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LIBERATIVE BLACK THEOLOGY: A CASE STUDY OF RACE IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

Our history in South Africa has shown that we are largely segregated and unequal, as race continues to define the opportunities of many. Post-apartheid interactions continue to be troubling in racial terms. The new interracial relationships that are created in religious organisations can become a model of social cohesion for South African society. However, Christian organisations are structured in patriarchal and hierarchical ways with their authoritarianism; hence, the roots of oppression lie deeper. Black theology is part of a larger ongoing movement of liberation and must turn its attention to persistent forces such as racism that cause human alienation. This article will attempt to analyse racism by unpacking the findings of an empirical research project on diversity, and explore the transformative methodology of Black theology in raising critical awareness on identity issues within South African theological education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our history in South Africa has shown that we are largely segregated and unequal, as race continues to define the opportunities of many. Durrheim *et al.* (2011:19) state that

> these post-apartheid interactions continue to be troubling in racial terms. They take place in a context where the memory of racism is still fresh and where the legacy of apartheid is visible in concrete forms in the shape of persistent racial inequality and segregation.

In addition to these material and structural aspects of persistent racialisation, there are also social consequences, and religions play their part therein.

Within theological education, church denominations have restructured their education for *all* their members, resulting in growing multicultural student bodies. The latter reflect a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds, personal histories, and theological commitments, and represent diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation (Dreyer 2012:504). These religious organisations are mediating institutions between the private and public spheres. As such, churches and theological institutions have the potential to draw people out of their private, racially segregated lives into a social space where human interactions are more intimate than in the public arena (Naidoo 2015a:1). The new interracial relationships that are created in religious organisations can become a model of social cohesion for South African society. However, in far too many instances, the reality is that "churches, the presumed agents of reconciliation, are at best impotent and at worst accomplices in strife" (Volf 1996:36). What kind of Christians will such a church and its accompanying theological training institutions form, and how are future ministers being equipped to deal with their own racial identity or race relations in the church?

Churches should, by definition, be places of acceptance and love, but can be arenas for subtle racial tension, sexism, and homophobia. Christian organisations are structured in patriarchal and hierarchical ways with their authoritarianism. This ensures that the male prevails over the female and the clergy over the laity; hence, the roots of oppression lie deeper (Kee 2006:76). This is problematic as it points to an issue of religious values and not simply of social management. Church structures must liberate rather than control, as Motlhabi (1973:119) states:

> We cannot have the authoritarians who try to tell us what we believe or what to believe and who have the power to reward or punish us. We need a Church which is authentically a Church of the people for their liberation.

Motlhabi draws this conclusion concerning the churches, but it is also applicable to society at large; hence, there is a need for a theology of the oppressed, or Black theology. Black theology asks on whose side God should be – the side of the oppressed, or the side of the oppressors. It seeks to reinterpret the meaning of Christ, "in light of the very real experiences, largely of struggle, oppression and the sheer hardship of [B]lack people" (Reddie 2010:95). It investigates the notions of racial and cultural identity in relation to faith (Hopkins 1989:451). The race issue is a political one,

easily identified but an expression of factors in society that are not so obvious. Racism is the narrative which explains why things are "just so". Motlhabi (1973:119) suggests that racism arises from a deeper ideological level in order to maintain interests through certain social structures that perpetuate inequalities of power. Black South Africans have suffered many injustices at the hands of White people, continue to do so within institutions, whether we choose to recognise it or not. "We need to be aware of how racial identity informs power relationships within institutions" (Kujawa-Holbrook 2002:142). This article will attempt to analyse racism in theological education by unpacking the findings of an empirical research project on diversity, and explore the potential emancipatory role of Black theology in South African theological education.

2.   THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This project was a three-year study in two Protestant theological institutions in order to understand how diversity is attended to within their institutional culture. Diversity was represented in the interlocking issues of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation. For the purposes of this article, only the issue of racial diversity will be explored in order to examine the ways in which "difference" is constructed and construed; how its significance shifts; how it is operationalised in society, and, most critically, why "difference" continues to matter (Naidoo 2015a:2). The point of highlighting differences is to show the implicit values and norms that need to be thoroughly articulated, analysed, evaluated, deconstructed, and reconstituted (Lee 2009:21). It also involves understanding the underlying theological criteria that lead to assumptions and conceptualisations, which need to be self-conscious and open to criticism.

The overall aim of this research project was to understand the critical role of the theological institution's culture in relation to student formation. Ministerial formation is about ongoing development of identity, reclaiming one's culture, gender, and other aspects of identity as part of moving towards greater authenticity (Borysenko 1999; Palmer 2000). To do this, the concept of "diversity" was explored within the institutional culture by first seeking to understand how theological institutions deal with diversity within this institutional culture and how these interactions of dealing with diversity ultimately form and prepare future religious leaders. The second aim was to establish whether theological institutions exhibit distinctive cultures according to the heritage of the church tradition, in dealing with diversity, within the formational mandate.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this research is built on culture (Geertz 1966), which was the major lens through which to understand educational organisations and their dynamics. Geertz defines culture as "*publically available* symbolic forms through which collectives and individuals experience meaning culture" (Geertz 1966:26). Swindler (1986:273) elaborates on Geertz's perspective by emphasising that culture includes shared practices and ideas, and interprets culture as "tool kits" of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews that provide the cultural components people use to construct "strategies of action". The institutional culture is a "script" that guides, in powerful ways, how the various actors – teaching staff, administrators, staff, and students – play their roles. It is also true that an institutional culture is not a self-contained culture; it is more accurately a subculture of the broader social and religious world outside the institution. Students are formed by the institution's culture as they interact with it and others in the learning context, which functions as a plausibility structure for nurturing and sustaining the culture's shared meanings and symbols.

To understand the role of the institutional culture, special focus was placed on a campus climate framework (Hurtado *et al.* 1998). Organisation culture

> occurs as if the institution were an interconnected web that cannot be understood unless one looks not only at the structure and natural laws of that web, but also at the actors' interpretations of the web itself (Geertz 1966:5).

The task was to identify the assumptions, patterns, values, and myths that "form" students within the area of diversity: race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation. In conducting an analysis of the culture in theological institutions, the latter provided reasons for their beliefs and actions, and their orientating action toward some normative goal.

The way in which diversity is managed could create a source of division or be used as a positive element in religious identity formation. The question, in this instance, is how students might relate theology to their own context, while also attempting to understand the other, such that their own presuppositions are challenged and their work in society becomes more effective (Naidoo 2015b:79). This can help students and faculty understand the formative means that institutional culture employs, so that together they might find a common theological discourse.

2.2 Methodology

This project used qualitative research, a critical ethnographic approach, which involves intensive study of the characteristics of a given culture (O'Reilly 2009:4). Critical ethnography is "an attempt to expose the hidden agendas and describe power relations at play" (O'Reilly 2009:55).

The research sample consisted of two theological training institutions from the Protestant tradition; one college from the Independent tradition (Institution A) and one from the Mainline tradition (Institution B). To explore whether institutions respond differently and exhibit different cultures, a comparative study of theological institutions was done; hence, two colleges were selected. These contrasts methodologically help one observe cultural differences more easily, as each institution articulates a normative goal in its culture. The selection was based on five criteria: an accredited academic programme with the Department of Education; education for church leadership; contact teaching sessions; a residential community, and different Protestant traditions represented.

These institutions have separate intellectual, religious and social worlds; the two institutions do not at all represent the totality of those two broader religious traditions. Theologically, both these institutions are different in terms of understanding humanity's low and sinful state, the authority of the Bible, and salvation in other religions. Independent churches are recently established, can be loosely forming, are mostly autonomous in terms of church governance, and focus on bringing religious discipline to Christian and social life according to God's plan as inscribed in the Bible. The Mainline churches include the historic churches. In addition to a spiritual focus, their goal is to achieve inclusiveness and justice for all, both in church and, more generally, in the world (Carroll & Wheeler 1987). The selected institutions allowed access to their campuses and placed no restrictions on what could be observed or who could be interviewed. This placed a degree of risk on the part of the institution. The researcher guaranteed anonymity. While such caution is not typical of ethnographies, disguising names, omitting some specific information about the institution and their histories was necessary (O'Reilly 2009:62), since theological training institutions in South Africa constitute a small universe and it is possible to identify institutions.

Data was collected by means of ethnographic fieldwork, which took time and prolonged involvement in a setting. Over a two-year period, the researcher visited each institution and conducted interviews and focus groups with students, attended classes, visited student residences, attended chapel services, took part in recreational activities, had meals with students

both on and off campus, attended a graduation ceremony, and conducted interviews with all tiers of staff. An equal amount of time was spent in each institution in collecting data, with a total of approximately 20 formal student interviews, 4 focus groups with students, and approximately 10 staff interviews. Interviews with staff and students were conducted on a voluntary basis, with the Student Representative Council (SRC) acting as gatekeepers. In addition, video recordings of events, short notes, and institutional documents were collected. Observation was another key method of collecing data; the idea was to let the formative process unfold and watch students and staff as they experienced and negotiated their institution's culture. This emic approach investigates what has meaning for participants or local people and how they imagine and explain things.

The analysis was done using thematic analysis,

> which involved identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning; coding and classifying data according to themes; and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking commonalties, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles (Creswell 2011:156).

To help with trustworthiness of the analysis, an independent coder, who was experienced in qualitative data analysis, helped verify the findings.

2.3 Findings

The sampled institutions are the official learning centres of the denomination, with an average student body of 35-60 full-time residential students. At Institution A (Independent tradition), the student body consisted of 25 males and 10 females. The majority are young Black Africans with four Coloured and seven White students. The average age was 25 years. The teaching staff comprised six full-time teaching staff and three part-time lecturers; all were White, except for one Black African male lecturer. Institution B (part of the Mainline tradition) had 45 males and 13 females. The majority were Black Africans, with three White, two Indian, and five Coloured students, including eight students from the wider African continent. The average age was 37 years. The teaching staff consisted of a multiracial group of eight full-time and two part-time lecturers. All staff were male, except for one female lecturer. Racial diversity was present within both institutions, with a majority of Black students; other races are in the minority, with some African students from the continent.

All students were preparing for church ordination in a three-year programme. As residential communities, both institutions had particular activities throughout the day, with meals, prayer time, classes, group

activities, church services, recreational activities, and community outreach. Students are being formed within a particular institutional culture, within the ethos and values of the larger church denomination.

It was evident that, in both institutions, there is an official stance on non-racilism, non-sexism, and equal treatment of all; however, in practice, these value statements are not intentionally planned for, or aligned within the institution. In the formal curriculum, some modules address social diversity. For instance, the Mainline tradition (Institution B) has a module on "Gender Studies", "Ethics and Sexuality", and even conducted a workshop on sexuality. The Independent tradition (Institution A) has a self-awareness course, "Knowing yourself and others", and a spiritual formation module. In both institutions, formation groups, community-building activities, meals, and recreational activities deal with spirituality and community life. These activities should help with personal ministerial identity development and could impact on social cohesion among students.

Interaction between groups reflected a microcosm of South African society, with associated behaviours and attitudes that alluded to a lack of trust, a lack of awareness of different cultures, and a lack of interest in engaging others. Students are keenly aware of the broader context: the inequality, racial stereotypes, and separate realities. There were incidents that reported on racism, tribalism, cultural misunderstandings, discrimination based on language, and verbalisations of internalised oppression and domination. In both institutions, the SRC has a key role in "managing" student interpersonal issues:

> The [B]lacks they are in majority and they clique together, so whatever issue we will bring, or whatever issue there is, they will stick together. To socialize it's always [B]lacks with [B]lacks and [W]hites with [W]hites. What I can say is even when the living arrangements, it's hard for you to stay with a [W]hite person because they decide where you should stay. So for us to relate is maybe we have to greet each other in the morning.

> I ended up saying you are going to present in Afrikaans be sure that I'm going to leave because I'm just wasting my time I don't understand what you are saying. So this language issue really we must beat around the bush we must deal with it straight.

> Hidden agendas because actions speak louder than words … there are other things that you can just see from the people but you cannot prove [a [W]hite person is bringing expired food for [B]lack people] … that one I don't like it, it's wrong … for me it's an insult.

> I remember last year they had to call the principal to address this thing of cultures, how people worship, how [C]olo[u]reds worship,

> how [B]lack people worship, because it was a problem – people felt that when that one leads, he or she leads others away, there was tension.

In both institutions, there was a lack of open spaces to constructively hold a dialogue about diversity issues or racism. There was generally a culture of silence, as students were afraid to speak for fear of being ostracised. In addition to the strong authoritarian culture of traditions, the emotive nature of issues, and not enough trained people to facilitate formation, there was hardly any openness to start the conversation. In Institution B, it was evident that management had a very authoritarian approach, whereas, in Institution A, there was a fear of challenging White management:

> … we haven't dealt with that kind of, or engaged in that kind of debate you know. I think it's there, in the back of all of us, in the back of all our minds, but, I think everybody just says, 'you know what, let's just leave it as it is and just move on maybe a miracle will happen, I don't know (laughing), you know. So there isn't, personally I think there is no space of dealing with those kind of issues.

> Basically the students were chewed because nobody tells authority what to do. Authority is authority here and that sad. The question I asked my formatter yesterday is, tell me what is the college's definition of 'formation' my understanding of formation is that my character is supposed to be bold yes but right now yes my character is broke, my spirit is broken down, I am treated like a five year old.

> [referring to the students] I think everyone's mind is that there is something about the colour of your skin. They won't say it but you can sometimes feel it ...

> We think about this but we cannot speak about it.

> … on the surface we are together, we agree but inside, you know, inside the person, is a struggle.

Issues of identity and race were not embedded in ministerial formation due to a lack of broad understanding of ministerial formation. Both institutions strongly focus on academic issues, and formation issues were not prioritised. At the same time, these religious communities are firmly focused on conformity and "performance"; thus, difference is not readily welcomed. On the whole, there was a lack of real community.

> We realized that even though we have orientation week even though we moved together not much was done to break the cliques within different groups and that now creates problems because we now have people moving in their cliques, shutting out people … they don't want to interact with the bigger group.

> I don't think it's [formation] working. I thinking people are just conforming … conforming because the institution says do it.

Two different approaches to diversity emerged from the findings. In both colleges, the institutional culture represented that of the broader church, and the curriculum focused on training church ministers for that particular denomination. Doctrine, polity, and theology were driven by the broader church. The historical make-up and tradition shaped its approach in handling diversity issues. Even though the issue of race was not as contested as other issues of diversity, and while there was theological agreement that racism is morally wrong and that theological colleges need to address the issue of race, there was less agreement about how to attend to it within institutions. In Institution A, there was a strong affirmation that "we don't have a problem here – we are brothers and sisters in the Lord and we do not see colour". Theologically, racism was viewed as a personal sin. In this theological worldview, the wrongs of racial discrimination are dealt with by looking inward, dealing with individual prejudice. This can be solved by the repentance and conversion of the sinful individuals at fault (Naidoo 2014:243). There is a strong focus on piety; the heart needs to be changed before structures can be changed. This tradition has a strong sense of conformity to biblical truth, as it is interpreted by the tradition, and it does not necessarily include the secular ideals of human rights. Management of this institution was of the opinion that, in relation to the larger church denomination, the institution had made great strides in unifying different training schools and in focusing on treating all students equally. A strong assimilation culture was evident, as the church tradition attempts to create a racially unified training system. Educators were of the opinion that social integration should occur naturally. It would seem that issues are not dealt with directly and viewed as the broader church's issue, as the college is *just* a subsidiary of a larger denomination. For example, if students cannot tolerate others, they have the opportunity to study via "distance education". It would seem that there was a "fear that embracing diversity would result in the theological institution's atmosphere becoming contrary to the faith" (Abadeer 2009:189), becoming politicised. There was a certain level of indoctrination, as teaching goes unchallenged with issues being spiritualised. There appeared to be a lack of critical engagement with social issues, since the tradition is viewed as being historically, politically conservative (Anderson 2004:4). Within the institutional culture, nearly the entire White staff was of the opinion that there were no problems with living together, although students felt otherwise. The students showed a general reluctance to verbalise their concerns, as they needed the school's recommendation for graduation. However, some Black students stated very clearly that they felt discriminated by the language policy of

English and Afrikaans and that they did not have the option to learn in their home language like other students. Other students were apathetic towards discussing the race issue and had to simply "tolerate" and put up with others and cultural differences.

At Institution B, there was a general openness to dialogue with issues of difference, with the focus on social justice, and the "transformation of the structures of society". Historically, this tradition has been at the forefront of the church struggle in South Africa, with a strong focus on socio-political issues. All ministries are fully integrated racially. Theologically, sin and salvation are viewed as having deep social dimensions. Racial discrimination is more than the sum of personal prejudice; it is viewed as a function of power, class, and systems of domination (Naidoo 2014:243). In this theological view, social systems and structures have to be addressed, which, if corrected, will impact on the effects of personal racial prejudices, whether individuals get more righteous or not. However, in the institution, there was a lack of relational structures for dealing with racism. It is assumed that sufficient progress has been made on this social issue; hence, students are aware of racism and it is, therefore, not prioritised or linked to personal development. There were many reported incidents of racism with a majority African Black student body by minority races as well as incidents of tribalism, with a dominant African culture group being favoured. There were cultural divides and strong cliques in the community in terms of language groups. A multicultural teaching staff was present, with poor gender diversity; however, academics were prioritised over the formational dimensions. Students were of the opinion that there was a lack of confidentiality and trust about personal issues and they were reluctant to speak up, due to the authoritarian nature of management.

Both institutions do not facilitate the work of racism for different reasons: it maintains the *status quo* and creates an ethos that favours the dominant group as the norm. The institutions have not prioritised these issues for ministerial formation and are not well-equipped to facilitate a process of change. This research highlights the way in which racism has embedded itself in South African society. It is equally important to recognise that the act of speaking is itself influenced by the problems related to how one is perceived in racialised ways in these spaces (Meier & Hartell 2009). The research also emphasises the important role of the institutional culture in shaping the beliefs and practices of those involved in the life of the institution.

3. INTERPLAY OF BLACK THEOLOGY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Black theology, like other forms of "theologies of liberation", emerges from specific locations and reflects the concrete experiences of particular groups of people who have been marginalised and oppressed for a number of reasons (Reddie 2010:58). It is a heterogeneous movement, in which there are different perspectives and notions of how one undertakes the theological task. Theology, in our context, has a unique role to play in "acknowledging, interpreting and enhancing agency of African Christians" (Maluleke 2000:105) in their daily struggle against cultural, religious and economic forces of death that seek to marginalise them. Black theology questions the intellectual consistency and practical accountability of Black people to the faith they seek to believe in and practise. It challenges people to pause and think critically about whether what they believe in, and witness to is what they profess as their ultimate hope. As a practical theologian, I am interested in the critical process of action and reflection on how oppressive theories and forms of knowledge are constructed and enacted. Liberation practices and theologies in the classroom have the potential to call into question various forms of injustices. Black theology is a transformative methodology for raising critical awareness in order to assess the veracity of truth claims that produce seemingly all-powerful and interlocking structures that inhibit the God-given selfhood of ordinary Black people. It provides a critique to the normative approaches to Christian theology, as they have arisen from the Western tradition of Christianity.

Black theology focuses on the "Black" dimension of this form of liberation theology and is a response to the negative encounters with its European other. The category "Black" is not a natural or neutral term, but a political and social construct, that expresses not its reality, but the view of others. Black people "have undergone and continue to encounter rather clearly defined racial experiences revealed in different arenas" (Hopkins 1989:11). Many assume that a Black theology is juxtaposed to a "White" theology and is, therefore, racist in outlook. However, as Roberts (2005:2) suggests, the "focus is not on a racist intention but on a latent, unwritten Black theology which now needs to be recorded". Others understand the term "Black" to mean the "common struggle of all persons from minority ethnic groupings seeking to reflect on and challenge White hegemony" (Reddie 2010:8).

Black theology in South Africa was started by Black South Africans, of all races, in their effort to decipher the Christian message for them and their community, as the majority of the population was in a situation

of legal White racism under apartheid. Theology was practised along racial lines, informed by different ideologies, which either supported or opposed apartheid. Institutional theological knowledge "was heavily laden with [W]hite interests" (Hopkins 1989:12) and the monopoly of White power. In their struggle against White racist theology, these theologians showed concern towards change in political systems, governments, power relations, and the establishment of non-racial political movements. These theologians also saw the worth of Black culture in their doing of theology. Black theology asserted its own theological agenda and incorporated the Black reality of indigenous religious experience and struggle for liberation into the Christian hermeneutic (Hopkins 1989:12). It is within this context that one must understand Black theology as

> a form of theology that debunked the notion that God had created [B]lack people to be perpetual subordinates to [W]hite people (Tshaka & Makofane 2010:533).

Black consciousness or awareness is a realistic foundation for the theological task. As Biko (1978:30), states:

> [L]iberation, therefore, is of paramount importance in the concept of Black Consciousness, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage.

When Blacks move from the myth of colour blindness to the reality of colour consciousness, it becomes difficult to avoid the implication of Black power, which has psychological, sociological, economic, political, and religious implications (Roberts 2005:2).

Post-apartheid South Africa hints at "the genuine irrelevance of race, but just beneath the surface lurks the deeper legacy of deeper separations" (Goldberg 2009:530). A society caught between expansive wealth and abject poverty, "between hope and creeping hopelessness, official non-racialism, still self-confident [W]hite economic power and an opportunistic [B]lack nationalism" (Goldberg 2009:532). In the liberal view, the enemy is apartheid and the solution is non-racialism (Kee 2006:76).

> Non-racialism, like the emperor's clothes, is what the state wears to represent itself to the world. However, race continues to exert social effect even where the category is placed under official erasure (Goldberg 2009:532).

Racism remains institutionalised in social relations, not only in society, but also in religion. Goldberg (2009:534) reminds us that religion, as, as a political theology,

shapes the social order, making possible certain types of institutional arrangements and not others, producing or redirecting culture and not merely inserted into it;

gives expression to it and modes of being and relating. Even at this moment, there remains a racial/ethnic/gender divide in the conversations of the theological academy with Black people and their allies in one discursive orbit and significant numbers of White scholars in another discursive orbit. Each recognises the existence of the other, sometimes in polite scholarly acknowledgement, but rarely in shared intellectual exploration.

The findings of this research project have highlighted that the ways in which racism has already embedded itself in South African society must be acknowledged. Race has everything to do with the political interests of those who constructed negative images of social groups they seek to oppress and use to their advantage. The purpose of initiatives related to diversity is not to ferret out racists, but to examine the unrecognised ways in which power assumptions embedded in institutional culture might disenfranchise certain groups of students (Riebe-Estrella 2009:19), whether knowingly or unknowingly, and undermine the educational mission of empowering students for work.

4.   LIBERATIVE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Decades after apartheid, theological education still reflects Europe in Africa. The inference, in this instance, is the distorted view that Africans possess hardly any or no indigenous knowledge of value that can be utilised in theological education. The dominant curriculum continues to be a source of alienation (Naidoo 2016:2). As we know, globalisation promotes the epistemological and ontological realities of the most powerful in the world, anything less is marginalised – hence Africa and its theologies are marginalised by "classical" theology. While in many theological institutions the liberationist take has been accepted as an appropriate methodology to be used by the culturally "other", the model is rarely incorporated into mainstream theology. As Irizarry (2006:37) reminds us that

> the history of scholarship, in the West and elsewhere, is produced by a few with intellectual capacities and then given to less creative and less civilized subjects.

Western thought presumed that other cultures in their very "otherness" lacked rationality. However, Antonio (2006:16) states that there is a commitment from Africanism, to deconstruct the epistemic systems and beliefs of western theology, not textual deconstruction, but primarily

political deconstruction through African idioms, models and metaphors, seen in the example of Charles Nyamiti who reworks central doctrines of God, Christ, Church, Holy Spirit, etc. Grounding them in indigenous structures of meaning introduces into African theological discourse a constitutive suspicion about the social and cultural relevance of the grammar, rhetoric, and content of western theology in non-western contexts (Antonio 2006:16).

In considering the liberative role of Black theology, there must be a move beyond a liberal analysis to laying new Christian foundations. To start with, a Black theology must seek to liberate ministerial formation from its over-dependence in Eurocentric approaches that are dominant in the field of theology, both in the content and method of communicating knowledge, focused on euro-western formulations of faith and philosophical thought (Naidoo 2016:2). The very language of discourse that has developed is inherently racialised as White and normative. Cultural colonisation that involves "colonised minds and education systems is a deeper and long lasting form of colonial power" (Androas 2012:4). This form of power is more subtle and more difficult to identify, resist and transform.

In this research, a liberative stance and attending to epistemic decolonisation could help both theological institutions. It begins by acknowledging that the "cultural, religious and theological knowledge represented in the classroom is not equally valued" (Andraos 2012:7). A hierarchy of systems and sources of knowledge, with the Western perspective at the top of the pyramid, is consistently affirmed in subtle ways as universal. Andraos (2012:7) uses Mignolo's approach for decolonising knowledge, understood as a

> de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality, and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and consequently, other politics, other ethic.

To do this, together with Black theology, theories of critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, antiracist education, and critical multicultural theories are useful in the liberative stance. These theories focus on the analysis of power relations between dominant and oppressed groups and assume that structural social change will result when power relations are challenged (Brookfield 1995).

For example, Hill *et al.* (2009:4) wrote of the elephant in the room as the complex nexus of systems of advantage, with a special focus on White privilege. In developing models of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices for Christian ministry, Reddie (2010) speaks of challenging the unaware

White students to reflect on what privileges and opportunities are accrued by the simple fact that they are White. Whiteness studies is an emergent field that examines "[W]hite inflections in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented" (Steyn & Conway 2010:284). In mounting a critique of whiteness, it is important that this work calls for White people to critique their own whiteness as a symbol of supremacy and normality. There is a clear distinction between whiteness as a concept of supremacy, superiority, and normality (when Black is counterpoised as the direct opposite of these terms) and White people as such (Reddie 2010).

This study on diversity and theological education highlights that ministerial formation is about

> ongoing development of identity (including one's cultural identity) of moving toward what may be referred to as their greater authenticity, more authentic identity and authenticity vocation (Tisdell 2003:).

Identity is forged in communities (Foster 2002). The mutual shaping relationship between one's identity and one's community results in a developmental progression. These dimensions of spirituality are often deeply cultural; hence, the connection of spirituality to cultural identity. As these two samples showed, it is encouraging to find multicultural campuses, because, in order to progress towards committed, internalised, and autonomous racial identity, students need to cross racial borders of learning and growth (Tisdell 2003). As students meet each other, they reach new levels of engagement by either challenging their development process and forming new values or confirming their values (Parks 2000).

Students need help in order to challenge their own racial stereotypes, and this can become an opportunity to deconstruct their past with all its attendant behaviours. In this instance, deconstruction addresses the fundamental basis of prejudice; "falsehoods of misinformation need to be exposed along with the realities of the oppression that have been endured" (Kujawa-Holbrook 2002:145). As Cone (1986) suggests, the work of conscientising and empowering Black students through Biblical hermeneutics and Black theological reflection, a critical re-reading of African histories together with the notion of Black self-determination, students can work through the psychological chains of mental slavery. Kujawa-Holbrook (2002:146) states that,

> without an analysis of the learned behaviour of oppression that perpetuates racism, these behaviours can continually be used by the dominant culture as a justification for racism.

Part of this process for students is learning from their histories, reclaiming what has been lost or unknown to them, and reframing what has often been cast subconsciously as negative in more positive ways (Hurtado 2005:605). Hence, the potential and role of ministerial formation is critical in our context. The reality of internalised oppression is an important part of the change process and is often ignored in the classroom discussion on racism. Reddie (2010) states that, in exploring theological anthropology, students are challenged to reflect critically on what is meant by human beings created in the image and likeness of God. What increases understanding and change is the "opportunity to examine issues related to race in an environment where both their affective and intellectual responses are acknowledged" (Tatum 1992:321). Through exploration and reflection, students can question the taken-for-granted notion of their rootedness in a culture or a nation. Black theology can play a role in helping learners and educators explore their identities as children of God, affirming them in their racial and cultural identity, thereby demonstrating that church tradition and cultural heritage have unique resources for identity of personhood.

Theological education should do more to prepare people for ministry in predominantly Black congregations and communities. Does the education of Black pastors, especially in institutions and in fields dominated by White ideology, distance them from the Black community? There is a need for students to engage seriously and experientially in understanding liberation theology again, ecclesiology from Black perspectives and Black survival skills in predominantly White settings. Cone (1986:14) summarises the challenge presented by the Black church to theological education:

> The absence of a creative theological consciousness has had its impact on theological education in the Black church. Most Black churches do not support their theological schools because they do not regard theology as essential to their mission. As they see it, their task is to preach the gospel without critically asking, what is the gospel and how is it related to Black life? Black churches tend to assume that everybody knows what the gospel is, even without asking about its primary meaning.

Among the prices, which the Black church is paying for not attending to critical theological reflection and growing theological consciousness, the Black church has almost forgotten its historical and theological identity (Lewis 1988:218).

Since racism is socially constructed, Black theology will also require an effective social analysis of educational structures, even if the institutional culture remains one of privilege for those who have held the power to maintain

their dominance, and an understanding of the underlying rationalisations used to justify those structures. Lewis (1988:217) commented on the challenges of Black Lutheran theological education in predominantly White institutions in the US context:

> The lack of a reasonable number of [B]lack faculty and administrators who could make an impact on all aspects of seminary life;
>
> The lack of consistent attention to spiritual and personal formation of [B]lack students, helping them to shape or maintain [B]lack identity and culture;
>
> The lack of curriculum which makes adequate use of the poor [B]lack community as a context for theological education and praxis;
>
> The failure of teaching methodologies to help students understand how such study may contribute directly to the liberation of oppressed people and how to minister to them, and
>
> The existence of personal racial prejudice and discriminatory behaviour on the part of influential persons in seminary communities.

Without structural change, racism will continue, but it can be deconstructed. Kujawa-Holbrooks (2002:143) states:

> [I]t becomes apparent that what may be respected beliefs for some, are also a source of oppression for others in the same context.

While often unarticulated, the fear of reverse victimisation is a fundamental part of White resistance to racial justice. However, the concept of racial justice is not rooted in revenge, but in equal access to human needs and rights. It is important to note that, as this study highlights, students are formed within a particular institutional culture, within the ethos and values of the broader church denomination. Hence, it is important to understand how churches socialise their members, as churches mainly reflect the social divisions of society which then impact on the structure and content of theological education. As Ramsamy (2005:18) suggests, "the interlocking effect of racial privilege at individual, group, institutional and cultural/symbolic levels creates a powerful barrier to lifting the veil of privilege that obscures racism". Theological education can facilitate positive social change *if* faculty make a deliberate attempt and take greater effort to teach in ways that question and dismantle oppressive systems.

5.   CONCLUSION

This article highlighted some potentials of a Black theology in theological education, with a focus on race. It can be argued that those who identify

racism as the enemy find that, with the end of apartheid, Black theology is redundant. However, the roots of oppression lie much deeper and there is much work to be done as institutional racism survives. Conducting an analysis of race relations conscientises students and educators, helping them perceive the reality of social, political and religious oppression not as a world that exists for victims, but as a limiting situation which they can transform with the power of God. More support is needed for a theology that recognises the social positioning of those doing theology. Black theology can encourage people to develop their sociological imaginations to realise that healing is mediated through social processes and structures.

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