

**A Coloured South African Teacher  
in Aotearoa New Zealand**

by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation investigates my personal identity and how it has been shaped by large historical and social forces, including racism, colonialism and patriarchy. I am an immigrant South African teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand: one of many who appreciate living in a society where overt racism is not accepted. Being Coloured meant I knew both worlds and could accept what each brought: languages, cultures and value systems. I had an advantage over many relatives and friends since I had developed my sense of identity early in life, and was equally proud of all sides of my family heritage.

Migration is a conscious decision to leave one's country of birth and re-establish oneself in another country. People migrate for a variety of reasons – new opportunities, for a safer environment for their families, for a better life. Acceptance by the adoptive country determines how well the migrant can settle into life there. I found that the concept of 'Coloured' was often viewed as unacceptable in Aotearoa New Zealand. I realised the need to be open about my bi-ethnic heritage, which led to my acceptance.

Having been brought up as a native speaker of English and with knowledge of British culture worked to my advantage as a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand. A clear sense of identity and pride in my ethnic heritage has given me tolerance for cultural difference that is an advantage in developing a culturally responsive classroom practice.

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

*Signed:*

*Date:* 1 December 2021

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Author Name

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Thanks also go to my children and siblings whose unfailing encouragement carried me through this time of study.

*The essence of true knowledge is self-knowledge - Plato*

# Chapter One

## Introduction

*Without the search for meaning, the quest for vision, there can be no authentic movement towards liberation, no true identity or radical integration for an individual or a people. Above all, where there is no vision, we lose the sense of our great power to transcend history and create a new future for ourselves with others.*

(Harding, 1983, p. xii)

This dissertation records a journey towards a better understanding of my personal identity, and how it has been shaped by historical and social forces. There are themes and patterns in the international arena that have impacted my life, in particular in Swaziland, South Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand. Racism, colonialism, apartheid, patriarchy, and academic hierarchies are some of the forces that have acted as currents and waves in navigating my life journey. Like many others, I and my family have been piecing back together our family histories, often broken apart by the social forces mentioned above. Living in Aotearoa New Zealand gives an immigrant like me a wider perspective, and often a safer space than before, in which to explore one's past.

Undertaking the research reported in this dissertation has allowed me to embark on another part of this journey of self-identity. I am one of a large number of immigrant South African teachers in this country, many of whom have appreciated coming to live in a more egalitarian society in which overt racism is socially unacceptable. I have observed White South Africans who retain residual attitudes from the apartheid era; I also know of many Coloured South Africans teaching in schools in Auckland. Many of us formed fond feelings towards New Zealanders as a result of the 1981 Springbok rugby tour protests. For such a small, faraway country to stand up so effectively against the apartheid regime created a permanent bond of friendship and camaraderie.

Like many other oppressed peoples, including Māori, African authors have used literary writing in the form of poems, stories and novels to speak out and resist against the colonial

regimes that have oppressed them. Several such poems are included in the Poetic Interlude sections, below. The political significance of literary writing also justifies my use of stories in my research. The following vignette or short story is the first piece of narrative writing to occur in the dissertation (for more about narratives and poetry in the dissertation, see Research Approach section in Chapter Two, pp.11-14 below). This vignette acts as an educational provocation for my dissertation research project, and spotlights the complex and sometimes ironic ways in which centuries of colonial racism are ground into the lenses through which we look at others and the world.

### **Provocation: Mistaken for Māori**

I arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand from South Africa in 2000, having succeeded in attaining a teaching job in Rotorua, to join my husband where he was working for a heavy machinery operation, after having been apart for a year. Seven months after I arrived, he was transferred to set up a new northern branch of the company - and so we moved to Ruakaka, a rapidly-growing coastal suburb located an easy 20-minute drive south of Whangarei. This move suited us well, as we had lived in a seaside town in South Africa.

I managed to get an LTR (long-term reliever) position at the local secondary (high) school for two terms, covering a teacher on maternity leave. The role was in a total immersion Māori unit, which was a daunting prospect, but my new principal assured me that I would have good support from the full-time Māori resource teacher aide working in the unit. I counted myself lucky that while at Rotorua Boys High School, I had attended a twice-weekly PLD Te Reo class, run for staff and taught by a local Māori tutor, where I learned to sing a few waiata (songs), say my pepeha (introduction), and recite a karakia (prayer).

On arriving for my first morning at the new school, I found that the teacher aide was away on tangihanga (funeral) leave, so I was on my own. I stood at the classroom door with as bright a smile as I could muster, and greeted each student with a cheery ‘Kia ora’ as they filed into the room and stood behind their desks. I faced the quiet classroom and said, as our tutor in Rotorua had said at the start of each class, “Karakia tīmatanga - E te Atua, hōmai ki a mātou...” The students joined in, and at the end there was a resounding “Āmine” from the room. One student started to sing: “Ka waiata, ki a Māria...” and we all joined in.



The hīmene (hymn) ended; I asked a student close by to hand out the resource I had been given for the first lesson, and got on with organising the class. A few minutes later, I was approached by one of the older girls, Ariana, who I had already noticed guiding and helping the younger ones. Ariana: ‘Whaea, ka taea e ahau te haere ki te whareiti? (Aunty, may I please go to the toilet?)’ Hiding my surprise at being mis-recognised in this way, I replied, ‘I’m so sorry, I don’t understand what you are saying - I only know a little bit of Māori.’

Ariana: ‘But Whaea, you look like a Māori, you look like us - and you said the karakia and sang the hīmene with us!’ Without my noticing, Bo, the biggest boy in the room, had sidled up beside me and heard what was going on: ‘Yeah, Whaea, you look like my aunty... so where’re you from?’ ‘I’m from South Africa’ I replied. ‘I’ve only been in New Zealand for seven months.’

This introduction to teaching in Te Taitokerau Northland had quite an impact on me. Safely home again, reflecting on that exhausting yet exhilarating first day, I felt secretly pleased that the local people - as represented by these students - had ‘seen’ me as one of them. I was heartened and reassured by the fact that I had been accepted by them so readily. The Māori students were receptive and curious to hear more about where I was from, the languages I speak, the peoples I claim. I felt a deep sense of belonging, of being made welcome here, in their land. It was an encouragement for me to start tracing my African ancestry. In my teaching and postgraduate studies, I have continued to further my interests in identity, culture, ethnicity and bi-ethnicity, and how these operate in education. The following section presents a brief introduction to those concepts from social and psychological theory.

## **Identity and Ethnicity in Education**

Identity is a concept freely used in everyday conversation, yet extremely difficult to clearly and succinctly define. Identity is a concept of central importance underpinning teacher practice, and is heavily emphasised in current policies affecting teacher work in Aotearoa New Zealand. Identity is of particular significance for secondary teachers, given the transition of students through adolescence during their secondary school years.

Pioneering psychological scholar of identity, Erik Erikson (1980), recognised the central importance of personal identity: “In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity” (Erikson, 1964). A Neo-Freudian scholar, Erikson

posited eight sequential stages in human psychological development, making special reference to adolescence as a transitional period characterised by increased vulnerability and heightened potential. Adolescents develop their identity by asking questions like: “Who am I?” and “What is my place in this world?” These questions encourage the adolescent to question how they are perceived by others. Secondary school students can be expected to ask these kinds of questions as an important part of their journey through their adolescent years.

Since identity is a relational concept, the ‘self’ is defined in relation to ‘others’. According to psychological theory, the notion of the self comes into effect as soon as an individual has the ability to make meaning of the world around them. While several dimensions, including social, cultural and political, have an important influence on the development of identity and on how people interact with each other, the issue of identity is heightened when they are faced with learning (growing, changing) in educational scenarios and their expectations. Identity refers to the norms and values that an individual, group or society adheres to, and the sphere of influence that enables them to establish their society (Adams & Marshall, 1996).

Identity is formed by interaction between people and collaboration through shared goals, which help with the establishment of success based on the outcome of their shared experience. Part of the cognitive development typical for an adolescent is to establish their individual ‘theory of self’ that allows them to realise their own personal identity in relation to the socio-cultural norms within their social milieu (Erikson, 1980). Aligned with personal identity is cultural identity, which is a process in which an individual behaves to find a sense of belonging within a group. It can be identified as a two-dimensional process which includes preservation of one’s own heritage and cultural identity while adapting to the host’s culture (Berry, 1990).

Immigrants go through an analogous kind of transition of group identity, which is called acculturation, and may adopt a bicultural or integrated identity. Other identities of acculturation include: assimilated identity, where the individual forsakes their identity in favour of the host’s identity; separated identity, where the individual only retains their own identity; and marginalised identity, where the individual identifies with neither culture (Berry, 1997).

Adolescence is a critical stage between childhood and adulthood, fraught with challenges that establish a person's identity, along with structure and consistency of expectations, which provide direction (Adams & Marshall, 1996). Adolescent identity development is significantly influenced by relationships, which provide both a support network and hierarchical pecking order. The students' identity or 'view of self' influences their learning interactions with their peers. Self-identity is defined as a well-developed collection of identities that reflect the person's social standing in their community, and enable them to recognize their unique self-worth. Teacher-student interactions also play an important role in the establishment of individual identities within an educational setting.

While identity theory is a well-researched concept explaining self-reflexivity in individuals, it is often aligned with social identity theory because most individuals identify themselves and their relationships as subject to the interactions they experience in society. The emphasis of social identity theory is on how people categorise themselves within their social grouping (Turner, 2012). Ethnocentrism is defined as how members of particular groups see themselves compared to other groups (Stets & Burke, 2000).

The concept of culture refers to the way individuals and groups interact and associate with each other in their environment. On one hand it is a collective expression of norms and behaviours by people who have a common interest and is communicated in a common language. In this instance people acknowledge collective values that are grounded in historical rituals and actions that are passed down through generations. On the other hand, an individual can perceive culture as a demonstration of their own set of beliefs, values and actions. They then pit their 'individual culture' against that of other individuals around them. These two seemingly different ideas of culture have been bandied among anthropologists over the centuries (De Munck, 2000).

Ethnicity can be defined as a shared culture which is based on learned behaviours which consider traditional, religious, linguistic and cultural aspects of a particular society. Ethnicity is a broad term that can also be explained as experiences that individuals or groups of people identify with and aspire to. It is very often confused with the term 'race' which is a pseudo-biological concept fallaciously used to explain genetic or physical traits (Spencer, 2014). People with similar characteristics (ie. skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, etc) do not always share the same ethnicity, and people with the same ethnicity do not always share the same

physical characteristics. As a result this concept can be badly used and misconstrued – as was the case in South Africa.

Forming an identity is a process under which an individual relates to certain phenomena and experiences around them, and then creates a connection to them. It can also be seen as “the challenge of preserving one’s personal sense of continuity over time, despite the inevitable changes that one has to undergo to redefine oneself” (Harter, 1990, p. 352). Youth develop their identity by experimenting with multiple roles and selves, and over time, with nurturing from constant societal influences, eventually establish a coherent sense of self (Rodriguez, 2000).

According to identity theory, the individual develops specific ideas about ‘self’ which are supported by their learning interactions and expectations. This process is known as identification (Stets & Burke, 2000). In education scenarios, the identities of students and teachers fall into both ethnocentric and individual categories, because of the dynamics of the school situation. Performance expectations and relationships between teachers and students are governed by their positions within the social groups (in-groups and out-groups). Identities need to be activated in order to demonstrate interactions within social categories or groups. Social identity theorists use the term ‘salience’ to indicate the activation of an identity in different situations (Oakes et al., 1991). It is clear that social identity theory and identity theory serve as complementary phenomena which indicate that individuals increase their self-worth when they are accepted by others within the group. The next section sketches the context for South African teachers (like me) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **A South African teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand**

The state education sector of New Zealand has been actively encouraging South African teachers to migrate to fill gaps in the local teaching population for at least 25 years. The unstable and unsafe conditions of post-apartheid South Africa provided ample reasons to leave (the ‘push’). The relatively safe, liberal conditions of contemporary life in New Zealand are attractive (the ‘pull’). These contrasting social milieus make up the ‘push-pull’ model of immigrant South African teachers in New Zealand (Jhagroo, 2004). There is a need for more research into the experiences, characteristics, and influences in the sector of the now considerable number of South African teachers in New Zealand, most of them White. Most of

the research located on this topic is in the form of Master's level research dissertations and theses. There is no existing (published) research specifically about Coloured South African teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand (pers. comm. J. Jhagroo, 2/3/22), which adds to the academic rationale of my study. There have been several studies of the lack of induction or professional training provided in New Zealand for immigrant teachers (Biggs, 2010; Clement, 2000). Those who migrated without first securing a job often arrived to find a large discrepancy between reality and what they had been led to expect by the recruitment campaigns. Such teachers made hundreds of unsuccessful applications. Those who were Coloured, Black or Indian faced significant difficulties that could only be due to racism, and were able to find work only in low decile schools. Despite likely breaching Human Rights legislation, teaching job adverts began to specify 'New Zealand trained teachers' (Jhagroo, 2004). South African and other immigrant teachers often find conditions in New Zealand schools very strange and different from what they are used to (Butcher, 2012; Crossan, 2009) and have trouble adapting (Sewsanker, 2015; Vohra, 2005).

In my own experience, when I first began teaching in New Zealand, no explanations of the local school culture were forthcoming, let alone Māori protocols. Some students expected to address me by my first name, which never happened in South Africa. There, students called me Miss, Ma'am, or Mrs Stanley, but never 'Carol'. In my community it was also common to call teachers 'Uncle' or 'Aunty'. Just as I find 'Aunty Carol' perfectly acceptable, being called Whaea Carol also carries far more meaning and respect than just 'Carol'.

## **Research Question**

This research asks: **What does it mean to be a Coloured South African immigrant teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand?**

This question is a prompt in seeking to better understand my identity as a bi-ethnic South African person, accepted into the bi-ethnic social milieu of Aotearoa New Zealand, especially in Te Taitokerau Northland. I am motivated to explore how my integration into the New Zealand way of life has enabled me to utilise my personal experiences to identify with people of colour.

## **Overview of Dissertation Chapters**

This chapter has introduced the reader to the researcher (me) in the context of my teaching practice, the auto-narrative approach, and the question that motivates this dissertation project. It has also introduced the key theoretical concept of identity in education, on which the research draws. Chapter Two explains the research concepts, methods and ethical considerations used in undertaking this research. Chapter Three draws on literature to present an account of the history of South African's Coloured people and education. Chapter Four narrates my lifestory and experiences of ethnicity, politics, and education. Chapter Five presents key themes and learnings, discusses implications for future research and teaching practice, and concludes with final thoughts.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodology**

We use research to gain insights and understandings about the world, and to improve on current conditions (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Many varied research methodologies have been used to investigate social issues and seek answers for problems in the world. More recently, educational research has embraced creative approaches such as video research, the use of social media, self-study, poetry, and others. These newer forms of research recognise that so-called ‘objective’ or ‘scientific’ social research can never be completely free from cultural bias (Denzin, 2006).

This chapter explains how I undertook my research under three headings: Research Framework, which discusses the conceptualisation of the methods, and how they relate to major research theories and domains; Research Approach, which details how I collected and analysed my data; and Ethical Considerations, concerned with ensuring the research is of high quality and does no harm.

#### **Research Framework**

Many education researchers agree that the rational and scientific objectivity that is expressed in quantitative research does not address the nature of humanity, nor indeed the reality of teacher classroom practice. This dissatisfaction has led to the development of research from a qualitative perspective. Social research is purposive: it sets out to clarify phenomena from different positional perspectives or viewpoints (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). These perspectives in turn can be influenced by the political climate in which the researcher is placed, often resulting in different interpretations. Applied social research aims to find practical applications of the phenomenon under investigation, while pure social research seeks to investigate big questions by describing, explaining or exploring the phenomenon (Mutch, 2005).

**Qualitative research** focuses on people’s perceptions of reality, and the emotional capital they apply to different social phenomena. Advantages of qualitative research include more flexible approaches to collecting data, and that the nature of the text-based data collected is richer and more meaningful in terms of educational problems (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Qualitative

methods are not bound by the limitations of ‘measurement’ that apply in quantitative or scientific research. Qualitative analysis allows for data to contain ambiguities and contradictions, which reflect social reality (Denzin & Giardina, 2015).

**Post-qualitative research** is an even more recent development in methodology that seeks better alignment with post-qualitative and poststructuralist theories than traditional qualitative methods (St. Pierre, 2014). Post-qualitative research methodology uses ‘writing’ as an umbrella for both academic scholarship and literary writing methods for data collection and analysis (St. Pierre, 2018). Post-qualitative methodology deliberately rejects and moves away from the residues of scientism and empiricism that are found in traditional qualitative methods, but can still be categorized under the broad heading of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

**Writing as a method of inquiry** is a form of post-qualitative methodology in which ‘writing’ is used as a conceptual umbrella to cover all forms of writing used in research, including writing from the literature and from personal observations and experiences (Richardson, 1994; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Writing as a method recognises and bridges the gap between literary and academic genres that has become embedded in thinking about research (Richardson, 1990). This approach enables small-scale studies to provide understandings about what people do that could not be accomplished using other, more traditional qualitative methodologies. Along with other forms of artistic practice, literary writing is gaining acceptance in social science due to its position as the centrepiece of social reality, which helps give meaning to the author’s perception of their world. The inclusion of literary writing genres in research enables us to be self-reflective about our subjective reality, including our experience of teaching cultural others.

**Autoethnography** is seen as a postmodern form of ethnography, in which researchers are self-reflexive and deeply involved in the phenomena they are studying (Reed-Danahay, 1997). The term ‘autoethnography’ was first coined by David Hayano (1979) to give voice to research that was considered controversial. It is also known as ‘insider ethnography’ and is seen by its advocates as a transformative research paradigm that “lets you use yourself to get to culture” (Pelias, 2003, p. 372) through a process of careful self-reflection, combined with study of theoretical and research literature.



Autoethnographers have often had to defend their research stance against questions raised over whether autoethnography is valid and scientific. Qualitative research has always argued against the view that ‘real’ scientific research needs to be experimental, methodological and quantitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Such arguments are intensified in the case of autoethnography. More recently, autoethnography has gained wider acceptance, and has been found useful by researchers of feminist, indigenous, gender diverse and differently-abled identities.

Autoethnographic research aligns the personal narratives and experiences of the author with those of the people they are researching. This enables the researcher to develop an understanding of the social and political underpinnings of their culture. Autoethnography engages the individual in personal and cultural analysis and interpretation, providing more authentic knowledge of “personal educational experiences, beliefs and ideologies” (Alsup, 2006, p. 127). As a methodology, autoethnography draws on the concept of conscientization (Freire, 1971), and provides opportunities to interrogate identity in relation to one’s location and interactions with others. Autoethnography “transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation” (Chang, 2008, p. 43). The author immerses themselves in the research milieu and fully participates in the methodological experience by engaging in “descriptive, interpretive and self-critical” aspects within the study (Chang, 2008, p. 39).

Autoethnography works at the intersection of biography, history, and relationships with others, within a specific “context and ethos of time” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). It provides the educator with an opportunity to acknowledge the pragmatic demands of teaching, while liberating them from personal constraints, thus allowing them to tackle their professional position from a place of reflexivity. Autoethnography is viewed as a holistic, transformative and emancipatory pedagogy, which draws attention to the forces that shape a person’s sense of self, including issues of gender, ethnicity, religion, culture and social standing.

## **Research Approach**

My research question concerns identity and its impact in education. Identity is shaped by people’s beliefs and the value systems in which they are brought up, which also affects what they count as knowledge and truth. Education involves the imparting of knowledge in a manner which is social in nature and is impacted by historical and social contexts (Carr &

Kemmis, 2003). Given that I have had the chance to be an educator in both South Africa and New Zealand, it is important to address the impact of my identity in education as a whole.

Personalising the research enables a form of writing that relays first-hand experiences to the reader in an emotive and meaningful way. In ‘writing about one’s own culture’ the researcher gains insight into a cultural practice or set of values in which they themselves are involved. The reader can follow the personalised thread of the researcher’s story, which makes the research more believable. In taking this approach I am inspired by the influential handbook chapter on writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018), which recommends the use of creative writing genres as a way of ‘looking through two lenses’ at complex social situations that affect our lives and teaching work.

Collecting and analysing information or ‘data’ in this study draws on two writing genres, academic and narrative. Although involving two distinct genres of writing, both strands are post-qualitative and align well with post-modernist and post-structuralist philosophies of education. The first strand is written in conventional academic prose, and involves writing critical literature reviews of scholarship and research relating to ethnic identity, its formation and effects in schooling in South Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand. This strand investigates the research question through the literature, constructing coherent, succinct accounts and arguments based on reliable sources. My dissertation illustrates the tendency of education research to draw on sources from across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines beyond education, in my case primarily history, to narrate the story of South Africa, and psychology, to describe the complex concept of ‘identity’ and how it operates in education.

The second strand is written using poetic and narratives genres. It involves writing personal accounts, poetry and autoethnographic narratives to document and analyse my own personal and professional experiences. This strand aims to bring the reader face-to-face with the complex nature of identity and ethnic relations in education in South Africa and Aotearoa New Zealand. At the start of the project I envisaged writing autoethnographic stories based on classroom practice, but as the project progressed my narrative pieces turned more to autobiography, which falls under the larger category of autoethnography.

Poetic writing is also used to construct two ‘Interludes’ in the dissertation, each consisting of three poems, so-called because they do not form part of the chapters, but rather bookend the

two main ‘data’ chapters of the dissertation: Chapter Three based on literature (the first strand) and Chapter Four based on personal narratives and autobiography (the second strand). Brief notes follow on these two interludes:

***Poetic Interlude I (pp. 16-17)***

These three poems set the scene of centuries of harsh racism faced by Non-Whites in South Africa.

*Yakhal ‘Inkomo (The Cries of the Cattle)*: This poem evokes the cries of the Coloured people to be heard - of the panic, fear and helplessness that pervades their lives - of generations of children taken from their mothers and institutionalised in orphanages run by Whites.

*I Lost My Talk*: Most Coloureds were obliged to disown their ethnic ancestry and Black families and lost all knowledge of their ethnic language and knowledge. Coloured were expected to assimilate to English ways of doing things, including traditional Christmas celebrations despite being in mid-summer.

*Do Not Fear*: This poem is about the White fear of Black people, which is both an effect of and a mechanism for maintaining apartheid. Black people were automatically suspect, and to date a Black guy would mean being ostracised by family and society.

***Poetic Interlude II (pp. 45-47)***

*Coloured*: This well known poem demonstrates the power of humour as a survival mechanism, used by oppressed peoples everywhere as protection against all the insults and hurts.

*Ixabiso*: This poem results from a group process in a Black consciousness-raising teacher workshop as part of activism for equity and fair treatment.

*I am Enough*: I wrote this poem during the dissertation research in a deliberate attempt to use a poetic genre to explore the issues raised by the research question. This poem is a statement of my self-pride in who I am as a Coloured South African woman. Many of my countrymen in New Zealand may gloss over the fact that they are Coloured, but I am proud to be African and to be known to be African.

The table below lists all the original narrative/poetic sections included in the dissertation. My analytical strategy proceeds by synthesising the results of all of my writing to generate insights about my research question.

**Table 1: List of original stories and poetry in the dissertation**

	Title	Section	Page
1	Mistaken for Māori	Chapter 1	2
2	Happy Childhood in eSwatini	Chapter 4	32
3	Family Road Trip	Chapter 4	34
4	Back in Apartheid South Africa	Chapter 4	37
5	New Country, New Horizons	Chapter 4	40
6	Day Two Teaching in Te Taitokerau	Chapter 4	43
7	I Am Enough (a poem)	Poetic Interlude II	45

### **Ethical considerations**

As a post-qualitative study, this research does not involve collecting information from any other person, so did not require formal ethics approval. Ethical considerations still apply, however, in terms of the study design and its reflexive nature (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Concepts are carried by words, and some of the key concepts with which this research is concerned have enabled the infliction of centuries of systemic harm on my ancestral peoples and those of Māori. It is difficult to write about South Africa without using the word ‘race’ despite knowing that this refers to a fallacy, not a scientific concept. The concept of ‘race’ is a political invention, used for installing hierarchies of socioeconomic power. These links show how writing itself is an ethical practice; the decisions made in writing research are ethical decisions. There are ethical issues of language and discourse, understood as the big messages built into texts, involved in writing this dissertation as a post-qualitative research project.

In terms of language medium, as well as English, words and phrases from both te reo Māori and African languages appear in this dissertation, and are explained in brackets after first appearance. Certain language items are used to reinforce dominant narratives, for example, the word Bantu, a generic term for indigenous Africans, is ubiquitous and indeed unavoidable in social discourses of South Africa, yet derives from a racist social framework. The ‘K-word’ from the taxonomies of European labels for Africans (see p. 37) is used today as an insult among South Africans (including ex-pats in Aotearoa New Zealand). These words are like South African versions of the infamous ‘N-word’ in the USA. Writing this dissertation is an

opportunity to bring attention to the language in which social history is presented in the literature about my country of origin and decolonise my own writing, and indeed thinking, about my own life and ancestry. In this dissertation, I have attempted to use non-racist terms and conventions of writing, including the use of the word ‘ethnicity’ in place of ‘race’, and the capitalization of words used as labels for people groups, including Black, White, Coloured, Western, Trekboers, etc.

The concept of ‘relational ethics’ draws attention to the responsibility of an auto-researcher to protect the privacy of the ‘characters’ - our family members, friends, colleagues and students - who may appear within the stories we write about our experiences (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2007). Selective reporting and fictionalising details are two ways that relational ethics are upheld in this research. Auto-research requires researchers to “act from the heart and mind, to acknowledge personal bonds with others, and to maintain appropriate conversations” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4).

Given the inherent limitations of non-empirical methods, a high level of credibility and trustworthiness is needed to ensure that such research is beneficial to the subjects of the research, while avoiding harm to any other parties mentioned (Flick, 2014). Above all, the ethical considerations involved in this research concern its motivation to be beneficial to the students I teach in this, my adopted country of Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Poetic Interlude I

### Yakhal 'Inkomo (The Cries of the Cattle)

The sculptor told me that once that in the country,  
he saw a cow being killed.  
In the kraal were cattle looking on.  
They were crying for their like,  
Dying in the hands of human beings...  
The cattle raged and fought,  
they became a terror unto themselves;  
the twisted poles of the kraal rattled and shook.

*by Mongane Serote*

### I Lost My Talk

I lost my talk  
The talk you took away  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie school.  
You snatched it away:  
I speak like you, I think like you  
I create like you  
The scrambled ballad, about my word.  
Two ways I talk, both ways I say,  
Your way is more powerful.  
So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me.

*by Rita Joe*

## **Do Not Fear**

Do not fear Baas  
It's just that I appeared,  
And our faces met  
In this black night that's like me.

Do not fear –  
We will always meet  
When you do not expect me.

I will appear  
In the night that's black like me.

Do not fear –  
Blame your heart when you fear me –  
I will blame my mind when I fear you  
In the night that's black like me.

Do not fear Baas  
My heart is vast as the sea  
And your mind as the earth,  
It's awright Baas,  
Do not fear.

*by Mongane Serote*

## **Chapter Three**

### **Peoples, Politics, and Education in South Africa**

Trade between Europe and Asia dates back as far as the fifth century, to the beginnings of the silk and spice routes. In the traditions of South Africa, people from Asian civilisations, particularly Chinese and Japanese, were regarded by Whites as equal (or even in some ways superior) to Europeans (Boyce, 1971). In the early centuries of European exploration, voyages were undertaken predominantly by land into the Byzantine and Indo-China empires. The second wave of European exploration was by sea, once technology developed to allow navigation beyond the sight of land, with navigators like Vasco Da Gama, Bartholomeu Diaz and Christopher Columbus undertaking arduous journeys taking several months to the new worlds of Africa and America (Boyce, 1971).

Colonisation can be defined as the imposition of political and economic control by one group over another, which began in 1652 in what became South Africa, upon the arrival of the Dutch and the subsequent introduction of the Slavery and Forced Labour Laws. These laws resulted in the indigenous peoples of the land being dominated by their Western counterparts, and forced to adopt their religion, economics, language and cultural practices (Hudson, 1989). Colonisation of new lands was based on an unethical form of control which did not take into consideration the culture, language and beliefs of the people on which it was being imposed. Oppressive colonisation and the imposition of White rule over African peoples became the norm in the lands now known as South Africa as they were occupied first by the Dutch (1650s-1800s) and later the British (1800s-1960s).

The voyages of exploration undertaken by the Europeans out into Africa and the New World were targeted at the acquisition of new land, with all its wealth, to be claimed for the Crown. The dominant Western opinion was that human groups were of different species, descended from different origins (Young, 1990). Exploring and exploiting the African continent, European colonisers saw themselves as a superior type of people, which endowed them with the right to conquer, colonize and ‘civilize’ the indigenous peoples (Fryer, 1984). Governance of the Cape of Good Hope area was first established by the Dutch, but the ensuing centuries



were marked by a complex history of struggle for power between the Dutch, the French, and later the British. The natural mineral resources found in South Africa, especially gold and diamonds, explains why these European powers fought for its control.

## **Origins of the Nation of South Africa**

### **Autochthonous Peoples of Southern Africa**

The original indigenous peoples of southern Africa were the KhoikhoiSan, hunter-gatherers who lived in harmony with their natural landscapes with their wealth of flora and fauna to sustain their lifestyles for over 100,000 years (Wilmsen & Denbow, 1990). Over time, the KhoikhoiSan's nomadic modes of existence took them all over the lands of southern Africa in search of sustenance. Some of them adapted to a subsistence and pastoral lifestyle, in areas with water and enough grazing. They interacted with several other indigenous African peoples from the north to acquire livestock (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). Since there were mutual agreements regarding resources, those interactions were mainly amicable.

The descendants of interactions between the KhoikhoiSan and these northern peoples were first known as the Fokeng people, and later formed the Tswana chiefdoms, who became integrated into the emerging nation of South Africa (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007). A different, larger group of peoples, collectively known as the Nguni tribe, resided in the eastern parts of what is now South Africa. The Nguni later separated to form the chiefdoms of Swazi, Zulu and Xhosa, who also played an important role in the forming of South Africa.

### **The Free Burghers and the Cape Refreshment Station**

In April 1652, navigator Jan van Riebeeck arrived in Table Bay, close to the Cape of Good Hope, and established the Dutch Cape Colony on behalf of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC). These early European voyagers were seeking alternative routes to India and Southeast Asia, and the Cape provided a valuable half-way point for restocking their ships. Fierce competition arose between several European countries to monopolise the sea-route to the East, resulting in a power struggle for control of the Cape between the Dutch and the British between 1795-1819 (Theal, 2008).

The DEIC established refreshment stations at the Cape by installing a group of ‘free burghers’ or autonomous Dutch settlers there. The free burghers were allocated plots of land and commissioned to grow grain and produce for supply to passing ships (Theal, 2008). By 1658, the Cape of Good Hope Refreshment Station had become a self-governing colony, and the free burghers were independent of Holland. The free burghers are considered the first White South Africans, from whom the Boers descend.

Settlers in the Cape had to provide the fresh produce required by the DEIC, as well as their own growing families, so they began roving further away from their allotments (De Kock, 1936). The free burghers considered themselves entitled to annex the lands they ‘discovered’ and govern their lands as they saw fit. These Dutch settlers at Cape Colony demonstrated the Western need to lay claim to property for personal gain by expanding their initial territories. In a land teeming with animals suitable for game, many settlers relied on hunting to supplement their lifestyle. By the beginning of the 1700s their forays took them over the mountains where they discovered good grazing for them to change to roving farming – hence they were known as Trekboers, or Boers (Marquard, 1955).

### **The Trekboers and Boers**

These Dutch pioneers, with their own cultural and religious practices, held on to their rights of ownership, and as they became more isolated from the Cape, developed their own language called Afrikaans (derived from Dutch and some French). The isolation of these distant farms meant that Trekboer families lacked formal education, but they were schooled in practical skills like riding, shooting and foraging for herbs, honey and gardening plants. Most Trekboer families were staunch Christians affiliated to the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK-Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk) and would read their Bible, say grace before meals and have evening prayers daily. They would attend ‘nagmaal’ (NGK communion services) in the Cape every three months (Boyce, 1971).

Households had to become self-reliant and had to make their own clothing and essentials. A typical example of this was their ‘veldskoene’ (shoes made of bespoke leather); each household also had their own ‘huisapotek’ (home chemist) for medicines and remedies made from indigenous plants (Green, 1972). This self-reliance limited their worldviews and they became suspicious of new people and resorted to the ways they knew (Green, 1972). Since these

frontier farms were so remote the Cape governing body found them difficult to police, and as a result the Trekboers expanded them at will. Their priorities were to farm their sheep and cattle and expand their ranches to cater for their expanding families. Therefore, they would protect their families at all costs.

By the 1720s the DEIC had introduced a loan-farm tenure, where farmers could pay an annual rental of ten Rand to acquire farms of about 6000 acres. This incentive speeded up their dispersal inland and to the northeast and provided economic independence for the Dutch farmers. The dispersal provided a wide range of grazing which meant that stock farming became the preference. Since there were labour constraints all of the farmers' children were involved in the farming. Their descendants, who came to self-identify as the Boers, had given up their original agricultural lands in the Cape, and looked upon these inland stock ranches as their birthright (De Kiewiet, 1986).

This movement of expansion and dispersal of the Boers would stretch from the Cape Colony to as far north as the Zambezi River over the ensuing decades, and go on to impact the indigenous African peoples for centuries to come (De Kock, 1936). The first encounter of the Dutch settlers with indigenous Africans was with the relatively amicable people of the Cape, the KhoiKhoiSan. The Dutch dubbed the KhoikhoiSan Hottentots, translated as 'hotteren-totteren stutter' because of the click sounds in their language (De Kock, 1936).

The Dutch settlers entered into barter trade agreements with the Hottentots for cattle in exchange for fresh produce. The settlers also arranged for them to work as labourers in exchange for food. Settlers from Europe presupposed that they could automatically enforce their 'superior' socio-political value systems on the colonies they occupied, since they viewed the indigenous African people as cultureless savages (De Kiewiet, 1986). As a result, major misunderstandings arose from the fact that the indigenous peoples were nomadic. Adhering to their own social structure, they did not remain in one place for very long.

There was miscommunication about the concept of barter, and the Hottentots 'absconded' with livestock and grain. They were a very nomadic group of hunter-gatherers who saw nature as part of their heritage and would take whatever nature provided (Boyce, 1971). Unfortunately, they did not understand the concept of possession, and would 'steal and kill' the Dutch settlers' livestock. As a result, they were considered vermin by the Dutch, and could be shot on sight.

Frustrations on the part of the settlers led them to import slaves from East Africa and the Malay Peninsula, who they regarded as more reliable workers than the indigenous people, and who were skilled artisans. Interactions between the slaves and the indigenous population groups varied from indifference to acceptance, but both regarded the ‘umlungus’ (White people) with hostility, united by the fact that the Dutch perceived themselves as inherently superior over all others (Boyce, 1971).

During the expansion into the interior, the Dutch Trekboers came into conflict with the African tribes who inhabited those regions: first the Xhosa, and later, the Zulu. The Trekboers faced fierce resistance from the hinterland Xhosa people, who were small subsistence stock farmers who had been moving steadily south in search of arable land for their meagre stock. These tribes saw themselves as guardians of nature, who communed with the land and had no policies of individual ownership since they were largely nomadic. Major skirmishes over land use and ownership ensued, with significant loss of life on both sides.

By 1880, four White provinces had been established in what became South Africa, with two provinces under British rule, namely the Cape Colony and Natal, and two under Afrikaner control, namely the Oranje-Vrijstaat or Orange Free State and the ZuidAfrikaansche Republiek or South African Republic (Oliver & Oliver, 2017). The Black peoples living in all four of these provinces were dominated by the Whites who imposed a “policy of severely unequal segregation” on African citizens (Oliver & Oliver, 2017, p. 4).

### **Eurocentric Taxonomies of Indigenous Africans**

Europeans in colonial milieus used ubiquitous classification criteria to rank the indigenous African peoples in accordance with then-accepted Eurocentric hierarchies of civilisation (Sparman, 1975). While most indigenous Africans were classified as Bantu, the hierarchy of the different groups was compared to the class status commonly found in Europe. The Tswana people occupied the highest rank, followed by the Xhosa and Zulu people, and finally the KhoikhoiSan people. The criteria for these fallacious categories were recorded as follows:

- The Tswana were called the Beetjuanen and were seen as more than semi-civilized. They were considered a compliant group who were prepared to adopt Christian and European ways.

- The Xhosa and Zulu were dubbed the Kaffirs and viewed as aggressive half-mannered unbelievers. The name is coined from an early Moslem word ‘Caffer’ meaning infidel/unbeliever. Nowadays this term is considered a derogatory label, a racist slur.
- The KhoikhoiSan were called the Hottentots, which translates as most wretched savages, and occupied the lowest classification because they were thought to lack physical strength, beauty and a formalised language (Broberg, 2016; Sparrman, 1975).

### **Emergence of the ‘Coloureds’**

The so-called Coloureds originate from a phenotypically diverse group of mixed-ethnicity people, known as Bastards, who trace back to the arrival of the free burghers and their relationships with women from the above-named groups (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). Controversy arose because the Bastards’ genetics would not always favour their Dutch ancestry, which challenged the purist beliefs of the boers (Huigen, 2009). This doubt culminated in the ostracization of this group resulting in their being renamed ‘Kleurlings’ meaning people of different colours. The people in this group later became known as ‘Coloureds’. The concept of ‘race’ was formalised by European thinkers such as Kant (1724–1804) and Blumenbach (1752–1840) towards the end of the 18th century, and became an accepted discourse in the emerging nation of South Africa. Racism was embedded in the laws and systems (Broberg, 2016; Perrson, 2019).

As the Trekboers moved further into the interior, their interactions with the indigenous peoples became more frequent. Even though the Xhosa men were seen as aggressive, their women were seen as very attractive to the early European settlers, and subsequent carnal interactions resulted in a new group of bi-ethnic people who were known as Bastards. The so-called White Bastards were accepted heirs to the wealth of the Boer colonials, integrated into the settler culture (Huigen, 2009). On the other hand, those offspring whose looks favoured their indigenous ancestry were called Black Bastards and rejected by their families and Boer communities, who feared that these Black Bastards would lay claim to their inheritance (Huigen, 2009).

A further contribution to the Coloured peoples’ heritage was the introduction of Malay slaves in 1657 as well as Indians who came to the Cape in 1860 as indentured labourers (Khan, 2009). As the Cape was seen as the cradle of the origins of Coloureds, residency in pre-World War I

and II was not systematic and this population group produced the most varied of peoples. With the British occupation of the Cape in the early 1800s, more liberal policies of governance prevailed, and the Coloureds were acknowledged and assimilated into Cape Colony society (Jenkins, 1996).

The repeal of the South African Vagrancy Laws in 1828, and the global emancipation of slavery in 1834 marked the start of social acceptance of Coloureds as people with an intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy. Their conversion to Christianity and acquisition of education enabled their incorporation into the dominant civilized society. This resulted in the development of a bastardized dialectic language which was a combination of Dutch, Malay and ethnic words. This language became the present-day Afrikaans. In early Cape Colonial years there was a loose legislative relationship between the Cape Coloureds and the ruling White minority, whereas the large African indigenous population were regarded as illiterate and subservient (Young, 1990). These laws set the stage for politicized Coloureds in the early 20th century to adopt the well-known slogan, “Equal rights for every civilized man south of the Zambezi” (Jenkins, 1996).

Port Natal on the east coast of South Africa had established a different society from the Cape Colony. The British wanted an exclusively British colony without the influence of the Boers. British settlers had had violent encounters with the indigenous Zulu people, who were a proud and militant nation. The Zulus were subsistence farmers, and objected to the British annexation of their lands, so fierce battles ensued (Boyce, 1971). Inevitably, here too, numerous inter-ethnic liaisons occurred between British men and Zulu women, leading to the formation of another inter-ethnic community.

In these British households, English and Scottish patriarchs commonly practiced polygamy, taking African ‘wives’ to bear their children. They brought up their numerous offspring in the typical British colonial manner which reeked of class distinctions. Neither the ‘wives’ nor their offspring were permitted to interact with their African relatives, who were seen as beneath them. In earlier years, all such offspring were accepted as part of their British family and were given the same rights as other Whites in the Colony. In the province of Natal, English was the primary language of communication, with Afrikaans and other ethnic languages following in order (Boyce, 1971).

By 1910, the minority White people governed the Union of South Africa, instituting rules that facilitated imperialist conquest of native land and formalised forced labour and slavery. Racist segregation began to rear its ugly head, leading to the end of equality for those of mixed-ethnicity and their re-casting as Coloured. The Coloured population in Natal were marginalised because they were not White enough to fit into polite British society, but were also ostracised from their Zulu communities because they were not Black enough. Coloureds were included in the term 'Non-White' - an inclusive term referring to anyone who was not White (Jenkins, 1996). The Anglo-Boer Wars (1880-1902) were caused by conflict between 'Afrikaner Boere' and British farmers over land ownership and governance.

The Immorality Act 1927 forbade intercourse out of wedlock between White men and native women, making it a convictable offence (Martens, 2007). Inter-racial relations continued nevertheless; the offspring often identified with the ethnicity of their mothers, which resulted in problems since these children did not look like their mothers, often resulting in their being regarded as outcasts.

## **Apartheid**

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word meaning 'the state of being apart' and became national policy in South Africa following the 1948 election, when the National Party came to power. They promptly introduced Afrikaner (White) supremacy over the African majority of the population. The Group Areas Act of 1950, revised in 1957 and 1966, created two separate political communities, Whites and Non-Whites, within the same country (Posel, 2001). The apartheid policy effectively gave the ruling party total control of all legislation in the country. Specific regions were set up where each group was to live, socialise and be educated. Bi-ethnicity did not feature in this institutional divide-and-rule model, and Non-Whites were given different citizen status. These arrangements were further formalised in 1961 upon South Africa becoming a republic (Heldring & Robinson, 2012).

The population was divided into four racialised groups based on beliefs about inherent and cultural differences (Spencer, 2014). Whites had first-class status and were afforded the best residential areas, educational opportunities and services, and free access into public places. Apartheid's social engineering resulted in many people losing their homes, family groups being damaged, and properties and businesses being lost. Vibrant racially integrated neighbourhoods

such as District Six in Cape town and Sophiatown in Johannesburg were bulldozed to make space available for affluent 'White' suburbs (Lewis, 1987).

In Johannesburg, Blacks were moved to the settlements of Soweto and Meadowlands, very far outside the central business district (CBD), and Indians and Coloureds were settled in Lenasia and Eersterust & Noordgesig respectively. These forced removals sparked several anti-apartheid songs and anthems like Meadowlands by Strike Vilakazi in 1956 and in later years (Vershbow, 2010). In Cape Town the District Six residents were moved to areas on the other side of the mountain which had hardly any public services. Since public transport was so scarce, people would have to walk for miles to reach the CBD (Horrell, 1978).

For Coloureds, adherence to this Group Areas Act was exacerbated by the large degree of variance within this group, and further sub-classifications such as Cape Coloured, Cape Malay, Griqua, Other Coloured and Chinese were foisted on individuals of groups in an attempt to pigeonhole the population (Pirie, 1984). These classifications misrepresented people in that assumptions of ancestry were made without any clarifications of their ethnicity or heritage. Derogatory names such as 'coon', 'bruin-ou' or 'boesman' were used to reinforce the subjugated status of Coloured people in social discourse.

Most Coloured people in Natal were the offspring of English and Scottish traders and had adopted their paternal culture, language and ethnic identity. Therefore, they took exception to these unacceptable labels which were regarded as abhorrent. In spite of being marginalised, Coloureds were practicing racism within their own population group and often demonstrated it in their censure of darker-skinned Coloureds, and more often than not identified with their European rather than their African ancestry. Harsh criticism was directed against relationships across the colour line, with the perpetrators often being hypocritical in their behaviours. They condoned relationships with European people, stating that Coloureds were associating above their rank, but ridiculed relationships with ethnic African people, who they viewed as below their rank.

Many Coloureds occupied areas on the fringes of the White settlements, and these were also ranked according to socio-economic status. They had to socialise within their ethnic group and were often subjected to random police checks if fairer Coloureds were seen in the company of



darker people, with the Immorality Act quoted as the reason for the police checks (Lewis, 1987).

In 1953 the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, Act 49 legally imposed the segregation of public premises (toilets, parks, beaches, stadiums and cemeteries), public buses and trains as well as post offices, hotels and restaurants. The second-class citizens, (Coloureds and Indians), and the third-class indigenous Africans (Bantu or Blacks) each had separate areas, education facilities and services with the best facilities reserved for Whites, while non-Whites had facilities which were inferior. Since most public premises and services were reserved for 'Whites only', non-Whites were not allowed entry into those facilities. Signage was put up in these public areas prohibiting non-White people from using the facilities and those who breached these laws were arrested. In some cases, lenient proprietors of general dealer stores would allow non-Whites to use the rear service entrance to their premises.

Under Apartheid, Black South Africans were not regarded as South African citizens, but rather as members of 10 government-assigned tribal collectives or homelands called Bantustans. Detribalized urbanized Africans residing in cities were allocated to reserves or 'locshuns' and required to identify and intermingle with those from other tribal groups, leading to the loss of identity for many people. These areas became the breeding ground for inter-faction fighting, and xenophobia was rife. Non-Whites constituted about 80% of the national population but were squeezed into 30% of the country's territory. Of the non-White population, 70% were Blacks who were occupying only 13% of the national territory, the balance being shared between the Coloureds and the Indians (Pirie, 1984).

The Pass Laws Act 1952 required all Blacks to always carry a dompas (passbook), restricting their movement only between their place of abode and their place of work (or servitude), and instituting a curfew that required them to be in their locshuns before dark. The dompas enabled them to secure manual work, and was used to report on their performance. Failure to produce the dompas or abide by the curfew resulted in arrest (Elphick, 2008).

In 1950, the Population Registration Act No. 30 imposed legal classification for all South Africans. This Act made it compulsory for every South African to carry an identification book, which had a photograph, fingerprints and a numeric code that classified each person according to their stipulated ethnic group. Certain officials were allocated the task of determining each

person's 'race.' Coloured people were caught in the crossfire, since genetics meant their skin colour could vary widely, making it difficult to determine who was White, and who was not. Mismatches in identification led to problems: families were often separated from each other because they were not all placed in the same ethnic group (Elphick, 2008). Despite their racist origins, these ID books are still in use as a common form of identification today.

### **The Non-White Education System**

The Nationalist government set up separate education departments Whites (i.e. Europeans) and non-Whites (i.e. Coloureds, Indians and Africans), perpetuating an unequal and unfair system of education (Nzimande & Thusi, 1991). Racist ideas were fostered by pseudoscientific articles by scholars from the Afrikaner universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, which gave credence to the fact that White people were more intelligent than non-Whites. Since many of the schools were Christian-based, they promulgated a secular theology that European cultures were superior to indigenous cultures, therefore to impose segregation was justified to protect and promote the different cultures (Behr, 1987).

The Eiselen Commission Report of 1951 proposed that schooling for the African peoples (and later all non-White groups) should be adapted so that it could adhere to language, cultural and socio-economic needs within their communities (Morrow, 1990). With the establishment of state schools, it was illegal for a person to attend a state school designated for a population group other than that to which they are officially assigned, or for a school to admit as a pupil someone from the 'wrong' population group. The four schooling systems had several inequalities, some of which were: per capita funding; teacher-student ratios; facilities; and allocation of certificates.

Prior to 1953, education of non-Whites was controlled by mission or special character schools within the four provinces of South Africa -Transvaal, Natal, Free State and Cape (Behr, 1984). In spite of opposition from the government, several of the mission or special character schools continued to operate as 'mixed' private schools to cater for the international clientele or to families who were willing to pay exorbitant amounts to educate their children. Their argument was that they were not funded by the state, but by overseas grants and fees charged to international clientele.

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 gave the government total control of African education, ensuring separate educational outcomes. Funding for Black children was greatly reduced meaning that facilities were inferior to those of White children (Errante, 2003). The curriculum followed in Bantu schools only provided education in menial skills as they were deemed to be the servant workforce. Combined with poorly qualified teachers, facilities - little to non-existent and pupil-teacher ratios often topping 60:1, illiteracy was extremely high and pass rates abysmal (Behr, 1987).

From 1952 school attendance was compulsory and 'free' for Coloured children in all Natal state schools, even though the per capita expenditure for education was less than a quarter of what was spent in White schools (Behr, 1987; Malherbe, 1979). In 1955 The Vocational Education Act introduced a Junior Certification to Coloured and Indian ethnicities, specialising in trades, dressmaking and home-management to build up the skilled labour market (Behr, 1984). There was also the possibility of further educational opportunities, following an academic curriculum, for Coloured and Indian students.

Students attending secondary schooling would have to complete certain compulsory subjects (English, Afrikaans, Mathematics) and then either follow an academic stream (the Sciences and Humanities), a commercial stream (Accounting and Business studies) or a practical stream (woodwork, agriculture, arts & crafts and home economics). These options would lead to a Senior Certificate or Matriculation Certificate. The Matriculation Exemption certificate provided entrance to university. Non-Whites students had to complete the same national external examination as their White counterparts, thus competing for the same university opportunities. Over the years, some non-White students were able to secure placement in universities, despite the poorer facilities in their respective Education Departments.

Then, in 1959, the Extension of University Education Act #45 banned non-White students from registering with or attending White universities, with the exception of the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of Natal Medical School (UNIMED), and resulted in the establishment of 'bush universities' including Fort Hare and Western Cape (Behr, 1987). These measures denied educational opportunities to non-Whites, leading to major shortages of teachers and underqualified teachers. Certain Advanced Technical Colleges only allowed non-Whites who had applied for a special permit, under exceptional circumstances, to attend.

Teacher-student ratios in non-White schools averaged 40:1, increasing the inequities in schooling. The Coloured Person's Education Act of 1963 and the Indian Education Act of 1965 further segregated schooling, making compulsory education under four separate bodies (Behr, 1984). In Natal, the Anglo-Boer War had polarized the English and Afrikaner communities, and the Coloureds in Natal, who were mostly English-speaking, had demonstrated their allegiance to the British Empire, thus uplifting and advancing their educational status.

Regardless of the unequal nature of the education system, the Black schools and teacher training colleges were centres of political activism and an important crucible for the beginnings of anti-apartheid activism.

### **Ending Apartheid**

Beginning in the late 1940s, the anti-apartheid movements ramped up dissension amongst the Non-Whites. At first there was peaceful protest, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and later advocated by Nelson Mandela. In 1955 Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, and several Black, Indian and Coloured activists formed the African National Congress (ANC) whose sole aim was to establish equality for all South Africans, irrespective of colour or creed. Any activities carried out by the ANC was seen as subversive activity and was met with radical resistance from the apartheid government.

The 1960s saw the passing of several laws to provide the government's defence forces and judges with independence and autonomy regarding warrants, detentions, arrests and detentions. The first of these laws, the General Law Amendment Act No. 30 1961, allowed for detainees to be kept for 12 days without bail, and these laws were amended at will to suit the circumstances. The South African State President was granted power to ban social gatherings, restrict the movement of people of interest, and declare organisations unlawful (Horrell, 1978).

Several anti-apartheid activists were arrested and detained without trial for several weeks, and institutions such as Fort Hare were shut down because they were seen to be harbouring terrorists. All students of Fort Hare were regarded as people of interest by the government and would be placed under surveillance. In 1961-2, several ANC members were arrested on suspicion of subversion and were detained. Those who managed to escape detention went into exile outside South Africa to advocate for freedom of the masses from apartheid (Mphahlele,

1982). In 1963 the Rivonia Trial saw 30 prominent leaders of the ANC, including Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and Thabo Mbeki, tried for treason against the state, and they were imprisoned. The prisoners were sent to Robben Island, a shark-infested island 23 km off the Cape coast. Here freedom fighter Nelson Mandela would spend 27 years of his life (Gregory, 1995).

Despite the atrocities inflicted upon him, Mandela remained a positive symbol of hope for all South Africans who sought to end the system of apartheid. The slogan ‘amandla, awethu’ (power is ours) burned bright in the hearts of all South Africans who wanted freedom (Struwig et al., 2016). Outside South Africa, those in exile and their supporters continued to fight against apartheid, educating their hosts about the oppression of Non-Whites, using poetry and song to highlight the oppression, and organising protest marches and rallies in support of Nelson Mandela and the ANC (Mphahlele, 1982).

The drastic actions of the South African government in repressing anti-apartheid activism boosted the awareness of the international community about the extremes of the apartheid regime. Anti-apartheid activists all over the world protested in sympathy and lobbied against these human rights violations. For the people in South Africa this struggle had to go underground, since activists or ANC sympathisers were at risk of disappearing, their families victimised. For Coloureds, living under suspicion became an everyday experience, and emigration became an even more attractive prospect than ever before. Coloured South Africans who were well educated took their opportunities to migrate to countries including the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **Chapter Four**

### **A Narrative Journey to Self-Identity**

#### **Happy Childhood in eSwatini**

**1961:** My father had been questioned at his workplace at Fort Hare University about his involvement with the African National Congress (ANC). He realised his family would be in a dangerous position, under constant surveillance by the special branch of the South African Security forces, so my parents moved to the safety of Swaziland, the Kingdom of eSwatini. They planned for their children to be born in eSwatini so they had siSwati citizenship. But while my parents were visiting family in South Africa, I made my entrance into the world, earlier than expected. We returned to eSwatini and I spent the first 10 years of my life there - a country rich in African culture, and welcoming of other cultures.

The eSwatini monarchs King Sobhuza I and II established trade relations with the UK, and to support trade communication with the British, introduced English as another official language, besides isiSwati. All siSwati people were fluent in both languages. The increase in international trade led to eSwatini becoming a wealthy cosmopolitan country, where everyone was regarded as equal before the law, and facilities and services were accessible to everyone.

In eSwatini colour prejudice was non-existent: we were all amaSwazi. I learned about my heritage and in spite of being slightly different from my peers, I was a proud 'Swazi'. Over the ensuing years, all three of my siblings were born in eSwatini, and I did not even realise that I was a South African citizen. My freckled face, sallow complexion and reddish hair colour were inherited from my Scottish ancestors, while my round face, button-shaped nose and coarse hair texture were from my siSwati ancestors. Those first ten years enabled me to affirm my roots and proud identity as a bi-ethnic person, acknowledging I could be anything I wanted to be.

**Christmas morning, 1967:** Our family was getting ready for the 10 o'clock mass. I fidgeted as my mom tried to set my hair in a semblance of pin curls. My hair was reddish brown and coarse, fairly long, but with a tendency to stick straight out like Pippy-Longstocking's. "Why do you have to braid them with sugar water, Mom? It's so sticky" I wailed. "My curls don't

look like Kassi's curls. They're a funny colour, not lovely and golden like Kassi's. Why can't you just curl them like Kassi's mom does for her hair?"

My mother took a deep breath, and quietly, not betraying the angst in her voice said to me "We are different darling, we have a special mix of cultures, Scottish and siSwati, and we must be proud of who we are. We have to be happy with what we were given by God and our family ancestry. Your friend Zindzi can't even have pin curls, but she's happy with her short black hair."

I was suitably chastised, but these revelations were the start of a tumultuous time in my life as I tried to understand the concept of race and ethnicity. The big question constantly on my mind was, "**Why am I different?**" The pin curls complete, Mom and I joined Dad and my two brothers in our old Ford Taunus station-wagon for the five kilometre drive to the church. A couple of hundred people were milling around, hugging and wishing each other Happy Christmas.

Father Borelli, our Italian priest, ushered us into the serene interior of the church to begin the mass. "In the name of the Father" he began, and so the service continued, commemorating the birth of Jesus in the lowly manger in Nazareth, and encouraging us all to demonstrate faith, hope and love in our everyday lives. An hour and a half later, our beautiful family mass ended with a glorious "Alleluia, Amen" and families poured out of the church to share a midday Christmas meal together.

Our little village of Hluti held an eclectic group of people of all races, including the teachers who taught at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School (OSOS) and their families. My BFF's were Kassandra Heuning (Kassi) and Zindisiwa Mbatha (Zindzi). We were all the same age, five years old, and in the same class, Grade 1. We were as different as chalk and cheese, but inseparable. Kassi was an only child of Dutch immigrants, Johanes and Gretha who had moved with her grandparents from Volendam, Netherlands to teach at OSOS. Zindzi was the youngest of six children of Siphon (Siswati for God's Gift) and Nothando (God's Love), born and bred siSwatis. My Mom and Dad, both second generation Coloureds as referred to in South Africa, chose to move from South Africa to Dad's ancestral country of Swaziland to raise their family in a place free of racial division. Their decision was proving fruitful; we were growing up as a

group of happy-go-lucky children who were free of racial inhibitions, loved the outdoors, and popped in and out of each other's homes at will.

## **Family Road Trip**

**New year, 1968:** My mom noticed my pensive mood and asked me what was wrong. I asked the questions that had been plaguing me since Christmas morning. "Mom, why am I different? What is culture?" Here began the journey into my heritage. It was time – time to explain the history that would provide my rite of passage into a society I would have to live in, in the future. My parents decided that since it was the holidays, they would take us on a week-long road trip to clarify our birthright and hopefully answer my incessant questions. This was to be the trip which would plant the seed of pride in my identity as a bi-ethnic person.

On our road trip we visited several places which were steeped in siSwati history and ancient folk-lore. At Lobamba we were privileged to be invited into the royal palace grounds and given a tour of the house of the Ndlovukathi (Queen-mother). For me, however, the highlight of our trip was the visit to Shiselweni district, the tribal lands of my Siswati great-grandmother, and the homestead that my Scottish great-grandfather built for his new bride at Hlatikulu (meaning large forest).

We entered a high walled kraal (enclosure) which was made of reeds that had seen better days and were met by a pack of energetic dogs who bounded around the car and led the way to the main house. A wizened old woman leaning on an ornately carved cane met us at the door and welcomed us into her umuti (home) - a humble house built of wood, stone and mud.

To me this house, which was quite different to the modern home I lived in, was fascinating. It was the typical Scottish highland croft with a high-pitched thatched roof, a number of rooms with deep window wells and a well-established fireplace set against the inside back wall of the main room. Paraffin lanterns hung on pegs on the wall, casting a warm glow into the 'great room' – as the living area was called. Portraits lined the walls; the imposing figure of our Scottish ancestor, James Henwood, and his serene bride Lydia, in full siSwati royal regalia. Great-aunt Gerty (Nokuthula, meaning peace) as she was called by her immediate family - embraced us in welcome. Dad knew many of the people there and settled into a well-worn armchair once introductions were complete. My youngest brother, 18-month-old Gene, was



asleep in my mom's arms. One of the relatives ushered Mom into one of the small bedrooms to lay him down.

Curious, I followed mom into the cozy space and was struck by a pleasant smell of sandalwood. My eyes marveled at the monstrous bed, rustically fashioned out of Tamboti, an African blackwood, with a lumpy, soft feather mattress. Baby Gene snuggled into the soft covers and continued his slumber. I was a bit nervous addressing Great-aunt Gerty. It was a mouthful to say and I stumbled over the words, so she suggested we call her Nina-Thuli, which was what her siSwati grandchildren called her. This was the first of many learning experiences on my journey of discovery.

We returned to the great room where several people of various shades of brown, fair to very dark, made their appearance, and we were introduced to each of them in turn. The welcome by these proud and loving people, spoken either in English or siSwati, was heartfelt. Wow! All these people were my family. Nina-Thuli told us that she was Lydia's youngest sister, that they were all living comfortably at the ancestral homestead and that they had been living there since her sister had died in 1957. Some of the family were native siSwatis - Nina-Thuli's children and extended family, and others were nieces and nephews - the bi-ethnic offspring of James and Lydia. We spent several hours in the company of these happy people who had no inhibitions around each other, all of them confident in their identity as siSwatis.

Nina-Thuli retold the story of how Great-grandfather James Henwood had traded with King Sobhuza II in the early 1800s and was offered a wife as a mark of appreciation for all his work. Lydia (Thembisile – meaning hope) was the king's daughter from his third wife. She was betrothed and later married to James in 1880, and they set up their homestead on gifted land in Hlatikhulu.

“How do all of these people fit in the house?” I whispered to my brother, Denny. “Shh! And listen” admonished Mom, embarrassed by my forthright observation. Nina-Thuli just smiled.

My parents watched on as I was filled with awe about the history of our family and shared a secret smile that their decision to take the road trip was worthwhile. Time flew by as we visited with our family, and at midday we were offered lunch. The simple yet delicious meal of beef and vegetables was prepared from organic produce grown at the homestead. Mom's anxiety

was heightened when she realized that the meal and refreshments were presented on fine Vintage Scottish china, in evidence of the coexistence of biculturalism.

“Carol and Denny, please be very careful not to break anything,” she pleaded. “Don’t worry dear, this crockery has stood the test of time – I’m sure the children will be fine using them, won’t you, Carol and Denny?” replied Nina-Thuli, smiling to put us at ease.

While my parents enjoyed hot fresh-brewed *lisinga*, a coffee-like drink made from *Acacia karroo* seeds, my brother and I were given fresh cow’s milk and homemade shortbread made from a well-known Scottish family recipe. After lunch we were shown around the ancestral home. Beside the two rooms we had seen, there was another bedroom and a separate kitchen, accessed from the veranda outside. The ablution area was located a short distance away surrounded by a hedge for privacy. A well-kept garden surrounded the house, beyond which was a large area with crudely made benches around an open pit fire. I was told this area was called a *boma*. Further along, dotted about the main stone house and *boma* were several *iQukwane*, beehive-shaped huts made of reeds and covered in thatch, where most of the family slept, in keeping with the *siSwati* culture. As we chatted, we noticed a large herd of healthy looking *Nguni* cattle being brought into a fenced-off area. These were the family’s pride and joy. Within African customs, possession of cattle is viewed as a form of wealth. An African woman’s *lobola* (bride price) is determined by the number of cattle her father asks her suitor to bring to the betrothal. The homestead also boasted a menagerie of farmyard animals, and a thick grove of trees, indigenous and introduced. We were told about the uses of many of the indigenous trees, which included herbal remedies, cultural uses and even a cure for snakebite.

Two of the trees, the *Tamboti* and *Marula*, were of special interest. *Tamboti*, with its pleasant scent and hard black wood, was used for cabinetry and carving. Its sandalwood-like perfume made it a popular wood in furniture-making. Also, the milky latex it produced had medicinal properties, and care had to be taken not to use it in barbeque fires as the fumes could contaminate the food. *Marula* was a popular tree because it had multiple uses. The tree itself provided great shade, the bark was used to make ropes, the leaves were crushed and brewed to combat heartburn, the nuts were rich in vitamins and minerals for growing children, and the fruit was used for jelly and jam.

“All the men at the homestead look forward to using the fermented fruit to make beer,” whispered Nina-Thuli. She sniggered when she noticed my eyes growing as big as saucers, and in a conspiratorial voice said, “Carol, you weren’t supposed to hear that.”

Later that afternoon, before it was time for us to leave, we were treated to a traditional dance, hurriedly organized by some cousins. We were seated on rustic benches in front of a large outdoor fire, where about a dozen young people took the floor, dressed in elaborate beaded traditional costumes. The females performed a series of graceful moves and were soon replaced by loping and stomping males whose moves scared us somewhat. Nina-Thuli rested her hand on my shoulder and assured me that there was nothing to be scared about, and that the performance was done in our honour, to formally acknowledge our allegiance to the kingdom of eSwatini.

That road trip formed a lasting impression on me and was a turning point in my life. I was filled with a sense of belonging to two very different but amazing heritages. I knew who I was, that my ancestry was filled with a rich diversity of cultures – each with characteristics which would later shape me into the confident, proud and well-grounded person I feel I am today.

### **Back in Apartheid South Africa**

1972 marked the end of my safe, contented life in eSwatini. The South African government had issued an injunction which forced us to return to South Africa, or face losing our South African citizenship. It was only then that I found out my true citizenship. My parents had to leave their permanent employment in a loving and accepting community to find work in a country fraught with oppression and division.

Work was scarce in South Africa, and our family was forced to move to a segregated Coloured township in the Natal hinterland, where my parents were able to secure teaching positions. The town we moved to was steeped in racism. We had returned to South Africa in the middle of the apartheid era, with the government exercising severe punishment on anyone who dared to oppose their ruthless regime. Most people were wary of challenging the status quo, especially since activists like Nelson Mandela were still incarcerated on Robben Island, and anyone suspected of being a Mandela-sympathizer or ANC supporter was under constant surveillance.

Racism was also rampant in and between the Coloured communities. No photographs of ethnic African ancestors graced living room walls, but rather, English, Scottish, Dutch and many other European forefathers took centre stage in peoples' homes and conversations. Even among the Coloureds, inter-ethnic relationships were seriously frowned upon. I rejected racism, but was obliged to conform in this separatist climate.

My first years in a Coloured school were extremely taxing as I had to adapt to the expectations of the people in my area. Having come from eSwatini, I was horrified at the duplicity of many of my peers, and the blatant racism of the adults around us. Coloured people ridiculed the Black people, calling them derogatory names, and contemptuously treating them as third-class citizens. This discrimination did not sit well with me, so I frequently got into trouble for standing up for the rights of all people. Racism was rife in public places: we were not allowed to sit on the park benches or play on the children's playgrounds in the town.

Signposts around the town indicated 'Slegs Blankes' (for whites only) forbade us from using essential services like toilets, eateries and certain public transport services. Even in church we were ushered to the back pews, because the front pews were reserved for Whites only. The expectation was that I conform to the rules and regulations foisted upon us by the racist regime. Passing one of the many racist signposts that there put up around the town, my brother was horrified to see the words: "No Coloureds, No Dogs". "Is being a Coloured just like being a dog?" he asked, and my parents were lost for words. Things came to a head in my high school years when I stood up against the racist remarks that one of my teachers had made.

Young Teacher (speaking rudely to a cleaner, an elderly Zulu woman): "Thembi, get out of my way - what's wrong with you? Can't you see I'm carrying a load of books, yet you still carry on sweeping?" She barges past, almost knocking the old woman over. "You Kaffir maids have no brains, no wonder you can't think!"

Thembi (looking anxious and embarrassed): "Ngiyaxola madam, bengishanelah! (Sorry madam, I was just cleaning the hallway)."

Other students in the vicinity snigger and add derogatory comments: "Nigger, blackmama."

Me (horrified at this treatment): "Ngixolisile Gogo Thembi (I'm so sorry grandma)."

Me to the teacher (outraged voice): "Miss, that was so rude of you speak to Gogo Thembi like that, it's racist! Gogo Thembi is not a maid, she could be your grandmother. Nobody deserves to be treated like that! You tell us to respect our elders but you do the opposite."

Teacher (angrily missing the point): “Carol, how dare you insinuate that I have a Black grandmother? Get out of my class! As for Thembi, she’s just an illiterate servant - I’m sure this is the only job she’ll ever have.”

Me (in tears and disillusioned): “I can’t believe how racist everyone is in this place... I wish I was still in eSwatini, people treat each other right.”

Teacher: “Go to the office now! The principal will deal with you, and your parents will hear about this too.”

It was at this stage that my parents realised the impact apartheid was having on me, and they decided to move me to an international multi-ethnic school for the rest of my schooling. I was able to be myself at the international school, thriving both academically and socially and developing a strong sense of identity. The broad-minded teachers indulged my political aspirations and encouraged constructive dialogue about the politics of South Africa. While there were a couple of incidents which landed me in hot water because of my outspokenness and left-wing viewpoints, this was a safe environment in which to express my opinion.

I graduated from the international school with a qualification recognised worldwide, and immediately applied to attend Natal University. My application was accepted until the final stage, where I had to attend an interview. At this stage the racist world of apartheid reasserted itself; because I was a Coloured student, I was not allowed to attend the university. Instead, I was obliged to attend a Teacher Training College for Coloureds, and eventually graduated with a Secondary School Diploma in Natural Sciences and Mathematics. This qualification required the same examinations as that of White institutions, but only allowed us to teach in a Coloured school.

In 1987 after teaching for five years I secured a full scholarship to complete my BSc degree in the USA. This scholarship was offered by the Institute of International Education to 100 top Non-White South African students. There, I interacted with Coloured as well as Indian and Black students from all over South Africa, and even though we were enrolled at several universities around the US, we maintained close ties with each other. The camaraderie between us let us learn more about each other’s ethnic culture, and strengthened our acceptance and understanding of the realities of apartheid for our Non-White South African counterparts. I was exposed to a different lifestyle and learned to believe in myself and my unique individual identity. In 1989, my degree completed, I returned to South Africa to resume my teaching

career in a Coloured school, because we were not allowed to teach outside our ‘race’ group. I spent the next 20 years teaching in that unfair system.

Apartheid was perpetuated for three decades and not only pitted Non-White against White, but also Non-Whites against each other (Marx, 2002). Change came about through the leadership of the compassionate activist and humanitarian, Nelson Mandela, who after 27 years’ imprisonment, led South Africa to become a democratic republic in 1994 (De Klerk, 2003). While the new South Africa held much promise for the majority of its countrymen, the following years also came with many enormous challenges.

On independence in 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Program introduced affirmative action, which became part and parcel of the transformation project. It was established to correct the inequalities to which the apartheid regime had subjected the majority of its people, as well as to make a meaningful transformation of the economy to allow everyone to be participant. Affirmative action was intended to address the social disparities between groups, but as time went on, the outcome was very different. Two of the Non-White groups, Coloureds and Indians, were further marginalised while the Black/Bantu people, seen as the most disadvantaged group, were given precedence in job security.

Affirmative action can be viewed as ‘positive discrimination’ which favours people with protected characteristics over other candidates more suited to jobs. Attitudes of despair were especially prevalent in the mixed-ethnicity groups who saw it as reverse apartheid. Research reported the feeling among these groups that they were not White enough in the old regime, and now were not Black enough (Adhikari, 2005). For many, South Africa’s reform was too-little-too-late, and coupled with increasing levels of poverty-driven crime, resulted in many South Africans seeking a new life outside the country. We were tired of the oppression, the verbal abuse and the fear we had to live with – it was time to leave.

## **New Country, New Horizons**

**9 November 2000:** It’s 10pm when I hang up the phone in Port Shepstone, South Africa. I have spent the last hour on a telephone interview with the principal of a school in New Zealand. I’m close to hyper-ventilating and I screech “I can’t believe it! I’ve got a job - a Maths and Science position at Rotorua Boys High School!”

Jen, my mother-in-law, hugs me and says “Congratulations m’darln, you’ll do a great job in New Zealand – but we’ll miss you so much.”

Half-an-hour later, at 9:30 am New Zealand time, 11 hours ahead of South Africa, Chris the principal presses send on the email that formally employs me at Rotorua Boys starting January 2001. My computer pings as the email arrives, and I open it and scan it to find the attached PDF which has the Offer of Employment. I click ‘CTRL-P’ and the staccato of the old inkjet printer echoes the beat of my heart. My heart lurches as I watch the letterhead of RBHS appear out of the printer. I have to sit down to take it all in. I have a job: sight unseen, but nevertheless, a full-time position in a new country, where my husband has been working since the start of the year. Quietly, I whisper a prayer of thanks. Our tickets are bought, our bags are packed, and now leaving is becoming a reality. Three weeks from now I’ll be halfway around the world, going to a new job, a new town, a new country.

**30 November 2000, 2:00pm:** The international departure lounge is humming with the sounds of people preparing to depart. My two brothers and I wrestle three huge suitcases to the check-in counter. All our earthly possessions, the sum total representing our life in South Africa, are crammed into those three 75x45cm suitcases. A large contingent of my relatives, including my parents and my in-laws, are milling around, trying to be enthusiastic about farewelling us. The truth is they are likely to never see us again. I swipe at an errant tear, making sure that my children don’t notice my anxiety. Suddenly I realise we are just one of many families who are migrating, and that the same strong emotions are running through several family groups right at the same minute. My dad, ever the stalwart, puts his arm around me and says, “Daughter, it is your time. To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under Heaven. Never fear, we will meet again.” A bell chimes, and the boarding call for Singapore Airlines, bound for Auckland New Zealand, is announced. I check again – passports, boarding passes, wallet - and tissues. After a flurry of hugs, kisses, tears and waves we pass through the boarding gates, ready to start a new life in a new country with an earnest wish for a better life without racism.

Twenty-two hours later, three tired travellers embark on the last leg of our journey to New Zealand. My daughter’s chatter has ebbed before her tiredness. I cajole my very shy son into giving me a smile; he does, but his eyes glisten with tears of exhaustion. The friendly Singapore Airlines airhostess directs us to our aisle seats. We gratefully sink into the plush seats after enduring a 14-hour flight from Durban, followed by an 8-hour layover in humid Singapore.

Each of us ‘plugs-in’ to our choice of movie, game or music. Within 15 minutes we are airborne. My eyes close as I listen to a random selection of pop/rock. Pink Floyd belt out a hit from their album, Off the Wall:

*We don't need no education*  
*We don't need no thought control*  
*No dark sarcasm in the classroom*  
*Teachers leave them kids alone*  
*Hey, teachers, leave them kids alone*  
*All in all it's just another brick in the wall*  
*All in all you're just another brick in the wall...*

I drift off, and memories flicker on the screen of my subconscious mind... Hundreds of students are crammed into the hall, while a mixture of languages in excited voices - Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, Tswana - compete against each other and English, as people greet each other. From the front, a deep, distinctive voice shouts powerfully and in slow rhythm, “AMAND-LA” and we all answer “AWE-THU!” Translated, it means ‘Power is ours’ and it reverberates throughout the venue as we – ethnic Africans, Coloureds and Indians - stage yet another protest against unfair, unequal education. We stand together as one, united in an identity that has been foisted on us, Non-White South Africans, to demand what is rightfully ours – equal education.

The drone of voices soon stills as Zindzi (Nelson Mandela’s daughter) addresses the crowd to enlighten us on the status of the protests and boycotts that are crippling the country’s education system. Her speech is greeted with enthusiastic applause – which weirdly morphs into the chorus, ‘All in all you’re just another brick in the wall...’

Turbulence jolts me awake, and I reach over to my kids sitting on either side of me – an instinctive behaviour perfected over the years of living in crime-riddled South Africa. I relax as I realise they are safely with me, and have also succumbed to their exhaustion.

I ponder my strange dream. Is the song telling me something? What does it mean? The mixture of ethnicities in the meeting I dreamed about seemed to relate to my anticipation of meeting with all kinds of New Zealanders - Māori, Pākehā, and others. The memory of the protest meeting and the chant, Amandla Awethu relate to the memory of the New Zealand protests



against the exclusively White Springbok teams. Dreaming about Non-White South Africans seemed to relate to the Māori indigenous peoples of New Zealand who I was looking forward to meeting. Lastly, the Pink Floyd song reflected my nervousness in joining an education system which I have no knowledge of at this stage. Starting over in a new country could have positive and negative implications – but based on our current understanding of the attitudes and social policies of Aotearoa New Zealand, we were confident that this decision to immigrate was the right one for us.

## **Day Two Teaching in Te Taitokerau**

Of course, by the time I arrived at school the next day, all the children knew I was a part-African immigrant who had been going to te reo Māori classes, and just happened to look a bit like someone's aunty. This time, when the hīmene ended, Bo took the moment and spoke so that all the students could hear. Nobody moved.

After a very short mihi, Bo asked: “So, Whaea, can you speak that Click language? Can you say something to me in African?” Laughing, I replied, “Yes, I can say a few words and sing some songs in Xhosa – the click language, but I speak a number of languages – English, which is my mother tongue, Afrikaans, which sounds like German, Zulu, and Siswati, which was my great-grandmother's home language. So, I'll greet you in Siswati: Sakubona, kunjani? that means ‘Hello, how are you?’”

Ariana: “Oh, okay, so that's the same as saying ‘Kia ora, kei te pehea koe?’ Most of my whānau speak Māori, and I went to a Kura Kaupapa Māori before I came to this school.

Me: “I'd like to learn Māori and I think it won't be too hard, because our languages have the same vowel sounds as yours - a e i o u.”

Bo: “Okay Whaea – maybe we should teach you...”

We get on with the lesson, me learning some new words and phrases. At the end of the day, Ariana asked “Whaea, how do you say ‘Goodbye’ in your language?”

Me: “As you leave, I'll say “Hamba kahle!” which means ‘go well’.”

Ariana (mimics): “H-a-mb-a ka-h-le - I can't say the ‘shl’ but some of it sounds like Māori.”

Me: “A really good try.... do I say ka pai?”

Ariana: “Kia ora Whaea. See you on Monday.”

Me: “Haere rā, tamariki mā.”

## Poetic Interlude II

### Coloured

When I was born, I was Brown,  
When I grow up, I am Brown,  
When I am embarrassed, I stay Brown,  
When I get injured, I am still Brown,  
When I am tummy-upset, I stay Brown,  
When I am cold, I am still Brown,  
When I am sick, I still look Brown,  
When I die, I'm still Brown.

Yet, You...

When you were born, you were Pink,  
When you grew up, you are White,  
When you are embarrassed, you get Red,  
When you get injured, you turn Purple,  
When you are tummy-upset, you go Yellow,  
When you are cold, you turn Blue,  
When you are sick, you look Green,  
When you die, you are Grey.

And yet you call me ...

Coloured

*by Agra Gra*

### **Ixabiso (Xhosa for 'value')**

Be comfortable being, just be  
Glowing, basking, dynamic me  
Who am I? Different and diverse  
Better together, pride of the pack.

Glowing, basking, dynamic me  
Come into bloom  
Better together, pride of the pack  
Creating stories, a chest of treasures

Come into bloom  
Who am I? Different and diverse  
Creating stories, a chest of treasures  
Be comfortable being, just be  
Just Be

*(Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2018, p. 112)*

### **I am Enough**

She was alone, but stood there with pride,  
She stood there staunch, though crying inside,  
They said she was different – that she didn't fit in,  
Her colour was wrong – the mixture a sin.  
She never knew that life would be so tough,  
She was not white enough, not black enough.

Opposites attract – that's what they were taught,  
So black met white – love was what they sought.  
Amid the love, the life and the laughter,  
Her beloved parents welcomed their daughter.  
Taught fairness, equality and all that stuff,  
But sadly always -not white enough, not black enough.

She was just perfect - the best of both of them,  
Caramel skin, red curls, eyes like amber gems.  
Her curiosity was great, her goals, her flair,  
Determined to prove that life can be fair.  
But alas, alas - her life would be rough,  
She was still - not white enough, not black enough.

Live, love and learn, just do your best,  
Education is key – that’s what’s the test.  
Strive and work hard to prove to many,  
That you are the master of your own destiny.  
Who knew that all this was just a bluff,  
Since you are - not white enough, not black enough,

She straightened her back, her head held high,  
Determined to prove she’d not just get by.  
“Both my Scottish and Swazi ancestry –  
I am proud of them as I ever could be.”  
Though not white enough or black enough,

“Am I enough?  
I am enough - I am me.”

*by Carol Stanley*

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Racism is still a social force in most countries and cultures, though today it is often veiled. It shows itself in the assumptions people are brought up to have about the social world, and is reflected in the language that is used. In the accounts I have written about South Africa in the preceding chapters, I have paid attention to the many labels used to separate people and place them in categories, and the way these have reinforced racist hierarchies and understandings of other people. For example, names for people groups that derive from racist frameworks continue to be used; and the identity passes from the apartheid era are still used as forms of identification. In undertaking this research, I have gained a new level of understanding of the extent to which racism has shaped my family history, and continues to impact on my life. Undertaking this dissertation here in Aotearoa New Zealand has made possible an exploration of my African ancestry, which would not have happened had I remained in South Africa.

Below, I first discuss the limitations of my chosen research approach, followed by a reflection on the research question, finishing with a brief closing comment.

#### **Limitations of this research (and strengths)**

This dissertation research is limited by the fact that it is an account of a complex national history told mainly through my own life story and experiences. My story, while different in the fact that I proudly established my bi-ethnic identity at an early age, is one that many Coloured South African people could relate to. It is likely that the experiences I have recorded would also touch the hearts of many White South Africans who lived through the apartheid era. This research is autobiographical in nature, which is an inherent limitation. On the other hand, in a study as small as this, the use of both the literature and my own experiences have given me the means to tackle a large topic more effectively than by using other more traditional qualitative research methods, such as interviews.

#### **A Coloured South African Teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand**

In South Africa, the term ‘Coloured’ refers to a person of mixed ancestry. Originally the label was used for the children of European men and indigenous African women. For most of the

country's history, there would have been very few liaisons between African men and European women. The early European settlers in Africa believed that their genetic superiority meant that their children should be White. These concepts and terms are examples of how deeply racism has been embedded into the social frameworks of the South African people.

Under apartheid, Coloureds adopted elitist attitudes towards other Non-White groups and counted themselves as lucky to have better services and facilities than the rest of the Non-Whites. The large majority of Coloureds were happy with their lot, but many sought to pursue pathways towards improving social justice. Many Coloured people followed the lifestyle and belief systems of their European forebears, and some even shunned their indigenous ancestry.

For me, being Coloured meant I had the benefit of a foot in both worlds. I accepted what each ethnicity brought - the language, culture and value systems. This put me in a unique position to be able to navigate through life in South Africa. The advantage I had over many of my relatives and friends was that I had developed my sense of identity and was equally proud of both sides of my family heritage. Added to that was the fact that I had spent several years in a multi-ethnic school, where I realised that I was on par with people of all other ethnicities.

Immigration is a conscious decision to leave one's country of birth and re-establish oneself in another country. People immigrate for a variety of reasons – new opportunities, for a safer environment for their families, for a better life. Immigrants experience a raft of emotions – excitement, anxiety, loneliness, to mention a few. For many immigrants there is a sense of determination to make the most of the situation they have put themselves into. Since most have left family and loved ones behind, we cling to the things that we hold dear. If we have immigrated with our nuclear family, we tend to develop closer bonds within that unit.

Acceptance by our adoptive country plays a large role in how quickly we are able to settle into life there. Often the language barrier can have a huge impact on how quickly we are able to integrate into our new society. For many Coloured South Africans, Aotearoa New Zealand represented a place of refuge, where an accepting attitude meant we could quickly blend into the way of life here. Immigrant status also comes with challenges. Since we are South African, we would often be stereotyped as racist, given the limited knowledge most people outside South Africa had. The first wave of White South Africans to Aotearoa New Zealand (pre-1994) tended to be those who left because they did not want to be part of the apartheid

system. The second wave (post-1994) included those who left because they did not like the changes in the post-apartheid era and being under a Black government.

The early 1990s saw an influx of teachers from around the world to Aotearoa New Zealand to fill a recruitment drive because of the population boom, and by 2000, 40% of the teachers were South African. I was one of the teachers who answered that call. My teaching experiences varied depending on where in Aotearoa New Zealand I was, given the limited understanding many people here had about Non-White South Africans. The concept of ‘Coloured’ operated differently in most countries outside South Africa, including Aotearoa New Zealand, and was often seen as unacceptable and derogatory. Questions like: ‘Do you have a Black parent and a White parent?’ ‘How come your children are so different – one is brown like us Māori, and the other is white like a Pākehā?’ caught me off-guard at first, but then I realised I needed to be open about my bi-ethnic heritage. This led to my acceptance, when people likened my story to theirs.

Having been brought up as a native speaker of English and with knowledge of British culture worked to my advantage as a teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand. I did not have a noticeable accent, and with my ability to converse in several languages, I was able to quickly adopt the Kiwi way of speaking. Having a clear sense of identity and being proud of my ethnic heritage has given me tolerance for cultural difference that is an advantage in developing a culturally responsive classroom practice.

### **Final thoughts**

The contemporary world is inter-connected; it is no longer possible to maintain the illusion that what happens in one country does not affect others. The course of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the effect of racism on global health: the wealthy nations of the world have commandeered the supplies of the vaccines to the exclusion of the impoverished nations. This has allowed the virus to mutate freely, with the new strains moving back into Europe and the so-called first world. As difficult as it is proving to overcome the scourge of the virus, it is clear that overcoming the historical social effects of the scourge of racism will take even longer.

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