even deport aliens and supposed aliens - so it is not only members of one ethnic group in our country who use skin colour to condemn others.

We need to remember that the use of differences in appearance to condemn people, to treat them as different, strange, inferior, is not new, nor is it confined to one part of the world.

But among the categories of man's inhumanity to man (using the word to include both genders) racism is specially obnoxious because classifying people by race - even when it's not done by the law, as was once the case in South Africa - is unalterable. You may change your language, religion or opinions to fit into a new country, but you can't change your "race" (nor, indeed, your gender, which makes sexism as objectionable as racism.)

There is actually only one human race, but people choose not to believe this. So let's look at these words more closely.

Race - a group of persons or animals or plants connected by common descent; house, family, tribe or nation regarded as of common stock, distinct ethnical stock (Caucasian, Mongoloid, Negroid race). (That this classification leaves out hundreds of millions of people who don't fit exactly into these categories is hardly ever mentioned or considered.)

It is doubtful if there ever were "pure" human races; there certainly are none now. But the whole racist view is based on the fallacy that there are pure races. Without this fallacy, there can be no racism as a theory, often almost as a creed, and without that racist beliefs and practices might begin to fall away more quickly.

Racism is the theory and belief that human abilities, especially mental and character qualities, are determined by race. THIS IS NOT TRUE, but millions of people believe it - maybe not as many as in 1880 or 1930, but still millions.

We should also remember that the word race has been loosely used of many groups of people seen as "of common descent"; sixty years ago in South Africa people often spoke of the two white races, English and Afrikaners (meaning white people with Afrikaans as home language.) The belief that there are three major human races and that they differ in mental ability, first put forward in 1853, is not supported by science, but remains widespread.

Science, we need to know, is firm in stating that the human race is ONE race. I quote from a 1969 Unesco document:

- All men living today belong to the same species and descend from a common stock.
- Differences between individuals within a race or within a population are often greater than the average differences between races or populations.
- No biological justification exists for prohibiting intermarriage between persons of different races, or for advising against it on racial grounds. In fact, the genes determining race or colour make up only about 5% of our genes.

That groups of people who "grew up together", or in similar cultural environments, will share many character traits is broadly true - but even this is so only broadly. Anyone who knows a family of several brothers and sisters will know that siblings are often very unlike one another in several respects and may have very different characters (that's why they often quarrel...)

B. False beliefs

I mentioned that the belief in inherited "racial" character qualities is widespread, but that doesn't make it true. We ought to teach this in our schools, but we don't. In a lecture I gave

in 1992 I said that in the twentieth century teachers had failed to teach certain things properly. I gave the example of three things which we do learn at school, and learn so well that no misleading talk or propaganda will persuade people afterwards that these things are false. The three examples are that pigs don't fly; that two and three make five, not four; and that though the sun may be hidden behind clouds for a whole day, we know it will rise again tomorrow.

Yet many people believe

- that racial identity determines character and intelligence;
- that history is the result of conspiracy by a few villains;
- that natural disasters, illnesses and other misfortunes that happen to us are caused by the evil plots or spells cast by our neighbours.

We should teach children that these three things are also false, and we should teach them so well that propaganda and agitation will not make people go back to believing such nonsense.

Some people believe that things deep in human consciousness can't be dislodged, that what is seen as true can't easily be accepted as being false, more especially if believing it to be true is to the advantage of the person concerned. Well, let me give three examples to show that some former beliefs have been dislodged by knowing the true facts. Firstly, if you think about it you will realise that the illness malaria has this name because people once believed it was caused by bad air. We now accept that it's not caused by "bad air" but by a parasite carried by the female anopheles mosquito. Secondly, for thousands of years women were held responsible if they gave birth to girl children only. Today we know that some of the man's chromosomes in fact determine the sex of the baby. So it's not the "fault" of the woman if a marriage doesn't "produce" sons, in spite of many tales, in the Bible and in many other places, which say she must get the blame. And thirdly those of us who are older have grown up with the belief that smoking is a fairly harmless pleasure that people can enjoy innocently. We now know that that belief is not true: Tobacco smoke is harmful to health, and can have serious medical consequences, even causing death.

I give these examples in order to make the point that the beliefs of the racists can and must also be dislodged. The two racist beliefs that are simply false are that there are "pure" races of humans, and that if you belong to a specific "race" this will determine the extent of your mental and character qualities, and that somehow people of Negroid stock are less bright and less competent than other humans... I shall come back to the origins and consequences of racist theories later.

C. Classifying people: multiple identities

There have been many attempts to classify human beings into various categories. Pigmentation, since it is "obvious", is a favourite system of classification. There have been others, e.g. according to temperament, believed to be of four kinds of body fluid (humours) "determining physical and mental qualities"; according to the shape and size of the skull, or the size of the brain. Many of these attempts occurred in the nineteenth century, and tended to lean on Darwin's theory of evolution - mainly by assuming that within the human race as it has been living on this planet for the past few thousand years there must be evolutionary

developments - always of such a nature that those who develop the theories belong to a human group that is better or higher on the ladder of evolution than some others they study. (Of course Darwin didn't say that, but this view fitted the popular beliefs of the age - and justified treating some humans as inferior.)

For some time I have pondered the whole idea of classifying human beings. The twentieth century was full of demands on human beings to be loyal to a single identity, usually based only on "race" or nation, sometimes on religion. Now human beings aren't actually like that. Each of us has various identities. I am a human being, but also a male, a South African, of the Jewish faith, of white pigmentation. And I have links with Germany because I was born there. But even those six don't define me adequately - I could be classified in many other ways. Professionally I've been a teacher, and a free-lance journalist. Like most people, I have certain interests in the sports and cultural fields. When I enjoy one of those, say watching a play, I will feel some affinity with others in the theatre. Then I have lived in Johannesburg for most of my life, and like other people I have some feeling for my province and my city. I'm also a husband and a father.

Yet all those identities may be irrelevant to members of this audience who have noted that I'm elderly, and therefore likely to have habits and opinions that are out of date.... So age is a powerful classifier of human beings, as is youth; sometimes weight or height might be too. If I am among people many of whom are sick or handicapped, my good health might "classify" me. Which of these is the most important should depend on particular situations. I should not be pigeon-holed just because of my colour or language.. In fact we all have multiple identities. It is important to reflect that if we consider all these identities we will realise that people of different "races", or different languages or religions, in fact have far more characteristics in common than those we use to classify them as different. If we could all accept this, many inter-group tensions would lessen.

D. Origins of "scientific" racism

Let me return to the origins of racism. Though attempts to classify human beings according to "race" are older, the starting point of modern racism was the publication in 1853 of the "Essay on the Inequality of Human Races" by the French Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. He maintained that the three major races - black, yellow and white - differed not only in appearance but also in mental qualities, and proved to his own satisfaction that only those of the white race were capable of mental creativity, while those who belonged to the yellow or Mongoloid race could only imitate, and blacks lacked the ability to do either. He also maintained that where civilisations had declined this was due to the dominant "race" mixing with an inferior "race". In 1899 Houston Stewart Chamberlain published a two-volume work on "The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century" in which he took this theory further to show that the Teutonic or Aryan race was the creator of most advanced civilisation, and that this occurred from the time when the Teutonic races accepted Christianity. Chamberlain regarded the Jews as a negative and alien influence incompatible with the Teutonic or Aryan spirit.

On the foundations of these two the National Socialists built their race theories and practices. The dominant idea, that the superior races were entitled to more of the earth's land and resources because of their superior value to humanity, was not of course their invention, but they carried it to the extreme of deliberately exterminating millions of those

they regarded as inferior or harmful.

We need to note that they most certainly did not regard all "whites" as equal - Aryans were superior not only to Jews and Slavs and Blacks, but also to the southern Europeans of the Mediterranean area. The racism built on the Gobineau-Chamberlain foundation permeated much economic, social and political thought and practice, particularly during 1850-1950. I believe it remains widespread in many heads in many parts of the world.

E. Racism persists - Let's beat it

However, one cannot of course maintain that it was a necessary foundation for the practice of slavery, which is an institution going back a few thousand years in human history. Nor was the new scientific racism of the nineteenth century needed before colonial overlords could feel and assert their superiority, an assumed superiority so tellingly expressed in Kipling's famous phrase about the "lesser breeds without the law." I would, however, maintain that "scientific racism" gave colonial rule a veneer of justification it did not have before. Its critical component was the belief that character and intelligence are inescapably related to "race", and that they are hereditary.

This was often expressed by saying that character and intelligence are racially transmitted in the blood - even though this is clearly incompatible with the famous verse in Acts 17 vs 26 in the New Testament, "And he has made from one blood every nation of men". If it's in the blood, then you must keep your "blood" pure by forbidding intermarriage with people of other "races". We have known for decades that the 3 or 4 blood groups that exist in the human race are not linked to "races", even though the frequency of a specific blood group within a population may vary from one ethnic group to another. (H.S. Chamberlain referred to the Migrations that were widespread in Europe during the fourth and fifth centuries AD as the Chaos of the Nations because he believed that its "race mixture" had led to the collapse of the civilisation of the Roman Empire.)

We need to be aware that the belief in the superiority of one's own group doesn't have to be tied to a racist view of the world. It was India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, who once said that every nation seems at some stage to have nurtured the belief that it was superior to all others. But if you believe that your own superiority is due to heredity - to your blood or genes - then that's a very comfortable reason for feeling that "We're better than you." That is, of course, arrogant, and this arrogance will incline people to use their superiority to dominate, at times to enslave, those others rather than seek to ensure that "they" catch up with us, or that we might learn something from them.

One of the absurdities of racism is that where it is dominant it makes harsh rules, including some ridiculous ones. Of this apartheid South Africa was a prime but of course by no means the only example. I think it's a fair generalisation to say that where a racist group is dominant it makes harsh rules that are enforced on the dominated but allows itself to do pretty much as it pleases. It made laws enforcing race classification, and some that forced the dominated to accept poorer quality education, health services and living areas, and confined them to lower status jobs and life chances. Control through ID documents and forced removals of black people to bleak, unprepared rural were particularly harsh. There were more absurd ones like separate lifts and entrances and separate park benches. Then of course there were laws against mixed marriages and rules to say that blacks and whites may

not sit down together to a meal in a public restaurant. Some other countries have made similar absurd rules.

We need to know that racism, seen simply as unfair treatment of people because of their ethnic background, is also rampant outside Africa and North America - for example in Britain, where people of Asian, African and Caribbean descent make up about 6% of the population. Such racism may take the form of non-promotion in a job, assignment to lower grade educational paths, abusive language, non-allocation of housing and also of racial attacks such as recently happened in Oldham and Bradford.

So prejudices against "strangers", strongly reinforced by racist beliefs, may cause quite horrible incidents - even where the law forbids them. I do think that if we cannot alter the beliefs, the racist behaviour will persist.

I therefore suggest that it is more important to disprove racist beliefs than to dwell too much on our suffering from racism. At the same time I agree that we must make people, including young people, aware of the suffering racism has caused in the past, and to some extent continues to cause in the present. People need to learn what others suffered under apartheid and other forms of racism. But the deeply entrenched beliefs must be tackled head-on, and we must make sure that our schools teach the truth about "race" and especially that intelligence and character are not functions of "race".

Beliefs based on fixed impressions we call stereotypes are quite hard to dislodge. We should realise that this is partly because current life experience may reinforce them. If you believe ALL whites are racists, you may experience and read about enough day-to-day examples to reinforce this belief, even though it's not true. Similarly, if you believe MOST young black men are criminals the experience that a majority of petty thieves and hijackers in your town are in fact young black males (of whom there are in any case about six times as many as young white males, quite apart from poverty and unemployment) will make you think that your stereotype of them is correct, even though it's clearly not true.

Let me end by giving three examples of racist expressions to show its insidious nature. The first concerns the immigration to South Africa of German refugees - mostly but not entirely Jewish - during the thirties. Immigration rules were made more difficult, and so a ship, the "Stuttgart", was chartered to bring 537 refugees to Cape Town in October 1936 before the new rules would be applied from 1 November. The Greyshirts (a South African version of the Nazi brownshirt movement) held a big protest meeting the night before, but the next day the Cape Town Jewish community organised a great welcome. Concerned people arranged that jobs were found for most of the refugees soon after their arrival. Less than 3 weeks after the arrival of the ship, a Stellenbosch professor, protesting against the admission of these refugees, said, "It is astonishing that all these refugees have already been found jobs - bread which they take out of the mouths of Afrikaners." The professor was Dr H.F. Verwoerd. (My father was on that ship.)

Secondly, a comment from another quarter. During an amnesty hearing in KwaZulu-Natal last year, a man was asked why in an incident of violence young people, perhaps children, as well as older ones had been killed. His answer was "A snake gives birth to a snake." Still a widely held view....

Thirdly, you may remember that Professor Asmal recently drew attention to the fact that black girls were achieving much poorer results in the Matric mathematics examination than boys, and that the results of black pupils generally were still poorer than those of white pupils. He felt this should spur us on to give such pupils better tuition and extra help, so that their results would improve. The official organ of the HNP, "Die Afrikaanse", however, reported this under the heading "Blacks can't do mathematics", and elaborated this view in a long article in which it was assumed the results were "clearly" due to genetic defects!

If we want to reduce the scourge of racism, we need to work hard to reduce the number of people who still have such beliefs.

What is racism?

Basil Manning

Thank you to all of you and also to C.S.V.R. for this opportunity to share some thoughts on what is really a very challenging issue and continues to be so in our country. I was born into a racist South Africa, I was born into a sexist South Africa, I was born into a racist world, I was born into a sexist world. It is not my fault that I was born into a racist and sexist world. I don't have to take the blame for that, I don't have to take the responsibility for that in the past. All I can do is take responsibility for how that has impacted upon me and upon us in the present and how we build the future. Okay, so let's not get into denial, let's not get into blaming ourselves, let's hear racism not as an accusation but as a truism, as a fact of history. Both speakers have approached the subject very differently, and I want to go one step further and approach it from an experiential and personal point of view. I do that because I think both racism and sexism are not academic issues, they are experienced at a gut level. They are very much experiential issues. So I think the best way to get an insight into what I mean by racism, and possibly what we should be meaning by racism, is to hear my personal story.

I was born in Athlone, but I grew up on the west side of Johannesburg in Newclare which, until the advent of the Group Areas Act, was a predominantly "black African" area, I put all these things in inverted commas because I'm also born in Africa, so I consider myself to be African, but we are going to struggle as a result of the racial classification and gradations, we are still going to struggle with language in terms of race for a very long time in South Africa. But at the time Newclare was predominantly African, but it was declared a "coloured" area. I put the word "coloured" in inverted commas as well, because I call myself a black person of mixed descent because when I looked at the dictionary for the word coloured, then all of you are coloured then why am I more coloured than you. Newclare was predominantly African but it was declared a 'coloured' area. I couldn't understand that, it was only later in life that I saw the very, very clear social engineering, through which the poorest of the poor remained poorer by being pushed the furthest out of town. So, economic exploitation is very, very fundamental to our understanding of racism. But, to go back to my personal story, I played "black mamphatle" and "blikkies", with black children on the street, I was in and out of black homes, and I would have thought that those formative years of my life up to the age of about twelve or thirteen would mean that I would end up not being a racist. But, I was not aware that there was something far more seductive in the South African society, which was giving me the message that actually Basil you should pull yourself away from blackness and put yourself closer to whiteness as a

black person of mixed descent.

Let me give you one or two examples. The first girlfriend I took home in my late teens [or] early twenties - I can't remember now, it's too long ago - was dark, classified coloured but was dark and did not have straight hair. My family were very upset when I brought her home. Nothing overtly nasty was being said, but you could hear the whispers, 'how can he bring somebody like this home?', 'does he not see he's pulling the family down by bringing somebody like this home?', and he should, and even though there was no talk of marriage at that time, comments like, 'he should at least think of the children and what they are going to look like'. My second girlfriend was seen as a very good catch, because she was also classified coloured but she was blond, fair, and had blue eyes, and lived in Silverton at the time, even though that was a white area, so I think they passed for white or played white, but that was seen as a very special catch, so much so that, that special lounge, which was only opened when the 'dominee' or the "moruti" or a white person had come, was opened and we were allowed to joll in that lounge because now I was "amper wit". As a child I wasn't aware of what I was picking up. The most significant event that I want to share with you in terms of what happened in my life, right, is when I could not get into high school in the Coronationville- Newclare area, and had to travel to Benoni for the five years of secondary school.

That train journey effected me at a subliminal nature in ways that I was not aware of at the time. As I travelled on the train, in the front of the train I saw two or three third class coaches, and these two or three third class coaches were always jam packed full of black African people, people hanging out of the doors, people hanging out of the windows. In my childhood innocence and given how the ideology of white superiority works in our society, and how racism functions, in my childhood innocence, instead of blaming discrimination for the fact that they were cramped into a small space, what did I do, I blamed them. I said look at them, they're unruly, there are so many of them, and I didn't even think that they were the majority and why should they get the least space, and I said 'thank God I'm not like them'. On the other end of the train, it was those metro trains which just came out at the time, I saw first class carriages for white people, five or six, always half empty, a lot of beauty and order. In my childhood innocence I did not realise that white people were in the minority in South Africa, they always seemed to get the most space, and the best, and as I looked into these first class carriages, even the fluorescent lights seemed to look even better in those carriages. And in my childhood innocence I said if I'd like to be like anybody, I'd rather be like them, I don't want to be like the people in the third class carriages for black people. I travelled in an in between coach, it was called 'first-reserved' and then later it was changed to 'first non-white', and travelling in that in between coach, , to and fro for five years, is I developed my 'in-between' identity, an identity which said you're not quite as good as the white people, but at least you are not as bad as those people in the third class carriages for black people, and if I'm honest: in my heart of hearts at the time, I said I don't want to be like those black Africans in the third class carriages, I would rather be like those people in the first class carriages for white. I lost that false identity which I lived with for many years until my interaction, meeting and friendship, and association with Steven Bantu Biko, that's when I discovered a new identity of worth and pride as a black person, which said no to the lies and degradation which apartheid had put upon blackness.. But I'm sad to say, but it's true that there are many 'coloured' and many Asian people in South Africa who are still caught in that in between identity, and it comes out most clearly when we talk about affirmative action, and it will be stated in this way, 'in the old South Africa we were not

white enough, but now in the new South Africa we are not black enough'. That is the insidious nature of racism and what it has done to us.

So, at an individual level, what was happening to me? At an individual level as a result of what I was being socialised into I became a racist. Racism is based on the ideology of white superiority, as sexism is based on the ideology of male superiority, as all 'isms' are based on an ideology of superiority which leads to one form of social exclusion or another. The ideology of White superiority legitimises racial discrimination which in turn leads to the denial of opportunities, resources, services and self respect. The visibility of these denials feeds negative attitudes: assumptions, stereotyping, prejudices and values: when we see large numbers of black people living in squalor as a result of racism and discrimination, when as a result of the economic exploitation they have little or no access to resources and services it feeds the notion that they are lesser people and reinforces the ideology of white superiority. So racism becomes self-reinforcing, it becomes deeply imbedded in the structure of society, history, language, economic exploitation, culture, values, legislation, socio-political structures, the media will all be used as instruments which reinforce racism. It's not about anyone getting up in the morning and asking how can I be racist today, it will happen through 'business as usual'. Racism is not always direct, it takes indirect forms (e.g. a university opening admission to all but then raising its fees, knowing that as a result of previous discrimination certain races will be excluded); it can happen through inaction/collusion – seeing that certain policies or procedures leads to social exclusion, but doing nothing about it; or it can take the form of victimisation, where the victims of discrimination, because they stand up against it, become marked and victims of further discrimination.

The ideology of white superiority also breeds other hierarchies in our society: 'coloured' seeing themselves as 'closer to white' and therefore being depended upon to pass the racism down to those seen as 'less white', Zulus will see themselves as superior to Xhosas etc, leading to ethnic discrimination, all black people in SA seeing themselves 'closer to white' and therefore becoming xenophobic towards those black people from further north of the Limpopo. The internalisation of the ideology happens on all sides and leads not only to passing on the oppression but also to an internalised ideology of black inferiority and deficit thinking about black people, further entrenched by the deficit thinking we are fed with daily through the media, street and place names and through who still predominantly holds economic power in SA.

To counter racism our main challenge will be what actions to take to contradict - not replace - this ideology of white superiority, and that effort will have to be as systemic, as the system which produced racism in the first place.

Question Time¹

Franz Auerbach (response to questions): In talking about the progress that is being made we tend to emphasise the negatives, that is to say the horrible things that still happen. They do happen, but that's not the only thing that happens. There are also wonderful examples of reconciliation, of people making friends where they didn't do it before, etcetera. And I think we should find more publicity for the progress we make, and not quite as much publicity for the progress we haven't made yet. Obviously if racism were easy to kill, it would have

been done somewhere in the world. It hasn't been done anywhere in the world yet. But that shouldn't discourage us, it should make us look also for the good things, for the good progress that has been made - not only in the paper for the Constitution (but that's not to be sneezed at either - that's a piece of progress). We should look for the good things.

And then the question that several people have asked about what 'can you do as individuals?' Work where you are. Find other people that, as you have been encouraged to do during the morning, turn some strangers into neighbours, and maybe when you have turned them into neighbours they may even become friends, across all kinds of dividing lines. It's not easy in South Africa because, I used to say long ago, people underestimate the effect of geography on racist attitudes. The apartheid system put us in different parts of the town, and that pattern is still very widespread, not as much as it was. So, at the level where we are, let's make an extra effort to turn strangers into neighbours across barriers of race language and culture. And then maybe once they've become neighbours, some of them will become friends. Thank you.

Basil Manning (response to questions): Just one or two points that I would like to pick up on. I said 'contradicting the ideology of white superiority', I don't think I said becoming proudly black or becoming black. In the same way if I say sexism is sustained and legitimised by an ideology of male superiority, which is a global phenomenon, when I say that to contradict that ideology of male superiority, I'm not saying all men become women. I'm saying, let's expose the lie in our actions. One or two examples in terms of contradicting the ideology of white superiority, which have already happened in the work that we have done in the corporate environment. Most corporate environments, the top echelons are in fact white and male. Just by virtue of it being that way it is reinforcing the ideology of white superiority, and also the ideology of male superiority, together with other factors of course. Just changing it, to a more inclusive group of men and women, black and white, which celebrates and makes visible the contribution of all of us, is beginning to contradict the ideology of white and male superiority. We can go one step further to begin to change the environment, so that the culture which is perpetuated, and the ideology which is perpetuated - in this environment, for example, Sunnyside Park Hotel, who's culture, what ideology are being perpetuated here? Who's little flowers are these here? Where am I? Do I exist or do I become invisible again? So we are talking of a whole range of things that we need to do in our society, which is not to exclude white people, but actually to be more inclusive, in order that we begin to contradict the ideology that only one group of people made a contribution to the advancement of the world.

Taking it one step further, we are not suggesting that we replace this ideology of white superiority with an ideology of black superiority. Because if we did that successfully over 400 years as has happened in our history, the net result again would be racism, if as a result white people are being marginalised, subjugated and subordinated, and every instrument in our society is used to reinforce the notion that they are inferior to black people, then the result would be racism again.

In response to the other question, I said to Margaret Thatcher many years ago that racial harmony is no reliable indicator of racial justice, and 4 months later Brixton blew up (and now again Bradford this time)² okay. So, we may be in a harmonious society and think that we are now in a non-racial society, but it's much deeper than that. It is not possible to be

non-racist in a racist society. The only possibility for us at the present time is to push against racism, to push against sexism, to be anti-racist and anti-sexist, in order to work towards that vision of a non-racial and non-sexist society that we hope to achieve one day.

What do we do? We've done quite a bit, we've done the legal stuff, as you [one of the members of the audience] quite rightly say. But I think we need to harness the same energies that we harnessed against apartheid. Maybe we need a new MDM,³ but this time for racial justice and gender justice, and justice in other ways. It may be that the instrument's we have put in place are not enough. And that may mean that we need to work with the creation, as suggested in the conference last year on racism, towards the creation of a national movement against racism in South Africa. But we need to start with the sectoral thing, with youth, with the business sector, criminal justice, land and housing. Whatever you call it, start there in order for us to set in place the things that will feed into a national movement against racism that was suggested in the program of action, as was suggested at the conference as well.

Participant from audience: Thanks very much. I think it's a comment more than a question and a matter of clarity for me. Several years ago I was taught as a young lawyer that, for one to understand racism, the starting point is to make a distinction between institutionalised, and institutions. Now we've dismantled the institutions, we don't have racism in that regard. But how do you deal with what is inside. Like the comrade said, it's something that we experience. Those institutions, the racism that they have served onto the people, has created some scars. How do you deal with the scars? White is racist, black is racist nowadays, because of what happened, because of those institutions. If the comrades could just explain to me to say, what is the starting point? Where do we start as a nation? Because for me, I'm saying this is not for me, this not for my generation. Maybe if I have kids, the starting point for them is, they will be living in a country where things have changed. For me when I buy chips from a small window because I'm black, it's just not acceptable, it's not easy for me to say that actually I've forgotten about that, actually the scar is gone. Because the experience is there. You cannot just go to a conference for 5 days and say let's talk about it. Dialogue is good comrade Barnie. I'm saying the fact that we can stand up and say let's talk about racism, is a good thing. But where do we start, what exactly do we have to do to heal the scars within ourselves?

Participant from audience: My concern is more in terms of, Graeme⁴ talked about schools in Soweto, which means that there is a history behind Soweto, and then we talk in terms of a building in Sunnyside in Parktown. So the question of access comes into a question in terms of accessibility, ordinary people that participated more in the struggle, to make what we have today, what we now call democracy. I don't know whether CSVR or SAHRC, I don't know whether they have any mechanism in term of actually informing the ordinary people, like in Soweto, about racism. Because we are talking of a conference in August, and most of the people don't even know about the conference and about the content of the conference and if they can make any input in terms of the conference, even if there is SANGOCO.⁵ So my question is what mechanism are there to inform ordinary people in terms of their rights?

Participant from audience: I have similar experience to what Basil was talking about and my concern relates to all of us. I want to presume that for most of us here we have access to

people who help us, be they gardeners, be they assistants in the kitchen or whatever. And my challenge is that we all have a role to play particularly where we are, because I want to believe that there are three socializations, three institutions of socialization: home, the church and the institutions of learning, the schools. And it's at home where we learn a lot of things, and the manner in which we treat people who help us, is actually evident in the way people behave outside. I had an experience some years back in Springs where I was traveling from, into the 'non-white' area. There was a child who said: "mommy, mommy, dog!" pointing at me. And for me that was evident of what teaching this child is getting from home. And we have a saying in our own African language that says you can actually see the parents through the children, because the behaviour of the child is reflecting of what he is actually being taught at home. So, my challenge here is that, as much as we all can say that we cannot belong to institutions, we cannot belong to certain groups. But we all have a role, where we are, what difference can we make, the people who help us, the people who are employed, the people we employ. What difference can we make? Getting empowerment or giving empowerment, and making sure that they have self-respect.

Basil Manning (response to questions): I think the scars issue is a very fundamental one. As a man, when women told me how they are hurt by sexism I could not hear it. Because actually I was living on the receiving end of sexism and so on into deep denial and I say 'God they go on, and on, and on, and on about this sexism thing'. Until of course I became aware, and grew in my consciousness. So I can understand the scars. For me one of the criticisms I have of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is that it focuses only on the excesses of the regime. Whereas the kinds of issues that we talk about in terms of scars, the number of people who in less than a minute their lives were ruined under the pass laws, under administrative justice, or injustice, in South Africa. What happened in terms of Bantu education, the scars of that. The healing in our society has not yet taken place. And I don't think that some of that, even the campaigns and the work on anti-racism can take place without some of that, because the divide will remain there, because there's too many things within our society, as Barney mentioned, which re-stimulate left over feelings for me. As I said I go to Parktown, and when I go to Sebokeng, do you not think it affects me? To say, 'God, seven years and it's still there. When will it ever change? When will the conditions, when will the things which remind me of the hurts of the past, no longer be there?' It's easy for those who have never been on the receiving end to just say, agh let's just forget about it now and move on. But it's not that easy at all.

In terms of informing people of their rights. I hope, we've set so many instruments in place. One of the things that we have to help people is also to access the things that are available. If I was to say 'hands up all of those who actually read the South African constitution', I wonder how many hands would go up. 'How many have read the Bill of Rights?' How many hands would go up? We also have to help people, to access the information that they need, in order that people are equipped and empowered to actually claim their rights, as well. There is not enough of that happening. Certainly there is a bit, but I think it can happen on a larger scale. Thanks.

Barney Pitso (response to question): I don't have much to say except to thank all of you for the contributions that you've made to this. And thank you particularly for the recognition that this opens up for all of us, a major responsibility in the transformation of our society, and the recognition that, that process did begin in 1994 and continues, and that process takes various forms. It has been going on through the legal transformation process.

That is continuing. And it also goes in terms of trying to address the very individual, attitudinal, personal experiences. That is continuing. We all recognise that there is just that much more that we have to engage in. It's a whole system which we continue to live with, a system of socialization, of ideology. And there is a role for the media, there is a role for television, and newspapers, there is a role for educational institutions, religious institutions, environments in which we work. All of that says that there is a role and responsibility for all of us. There is a process underway, of trying to develop a national strategy for national mobilisation against racism in this country for the next 10 years, which is the decade that was declared by parliament, and that we need all to try and engage a great movement of South Africans of all colours and all backgrounds to work together towards this idea of constructing this new society. And we do so by recognising where we come from, and living with those experiences and scars that we do, but recognising that we need to look into the development and construction of our society. So, these gatherings, may be small but they are not insignificant. All of you are here are, by being here, to a large degree making that contribution, and we all go away to very many and different places, we all interact in our society in different ways, as we heard over there, and we all interact. And with all our interactions we actually carry with us the seeds of transformation of our society. That I think is what ultimately we are aiming for, and that the responsibility to change these mindsets and the social system which we live with depends to a large degree on all of us. And that's what I want to say, thank you.

Conclusion from Yvette Geyer(chairperson):

Franz has said that he will pass so , I'm sure you will way lay him outside if you want to chat to him. I think one or two things to respond to the challenge that has been raised to CSV. Earlier on in his opening address Graeme pointed to the fact that in our own organisation we too are working and struggling with transformation. So we would like to perhaps challenge you too to invite us to jointly host something in your area. And I think the responsibility does lie with us, it's not only about having these conversations in nice fancy hotels with people who have academic degrees and so on. This conversation needs to happen in our churches, in our schools, in the taxi when we are coming to work, it needs to happen in our cars, it needs to happen between me and my father, and I think that that's what we need to take away from this. I just want to point out that outside the door is the table for the World Conference Against Racism NGO Summit. If you haven't registered, you haven't thought about going, have a talk, register and go. Because although 5 days for a conference may not seem like a lot, it is also a place where we can network and we can learn and we can perhaps find from other people also how are effective ways to go about healing. On the issue of healing, for me I think it's important to say as an individual, that I believe that that happens with acknowledgement, and that we need to stop being in denial about our racist history, and we need to acknowledge our own racism. And I think as Basil pointed out before, not to be apologetic about it but to recognise it, I think it's very important. Thank you very much for your time, for your considered input, comment, questioning and sharing with each other. Hamba kahle.

Summary biographies of speakers

Dr. Nyameko Barney Pityana, Chairperson, South African Human Rights Commission

Dr Pityana is Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission. After sixteen

years in exile in both England and Geneva, Dr Pityana returned to South Africa in 1992. Whilst in Geneva he served as director of the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism. Dr Pityana is an ordained Anglican Priest and also an attorney. The University of Cape Town awarded him a PhD in Religious Studies in 1995. Dr Pityana is the convenor of the Parliamentary and Government Liaison Committee, serves in an ex officio capacity in the SAHRC Trust and represents the Commission both nationally and internationally. He is a trustee in a number of grass-roots development bodies like the Eastern Cape-based Microprojects Trust and the Maths Centre for Professional Teachers in Johannesburg and is on the Board of the Geneva-based International Foundation for Human Rights Policy. He is also a member of the African Commission. In late 2001 Barney Pityana, resigned from the SAHRC.

Dr. Franz Auerbach

Dr. Franz Auerbach is a retired teacher and free-lance journalist. He has written widely on education and human rights issues. He did research into prejudice in history textbooks, published as 'The Power of Prejudice in South African Education' (1965). Himself a child refugee from Nazi Germany, he has also published 'World on Fire', a short history of the Holocaust (1998). He is involved in inter-faith activities and last year was a member of the James committee on Values, Education & Democracy.

Revd. Basil Manning, Chairperson, Centre for Anti-Racism and Anti-Sexism (CARAS) Trust

Since 1992 Basil Manning has been a Freelance Trainer and Consultant on Anti-racism/Anti-sexism and other Equity issues, Community Development, Leadership, Strategic Reviews and Planning and OD work. In addition to being the Chairperson of the Centre for Anti-Racism and Anti-Sexism (CARAS) Trust he is also an Associate Director of Organisation and Social Development Consultants, Sheffield, UK and as well as being an enrolled Minister of Religion with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. He has co-developed a training and organisation development model for understanding and dealing with racism and sexism in organisational contexts (Through Organisation and Social Development Consultants), UK. He has a long history of anti-racism work both in South Africa and in the UK.

Notes:

¹ Due to a problem with the tape recorder, not all of the questions were recorded.

² During June and July 2001 the northern English towns of Bradford, Oldham, Leeds and Burnley were hit by race riots and clashes predominantly involving youths of Asian origin and white skinheads.

³ The Mass Democratic Movement served as a unifying front for anti-apartheid activities during the late 1980s in South Africa.

⁴ In his welcoming address, Graeme Simpson, the Executive Director of CSV, mentioned work that CSV is doing at schools in Soweto.

⁵ The South African NGO Coalition coordinated participation by South African non-governmental organizations in the World Conference Against Racism NGO Summit.