

**The road between Sandton and Alexandra Township: a Fanonian approach to the study  
of poverty and privilege in South Africa**

By

**Raimond Nyapokoto**

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Supervisor: Prof Sabelo. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

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Student number: **36420174**

I declare that **The road between Sandton and Alexandra Township: a Fanonian approach to the study of poverty and privilege in South Africa** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

(Mr)

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## **Abstract**

The key challenge to socio-economic transformation in South Africa is closing the gap between the poor and the rich. What is distinctive about South Africa is the uneasy coexistence of poverty and opulence. This study seeks to explore the structural, historical roots of poverty among the blacks in South Africa by deploying Fanonian Critical Decolonial theory. This is the ideal theoretical approach to unmask the structural causes of poverty and inequality in South Africa. Colonial ambitions and the global political engineering of the world by America and Europe spans more than four hundred years, and is still very much alive today in subtle forms. This study asserts that this imperial history is the cause of poverty, lack of agency, and the hellish conditions under which many black people live. The rise of industrial capitalism and attendant urbanisation is at the core of this impoverishment of the black man. It is also shown that, once impoverished, the black man's poverty gathers its own momentum, leading to more poverty that is then handed down to succeeding generations. Contrary to Eurocentric theorising, the study shows that blacks are not 'problem' people but people with problems, who, instead of being condemned, should be regarded with sympathy. This research thesis focuses on Alexandra Township and Sandton as symbols of poverty and privilege, respectively. The former represents Fanon's zone of non-being where life is lived in conditions of want and poverty, whilst the latter represents the zone of being characterised by good living and prosperity. The thesis will demonstrate the fact that these anomalous socio-economic disparities are not natural but man-made, and therefore require the action of human beings to correct them.

**Key Terms:** abyssal lines; the Manichaean structure; coloniality of being; zone of being and zone of non-being; the black condition and structural violence.

## **Dedication**

In memory of my beloved brother Remigius Nyapokoto  
(1973 – 2009)

## Acknowledgements

This research thesis bears my name as the author, but truly speaking, it is a product of a lot of folks who ‘paused’ in their lives to give me a hand in this gruesome, long and lonely academic journey... ‘izandla ziyagezana’ for real...

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# CHAPTER ONE

## The making of ‘a country of two nations’

*South Africa is a country of two nations, one black and the other white... One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor... This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure.*

**Thabo Mbeki**

*The misfortune of the man of colour is having been enslaved. The misfortune and inhumanity of the white man are having killed man somewhere.*

**Frantz Fanon**

### Introduction

The key challenge to socio-economic transformation in South Africa is that of closing the gap between the poor and the rich. What is distinctive about South Africa is the uneasy coexistence of poverty and opulence. This divide is traceable to the colonial-apartheid period, which perpetuated a Manichaean social structure, as described by Frantz Fanon in these revealing words:

The colonial world is a world cut in two... The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the white settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in service of a higher unity. ...they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity... The settlers' town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town, all covered with asphalt... The town belonging to the colonized people... the native town... the reservation, is a place of ill-fame... It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light (Fanon 1961: 29-30).

The above quote summarises the dichotomous nature of many of the global cities that emerged during the age of colonialism. South African cities are not an exception to this situation. Sassen (2013) calls this a “new geography of privilege and disempowerment ... not marked in any conventional map. Sassen (2013) adds further that this ‘new geography’ has “

...its own borders, and they are not very permeable". This Manichean structure was also articulated by Thabo Mbeki in a speech at the opening of the debate in the National Assembly in 1998, where he, like Fanon, identified the dichotomous socio-economic structure in the South Africa national economy:

South Africa is a country of two nations, one black and the other white... One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor... This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure (Mbeki 1998).

Indeed, as Crawford (2012) observes, "South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world... with more than half of the population living in poverty". This point is corroborated by Woolard (2002) who argues that "South Africa is an upper-class income nation, but is a country of stark contrasts. The extreme inequality evident in South Africa means that one sees destitution, hunger and overcrowding side-by-side with affluence".

Alexandra and Sandton in Johannesburg graphically epitomise the coexistence of poverty and opulence in South Africa. This ambivalent nature compelled my focus on these two areas, as they clearly illustrate the social inequalities that were inculcated during the era of imperialist control of South Africa. Alexandra emerged as a place for peasants who were forced off their ancestral land to sell their labour cheaply in emerging urban settlements. Sandton crystallised as a place for the owners of the means of production. Cohen (1997) traces the formation of such slums like Alexandra back to the advent of imperialism and colonialism observing that "Conquest and the dispossession of land rights forced Africans into the labour force". Cohen (1997) concludes that "The creation of a ... wage-labour force in Africa is essentially a product of white settlement and the establishment of European colonial administrations" through "...the creation of a landless group who also could no longer meet the cash demands of the colonial administration, who provided the making of an embryonic proletariat".

### **Historical background**

Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 190) pointed to the inauguration of systematic exploitation of Africans as the South African capitalist political economy gathered momentum, propelled by the mineral revolution. They elaborated that during this period:

...began the long saga of conquest as whites moved with their guns (and their bibles), trading where it was useful or profitable and taking over land as they required. It is this manner that, first the Khoisan, and subsequently Xhosa and other Bantu-speaking people, were either pushed off the land or absorbed onto it as conquered labourers... This process of conquest went on for several generations.... [and] culminated in the notorious Land Act of 1913 whereby the conquerors sought to ensure that land won by conquest should not be lost through the market in the new industrial society that was emerging (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 190).

Through this Act blacks were restricted in terms of areas where they could buy land. The land that was offered to black buyers was mostly in poor, unproductive areas. This is a theme that is pursued in the work of Mhlongo (1989:132) who argued that, as now, all significant agricultural activities around the late 1880s were carried out on white-owned farms and, more pertinently, that “the agric sector... is still characterised by formations peculiar to pre-capitalist societies” where “a number of African or Coloured families became tenant peasants on a white-owned farm” paying ‘rent’ in the form of 90 – 180 days’ unpaid work per year. Thereafter they would get grazing and farming rights. Subsequently they were labelled ‘squatters’.

Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich (1979:69) corroborate Mhlongo (1989) by noting that by around 1970s the British imperialists had exploited about 93% of peasant land in South Africa and set up large farms, “tied half of the peasantry to those farms and... herded the other half onto the reserve’s pool of labour.” Nzula *et al* (1979:69) also note the fact that the peasants were also bombarded with a plethora of burdens like taxes which they failed to pay, forcing them to leave the land and provide contract labour in mines and other enterprises, and on farms and plantations.

Cohen (1997) states that “conquest and dispossession of land forced Africans in the labour force” to form “an embryonic proletariat” and consequently “by the 1930s the chains of proletarianisation and peasantisation” were well established in “the cities of colonial Africa especially on public works programs, in mines, in building of roads and railways, and in the development of harbour and port facilities.” Cohen (1976:159) also notes the fact that these labourers “started as seasonal labourers but became permanent over the years” and he attributes the growth of shanty towns and slum conditions to this phenomenon.

Legassick (1977:175) noted that “With mining and secondary industry came the growth of cities” and the “Witwatersrand (the Reef ,’Goli’) became the economic, social, and ideological focus of a subcontinent” and “in a parallel process to the international dialectic of the metropole and satellite, Southern Africa proceeded from *undevelopment*” to *underdevelopment*. The growth of cities, Legassick (1977:175) adds, resulted in “rural underdevelopment, economic decay, and pauperisation. In South Africa itself, moreover, the entrenchment of racialism in the institutions of the society meant the correlation of development with whiteness, and of underdevelopment with blackness”. It is also interesting to note that those labourers who were dispersed from rural areas due to a multifarious array of white-induced burdens also found themselves beset by a new and unique catalogue of problems in the city. Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 161) state that,

Firstly, there is a net of legislation and regulations, the most notorious having been pass laws, in which the poor became entangled because of the fact that virtually all the strategies individuals can adopt against poverty involve breaking the law in some way. Secondly there [was] the whole policy of forced removals in urban... environments... and ...the bureaucratic jungle of red tape woven by officials (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 161).

All of these factors resulted in fraternal twins: Alexandra and Sandton. Alexandra Township, an extremely poor suburb, and Sandton, a very affluent suburb, two areas geographically situated side by side, separated by the M1 highway. Sandton, the richest area in South Africa and Africa itself, covers an area approximately 156 square kilometres. It is here that most of South Africa’s “ultra high net worth individuals” (UHNWIs) reside, with the leafy suburb of Sandhurst alone housing 36 multimillionaires (News24: 2012). Fin24 (2010) shows that in 2010 billionaires in SA doubled. Riches beget riches.

Within shouting distance of the leafy suburb of Sandton is Alexandra Township, the oldest township in South Africa and one of the poorest areas in South Africa, covering an area of approximately eight square kilometres. Strikingly, the populations of the two areas are more or less the same, making Alexandra unbelievably overcrowded with a population of 25 545/km<sup>2</sup> compared to Sandton’s 938/km<sup>2</sup> (Frith 2001). This has spawned many other attendant problems. Sandton is neat, salubrious and conducive to human well-being. Conversely, Alexandra Township is dirty, polluted and overcrowded. Here the poor continue to grow poorer. Bonner and Nieftagodien (2008:17) observe that, from the onset, residents of Alexandra have not been rich as they have generally been hapless “sharecroppers and labour

tenants squeezed out of South Africa's white farms." This social group continued to grow "particularly in times of drought and depression..." ... (Bonner and Nieftagodien 2008:17). The fact that Alexandra was born of impoverished people explains the current prevalent poverty. Dlanga (2012) explains that "Inequality breeds inequality" and "the poor get fewer opportunities and barely get a chance to make it out of their situation." This congenital poverty is part of what this study seeks to explore.

## Literature review

Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, is one the poorest continents globally. According to World Poverty Organisation (2012) the majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. Sachs (2005) corroborates this fact stating that "Not only is Africa the poorest region on the world, but it was also the only major developing region with negative growth in income per capita..."

The World Bank and most neo-liberalists attribute the causes of poverty in Africa to geographical/environmental and post-independence governance challenges, glossing over historical facts that led to the current socio-economic challenges in Africa (Christian *et al* 2002). The World Bank, reliant on analyses by Collier and Gunning (1999), conclude that the causes of poverty,

[A]re to be found in geographical circumstances, for example, the landlocked, tropical character of many countries; in macroeconomic policies, notably economic policy volatility and a lack of openness to international trade; and in microeconomic policies, which have disproportionately taxed rural producers, eroded social capital, undermined the provision of public services, and resulted in a retreat into subsistence by rural farmers (Collier and Gunning in Christian *et al* 2002).

Such an ahistorical analysis cast a cursory glance at the real and most important, underlying effects of colonialism. Barret, Carter and Little (2008:1) attribute the roots of poverty in Africa to the fact that "the continent has been dealt a very unfavourable historical hand". They catalogue some of these factors as,

A devastating and cruel global slave trade, long periods of colonial occupation, and series of European- backed commercial ventures to exploit Africa's natural wealth... [the] cold war and post-cold war politics, prolonged conflicts, a series of

structural adjustment experiments and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Barret, Carter and Little 2008:1).

These factors have ensured that Africa was and remains underdeveloped. Casualties of capitalism and colonialism have always been Blacks who find themselves on the lowest rungs of the colonial structure. This has been ensured by a systematic dispossession visited upon them through the factors mentioned above.

Magubane (1976:178) noted that “Colonial oppression and exploitation impoverished all strata of African society...”. This happens with the activities of the colonizers. It is interesting to note that imperial powers have no interest at all in Africa’s well-being. Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich (1979:34) argue that even acts of goodwill in Africa by imperialists are to be taken with a pinch of salt by observing that,

The export of capital to Africa is not intended to establish the preconditions for its economic independence, or to create local industry, but on the contrary, is intended to transform Africa into an agrarian appendage of European imperialism, to drag it into the orbit of world imperialism, and to subject it to the interests of finance capital. (Nzula, Potekhin and Zusmanovich 1979 :34)

This is the same with infrastructure, which, they argue, is meant to advance the interests of capital. Railways, for instance, are meant to siphon Africa’s resource wealth out of the continent and not to improve the transport network system of Africa. They go on to argue that even though slavery was officially abolished, Blacks, and indeed Africa, is still performing the same role of enriching the West, but now under a new world order: capitalism.

Palmer and Parsons (1997:175) state categorically that, “In South Africa ... the entrenchment of racialism in the institutions of the society meant the correlation of development with whiteness, and of underdevelopment with blackness” and this came about through “confiscating the means of subsistence [from] the hands of the indigenous population...” Woolard (2002) catalogues past historic injustices that saw impoverishment of blacks:

Past policies of segregation and discrimination have left a legacy of inequality and poverty and... low economic growth. The apartheid system was heavily biased towards providing health, education and housing to the white minority, to the detriment of black population who were denied the opportunity to accumulate human and physical capital. Labour market policies were aimed at protecting the white workers through active policies such as job reservation, while inferior

education, influx control and the Group Areas Act ensured little competition from other races. Apartheid also unequally distributed resources (including land, mining rights and access to capital) thereby marginalising a large sector of the population to menial and poorly paid sectors of the labour market, if granting access at all (Woolard 2002).

This is the genesis of poverty amongst the black population. Palmer and Parsons (1997:177) state that this process was sustained for a long period of time noting that, “Thus, over a hundred years, South Africa changed ... to a developed sub-metropole, generating underdevelopment and exploitation in its own periphery”. With blacks having been stripped of all their livelihoods by “capitalist machinations”, peasantisation and proletarianisation became the order of the day.

Eighteen years after apartheid officially ended, the life of many blacks has not changed at all. In any case poverty is worsening. Dlanga (2012) explores why blacks remain poor well after independence “because the current government has not done enough to ensure that the gap between the rich and the poor decreases”. He (Dlanga, 2012) further explains that “The poor get fewer opportunities and barely get a chance to make it out of their situation ... Denying them an opportunity ... is stealing whole future from them” Mbeki (2009:7) observes that,

Independence did not bring about economic transformation in Africa as it did in Asia; if anything, it entrenched the economic inequalities inherited from colonialism. The new black elites merely replaced the former white colonial elites, but the exploitation of the black masses continued as before as did the exploitation of Africa’s resources – the copper, gold, bauxite, iron ore, cobalt, coltan, oil, timber, cotton, coffee, cocoa beans – drawn from the continent and exported to the rest of the world (Mbeki, 2009:7)

In a typical Fanonian thinking, Mbeki (2009:16), points out more bluntly that “African political elites today sustain and reproduce themselves by perpetuating the neo-colonial state and its socio-economic systems of exploitation, devised by colonialists” (Mbeki: 2009:7).

When poverty stays with people for too long it becomes entrenched and normalised in their lives until they reach a dangerous and intractable situation which Swanepoel and de Beer (1989:3) term ‘balance or equilibrium of poverty’. In this state of “accommodation to a culture of poverty” Swanepoel and de Beer (1989:9) observed that being poor becomes normal to the poor, and because they are poor, their generations inherit poverty as well. Poverty itself becomes a hindrance to privilege. The two conclude that,

In an African context, poverty and the resulting ill-being affect the masses, not the individual. Masses of poor people are trapped in deprivation and it is extremely difficult for them to break free of this trap. In fact the tendency exists for poverty to constantly reintroduce itself in new guises, thus ensuring that equilibrium of ill being continues (Swanapoel and de Beer 1989:9).

The above quote beautifully sums up the poverty situation in South Africa whereby poverty, instead of relenting, is worsening.

### **Problem statement (research question)**

This study seeks to understand the dynamics of affluence (symbolised by Sandton) and poverty (symbolised by Alexandra) in two adjacent South African urban locales, inquiring into the structural roots of poverty on the one hand, and affluence on the other. The thrust of this study is to use Fanon's ideas as a 'tool' to delve into the roots of poverty in Alexandra township and into poverty's tendency, among other factors, to 'block' the poor from moving out of poverty by keeping its victims 'trapped' in poverty. Three of Fanon's main theories - structural violence, the black condition, and the Manichaean structure - will be deployed as a 'torch' with which to illuminate the murky depths of this problem, and bring to the fore dynamics which liberalists and Eurocentric theorists ignore and gloss over, which are explained in the Rationale. The study further utilised Fanonian ideas to find out how new local leaders who took over the reins of power after independence inherited the logic and essence of colonialism and today continue to perpetuate the colonial existential situation of blacks.

Fanon's ideas have been fundamental to this study because they offered a comprehensive account of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. These ideas painstakingly trace the brutalising road from the moment the coloniser 'breaks' the colonised until he is zombie-like and useful only as a tool to enrich and serve the ends of the coloniser in the colonial era, to the long-lasting, if not permanent, effects of colonialism well after the coloniser has left the scene. These effects, termed coloniality, are visible in the values and actions of both the new political leaders and their subjects. It is also through Fanonian lenses that physical violence, which is prevalent mostly in poor areas inhabited mainly by blacks, will be explored to test and verify Fanon's claims that physical violence is a by-product of

colonial violence. This is what Santos (2006) refers to as “invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones.”

## **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- To deploy a Fanonian approach in the exploration of the roots of poverty amongst the black community in Alexandra Township, a town separated by a road (The M1 highway) from the affluent city of Sandton.
- To explore how colonialism developed into capitalism, and how current neo-apartheid coloniality perpetuates poverty on the one hand and creates opulence on the other.

## **Rationale**

This study intends to contribute to the understanding of how and why some social classes are poor and remain poor, whilst other classes are rich and continue to grow rich. This study is revisionist in nature in as far as it corrects the capitalist and liberalist claims that a man is the master of his destiny, capable of moving vertically in the social strata according to his level of effort. Capitalists, being in control of most influential media, bombard the world relentlessly with this idea. People living in violent and crime-infested communities which, more often than not, are poor areas in most countries, are condemned and blamed as being the irredeemable, intractable ‘wretched of the earth’ who deserve the suffering they go through. Using the case studies of Alexandra and Sandton, this study will illustrate the fact that inequalities are caused by the structural set-up of societies. This study, like Chasin’s (2006), seeks to explore why no amount of policing and jails deter violence and crime among certain classes of people. It seeks to remove the stereotype that certain groups of people are inherently brutal.

It is this stereotype, which results in certain classes being labelled as being intractable and inherently poor, that this study seeks to address. The study seeks to bridge the knowledge-gap which exists in this regard by interrogating the capitalist conceptions of success that cover systematic inequalities inherited from colonialism which inhibit the success of those born into poverty. This study also addresses the Eurocentric, and therefore biased, representations of poverty identified in my literature review by *inte*. This is even more pertinent in Alexandra Township where poverty, hopelessness, crime and violence are permanent citizens whilst agency is an occasional visitor.

This study will also contribute to the understanding of many other attendant phenomena prevalent in poor areas, such as xenophobia, physical violence and crime. Here the study seeks to show how structural violence is the source and perpetrator of most of the ills prevalent in poor areas.

### **Limitations of Study**

The study deploys Frantz Fanon's thinking to investigate how colonialism caused poverty amongst the black South African people and how its residual effects (coloniality) have created a poverty 'trap' which will be passed on from one generation to another, unless the current abyssal thinking and the skewed geo-political world economy changes. Franz Fanon has written many works, but for the purposes of this study his two seminal works, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of The Earth* (1963) will be employed because of their thematic and theoretical relevance.

Whilst poverty is ubiquitous in South Africa, especially amongst the blacks who have been on the 'wrong' side of colour during the colonial era, it is not possible to study the whole black population in South Africa in a single study. Thus Alexandra Township, a microcosm of poverty amongst black South Africans, juxtaposed with Sandton, will be studied. While there are other variables in other impoverished communities, the findings of this study will be broadly relevant to many black South African communities who are in more or less the same circumstances. My visits to some areas in Alexandra Township were hampered by the danger in some areas for example the Hostels. On the other hand, gaining information from Sandton residents proved difficult as the residents were generally unwilling to share information about their socio-economic lifestyles. I had to rely on information from other researchers and other secondary sources.

Because of the descriptive nature of the study, qualitative methods will be used to investigate the web of poverty that the black man continues to be entangled in years after the official end of colonialism. Quantitative methods will not adequately capture 'subjective experience'.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study deploys Fanonian decolonial theory to the understanding of the roots of poverty in South Africa's Alexandra Township where a poor black population is residing. Throughout

the study the suburb of Sandton is used to compare and contrast this with the roots of opulence. Three main thematic areas posited by Frantz Fanon - namely the black condition, structural violence and the Manichaean structure - will be used to explore the above-mentioned focus of the study. These thematic areas and other pertinent auxiliary ideas like ‘the coloniality of being’ posited by Nelson Maldonado Torres (2003) and ‘abyssal thinking’ posited by de Santos (2006) will be evaluated in relation to the case studies of Alexandra and Sandton.

Frantz Fanon’s ideas were written before most countries, South Africa in particular, achieved independence. Since this study deploys Fanon’s theories it is necessary to analyse Maldonado-Torres’s (2007) concept of the ‘coloniality of being’ since it helps to situate Fanon in the post-colonial period and to apply these Fanonian thoughts to the Alexandra/Sandton nexus. In his paper ‘On the coloniality of being’ Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains how the effects of colonialism - of keeping one group of people subjugated by another - continue long after colonialism has been officially declared over. Maldonado-Torres’ (2007) idea of ‘coloniality’ compliments and dovetails with Frantz Fanon’s views on the effects of colonialism on the colonised during and after colonialism.

Torres describes a situation prevalent in South Africa, in which it is largely blacks who are poorer than whites. This is because black, indigenous and ‘coloured’ peoples are seen by the dominant regime as a “dispensable” people or “discardable population” (Santos 2006). This is so because of “the suspicion that the conquered people, and then non-European peoples in general, are constitutively inferior and that therefore they should assume a position of slavery and serfdom” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 247). Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines ‘coloniality of being’ as “the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations”. He adds that “It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243). Maldonado-Torres (2007:243) is fundamental reading in the study of the Alexandra/Sandton nexus, since his assertion that ‘coloniality’ involves “two axes of power that became operative and defined the spatio-temporal matrix” is applicable to many societies with inherent inequalities. According to Maldonado-Torres (2007: 246) the situation in which some people are poor and others are privileged is not natural nor

coincidental but is due to the fact that “the idea of progress always meant in modernity progress for a few and [this is also the reason] why the Rights of Man do not apply equally to all, among many other such apparent contradictions”. Thus underprivileged people often have few creative abilities to draw on because “the capacity to have and to give” have been wrung from them by years of brutalisation under colonialism (Maldonado-Torres 2007:258). This apparently explains the problem of why underprivileged people from generation to generation have nothing to hand down to each other but poverty.

Maldonado-Torres (2007:259) summarises the situation of ‘coloniality’ stating that “not only poverty, but also the nearness of death – in misery, lack of recognition, lynching, and imprisonment among so many other ways – characterise the situation of the *damné*”. These hellish existential conditions define the lives of people in Alexandra, as its people “Once vanquished, ...are said to be inherently servants and their bodies come to form part of an economy of sexual abuse, exploitation, and control” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 248).

Santos (2006) also compliments Fanon’s and Maldonado-Torres’ (2007) ideas in his paper ‘Beyond Abyssal thinking: from global lines to ecologies of knowledges’ in which he explores the dichotomy of colonialism. He observes that poverty is human-made and is a product of colonialism, as is the obliviousness of “Modern Western” culture to the condition of people living in poverty. Santos (2006) believes that the European colonial mindset which legitimated colonialism and, by extension, the subjugation of people of colour, remains entrenched in the global economic dichotomy of privilege and poverty.

Santos (2006) states categorically that “Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking” in which “lines divide the human from the sub-human in such a way that human principles are not compromised by inhuman practices”. It was the colonies which “provided a model of radical exclusion that prevails in modern Western thinking and practice today as it did during the colonial cycle”. Santos (2006) perceives this abyssal thinking to be part of the Modern Western paradigm, describing it as,

a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of ‘this side of the line’ and the realm of ‘the other side of the line’.

In the eyes of the colonizers, colonised people were on “the other side of the line” which is “produced as non-existent …not existing in any relevant or comprehensible way of being. Whatever is produced as nonexistent is radically excluded because it lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other” (Santos 2006).

Since, according to Santos (2006), we have inherited this abyssal thinking as part of the Modern Western paradigm, it is no longer colonised people that are considered insignificant and not worthy of any recognition, but their descendants. Santos (2006) suggests that this is how and why poverty and inequalities exist globally and locally in spaces where there are abundant resources for all residents. Santos does not refer specifically to white privilege and black poverty, but it is easy to relate his observations to the plight of blacks in South Africa, and particularly those in Alexandra, and to comprehend - in the context of Abyssal thinking - why living conditions in Alexandra are not decried as insufferable and unacceptable. We have inherited a dichotomy of the colonizer and the colonized: the world of the colonizer is salubrious, while the world of the impoverished black person could be seen as a type of earthly hell characterised by deprivation, intolerable living conditions, scant medical support, and limited educational and employment opportunities.

Santos (2006) argues that in “abyssal cartography” there are two distinct sides - one of “regulation and emancipation” which is the side of the colonizer, and the other of “appropriation and violence” which is the side of the colonised. Likewise, Fanon (1961: 29) states that the world is cut in two “compartments” or “zones”. On the black/colonised side Santos (2006) states that “appropriation involves incorporation, co-optation, and assimilation, whereas violence involves physical, material, cultural and human destruction”. Commenting on how the political dynamics have not changed from the colonial period to this day, Santos (2006) says, “Today as then, both the creation and negation of the other side of the line is constitutive of hegemonic principles and practices”. He also asserts that the formerly-colonised side is “a non-area in legal and political terms, an unthinkable ground for the rule of law, human rights, and democracy” (Santos 2006).

The ordinary, previously-disadvantaged people continue wallowing in poverty as hegemonic practises continue in the postcolonial era through “the new indirect rule” in which “the state withdraws from state regulation and… public services are privatized”. Aided by what Fanon calls ‘useless’ new leaders,

Powerful non-state actors thereby gain control over the lives and well-being of vast populations... the weaker party is more or less at the mercy of the stronger one ...[resulting] in social fascism, a social regime of extremely unequal power relations which grant to the stronger party a veto power over the life and livelihood of the weaker party (Santos 2006).

Under capitalism, the latter day subtle colonialism, Santos (2006) cites Karl Renner's observation that 'the owner of the machines [becomes] the owner of the workers operating the machines.' Because of their financial needs, the workers have no choice but to be subjugated by owners of capital.

Chasin (1997) complements Fanon's inequality/(structural) violence nexus well. Just like Fanon (1953, 1962) and Santos (2006), she stresses the fact that the structural violence that prevails today is a manifestation of 'invisible' forces. She defines structural violence in a way which is very relevant to this study, as:

a consequence of the routine workings of a society, especially of its stratification system. Structural violence occurs when people's lives are made demonstrably worse by their lack of access to resources. If identifiable groups are suffering physically from conditions that could be changed given the existence of knowledge, while other groups are not, then theirs is structural violence... (Santos: 2006).

More pertinently, Chasin (1997) points out that, "Victims of structural violence do not see and generally are unaware of those responsible for their injuries, while those responsible rarely see the suffering their actions have caused".

Chasin (1997: 13) also quashes the popular and "[capitalist] ideology that individuals are responsible for their own fate" by emphasising the fact that, "In reality... a person is born into a family that has a given income level, and we do not choose our own ethnic heritage". This is what makes certain classes of people privileged from birth and others '*damné*' before they are even born. Massey (2007) corroborates the same information where he states that, "All human societies have a social structure that divides people into categories based on a combination of achieved and ascribed traits". The former are "acquired in the course of living" whilst the latter are "set at birth" (Massey 2007:1). Poe and Janita (2013) sum up this phenomenon beautifully quoting the famous speech by George Wallace "segregation now,

segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” when he was sworn in as Governor of Alabama in 1963. The effects of the historical sanctioning of ideological and institutional segregation seem eternal.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is conceived as a theoretical-conceptual and analytical study that deploys Fanonian decolonial thinking to enlighten the study of poverty in South Africa. This means that it uses a broadly qualitative approach to investigate, explore and interpret the root causes of poverty among blacks and why blacks lack agency to move out of poverty. What is distinctive about it is that it applies a critical decolonial theoretical framework to study a topical issue of poverty in South Africa where neo-liberal explanations emphasise the failures of the African government, particularly corruption, while ignoring the role of continuing neo-apartheid coloniality.

The qualitative method has been chosen ahead of the more common quantitative methods because of the flexibility and in-depth approach it offers to any phenomenon being studied. On the other hand quantitative research methods are “limited in the way subjective experience is quantified” (Henning, Rensburg and Smit 2004:3). The flaw of this approach, according to Henning, Rensburg and Smit (2004:3) is the fact that its design makes use of “predetermined instruments”. This makes it unsuitable to explore the experience of black poor classes over the years. Henning *et al* (2004:3) state that one merit of deploying the qualitative method is the fact that “the ‘variables’ are usually not controlled [and it allows] freedom and natural development of action and representation...” and it is not confined “within the boundaries of an instrument that we designed beforehand because this will limit the data to those very boundaries”.

Since the researcher, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2004), is the main ‘instrument’ of data collection and data analysis, I will guard myself against bias by familiarising myself with a lot of authoritative literature on the subject. I will also let the gathered information do the ‘talking’ whilst I ‘stands aside’.

The qualitative approach is used to explore the three main thematic areas from Frantz Fanon’s writings, namely, the black condition, structural violence and the Manichaean

structure. These themes can only be adequately treated and explored using the qualitative methodology.

The snowball sampling method was chosen for this study due to its suitability, which according to Bernard, Harvey and Ryan (2010: 24) enables the researcher "...to find a representative distribution of cases that will allow for generalisations about the average or typical". Here, states Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 27), "... a core group of participants is initially sampled for the research project". With regards to this research project, this is the "sampling frame". Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:27) which basically is the eligible members of the population, are the poor people who live in Alexandra who have been directly 'pushed' into Alexandra from their areas of origin because the increasingly unbearable politico-economic conditions there resulted in them losing their livelihoods. Knowledgeable researchers who have witnessed this phenomenon will also be considered to validate the assumption explored in the introduction that Alexandra emerged as a slum township for poor and desperate black people coming to Johannesburg to offer their labour in exchange for wages for survival.

As a researcher, the context of my interest in the areas of Alexandra and Sandton is that I am an educator at a school in the catchment area of Alexandra Township and Sandton. I am therefore privy to demographic information from the two areas. After duly seeking permission from school authorities, I used this as a strategic starting point from where the first respondents were drawn. The chosen participants lead to the identification of other respondents. Any other participants with knowledge of the emergence of Alexandra, i.e. the elderly, Faith-Based Organisations, and Non-Governmental Organisations were also considered.

Participants were also drawn from Sandton. These are blacks who have 'crossed the floor' from Alexandra to take up residence in Sandton. They are an interesting "sampling frame" because of their ability to break loose from the chains of poverty in Alexandra. Their "story" is of paramount importance to the study. Whites in Sandton who have owned business empires for many years are also an integral part of this research since the assumption is also that these people, through advancing their corporate ventures and simultaneously exploiting blacks as cheap labour have, wittingly or unwittingly, 'created' the slum that Alexandra is.

I proposed to interview thirty people in all and in the end I twenty-one. This number was settled at on the basis of empirical research studies from authoritative sources like Bernard and Ryan (2010:360) who argued that “There is growing evidence that twenty to sixty knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience”. Bernard and Ryan (2010:360) elaborated further saying that after these twenty to sixty people, “The number of new concepts retrieved in interviews tapers off after just twenty interviews”.

I interviewed these participants in a series of open-minded questions. Open-minded questions were deemed suitable because, according to Yin (2011:32), “Many qualitative studies can be based solely on a set of open-ended interviews. What makes studies qualitative is that they are interested in interviewees’ words and ideas, not in arraying the responses numerically”. Thus, Yin (2011:32) advises that the interviews should “assume a conversational mode” lasting about two hours “to encourage participants the opportunity to construct their own experiences and reality in their own words”. It is for this reason that a questionnaire was not a suitable option for my research as it is not flexible and accommodative enough to capture such personal experiences.

I followed the methodology for carrying out the interviews posited by Yin and Roberts (2011:32) with some modifications in the duration to suit individual cases. They state that

...the same person might be interviewed ... on three separate occasions: the first interview might cover the participant’s life history; the second might cover the events involved in the topic of study; and the third might cover the participant’s reflections on the meaning of their experiences (Yin and Roberts 2011:32).

In the first interview participant revealed how they came to be into living in Alexandra/Sandton and the jobs or businesses they have been involved in. The second covered the livelihood activities they have been involved in since moving into Alexandra, and the third and final interview resulted in the participants evaluating their life experiences. I drew up a list of questions and commit them to memory and deploy them during the interviews to help, not lead, the interviewees during the interview sessions. Thomas and Murray (2003:63) advise that “...the interviewer casts questions in a fashion that allows respondents unrestricted freedom...” and, as Walliman (2011:99) suggests, the researcher should “...allow [the] interview to ‘rumble’ in order to get insight into the attitude of the

interviewee". Structured interviews were not be deployed as these limit the information that can be sourced and leads to the process being stifled through being bound to the instrumentality mentioned above. Therefore the process was left to be as dynamic and spontaneous as can be, which is the hallmark and essence of qualitative research methods.

Besides unstructured interviews, I used what Mouton (2001:7) terms 'systematic field observations' as well as a form of data collection. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:90) also term it "non-participant observation" whereby the researcher "observes from outside and not embed self in community". They, Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009), note that the advantage of this type of observation is that the observer remains detached and therefore makes the whole process less prone to bias.

Mostly secondary sources were used to study the phenomenon of poverty and agency in Alexandra and Sandton, respectively. These, among others, include newspaper articles, NGO documents, dissertations, and any literature on Alexandra that is thematically and theoretically relevant. Secondary sources were complemented by my own observations which I recorded after my visits to Alexandra Township and Sandton when I mingled with the inhabitants of these areas. I took down notes on any observations I made with regards to the topic. I also took pictures of the two contrasting locales of Alexandra Township and Sandton, taking a cue from an editor, Arthur Brisbane (1911), who told his reporters, "Use a picture. It's worth a thousand words". The pictures will form an unbiased means of contrasting the two areas.

### **Ethical considerations**

Research can result in harm to research participants if it is not well-thought out. Thus painstakingly careful planning is imperative in research and this study is no exception. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 66) state that "[t]hat the essential purpose of ethical research is to protect the welfare and rights of research participants...". This was duly observed in this study. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:66) state that autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence are three principles which should be observed in research. I took all the necessary measures to ensure that participants were not forced to participate, that participants were well informed of the proceedings and lastly that the research will be beneficial to society. To ensure maximum compliance with the research ethic, I heeded Terre Blanche and

Durrheim's (1999: 69) advice that I "carry out [only] procedures [I was] competent to conduct".

I ensured that authorities at the University of South Africa, Alexandra Township and Sandton were made fully aware throughout the writing of this study. Written consent was sought from these authorities before the study commenced. Likewise the authorities will be briefed on the outcome of the research.

## **Chapter Layout**

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- Research methods
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Case Study: The zone of being

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## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework: Theory of Poverty and Poverty of Theory

*Notions of white superiority and black inferiority have significantly shaped the mind-sets of both black and white South Africans. The superiority complex of white people is not a problem peculiar to unreconstructed racists. It has been programmed into those who have grown up in an environment that accorded them higher status than most of their fellow citizens by virtue of colour. The same applies to black inferiority. It is not simply something one shrugs off like a bad cold. It has been branded deeply into one's psyche by doors that have been shut in one's face, resulting in repeated humiliation.*

**Mamphela Ramphele**

*White people are white people*

*They must learn to listen*

*Black people are black people*

*They must learn to speak*

**Mongane Wally Serote**

### Introduction

This chapter teases out the Fanonian critical decolonial thinking, variously called decoloniality/transmodernity/border thinking/border gnosis, as the framework through which we can delve into, and explore how poverty amongst the poor (blacks) and privilege amongst the rich (whites) came into being. Most importantly, Fanonian thought has been chosen and deemed superior to all other theories which attempt to explain the genesis of poverty and the socio-economic structuring of the world, because of its holistic nature in tracing the root causes of poverty. Fanon has also been deployed for his superiority since his ideas also map the way out of this seemingly natural and intractable poverty amongst blacks. He offers solutions for both the colonized (victim) who lost his humanity during colonialism through being brutalised, and the colonizer (victimizer) whose humanity also disappeared in the process of the brutalising and impoverishing of the former.

It is important to mention at the outset that decoloniality itself is not one school of thought,

but a plurality of schools that all acknowledge that universalism does not solve global challenges. It advocates pluriversalism based on the reality of the unique and local or contextual nature of problems facing the different parts of the globe. Decoloniality itself does not pretend to have a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to exploring and solving challenges of all inferiorised and impoverished human beings globally. It vehemently denies the fact that the patriarchal, racist and sexist Eurocentrism modelled around the thinking of a miserly five countries of the world - namely England, Germany, France, Italy and Spain - is neutral and universal and universalisable. This provincial mentality is Fanon’s point of departure.

The superiority of Fanonian thought is all the more conspicuous because he theorises from the perspective of the oppressed as opposed to the generality of Eurocentric theories. Taking cognisance of the fact that theories/knowledges themselves have been colonized, Fanon comes across as a refreshing, almost natural and obvious way of analysing the conditions of the South/oppressed. Fanon, theoretically and thematically, is a critical decolonial thinker shifting “from the enunciated to the enunciator” and engaging in “epistemic disobedience and delinking” from the knowing subject (North/oppressor) [who] maps the world and its problems, classifies people and projects...” (Mignolo 2009). Wiredu (1998) calls this refusal to analyse and explain Southern socio-economic phenomena using Eurocentric theoretical frameworks an “epistemic awakening” - the realisation that theorising can be from the South itself. Suarez-Kroba (2009) observes that Fanon, in doing this, quashes the idea of ‘...the West as the logical starting point of valid and relevant theory and as a privileged site of knowledge production’. Thus for critical and holistic decolonisation to occur in ‘Beings’ of the South, it is therefore imperative to use methods and frameworks which themselves are not contaminated by that which the South seeks to cure itself from. This is the essence of decoloniality.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) comprehensively defines this Fanonian stance under decoloniality by observing that “What distinguishes decoloniality from other existing critical social theories is its locus of enunciations and its genealogy - which is outside of Europe - and that:

Decoloniality can best be understood as a pluriversal epistemology of the future – a redemptive and liberatory epistemology that seeks to delink from the tyranny of abstract universals...[and]... informs the ongoing struggles against inhumanity of the Cartesian subject, ‘the irrationality of the rational, the despotic residues of modernity’” (Ndlovu Gatsheni 2012).

In a highly polarised and compartmentalised world where ‘abyssal thinking’ is the attitude

and order of the day, decoloniality enables what Santos (2006) aptly terms ‘post-abyssal thinking’ involving “a radical break with Modern Western ways of thinking and acting”.

As noted above, a lot of theories - Marxism, Post-colonialism and Postmodernism, which seek to explain inequalities in socio-economic phenomena in the South - are eurocentric, ahistorical and colour-blind. Fanon’s decolonial “racial optic”, as Kane (2007) observes, clearly and exhaustively explores and “offers a genealogy of race” as the “organising principle” for “ontological polarisation” and the “structural organisation of global formations”. Despite the ostensible antipathy of Western liberal discourses towards inequality, the salient by-product of these positions is grinding and perpetual poverty being predominant in one group of people (blacks) and burgeoning and unending wealth being more easily accessible to another group of people (whites). Umpteen centuries of colonisation dispossessed the South and simultaneously deposited the fruits of ‘civilisation’ in the North. Kane (2007) also posits that Fanon is also superior as a theorist in the sense that Fanon touches and envisions a new world order wherein both black and white get “disalienated” and “break down the binaries of an oppressor-oppressed world”. The objective is the creation of a ‘new man’. A ‘new’ black and a ‘new’ white staying side by side in a horizontal relationship devoid of friction. This is what Santos (2006) calls “a radical co-presence [where] practices and agents on both sides of the line are contemporary in equal terms”.

Fanon has tapped into many studies which have shown that blacks are not biologically inferior to whites as claimed by the imperial colonial ideology. Without empirical proof of the biological inferiority of black people, the only explanation for continued economic inequalities is that colonial ideologies about racial inferiority are ingrained in the structure of contemporary racism, which continues to construct differences between blacks and whites. Mignolo (2009) calls this “the colonial difference”. Fanon (1961) states that blacks, battered by racism emotionally, physically and psychologically, are reduced to mere zombies. In this state the black people cannot assert themselves. This is the genesis of inequality between black and white. As observed above, after abyssally demarcating black and white, into ‘zones’, the zone of the colonised becomes, as Santos (2006) scathingly points out,

the realm of incomprehensible beliefs and behaviours... [and] ...magical or idolatrous practices. On the basis of their refined conceptions of humanity and human dignity, the [European] humanists reached the conclusion that the savages were sub-human...

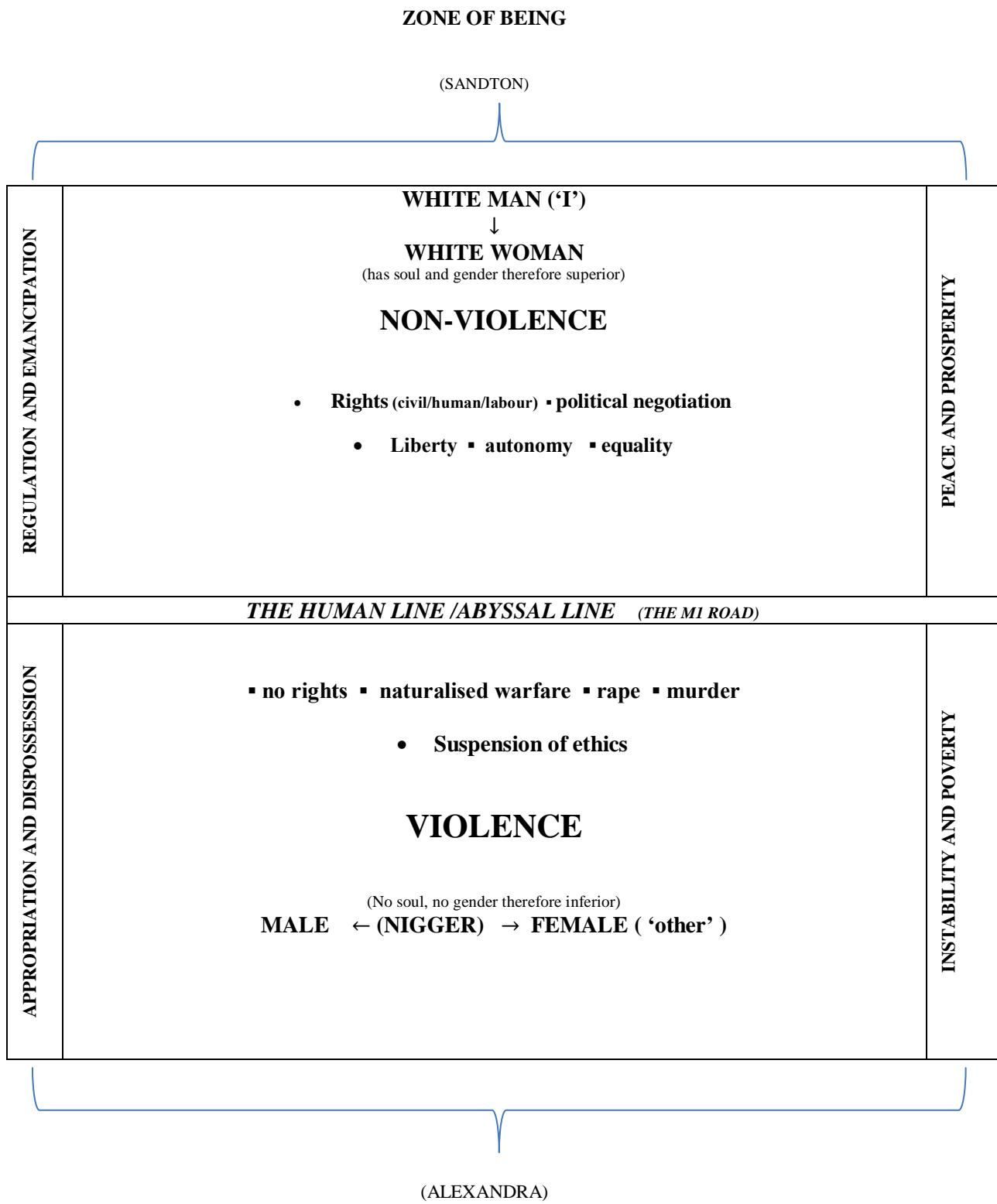


Figure 1. Diagram of the zone of being and non-being. Formulated by R. Grosfoguel (2013) and modified by R. Nyapokoto (2014)

According to Santos (2006), Pope Paul III affirmed in his *Sublimis Deus* of 1537 that the savage had a soul but it was “an empty receptacle, an *anima nullius*” (Santos 2006). It is very interesting and appalling to note that even a Pope, the highest figure of the largest and most powerful church globally also engaged in the same ‘misanthropic scepticism’ through questioning the very humanity of blacks.

Thus Fanon’s argument is that the South can use her unique suffering as a raw material and starting point for theorising. The diagram below illustrates and summarises the main arguments of the Fanonian critical decolonial theory.

### **Abyssal lines**

In order to understand the genesis of racism and unequal politico-economic power relations which polarise people into the white/superior and black/inferior binaries, a classification and existential situation whose ultimate by-product is poverty and lack of agency amongst the blacks, one needs to understand the mindset and framework which shapes the global political landscape by tapping into the ‘imperial’ mindset of racial protagonists.

Originally, people were equal since religion/God was the standard used to classify people. Mignolo (2009:146-7) traces the origins of this polarisation of the world into a white/superior and black/inferior binary noting that “with secularisation of the world, knowledge became attached to Reason and Theory (instead of God) and [became] supported by a new global design, the civilising mission”. Man, the white man, became the classifying standard buoyed by the Cartesian “‘I’ think therefore ‘I’ am” and later the Dusselian “I conquer, therefore ‘I am’” abyssal thinking.

Quijano (in Mignolo: 2009) observes that with this new global design “only Europe [became] rational and [could] have subjects. Other cultures [were] not rational”. Nursey-Bray (1980) points at race as the aspect which led to one group being inferiorised over the other by pointing out that racism is an ideology that justifies economic exploitation, oppression and the domination of one group by another through observing that, “[r]acism is only the emotional, affective sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorisation”. Today, in this new dimension when, with the independence of South Africa in 1994, outright colonialism has been officially abolished, talk of racism as an organising principle, appears incredible and far-fetched, but it’s not. It is subtly enmeshed in all existential aspects of life - social,

economic, politically and indeed aesthetic. It has only been erased from our memory through rampant media, school, university and all other voices calling for forward-thinking and looking against any forms of retrospection.

Santos (2006) confirms this notion of race as the subtle organising principle that has condemned the black man into an abyss of poverty noting that, “Modern Western thinking is an abyssal thinking” and it “consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones”. These “[g]lobal designs” according to Mignolo (2009), “are brewed … in the local histories of the metropolitan countries; they are implemented, exported, and enacted differently in particular places…”. This means that the challenges and impediments towards development and self-actualisation that black people face today have their roots and foundation in aspects which are no longer explicit and present. This apparent invisibility of the root causes of poverty, more often than not, results in the victim, the black man, being blamed and vilified for his current impoverished and intractable circumstances. At times the black man blames himself, oblivious of the fact that his fate was sealed centuries ago. Fanon (1952) observes that “From birth it is clear to [the black man] that this narrow world is strewn with prohibitions”.

Today it takes painstakingly careful study to be able to dig up and bring to the fore the ‘invisible’ causes of inequality in the world. Globalisation, driven by capitalism, which is touted today as the cause of suffering amongst fringe societies, which happen to be black and from the global South, is only part of a process that started centuries ago:

The current process of globalisation is not a new phenomenon, although the way in which it is taking place is without precedent. On a larger scale, globalisation at the end of the twentieth century (mainly occurring through transnational corporations, the media, and technology) is the most recent configuration of a process that can be traced back to 1500s, with the beginning of transatlantic exploration and the consolidation of the Western hegemony (Mignolo 2009).

Globalisation is only widening the crevices that have long existed. The reason why one ‘side’ of humanity benefits consistently and another ‘side’ suffers consistently is a true testament that the world order is skewed, deceitful and evil.

The most intriguing aspect of abyssal thinking is its quality of always mutating into new forms. It takes careful and methodical study for one to realise that though abyssal lines come in different complexions at different times and spaces in life, it is still the same aspect with

the same goal: the inferiorisation and impoverishment of the black man. Santos (2006) observes that “The permanence of abyssal global lines throughout the modern period does not mean that they have remained fixed. Historically, the global lines dividing the two sides have been shifting”.

The rationale behind the inferiorisation, enslavement and eventual serfdom of blacks is the abyssally defined and assigned place of the black man. Torres (2009) posits that in the eyes of the imperialists the humanity of blacks was questionable during the very historical era when human rights were becoming an accepted idea. At worst the “imperial attitude promotes a fundamentally genocidal attitude in respect to colonised and racialised people” (Torres 2009). Fanon (1961:32) observes that in the eyes of the imperial masters, the native is “the quintessence of evil” and that,

The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is... the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or immorality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (Fanon 1961:32)

By virtue of the above, Torres (2011) observes that that is why even “perverted acts of war” are visited upon blacks. In the eyes of imperial powers blacks were at worst subhuman and at best children. Fanon (1952:46) points out that in the mindset of whites, blacks are barbarians with “no culture, no civilisation, and no ‘long historical past’”. Such ‘Beings’ can only be brutes needing brutalising forces to civilise and Christianise them. Colonialism goes further than that: “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of a perverted [abyssal] logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (Fanon 1961:169).

This act is meant to empty out the black man epistemologically and leave him in a void that will be replaced with an inferiority complex. In fact this whole process’s end result and intention is to characterise and portray a black man as a brute devoid of any values. One can easily deduct that the black man being thus stripped of his past and denied the present, logically will not have a future. Even the generations that come after him will have no future. He has no base, no foundation, no stepping stone from which to launch himself emotionally, socially and economically as an active and productive citizen. This systemic inferiorisation of blacks by whites, make the blacks so dependent that, Fanon (1961: 169) observes, “The effect

consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality".

As observed before, the colonial masters had a patronizing and condescending attitude towards blacks all with the goal to inferiorise the latter, or out of the assumption that the latter is inferior. Having observed 'hundreds' of different whites for objectivity, Fanon (1952:14) points out that "A white man talking to a person of colour behaves exactly like a grown-up with a kid...". He adds further that "speaking in this way is an attempt to reach down to them, to make them feel at ease, to make oneself understood and reassure them". Children don't know, are naive and have to be nurtured. It is with this abyssal attitude that colonialists felt they had the obligation to come and 'civilise' people of the South. The idea is that the whites abyssally felt they had the obligation to civilise and Christianise blacks. If need be, even gunfire was deemed necessary because of the honourable goal to be achieved. Just like the bible discourages sparing the rod on a child because that child will be spoiled, blacks, these bigger children of the South needed even more force because of their coarseness and also because of the enormity the task of civilising and Christianising them. All this is born of the fact that, for Fanon (1952:79) "the white man is governed by a complex of authority, a complex of leadership..." This is an abyssal mentality which Dussel (quoted by Mignolo 2000:117) believes stems from the fact that,

Modern (European) civilisation understands itself as the most developed, the superior civilisation. This sense of superiority obliges it, in the form of a categorical imperative, as it were, to 'develop' [civilise, uplift, educate] the more primitive, barbarous, underdeveloped civilisations.

Thus Europe the 'centre' has to bring light to the South, the 'periphery'.

What most fundamentally characterises abyssal thinking is the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. The only nearness between zones is geographical. This modicum of co-presence happens for the singular goal of enslavement of the other. This is how Alexandra and Sandton were conceived. This is the reason Fanon (1961:39) claims that "in the colonialism context there is no truthful behaviour". This co-presence is for the good of the colonizer.

Santos (2006) corroborates the idea above summing up abyssal thinking as the root of inferiorisation and impoverishment of blacks, and today as a 'soft' force that [il]legally keeps blacks on the periphery of the economy as fringe players. He coined the term 'social fascism'

which he divided into two categories: “fascism of social apartheid” and “contractual fascism”. The former works out in such a way that at the end of the day the world is delineated into ‘savage’ and ‘civilised’ zones. ‘Savage’ zones are neglected and beget savagery and death whilst ‘civilised’ zones get all the finery of life and at the end of the day beget all the niceties of life and life itself. One classic example of this playing out in a larger context is Europe getting all the silver and gold and ivory from Africa and Africa getting guns and gunfire.

“Contractual fascism”, Santos (2006) posits, “occurs in situations in which power inequalities between the parties in the civil contract are such that the weaker party [the inferiorized black man], rendered vulnerable for having no alternative, accepts the conditions imposed by the stronger party, however costly and despotic they may be”. Analysed closely, ‘contractual fascism’ seems to be at the heart of all dealings between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. It benefits the former and buries the latter in a cesspit of poverty out of which it is difficult to extricate oneself from. For illustrative purposes, Santos (2006), cites “privatisation of public services, such as healthcare, welfare, utilities” as a form of ‘contractual fascism’ and observes that the net effect of all this is that “privatized services agencies take over the functions of social regulation earlier exercised by the state”. The net effect of social fascism, he observes,

... is the process by means which social groups and social interests which up until now were included in the social contract are excluded from the latter without any prospect of returning: workers and popular classes are being expelled from the social contract through the elimination of social and economic rights, thereby becoming discardable populations (Santos 2006).

Therefore owners of capital, the ‘haves’, thus hold the owners of labour, the ‘have-nots’, at ransom in order to make profits. Each time capitalists are making profit the labourer is losing out. This is the win-lose situation at play in the zone of being and zone non-being, respectively.

### **Manichaeism: The zone of being and non-being**

As noted above, abyssal thinking leads to binaries of black/white and superior/inferior. Santos (2006) states that abyssal thinking has the role of bringing “distinctions and radicalizing them”. This scenario plays itself out into the psyche of people and leads even to physical separation of what is considered white and superior, and black and inferior. This is the Manichaean Structure. Nursey-Bray (1980) observes that the colonial world is

Manichaean in structure and values. It creates two distinct white/superior and black/inferior ‘zones’ physically and psychologically. It leads to schizophrenic psychosis amongst blacks. Even if blacks live amongst the whites geographically, Manichaeism still exists - the ‘black condition’ of lacking ontological density - stalks the black man even if he moves geographically into the zone of being. The former are perpetual victims of the machinations of colonialism and its by-product: coloniality. Coloniality haunts the black man into the grave.

According to Fanon (1952:196) the “colonial [and indeed the postcolonial] world is a Manichaean world” divided into “compartments”. These form the black world and white world. In this compartmentalised world Fanon (1952: 67) observes that “...black and white represent two poles of this world, poles in perpetual conflict: [and this is] a genuinely Manichaean notion of the world”. This black/white binary is not a natural divinely-ordained order of life. Kane (2007) underscores this point noting that “... race is culturally and historically situated as opposed to a reified fact of biology...”. Nursey-Bray (1980) also depicts the “role of racism in the structuring of colonial social relations” and that this ideology of racism causes physical demarcations. In this world white is superior and symbolises virtue. Black is inferior and symbolises vice. Fanon (1952:67) further states that “The black man symbolises sin. The archetype of inferior values is represented by the black man” and this black man “...has a function: to represent shameful feelings, base instincts, and the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *Homo occidentalis* the black man – or, if you prefer, the colour black – symbolises evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, and famine. Every bird of prey is black” (Fanon: 1952: 167).

Fanon (1952:26) states that “the colonial world is a world cut into two... inhabited by two different species”. Fanon portrays this Manichaean structure in two ways: as physically demarcated and also in psychological terms. Maldonado-Torres (2007) observes that Manichaeism portrayed through “colonial difference is indeed the first by-product of the coloniality of power, of knowledge and being. Ontological colonial difference is more specifically the product of the coloniality of being”. These terms will be clarified on later on. Colonial South Africa unconsciously termed Manichaeism ‘Apartheid’. The goal is the same: separate development or, more aptly, development for whites and underdevelopment for blacks. Blacks became serfs providing cheap labour. In physical terms the world of the white man is a perfect and salubrious world, whilst the world of the black person is ugly and

insalubrious. “The settlers’ town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt...[and] are clean and even, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners” (Fanon 1952: 48). This serenity is not only physical but existential, too. Santos quoted in Grosfoguel (2013) observes that,

The way conflicts are managed in the zone of being (above the abyssal line) is through what he calls mechanisms of regulation and emancipation. Regulation refers to civil/human/women/labour/ rights codes, relations of civility, spaces of political negotiation and action that are recognised for the oppressed “Other” in their conflict with oppressor ‘I’ within the zone of being. “Emancipation” refers to discourses of liberty, autonomy and equality that form part of the discourses and institutions used for the management of conflicts in the zone of being. As a trend, conflicts in the zone of being are regulated through non-violent means. Violence is always an exception and used only in exceptional moments.(Grosfoguel: 2013).

In contrast, the Zone of Non-Being,

...The town belonging to the colonized people... the native town... is a place of ill-fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men there on top of each other... The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is the town of niggers and dirty arabs’ (Fanon 1961:45).

This type of area is called The Zone of Non-being because here humanity/‘being’ is abyssally characterized as absent. These ‘beings’ or ‘non-beings’ are characterized as subhuman living below the ‘human line’. Grosfoguel (2013) observes that “The people below the line of the human are considered subhuman or non-human; that is, their humanity is questionable and, as such, questioned”. Santos (2007:10) quoted in Grosfoguel, explains the Zone of Non-being comprehensively thus,

...in the zone of non-being – below the abyssal line – where people are dehumanized in the sense of being considered below of the human as non-humans/sub-humans, the methods used by the imperial/capitalist/masculine/heterosexual ‘I’ and it’s institutional system of managing and administering conflicts, is by means of violence and overt appropriation/dispossession. As a trend, conflicts in the zone of non-being are managed through perpetual violence and only in exceptional moments are methods of emancipation and regulation used. This is the inversion of the way

conflicts are managed in the zone of being. Since the humanity of the classified into the zone of non-being is not recognised, and given that they are treated as non-human or subhuman, that is without norms of rights or civility, then acts of violence, rape and appropriation are permitted that would otherwise be unacceptable in the zone of being. (Santos :2006)).

Colonised people are condemned to such wretched places and conditions because, as Torres (2006) observes, “the idea of progress always meant in modernity progress for a few and [that is] why the rights of Man do not apply equally to all...”. In other words blacks, having been abyssally delineated as inferior and subhuman have to live under subhuman conditions.

Analysed from a figurative plane, Fanon’s ideas state that the town of the white man is full of life and the town of the black man is funereal. In such disparate scenario the white man will prosper. Fanon (1961: 40) observes that “The settler makes history and is conscious of making it”. The black man naturally, will degenerate. “The native ‘bent double, more dead than alive, exists interminably in an unchanging dream’. The native is marooned in such a place since he has to “stay in his place” and not exceed certain physical, psychological and economical limits. The dreams of the native, Fanon states, being “hemmed in” in such a wretched place “are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression”. In fact violence becomes the order of the day in the native town because, Fanon states, “The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settlers’ violence in the beginning” (Fanon:1961:73).

Thus violence consumes the whole black community and ‘dehumanises’ the black man. If the physical Manichaeian world denies the black man a salubrious world to live in and wreaks havoc on him, it is the psychological battering of the black man that brings him to total degeneration and dearth of his ego. Fanon posits that,

At times this Manichaeism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanises the native, or so to speak plainly it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man’s reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to bestiary... (Fanon: 1961:32 -33).

This delineation of the black man as sub-human puts the black man in a “state of permanent tension”. The white man “robs [the black man] of any value or originality...”. When this happens for a long period of time the black man internalises the inferiority complex. Fanon states that the black will be convinced that, “All those white men...can’t be wrong. I am guilty. I don’t know what of, but I know I’m a wretch”. After being robbed of his humanity, the black man is further made to feel like an outsider. Fanon (1952:152) states that “...the black man must be branded an outsider down to his chromosomes”. Being thus circumstanced the black man has no balance and no confidence. This is the chief objective of colonialism – to kill the confidence in a black man.

Having been thoroughly battered thus, the black man will, unfortunately, need the approval of the white man in whatever he does, or even to be recognised as a human being. This is the reason why black men under colonial regimes love to bed white woman. It makes them feel white and, it means that the white woman would have affirmed the fact that he, the black man, is human. Fanon (1952:43) dramatises a black man fondling a white woman thinking, “I espouse white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. Between these breasts that my wandering hands fondle, white civilisation and worthiness become mine”.

As shown above, the Manichaean world is both physical and psychological. The sole aim is to turn the black man into a miserable ‘sub human’ zombie-like being. It is in this state that the white man can fully abuse the black man without any fear of retribution. Nursey-Bray (1980) contends that for one race to enslave another race it has to inferiorise the other first because a man with his full faculties will fight any form of domination visited upon him. The apartheid system was one example of Manichaeism that never tried to conceal its intentions. Separation, besides aiming to promote one race over the other, was a vivid way of showing the inability and impossibility of white (superiority) and black (inferiority) to dwell together.

A person condemned to a wretched location devoid of social amenities and who is also suffering from schizophrenic psychosis is useless vis-à-vis productivity and wealthy creation. He is a zombie or a ‘carcass’ whose utility value is more or less the same as a machine in a factory: to be (ab)used and disposed of and replaced by another.

### **Coloniality of being: The black condition**

Coloniality of Being has its genesis in the secularization of the world. Secularization of Christianity brought new identities in humanity with the net result that non-European people, because of their darker hue, were delineated as “constitutively inferior and therefore they... assume a position of slavery and serfdom” (Maldonado-Torres: 2011). This state of damnation continued even long after colonialism ended with race as an organising principle. This is Coloniality of Being.

Today, twenty years after apartheid officially ended, the black skin lacks ontological density as compared to the white skin. The movement of blacks into formerly white-only suburbs does not mean that they have gained ontological density. Modern day segregation is not based on the geographical location where one dwells nor even wealth accumulation but on the basis of skin colour. Fanon (1952:45) states categorically that the “black problem is not just about Blacks living among Whites, but about the black man exploited, enslaved, and despised by a [post]colonialist and capitalist society that happens to be white”. The sum total of this exploitation, enslavement and contempt, among a whole catalogue of daily ordeals which a black man suffers as the attendant residual effects of colonialism also forms Coloniality of Being. Maldonado-Torres (2011) defines Coloniality of Being as “the cruel reality of damnation and naturalization of war”. This comes about because of what Maldonado-Torres (2011) calls “Manichaean misanthropic skepticism” or the dislike and questioning of the very humanity of black bodies. This is the reification of the thought that if blacks are sub-human they may be subjected to sub-human treatment, to damnation. Thus,

coloniality of Being primarily refers to the normalization of the extraordinary events that take place in war. While in the war there is murder and rape, in the hell of colonial world murder and rape become day-to-day occurrences and menaces. ‘Killability’ and ‘rapeability’ are inscribed into the images of the colonial bodies. Lacking real authority, colonised men are permanently feminized (Maldonado-Torres: 2011).

The life of a black man is punctuated by violence of sorts from birth to death in a Manichean world that is divided into ‘compartments’. Fanon (1961:28) states that, “Their first encounter was marked by violence and [even] their existence...” He adds, “From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence”. This violence is physical and psychological. And violence begets violence.

Violence against blacks during colonialism takes on a physical form through spatial segregation. There are clearly demarcated areas of the colonizer and the subject, the Manichaean structure which becomes permanent even long after colonialism. The black man's side is thin on amenities and life itself, whilst the side of the colonizer is awash with all amenities and life. Sustained over long periods of time, hundreds of years, this geo-physical separation leads to physical and psychological deterioration and despondency for the black man. Fanon posits that colonialism affirms the superiority of whites over blacks by questioning the humanity of blacks, leading to the objectification of blacks. Having achieved this Fanon (1961:28) observes that a black man is “crushed into... inessentiality”. After colonialism comes coloniality - an even more permanent and destructive state of affairs.

Coloniality of Being also plays itself out in the form of structural violence. It morphs and mutates from a strictly physical form during colonialism to subtle forms afterward but with the same debilitating effects on black man – the violation of rights and being. This is in essence the character of Coloniality of Being. Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains that Coloniality of Being is a pot-pourri of the “[l]ong-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations”. The genealogy of Coloniality of being is thus traceable to race. Race is the organizing principle to the geo-political structure and structuring of the world today. It empowers some section of people and dispossesses another side simultaneously. It is worth noting that Coloniality of Being permeates all aspects of life,

Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day (Maldonado-Torres: 2007).

At play with coloniality is the fact of a black man living under the shadow of colonialism, which was a long epoch of inferiorisation and knowledge destruction. Colonialism perceived blacks as inferior. Under these years of colonialism which Fanon (1961:44) calls “centuries of unreality” a black man having fed for too long on a diet of inferiority is bound to behave in the zombie-like manner that colonialism intended him to be. Nursey-Bray (1980) notes that an inferiorised man will permanently suffer from “psychological dependency and distorted consciousness”. The effects always lurk somewhere around the black man and filter down to

his offspring. Downstream generations inherit coloniality. Coloniality of Being ultimately manifests itself in grinding poverty and inequality. It also becomes interesting that certain sections of humanity consistently manifest these twin problems whilst the other section manifest twin blessings of wealth and prosperity. One section is *damné*, the other is heavenly. In the same vein, the white skin which holds more ontological density, enjoys all the benefits that come with superiority. Fanon (1952:67) states that from the beginning a white man has a complex of a ‘master’. For one to be a master, there has to be a servant, a black man. This is how Sandton and Alexandra emerged. On the grand scale, the current geo-political world is thus one of inherent masters and inherent servants.

At worst the black skin is so inferiorised to the extent of not being visible – non-being. Torres (2007) observes that, “the *damné* is the subject that emerges in a world marked by coloniality of being...The *damné* exists in the mode of not being there, which hints at the nearness of death, at the company of death”. No wonder one anonymous aid beneficiary in Africa quipped that the poor live below the living and slightly above the dead.

This fact of invisibility or not being there - lacking ontological density - is the reason why the black man is denied humanity. That is why he is condemned to abyssal living and working conditions. He is not a ‘being’. He exists in the Zone of Non-being: a condition where Coloniality of Being is the order of life. Here everything goes: the rule of the jungle is the order of the day. If a black man happens to be visible he gets lynched, arrested and imprisoned. He is allowed to be visible only for utilitarian benefits of the master – as a servant or labourer. The pass system was testament to this. He is tolerated only in as far as he can work for capitalism. Oyono (1956) observes that the white man thinks of a black man only when he is hungry.

Fanon (1961:54) observes that a black consequently finds himself in a state of neurosis. First he is a prisoner of the white, and then of himself. Thus Fanon having psycho-historically explored the black man came to the conclusion that for a black man to be fully human, capable of living a full, productive life he should be “liberated from himself” and in the same vein a white man, even though he may have gained material possessions, needs to gain his humanity, which has been lost over centuries of brutalising the black man. All have lost humanity. Fanon (1961: 78) prescribes a renaissance where black and white undergo a rebirth into a new world free of prejudices - where they can “touch each other and feel each other”. Only then, when these two poles been rehabilitated, can humanity return.

## **Structural Violence**

Structural violence is a systematic way in which social structures harm or otherwise disadvantage individuals, and it operates in subtle and invisible ways. The most unfortunate aspect of structural violence is that victims never know of its existence until and unless some ‘shock’ occurrence happens. Fanon (1952:132) states that it is only when black students get to Paris that they become apprehensive of the spanners that are thrown in their way along their path of life. “And yet these problems were not exactly invisible” (Fanon 1952: 132). This is structural violence because the violation of the black man’s life is not exactly ‘visible’ but is embedded in the political and economic organisation of the social world. The victims are normally unaware of the causes of their hellish conditions. They just know that they are the wretched of earth. It is historically given and often economically-driven processes that conspire to constrain individual agency.

The physical set up of the Manichaean ‘compartmentalised’ world is deliberately made to ensure that the black man’s livelihood - creatively, physically, intellectually and aesthetically - is smothered. Fanon (1961:30) describes it thus, “The settler’s town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt...[and] are clean and even, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners. On the contrary,

The town belonging to the colonized people...the native town....is a place of ill-fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men there on top of each other..... The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is the town of niggers and dirty arabs (Fanon 1961:30).

Under this set up, Fanon (1961: 28) posits that the black man is “beaten from the start” Even before he makes the first step on the geopolitical landscape his fate is decided and cast in stone and any move towards self-actualisation is doomed to fail. The prohibitive socio-politico-physical milieu he grows in is complemented in the destruction of the black man by the psychological environment under which he “lives in an ambiguity that is extremely ‘neurotic’” (1952:44). These are the ingredients for failure. Fanon (1952:162) reiterates this point clearly when he states that,

In the case of the African, in particular, white society has crushed his old world without giving him a new one. It has destroyed the traditional tribal foundations of his existence and bars the road to his future after having closed the road to his past... [and]...Apartheid aspires to banish the black man from participating in modern history as a free and independent force.

Fanon (1952: 68) depicts the debilitating effects of structural violence when he talks of blacks “who have toiled without great success”. He states “...it’s because the structure of South Africa is a racist structure”. He adds “This is to separate the natives from the Europeans, territorially, economically, and politically and to allow them to set up their own civilisation under the control and authority of the whites, but with minimum contact between the races”.

“...[E]ach side keeps to his own”. A close analysis shows that this Manichaean structuring of the world is a conveyer belt on which poverty-stricken black people will sink deeper and deeper into poverty and despair because their ‘world’ is devoid of resources and not an environment conducive to success. The education system of the black man is inferior and infused with the distorted history of his people. It is an education that does not seek to empower but to control and to produce labourers. It is meant to break the ego of the black man. Religion is also ‘abused’ to tame the black man into an obsequious servant of the white masters. A black man is drilled into the belief that suffering on earth is God’s plan and that the reward will come in the after-life.

After gaining independence the black man has to be content with neo-colonialism and capitalism which Fanon (1952: 67) terms a “completely new international situation”. After independence, wittingly and mostly unwittingly, new leaders perpetuate the same hierarchical patterns between power and disempowerment that were engendered during colonialism.

### **The decolonial turn and shifting the geography of reason**

This study, as an ‘other’ thinking seeks to move away from Euro-American theorising. It attempts to tell the story of the black man and the South, of and from the South. This is what is termed the decolonial turn and the shifting geography of reason.

Fanon (1961: 78) states definitively that “[c]apitalist exploitation and cartels and monopolies are the enemies of under-developed countries”. Capitalism is one of the tentacles of colonialism in the enumerable “centuries of incomprehension” the Cartesian subject smarted under. Capitalism’s goal is to inferiorise the black man materially and emotionally, and

indeed epistemologically. As it was noted earlier, for the South and the sub-altern, variously called the Cartesian subject, to begin to find its feet and cure itself of the above-mentioned “centuries of incomprehension” (Fanon 1952:56). There is need to make a detour from the path that led to coloniality and shift the “geography of reason” from the West, (the touted source of knowledge and theories) to the north - a kind of “theorizing [that] allows for a decentring of theoretical practices in terms of the politics of geo-historical locations” (Mignolo 2000 :107). For the burgeoning poverty and inequalities gap among races in South Africa to be adequately tackled a thinking ‘from and about’ South Africa is the best if not the only deployable theory since there is no thinking in a vacuum, [but] that thinking responds to material and local needs. Referring to newly-independent countries, Fanon (1961:79) states that, “These countries have agreed to take up the challenge after the unconditional withdrawal of the ex-colonial countries. The country finds itself in the hands of new managers; but the fact is everything needs to be reformed and everything thought anew” (Mignolo 2000: 209). Consequently Eurocentrism has to be shied away from because the South is unique and is in itself a very rich source of knowledge and a credible home of theories. Universalism, which privileges the West has to give way to ‘pluriversalism’, a stance which recognizes all parts of the globe as sources of knowledge and theories. Grosfoguel (2013) observes that the South has been reduced to passive consumers of Euro-American theories noting that we have been

basically reduced to ... learning these theories born of the experience and problems of a particular region of the world (five countries in Western Europe) with its own particular time/space dimension and applying them to [our] geographical locations even if the experience and time/space of the former are quite different from the latter. (Grosfoguel: 2013)

Africa has a completely different history from that of Europe and America thus the need for different methods and modes of thinking.

Wallestein (quoted in Mignolo 2000:190) contends that there are no “universal truths about human behaviour that hold across all space and time”. This reasoning forms the foundation for geo-political uniqueness. Therefore every geo-political entity can only be ‘of and about’ itself. Moya (2011) states that “all knowledge is situated knowledge: there is no transcendent subject with a ‘God’s eye’ view on the world who can ascertain universal truths independent of historically- and culturally-specific situation”. This is the reason why Fanon advocates a move away from Eurocentric to Afrocentric epistemic, philosophical and indeed theoretical

orientation because, as Mignolo (2000 :109) contends, “There is no geographical or epistemological location that holds property rights for theoretical practices...[and he also observes that] to think theoretically is a gift and competence of human beings, not just human beings living in a certain period, in certain geographical locations of the planet, and speaking a small set of particular languages” (Mignolo 2000 :110). Thus, decoloniality is an imperative for any meaningful theorizing ‘from and about the borders’ of the South.

Corroborating Fanon’s thinking, Cesaire (1955) in a cautionary note, warns us that “no-one colonizes innocently”. Mignolo (2000: 107) expounds on this idea, observing that “it is ...consciousness on [the part of] colonialism and neo-colonialism that created the conditions for subaltern theorizing”. Colonization is thus a conscious genocidal project whose aim is to annihilate all local ways of ‘Being’. Grosfoguel (2013) observes that “Once European men conquered the world, God [became] disposable as the foundation of knowledge. After having conquered the world, European men achieved ‘God-like’ qualities that gave them epistemic privilege”. Gordon (2011) concluded that this secularization of knowledges simultaneously resulted in the “organisation of knowledges into knowledge” - the Euro-Western knowledge.

Forewarned of the lack of neutrality of knowledge and theories, the Cartesian subject has to be methodologically cautious because, since “no-one colonizes innocently” then it will be naïve to take Euro-American methods and theoretical frameworks at face value. They are laced with imperial epistemological poison. Gordon (2011) points out that there is “colonization at the methodological level... any presumed method, especially from the subject living within a colonised framework, could generate confirmed colonization” and calls for “teleological suspension of disciplinarity... [meaning] go[ing] beyond disciplines in the production of knowledge”. Indulging in this exercise ensures that the South ceases to be prisoners of the foreign methods and methodology. Theorising from the South enables so much methodological leeway to allow us to adequately and exhaustively address the problem whose answers we seek to find. In other words, the leading methodological factor becomes the problem, not the means (method) to the problem. It’s a problem-centric quest. We also cease to use the imperial ‘I’ as a standard. We become our own standard evaluating ourselves against ourselves and our achievements vis-à-vis our challenges as the South.

The case for the decolonial turn and shifting of the geography of reason is the more important when one critically analyses the intentions of Western Euro-American mythical epistemic

superiority. It is on the premise of epistemic privilege and superiority that, Grosfoguel (2013) posits, Euro-America's dream was to completely destroy knowledge systems from all other parts of the globe because they were conceived to be inferior. Grosfoguel (2013) states that "the other side of this epistemic privilege is epistemic inferiority. Epistemic privilege and epistemic inferiority are two sides of the same coin. The coin is called epistemic racism/sexism". Moya (2011), a writer who positions herself in the global South, observes the inferiorisation of our knowledge comes from the fact that, "Rather it is that we are ourselves are judged to be less interesting, less significant, and more parochial..." by the West. Ironically enough, a critical analysis of the Euro-American superiority and modernity shows that it is in fact decadent and 'provincial'. It cannot cater for the problems of the global South. Decoloniality comes across as an emancipatory episteme calling for 'suspension' of [Euro-American]" method Maldonado-Torres (2011) and Moya (2011), in defiance of the inferiority label put on us, observes that,

And since 'who we are and from where we speak' matters both for how we understand the world and for how what we say will be received, the burden will always be on us...to find a way to institutionalize – and in that way materialize – our marginalized views. Moreover, if we want to dialogue with those who fail to see how what we are saying might be different from what they believe, it will be up to us to translate our concerns in a way that might challenge them enough to break through their intellectual complacency as well as their (often unconscious) sense of racial, gender and/or geographic superiority (Moya: 2011).

It is also worth noting that the critical decolonial path/transmodernity is not at its core anti-Euro-Americanism per se. It is just 'an other' way of theorizing that has the geo-political south as its grounding. Grosfoguel (2013) posits that "Transmodernity is a recognition of epistemic diversity... [t]he call for epistemic pluriversality as opposed to epistemic universality". However, Grosfoguel (2013) observes that transmodernity "acknowledges the need for a shared and common universal project against capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism and coloniality". This means that decoloniality/transmodernity is not in any way a counter epistemology but an epistemology against any way of looking down upon other epistemologies, whatever form they take. Mignolo (2012) puts this across in a more pellucid way positing that decoloniality does not only offer "counter or different stories; they are forgotten stories that bring forward, at the same time, a new epistemological dimension: an epistemology of and from the border of the modern/colonial world system". If decoloniality takes on as its mission the role of opposing other epistemologies then it defeats its own goals

towards achieving pluriversalism. It is only in opposition to any epistemes that “judge and subalternize forms knowledge” and it “opens a new perspective for a geopolitical order of thinking” (Mignolo 2012: 61). This is the essence of this thesis – it is an “epistemological project [that is a] critique of the epistemic coloniality of power” (Mignolo 2012: 85).

Critiquing modernity itself as the foundation of epistemological hegemony is also very important, especially in the light of the fact that it has, ironically enough, failed to solve its own problems the world over, even in its own homes, Europe, England and America. Cesaire (1955) says modernity is decadent because it cannot solve its own problems: “A civilisation that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilisation. A civilisation that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilisation. A civilisation that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilisation”. Ultimately decoloniality or transmodernity,

can help make available to us the kinds of alternative perspectives that will call to account the distorted representations of peoples, ideas, and practices whose subjugation is fundamental to the maintenance of our unjust social order. We will then be better positioned, as knowledge producers, to provide an adequate – that is, more comprehensive and objective, as opposed to narrowly biased in favour of the *status quo* – understanding of the one world in which our many “worlds of sense” can co-exist (Moya 2011).

This move will help to “humanize this world which has been forced down to animal level by imperial powers” (Fanon: 1961:79) and create what Fanon (1961:67) terms ‘a new man’. This ‘new man’ is both black and white, colonizer and colonised. In the black man Fanon (1961: 45) envisages a “fully conscious” human being free from coloniality and all its debilitating and attendant effects. In the white man Fanon (1952) envisages a human being free from all biases and the debilitating effects of the abyssal imperial attitude. This makes Fanon’s goal, and indeed this thesis’ goal, a liberatory project. It’s both for the good of the victim and the victimizer. This is the superiority of the critical decolonial paradigm – it’s a redemption project leaving everyone free. Nursey-Bray (1980) observes that “... for Fanon, the end product... is nothing less than the creation of a new set of human possibilities, not just for the colonised, but for all mankind”.

## **Conclusion**

The Fanonian critical decolonial theory is a theory that is representative of the South bio- and geo-politically. The locus of enunciation is black with a voice that is ‘speaking’ from the South. This is of utmost importance because deploying Eurocentric theory would not unravel the challenges modernity visited upon the South. The South cannot ‘cure’ itself using that which unleashed the challenges in the first place because colonialism is not only on the ontological and existential level, but also on the methodological level.

Theorising from the South is also a way to affirm the fact that the South itself is also a credible ‘home’ of theory, on a par with the West which prides itself with this privilege. This is what has been termed ‘decentering’. This is important in as far as Afrocentric theories, in particular the Fanonian Critical Decolonial theory, seek to explore the roots of ills bedevilling the South. The Fanonian Critical Decolonial theory will be deployed to do just that, through its exploration of phenomena like abyssal lines and thinking, Manichaeism, and coloniality of being, which manifests itself in yet another concept, the black condition. Structural violence is shown as that which perpetuates black suffering and the hellish conditions caused by structures created by colonialism well after colonial administrations have been abolished.

It has been observed here that all the ills visited upon the black skin come into being through the abyssal thinking that characterizes some human beings as superior and others as inferior. This thinking uplifts those considered superior to a level where they are demi-gods with the powers to oppress and abuse those this same abyssal thinking designates as inferior. The creation of Manichaean structures is one way colonialism ensures that on one side, in the zone of being, resides those who characterize themselves as superior, and enjoy life and its benefits, whilst the other side, the zone of non-being, is peopled by those deemed inferior. The hallmark of the zone of non-being is the suspension of ethics.

# **Chapter 3**

## **Case Study: Zone of Non-Being**

*Slaves have lost free will, are under violent control, are economically exploited, and are paid nothing. They may be kidnapped or captured, tricked or born into slavery, and the contextual explanation of why they end up in a state of violent control may be political, racial, religious or mythological, gender-based, ethnic, or a combination of these, but the essence of slavery is controlling people through violence and using them to make money*

***Kevin Bales, Zoe Trodd and Alex Kent Williamson***

*If you suffer the poor to live as animals do not be surprised if they grow as beasts and rend you*

***The Institute of Race Relations of South Africa***

### **Introduction**

The signature act of all colonial projects, in the true Fanonian Manichaean structuring of the world, is the creation of different ‘zones’ in the city – the urban planning culminating in ‘zones of being’ and of ‘non-being’. This chapter explores one of the two ‘zones’, the ‘zone of non-being’, Alexandra. The ‘zone of non-being’ constitutes spatial and economic segregation and is home to people who are abyssally characterised as having no souls and gender, making them ‘sub-human’ and thus inferior.

Exiled to the ‘zone of non-being’, this chapter will show that these inferiorised blacks enjoy no rights: they are all too frequently raped, maimed and murdered, and their general experience is one of ‘naturalised warfare’. In this ‘zone’, there is a complete suspension of ethics and civility. The ‘black condition’ here is hellish and damned. Violence is a norm and peace is experienced only in exceptional times.

The chapter will show how the long history of colonialism had already inferiorised and stripped the black man of the means to participate in the global modern economy competitively so that on day one when he entered the city already he was destined to be a servant to the white man. Factors forced him to the city to find means of survival, not to create wealth.

The chapter will explore all the steps taken, and draconian laws that were promulgated by the government to segregate, cow and control the black man, thus keeping him and all subsequent generations as servants. It will also be shown that the ‘zone of non-being’ was deliberately neglected causing decadent and squalid conditions. It is also thin on amenities. The chapter will also explain how the apartheid government delegitimised the rights of educated blacks and forced onto uneducated blacks an inferior education to stifle their competitiveness in the job market, ensuring that even succeeding generations of blacks do not participate actively in the modern economy. To ensure its permanency the government also activated a divide-and-rule mode of life amongst the blacks by politicising tribal and ethnic differences.

This chapter will exhibit the fact that the zone of being is always in warfare of sorts: violence will be shown as the hallmark of the zone of non-being. At any given time, Alexandra was either getting into war, in war or just getting out of war. State apparatuses like the police and army are always present in the ‘zone of being’, terrorising and keeping blacks on ‘tenterhooks’. Taxi wars, gangsters, tsotsis, protests, boycotts, floods, stink and evictions mark the day-to-day life of blacks that create hellish conditions that ultimately leave blacks as useful ‘zombies’ or destructive brutes, thus stripping them of all agency.

### **Alexandra: ‘The Dark City’**

#### **Geographical Location**

Alexandra Township is situated thirteen kilometres north-east of the Central Business District of Johannesburg and covers an area of roughly eight square kilometres. It was planned with a carrying capacity of 30 000 people but today, according to Twala (2014) the township has around 950 000 people residing in it. Most notably Alexandra, and key to this study, is its proximity to Sandton, a leafy suburb of Johannesburg. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:386) observe that,

The township was perceived as a quintessential ‘black spot’, incongruously surviving in the heart of white suburbia in Africa’s wealthiest city. Its presence was tolerated mainly because its inhabitants provided labour to the industries and homes of Johannesburg’s northern suburbs.

Alexandra Township is surrounded by industries to the North, West, East and South. This is not coincidental. Alexandra Township was conceived as a “labour pool for Johannesburg” (Ferrinho, Robb, Mhlongo, Coetzee, Phakathi, Cornelje, Ngakane 1991:374).

### Alexandra in pictures



Figure 2. Map of Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa

(Source: Human Sciences Research Council 2003)



Figure 3. Unequal neighbours: Alexandra and Sandton (Khaya Dlanga: 2013)



Figure 4. Die for Life. Literally. (R Nyapokoto: 2014)



Figure 5. Setswetla bordered dangerously by the treacherous Jukskei River (R Nyapokoto: 2014)



Figure 6. Portrait of squalor, Alexandra township (Ray of Hope: 2014)



Figure 7. Street in Alexandra (Ray of Hope: 2014)



Figure 8. These toilets are still being used in Alexandra to date (R. Nyapokoto 2014).



Figure 9. Linda Twala, (L) a philanthropist and the grandson of the Hey and Eva Mbanjwa, the first black couple to settle in Alexandra, pauses for a photo after our interview (Nyapokoto: 2014)

### **Historical Background**

The history of Alexandra Township has been punctuated by Act after Act and protest after protest. To that end this chapter will be sub-titled and modelled along those thematically and theoretically relevant sub-topics.

Contrary to many records of Alexandra, the genesis of Alexandra was not in 1912. Alexandra Township celebrated her centenary in 2012, meaning it was founded in 1912. This recording of history is deliberately flawed to hide a little-known historical fact about the township: the fact that Alexandra was created in 1905 for sale to white people. Davie (2003) exhaustively chronicles the history of Alexandra, revealing the real story of its origins:

The story of Alex township goes back to 1904 when it was very much part of Johannesburg farmlands. A wealthy farmer by the name of S. Papenfus bought a number of farms around present-day Alexandra, one of which was Zandfontein, which eventually became the township. Papenfus brought a cook - Henry Nxele Mbanjwa, and his wife Eva - along with him and they built themselves a mud hut in the heart of Alexandra. The hut acted as a donkey refreshment station for carts carrying Papenfus' milk from his farm in Midrand to Johannesburg. The Mbanjwa's brought their five-year-old daughter Annie with them when they moved. Annie married Phumza Twala and they had ten children. Phumza was a

thatcher and thatched roofs in white suburbs of Johannesburg. Annie lived to the age of 99, dying in February 2003, leaving a memorable philanthropic son, Linda Twala [who is still alive and a successful businessman in the township]. People from rural areas, drawn by the possibility of jobs in the burgeoning mines, settled near to the Mbanjwas, and by 1912 Papenfus started dividing Zandfontein plots, selling them to black families and giving them an opportunity to own land just before the 1913 Land Act took away that right from them (Davie 2003)

Bonner and Niftagodien (2001) record that white property buyers were unwilling to buy land in Alexandra because the land was wet, muddy and infested with diseases, namely measles, small pox and polio. Thus, after virtually failing to sell the land to white buyers for six years, Papenfus would not countenance the idea of a total loss from his investment. Against the prevailing legislation, he decided to sell the land to coloureds and African (black) buyers in 1912. Blacks could not buy or own land in any urban areas in South Africa. Alexandra, albeit being insalubrious, became the only area where blacks in Johannesburg could own land. In 1913 the Native Land Bill was passed into law as the Native Land Act. This Act was promulgated for several purposes, chief among them:

1. To stop the buying back of land by African communities from white farmers which was happening on a large scale in the Transvaal and,
2. To outlaw sharecropping, especially in the eastern Orange Free State, a practice that allowed African families to enter into agreements to cultivate the land of the white farmers and to give them one-third or one-half or more of the crop once it had been reaped. This had served as another way for Africans to regain possession (though not ownership) of the land.

Alexandra Township is the result of centuries-old dispossession, displacement and racial segregation of non-white communities by the imperialist colonial project of the Dutch and the British. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:17) record that,

Alexandra was laid out as a freehold township for Africans and coloureds in 1912. It was one of a handful of freehold African townships in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area... The majority of new immigrants who initially bought land in Alexandra were formerly relatively prosperous sharecroppers and labour tenants squeezed out of white South Africa's farms. (Bonner and Niftagodien 2001:17)

These new owners were joined by many more settlers especially in times of rural depression or drought. Some of the people who swelled Alex were poor and unskilled people who were

“those displaced from the city centre”. Ferrinho, Robb, Mhlongo, Coetzee, Phakathi, Cornelje and Ngakane (1991:374) report that “Since the 1920s, successive waves of people have sought refuge in Alexandra - initially those displaced from the city centre and... migrants from rural to urban areas”. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:25) corroborate these movements:

Drought persisted intermittently for five years after 1927, reaching its worst in 1932-34. By late 1933 starvation stalked the land and many white farmers abandoned their farms. Those who remained laid off their black labour tenants in their thousands. Relations between white farmers and black workers, which were already strained, finally snapped. Tens of thousands of African labour tenants sold up their cattle, left the land and headed for small and large towns. Many bought property in Alexandra. (Bonner and Niftagodien 2001:25)

## **Housing and Infrastructure**

### **Overcrowding and squalor**

Alexandra was initially planned and developed to accommodate 30 000 people. Soon the township became overcrowded and squalid. Ferrinho et al (1998) observe that “[t]he neglect of housing and other basic services, essential for a dignified family life, has resulted in a dense urban slum, violent and poor”. Because of the informal nature of Alexandra it has always been a challenge to correctly enumerate the residents of the township but today it is estimated that there are close to a million people living there. Callinicos (1993:33) observes that,

By the late 1930s the town population had multiplied so drastically that all available rooms [in town] were occupied. The few freehold areas available for black people, like Alexandra or Sophiatown in Johannesburg, were even more crowded because thousands of rooms in the multi-racial inner city areas had been demolished to make way for segregated housing. The rapid growth of the towns was not confined to the Rand. It happened in all major industrial centres. Conditions in the countryside caused more and more to leave the land to look for a new life in town. Conditions in the reserves continued to decline. And white farmers, short of cheap labour, put more pressure on the families of their labour tenants... Orlando, Sophiatown, Eastern and Western ‘Native Townships’ and Alexandra were filled to overflowing . (Callinicos 1993:33)

As noted above, the first residents who bought land in Alexandra “were formerly relatively prosperous sharecroppers and labour tenants squeezed out of white South Africa’s farms” (Bonner and Niftagodien 2001:17). These people bought stands and set up houses in a

promising new urban locale for blacks but in no time this changed. Since it was the only area in which blacks could live legitimately, soon more blacks poured into the area transforming Alexandra into a slum it is today.

### **‘This Wretched Place’**

A casual drive up and down the narrow and heavily potholed streets of Alexandra shows squalor all over the township. Like in the Brazilian *favelas* where the Brazilian Health Committee oversaw the affairs of the slums (Caldeira: 2000), in 1916 the Alexandra Health Committee was established to manage the township. The Committee was not given any money and thus throughout its tenure it witnessed helplessly as the township’s dilapidation into a ‘ghetto’. The committee did not have any powers and Babich (1992) recorded a glaring fact about black committees that tried to steer the town forward: there were “endless committees with endless representatives from endless factions, trying to solve endless problems in a stranglehold of fear and irresolution”.

Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:21) records the exponential growth of Alexandra noting that in eight short years the population growth from 1916 to 1924 rose from 900 people to 2 640 and that by 1936 it had shot to 16 747 and 80 000 in 1948. This growth was not natural growth resulting from the differences between births and deaths. It was a result of the “same pressures as those experienced by the first wave of immigrants. These were people squeezed out of farms through dispossession of their land or forced out by economic hardships spawned on by a spate of drought periods between 1927 - 1935 that rendered life on the farms as labourers or sharecroppers untenable. For instance, ‘In 1927 drought white farmers began to reduce the number of livestock that their tenants could run and [also] the increasing labour demands. Many blacks sold cattle and came to buy plots in Alexandra Township’ (Bonner and Niftagodien 2001: 67).

Alexandra became overpopulated and soon slum conditions became the order of the day. In 1926 Herbst rightly called Alexandra Township a “wretched place”. Dustin (1983:20) observed that during the period of the Second World War Alexandra was nicknamed ‘Emasakeni’ - “The word came from the mielie bag shelters some 5 000 squatters erected in two of the three public squares” in Alexandra. Today Alexandra’s physical squalor is also symbolic of the spiritual and moral squalor of a lot of residents in the township. Interviews with residents revealed the fact that the township is now nicknamed ‘Gomorrah’ after the

biblical Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed due to sin. Diseases like AIDS are indeed threatening to annihilate the township.

### **'Laws, laws and more laws'**

Alexandran's growth, just like that of many residents of townships in South Africa, was greatly blighted by laws which were put in place that stilted upward mobility. Each time a law is put in place it criminalises some individuals who find themselves outside the bounds of that law. By promulgating an avalanche of laws that straddled across the whole aspect and life of black people, apartheid laws made all blacks living in the city criminal when they were not oiling the capitalist machine. Joyce (1990: 16) explains that,

From 1951, when Dr HF Verwoerd became Minister of Native Affairs, the pillars of what came to be known as 'grand apartheid' were steadily erected. The plan was to consign the entire African population of South Africa to its traditional 'homelands' where it would, according to theory, develop its own political and cultural institutions. Blacks would continue to reside in the Union, but only to the extent dictated by labour demands. They would have no citizenship, rights or vote. Basic human freedoms were severely curtailed. (Joyce:1990: 16)

### **Slums Act: 1934**

The Slums Act of 1934 contributed massively to overcrowding in Alexandra Township. This segregatory act was promulgated solely to separate blacks and whites from living in the same areas. The Johannesburg City Council cleared many slums from central Johannesburg under this act. These people had nowhere to go because all other areas were designated white areas. Alexandra Township naturally became the destination and home of these former slum dwellers. This resulted in the trebling of the population of Alexandra Township. Emigrants into Alexandra Township, coming from slum conditions, brought with them their own culture (or lack of it) to Alexandra. This, among many other things, fostered violence and general antisocial behavior. Between 1931 and 1935 Alexandra Township became a slum.

In 1943 the population of Alexandra Township swelled. This was because of the 1943 industrial boom caused by the demand for goods for war. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:60) observe that a "flood of workers came to the Witwatersrand, the hub of the industrial sector. Forty to fifty thousand of these individuals came to Alexandra Township to 100 000 people". Thabo Masekela, now in his sixties revealed to me that he arrived in the township around 1944 with his parents, whereupon his father took up a job as a miner in City Deep. The

township was a magnet to black people because of its “unregulated character” and it drew illegal emigrants from as far afield as Rhodesia. Alexandra Township soon became the largest black township in Johannesburg.

### **Group Areas Act of 1950**

The colonial and apartheid governments ensured that black people were segregated in every aspect of their lives to ensure that they always maintained a servile position in life as labourers. To that end, the notorious Group Areas Act was promulgated, laying principles for racial, residential and business segregation. The removal of blacks from the vicinity of central Johannesburg meant that blacks had to stay far away from ‘white areas’. Blacks were not tolerated close to whites because whites associated blacks with all sorts of sins: rape, uncleanness, robbery, and all sorts of vices attributable to ‘uncivilised’ beings. Dustin (1983) observes that ‘...Johannesburg whites were safely cushioned from the people of Alexandra by the distance from the heart of the city...’ The removal of blacks from Johannesburg Central also situated blacks far away from places of work. Caldeira (2000:213) observes that,

Rules organising urban space are patterns of social differentiation and separation ... [they] ... indicate how social groups relate to one another each other in the city ... the centre-periphery, dominated the city’s development... it has different social groups separated by great distances, [the white] concentrated in central and well-equipped neighbourhoods and the poor exiled into the hinterland. Caldeira (2000:213)

Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:66) corroborate this idea observing that the policy of residential segregation escalated in the 1920s and 1930s, forcing African labourers to live ever further from their workplaces, and significantly raising their transport costs which “constituted a much larger component of day-to-day living expenses than was typical for working classes of most other countries”.

Staying far from places of work sapped the already meagre earnings of the black workers. Thus Alexandra’s geographical location, though a haven for blacks, was also part of the catalogue of problems a black man had to contend with on a daily basis. Industrial areas cropping up in Kew and Marlboro eased the distance problem for Alexandrans but brought their own problems as well.

The township's infrastructural growth could not cope with the number of immigrants. The Johannesburg City Council refused to have anything to do with Alexandra arguing it was outside its jurisdiction. A new phenomenon of squatting came into being. Every open space was occupied and shacks erected. Thus,

By late 1980s Alexandra had effectively been transformed into a squatter township and was probably the most congested residential area in the country. In 1986 the population density in the township was about 340 people per hectare, compared to the generally acceptable level of 90 people per hectare. By the end of the 1980s it was estimated that approximately 80 per cent of Alexandra were squatters and that the same proportion was without electricity and water (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:311).

Administratively Alexandra Township was on autopilot. The Health Council was financially unhealthy so it was out of sorts with regards to the growing phenomenon. No one took care of the township. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:329) observe that "The state's failure to provide adequate public housing resulted in extreme overcrowding and the proliferation of squatter settlements... in Alexandra".

By the early 1990s Alexandra had transformed into an ocean of shacks, engulfing the old township, with every corner occupied by housing - right up to the banks of the Jukskei River, which often flooded during Johannesburg's summer rains (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:329). The population density figures confirmed Alexandra's status as the most overcrowded area in the country. In early 1991 about 400 people were crammed into a hectare in Alexandra, compared to only 200 in Soweto and a paltry 18 in the neighbouring Sandton. It was estimated in 1992 that there were between six and eight people living in each shack in Alexandra (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:332).

### **The shame of Alexandra**

Because Alexandra was run without any funding it deteriorated into real slum. The Weekend World (2008) commented on the squalor and decay of Alexandra Township calling it "The shame of Alexandra... it is a stinking cesspool of overflowing dust-bins, litter-lined streets and angry residents". Babich (1992) also records the same desolate conditions: "the stench of human excreta, filth, dust and indescribable squalor... There is fear, truculence, despair – yet an indescribable will to survive... in dauntless defiance of intolerable living conditions". Callinicos (1993) observes that "The Rand's City councils, responsible for urban housing,

had insufficient funds to accommodate the massive increase of newcomers, who were supposedly ‘temporary’”.

Georgiannis (2013) reports shocking incidents of squalor with rats in Alexandra having “become notorious, mainly due to their size and their lack of fear of people. The rodents chew through doors and walls, open pots, destroy electrical and clothes”. The most shocking incident was when rats fatally tore through Nunu Sithole’s baby, “Sithole clearly remembers seeing blood on the bed and floor as rodents bit through the baby’s nappy and ate at both legs”.

Another factor which added salt to the wound created by the segregation of Sandton from Alexandra was the dumping of Sandton’s rubbish in Alexandra. *The Sunday Times* (1992) reported that “Garden refuse and building rubble from Sandton is being dumped in the neighbouring township of Alexandra, adding serious pollution problems to the area”. Pollution in the area is so serious that people could pick up a variety of diseases.

## Setswetla and the shacks

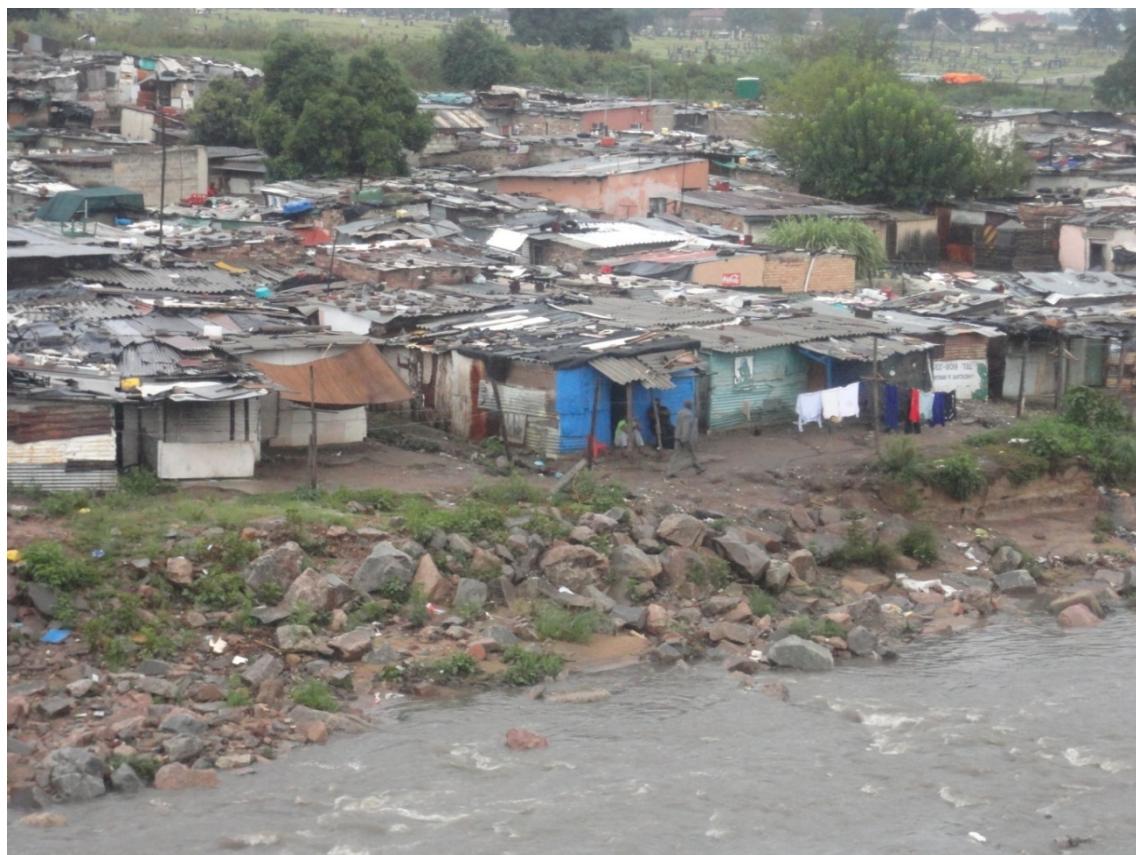


Figure 1. Living below the living, and slightly above the dead – literally and figuratively. A careful look of the picture of Setswetla shows that it's bordered by a graveyard. (R Nyapokoto 2014)

As Babich (1992) described it: “Hemmed in on all sides and swelling daily as more and more squatters poured in, Alexandra is like a boil about to burst”. A look at Setswetla proves Fanon was right when he said that the white man has denied blacks hell after death by giving them hell here in their lifetime. The most amazing thing about Setswetla is how near to death people live. Molosankwe (2004) observes that, “Setswetla residents know that staying so close to the river bank is dangerous but say they can do nothing because they have nowhere to go”. The flood-warning siren in Alexandra which should help to warn these vulnerable people of impending floods has not worked for a long time. People lack choices in life and wait sheepishly for their death. Interestingly Setswetla is bordered by Jukskei on the East and Alexandra cemetery on the west. Reminders of death pervade the residents’ lives all the time. This is vividly revealed by *The Sunday Times* narrating a shack dwellers’ story:

When Martha Nana opens her shack door in the morning, she breathes the sort of stench that most people encounter only when they open their dustbins. A mother

of four, Martha is one of about 2000 families whose squatter shacks cling precariously to the banks of the filthy Jukskei River in Alexandra. The stench is not her main worry. She fears heavy rains will spell homelessness or death (*The Sunday Times* 1992).

Martha is at the mercy of multiple threats. Being unmarried with four children is a big problem on its own. Fanie Mhlongo, a resident of Setswetla quoted by the *The Star* (2004) also speaks resignedly about the forces of nature: “We have to constantly watch the water level in the river and run to neighbours’ houses if it rises. I know there is a possibility of being washed away during a heavy rainfall, and that worries me a lot, but I have no choice but to stay”. For Fanon, this nearness of death characterises the life of the *damné* – the damned of the earth. In 2005 Shadi Rapitso, who was then working for the *City Press* newspaper, spent a night in Alexandra at 62-year-old Darling Satikge’s shack. In a story titled ‘Not quite a house but a home’ Rapitso (2005) reported:

Satikge is forced by circumstances to share the space with 11 other people. These are her two children, six grandchildren, two great grandchildren and her sister’s daughter. Because of space constraints [children] are forced to play in the streets until late in the evening. The ‘house’ is a three-by-four metre room that can barely accommodate a family of four. Because of the shortage of space, her 25-year-old granddaughter has to sleep at a relative’s home. She only comes home during the day and goes back at night. Usually five people, including a seven-month baby, sleep on the bed. [Their son] Veli sleeps alone on a single bed, someone sleeps on a sofa and the remaining four sleep on a patch on the floor. (Rapitso: 2005)

At night, the state of affairs is even sadder. Rapitso (2005) quoted Satikge thus, “There’s no privacy. This is our life. When we want to take a bath, the guys have to go outside and the same applies when they bath” and Rapitso reports “Occasionally I am awakened by gogo, who gets up to wee in a bucket just behind the bed, or by something moving on the corrugated iron roof, which we were told were rats”.

Dustin (1983) portrays the wretched family conditions of Alexandra as “... a link in a long chain of human indignity”. Dustin quoted Dutch Reformed Church minister Reverend Buti who said, “I went to see a family that shared one room. The man told his minister. “We live in very difficult times and very difficult conditions. What you see is my bedroom, my kitchen, and my living room... I made love to my wife one night and my child was there watching” (Dustin1983).

Circumstances have found the residents of Alex marooned in danger and they are dejected by their helplessness. Capturing the mood of most of the elderly residents of Alexandra, 80-year-old Josephine Mamphane who has been a resident of Alex for twenty years bemoaned her state of inertia, in *The Star* newspaper (2005): “It’s an ugly place. Right now, the sewage pipe has burst, the whole place stinks. We are struggling to eat in this place. I am old now and it scares me that I have lived in such conditions all my life. My husband is buried here. I’ll also be buried here when I die.” This statement shows the sterility of life and the lack of choices in Alex. The residents are the subjects of circumstances.

In Sandton suburbs, the direct opposite was taking place for the residents, especially during apartheid. It was within their power to change their financial circumstances through education, employment and property ownership. They existed with a sense of relative agency and a reasonable expectation of upward mobility. They lived with a sense of entitlement to basic needs and services and would be outraged if the government failed to safeguard their human rights. If their living conditions became disrupted to some failure of municipal service delivery, they assumed that their complaints should be swiftly addressed. For them, trying to eat a meagre dinner amidst the stink of raw sewage with their children at the mercy of rat bites would be unthinkable.

### **‘Nobody’s baby’**

Due to the fact that Alexandra was a ‘black spot’ among the white suburbs and had been established there against the grain of official policy, it was never supported financially by any authorities, including the Alexandra Health Committee. The Johannesburg City Council, government, and later on the flourishing Sandton Town Council refused to take ownership of Alexandra Township leading to the settlement to decay.

### **The Merger of Sandton and Alexandra**

Meintjies (1980) reported that Sandton’s new mayor, Mr Perry Oertel in 1980 called for the merging of Sandton and Alexandra “for the upliftment of Alexandra by extending Sandton’s municipal services into the township” with “the government [having to accept] responsibility for the tremendous financial implications of upgrading Alexandra...’ The rationale behind his proposal was the fact that the two urban locales “geographically and economically ... are closely linked.” One can clearly see that the separation of the two was artificial – race was the

only organising principle. The *Rand Daily Mail* on Tuesday 18 March 1980 also gave currency to the geographical connectedness of Sandton and Alexandra noting that,

The idea itself is wholly sensible. If you look at the map of Sandton you will see that Alexandra has been excised from the municipal area. Most of Alex's residents work in Sandton. Geographically and logically it should form part of the town and should not as Mr P W Botha might put it – be treated as a separate leper colony (*The Rand Daily Mail* 1980).

This idea was thrown out by ultra-racial councillors of Sandton city. White Sandtonians could not and would not care for the blacks. Russel Norton, writing for *The Citizen* of 28 October 1980 reported the failure of the proposed merger:

The Sandton Town Council last night unanimously adopted a resolution which effectively dashed hopes that the municipality would be able to financially assist the Black township of Alexandra. The resolution tabled by the councillor of Parkmore, Mr Red Metrowich, called on the council to 'actively resist any initiatives aimed at incorporation of Alexandra into the area of jurisdiction of the local authority' (*The Citizen* :1980).

Until 1994 no jurisdiction was ever financially responsible for Alexandra. It was always financially starved. The *Citizen* (1991) reported that "Residents of Soweto, Dobsonville, Diepmeadow and Alexandra have been warned that there is a shortfall of about R140 million for essential services". Alexandra and black townships were all thin on amenities and services and had to undergo inevitable decay which was compounded by the ever-increasing number of residents. To date a drive and stroll around the town reveals the same state of decay and disrepair as newcomers continue to pour in. This is despite the fact that a new democratic government has taken over. Race has now been replaced by class. Alexandrians still find themselves in the lower class. Therefore poverty, lack of service delivery continues and lack of agency continues.

### Taxi Wars

Taxi wars in Alexandra and most black townships wreaked havoc in the township disrupting and taking life. People stopped going to work and children stopped going to school. Many casualties were recorded. Causes have been attributed to taxi drivers' and owners' disorderliness and penchant for violence but the bottom line was the fight for the transport market – one of the few informal industries black entrepreneurs could thrive in - and the city's planning and infrastructural problems. The general 'causes' of the wars reported by

many media were actually symptoms of a bigger problem. *Business Day* (1992) captures the causes of the war as “Unbridled commercial rivalry and intolerance among rival taxi associations...”. This portrays blacks as people who can’t carry out business in competitive environments as was happening with whites in Sandton. *Business Day* (1992) was, however, correct in the succeeding report which blamed the authorities:

...it was clear the sudden growth of the mini-bus taxi industry in Alexandra was unforeseen and no timely strategy was devised to accommodate it and to deal with the industry’s problems. There were no formal taxi ranks. At one rank, more than 500 taxi operators plied their trade, but there were no facilities such as shelters and toilets.

Taxi wars resulted in the cold-blooded butchering of blacks by fellow blacks. This black-on-black violence stood the apartheid government in good stead in that it left the black community heavily divided, unable to unite as one formidable force well-organised to fight and dethrone the white supremacist and oppressive government. *The Star* (1992) gives a chilling report of casualties in a two-day fight:

Ten people have died in Alexandra in the past two days, among them four who police believe were victims of a continuing taxi war in the township. On Wednesday morning one man was killed when gunmen opened fire on a group of people waiting for a taxi in First Avenue. Yesterday morning three people were gunned down in separate attacks, one of them at the taxi rank in First Avenue. Police said that at about 6:10am gunmen opened fire on commuters, killing one person and injuring another. One man was arrested. At about 6:20am a man was shot near the taxi rank. About 10 minutes later a man in Watt Street was shot by attackers. The bodies of six men, who had all been stabbed, were discovered on Wednesday night in the township. In other unrest-related incidents, a man was ‘necklaced’ and a woman was shot dead in the area (*The Star* 1992).

During the same period the *Business Day* newspaper (1992) reported that schools in the area had been closed and the atmosphere was “tense”. This intra-black fighting, loss of life, and the many other daily disruptions that occurred in Alexandra township due to taxi wars had far-reaching consequences in the lives of ordinary residents, particularly the disruption of school attendance for children and the dangers for those needing transport to work. To date taxi wars are still very much a feature of Alexandra with the last ‘war’ having happened in November 2013, according to the residents I interviewed.

What we find in Alexandra is the fact that life is just on auto-pilot in the midst of squalor and conflict in a town with so many poor people united only by want. Residents in Sandton, in the

meantime, could expect regulation in every aspect of their lives with disputes settled in a legal and ‘gentlemanly’ way.

### **Evictions and Expropriation**

When Alexandra Township’s population had swollen beyond its holding capacity and became a slum it became a ‘black spot’ among the surrounding affluent areas. Therefore, without any consultation with the residents of Alexandra Township, it was decided by the government that it had to be decongested through forced removals of some of the residents. Such an uprootment of people has devastating consequences on the physical, economic, social and spiritual structure of a community, and on the psyche of individuals who lose their homes. Caldeira (2000:263) sums up the importance of a dwelling place:

Across the most disparate cultures and in various social classes, the home crystallises important symbolic systems and shapes individual sensibilities. Residence and social status are obviously associated, and the home is a means by which people publicly signify themselves. As a consequence, the construction or acquisition of a home is one of the most important projects people undertake. The home makes both public and personal statements as it relates the public and the domestic. In creating a home, people both discover and create their own social position and shape their intimate world. (Caldeira 2000:263)

There was a lot at stake in the removals of residents from Alexandra Township. The government still had to urgently force its will on the people. Davie (2003) explains the reason why the sudden need to remove Alexandrans became urgent towards the end of the 1940s:

In 1948, the National Party was elected into government, and it brought into law a sweep of apartheid laws. It was decided the influx of people into Alexandra had to be controlled, and in fact the population needed to be decreased, and finally the provisions of the 1913 Land Act had to be implemented: freehold rights had to be taken away from those residents who owned their properties (Davie 2003).

The evictions carried out were brutal and basically anti-family. Families populated townships easily without proportional benefits to the employers, so “families were more liable to be moved before single tenants” (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:177). The reason for this was the need to maintain a core of prime-age labourers in the townships.

Efforts to move people were hampered by the fact that both the central government and Johannesburg City Council were not willing to bear the costs of relocating the Alexandrans.

Commentating on the forced removals of blacks from the vicinity of whites Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:66) observe that, “Urban Africans lived on the breadline in South Africa. The bulk of the white people were oblivious to their condition. Their sole aim, which was completely in this state of ignorance, was to remove urban Africans out of sight, out of earshot and out of mind”.

The Group Areas Act was deployed to this end. This Act legitimised racial, residential and business segregation. The Mencz Committee of 1952, using the Group Areas Act, set to work to ensure that excess population be forced out of Alexandra Township. Around the 1950s the population had to be reduced from 90 000 people to 30 000 people, the planned carrying capacity of Alexandra Township. In 1958 there were extensive evictions to Zone 8 in Meadowlands. Interesting to note is the fact that “Single men with legitimate jobs were dispatched to hostels in Dube or Nancefield depending on whether they were ‘Zulu’ or ‘Sotho’” (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:175). Around this time 20 000 residents were forced out of Alexandra. Ferrinho et al (1998) report that “In the 1960s land was expropriated from residents and in 1963 and 1964, 44 700 people were resettled in Soweto”.

Forced removals were carried out ostensibly to de-congest Alexandra and sanitise the area but the hidden reason was to dispossess African landlords of their properties. Allowing Africans to own land in 1905 had been a big blunder by the authorities. No African was to own land in colonial and apartheid South African cities. The city was apparently the preserve of the white man. The land had to be expropriated using unscrupulous means. Landlords were paid miserly amounts of money in exchange for their properties in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1970s “...the position of stand holders was threatened. When their properties were expropriated, owners were given two choices: either to agree to be relocated to another township or live in their own houses as tenants, in which case they paid rent to the WRAB” (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:195).

A closer analysis of the ‘two choices’ shows that both were not ‘choices’ at all. This lack of choices characterises the life of the *damné*. Blacks thus found themselves at the mercy of the apartheid system. They had a choice of no choice. Both ‘choices’ were detrimental to the well-being of the African family and decimated its social fabric. Removal from a place you have called home is tantamount to uprootment spiritually, socially and economically. Those who remained were always ill-at-ease. Their fate was always in the hands of the white man.

From time to time the government always mulled over completely annihilating Alexandra. Around 1967 – 68 it was decided that Alexandra had to be completely destroyed. Noteworthy here is the fact that even though certainty with regards to staying was gained, forced removals were not the only threat bedevilling the people of Alexandra: they still had to wrestle with a plethora of many other battles. Whilst Africans were being moved out of Alexandra, African domestic workers were simultaneously being moved out of white suburbs.

Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:231) conclude that the net effect of the segregatory system and its machinations were very destabilising for the black family:

The negative effects of the state's policies were not only evident in the decaying physical characters of the township. Years of control, forced removals and attacks on urban African families had severely destabilised the social cohesion of the community. A salient illustration of this was the gender disparities that characterised the township population in the 1970s. In 1977 females comprised less than 33% of the adult population (6 045 out of 20 063). (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:231)

The Group Areas Act of 1950 criminalised the black man's stay in the city. Black men had to stay in the city only as labourers. Women bore the brunt of apartheid as they were oppressed first as blacks then second as women. They were allowed into urban areas on visitors passes after the Bantu Amendment Act of 1964. Children's education was heavily affected as they could not go to school because their parents did not have the 'right' papers.

In many invidious ways the apartheid government was completely destroying the stability of the African family. This was to manifest itself many years later as the family structure in Alexandra was severely strained and broken. By breaking the family structure, the government ensured that downstream generations were also negatively affected.

### **Hostels**

Whilst the government wanted Alexandra to disappear completely it was also faced with the dilemma of the need for labour. Blacks, whilst abhorred by whites, were tolerated for their utility value: their ability to provide labour. Instead of annihilating Alexandra Township, a new even more devilish and damaging plan was hatched: the hostels. It was under this

thinking and the violence of the 1960s that the idea of coming up with hostels was mooted. Davie (2003) records that,

After the Sharpeville killings of 1960, the government clamped down on opposition with a state of emergency and it was decided to move Alexandra altogether and rebuild the area as a ‘hostel city’. Twenty-five hostels were to be built, each housing 2 500 people, for single men and women, and blacks living on white properties throughout the northern suburbs were to be moved into hostels. (Davie: 2003)

The hostels unmasked any pretensions by the government to have a human face and hand towards blacks. Open racism was at play here. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:124) point out that hostels were hellish and “epitomised the crass objectives of apartheid: to control the lives of urban African workers by housing them in prison-like, single-sex dormitories”. Dustin (1983: 46) observed that, “Their town was being turned into an inhuman satellite city of hostels where man and woman, husband and wife, were to be kept as segregated as the residents were from the urbanites of nearby Sandton. Mike Sarakinsky (quoted in Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:187) gives a graphic layout of the hostels:

Rooms in the hostels would have a bed, mattress and cupboard, but no central heating or electricity outlets. The hostels would be divided into controllable units of 150 people, divided by electrically operated steel doors... There were 112 washing tubs and 32 electric points for about 3 000 residents, 1 bath per 25 residents, 1 shower per 35 and 1 hand basin and toilet per 20. In the kitchen 5 people would have to share 1 gas burner. The hostel had 40 single rooms, 98 double rooms and 412 for 4 people. (Mike Sarakinsky (quoted in Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:187)

Interesting to note in the white thinking and reasoning behind the establishment of hostels is the fact that white nationalists claimed to ‘know’ blacks and what is good for them. The Chairman of the Transvaal Board for the Development of Peri-Urban Areas revealed this condescending thinking in his speech:

The accommodation provided in Alexandra for the Bantu compares favourably with that provided for white migrants overseas... It is obvious then that the task of preparing and executing this ambitious project was tackled with devotedness and conscientiousness by persons who, with knowledge of and sympathy towards the needs, interests and comforts of those people who are to occupy the hostels, strove to ensure that inmates will live, and relax happily, and under pleasant conditions (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:187 - 188).

This abyssal thinking is what Gordon (2010) calls “reasoning with unreasonable reason reasonably”. Something bad was being ‘reasoned’ and justified as being good. On closer analysis the hostels were prison-like and hellish:

The electric doors installed in the women’s hostels were... reminiscent of a maximum security prison... electric doors were to allow certain sections of the hostel to be quickly sealed off in the event of unrest... The female inmates’ relations with men were subjected to tight controls. Men would be permitted into the courtyards but not into the buildings... all women living in the hostel, whether married or not, were [treated as being] single (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:188).

### **‘Universities of crime’**

The subhuman nature of the hostels - the over-crowdedness, the social imbalances wrought by single-sex cohabitation, the claustrophobic conditions, the ethnic polarisation - was inevitably a fertile breeding ground for all forms of vices in whoever was to occupy them. A former medical officer of health quoted in Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:188) “slated the hostels as ‘potential universities of crime’ and warned that ‘life in conditions where there is little living space, less privacy and no stabilising family or marital relationships can have demoralising, dehumanising and eventually brutalising effects’. Sam Moss of the Johannesburg City Council corroborated the same idea: “When suppressed,” he opined, “one’s sexual needs could lead to several forms of antisocial behaviour.”

Today, exactly twenty years after the country has gained its independence hostels have lived up to their billing and indeed produced *cum laude* students in crime. In my umpteen visits to the township when I asked for a ‘guide’ with whom to visit the hostels I came face to face with the perception township dwellers have of hostel dwellers. Khubheka (2013) of 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Alexandra, like many other respondents from the township, vehemently and advisedly cautioned: “We never go to the hostels because you can never tell with those guys. They are into drugs and they have guns and dangerous weapons. They are very dangerous. They can do anything to you. They are very, very unpredictable. I advise you not to take chances [by visiting the hostels].”

Even in the name of empirical rigour, I refrained from a visit to the hostels, knowing that, true or imagined, the accusations against, and perceptions of, hostel inhabitants by Township dwellers remained unchanged and was as old as the hostels themselves.

## **Politicisation of Ethnic and Tribal Divisions**

The hostels also served the apartheid government through the objective of divide-and-rule through polarising ethnic groups along tribal lines. For instance, Zulus were put in one hostel separate from other tribes. Later this was to serve the apartheid government well as black-on-black violence reared its ugly head in Alexandra many years later in the '90s. Babich (1992) captures one of these violent clashes: "In the 'Beirut' area between the M1 Hostel and the southern border of Alex, not a living thing stirs. All the residents fled from the area couple of months ago as the battle of supremacy between ANC and Inkatha supporters waged relentlessly back and forth..."

Black people fighting black people was a gift from heaven for government as this diverted attention from the real source of problems. When looked at retrospectively and analytically all these wars had roots in the structuring of Apartheid. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001: 359) observed that,

...the underlying causes of the conflict could not be reduced to such a simple political contestation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded that the causes of the violence had to be located in apartheid, the extremely limited resources and the politicisation of ethnic divisions. Furthermore, the particular characteristics and trajectory of the conflict in each township, while manifesting certain common trends, were not always or even mainly party political. (Bonner and Niftagodien, 2001: 359)

The fact that problems in Alexandra had their roots in apartheid gains currency when one looks critically at the complicity of the police during violent clashes. The police directed and even protected perpetrators of violence - the Inkatha supporters. *The Star* (1991) quotes a Civic Association publicity secretary Louis Ramono account of political clashes in Alex in 1991: "All of a sudden they started attacking houses and buses. This happened while the police were there. Afterwards they [the attackers] just walked back through the police lines to their buses still carrying their guns." *The Citizen* (1991) corroborated the same government complicity:

The violence happened mainly at night when gangs of armed thugs attacked anyone who happened to be in the area of Inkatha-controlled hostels. The armed men attacked residents with the help of whites wearing balaclavas. Another group

of whites were seen offloading people wearing IFP t-shirts and red headbands at a squatter camp near the hostel, where 11 people were killed.” *The Citizen* (1991).

*The Star* (1992) quoted Desmond Tutu’s slamming of government partiality: “We urgently need a professional police force which is apolitical and neutral and which acts as a peacekeeping force and law enforcement agency.” Over the same weekend *The Star* (1991) recorded that “19 people were killed and many more injured”. *The Star* shows how the Inkatha Party was highly empowered to violently disrupt the ANC and government talks that saw the birth of democracy two years later:

Amid growing optimism that negotiations between the South African Government and African National Congress will resume soon, hopes for peace suffered a setback with the news that two teenage choir girls had died after an apparently random shooting in Alexandra last Wednesday night. The killings raised the death toll ... above 40... It was the second unprovoked shooting in Alexandra in a week, six people having been gunned down earlier. The response of Alexandra residents has been to blame the Inkatha Freedom Party, members of Madala men’s hostel, the source of continual violence in the past 18 months (*The Star* 191992).

This violence was meant to derail the move towards a deracialised South Africa through black-on-black violence. A government-sanctioned ‘third force’ is said have been tasked with sparking black-on-black violence to support Nationalist claims that black South Africans were incapable of running the country peaceably together. As mentioned earlier on, this fostered suspicion and animosity amongst blacks.

## The Necklace



Figure 2. Footage of necklacings (mweb 2014):

Apartheid brutalised blacks and left them heartless and brutal as evidenced by the horrendous methods in which any people suspected of being informants were killed - a tyre was set upon their necks, doused in petrol and set alight. Victims would scream to their deaths to the cheering of the mobs gathered around. Those watching will never remain the same again. Something dies in them. This act of necklacing has continued to date with the last acts of necklacing occurring in Alexandra as late as 2003.

## Xenophobia in 2008

On 12 May 2008 riots erupted in Alexandra resulting in nationals of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe being attacked, killing two people and injuring many. To argue that the 2008 xenophobia in the townships started because black South Africans hate foreigners, as was peddled in some section of media, is a very glib and shallow analysis of the South African history, as nowhere is this supported by any credible printed and documented material. Xenophobia has its genesis along the same local politicisation of tribal groups in South Africa. . A critical look xenophobia of South Africans towards foreigners can be attributed to the legacy of apartheid which has left black South African feeling desperately disenfranchised and

poorly-equipped to compete with people from other African countries. While most African countries endured some degree of colonialism which left various psychic scars, the effects of apartheid seem to have debilitated South Africans more than other ‘postcolonial’ Africans. It seems that where colonial regimes were most brutal (in Congo and central Africa) the ‘postcolonised’ people are correspondingly more brutal. Johnstone (2008) reports that with the prevalent black poverty,

The wave of pogroms that saw foreigners fleeing Alexandra this week, clutching at the tattered remnants of their lives, should surprise no one... Xenophobia may have been the spark that set Alex alight this week, but joblessness, crime, a lack of service delivery and soaring prices provided the kindling (Johnstone 2008)

The idea of Alexandra being neglected in terms of service delivery and having many of its residents uneducated and unskilled, an aspect of life that has characterised Alexandra since its inception, thus came to rear its ugly head in the form of xenophobia. These factors hold water since Sandton - with a lot of foreigners and just a shouting distance away from Alexandra Township - did not experience the same wave of violence. All was peaceful and serene.

## **Violence and Lawlessness**

### **Gangsters**

*‘Streets of the damned’*

Having been brutalised by the government and without any alternatives in life black-on-black violence mushroomed in the township of Alexandra. Disadvantage in life feeds on, and begets, disadvantage. Gangsters became a feature of the township. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:115) concluded that, “The exclusion of the youths not attending school from suitable employment in the Johannesburg labour market had a socially corrosive effect on Alexandra”. ‘Gangster’ and ‘tsotsi’ became a new phenomenon in the township. These two spawned gang violence, rape, molestation, and murders in a township already bedevilled with despair. They added to the daily ‘wars’ Alexandrans had to contend with in their lives and made the life of a black man hellish and untenable in the city. Dustin (1983: 45) lists the “names of the men who terrified the *‘Streets of the Damned’* as ‘the London Red Caps, the Red Knife Kids, the Peacemakers, the Dead Man Gulchers, the Vultures... the East Elevens, the Torch Gang, the Young Americans, the Crimson Pirates of Zorro or CPZ and the Stonebreakers’. Other notable gangsters were the Spoilers and the Msomi gangsters.

Literally the black man, as Fanon (1961:45) observes, was always on ‘tenterhooks’. His life has always been hellish all the time and in all spaces in his life. Ideally home is supposed to be the therapeutic haven to rest peacefully away from the rigours of day-time life. But this was not the case with blacks. Besides terrorising and killing the black man, the gangsters - unconscious cohorts with apartheid - made blacks destitute. In the name of a ‘protection fee’ ranging from “five shillings to R50 a month”, the gangsters swindled people of their meagre salaries. The Alexandra Liaison Committee (1983: 45) records that,

A washerwoman, and a survivor, who had a ‘job’ in Houghton, paid R1 a month to each of the two major gangs – the Msomis and the Spoilers – for protection, crossing what became the great divide between the haves and I’ll-have-what-you-haves. [R1] ...represented 20% of her monthly income” (Dustin1983: 45).

The gangsters also aided in the grand scheme of apartheid government engineering by enhancing forced outmigration from Alexandra, and dispossession of house ownership of blacks in this township. Unable to bear the daily threat posed by the gangsters some residents sold houses and migrated elsewhere. The Tshabalala family (2014) living at the corner of Second and Roosevelt Street corroborated that one of their neighbours, the Sathekes, left Alexandra soon after their son, Dumisani, was bludgeoned to death on his way back from work in the late eighties.

### **Bus Boycotts**

#### **Motor Carrier Transportation Act**

In order to safeguard the South African Railways from competition the government came up with the Motor Carrier Transportation Act in 1930. This was to create a monopoly and reduce competition. Certificates of operation were granted to white and not black businesses. Black businesses left without operating licences were always at the mercy of the police and thus could not be run viably. In this way apartheid empowered white businesses while simultaneously destroying black businesses.

#### **Abolition of Passes Act of 1952**

A *prima facie* reading of this Act gives one the impression that the severely restricted life of a black person was being eased, but this was not the case. The apartheid government had just refined its ways of restricting the life of a black man and came up with comprehensive ways of curtailing his freedom. Joyce (1990:17) observes that the Abolition of Passes Act of 1952

“did indeed do away with the simple ‘pass’, but substituted in its stead with the ultimate control document, a large and complex reference book containing the entire life and job history of its owner, his movement rights and his fingerprints”.

It was compulsory for all African adults to carry this book. Failure led to arrest and trial at the Bantu Commissioners court. Africans had no rights and the justice system was heavily skewed against them. Joyce (1990:17) records that “from 1956, defendants were denied the right of appeal against this court sentence” and that “[p]olice were later given wide powers to raid dwellings without warrant in order to root out ‘illegal’s’. This illustrates and confirms the fact that in the zone of non-being human rights do not exist. Blacks were abyssally designated as sub-human had no rights.

### **Pass Laws and Police Raids**

If there was any tenet of the apartheid government that openly revealed the fact that a black person was an unwelcome ‘foreigner’ in the city, it was the pass laws. During the period of what became known as ‘high apartheid’ the government introduced the pass. The pass – Dompass – criminalised a black people. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001: 191) observe that “In a context in which the government was seeking more and more to strip the urban Africans of the unequal right to remain in the town, Alexandra’s freehold urban community became more and more of an anomaly”.

In pursuance of the governments’ need to root out urban areas of illegals the police wreaked havoc in the townships through raids for passes. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001: 176) record that,

The notorious Peri-urban police carried out daily permit raids in the streets, at bus stops and in Shebeens. Pre-dawn raids became standard practice as Peri-urban police attempted to catch those people who managed to evade detection in public places. Those unlucky to be found without permits were summarily issued with removal forms, which ordered them to leave the township. (Bonner and Niftagodien 2001: 176)

Those arrested were taken for farm labour at places like Bethal providing free labour. The government was always the winner. The pass laws rent into shreds the social fabric of the township. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:233) paint a discordant demographic picture of Alexandra Township: “A salient illustration of this was the gender disparities that characterised the township population in the 70s. In 1977 females comprised less than 33% of

the adult population (6 045 out of 20 063)”. This on its own reveals the number of severed and broken families

### **Socio-Economic System in the Township**

Life in Alexandra has always been punctuated by protests, boycotts, evictions, violence and general poverty and squalor. The socio-economic lifestyle of blacks in Alexandra has been negatively shaped and influenced by apartheid policies and engineering. Every day for a black man was a day of war and fighting one struggle after another. Socially, these daily ordeals strained and wrecked families and the community at large. Economically blacks became very impoverished as they found spanners thrown in all their efforts to rise out of poverty. Economically deprived, their children also had nothing to inherit by way of education or wealth acquisition.

### **Education System**

In any society, education, good education, is a useful tool to do away with poverty. In South Africa the education system for the blacks did not serve that purpose. The education system for blacks was deliberately crafted and engineered to be of inferior quality so as to prepare blacks for life of being submissive labourers and as a lower beings in society. This had downstream effects on subsequent generations. Education was meant to create a ‘zombie’ who would submit thoroughly to the status quo. Fanon (1961:28) posits that,

In capitalist societies, the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behaviour – all these aesthetic expressions of respect for established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing (Fanon 1961: 29).

Tabata (in Gumede 2014: 6) corroborates Fanon by cataloguing a comprehensive raison d’être of the education system administered to blacks observing that Bantu Education was,

Calculated to serve as an instrument for creating and ensuring the continuance of a voteless, rightless and ignorant community whose main purpose in life, apart from reproducing their kind (for there is not yet a specific law against that in life) is to minister to the Whites. The invoking of dead tribalism and of Bantu Communities wherein ‘education will find its expression’ is a cynical political claptrap. The plain fact is that Bantu Education is to rob the African of education,

cut him off from the mainstream of modern culture and shut him into a spiritual and intellectual ghetto (Tabata in Gumede 2014: 6).

Dustin (1983) captures an example of this thinking in a quote by Dr Verwoerd:

My department's policy is that [African children's] education should stand with both feet in the reserves, and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society... There is no place for him (the Bantu) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour (Dustin 1983: 23).

These 'certain forms of labour' meant menial, demeaning jobs. For the white psyche, the black person was naturally suited to this labour because of his inferior position on the human racial hierarchy. To that end, African schools were heavily under-resourced. Consequently schools in the township were overcrowded, lacked basic necessities, had poor standards of teaching, were underequipped and were dilapidated just like the rest of the township amenities. Shafto (1991) vividly describes the environs in and around Eastbank High School:

It is just before 8am. The valley where the school is, is dense with smoke. It looks like mist. The street outside is choked with litter. Soon a snake-like latrine vehicle sways past with slopping buckets, it stinks of excrement: the smell permeating the school grounds where some 600 pupils in standard 6 and 7 cram into six classrooms without windows or doors – and no toilet facilities (Shafto 1991).

Such an insalubrious environment is not conducive to study. At one time there was no grade 12 in the whole township. A totally absurd state of affairs prevailed in schools: "It was estimated in 1991 that about 96 000 students resided in the area but there was only sufficient space for 20 000. At Alexandra High, the best equipped secondary in the township, the teacher-pupil ratio was 1:36 whereas at Eastbank High the ratio was 1:100" (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:332 -333).

In the 1970s schools in Alexandra were 'overflowing' with learners. The same scenario continued for many years to come. Seeing many children and very few schools, Babich (1992) questioned rhetorically, "What is the fate of the 50 000 children who haven't even a hope of even getting into one of the 20 schools there?" concluding that "There can be no glib answers or simple solutions to the problem of Alex, which has been almost a century in the making". Without any local solutions in sight, some parents, cognisant of the fact that education was the only passport out of the house of hunger, sent their children to Orlando High School in Soweto. The distances to Soweto had negative effects on these learners'

performance. Besides being very expensive, they encountered all sorts of problems along the way from passes to gangsters. Academic performance was always poor and most children dropped out of school.

Since the majority of parents in Alexandra occupied low paying jobs or were not working at all, the inability to pay school fees also meant that some school-going age children never even attempted to enrol in schools at all. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:98, 99) record that “Many children dropped out of school because of poverty, and because of the slow pace of learning in the overcrowded lower classes, which often marooned them for years in the sub-standards”.

It is not surprising that in these circumstances:

More than sixty per cent of household heads only had Standard 6 (grade 8) or had attended primary school. Nearly a quarter had no schooling at all... Two thirds of household heads were either semi-skilled or unskilled labourers, with only 4.1 per cent being professionals and 4.6 per cent employed in clerical jobs... (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:234).

The statistics above are not surprising as it was the goal of apartheid to ensure that blacks were not educated at all. The story was different with white children who received all the support the government could give. With regards to African support in education, Seekings and Natrass (2006: 134) report that,

The story of education for African children was very different. Per-child expenditure on African schools rose in the first five years of the NP government. But in 1953, the expansion of state spending on schools for African children was tied once more to the level of African taxation; the grant from the general revenue was kept at a constant R13 million (until 1972), and inflation eroded the real value of this figure. (Seekings and Natrass 2006: 134)

This is the reason attributed to the fact that, in general, literacy is low in blacks as a community and on the contrary literacy is highest amongst whites as a community. In the modern capitalist world, wealth is distributed proportional to educational achievements or to wealth inherited from previous generations. Blacks were systematically denied either of these two options by subtly crafted policies.

## **School Protests and Boycotts**

There is no single day on which Alexandra knew peace and tranquillity. The township has always been in war mode. Disturbances and disruptions of one kind or another punctuated the day-to-day life of Alexandra Township. In the same vein, everyone from children to adults, fought one way or another. Whilst parents were busy fighting the Apartheid system through protests and boycotts like the bus boycott, children were also waging a war on the education front. The most well-known instances of protest are associated with the Bantu Education Act and the Soweto Uprising.

## **Bantu Education Act**

As noted above, education for Africans was never a concern of the apartheid system. Educational facilities were of a lower standard and were under-resourced as compared to those administered to whites. A black person in the eyes of whites was a ‘tool’ meant to provide labour and nothing more. Hendrik Hoffman (a white South African) (in Callinicos: 1993:32) corroborates this idea noting that, “... we older folks – believe that the black man should be in his place. That sort of thing, you know. We didn’t have much to do with him. If he worked for you, he must just do his job and finish. Beyond that, you had nothing to do with him”. Commenting on the advent of the segregatory Bantu Education Act, Dustin (1983: 23) noted that “Schools – under threat of legal action – had to be registered and the common limb of the tree of education was forever sundered from that given to whites”. Education for the Africans was supposed to bring to him basic literacy and numeracy in order to prepare him solely for his role as a labourer. This was put in black and white in the form of the 1954 Bantu Education Act and this ignited yet another war in South Africa and in Alexandra Township. Davie (2003) observes that, “blacks now had to submit to an inferior system of education, preparing them for inferior status in South African society. Mission and private schools, which had maintained high standards, had to register with the Bantu Education Department, along with public schools” (Davie 2003).

This sparked a spate of protests and ‘thousands’ of learners boycotted school in April 1954 which severely disrupted teaching and learning in South Africa and Alexandra. Dustin (1983:23) confirms this noting that children stayed away from school “... in alarming numbers all over the country... some returned ... but over 7000 [in Alexandra Township] did not. And would not”. Teachers were also affected: “116 teachers were shown the door... 16 of them from Alex” (Dustin1983:23).

Adapting creatively to such a form of oppression, local political parties and some philanthropic groups formed ‘cultural groups’ to resume education of the students under the auspices of the newly formed African Education Movement. Because of the hovering repressive eye of the government formalisation of this schooling process could not happen as both the teachers and students faced arrests. Dustin (1983) reports that,

Any blackboards, chalk, books... any of the accoutrements of education could cost them a prison sentence. Multiplication tables were sung in Zulu rhyme... stories of the past took over from history... Teachers, who had sacrificed their careers and pensions, began to have doubts when numbers began to shrink... there were no school-leaving certificates... [b]y the time the second year rolled round, the squares began to empty... parents wanted physical value... not psychological effort (Dustin 1983:24).

Here, it is interesting to note how the white government problematised and criminalised the noble actions of blacks and how a system can close all the gaps blacks tried to use to bore out of the cycle of poverty. Blacks could be criminalised for anything. It was manifestly clear that blacks were criminal merely for being black.

Despite fierce opposition from the Africans, the government’s Act prevailed and Bantu Education became the education system for blacks. Davie (2003) reports the high-handedness of government in forcing through this act: “The government eventually ended this impasse with an ultimatum: no child would be allowed back into a classroom if they hadn’t started attending school before 1956. Parents, concerned for their children’s education, relented, and their children and future generations were subjected for the next 40 years to the debilitating Bantu education.”

Many years later the effects of the Act began to be felt as it became clear that Bantu schooled children, who were meant to be ‘educated’ people, were uneducated. Sanai (1991) reported that “...certificates of education were virtually useless if the holder could not speak English properly. There are people out there with BSC degrees who cannot communicate properly in a factory and therefore cannot find jobs”.

## **The Soweto Uprising**

After years of inferior education, black South African's frustrations culminated in the 1976 nationwide uprising which became popularly known as the Soweto uprising. This uprising was ignited by the government's decision to impose Afrikaans as a medium of communication. It started in Soweto and soon spread throughout the country.

## **The Six-Day War**

There were many other 'wars' fought by students against poor schooling standards. The Congress of South African Students (COSAS) initiated many of these wars. In 1986, there was a '6-day war' sparked by anti-apartheid sentiments. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008: 120) calls the period "the seismic political upheavals of 1984 – 86". Besides these protests schools in Education in Alexandra were also affected by Taxi Wars. Children could not go to school. *Business Day* (1992) reported closures due to raging taxi wars that left many casualties. These upheavals disrupted the learning and teaching in African schools in massive ways. In the white townships the story was the opposite. Learning went on unhindered. Seekings and Nattrass (2006: 134 -135) explain the differences:

White pupils started school at a younger age than their African counterparts, repeated school years less often, dropped out less often, and thus progressed faster and further through the schooling system. By 1960, the number of white students passing matric was sixteen times the total number of coloured, Indian and African students who passed... By changing the skill composition of the white labour force via public education, the state was able to give white people a large advantage in the labour market, with the result that interracial wage differentials widened. (Seekings and Nattrass 2006: 134 -135)

As shown above, these differences translated automatically into privilege for the white people and into disadvantage for black people. The former saw a significant raise in salaries whilst the latter were condemned to menial jobs and attendant low salaries. This differentiation was to be handed down to subsequent generations. Segregation in education resulted in more disadvantages as some blacks sought to stop attending school altogether to fight the system as shown below.

### **'Revolution today, education tomorrow'**

Stay-aways and boycotts of schools were a double-edged sword for the black man. On a positive note they helped to expose the cause and plight of blacks to the government and most

importantly, the international community, a move that came to fruition in 1994 with the abolition of apartheid. On the whole, and especially in post-independence, these have proved detrimental and the greatest undoing of the black man, as Trewhela observes:

When unemployment stood at 40 per cent and over, and underemployment was very high; when 800,000 or more were employed in petty hawking; and when the youth themselves faced the prospect of miserable paid jobs or no jobs at all, the school was no magnet of attraction at the best of times. The schools boycott led to illiteracy, the bleakness of prospects made literacy irrelevant... The schools boycott was associated with the slogan (endorsed in practice by the ANC) 'Liberation before education', also phrased as: 'Revolution today, education tomorrow.' Across the country, tens of thousands of children decamped permanently on the streets, a huge, amorphous army, a children's crusade, brought into existence by this mass of declassed youth merging with the very large stratum of the unemployed and the criminal boheme of the townships. Educated by the streets, since they were amenable to no force of adults in the society, these children became the masters of their parents and the vehicle by which the ANC leaders acquired their ticket to the talks at Groote Schuur. Adults not in South Africa need only imagine the effect of permanent, unbroken school holidays in their own homes, and on their own streets, spiced with the sadism of South African social conditions. This was the milieu in which teenage armies, teenage generals, teenage courts and teenage executioners gave lessons in patriotism to the workers (Trewhela 2009: 47).

The downside of these protests is that it led to juvenile delinquents that later evolved into bigger and violent crime. It also spawned illiteracy amongst the black community which was to cause unemployment and all its attendant ills for a long, long time in the community. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:115) point out that the "The exclusion of youths not attending school from suitable employment in the Johannesburg labour market had a socially corrosive effect on Alexandra".

Some of these recorded 'corrosive effects' included gang violence and all the vices associated with 'idle minds', which burgeoned in the 1990s. Sanai (1991) states that many children he interviewed told him point-blank that they "... have to steal – how else do you expect us to live?" *The Citizen* (1992) reported that "Thirty stolen vehicles worth R1.9 million were recovered by members of the East Rand Vehicle Theft Unit when they carried out special operations in the townships of Alexandra and Tembisa".

### **'Azikwelwa'**

In 1940 the council-run bus company, Putco, decided to increase the fare from Alexandra Township to Johannesburg by a penny. The bus fare was fourpence. This may sound very little but considering the salaries of black workers, rentals, extortion by gangsters and a lot of other factors that milked money from blacks, a penny was just too heavy for the already burdened pocket. Bonner and Niftagodien (2001:66) corroborate this:

As the policy of residential segregation was implemented more systematically and effectively in the 1920s and 1930s, most African workers in towns were compelled to reside far from their places of employment. As a direct consequence, transport costs to and from work constituted a much larger component of day-to-day living expenses than was typical for working classes of most other countries. (Bonner and Niftagodien 2001:66)

It is quite understandable that blacks put up a spirited fight when bus fare increases were effected. Alexandra Liaison Committee records that in a few short years in 1942, 1943 and 1957 bus boycotts erupted again, with the latter year recording the worst of boycotts. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:59) observe that the increasing of bus fares and the subsequent bus boycotts "...placed a public spotlight, in a way that had never happened before, on the whole structure of black exploitation in South Africa, upon which white prosperity rested". One boycotter quoted by the Dustin (1983: 29) attests to this callous nature of black misery and exploitation chronicling that, "I woke up at 5 o'clock in the morning. I left home half past five. I walked all the way to Eloff street [a 15km walk]. After work I walked home again, I got home at 8 o'clock. I walked many miles every day". The government still showed its impersonal, aloof heart by not budging to commuters' demands but instead asked employers to chip in and pay the difference.

It is also interesting to note that the overwhelming majority of whites never lost anything during these protests. Blacks always lost out, one way or the other. The loss by a black man was a gain for a white man. Callinicos (1993: 43) observed that "After this boycott the last African bus owners disappeared. Baloyi's United Bus Company went bankrupt. The remaining bus companies were operated by whites". In the terrain of apartheid, all the odds were stacked against blacks. No amount of effort would suffice for him to succeed.

## **Employment**

Alexandrans have historically and traditionally been a working class population. They engaged mostly in menial jobs that were deemed not suitable for whites. This was because of the inferiorisation of the black man over the long years of colonialism and by the poor education afforded to blacks by the government. The dearth of skills was also due to the segregatory engineering of the white government which favoured whites over blacks.

Callinicos (1993:78) reports:

Before the war most industrial workers on the Rand were whites, who enjoyed the advantage of being trained in industrial skills... The government did a great deal to assist white workers to upgrade their industrial qualifications and schooling, while black workers' training was either neglected or forbidden by law. Apprenticeship was confined to non-Africans... This is not to say they were no black workers on the factory floor. They were thousands of Africans working as 'unskilled' labourers on the Rand. Some industries, like leather and clothing, also employed blacks as semi-skilled workers. But the type of work they did was allocated on a racial basis. In the clothing industry, for example, black men were employed to do the heavier work as 'pressers', while white woman did the sewing. The clothing industry had its own union for Africans workers, the unregistered South African Clothing Workers Union, which had a working relationship with the Garment Workers Union. The Industrial Conciliation Act did not permit African men ('pass-bearing' natives) to belong to registered trade unions. (Callinicos 1993: 78)

This structural disempowerment of blacks is shown to be so elaborate that blacks were left with no leeway at all to develop their skills in their respective trades. This accounts for the fact that amongst blacks only a miserly number were skilled and the rest were either semi-skilled or completely unskilled. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:234) observe that,

Two thirds of household heads were either skilled or unskilled labourers, with only, 4.1 per cent being professionals and 4.6 per cent employed in clerical jobs. Most workers were employed in the Alexandra-Wynberg-Sandton areas (52 per cent) and the majority of the rest worked in Johannesburg and Randburg. A 1983 survey found ... about 75 per cent of males were employed in manufacturing, transport and construction, overwhelmingly as semi-skilled and unskilled labourers (64.7 per cent). Most women were employed in the service sector (42.7 per cent), although a sizeable proportion (21 per cent) worked in the manufacturing sector (mainly as unskilled workers, cleaners and clerks). More than 60 per cent of household heads had a Standard 6 (Grade 8) or had attended primary school. Nearly a quarter had no school at all. (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:234)

This has its roots in the way people moved into Alexandra through push factors from where they were resident before as farm labourers and as migrant workers from other countries. The contextual factors in Alexandra also contributed to the total dearth of a skilled personnel. Over the years education has seen consistent disruptions through boycotts. Even without the detrimental effect of the boycotts, education was inferior and not helpful. Inferior education had the singular purpose of inferiorising blacks. After forty years of “debasing and debilitating Bantu education” blacks were left with little option but to take lowly jobs which do not pay well (Davie 2003). Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:97) record that in Kark’s 1943 small [research] patch in 3<sup>rd</sup> square were,

Five lorry drivers/taxi drivers... five shoe-makers, two basket weavers, one minister of religion, six tailors, seven shopkeepers, two sand loaders, one baker, nine landlords, one mattress repairer, one leather worker, two watch repairers, four shop assistants, two cycle repairers, one photographer, three thief's (sic), two teachers, one receiver of stolen goods, two African doctors, seventeen night-soil removers. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:97)

And yet at another research patch Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:97) that there lived, “...eleven messengers, twenty-one factory workers, eight plumbers, one miner, two soldiers, a stonemason, 18 gardeners, 9 painters, 14 builders, 3 carpenters, two grooms, two mechanics, two waiters, one hospital orderly and three domestic servants”. Women have always been hard hit by unequal power relations and Kark found out that of,

twenty-six washerwomen, forty-four were domestic servants, seven were nursemaids and one was a farm worker and the rest illicitly brew beer in the township, thirty-two needlewomen, six party-organisers, sixteen prostitutes, two landladies, one teacher, two receivers of stolen goods, two hawkers, and three sangomas (Kark in Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:97).

These types of occupations yielded meagre incomes to eke out a living. Savings and investments were not possible. Poverty and want thus has always stalked blacks the way paparazzi stalks celebrities, and, to extend the metaphor further, at times killed blacks the way paparazzi drove Princess Diana to her death.

## **The Great Depression of 1929**

South Africa's connectedness to the world economy meant that if the West 'coughed' South Africa would 'catch a cold'. In 1929 there was depression the world over. South Africa was not spared. There were massive job cuts, retrenchments and wage cuts. Nabol Mokgatle (in Callinicos 1993: 16) recalls that,

Nineteen-thirty was a year of depression. Many Africans were out of work and could not find any; some of them were thrown out of their jobs to make room for European workers. Hard manual jobs like working on the railways, road making, digging trenches and sweeping streets, which were considered suitable for Africans only, were taken away from them and given to Europeans... Notices appeared in the windows of many places stating that the work done there was only for white labour. (Callinicos 1993: 16)

Without having any responsibility for the economic dynamics at play, the already vulnerable community of Alexandra was heavily hit with the whole town being rendered destitute. The suffering was compounded by many other daily struggles encountered by the community. The depression ended and almost ten years later the community was still in the throes of want. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:59) report that around the 1940s: "The people of Alexandra found themselves at risk in more day-to-day ways. Their capacity to survive even at breadline standard of living came under intense pressure ... from an increase in the price of kinds of goods, and in a critical and symbolic way from rises in the cost of transport."

Ironically enough, when life was very hard nationally and Alexandra Township was being smothered in poverty and want, that was when more and more people poured into the township exacerbating an already critical problem. When the township appeared to have experienced the worst, more challenges appeared on the scene.

Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:87) record that in the 1940s, "The majority of families in the area, a full 55 per cent, survived on the margin. They lived 'hand to mouth' and occupied poorer built rooms. Here real hunger was a common complaint of both adults and children". In her 1944 – 46 survey of Alexandra Gertrude Kark (quoted in Bonner and Niftagodien 2008: 87) observed that "intense poverty and ill-health affected the bulk of Alexandra's population", Rent increases and food shortages during the World War were followed by price inflation. Kark also identified malnutrition as a big problem, adding that blacks were

seriously underfed with their general physique declining and that around the late 80s and 90s around 75 per cent of households had monthly incomes of around R1 000.

Unemployment continued unabated in the Township, a situation still manifestly clear in the township to date. Sanai (1991) reported that “More than half of Alexandra’s adult population is unemployed”. Many have to resort to crime to make ends meet. The state of affairs did not improve even five years later. Rapitso (2005) observes that Mambele Satigke, working in Sandton as a cleaner, was earning R900. Most families interviewed work in general jobs and earn between R1 500 to R3 800.

### **Beer brewing and Shebeens**

In an environment where means towards social mobility for blacks were impossible under any chances blacks resorted to ‘illegal’ means of survival. In fact, any means a black man could use gain wealth by was illegal by apartheid standards. Callinicos (1993: 35) observes that,

Residents wishing to improve their conditions had little success through official channels... Finding money to survive was a constant pre-occupation for blacks. Besides poll tax which every black adult male had to pay throughout his life, township rents and transport costs were high while wages were low... Black poverty took its toll in child deaths, illness, desertion, imprisonment and violence. But the creativity and determination of black communities formed a culture which enabled people to survive the harsh, racist and hostile world of the city.(Callinicos 1993: 35)

Having neither education nor employment skills, black people, particularly the women, creatively adapted to the cash economy through illegal beer brewing and running Shebeens. Shebeens and beer gained notoriety for ruining the social fabric of black people’s lives. With the pass systems regulating and restricting the movement of women to the city, many a man took to Shebeens as a pastime. The illicit beer brewed was cheap and affordable but extremely dangerous to the health of the drinkers. Most blacks, battered by the white system, escaped from reality into a surreal, peaceful world through beer drinking. The beers had lethal effects. Ukabini and Fukani beers, popular in the township, had ingredients that included battery acid and pepper. The most lethal of the beers was called Baragwanath, named after Baragwanath Hospital. It was so named because after drinking this concoction one will surely end up sick in hospital.

Shebeens have traditionally been associated with all sorts of vices and the eventual break up of many families. Prostitution, stabbings, murders and all sorts of unsavoury things happened in Shebeens. Shebeen owners have also been known to open ‘accounts’ for some regular customers. At the end of the month these would accumulate huge beer bills that wiped out entire salaries.

### **1994 - 2014: The enigma of arrival**

The year 1994 was a watershed year for South Africa. The country gained its independence with the ANC at the helm of government. The new dispensation promised a new era of equality and the betterment of the lives of black people in South Africa. That was the same euphoric feeling Alexandra had looking forward to a new day in history. Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:386) observe that,

Democracy also promised an inclusive Johannesburg, a city of equality for its residents – white and black, rich and poor. The promise has not been realised. Inequality and exclusion persists, and these are nowhere more evident than in the contrast between Alexandra and its neighbour, Sandton. The latter has arguably benefitted more from economic boom than any other part of Johannesburg, and entrenched its status as the continent’s wealthiest real estate. Less than two kilometres away the people of Alexandra have continued to suffer the ignominy of poverty and overcrowding. (Bonner and Niftagodien 2008:386)

Almost nothing has changed. Trevor Manuel (2014) reflecting on what South Africa has achieved since 1994, observed that “We are a nation, a generation of people who solved problems of a political order, but it’s incomplete for as long as people feel they are not included in the outcome of democracy. Although Twala (2014) has done well businesswise and generously donates his time and money to the community, he sums up the mood of the general Alexandrans: “This is not the freedom we fought for. We are free because we no longer carry the dompass but we are not yet free because we are still poor. Our government should start governing now”. Cox’s (2004) views dovetail with Twala’s:

In my interaction with various groupings in Alexandra it has transpired that their concerns have a common denominator, namely, housing and infrastructural development. Many people in Alexandra argue that they see a lot of activities executed by bulldozers, construction trucks, and construction drills, but no significant impact on their material conditions. They still stay in backyards as tenants to landlords; property landlords still battle to get their dues from tenants; the transfer of properties to their rightful owners is still a pipedream to many;

decent sanitation remains elusive to many; and decent shelter is not yet part of their livelihoods. Cox (2004)

Cox (2004) adds that, “Furthermore, they assert that the economic benefits have not trickled down to the average Alex resident”. The capitalist market claim that benefits trickle down to everyone has remained a distant myth. Ndlelambini (2014) observes that, ‘Nothing has changed at all. I have not heard from my friends or anyone near me whose life has changed at all’. Another resident, Mushau (2014) points out that “... on paper things have been revolutionised but that’s not what’s happening on the ground. The government talks of having allocated millions for the women hostel, millions for service delivery but we don’t see it at all”.

As the Alex Renewal Project set out working in Alexandra, the technologies of apartheid were shown to have skipped into new South Africa and were still alive in Alexandra as Cox (2005) explains in a story titled ‘Land claims could delay Alexandra regeneration plans’: “Three houses were demolished without notification, consultation or compensation. ARP officials told residents that the homes belonged to the council because they had been appropriated by the former government in the ‘50s and ‘60s’.”

Red tape involving ‘the Land Claims Court, the national Land Claims Commission, The Gauteng Housing Department and the City of Johannesburg Region 7’ are some of the hurdles in the way of development in Alexandra. Jobs have not come the people’s way. Mbongwa (2005) quotes one resident as saying, “Alexandra looks like a Sunday every day. People don’t work” and catalogues major post-independence problems such as “unemployment, overcrowding in schools and clinics, insufficient access to water and electricity, sewage and waste overflowing on the streets and HIV/AIDS”. These are the ‘visible’ problems. From a Fanonian perspective we know that a pathetic fallacy is also at play here – the inner man is never confident, firm and assertive under such barren, hellish conditioned brought in by a brutal force.

### **Structural Violence**

To date twenty-four years after South Africa officially abandoned apartheid, not much has changed socio-economically for the black person. Poverty has gone down but inequalities have widened. Blacks realise that apartheid was abolished but the spatial, socio-economic

engineering has indeed dealt them a long-lasting blow - its logic and technologies are still subtly active. Apparently blacks have gained political independence, however Bonner and Niftagodien (2008:386) note that, "Democracy was, however, not only [supposed to be] about the attainment of political rights. Crucially, it [should] entail the eradication of poverty. In other words, for democracy to be tangible, people needed jobs, decent houses, education and other socio-economic rights".

Visible violence has subsided in Alexandra giving a semblance of normalcy. Most of the Acts have gone, gangsters are no longer as rampant - they have gone underground - but poverty remains a stark reality. Physically, Alex still sticks out like a thumb sore in the middle of suburbia. In the eyes of the white people of Sandton blacks still symbolise evil. The Sandton Chronicle (2004) is a testament to this abyssal thinking as it reported that of some Sandtonians "defied odds" and visited the "island of poverty" [Alexandra Township] and came face to face with poverty and squalor observing that, "...at the two male hostels were broken windows and decaying buildings... at Alex Clinic the maternity ward was another upsetting reality with only five beds for women waiting to go into labour. Some ten women had to share the five beds for the night...at times 15 babies were delivered in a night".

The Alexandra Renewal Project, initiated by former President Thabo Mbeki in February 2001 as an urban renewal project, has not 'renewed' the township in meaningful ways. *The Star* (2005) reported that "by November 2001 - before the first year of the seven-year plan was out - knives were out as consultants, planners and web developers vied for prime cuts". Anna Modiba, a resident and spaza-shop owner in Alexandra told *The Star* (2005) that "she has not seen any of the so-called renewal promised... people are getting poorer and poorer...lives are no better".

A new, more debilitating and lethal ill than all the other pre-1994 ills which Alex now contends with is structural violence. Structural violence is discreet in its workings and has long and permanent effects. It has resulted in unemployment, deaths, and impoverishment. Apartheid was abolished but the black man has not received emancipation in his life. The technologies and logic of apartheid are still very much at play. The black man is free to go everywhere he wants but poverty still impedes him from partaking of the promised 'fruits of independence. He has gained a lot of holidays but he does not enjoy them because the gangster of problems haunts and terrorises him night and day as he thinks about the source of

the next meal, about fees, about settling accounts, about his whole life. Ntontela (2014) of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue sums up the mood of disillusionment in the township:

Yes, the rifles and bayonets from the white cops and army are gone but I still have to duck and dive from the volley of phone calls from Edgars about unpaid accounts, calls from my child's schools about pending fees... We do not have decent jobs. We live from hand to mouth. ANC has not, and surely cannot do much. We feel dejected. My father died poor, working under the mines. I am still poor under our own government... being black is totally a curse! (Ntontela 2014)

Children are going to schools but the quality of education is very poor because classes are so overcrowded, so much so that at Eastbank High School, teachers spoke of classes as large as 40.

AIDS is ravaging the town in more callous ways than the Msomi gangsters. Dimbleby (2013) reported that AIDS was taking as many as six hundred lives a day in South Africa. Alexandra faces the full brunt of this disease and other STIs are rife. According to staff at Alexandra Clinic, they treat as many as ten STI infections per day and the queue for people collecting ARVs on Tuesdays snakes around the whole clinic. Hunger stalks the people like the Peri-urban police of yore, leading to malnutrition. When a little money is available, other daylight robbers disguised as treats and symbols of 'the good life' - MacDonald's, KFC, Debonairs Pizza and many other fast-food outlets - milk people of their hard-earned cash in exchange for junk food, leading to malnutrition manifested through rampant obesity, especially in the women. Sandtonview School, a school in Bramley with ninety per cent of its learners from Alexandra Township, has, like all schools in Alexandra, initiated a feeding scheme to ensure that a number of learners can attend lessons on a full stomach. Poverty is real in the township.

Violence, witnessed and learnt during the dark ages of the town replays itself everyday. An intact, solid and normal family structure has disappeared from the township. The black man has been fundamentally destroyed, and to the core. In my visits to Alexandra I noticed an awkward phenomenon in which it is predominantly grandmothers who are raising the black children in Alexandra. Without a family structure there's no society. Family is the microcosm of society – in every aspect. Torong Ramela quoted in *The Star* (2005) sums up the wish of every resident of Alexandra: "We are sick and tired of living in such conditions. This has to end". Unfortunately, even today, after twenty years of Democracy the situation is

no better. If in 2005, Torong was ‘sick and tired’ of his living conditions today, in 2014, residents must be sick and tired of being sick and tired of life itself.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to portray the roots of black impoverishment through tracing more than a century of systematic brutalisation and oppression by the white apartheid government during which the black man has been robbed of his agency. An analysis of the life in Alexandra Township from 1905 to 1994 when South Africa ‘gained’ her independence through a negotiated settlement, shows that the township was involved in one crisis or another everyday: internal and external. The chapter explored Alexandra as narrative of incapacitation, inferiorisation, dispossession and brutalisation of the black man.

External crises stemmed from the government that saw blacks as having no place in the city and sought to forcibly drive them out to ‘homelands’. A black man was tolerated in the city just for his utility value: his ability to provide labour. Those allowed to stay were still at the mercy of apartheid as it impoverished them in a number of structural and systematic ways. Acts after Acts were promulgated to keep a black man in his place and in check. Women were altogether outlawed, allowed only in the city on ‘visitors’ permits. This resulted in the destruction of the black family structure and all the vices associated with husbands and wives staying apart, vices inherited by children who grew up under single-parenthood missing one of their role models.

During apartheid, when the police were not in the township, which was rare, the black man had all sorts of Acts hovering over his head. They criminalised and inferiorised the black man and stripped him of all his rights and humanity. The pass laws made blacks veritable fugitives. A black man, ostensibly born free, found himself always in chains living in the hellish zone of Alexandra.

Internal crises came from inside Alexandra itself. This was unleashed by gangsters and tsotsis who terrorised the township continuously. There was overcrowding and poverty. The most destructive and long-lasting effect of apartheid was the fact that continuous, structural and systematic brutalisation and impoverishment of the black man resulted in the inferiorisation and sometimes ‘death’ of the inner man. His ego was badly bruised and his psyche debilitated as he attained and internalised the ‘servant’ disposition.

Apartheid did a lot of harm to children as well. Living under such a chaotic and brutal system, witnessing their parents being humiliated by the system every day children became inferiorised as well or turned into violent brutes. Psychologists have proved that even a foetus in the womb of its mother is affected by the outside environment. Recent research into prenatal development has studied the foetus and has found that it can be,

considered to be an active agent in its own development... anything that affects the environment of the foetus can have an effect upon development beginning at conception and not birth. Environment does indeed begin to influence the individual as soon as he or she is conceived (Prenatal... 2014).

The chapter also explored the fact that the structural and systematic dispossession of the black man meant that during his tenure in the city he could not accumulate any wealth. Having no title deeds to any properties meant that the black man was perpetually poor and could not pass on wealth to subsequent generations. Those who owned houses, owned them in the township where real estate prices did not rise phenomenally as they did with houses in the white suburbs after 1994. Many years later when independence came, blacks, lacking any collateral, had challenges accessing loans from banks. Those who get loans are kind of ensnared in debt traps.

The numerous protests and the inferior education system given to blacks meant that over the century the black man was uneducated or not properly educated. Without education one cannot gain skills and earn a decent salary, substantial enough to bring capital and agency. Earning low salaries means he can't access any liberating loans from banks. Many resorted to loan sharks which offer punitive interests. Without education, the creativity and skills needed to start own a business enterprise are lacking. Without skills one cannot earn enough money to send his children to good schools. They attend nearby poorly resourced schools that have inferior education. In my visits to Alexandra and Sandton I discovered that blacks who somehow manage to get good education, will always end up in deplorable states of want because the majority of their family members depend on those individual members who are gainfully employed. Having had poor upbringing, most black professionals lack any financial management skills and soon after starting work, earning good salaries they end up in huge debt. On the other hand their white counterparts, having grown up in educated and prosperous families prosper easily and quickly in life as they are also not burdened with dependents to

look after. Blacks find themselves in a vicious cycle of poverty. This is the condition of the *damné*: perpetual poverty.

The chapter has deployed Fanonian critical decolonial thought and delved into all the nooks of the colonial/apartheid structure unearthing the brutalisation of man that consequently brings in poverty. Through these lenses, the Fanonian Manichaean structure is vividly explored. Here the Manichaeism is shown by the sharp differences between Alexandra Township and Sandton. Sandton and Alexandra, as shown by the 1980 proposed merger between the two urban locales, are ‘geographically and logically’ connected. Sandton, growing into modern suburbia of international standards and Alexandra deteriorating into a slum like the *favelas* of Brazil and Dharavi slum of India, can only be caused by artificial, racial segregationist policies. This is typical of the ambivalent nature of colonialism and capitalism: dispossessing one ‘zone’ and to benefit the other ‘zone’.

The mutual exclusivity and ‘peculiar inattention’ to one another that characterise these two racialised locales has been damaging to the Alexandra and has simultaneously benefitted Sandton. Fanonian Critical Decolonial thought argues that modernity resulted in the creation of abyssal lines that delineated one side as the zone of being and condemning the other side as the zone of non-being. The Abyssal line in this study is metaphorically represented by the M1 Freeway which ‘artificially’ separates Alexandra from Sandton. Sandton is delineated as the Zone of Being and the fruits of modernity deposit in it all the niceties of life. People there live in a ‘heaven-on-earth’ environment. Alexandra, as this Chapter has shown, is a veritable Zone of non-being where anarchy and lawlessness is the mode of life. People live in hell.

In Alexandra township, through what, in the Fanonian critical decolonial theory, is termed as ‘Coloniality of Power and Being’ black people are subjected to such a long and systematic brutalising and inferiorising condition, the black condition of the *damné*, that these ‘wretched of the earth’ will perpetually suffer from the effects of colonialism long after the colonialism/apartheid have been officially abandoned. These effects - or more precisely after-effects, which permeate every facet of being - are called coloniality. One of the main areas of study of this research project has been to unearth this phenomenon. Coloniality is more lethal than colonialism with all its guns and laws put together because with coloniality, the degeneration of the black man comes from structuring of the socio-political economy and from ‘self’ as the black man has been battered and emptied out of all agency. The black man

has been cowed into an inferiority complex so that, for the rest of his life he sees the white man as superior and as the standard. All his subsequent actions are guided by the inferior/superior binaries.

In conclusion this chapter has managed to ground its narrative in Fanonian critical decolonial theory. This theory that shows that blacks are not ‘problem people, but people with problems’. They are in need of a hand up to compete at the same level with their white counterparts. Abolition of restrictive regimes, and even economic affirmative action without rehabilitation of the inner man himself, will not yield results.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Case Study: The Zone of Being**

*Apartheid systemised white racism into one of the most successful social engineering projects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It vested colour with socio-economic and political power that attained a logic that remains deeply embedded in our society.*

*But it is especially the equating of colour with intellectual superiority, which predates apartheid, that has left a damning legacy.*

***Mamphela Ramphele***

*Continued unacknowledged white privilege feeds a superiority complex that adds salt to the wounds of racism. Many white people still do not recognise that they are beneficiaries of one of the most successful affirmative actions.*

***Mamphela Ramphele***

#### **Introduction**

At the core of the colonial project is the Fanonian Manichaean structure. This is a form of spatial, social and economic engineering that create ‘zones’: Zone of being and zone of non-being. This chapter explores one of the two ‘zones’, the zone of being. This is the zone where those abyssally characterised as complete human beings reside.

The chapter depicts the fact that in this ‘zone of being’ there is peace and tranquillity. In this zone, peopled by residents who are considered complete human beings, possessing a soul and gender, civility is the order of the day. Residents here have full civil, human and labour rights. In the ‘zone of being’ the residents have a political voice in the administration of the affairs of their town thus they actively shape the growth of their space. Their full recognition as human beings brings with it liberty, autonomy and equality.

This chapter will explore the fact that this salubrious environment where regulation and emancipation are the order of the day, provides the ingredients for success and wealth generation. The profile of the people who come to this area will be shown to be those seeking

fortune as industrialists and mine owners. The chapter will reveal empirically the fact that wealth is a magnet for even greater wealth.

Sandton in general will be used to this end, and Sandhurst, the richest suburb in Sandton, will be explored in particular to reveal all these Fanonian claims. The defining quality of this zone is non-violence. Violence is shown as an aspect of life that happens only in exceptional circumstances. Everything in the Zone of Being is conducted in civil fashion with the expectation of a reasonable outcome for all those concerned.

### **Sandton: ‘The suburb of gentlemen’**

#### **History**

The Sandton suburbs (including Sandhurst) were established on 1 July 1969 as a residential area of several smallholdings. Residents were white farmers who left the then Cape Colony (Western Cape Province) around the 1830 to run away in organised groups from British rule. These were wealthy farmers engaged in market gardening, supplying farm produce to the city of Johannesburg (iafrica 2014).

Sandton gained full municipal status on 1 July 1969 but people started living there much earlier than that. For the thematic purposes of this thesis, I will dwell briefly on the period before 1830s, the time when white farmers moved into the area that is now Sandton.

#### **1800s and before**

Because of lack of archived printed material before the advent of the white man in Sandton the exact historical background of the area is not well known:

Early signs have shown that the ape man crossed our roads 2,3 million years ago as well as through the Stone and Iron age there were also a few visitors. In the 1830's the Voortrekkers established the first demarcated farm areas and the whole area was split into 5 farms with our areas being within the Zandfontein farm (hence the name Sandton). There is a memorial of the original farm owners that still exists (Cherno Davis 2014).

Sandton Exclusive (2014) gives a potted history of Sandton:

In bygone days Australopithecus Africanus (southern ape-man) roamed this area. About 1 million years ago 'homo erectus' wandered through Sandton. Middle

Stone Age and Iron Age men took their turn and brought industry and invention to the region. Mzilikazi, the great Zulu warrior chief, also swept through this site. Voortrekkers, fleeing from British rule, settled here. Then gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand and Sandton became fledgling Johannesburg's lush market garden. Rich estates followed and Sandtonians were dubbed the 'mink and manure set' (Sandton Exclusive 2014).

Before the turn of the eighteenth century a prosperous and autonomous black community occupied the plains of Sandton. Carruthers (1993:14) observes that the group of people moved into Sandton some 30 000 years before the white settlers. These were Middle Stone Age Hunters who settled on the granite hills of the Witkoppen Tor (Fourways Gardens), Lone Hill and Norscot Koppies and that "Sandton's Iron Age residents have been linked through their pottery to the ancestral Hurutse and thus the Sotho-Tswana people. Until the early 1800s Tswana clans inhabited almost all of South Central and Western Transvaal" and most importantly that "[t]he Iron Age economy was diversified and enabled these people to live prosperously on the Witwatersrand for many centuries".

### **The Advent of the white man**

In the 1800s a new phenomenon rocked Sandton. This was the advent of the coming of the white man into this area. These white emigrants were farmers who were fleeing British rule in the Cape Colony. Besides, the onslaught of the British, these Afrikaners were seeking cheap labour and arable land. It is quite interesting to note how these new inhabitants acquired land. Carruthers (1993:20) observes that, "Each original male settler was entitled to one farm of his own, frequently two. The size of the farm was determined by riding slowly on horseback for half an hour from a central point in each direction. In this way, a farm of almost 4000 hectares was defined".

Around this time the Afrikaners led a very simple, rural lifestyle with barely any artefacts of modernity. They lived in brick and mud houses, raised livestock and grew fruits and vegetables. Later around the 1960s this wealth ensured that when urbanisation took an accelerated pace the residents had the wherewithal to take off with.

### **Discovery of Gold**

In 1853, Carruthers (1993) records that PJ Marais, an adventurer and prospector discovered traces of Gold at the confluence of the Crocodile and Jukskei Rivers and later on at Piet Nel's farm. However the discovery of the main deposits of gold, the main reef, was in 1886. This

discovery, Carruthers (1993:22) explains, "... influenced the development of Sandton and linked its fate directly with that of Johannesburg from that time onwards" which led to the increase of land values. Being faced with the prospect of making a fortune without moving a muscle, the Voortrekkers subdivided their farms and sold out. This move saw the disappearance of pastoral life and witnessed the genesis of urbanisation. The Afrikaner farmers also made a fortune supplying the fresh produce to the ever-growing needs of Johannesburg town.

### **The South African War: 1899 - 1902**

During the period 1899 to 1902 the British and the Afrikaners in South Africa locked horns fighting for control of the country. Life in the whole country was disrupted and Sandton was not spared. Carruthers (1993) recorded that life in Sandton was disrupted, albeit briefly. The Voortrekkers also joined in the war, on the side of the Afrikaners. When the war ended in 1902 and the farmers of Sandton rebuilt their lives, Sandton began to grow at a phenomenal speed from then onwards.

### **Urbanisation: 1902 onwards.**

Carruthers (1993:26) points out that from the early 1900s there was a property boom, increased prosperity on the Rand and a feeling of long-term security under the British after the war. Urbanisation occurred at an unprecedented rate enriching one section of society and impoverishing and dehumanising another – the black community. It is interesting to note that around the same period, 1905 to be precise, Alexandra Township developed. At this point in time there were a few rudimentary industries in Sandton like a sheepskin tannery near Parkmore. The tranquil and salubrious nature of the area was the main drawcard.

Carruthers (1993) observes that "It was thus in the early 1900s that wealthy Joburgers looking for recreational outlets and 'gentleman's farms' joined the markets gardeners and small-time farmers in the Sandton area" and indeed this dream was fulfilled with Sunday picnics at nearby Rattray's Dam on the Braamfontein Spruit in Craighall. Gradually these newcomers began to alter the face of Sandton. Whilst Sandton was growing from glory to glory a phenomenon in the opposite direction was taking place simultaneously:

Detracting from what might sound idyllic 'upmarket' retreat, were two other developments just outside the boundaries of modern Sandton... The first was the

prison farm at Leeukop... The second development of note, because it lies too close to Sandton, is Alexandra Township on the East. Initially aimed at white market in 1905, Alexandra, named after the wife of the developer, HB Papenfus – did not attract buyers because the small size of stands... While Sandton became populated by generally well-off middle-class white people, very close by was growing an enormous working-class population which had completely different lifestyle characterised generally by poverty and deprivation. Although providing much of the labour upon which Sandton depended, Alexandra was always an entity distinct from Sandton. Segregationist attitudes and legislation – and later-apartheid – precluded any sense of community from developing among the white and African inhabitants of the area, although, in the economic sphere, they were closely linked (Carruthers 1993: 30).

As noted above, early in its urbanisation Sandton's drawcard was not industry but the quiet, salubrious nature the place offered. Sandton offered serenity and even an Edenic purity, so much so that "The quiet country atmosphere of Sandton brought the Carmelite nuns to the village of Rivonia in 1931. They belonged to the Contemplative Order and sought peaceful surroundings for prayer" (Carruthers 1993:31). A lot other people who made fortunes on the Witwatersrand also became buyers of property in Sandton. The following are notable ones;

1. Adolf Wilhelmi, a rich adventurer-seeker from Germany.
2. Ernst Eriksen. He was a Norwegian motor magnate. Eriksen bought a property around Norscot (which later became the Sandton Town Council) and built a beautiful Cape-Dutch style home with a Scandinavian atmosphere.
3. W.F. Tillet. He bought a property in Hurlingham in 1938, which is today the Tara and built a large and opulent house which later became a provincial hospital.
4. Thomas Cullinan. He was a fortune-seeker who came to South Africa for that purpose and bought a farm in Rocklands, a 346 ha piece of land paying 18 700 pound sterling for it.
5. Sammy Marks. He, like Cullinan, had humble beginnings. He was a small-time trader who made money selling alcohol to British soldiers during the war. Later he became the head of the powerful Premier Milling Company.
6. Simon Norten. He was a wealthy business man who owned tracts of land throughout Sandown. When he divided his land, he called one half Athol and the other Wierda. Wierda was the name of his wife.

Many other rich business owners and industrialists bought and built in Sandton to transform it into a 'suburban' paradise forming an interface between city and countryside – 'where town

meets country'. From this period onwards Sandton had municipal services, water supply and tarred roads.

### **The birth of a new municipality**

According to Mhlanga (2012), the Johannesburg Town Council proclaimed Sandton a new municipality on 1 July 1969. After promulgation, Nelson Mandela Square (2012) observes that "Sandton faced a few rocky years concerning the issue of whether it should remain a quiet, semi-rural dormitory town or if it should become a more balanced entity with significant businesses and more residential buildings, splitting the council apart". The latter ideas prevailed through consensus. The name Sandton is an acronym from two suburbs of Sandown and Bryanston. Interesting to note is the fact that for this name to be adopted by the town, extensive public input was sought. The Sandton (1978) reports that the Sandton Councillors,

discussed the name at a meeting with Provincial officials, and the name Sandton was acceptable to all at this meeting. There was a great deal of discussion about the name ... The Rand Daily Mail became involved in the name issue. The newspaper asked for suggestions for names for the town, and some 340 names were forthcoming... (The Sandton 1978: 15).

It is interesting to note here that every little aspect of Sandton's growth was tabled to the public. Such a participatory approach brought out the best of human imagination and abilities. Autocratic, know-it-all, top-down approaches have never existed in Sandton, or when they did, they were promptly rejected by its self-confident residents, as is shown in the way the suburb developed into being. Residents were extensively consulted on all developmental matters. Sandtonians, by composition, were people who sought to have their destiny in their own hands.

Before the Municipality came into being, Sandton was administrated by the Peri-Urban Board. All along residents were not very happy with being run by an imposed Board. The road to self-determination came about for many reasons. Chief of these was that,

Sandton, unlike other areas which the Board administered, had residents who were educated, articulate and wealthy. They took exception to the implication that they could not handle their own affairs [and] also [because] of the great dissatisfaction also with control exercised by a remote authority based in Pretoria, and one which was often impersonal and out of touch with local issues National politics also played its part, for the Board was Afrikaans-speaking and nationalist, while Sandton area was English-speaking and generally supported opposition parties. Local pride, and fear of being absorbed by other local authorities also spurred the Sandton. In the event, local identity, as much as local self-government was at stake (Carruthers 1993:62).

By gaining self-determination the Sandtonians had their destiny in their own hands and had the power and means “to influence their own life-style and their own physical environment”.

Minutes of the Sandton City Town Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1970 signed by R. Sive, the Chairman of the Management Committee, reveals a lot of challenges tackled and the meticulous planning the Sandton Town Council went through to build Sandton into a real heaven-on-earth. Some of their new and pressing challenges included “untarred roads, inadequate sewage schemes, the lack of a traffic section, and... the lack of an overall plan for the development of [the] town... no established administration and a cadre of inexperienced Council officials...”. These are the same challenges Alexandra Township faced, as we have seen earlier on. However, one advantage which the Sandton Town Council inherited from the Transvaal Board for the Development of the Peri-Urban Areas Authority was “a healthy financial state”.

According to the same minutes of the Sandton City Town Council (10 August 1970), for the council to solve the tarred-road construction challenge, the Council was to borrow, and eventually got, R3 187 000 for the construction of all road infrastructure. The problem of traffic was solved though commissioning a complete survey of all traffic problems in the area, laying down a clear traffic policy and creating and expanding a traffic section. To enhance unimpeded infrastructure development “[b]uilding passed for the period between July 1 1969 and 30 June 1970, totalled 1 408 and were valued at R21 million”. With regards to sewerage and water, “The council... made an application for [and got] borrowing powers to the value of R1 294 000 for sewerage reticulation and to the value of R2 987 000 for water reticulation”. For the general financial good of the Council the Council :Sandton successfully floated its first public loan during the first year of its existence. The public loan raised R 3 000 000 and a further R1 750 000 was raised by private treaty”. This money was to help in general service provision. As far as health services were concerned the council provided “a

regular clinic at the Civic Centre and [had] comprehensive health services for tuberculosis, and all other health matters". With regards to staffing concerns, the council enlisted the services of experts: "309 European" staff members.

In the same breath, the minutes (10 August 1970) reveals that many other old and anticipated challenges were solved. For instance a horticulturist was "appointed who [was to] give priority to turning Hurlingham and George Lea Park (Parkmore) into places of beauty and leisure". Library services were "extended, with provision of more books at the Rivonia and Bryanston branches and the opening of a new branch at Sandown" which was to be the main library. This main library had a "highly qualified head librarian". The government empowered its own. Callinicos (1993:12) observes that around 1930 when the economy was not performing well the Hertzog government created libraries for unemployed and unskilled white youths. This ensured that when the economy improved these white youths would be skilled enough to be competitive in the globally-linked South African economy. The library is an integral part of every community as it is a repository of information and knowledge for subsequent generations.

The most important ingredient for success of Sandton as an entity is also to be gleaned from the minutes' concluding remarks. The report ends:

Sandton's development depends, firstly, on forward planning, and secondly, on the willingness of its residents to assist ... in guiding the town... [and]... view[s] of experts in the future appearance of [the] town. For the second part, a town grows and develops according to the expressed will of the residents and the Council needs to know the opinions of residents. The Council members are anxious at all times to hear opinions and discuss viewpoints where these are concerned with the constructive development and progress of Sandton (Sandton City: 1970).

The important aspect in all this is the power each and every citizen was afforded towards the drawing and the mapping of the path which the city was to take. Every citizen was 'visible' and had a 'voice' Nothing was imposed. With every inch the city moved development-wise the stakeholders were first widely consulted and consensus was sought. With such a scenario one can see that Sandton reflected the true aspirations and dreams of its citizens. To date Sandton has continued to grow, and thanks to the magnetic power exerted by the glossy Sandton City mall and business district, it has flourished into becoming the financial hub of South Africa, and the most glamorous area in Johannesburg.

## Richest Square Mile in Africa

As the Johannesburg CBD faced decay, many corporates took flight from Johannesburg Central to Sandton where they established their headquarters in this salubrious atmosphere. Sandton Exclusive (2014) reports that: “Today many of South Africa’s top 300 companies favour Sandton as the home of their headquarters. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange relocated [from Johannesburg Central] to Sandton in 2000. Investec, Nedcor, South African Breweries, Rand Merchant Bank, SAP and the Deutsche Bank... are established in Sandton.”. (Sandton Exclusive: 2014)

Around Sandton City is “the richest square mile” in Africa (History of Sandton: 2014) The glamour of Sandton can never be fully captured without mentioning the iconic Sandton City shopping mall. Sandton City on the east the largest shopping mall in Africa, and, together with Nelson Mandela Square, forms the largest shopping mall in the Southern Hemisphere (SA Venues 2014).



Figure 3. Sandton City – a world class shopping mall literally a shouting distance from Sandhurst (Source: South African Tourism: 2014)

If anything helped transform the landscape of Sandton to completely new heights, it was the Sandton City shopping mall. Urdang (in Mhlanga 2012) observed that “The creation of

Sandton City Shopping Centre helped transform Sandton from a farming community into a bustling business district”.

Having dwelled on the greater Sandton in general it is beneficial to take a more detailed and particularised look at one of her specific suburbs - Sandhurst. It is the most affluent of Sandton suburbs and very useful and in contrasting and comparing with Alexandra.

**Sandhurst: ‘where the cream of society lives’.**

### **3.1 Geographical Location**

Sandhurst, the most affluent suburb in Sandton, borders Sandton City. It has a total area of 2.45km<sup>2</sup> and a population totalling 2 471 residents thus making up a population density of 1000/ km<sup>2</sup>. Being twice the geographical size of Alexandra, Sandhurst is a very low population density area.

## **Housing and infrastructure**

### **Housing**

If Sandton is the ‘heaven-on-earth’ of Johannesburg, then Sandhurst suburb is its ‘holy of holies’. Fin24 (2014) reported that Sandhurst has 127 houses each valued at more than R20 million, not including holiday homes and any property owned by foreigners:

This small residential enclave in the heart of the financial economic power centre, Sandton, is home to some of the most sought-after and valuable real estate in the country... Its elevated position provides lovely views of the distant Magaliesberg Mountains. The designer homes here are equipped with luxury finishes and on large plots (MoneyWeb Property:2014)

Besides its elevated position that provides lovely panoramic views there are also other factors that have contributed to Sandhurst being a suburb of choice for ultra-rich people. IOL catalogues these factors as “A combination of large plots, safety, and location...” (Study reveals... 2012). SAvenues (2014) observes that another big plus for Sandhurst is the fact that it “... is literally minutes away from all that hums in this part of Johannesburg - Sandton City, Hyde Park shopping centre, the Inanda Club, Wanderers Cricket Club, and leading private schools in the area”.

Skurie (2013) describes the suburb in the most telling way. She observes that “It is difficult to differentiate between what is a house and what is consulate or hotel there”. Its inhabitants never roam in the streets. To have a picture of what sort of people they are she reports:

The greatest insight you can get into the characters of those who live beyond the walls comes from the ornamentation on their gates. One is adorned with bronze sculptures of cow heads, while a stone mermaid sits outside another. Everything from the landscaped pavements to the perimeter walls are detailed. Everything is attractive and elaborate (Skurie 2013).

### **3.1 a. A Sandhurst Mansion in Oxford Street**



Figure 4. A Sandhurst mansion in Oxford Street (Source: AfricaMansions: 2014)



Figure 5. A Sandhurst mansion in Oxford Street (Source: AfricaMansions: 2014)



Figure 6. Interior of a Sandhurst mansion in Oxford Street

(Source: AfricaMansions: 2014)



Figure 7. Interior of a Sandhurst mansion in Oxford Street

(Source: AfricaMansions: 2014)



Figure 8. Dining area of a Sandhurst mansion in Oxford Street

(Source: AfricaMansions: 2014)



Figure 9. Bar area of A Sandhurst mansion in Oxford Street

(Source: AfricaMansions: 2014)

The typical palatial mansion, pictured above, sits on two acres of manicured gardens offering “sweeping views of Sandton from every room” and boasts seven bedrooms all en-suite, ten bathrooms, a gym, a movie cinema, two kitchens, two formal lounges, two formal dining rooms, one gentleman’s bar, a wine cellar, a three-storey lift, a night-club, two full office suites with their own entrances, under floor heating throughout all the rooms, a three-bedroom staff flat with a kitchen, two bathrooms and a lounge, four electronic garages and parking for thirty cars, a full guard-house with toilets, double electronic gates and state-of-the art security systems, boreholes and computerised irrigation systems.

A casual look at advertisements of houses for sale in the area shows great opulence. Houses are all valued above R8 000 000. Most of these houses have been designed by the country’s best architects like Louis Louw and Ian Gandini. Here you have people in total control of nature and their lives. With their cash nothing is impossible. Outside their houses they landscape gardens to their liking. Inside their houses they even tame the weather using air-conditioners. Some of the houses are even weather-proof.

The suburb meets international standards and attracts international celebrities. Jaclyn Skurie (2013) reports that, “When international celebrities visit Joburg, they often stay in Sandhurst. Charlize Theron and Oprah Winfrey regularly stay at The Saxon Boutique Hotel ... Earlier this month, [May 2013], it was rumoured that Canadian teen pop sensation Justin Bieber stayed at The Saxon during the Joburg leg of his South African tour”.

*The Citizen* (2014) corroborates how the posh the suburb is the first choice for celebrities staying in Johannesburg:

Hollywood's power couple, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, will ... be making Johannesburg their home this year [2014]. The couple will ... pay R85 000 a month to rent a mansion in the luxurious Sandhurst suburb in Sandton. The private rent agreement will be for eight months and will cost the stars R680 000 for the full duration...

### **'Gated Community'**

Residents of Sandhurst have such a penchant for security. Money Web (2014) points out that "The area is secure and enclosed with controlled access for privacy and exclusivity" and "most importantly for security". Analysed critically, Sandhurst and many gated communities in urban South Africa, are reproducing apartheid of a different form: social apartheid. Caldeira (2000:213) explains this new form of apartheid:

Segregation – both social and spatial – is an important feature of cities. Rules organising urban space are patterns of social differentiation and separation. These rules vary ... historically, [and they] reveal the principles that structure public life, and indicate how social groups relate to each other in the space of the city... different social groups are again closer to one another but are separated by walls and technologies of security... these [spaces] are privatised, enclosed, and monitored spaces... (Caldeira: 2000)

Sandhurst indeed epitomises the term 'gated community'. SA Venues (2014) reveals this fact noting that, "all entrances to the suburb are boomed and security is high. The streets are heavily patrolled and properties are all behind six foot walls and higher. Infact, Sandhurst is closed to public thoroughfare". This watertight security is listed as one of the major magnets drawing the ultra-rich to the suburb (IOL 2012). IOL (2012) posits that "A combination of large plots, safety, and location make Sandhurst the top suburb in South Africa for the ultra-rich" (IOL2012). This preoccupation with security is not surprising at all considering the fact that Fanon observed the fear of white man has for the black man as waiting to pounce on a white man to rob him and rape his female family members. This also is a form of abyssal thinking that brings about ideas that the outside world is dirty, undesirable, and dangerous and has to be fenced off.

This gating/fencing off of the other parts of town has other repercussions for the city's social fabric. Just like during the days of pass-law the free movement of people, especially the poor

who are still largely black, is highly restricted. The poor can only enter freely if they are employees. Callinicos' (1993: 32) observes that under apartheid "For many black workers, accommodation was tied to the job" and the same thing plays out many years after the gaining of independence.

**'Billionaire street'**



Figure 10. Oxford and Coronation: two of the most expensive streets in Sandhurst and South Africa (R Nyapokoto: 2014)

Coronation Road in Sandhurst is aptly named ‘Billionaire Street’ after the wealthy owners residing in this street, most of whom are Ultra High Net Worth Individuals. (UHNWIs). MoneyWeb reported that “A home in this posh suburb will set you back anything upwards of R18 million, but you can expect to pay upwards of R40 million for a residence in Coronation Road, the second most expensive road in the country” [pipped only by Clifton’s Nettleton Road] (Money Web Property2014). Lance Cohen of Seef (2012) corroborates this opulence, highlighting that Coronation Road is not only one of “the most exclusive and expensive roads” in the country but “on the African continent, commanding average rates of R100 000 per square metre”. In this street, for instance, there are houses for sale for R45 million. One such home was,

...designed by one of the leading architects, Louis Louw. Set on a large plot of 4 800sqm with a fully irrigated, park-like landscaped garden with exotic cycads, walking paths and a rose garden this multi-levelled home offers bespoke contemporary designs and finishes for the ultimate, luxurious lifestyle. With some 2 000sqm in floor space, it is ultra-spacious with 4-metre high ceilings and appropriately high doors and windows. On arrival, you are greeted by a large koi pond and glass doors that open to a double-volume entrance hall. There are a multitude of formal and informal lounge and dining areas, a large study and library, a cinema room and a billard room with an adjoining bar. The living areas are fronted by large covered terraces with outdoor lounges and dining areas that overlook the garden and massive rim-flow swimmingpool. There is also a fully-equipped gymnasium and steam room. The large kitchen is equipped with integrated gaggenau appliances, a butler’s serving room, walk-in pantry as well as a walk-in fridge-freezer and a separate scullery and laundry. On the upper level are four bedrooms suites. The master suite is ultra-spacious and includes iroko and cherry wood carpentry and cabinetry throughout, marble flooring, underfloor heating and air-conditioning, a generator and eight geysers (Money Web 2014).

### **Socio-Economic set-up**

As noted earlier on, the whites who bought into Sandton, especially when urbanisation proper was starting, were rich fortune-seekers: industrialists and highly skilled professionals. These people have always enjoyed a superior socio-economic status over poor and desperate blacks who came and resided in townships providing cheap labour to industries and mines. Those whites who came to the Witwatersrand to seek employment had an edge over blacks in all spheres of life, from the classroom to industry and commerce. The apartheid form of governance ensured that whites were empowered at the expense of blacks. Besides educational empowerment, the workplace saw them further empowered as Seekings and Mattress (2006: 138) observe:

White workers had a strong hand in negotiations on the industrial councils. Not only did they dominate skilled occupations and have the power to negotiate closed-shop agreements, but white unions could always threaten to apply to the government for job reservation when bargaining for wages and racial division of labour. This increased their bargaining power substantially and enabled them to trade higher wages for limited encroachment by African workers in certain occupations. White unions also successfully prevented the training of African workers as artisans. Although the 1944 Apprenticeship Act contained a clause requiring that there would be no discrimination on the grounds of race or colour, no African people were apprenticed outside the homelands until 1975. (Seekings and Mattrass 2006: 138)

Even poor whites who also left rural areas to seek work in town at the same time as poor blacks, fared better than their black counterparts by virtue of their skin colour. This shows that the white skin holds more ontological density than the black colour. Callinicos (1993: 12) explains that:

There were many similarities between the experiences of black and white newcomers from rural areas. But they were also important differences, one of which was the state's privileged treatment of white workers... The Hertzog government, which came to power with the help of the white workers' vote, introduced welfare policies for whites: free medical services, subsidised low-cost housing, and free education. It also protected whites by reserving a number of unskilled and skilled jobs for whites only.

With regards to my research on the residents of Sandhurst, they are not the 'nouveau-riches', which are wont to flaunt their wealth at any given opportunity. They are extremely busy people and trying to draw them to an interview to gain information on the source and amount of their wealth was an impossible mission. This is understandable considering tax issues and security concerns which is the reason why they live in the security enclave in the first place. Thulani Nkomo (2014), a security guard sitting on the plush lawns in Oxford Road had this to say about the anonymous bosses he, and a host of many other guards protected everyday: "This is an area of bigshots. Guys here are loaded with cash. These guys have other problems, not money problems. My boss here changes cars like clothes... real cars... Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bugatti..." However, as Jaclyn Skurie (2013) noted, it is not necessary to meet the people in Sandhurst to know their wealth - the physical architecture of their homes and even their gates says it all.

A survey by WealthInsight in 2012 revealed that “Sandhurst [and central Cape Town] are the preferred suburbs for South Africa’s multi-millionaires... [and]... that 36 multi-millionaires reside in Johannesburg’s leafy northern suburbs of Sandhurst, [with Bryanston following in at a close second]” (SA’s rich... 2102). IOL (2012) also reports these statistics, similarly reporting that, “Sandhurst in Sandton is home to 36 of South Africa’s multi-millionaires, more than any other suburb in the country... It also has the highest multi-millionaire population density in the country, with one in every 20 residences being owned by a multi-millionaire...” (IOL 2012). MoneyWeb Property noted that “...the suburb is home to the highest concentration of millionaires with net assets upwards of USD30 million, excluding their primary residences, with one in every twenty residences in the suburb owned by a millionaire” and reported that twelve per cent of residents in Sandhurst earn more than R2.45 million a year (Money Web2014). This translates roughly to R204 000 per month. Not many people in South Africa earn this in a year. A high school educator employed by the government in Gauteng Province earns a gross salary of roughly R218 400 annually. A maid in Alexandra Township earning a conservative figure of R3 000 per month will need five years to earn this amount. Every month a maid in Alexandra Township is being left behind economically by five years by their neighbours in Sandhurst. Put differently, in Alexandra Township a maid earns in a month what a mogul in Sandhurst earns in half a day!

The whole area of Sandhurst is visibly awash with cash. Even outside the opulence of the houses and the high security perimeter fences, opulence is self-evident. Jaclyn Skurie writing for the City Press (2013) observes that “[d]riving down the quiet streets of that suburb, one finds few signs of life. An occasional SUV – the standard Porsche or Mercedes Benz – rolls by, bouncing over speed humps”. The only life you find out on the streets of Sandhurst are security guards, domestic workers and grounds keepers.

## **Education**

Sandton boasts the state-of-the-art educational facilities with low teacher/child ratios. Education is one of the greatest ways that leads to upward social mobility in life. Good quality education ensures a great future for its recipients as it unlocks endless opportunities and widens the horizons of possibilities in life. Education liberates the mind. Education is one pillar of apartheid that the government used to empower the white population over the black population. Seekings and Nattrass (2006 :133) posits that,

Education was central to the state's project of ensuring that all white people enjoyed an advantaged position in society. Differential education was integral to the apartheid distributional regime... The state assumed responsibility for almost all education in the country... Education was important because it ensured white South Africans were given huge advantages in the labour market, which in turn meant higher wages and enhanced capacity to pay privately for health care and to save for retirement. Insofar as white South Africans were already privileged, differential education served to reproduce this privilege. Insofar as some white South Africans had few skills in the 1950s, the disadvantage of one generation was not passed onto the next. (Seekings and Nattrass 2006 :133)

All being equal, Sandhurst children are assured of a bright future because of the availability of quality education in and around their suburb. These are schools that are as old as Sandton itself and, just like the suburb, they have operated with unhindered success. Schools which are near Sandhurst School are top schools such as St David's Marist Inanda, Crawford College, Sandhurst Preparatory School, Redhill School and many others. Sandhurst Preparatory College is one such school. The school's website shows the school has skilled, graduate educators and that this,

...‘boutique’ preparatory school’s environment will afford the precious boys and girls... opportunities... [in life by ensuring that they]... help young people to become, happy, confident and competent people of hope and personal integrity, with a deep sense of justice and compassion, and with a sense of social responsibility to positively contribute to and transform the world around them (Sandhurst Prep: 2014).

With classes whose maximum number of pupils is twenty per class excellent education is possible. These children have the added advantage that their community is peopled with role models - their own parents, and the residents of Sandhurst - people who themselves are transforming the world. They can dream, because they see real people, some of whom they are acquainted with and some who are even their own parents, living their dreams.

One of the crowning ivory towers of education in Sandton is Redhill School which prides itself as having achieved ‘100% pass rate for [the past] 39 consecutive years...and 100% of [their] university aspirants have been successful’. It is the ‘Essence of Education’ part of their website that is most telling:

Our aim is holistic – to develop the whole pupil, emotionally, socially and intellectually and physically. We provide an enriching experience and a stimulating environment, which will provide each child with the opportunity to

develop as fully as his/her abilities, talents, determination and ambition will allow. Redhill's creative approach to education is designed to stimulate curiosity, mental dexterity and awareness and to encourage initiative, self-reliance and self-discipline. Pupils also thrive in the free-spirited nature. From grade 8 onwards, pupils are taught to take responsibility of themselves, their emotions, their lives and their work. Pupils are allowed freedom to experiment and they know that it is a safe environment to make mistakes and fail. Risk-taking is an important skill. Pupils are allowed to question, to debate robustly and to reach conclusions themselves. Redhill also believes that pupils must be taught to make choices, but they must be also take cognisance of the consequences of their choices. This incorporates the idea of accountability (Redhill 2014).

The great array of skills imparted to the learners shows that Redhill is churning out innovators, business people and captains of industry. The quality of this education is liberatory. It gives one the cutting-edge in society and prepares one to adapt creatively to the capitalist global political economy.

Crawford College is a school whose catchment area is Sandhurst, Sandton. One does not even need to visit the school to know what goes on there. A phone call to the Crawford Group of Schools' call centre revealed interesting facts: learners from grade eight upwards pay a staggering R92 600 per year. It's not surprising that in 2013 99.3% of its matriculants qualified for university entrance and they had a 100% matriculation pass rate. Classes are very small with some classes having as little as fifteen children. Teachers are highly qualified and experienced and well-motivated by high salaries. A visit to the school is a mesmerising treat. Like the suburb itself, the school gardens are massive and neatly manicured. The school has state of the art classrooms and laboratories. A casual stroll on the school grounds in the afternoon shows interesting facts. At the four tennis courts in the school Tony, a private tennis coach offers one-hour private tennis lessons for R180. This is a 'necessity' parents will still pay for after paying almost R93 000 in school fees. The school, like the town itself, has no record, printed or archived, of any disturbances.

## **1994 to date**

After 24 years of independence, Sandton is a glitzy success story:

Sandton boasts world class accommodation, state-of-the-art shopping malls, rapid rail transport [the Gautrain], conference facilities, nearby sporting arenas, medical facilities, theatres, art galleries and restaurants. It is a magnet for those who seek vibrant innovation and the opportunities that only the African continent can offer. With one of the best climates in the world, Sandton serves as a springboard for

tourists and business travellers who wish to explore the natural beauty and opportunities that South Africa has to offer (Sandton Exclusive: 2014).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to reveal the fact that the ‘zone of being’ is indeed one of regulation and emancipation. Non-violence is the hallmark of the ‘zone of being’. Peace and tranquillity is ensured in the suburb and today Sandton, over forty-five years, stands strong as some of the most sought-after real estate in the whole of Africa, even attracting the attention of international buyers.

The chapter has also shown that the Sandtonians have been really privileged under apartheid, receiving preferential treatment from the government. These privileges have been in form of sound education, apprenticeship and the ring-fencing of jobs from competition from black workers. The residents of the area have been portrayed having autonomy and the right to self-determination as shown by the extensive consultation with the authorities governing Sandton, from the buy-in and participatory nature of the growth of the town to basic things such as the naming of the town. Self-determination means freedom and choice. These two are aspects of life that characterise liberty.

The fact that the municipality was autonomous and well-funded has also ensured prosperity for the suburb. This has been aided on the whole by one of the signature quality of ‘zones of being’: non-violence. The study has shown that only in exceptional circumstances, like the South African war of 1899 -1902 between Afrikaners and the English, was the city’s peace disturbed by external factors in its forty-five-year history. Besides this setback, Sandton has largely enjoyed unfettered peace that has bred prosperity beyond measure. For inhabitants, Sandton has indeed been a theatre of dreams that saw the growth of the best real estate in Africa. The physical glamour also bespeaks the prosperity the inhabitants have had in all spheres of life.

# **CHAPTER 5**

## **CONCLUSION**

*Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by actions of human beings.*

**Nelson Mandela**

*Certainly, no-one will say that Alexandra is free. Not yet. The community has too many roads to walk before that can become reality.*

**Alexandra Liaison Committee**

## **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides findings, conclusions of the whole research project and recommendations from the researcher. It links the research question and research objectives to the empirical findings in the field of study, and weigh and deduce to what extent Fanonian critical decolonial perspective, is helpful in unravelling the roots of poverty and the widening inequalities between blacks and whites.

The chapter uses empirical findings to show that Fanonian critical decolonial perspectives have indeed been relevant and useful in helping to unmask and lay bare the fact that poverty and inequalities have their genesis in the imperialist, colonialist and apartheid projects perpetuated in South Africa by the Dutch, the British and the Nationalist Party, which created skewed power relations that straddle all aspects of black lives.

The chapter reveals the fact that blacks are not inferior to whites as the colonial project of ‘civilising’ the world purported. In fact, the chapter reveals the fact that blacks have instead been systematically inferiorised over the years through brutalisation, denial of sound education and lack of skills training. It is this brutalisation that has created what Fanon calls

‘zombies’ that appear to be lazy, intellectually inferior and improvident, amongst other vices associated with black skin.

The chapter concludes that the Fanonian decolonial critical theory is superior to any other theories that have attempted to explore and explain poverty in the South. Fanon shows that the process of brutalisation is itself as an act that affects both the victim and the victimiser. Fanon’s superiority will also be shown in the way in which he offers solutions to the great historical logjam that is brought about by the colonial/modernisation ‘civilising project.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Causes of poverty amongst blacks and affluence amongst whites**

Empirical research on the two case studies of Sandton and Alexandra Township managed to come up with several findings with regards to the research objectives of the study. The study was conceived to explore the roots of poverty amongst the black community as opposed to the affluence common amongst the white communities in South Africa using the critical Fanonian decolonial thought. The Fanonian critical decolonial theory deploying the following thematic tools: Abyssal lines, Manichaean structure, coloniarity of being: the black condition and structural violence unmasked several insights:

### **Abyssal Thinking and Coloniality of Being**

Abyssal thinking, a supremacist thinking that characterises blacks as being inferior to white people in the hierarchy of creation, was empirically proved to be the cause of poverty and lack of agency amongst the black community of South Africa and the affluence of the white community. All other evils perpetrated on blacks are borne of this abyssal thinking. Abyssal thinking was shown to have destructive tentacles that straddle the whole life of blacks across space and time in South Africa. The study adequately proved that Sandton and Alexandra Township are “geographically... linked” as reported by Meintjes (1980) The sharp distinction between these two urban locales delineated by the M1- a road not more than a hundred metres wide – is abyssal, with race as the organising principle. The road, a conspicuous abyssal line, portrays vertical relationships that saw the black skin being characterised as inferior and the white skin being characterised as superior with the result that the subtle socio-economic engineering ushered blacks into hellish conditions in Alexandra and whites settled under salubrious conditions in Sandton. A conducive environment for success exists in the Sandton whilst the environment in Alexandra Township hinders

development. Whites prospered and blacks degenerated. Abyssal thinking manifested itself physically as it created ‘zones’. One zone, the zone of non being, occupied by Alexandra Township, the study proved empirically to be hellish, and the other zone occupied by Sandton, the zone of being, is salubrious. This differential structuring, Manichaean structure that create radical situations is explained below in detail.

### **The Manichaean Structure**

The study found out that indeed Sandton and Alexandra are geographically connected also set apart by a Manichaean structuring. According to the Fanonian critical decolonial theory, abyssal thinking creates these radical distinctions or zones. Sandton, the zone of being, is blessed with fine aspects of life whilst Alexandra Township, occupying the other zone, the zone of non-being, is characterised by damnation. The former according to (1952; 1961) is a zone occupied by the colonizer (and the powerful under capitalism). The latter zone is occupied by blacks. The study, using fanon as the lenses through which to explore causes of poverty and privilege amongst blacks and whites in South Africa respectively, showed that the spatial arrangement of Alexandra and Sandton is truly Manichaean in character. Predominantly white people stay in Sandton whilst blacks stay in Alexandra Township. This is generally the spatial arrangement of most township. Distinctions continue to exist twenty four years after apartheid was abolished.

The study found out that Sandton’s history since its inception into a fully-fledged urban centre around the 1960s has always been characterised by regulation and emancipation and consequently prosperity. Residents of Sandton have always enjoyed full citizenship rights as the study showed. They lived in an environment of liberty, autonomy and equality. The study noted that Sandton grew as an autonomous entity with full powers to determine its destiny, and most importantly, every step Sandton municipality took development-wise was done under wide consultation of its residents. The consultation done to choose the name of the city that resulted in Sandton, an acronym from Sandown and Bryanston, being the name of this urban locale, is a case in point. Residents are equal and have a voice in the making of the city as Carruthers (1993:26) showed. Added to liberty, autonomy and equality was has always been, peace and tranquillity. This has always been the order of the day. The study found out that it was only during the period between 1899 to 1902 during the South African War when the British and the Afrikaners in South Africa locked horns fighting for control of the country that Sandton was ever disrupted in a significant way. After this war, Sandton went through

unfettered reconstruction and phenomenal development. The study, through this finding, concludes that sovereignty, and liberty plus sustained peace and tranquillity are the major ingredients of success amongst the whites. Sandton today stands as a true testament of success. So are its residents who are predominantly white with a few blacks trickling in lately. These blacks, because of wealth, have joined the upper class enjoyed by whites in the current neo-apartheid set up. The study also unearthed this fact that race morphed into class after open racism was officially abolished in 1994. However, the study concluded, the same power relations between the poor blacks were the latter are exploited and poor are still intact, the study observed.

The study found stark distinctions across the M1, in Alexandra Township. A critical study of the history of the township since its inception in 1905 established traits consistent with the Fanonian critical decolonial thinking that in the zone of non-being appropriation and dispossession is the order of the day. In the zone of non-being, Grosfoguel (2013) posits that violence is a permanent feature naturalised into every day life. The study found out that Alexandra was always under the threat of being annihilated as it was seen by the government as an anomalous feature surrounding white suburbia. Instability and threat of arrest, caused psychological stress on the residents as the thought of forced removals always lingered in their minds. Acts promulgated by the white supremacist government like the Slums Act of 1934, Motor Careers Act of 1930, Abolition of Passes Act of 1952 and the Group Areas Act of 1950 and Bantu Education Act of 1954 coupled with police raids, taxi wars, school protests and boycotts, as the study found out, bespeaks of the zone of non being posited by the Fanonian critical decolonial thinking. Alexandra, the study found out never had a day when it knew total peace. Children could not attend school every day so could parents not attend work and engage normally in daily acts of self-actualisation. The study concludes that disenfranchised, blacks, residing under such hellish conditions lacking in peace, tranquillity, autonomy and liberty denied black people an environment conducive for success in life. Blacks could not be anything but failure and despondent. On the whole, the study concluded that Blacks are not ‘problem’ people, but people with problems.

The study also found out that Fanon’s (1961) statement that “the town belonging to colonised people...the native town...is a place of ill-fame, peopled by people of evil repute...is a world without spaciousness; men live on top of each other...is a hungry town...starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light..is a crouching village...wallowing in the mire” is applicable

to Alexandra in its entirety, the study found out. A drive around the township, revealed untold squalor and decadence exemplified in the extreme by Setswetla, the worst part of Alexandra that is full of shacks. The study found out that raw sewage flows everywhere, roads are full of potholes, service delivery is scant and that Alexandrians are in want.

Planned in 1905 to accommodate only 30 000 people, but to date with close to a million people residing in it, as the study found out, Alexandra is extremely overcrowded. Only blacks live here, testifying to the fact that blacks as a community have been dealt a heavy hand by colonial racial socio-economic engineering. The by-products of such machinations are hellish conditions being experienced by blacks in this township aptly nicknamed ‘Gomorrah’ by its residents. The majority of Alexandrians do not have jobs, the study found out. The study through, Mbongwa (2005) found out a sad state of affairs whereby “Alexandra looks like a Sunday every day. People don’t work’. This shows the dire states of joblessness in the township. Residents, uneducated and unskilled, loaf around the town or have to resort to crime to make ends meet. The study concluded that without education and skills blacks will always be on the fringes of the capitalist economy and poverty will always live from hand to mouth.

The study also sought to explore how colonialism developed into capitalism and how current neo-apartheid coloniality perpetuates poverty amongst blacks and opulence on the rich classes. The study found out that indeed 1994 independence was a window-dressing affair that brought only cosmetic changes to the life of black South Africans. The disillusionment that the currently grips the township of Alexandra is generasable to the feelings of the majority of black South Africans in the country. Interviewees interviewed by this researcher and information from secondary sources that informed this study clearly revealed the fact that post independent colonial leaders, if anything, inherited the logic of colonialism and, together with owners of capital, continue to oppress and impoverish blacks. Indeed as Trevor Manuel (2014), observed, the new post-colonial government leaders only solved problems of a ‘political nature’, without seeing economic gains reaching the poor (blacks). The study concluded that the liberal - capitalist claims that in a free-market economy economic gains trickle naturally to the poor is not true. This has not happened in South Africa. On the contrary the, gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Alexandra continues to decay whilst Sandton is flourishing.

## **Structural violence**

The study found out that even though open racism ended in 1994, the suffering and dehumanisation of black people did not end. Underemployment, a situation where jobs are available but people cannot occupy them because of lack of skills, is rampant. The fact that many black foreign nationals come to South Africa and get employed in jobs that demand high skills is a testament to this phenomenon. The study came to the conclusion that the joblessness of black South Africans has its roots in the structural arrangement of the apartheid regime whose logic of exclusion of blacks from quality education and skills attainment, still persists.

The Fanonian decolonial theory was thus very helpful in unearthing these findings. Had another theory, like Marxism been deployed, it would not have been possible to trace the hierarchical nature of the current geo-political world to race as the organising principle of current human relations. Marxism, like noted in the second chapter of this study, preoccupies itself with classes without delving into history to find out how these classes came into being especially where two different skin colours are concerned.

## **Recommendations**

This study, conceived as the Fanonian critical decolonial thinking, envisages and recommends decoloniality as a theory under whose thoughts modernity can be completely liberated. Modern liberal capitalism results in some sections of people prospering and another section wallowing in a cesspit of deepening poverty. As mentioned at the onset of this study, critical decolonial thinking has, as its chief objective, the desire to liberate humanity, which has "...been forced down to animal level by imperial powers" (Fanon: 1961:79) and create 'a new man' Fanon (1961:67)

Having observed that the problems bedevilling the black people in South Africa has its genesis in the abyssal way in which blacks are characterised as being inferior to white people, the study recommends a novel way of thinking that is free of biases against, and prejudices against races. This benefits all humanity. The presence of biases and prejudices in human relations has debilitating results in both oppressor and oppressed in the sense that, as Fanon (1952; 1969) observed, it brutalises both. In the act of brutalising the other, the oppressor loses his/her humanity. The brutalising process also takes away the humanity of the victim. In a statement pregnant with optimism, Fanon (1952) advises that "We shall see that 'another

solution is possible’ It implies restructuring the world”. Restructuring the world means demolishing all ‘constructed’ power relations. Throwing away the abyssal thinking into a sea of forgetfulness, thus becomes a liberating act that ushers in brotherhood, equality of opportunity and prosperity to anyone, black or white, who applies themselves diligently in life.

The study, having unearthed the root causes of poverty amongst blacks as inferiorisation of blacks through denying them peace, education and skills , recommends that holistic poverty alleviation strategies be employed to root out poverty completely. Enduring poverty alleviation strategies include providing quality education and skills to blacks. Giving of grants is but a stop-gap measure that ironically leads to dependency and also creates the spirit of entitlement amongst blacks. The study also recommends the building of multi-storey accommodation flats to try and ease overcrowding in the shacks and stand-alone houses in the suburb.

The Afro-centric theorising is recommended because of its high relevance if the South desires to solve challenges bedevilling it. The Fanonian critical decolonial theory advocates greatly against the myth of the epistemic superiority of Western Knowledge. It is the author’s take that privileging the west as the home of knowledge is also part of the problem that sees South Africa, and countries situated in the global South, marooned in intractable challenges as Euro-centric theories cannot be applied to problems of the South in trying to solve them. In any case, Europe caused the damage in the South through colonising beings and knowledge so it cannot be used to cure the problems it caused. The South itself is a credible home of knowledge. A Decolonial turn resulting in shifting of the geography and biography of reason is the way out of the challenges of the South such as poverty. This decolonial shift, the study recommends, should be inculcated and taught at all centres of knowledge starting from crèches up to universities, as these are the chief institutions that imparts knowledge. By so doing, blacks will be liberated from inferiority, thus making them pro-active agents in modern life.

Ultimately the Fanonian Critical Decolonial thought envisages a ‘pluriversal’ (and not ‘universal’) world system because unitary systems are oppressive to many a people and prosper at the expense of the ‘other’. In a pluriversal world there is no ‘other-ing’ and since it is a world where it’s possible for black and white to easily “touch each other, feel the other, discover each other” thus making possible the disappearance of the abyssal, metaphorical

road between Alexandra Township and Sandton. This breaking of this psychic abyssal hold is necessary to grant previously-disadvantaged communities the wherewithal to break the vicious cycle of poverty and also “to break down the barriers of division and create a country where they will be neither whites nor blacks, [neither rich nor poor], just South Africans, free [from poverty and racism] and united in diversity” (O.R. Tambo quoted in Callinicos 2002: 35).

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