

# White Racial Privileges, Racialization of People of Colour, and Racial Retaliative Violence in South Africa?

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## Abstract

South Africa's independence steered hopes that racism in South African, is likely to become a thing of the past. However, these expectations remained as a dream, as racism still thrives in contemporary South Africa. Till date, white South Africans still have more higher privileges, than their black counterparts (Africans, Colored, and Indians). This unfortunate circumstance, has indeed provoked studies that have examined the cause of racism in post-apartheid South Africa. However, findings of these studies hardly cover rationale for, and ways through which racism gets into contemporary South Africa. Drawing on document analysis, this article examines why and how racial identities and hierarchies are woven into South Africa's polity and the utility of CRT and Ubuntu in redressing racial marginalization and enhancing racial justice and equality in South Africa. The findings expand discussion on the dimensions of racism in post-apartheid South Africa. It also suggests means through which South African government can optimize CRT and Ubuntu in ways that aid strategic efforts at improving racial cohesion and equality in the country.

**Keywords:** Anti-black violence, CRU, Equality, Racial marginalization, Racial cohesion.

## INTRODUCTION

South Africa's constitution was built on the recognition of past injustices during apartheid to correct and foster unity in diversity in post-apartheid South Africa (Ellmann, 2008; The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 2021). The healing of wounds and ugly memories inflicted by white racists and the building of a society that is meant for all, not just a few, with a strong democratic base, justice, and respect for fundamental human rights are all fundamental provisions of the post-apartheid South African constitution (Reilly, 2021; Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Benton, 2016). With these constitutional provisions, South Africa is expected to remain largely united, racially equal, and an open, peaceful society where citizens are equally protected by the law. Chapter one, subsections (a and b) of the constitution, specifically advocates for human dignity, equality, and non-racism and non-sexism (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 2021). These provisions may have been deliberately inserted into the post-apartheid constitution to eradicate racism, discrimination, and systemic inequalities inherited from the apartheid regime. But the reality in the country shows that traits of racism still exist in South Africa (Reilly, 2021). These traits still rear their ugly heads and foster tendencies of division, disunity, and inequality between black and white South Africans (Reilly, 2021). It places South African whites over blacks in both private and public spheres and metes to them inhumane treatments, which often trigger feelings of resentment against the white, and in some extreme cases, violent protests or conflicts (Von Holdt et al., 2011; Puttick, 2012; Ojkorotu et al., 2023; Ndinga-Kanga, 2019). Conflicts not only create divisions but insecurity, as it limits the country's pathway to sustainable peace and development due to the huge economic losses (Mutanda, 2017; Mosselson, 2015).

Today, South Africa remains one of the leading countries on the continent, with high-ravaging violent protests that often leave huge economic losses, massive casualties, and untimely deaths (Mustafa, 2013; Reilly, 2021). Evidence shows that most of these violent protests or conflicts were triggered by the revengeful actions of aggrieved blacks that still nurse consequences of racism suffered during the apartheid regime (Peberdy & Crush, 1998b; Morris, 1999; Ojkorotu et al., 2023). Thus, most post-apartheid conflicts in South Africa are partly provoked by the retaliatory behaviors of some black citizens against the despotic white apartheid regime (Reilly, 2021). This explains why some nation-wide violent protests or conflicts are targeted at white South Africans and their properties. The violence over President Zuma's imprisonment across the country for contempt of court explains how historical memories of racism triggers conflicts or violence in South Africa. For instance, as result of the Zuma's violence, Kwazulu-Natal province, experienced a racial violence between its black population and large ethnically India community (Rikhotso, 2021). It was on record that one of the demands of the group, Radical Economic Transformation (RET), a faction of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), calling for the release of Zuma, was the fight against "the

real state capture by white oligarchs” (Reilly, 2021). This demand further showed how unforgotten latent past memories of racism during apartheid triggers violence in South Africa.

The reoccurrence of race-induced violence raises doubt about the extent to which constitutional provisions are effectively enforced and upheld in South Africa. It represents a situation where a country (i.e., South Africa) emerging from an oppressed and violent past still faces more ravaging violent protests, threatening its security and peace (Rikhotso, 2021; Leibbrandt & Zizzamia, 2022). Indeed, conflict between white and black South African students in higher institutions and domestic strife in the larger society are all indicative that South Africa is still grappling with racism and anti-black racial violence (Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Ndinga-Kanga, 2019). For example, much of the xenophobic or anti-black racial violence by black South Africans, against black Africans are borne out of fear of losing the few remaining opportunities, left for them by the whites, to black African foreigners. In retaliation of the oppression, they suffer from the whites, they tend to transfer the aggression to their fellow black foreigners. This can be interpreted to mean that racism has planted the seed of discord and xenophobic in black South Africans, hence their attacks on fellow black African foreigners. This may have led Webster (2019) to conclude that race-induced violence is responsible for South Africa’s classification as “the world’s most unequal society”. Similarly, xenophobic attacks are another form of conflict in South Africa, meted out to foreign black Africans by mainly urban black South Africans (Oni & Okunade, 2018; Ueda, 2020). Although several factors have been attributed to xenophobic attacks, they are also more likely to be caused by racism (Shoba, 2020; Rikhotso, 2021). Xenophobia attacks are partly manifestations of the ugly experiences suffered by black South Africans under racial policies or apartheid governments. They tend to transfer the aggression or seek revenge on black African migrants, especially those they feel want to dispossess them of their scarce jobs and other opportunities. Unlike the apartheid era, black South Africans are the main perpetrators of xenophobia, violence, or conflict in the post-apartheid era, thus showing that blacks can also be racists.

The rationale for this article is borne out of the need to find solution to the problem of racism and racial retaliatory or revengeful behavior that pushes black South Africans into violence. Since most studies (Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Puttick, 2012; Nicolson, 2013; Rikhotso, 2021) have shown that the majority of post-apartheid conflicts in South Africa have an undertone of racism, there is a need to conduct evidence-based research on viable conflict resolution mechanisms that can amicably address the issue of racism and racial retaliation in South Africa. Research in this direction is urgently needed to provide an early and exploratory, yet detailed, contribution to racial equality and cohesion. Therefore, combined efforts from researchers and the government should be more focused on race adaptability, reconciliation, respect for the law, human rights, citizen equality, and unity. This can enhance mutual racial cooperation and peaceful coexistence in South Africa.

To achieve this, people must understand that they have to live for one another and that their existence largely depends on the safety and survival of others. Ubuntu holds the view that human beings have dignity by virtue of their capacity for community, understood as the combination of identifying with others and exhibiting solidarity with them, where human rights violations are egregious degradations of this capacity (Msila, 2008; Metz, 2011; Letseka, 2011; Baken, 2015). It is evidently clear that racism thrives because citizens fail to live for others or show solidarity for others (Webster, 2019). The inability of human beings to identify with others or have a mutually shared collective interest has partly been blamed for the rise of racism and violent racial retaliation, which often, provoked conflict in South Africa (Moloketi, 2009; Rikhotso, 2021). For example, those involved in violent racial attacks hardly think about the consequences of their actions; if they do, it could have prevented them from engaging in them. Although Ubuntu has been criticized for being too vague, unable to adequately fit into modern industrial society, and for the absence of individual freedom, its principles and philosophy, if adequately applied and enforced, will go a long way toward creating a peaceful atmosphere devoid of conflict and racism. One of the tenets of Ubuntu is human dignity, which depends on shared collectivism and brotherly love. Naturally and ideally, it is usually very difficult to go into war or conflict when people understand that their own existence depends on others. It literally means that “a person is a person through other people” (Mandela, 2006). Ubuntu is a social philosophy that can be likened to humanistic conflict resolution virtue and is usually deployed to promote social cohesion and peace. Social cohesion largely depends on unity, equality, and social justice (Mandela, 2006). Thus, Ubuntu has a critical role to play in the promotion of social cohesion and peace through its doctrines of human dignity, social conviviality, and affinity. Instructively, Ubuntu’s sacred tenets, such as the fundamental interconnectedness of human existence, community, care, respect, responsiveness, and hospitality, can all serve as humanistic virtues for conflict resolution (Khoza, 2006).

Critical race theory (CRT) on the other hand, holds the view that racism is a social construct specifically crafted to place the white race over people of color (Brooks & Mary, 1994). It however argues that the persistent nature of racism is partly due to interest convergence of both the whites (interests for materials/wealth) and the working-class blacks (physical/labor). The pursuit of interest by both the whites and blacks, which is referred to as interest convergence or material determinism, often, heighten racism, as both racial groups are more interested in their individualistic interests than resolving racism (Calmore, 1992). CRT, opines that since racism is rooted in history that may not be known to their white counterparts, people of color should always communicate and voice out to their white counterparts on their historical travails and experiences with racism. With the continual voice-out by people of color, about racism, it would go a long way in reducing it (Haney & Ian, 1994).

### **Mapping the Problem with racism, systemic inequalities, and violent protests in South Africa**

Unlike other African nations, South Africa still suffers from conflicts brought on by racism and racial reprisals, which, somehow degenerate into violent protests. Although, these violent protests, tend to be blamed on bad governance, evidence showed that they could also be provoked by feelings of resentment by blacks against white supremacy. How the feeling of

racial resentment has consistently been hatched under the guise of protests against poor service delivery in South Africa, is one research focus that has received little attention. Research in identifying if deliberate retaliatory attacks in the name of service protests, is among the factors provoking violent protests in South Africa, will aid the designing of appropriate mitigation strategy that can reform the soul and mind of South Africans to see one another as brothers, to embrace peace, love, selflessness, and unity. This particularly becomes very important as South Africa is currently experiencing violent conflict as a result of this racially motivated domestic unrest (Shoba, 2020). Feelings of injustice and discrimination, particularly between whites and urban blacks in South Africa, are the root cause of this intra-family conflict (Ueda, 2020). Although causes of these protests are multi-faceted, racism still plays an active role in the provocation of violence or conflict in South Africa (Von Holdt et al., 2011; Ndinga-Kanga, 2019). This styles South Africa as the capital of world protests, where people are constantly protesting against segregated access to public utilities (Ndinga-Kanga, 2019). It has been noted that there are more violent protests or conflicts in post-apartheid South Africa than any country in Africa. This may have been due to the democratic transition in 1994, which allowed equal rights for all citizens, both black and white South Africans. The recognition and equality of human rights that the transition brought often led black South Africans to revoke or protest against any perceived injustice or segregated opportunity in contemporary South Africa. This article hypothesizes that the recurrent violent protests in South Africa is likely to be as a result how some blacks still nurse past memories of racism.

The foregoing hypothesis is aptly informed by the need to provide adequate answer to why white South Africans still have more access and opportunities than their black counterparts in contemporary South Africa. This is important as the political power and seat of government in the country, for about 30 years, have been consistently occupied by black South Africans, except for the recent coalition or unity government between African National Congress (ANC) and Democratic Alliance (DA). This raises the question, why are black majority group still suffering from discrimination and inequality and the white minority are still maintaining their unrestricted access to public services and economic opportunities, like they were in the apartheid era. Indeed, racial policies, which tend to demarcate or segregate black and white South Africans, still exist in the country. Thirty years after the 1994 independent and the new post-apartheid constitution, which specifically speaks against all forms of racism and segregation between the poor and rich and black and white, looks too fragile to combat racism. It's much emphasis on an all-inclusive society, where everybody respects human dignity and fundamental human rights, only yielded little outcome as racism remained in the polity of the country. Importantly, the constitution provided for creative and pragmatic urban planning to eradicate segregation of black and white in residential areas, yet this has not materialized (Burke, 2019; Leibbrandt & Zizzamia, 2022). The re-emergence of racism like it was in the era of apartheid is a potential source of conflict in contemporary South Africa (Ojokorotu et al., 2023). Racial conflict still arises because of the unforgotten historical experiences of racism (Holtman et al., 2005; Gibson & Claassen, 2010). This evidently has remained the underlying cause of violence and conflict that has bequeathed to the country huge economic losses and strained diplomatic relations with other African states, especially those whose citizens have been slaughtered out of envy and feelings of hatred.

Relatedly, cities like Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth, among others, in the country are evidently traumatically divided (Kotzé & du Toit et al., 2008; Ueda, 2021). While the whites still live in sumptuous residential areas, their black counterparts live in quill suburbs that are comparatively less pleasant and healthy for living (Ndinga-Kanga, 2019; Leibbrandt & Zizzamia, 2022; Reilly, 2021). These ugly experiences, could trigger conflict and a feeling of hate, which often pushes black South Africans into xenophobic attacks (Leibbrandt & Zizzamia, 2022). The inability of successive constitutional democratic governments to eradicate or prevent these racial upshots from stimulating violence and conflict is hardly discussed in the literature. This article addresses this gap by providing adequate information on some of the reasons that are responsible for the failure of successive South African governments to totally prevent racism.

Western ideologies and theories have always been imported by many African states, including South Africa, to resolve racially-induced violence (Jack, 1998; Miles, 1989). However, evidence indicates that the use of these theories in Africa hasn't done much to advance the goal of, or provide significant results in racial cohesion and unity (Matunhu, 2011). Additionally, applying these theories only serve to settle disputes caused by factors other than racism. Apart from the fact that less attention has been paid to Ubuntu as an African social theory, that can be used to enhance mutual cooperation among South Africans, how it can be blended with the western theory of CRT to enhance racial cohesion and equality in South Africa is rarely examined. And this article bridges this gap by hypothesizing that a blend of Ubuntu and CRT could be deployed to resolve race-induced inequality and conflicts in South Africa.

The article argues that Ubuntu and CRT are not only capable of eradicating racism but can also adequately serve as a mechanism for conflict resolution that can promote the expected peace and cohesion in South Africa. The effective practice or application of Ubuntu's doctrines and tenets of CRT, such as living for others, seeing others as human, respect for human dignity and rights, solidarity, compassion, and consensus, has practical implications for unity, cohesion, and peace as well as voice-of-color. Although the initiatives of Ubuntu and CRT often draw attention and commendation, it raises suspicion about sustenance and utility value, considering the fact that one of their criticisms' concern their applicability to a modern, dynamic industrial society.

## Methodology

This article utilizes the secondary source of data collection that relies on document analysis. Documents were sourced through desktop reviews of empirical studies that examined issues related to racism, CRT, Ubuntu, and the implications of racism in South Africa. The inclusion criteria for documents are empirical studies indexed only in Scopus and Web of Science and that discussed issues relating to racism, racial inequality, white supremacy, and black resistance in South Africa. The rationale for this, is because articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science are mostly peer-reviewed and have deep-rooted knowledge based. In addition, other documents such as the constitution, South Africa's white paper on building a better world, African

Union's Human Rights protocols, were purposively selected using the inclusion criteria that they are established government or regional institution reports on racism. Articles that do not cover the foregoing topical issues were excluded from the documents. Data were content-analyzed descriptively using themes that align with the objective of the research.

### **Reasons for the lingering nature of racism in South Africa**

This section of the research examines why racism, still rear its ugly head in the 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa. This question becomes relevant, considering the provisions of South Africa's constitution, which provided for racial equality, respect for human dignity, and social cohesion. In fact, looking at ugly historical experiences of racism and how South Africa fought for her independence in 1994, it is appropriate to conclude that the independence will lead to the demise of the ugly features of the apartheid regime. However, how and why this divisionary tool (racism) is woven into South Africa's polity in this dispensation has received very little attention. This research hopes to expand knowledge by providing adequate information on causes and ways racism flows into South Africa's political, social, economic, and cultural systems.

One of the reasons why racism has thrived in South Africa is as a result of interest convergence. According to CRT, the pursuit of interest by both white elites (materials/wealth) and black working class (Physical labor to earn means of livelihood), is likely to prevent both from being interested in tackling racism (Salta et al 2018). The convergence of interests, where both whites and blacks pursue their different individualistic interests, like it currently exists in South Africa would make racism fester. In today's South African governance systems, majority of people of color prefer to control the political power (as president, premier, municipality government, among others), while their white counterparts occupy the economic powerhouse of the country. Borrowing from the tenet of CRT on interests' convergence, it can be reasonably inferred that one of the causes why racism thrives in South Africa is because racial groups in the country place more value on primordial interest than civic interest. The convergence of whites' and blacks' primordial interests, often prevent them from addressing the critical issue of racism (MacDonald & Hudson, 2012). Indeed, evidences are abounded to show that, while the economic powerhouse of South Africa is in the hands of white South Africans, their black counterparts settle for political power. The higher both racial groups chase after their interests, the greater they tend to neglect the need to eradicate racism in South Africa. For instance, most of the high yielding income businesses and investments such as banks, food production, shopping complexes, and other economic-based ventures are owned by whites. The continual occupation of these economic ventures by white South Africans has remained one of the ways racism flows into the economic system or sector of South Africa. This is because the whites have continually believed that it is their birth right to control the economy and it is almost taken as normal that they own and control the economy of the country (MacDonald & Hudson, 2012).

Weak political will of successive South African governments to openly voice-out, take decisive action, and prosecute racists has remained partly one of the leading causes of racism in the country (Reilly, 2021; Ojokorotu et al., 2023). This is otherwise known as institutional racism. It is covert, resulting from acts of indifference, omission and refusal to challenge the status quo. Instead of engaging in effective communication with their white counterparts, some of whom, may not be aware of historical experiences of oppression suffered by people of color, about racial discrimination and inequality, they are busy engaging in excessive politicking that only benefits them and their cronies. Evidences showed that politicking by black political elites or leaders is at the best been able to maintain the status quo that is heavily racism-inclined (Oni & Okunade, 2018; Mulaudzi, 2022; Rikhotso, 2024). The sustenance of silent stance or posture of black political leaders, who have always been in control of government, but refused to change the racism-laden status quo, has remained a potential source of racism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa (Pather & Chetty, 2015). Whereas, actions on effective and robust engagement with their white counterparts through communication is completely non-existing. The satisfactory and contentment mode of people of color to remain perpetually at the helm of political power in post-apartheid South Africa, without actively speaking-up against racism, is another means racism rear its ugly head in South Africa.

It is also caused by the servanthood habit of poor black South Africans, who often work as laborers or workers for their white counterparts (Puttick, 2012). This can otherwise be called economic-induced racism. Racism is embedded in the economic structure of the country, partly because of the continued sustenance of the status quo, which also include the dominance of the economic powerhouse by whites, since the apartheid regime (Patton & Jordan, 2017). It was further cemented by the silence stance of successive governments led by people of color in South Africa (Shoba, 2020). Today, it is almost becoming normal, if not normal to see blacks working as laborers in companies, businesses, farms, and ventures owned and managed by whites (Ndinga-Kanga, 2019). Whereas, it is very difficult to see whites working under blacks, except for government institutions and even within those institutions, white South Africans, occupy key managerial positions or departments, especially those relating to finance, legal system, and investment. Despite facing racial discrimination, people of color in the country, tend to feel very contented with their servant-role, because, it is rarely challenged and communicated.

Feelings of resentment by blacks against their white counterparts is another cause of racism in South Africa (Reilly, 2021). Although, studies are quick to mention racial discrimination perpetrated by whites against blacks, as it generally exists in the apartheid era, recent findings have shown that blacks too harbor suspicious and distrustful attitudes toward other races, especially whites (Foster, 2009). The inability of black South Africans to forget bad memories of oppressions suffered during apartheid, is partly the leading cause why racism still persists in modern day South Africa (Mashele, 2012). For example, majority of black South Africans, born after the country's democracy, tend to have established perceptions and tags that they inherited from family, social experiences, and experiences that are not their own, but that are used as mirror to view other people or race.



Poor knowledge or lack of information on the path of whites, about the historical experiences of oppressions suffered by people of color or blacks is also among the reasons why racism pervades the South African polity. This had been envisaged by CRT, which was why it recommended that people of color must always voice-out or communicate with their white counterparts, their travails or ugly experiences with racism (Benton, 2016). The idea of effective communication, speaking-up, and acting-up against racism, as suggested by CRT, may have borne out of the fact that racism activates historical experiences of oppressions, that may not be understood or are unaware by whites.

### **Ways racism flows into contemporary South African Society**

Why racism still weaves its imprints in contemporary South African society remain a major problem, despite political changes offered by the independence in 1994. Although, racism no longer manifests in form of racially explicit policies like it was commonly seen during apartheid, it now manifests in ways such as proxy, exclusionary language, school admission, high school fees, segregation of universities among black and white learners, and other maneuverings like 'crowding out' black learners by bussing-in white learners from outside the feeder area. Racism has been flowing into the South African society through political, economic, and social structures.

### **Racism from the lens of politics in post-apartheid South Africa**

Following the end of apartheid and the country's 1994 transition to a democratic political system, South Africa used a federal executive structure and a functional single-district proportional representation voting system to divide power across races and regions (MacDonald & Hudson, 2012). The goal to prevent "spoiler" politics and promote inclusive politics at the provincial and national levels may have led to this decision. Research indicates that in modern South Africa, racism permeates the development of political parties (Mattes, 1995). In contrast to racist political parties, which have continuously failed in South Africa, dominant political parties are largely multiracial (Pather & Chetty, 2016). By critically examining the ways in which political parties and their leaders practiced politics, it is evident that racism in South Africa does indeed have its origins in political party operations. Although it is multiracial, white people still make up the majority of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the largest opposition party (Heidi, 1990). Similar to this, the African National Congress (ANC), although being the dominant party since 1994, frequently intensifies its racial appeals by offering only black candidates for political office, using divisive electoral language, and disproportionately targeting black voters in its campaign ads. After apartheid, racism enters South Africa through political parties (Meli, 1999). Even though the ANC and DA have a multiracial stance, their internal politics lean toward racism.

### **Economic-induced racism in South Africa**

From the economic lens, racism has been woven in South Africa's society through various economic-related routes (Reilly, 2021). As the country's economy is dominated and occupied by whites, racial discrimination manifests in forms of low wages received by blacks compared to their white counterparts. In today's South Africa, whites strongly hold the grip of economic activities such as large-scale commercial farming, food eatery ventures, mining, manufacturing, technology, and host of others, while their black fellow citizens commonly featured in the working (laboring) class (Ojokorotu et al., 2023). How their daily working relationship is defined by racial discrimination is well-documented. Evidence indicates that unequal pay, deliberate cut-in-pay, unpaid overtime or work hours, forced labor (especially in farming and mining sites), inhuman treatment, and other huge economic disparities persists, much of it is reinforced by existing institutions and attitudes in South Africa. This therefore raises the concern of how racism and its associated discrimination continue to hold sway in a Black governed country like South Africa. In addition to discriminatory white-black working relationship, blacks also suffer from low or lack of job opportunities, compared to whites. This goes to show that racism gets its imprints established in modern day South Africa, through economic institutions. For instance, economic institutions such as universities, hospitals, banks, business organizations, and others are objects of racial discrimination and abuse in South Africa. In these institutions, especially the universities, people continue to normalize racial discrimination and perpetuate harmful behaviors. According to the Centre for Higher Education (2009:74), staff employment in most public high education is skewed racially. Relatedly, Pather and Chetty (2016), indicated that students in South Africa entering universities have been racially discriminated from positions of extreme inequality in terms of race, class, schooling and other resources. Despite various educational reforms that have expanded more access of blacks to education after the 1994 independence, such reformatory expansion has not been sufficient in addressing the needs and expectations of black students, as they are still racially discriminated against in choice of courses (for instance there is still disparities between white and black students over medical-related courses), as white students get these courses than their black counterparts (Jeynes, 2016). At the organizational or managerial level, whites have predominantly been above the blacks in almost all the sectors in the country. Evidence shows that while about 69% of the whites are occupying topmost echelon of managerial positions, yet only 9% of them are economically active, whereas 78% economically active black population, occupy just about 14% of the top management positions ((Mthanti, 2017)

### **Socially skewed racism in South Africa**

In today's South Africa, racism also penetrates the country through social relations and activities (Banaji et al., 2021). Instances such as verbal slights and side-eye in conferences, workspaces, churches, and other social gatherings are examples socially-stimulated racism (Abel, 2022). Racism resonates through social structures, discriminately skewed against blacks in South Africa. Within South African society, social ills such as poverty, unemployment, hunger, and mal-nutrition, and shortage of access to fertile lands, are sometimes activated by racism in South Africa (Banaji et al 2021). For example, a lot of blacks have

remained poor because of their limited access to fertile farmlands, as most fertile farmlands are owned by whites, while their black counterparts work as laborers on their farm. In addition, whites have more access to social services like water, health, electricity, and public utilities, than blacks (Banaji et al 2021). Although, both white and black South Africans hardly meet in social gatherings or ceremonies, even if they converge, it is on record that both hardly sit together in such social ceremonies. Segregated residential areas between white and black South Africans is a common indicator of racism in contemporary South Africa.

A critical review of how racism flows into South Africa's polity shows that although, the transition from the apartheid regime to democratic system, raised significant hopes that racism will end with apartheid, but recent evidences showed otherwise, as the formation of political parties, parties' candidates to run in an election, campaigns, and intra-party politics are racially- prone or inclined. On the economic front, the result is the same as it was revealed that racism gets into modern day South African society more easily through economic interest convergence of both the white and black South Africans. White-Black economic interest relations (where whites are seen as owners of productive ventures and blacks as owners of labor, i.e working class) is racially defined and determined. Today's South Africa presents a picture of white population settling down for juicy top economic managerial positions and the black population struggling to make ends-meet through their power of labor. This aptly explains why, despite majority of the blacks being referred to as economically active population, still, have very low representation in top managerial positions. This receding tide of blacks has social implications for their continued segregation from residing in areas similar to their white counterparts. This generally has severe implication for racial dis-integration, disunity, and feeling of resentment among South African citizens, and has remained the basis for spontaneous xenophobic attacks on foreign black Africans in South Africa. To address this beldam, Ubuntu and critical race theory are discussed as possible mitigation mechanisms to enhance racial equality and integration in South Africa in the preceding paragraphs.

### **Ubuntu Theory and Racial cohesion and Unity in South Africa**

Although, theory from the scientific lens is a logical and congruent system of ideas or principles used in the explanation of events or phenomena in scientific discipline. From philosophical front, theory is expected to make predictions about future occurrences, that can be proven through empirical studies. In humanities, theory is the explanation of phenomena or occurrences and interpretation of social structures within a particular school of thought. From these definitions, it is clear that the meaning of theory is not the same across disciplines, which is why it has competing and contradictory notions. Indeed, there are many theories that have been used to explain behavior, political events, and other occurrences in the global system, majority of these theories are Eurocentric in nature and they are specifically popularized to promote western hegemony and ideology as well as capitalism. This has implication for the huge gap between the global North and South. And many African nations that have utilized these Eurocentric theories have only succeeded in deploying theories that does not recognized or adequately explain the real African circumstances or problem. This article is a departure from previous studies that have utilized Eurocentric theories that have hardly addressed African problems.

It adopts Ubuntu as a theoretical framework and conflict resolution mechanism that can be deployed to explain how racial discrimination and inequalities can be effectively managed and control in South Africa. Ubuntu is an African theory or philosophy that strongly holds the view that brotherly-love, collectivism, reconciliation, cooperation, and interdependency are critical to systemic equality and effective functioning of societies free of conflict. Ubuntu argues that through principles such as inclusiveness, reciprocity, and shared sense of human interdependence a society or community can be cohesive, united, and peaceful. For Mandela (2006), Ubuntu is a universal truth and way of life that underpin effective functioning of an open society. It is hinged on the principle that a person can only be a true person through other persons. As human beings, we need other human beings to be human. For a community or society to enjoy cohesion and equality among racial groups, Ubuntu stipulates shared understanding in human dignity, equality, collectivism, and inclusivity. From the principle that no one person can really be human without the inputs and cooperation from other persons, so also, no one racial group, which is made of human beings can be real human group, without the cooperation of other human beings in other racial groups. It encourages people in a society to address themselves to problems affecting them and must ensure that it improves the society or empowers members of the society. It is also based on the principle that if people are treated equally, fairly, and with love, they could have a sense of belonging that would promote the conviviality of the society.

Ubuntu specifically explains how African communities and societies can be free from all forms of discrimination and inequality, with a strong belief in brotherly love, cooperation, social inclusiveness, shared understanding that as Africans, whether black or white, they live for one another, and on the basis of communal bond. It can also be likened to conventional African wisdom that promote respect and dignity, compassion, solidarity, and survival, which in the long run, enhance common good. It also represents a sense of responsibility to one another and spirit of collectiveness. Some of its principles include

- i. Oneness of humanity through interconnectedness and interdependence of all creations
- ii. Fairness and integrity
- iii. Equal justice and cohesion
- iv. Live for one another
- v. Inclusivity
- vi. Love, equity, and togetherness

This adequately explains or provides information on how South Africa can address its problems of racism, inequalities, and divisions. Ubuntu philosophy or theory is widely known for its collective five finger principles namely survival, solidarity, compassion, dignity, and respect. Survival which represents sustained existence in delicate periods or time. It is likened to

resilience, which connotes the ability of societies to cope with series of difficulties and to maintained long years of existence amid troubles and inherent problems. Survival represents the ability of societies to develop strategies and ways of overcoming problem, through collective actions and conviviality. South Africa as a typical African society, have gone through lots of difficulties and problems relating to racism and systematic inequalities. South Africa is among the last countries on the continent to have gained independent from the imperialists and the apartheid regime. Using Ubuntu theory, it can be inferred that South Africa is likely may have devised resilience strategies that have enhanced its sustained existence, despite the lingering problem of systemic inequalities from the days of apartheid till date. The disadvantaged South Africa continue to survive through sharing limited resources among themselves, brotherliness, interconnectedness, and justice. Today, even though South Africa is still faced with inequalities and unequal access to service delivery, it seems the country has developed the spirit of resilience and mutual sharing of ideas against the associated hardships and difficulties in the post-apartheid era, as it has continued to cope or exist since 1994. The spirit of sharing and resilience are both indicative of Ubuntu's scared values

Solidarity is another scared value of Ubuntu, which stipulates that the functioning of societies largely depends on collective actions of people that see themselves as one and not enemies. Collective actions of people stem from the belief that all are equal, otherwise, it would be difficult to show solidarity for societal needs, if there are divisions. Solidarity advocates for cohesion as the basis of collective actions, which should be made to enhance civic interests over individual interests. This too applies to South Africa, as the country can overcome its current systemic inequalities, through the spirit of solidarity that sees all South Africans as equal, one, inclusive. With this principle, it is clear that citizens (white and black-Africans, colored, and Indians), could learn to tolerate one another and see one another as one and collective. This will go a long way in reducing tendency of racial abuse and inequality in South Africa. Just like religious and cultural practices are upheld by people, Ubuntu values and principles need to be upheld by South Africans in other to eradicate racism and enhance cohesion.

Compassion is one of the ideals of Ubuntu, which stipulates sincere empathy for one another irrespective of race, colored, and religion. This is hinged on caring and assisting one another in difficult times. The ability or spirit of empathy will go long way to reduce racial abuse and discrimination, because, Ubuntu represents giving sincere understanding and responsiveness to other people problems. It is basically the spirit to show love, care, assistance, support, and passion to let other people live in peace without any abuse or discrimination. This too adequately applies to South Africa, in that, the more people in the country, show compassion sincerely to others, the better the country in terms of social cohesion and equality.

### **Dignity and Respect**

These two principles, are treated as one as they look very closely and can be used interchangeably. Respect and dignity are the basis for social values in most African societies. Respect is objective, fair contemplation, and thought for privileges, principles, beliefs, and norms of individuals. Dignity on the other hand, represents attitude or character, that deserves respect. Ultimately, both principles enhance trust and equality. Stigger et al. (2010) assert that the South African Constitution, which is rooted in Ubuntu principles, mandates the protection of every individual's human dignity. Additionally, it makes it very evident that it concurs with the idea that all individuals are valuable and equal, regardless of their gender, color, ethnicity, or level of wealth. According to Zvitambo (2017:80), "respect and dignity within Ubuntu, entails appreciating others' worth and demonstrating deference to other people potentials to contribute." Self-respect is what Mashele (2012) defines as dignity. Humans can acquire dignity by learning to value themselves before others.

From the above reviews of five fingers principles of Ubuntu, it is clear that with adequate internalization of these principles as already stipulated in South Africa's constitution, issues of racism, which activate systemic inequality would be amicably addressed. Practical and sincere adoption of principles of Ubuntu, as a nation-wide philosophy or national anthem, is likely to promote racial equality and social cohesion in South Africa.

### **Critical Race Theory and Racism in South Africa**

Critical race theory (CRT) holds the view that what is known today as racism or racial inequality is a social construction that is largely embedded in cultural invention, specifically constructed to prefer certain race (Whites) over other race (usually non-whites or African Americans) considered to be inferior (Crenshaw, 2011). It was a social construction and not natural, or biological distinguishing feature of human beings. It was socially constructed for the oppression of people of color. The theory argues that racism inherently exists or originates from the law and legal institutions in the United States, purposively used as tool to oppress, exploit, and place the whites over non-whites (Ladson-Billings, 2013). This theory aims to deploy or apply an understanding of institutional or structural nature of racism with the goal of eliminating all forms of racial discrimination in public sphere, especially unjust racial categorization or hierarchies. The tenets of CRT include

- i. Race or racism was socially constructed by wealthy whites of western European group or decent, to oppress and exploit people of color considered to be inferior, immoral, and incapable for self-rule (Omi & Howard, 1994).
- ii. Racism was seen as normal and not an aberration in the United States as at then, it was a normal usual daily experience faced by people of color in the country. Despite the eradication of racists laws and legal policies, perpetrated by Jim Crow Laws that promoted racial segregation and restricted civil rights of African Americans, people of color still suffer ravaging racial discrimination that tend to subjugate them under white supremacy in public and private spheres as demonstrated in the case of police brutality and other numerous social racial indicators (Harris, 1994). Examples of these racial indicators include residential segregation as it currently exists in South Africa, university-based racial segregation (i.e in contemporary South Africa, some universities are racially categorized), unrestricted job access to white South Africans far and above

- black South Africans (consisting of color, Africans, and Indians, as the case may be in South Africa), white hegemonic influence or supremacy on South Africa's economy (especially in areas of business, industries, high-yielding income generating investments or sectors such as farming, among others) (Hayman & Robert, 1995)
- iii. Interest convergence, legal advances, and material determinism for people of color tend to serve both the interests of the dominant white groups and working-class color people (Physically), thus, large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it (racism). It argues that an improved legal status of the oppressed or exploited people of color is less likely to affect or reduce racial hierarchy that epitomize white society (Brooks & Mary, 1994).
  - iv. People of color periodically undergo different forms of racialization or suffer from the ascription of varying sets of stereotypes that are largely determined by the selfish interests of the whites. Such stereotypes manifest in movies, television, literature, and news media. These stereotypes, are often used to manipulate African history curricula in public schools. For instance, prior to the mid-20 century, blacks were regarded as slaves and laborers who were satisfied and contented in working as servants to whites. But with the civil rights protests against the domination of blacks by white Americans between 1950 and 1960, Blacks were viewed and exemplified as natural born criminals that feeds on social welfare programmes financed by the whites (Calmore, 1992).
  - v. It argues through intersectionality that no single individual can be associated or identified as a member belonging to a single group. For example, an African American, may also identify as a lesbian, Muslim, women, or Christian
  - vi. The tenet of "voice of Color" is based on the idea that people of color must voice-out or speak out about the forms and effects of racism. It argues that people of color are adequately qualified to speak on behalf of other black people about the implications of racism. This consensus has led to the growth of movement against all forms of racism across continents (Haney & Ian, 1994).

Tenets of this theory adequately applied to racism and why white supremacy still thrive in South Africa. Till date imprints of racial discrimination still lingers in South Africa because it is not a natural or biologically weaved, but socially constructed as it continues to manifests in public and private spheres in contemporary South Africa (Soudien 2010; Conradie, 2015). Although, racism backdates the apartheid regime, it tended to place the white over blacks in South Africa, and it has failed to disappear (Modica 2012; Verwey & Quayle 2012; Steyn & McEwan 2013). The easy construction of racism in South Africa's apartheid, may have been due to the domination of white western colonial masters that occupied South Africa as at that time (Soudien, 2010). How tenets of CRT apply or explain racism and mitigate it in South Africa is explained in the following paragraphs.

On the first tenet, racism in South Africa just like in the then United States is a social construct and not just something that is natural or biologically weaved. It sprang from historical experiences of oppression melted to the blacks by whites. It goes beyond human hates and discrimination, but that, which is socially crafted to be used as a tool of oppression and exploitation of people of color. It is embedded in laws, policies, and legal institutions dominated by white western groups. The lingering nature of racism in South Africa, aptly aligns with this tenet, which says it is socially constructed. This accounts for why it is difficult to erase, despite series of cross-racial contacts experienced by South Africa (Vincent 2008:1426; Cloete 2014; Slater 2014; Mattes 2012). Structural disparities and interpersonal bias or partiality are currently existing in South Africa because the South African society has its historical roots in apartheid dominated and construed by the white society. This can be interpreted to mean that racism in South Africa was constructed by highly dominated racialized white society of the apartheid era.

On the second tenet, because South Africa transits from the apartheid era where racism is seen as normal, where even the blacks remained contented as servants to the whites, it was very difficult for South African independence in 1994 to end racism (Foster 2009; Conradie 2015). Despite the demise of Jim Crow Laws, just like the demise of apartheid in South Africa, yet racism still continues to manifest in public and private spheres in post-apartheid South Africa. For example, Black South Africans still suffer from racial discrimination in residential areas, universities, job opportunities, healthcare services, and many other places (Vincent 2008; Cloete 2014; Slater 2014; Mattes 2012).

The third tenet, which stipulates that an improved legal status of the people of color is less likely to eradicate racism, adequately applied to South African situation. This is because interest convergence and material determinism both exists in South Africa. In South Africa, racism stimulates interests of both white elites (materially) and black working class (Physically) (Gillborn et al. 2012; Yosso et al. 2009). The competition to achieve these interests, significantly leaves the gap to eradicate racism in South Africa. It is a fact that in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa, despite the domination of the political office and seat of power by black South Africans, blacks or people of color in the country still suffer from racial discrimination (Yosso et al. 2009). This aptly confirmed the third tenets of CRT. The racial hierarchies that characterized the former apartheid white dominated society has still not been dismantled by the improved legal or political status of black South Africans in the post-apartheid era (Modica 2012). This reason for this is the chase or pursuit of individualistic interests by both the white elites and people of color in South Africa. It is a situation, where the white South Africans, prefer to be in control of the country's economy while their black counterparts compete for the control of political power. The scenario adequately aligns with the tenet of interest convergence and material determinism.

It is the same with the fourth tenet of theory, which opined that people of color periodically face all forms of racial discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). This too, aptly applied to South Africa's racial problem in that black South Africans (consisting of color, Africans, and Indians), routinely suffer from racial discrimination in schools, residential areas, choice of course of study. For instance, in some universities in South Africa, there are some courses, such as medicine exclusively reserved for whites, no black student is allowed to offer such courses in those universities. The fact that South Africa's



agricultural sector, major businesses, and economic sector are dominated by the whites, showed the existence of the fourth tenet in South Africa (Foster, 2009). Today, more blacks are working as laborers in the farms of white South Africans due to their limited or denied access to lands (Verwey & Quayle 2012; Conradie 2015). This raises serious concern and question as to why would the whites have more access to ancestral lands expected to be owned by blacks? This goes to show that apartheid helps to institutionalize racism in contemporary South Africa.

The fifth tenet which believes that no individual has a single, easily stated, and unitary identity also align with the case of South Africa. For example, everyone including white or black South Africans, has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties and allegiances' (Delgado & Stefencic, 2001). A white feminist may be Jewish, or working-class, or a single mother. An African American activist may be gay or lesbian. Similarly, a white South African, may be a working class, Christian, while a black South African, may be bourgeoisie and a major employer of labor consisting both whites and blacks.

The last tenet, which opined that the people of color must speak out against all forms of racial discriminations. This tenet holds the view that because of different history and experiences with oppression, people-of-color should communicate or speak with their white counterparts, about hidden racial issues that are not known to the whites (Sue, 2013). They are qualified to voice-out or communicate their historical predicaments with racism to their white counterparts, who may not likely be aware of it, because racism is historical based (Leonardo & Porter 2010). By so doing, continual communication and creation of an awareness about their historical experiences of racism and oppressions, to educate or enlighten their white counterparts about racism and voicing-out against racial discrimination in public and private spheres will go a long way in reducing the resultant stress of racial discrimination in South Africa (Ojakorotu et al., 2023).

From the review of CRT, it is clear that communication and continual voicing out of past and historical experiences about racism by the people of color to their white counterparts, would go a long way in addressing racism. Relating this to South Africa, the collation government (i.e Government of National Unity) between African National Congress (ANC), dominated by people of color, and Democratic Alliance (DA) dominated by whites, offer a good platform for the people of color in ANC to voice-out and communicate with their white counterparts in GNU, about the implications of racism, which tends to affects more of black South Africans. It is expected that the issue of racism is likely to be addressed by both the white and black elites occupying political seat in the GNU. For instance, it is hoped that with the control of political power by whites and blacks dominated political parties (GNU), the sixth tenet of CRT above would be instrumental to eradicating racism in South Africa. Blacks or people of color at the helm of GNU affairs are expected to voice-out and effectively and promptly communicate with their white counterparts, majority of whom, may not be aware of the historical experiences of oppression of racism. With this collaboration and continual voice-out against racism, especially by political black elites or leaders in GNU, is very likely to mitigate racism in South Africa.

## Conclusion

In this article, findings revealed that racism still features prominently in contemporary South Africa, because of reasons relating to unforgotten past memories of experiences of oppressions suffered by blacks in the apartheid regime, interest convergence of both the whites and blacks in the country, weak political will to act and effectively communicate with whites about inherited historical experiences of racism, contentment among blacks that they are destined to serve as laborers to the whites, feeling of resentment against other race, asymmetric information about white supremacy among the white population in the country, bad governance, among others. It was also revealed that racism gets or flows into South Africa's polity through political, economic, and social pathways. Intra-parties' dynamics and sharing of political positions, as well as political campaign rallies have been racially skewed in favor of, or to heightened the primordial interest of certain race over the civic interest of the country. While the ANC has been rooting for and positioning blacks for elective offices, their DA counterpart, has been nominating whites for political elective offices. This according to CRT, is called interest convergence, which either prevent timely attention to address racism or heightened tendency of racism. From the economic lens, it has been established that top managerial positions of almost all the sectors, if not all, are occupied by whites, whereas their black counterparts, remained at the lower ebb of the economic structure. Further, the whites have repeatedly used their top managerial economic positions to solidify their supremacy over blacks in the country. It was established that both whites and blacks in South Africa hardly relate socially as the whites tend to disappear or avoid getting closer to blacks in social ceremonies like academic conferences, marriage, burial, and birthday ceremonies. This is evidently seen in how both are divided along residential areas, universities, choices of course-of-study, access to social services, among others.

To address the problem of racism, both Ubuntu and CRT gave a clear roadmap to be followed. In this article, we argued that a blend of Ubuntu and CRT, which on the one hand believed that black and white South Africans should live for one another by respecting the dignity of each other as humans and not as an objects or slave in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and on the other hand, engagement in action and effective communication to disabuse the minds of blacks from holding grudges of past ugly historical experiences of oppression suffered during apartheid to mirror or relate with the whites in contemporary South Africa, and to voice-out against racial discrimination by communicating with the white population, in order to make them aware of how their predecessors have racially abused the blacks. The CRT opined that because majority of whites in this dispensation lack understanding on the historical experiences of racial discrimination meted to the blacks by their racial group, regular communication and sharing of past experiences of such oppressions with them, is likely to disabuse their minds from toeing the former pathway of their predecessors. The onus is on the people of color, especially those acting in the capacity of leaders and representatives of the black people at the corridor of political power, to regularly take action by engaging and

communicating with their white counterparts to shun racial discrimination. One of the ways to achieve black-white communication against racism is through coalition of government.

The current government of national unity (GNU) between the two dominant parties, ANC and DA is likely to offer the much-expected opportunity, where white and black political elites would see racism as a common national problem and collaboratively take action to amicably address racism in South Africa. Opportunities provided by GNU are desirable in addressing racism. We contend that GNU, which now has both white and black political elites at the helm of affairs, would promote effective communication aimed at addressing inherent problems of racism and provide wider arenas that can aid other efforts to tackle various sources and avenues racism flows into the society.

GNU is likely to enable deeper monitoring and taking of prompt action against systemic racial discrimination. Racial discrimination can be alleviated by collective action and whistleblowing communication involving both the white and black political leaders or elites leveraging on the opportunity provided by GNU in serving as partners rather than enemies in eradicating systemic racial discrimination. GNU, certainly enables the coproduction of knowledge in which both white and black South Africans in control of government bring to the relationship their knowledge about racial abuse and discrimination in their localities, by voicing-out and taking action against any form of discrimination, while they still exercise concern for people's rights and dignity, which are important hallmarks of democratic society.

Although, GNU has been predicted to tackle and aid racial integration, it has equally been under heavy criticism, for being a well-crafted ruling mechanism, specifically adopted to prepare the pathway for the whites to push-out blacks from the control of government. Sincerity and forgiving spirits on the part of the blacks and effective communication with the whites about the implication of racism, as well as public openness and collective actions committed to promoting human dignity, rights, racial equality and integration, brotherly-love and care will help to reduce racial discrimination, and can activate the potentials inherent in Ubuntu and CRT for racial integration, equality, and human dignity in South Africa.

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