

# “It Is a Catch 22 Situation”: The Challenge of Race in Post-Apartheid South African Desegregated Schools<sup>i</sup>

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## **Introduction**

More than a decade after apartheid was officially dismantled, most black children still experience racial and cultural problems in the desegregated schools of South Africa (Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Jansen, 2004; Ndimande, 2005). Historically, public schools were segregated by race under apartheid. However, the post-apartheid government passed the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, that legislated a series of democratic changes in education, including the desegregation of all public schools. Like many other educational reforms in the global South, post-apartheid South Africa’s education policy was concerned about providing educational opportunities to all students in order to redress the socio-economic disparities created by apartheid education.<sup>ii</sup> According to the democratic principles undergirding SASA, the government had to set in place the law to help facilitate for equal school funding and equal access to quality education in all public schools.<sup>iii</sup>

However, one of the challenges to these education reform initiatives still lies with the legacy of apartheid. Since formerly white-only schools were historically better funded under apartheid, education resources in these schools are still disproportionately greater compared to resources available in black schools in the townships. Therefore, it was no surprise that white schools attracted children from impoverished township schools in large numbers. As a result, these schools were able to desegregate while black public schools in the townships remained dysfunctionally operated because of the lack of educational resources (Samoff, 2001), remaining, in practice, segregated and poor.

The purpose of this article is to examine policy and practice regarding school desegregation in relation to education for all in post-apartheid South Africa. First, I present an historical analysis of education transition in South Africa as a way of establishing the background to this discussion. I show the rationale for policy change and the social outcomes emanating from these changes. Second, as a way to explain the extent to which policy and practice has or has not changed, I present the voices of black parents who transferred their children from impoverished schools in the townships to better-funded schools in the

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suburban areas. The findings revealed that these parents had a number of concerns and frustrations about the racism their children experience in formerly white-only schools.

Third, using the critical race theories of Omi & Winant (1994), Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), and Dyson (1996), among others, I argue that the power of race plays a constitutive role in desegregated schools of South Africa and that this is a threat to democratic goals of education for all. I contend that without understanding the subtle manifestation of race in these institutions, equitable education for all will not be possible. Fourth, I maintain that most of the racial problems that exist in public schools of South Africa are not isolated from the state's implementation of social policies which are associated and influenced by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These institutions have been widely criticized (see for example Brock-Utne, 2000; Bond, 2000, 2003) for their neo-liberal policies grounded on a conservative ideology about social reform (McChesney, 1998; Chomsky, 1999; Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2006). For instance, South Africa's official economic policy called Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR), which is grounded on neo-liberal principles of privatization, has been favorably reviewed by the World Bank, yet it has economically de-empowered poor South Africans (Desai, 2002; Garson, 2002; Pillay, 2002; Bond, 2003; Monbiot, 2004; Gumedde, 2005).<sup>iv</sup>

Because of their focus on the markets and privatization, neo-liberal policies have altered the true meaning of democracy—that of “collective solutions to pressing social problems” (Apple & Pedroni, 2005, p. 2095). These policies simply assume that markets are inherently grounded in a process of deracing, declassing, and degendering (Ibid.). Giroux (2006) argues that neo-liberalism has created new racism, whereby freedom is less about the act of intervention than about the process of withdrawing from the social and cancelling of civic courage. Therefore, I implicate neo-liberalism in the racism that occurs in desegregated schools simply because it pretends that the racial problems created by apartheid have disappeared, refusing to recognize that black and poor are still raced, classed, and gendered in post-apartheid social institutions.

### **Contextualizing the Discussion**

To understand the problems of racism in desegregated schools, we need to situate this discussion within the history of education in South Africa. Cross & Chisholm (1990) state that “racist attitudes and differential schooling for black and white have been an integral part of South African history since the beginning of settler occupation and domination of the territory” (p. 44). The institutionalization of apartheid in 1948, and subsequently Bantu education for black peoples in 1953, was the worst and most brutal type of racial discrimination in the history of South Africa (Kallaway, 1984; Christie, 1985;

Nkomo, 1990). Through Bantu education, segregated black public schools were required by law to teach a specified curriculum, which sought to impose inferiority on teachers and students with the sole requirement of bureaucratic and political compliance (Jansen, 2001). Thus, Bantu education prohibited equal educational opportunities for black people mainly through school funding and inferior curriculum.<sup>v</sup>

However, the dismantling of apartheid in 1994 brought along a whole array of democratic changes in a nation that was ravaged by policies of racial discrimination for more than four decades. The new government legislated a series of laws aimed at deracializing a state that was rife with institutionalized racial inequalities. Since it is generally believed that education is an important component in nation building, education reforms were given special attention.

Rightly so, the post-apartheid government believed that it was important for schools to be reformed so that black students who had been marginalized for many years receive the opportunity for a decent and quality education. As Samoff (2001) notes: “Education had been at the center of the anti-apartheid struggle. Its task, everyone agreed, was social transformation” (p. 25).<sup>vi</sup> With a progressive political agenda, the post-apartheid government adopted a new Constitution in May 1996. The South African Schools Act (SASA) was also passed in 1996, whose principal goal was eradicating race-based educational inequalities. However, let me hasten to add that education systems are not dependent variables influenced by the dynamics of the state. Education systems *can* work counter the intended goals of the state (Wong & Apple, 2003) and in this case to the detriment of democracy.

Post-1994 education transformation had its contradictions, complexities, and challenges. Despite democratic changes in educational policy and curriculum reform, the school system emerged with other dilemmas. For example, resources in township schools are still a far cry compared to resources in formerly white schools (Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Jansen & Amsterdam, 2006; Motala, 2006; Ndimande, 2006, 2005). This shortage led to township schools’ dysfunctional operation. Thus, many black parents resorted to transferring their children from poor township schools to wealthy schools in the suburban areas. At the same time, black students who enrolled in these wealthy formerly white schools experience racism. Studies (Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Ndimande, 2005) found that in some desegregated schools there was internal segregation and white students (and white parents) were given preferential treatment.

It is important to note that the corner stone of apartheid was racial discrimination and the institutionalization of white supremacy (Vestergaard, 2001). Apartheid created 4 racial categories—blacks, coloureds, Indians, and whites—and subjected the blacks, coloureds, and Indians to racial oppression.

While white communities were at the privileged position of this racial hierarchy, blacks were put at the lowest end, coloureds and Indians being in the middle of the continuum. The education system, therefore, served the purpose of retaining this political configuration. In Baxen & Soudien's (1999) observation, education under apartheid was not only used to achieve racial segregation, but also functioned as a legitimating arena for white hegemony and the racial ordering produced around it. Therefore, my argument in this article is grounded on this historical background, yet advance the discussion further into the post-apartheid education challenges.

### **Research Methodology**

This article is based on a study I conducted in the Gauteng province to explore the ideological beliefs and common sense assumptions that inform the school choices of black South African parents.<sup>vii</sup> I conducted focus group interviews with 122 black parents in three different sites in the Gauteng province in the first six months of 2003.<sup>viii</sup> The parents who participated were mostly women and they have children in both elementary and secondary public schools. I specifically sampled based on those parents who choose to send their children to formerly white-only schools and those who did not choose to do so.

Overall, I conducted four sets of focus group interviews, namely, parents who live in the suburban areas and send their children to desegregated suburban public schools; parents who live in the suburban areas, yet send their children to segregated township schools; those who live in the township but transfer their children to desegregated public schools in the suburbs; and finally those who live in the township and did not transfer their children to desegregated public schools in the suburbs.<sup>ix</sup> The participants comprised an average of five parents per group. Having selected three different sites, I retained a representative sampling by selecting parents who did not share the same socio-economic status. I accomplished this goal by recruiting participants from relatively wealthy suburban neighborhoods and from the poor townships. For purposes of this article, I will focus on questions that specifically asked parents about problems their children experience in formerly white-only schools. However, I also explored positive aspects of their children's experiences to give a fuller account about these schools.

As a way to examine why—according to these parents—formerly white-only schools attract black children, I first asked why they sent their children to these schools and what they hoped the positive rewards would be for their children. Most parents reported that they chose to transfer their children from township to suburban schools mainly because of greater resources in these schools. Given the shortage of resources in township schools, this overwhelming response is justifiable. Motala (2006) reminds us that while the resource discrimination has

been removed the “historical backlogs have been difficult to redress and the gains of increased expenditure have been eroded by inflation. Private expenditure in the form of fund-raising and school fees changed the picture of equalisation to one of substantial differentiation within the public schooling sector” (p. 80).

While faced with the resource shortage crisis in black schools, these parents also encounter racism in wealthy white schools. Yet, this racism does not deter their effort of accessing better-resourced schools for their children. As one parent states: “[I]t is a catch 22 situation” (Trans GH 3. 6/5/03), meaning that it is important to accept the partial victory brought by school desegregation while simultaneously challenge the existing racism. In all sets of the interviews, parents complained about racism in these schools, but let me share some of the voices of the participants.

### **Black Parents’ Voices Regarding Racism in Desegregated Schools<sup>x</sup>**

For these interviews I prepared standard questions that I asked of all the participants. As the reader will notice, these are somber voices of parents who tell the racial experiences of their children in desegregated schools. Oddly, the positive things they say about these schools are ultimately offset by the negative experiences in the very same schools. Below is one of the questions I asked all the participants. The first response is by Noluthando, a middle class woman, who lives in the township of Mhlenge and has enrolled her daughter in a former Afrikaans speaking school in a nearby suburban area:

*Question: What are some of the limitations or bad things that trouble you about formerly white-only schools in the suburban areas?*

*Noluthando: My children complain about racism. While they admit black students, our children are not treated the same as white children. My son complains about one of their head teachers who makes remarks such as: “You coloured boy” or “You black girl” when referring to our children. I think this is problematic...I once called the principal up and complained about this. She told me that she would attend to it...You see, if a coloured or a black child does something wrong, that is when it becomes conspicuous, but doesn’t become conspicuous if a white child does a wrong thing. (Trans Mono FG. 4/8/03)*

The second response comes from a different focus group, by a participant called Mbethi. Mbethi is also a middle class woman who lives in the suburban area of

Mvela. She has enrolled her son in a former English speaking school in the suburb where the family lives. This is how she responds to the question above:

*Mbethi: Let me cite an example of racism in these schools. There is this school, I won't mention its name... [T]hey used to call parents' meetings on different days for different parents. The principal would call a meeting for black parents today and the next day another meeting for white parents. So it was just segregated... [Y]ou know, even if you went to the principal and talked to him about this, he would just tell you that it has been like this from the beginning. (Trans IJ, 3/17/03)*

From a different focus group interview, Thandeka shares her own response to the same question. Thandeka is a school teacher by profession; she and her family lives in a township of Mhlenge but sends her daughter to a former Afrikaans speaking school in the suburban area. This is what she says about her daughter's school:

*Thandeka: If you want to see that these white schools want to drive us away, just check the parents' meetings. The principal would start addressing the meeting in Afrikaans<sup>xi</sup> and when you ask him to switch to English so that we could all understand, he would say: 'Wait, I will get to English later.' However, when he finishes talking in Afrikaans, he wouldn't switch to English. He will simply say (in Afrikaans of course): 'Die vergaardering is klaar' en hy sal nie meer praat nie ['the meeting is over' and he is done talking]. That is why I say white principals are trying to drive us away from these schools. (Trans GH 1. 3/26/03)*

The final comment is by Nompumelelo, who works in the day care center in the township of Sizwe. She and her family lives in Sizwe township, but her daughter attends school in the nearby suburban area. Nompumelelo, too, talks about the challenges her daughter faces in that school.

*Nompumelelo: The huge amount of school fees is really something I don't understand. Look, these people [meaning whites] do more fundraising than any township schools, yet they impose a lot of school fees on us. Besides, our children are not treated the same. If you visit there in the day, you would realize the separation of children—blacks on one side and whites on the other. All these [practices] do not sit well with me. (LM 3/27/03)*

The voices of these parents express disquieting race relations in these schools. Yet this is not the only revelation about these schools. Numerous studies have found that the race relations in these schools are far from complimentary (Jansen, 2001, 2004; Vally & Dalamba, 1999). For instance, Jansen (2001) shows how some white parents actively try to block the desegregation of white schools in the suburban areas using zoning policies:

*Throughout our country [South Africa], the more privileged schools make conscious decisions to deny entry to children who fall outside their “zones”—often marking these cut-off points arbitrarily but also consciously so that those from poor and Black communities do not overwhelm the school. Some schools such as Westville in KwaZulu Natal have been able to remain virtually all white, through their manipulation of these geographical cut-off points to access. (p. 2)*

Jansen’s (2001) description of this zoning problem created by privileged schools is, unfortunately, uncontrollable because SASA did not give clear policy directions to school districts regarding zoning for the purpose of school integration (Ndimande, 2006). For instance, there was no busing as was the case in the United States.<sup>xii</sup> Nor was there a strong rezoning policy that would have allowed black students to rapidly access white schools. In theory and according to the law, *any* parent could choose to send their children to *any* school regardless of race and/or in which districts such schools are located (Ibid.). In practice, however, white schools determine who gained access to their schools through self-created policies based on high tuition fees, exclusive language policies, and self-defined “catchment areas” from which students would be chosen;<sup>xiii</sup> the Vryburg case—which I allude to later in this article—being the typical example of the lack of legislative direction to enforce desegregation and break the barrier of racial segregation in conservative white schools. Let me now discuss the importance of race as a category and explain its constitutive role in institutional transformation for equity in education.

### **Analyzing Race in Desegregated Schools**

Nations around the world have witnessed the racial discrimination of marginalized peoples in one form or another. Since schools are microcosms of the larger society, racial discrimination found its way to these institutions as well. Omi and Winant (1994), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Dyson (1996), Pollock (2006), and others have contributed in critical race theory by showing how race and racism operates in communities and schools. They remind us about the constitutive role the power of race plays in societies emerging from or dealing with racial inequalities. As I alluded earlier, post-apartheid South Africa’s Constitution and SASA focused on creating democratic schools. Yet we

learn from the voices of parents and from studies (Vally & Dalamba, 1999; Jansen, 2001, 2004, Ndimande, 2005, 2006), that the practice in these schools has become racially discriminative towards white students.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contend that race is crucial in the examination of issues of diversity and social inclusion in schools.<sup>xiv</sup> They argue that race continues to be significant in explaining inequity in education, and that class and gender alone are not sufficient categories of analysis to explain all the difference in school experiences: “Although both class and gender can and do intersect race, as stand-alone variables they do not explain all of the educational achievement differences apparent between whites and students of color” (p. 51). Of course, we cannot afford to reduce race relations to a mere manifestation of other supposedly more fundamental social and political relationship such as class and ethnicity (Omi & Winant, 1994). When most patterns of racial relations reveal themselves to be more complex and contradictory trajectories (Ibid.), we cannot afford to think of our schools’ policies and social system as color-blind in a racialized nation like South Africa.

A white school in a town called Vryburg has been in the national news recently following divisive racial clashes at that school. Examining the Vryburg case, Jansen (2004) explains how conservative Afrikaner parents in this predominantly white public school sided with their white offspring in trying to deny access to black students. The Constitutional Court subsequently ruled in favor of the white principal. According to Jansen, this is just a specific case that happened to be covered by the media. Certainly, argues Jansen, there are many other “Vryburg” cases that people do not get to hear or read about. Race is not a static representation of identity guaranteed to hold a unitary form. In other words, it is not a fixed category. Rather, race is a social construct that is being relentlessly shaped and reshaped, therefore, making it crucial to understand the subtle formation of race. The mere fact that some institutions find it uneasy to talk about race (Omi & Winant, 1994; Pollock, 2006) does not mean there is no perpetuation of racial oppression. Omi & Winant’s (1994) point is absolutely crucial in this discussion:

*Until we understand the concept of race, it is impossible effectively to analyze the familiar issues which involve race. It is hard to grasp the way racial identity is assigned and assumed, or to perceive the tacit racial dimension of everyday experiences, ... Similarly, without an awareness that the concept of race is subject to permanent political contestation, it is difficult to recognize the enduring role race plays in the social structure—in organizing social inequalities of various sorts...Nor is it possible to acknowledge or oppose racism*

*without comprehending the sociohistorical context in which concepts of race are invoked. (p. vii)*

Similarly, Dyson (1996) argues that race is still a major issue in racialized societies. According to Dyson, the only way of overcoming racism is the understanding of the subtlety and subversive ways in which race continues to divide people in a nation.

Any assessment of complicated processes such as the desegregation of public schools in South Africa definitely requires the understanding that inequalities were *fundamentally* grounded on apartheid racial policies of discrimination and white supremacy. Yet it is also crucial to understand that post-apartheid government adopted social policies which are subtly racially biased in terms of equal access to opportunities, despite its commitment to deracialization. As I show in the next section, part of the racial problems in post-apartheid is related to these policies. For instance, South Africa's adoption of a neo-liberal driven macroeconomic policy has drawn a wide criticism from those who support a welfare state (Bond, 2000, 2003). And the implementation of an "outcomes" based rather than a critically engaging curriculum was also criticized by progressive scholars (Jansen, 1999). I do not mean to suggest that post-apartheid transformation relegated issues of race to the back burner. Rather I argue that neo-liberal driven reforms are retrogressive, especially within the context of the history of apartheid.

### **Neo-liberalism, World Bank, and IMF in Social Policy Reforms**

The current educational reform landscape in South Africa should be discussed within the larger trends in the international politics. South Africa, no doubt, is not immune to international contexts since some of our current educational reforms—for example, the *Curriculum 2005* policy modeled on outcomes-based education (OBE)— are largely an influence of countries such as Australia, Britain, and New Zealand (Jansen, 1999).<sup>xv</sup> Jansen (1999) has argued that an outcomes-driven education is too technical and lacked the critical bite to quality learning. I have argued elsewhere (Ndimande, 2004) about the problematic curriculum content in post-apartheid classrooms; in that no indigenous languages are being taught at an early age to black children in formerly white-only schools and that the histories of black people are relegated to the margins in the curriculum.<sup>xvi</sup> This certainly does not show equal representation of black cultures in the mainstream curriculum content. But here is the larger picture to all these reforms.

In June 1996, post-apartheid government adopted a neo-liberal economic policy known as Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR). GEAR is a structural adjustment program, which, according to Gumede (2005),

“recommended the complete privatization of non-essential state-owned corporations and the partial privatisation of others... the entire strategy depended heavily on new investment, particularly from foreign sources pouring into South Africa” (p. 90).

Pillay (2002) concludes that the adoption of this neo-liberal policy was mostly about satisfying the needs of the conglomerate global economy rather than addressing the real issues of poverty and socio-economic inequalities in this nation:

*The government has to please a range of interests, including its working- class mass base, the emerging Black elite, predominantly White big business and its allies, and the global investment community. Like other center-left parties, the ANC [African National Congress] has found it difficult to avoid the allure of the global economy, and the logic that all economic and social policy has to be subordinated to the need to attract foreign investment to build the economy. (p. 24)*

Neo-liberalism comes at a high price for the poor peoples who are largely dependent on state support, including the protection of jobs in an increasing capital flight situation. For instance, Bond (2000) states that between the years 1994 and 1999, GEAR brought a huge shrinkage in national and provincial civil services, and as a result 100,000 civil jobs were cut and many poor people were left unemployed. Increasing unemployment rate perpetuated the socio-economic problems facing the poor. In addition, the installation of pre-paid water meters in the poorest districts of Johannesburg (Orange Farm and Phiri) and in some parts of rural KwaZulu-Natal (Garson, 2002; Monbiot, 2004), exacerbated the already precarious material conditions of poor people.

In implementing GEAR, South Africa invited the World Bank advisory team to influence decisions on social policy. As Bond (2003) puts it: “The real impact of the World Bank in post-apartheid South Africa was therefore witnessed not through lending, but in policy advice” (p. 69). The World Bank and the IMF certainly do not have a pleasing record in their involvement with developing nations (Brock-Utne, 2000; Bond, 2000, 2003). The World Bank and IMF’s policies have always forced poor countries to introduce structural adjustment programs, which cuts on social funding and welfare. Based on her work in parts of Africa, Brock- Utne (2000) argues that the Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) introduced in poor countries have done more harm than good. An abundance of studies (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1994; McChesney, 1998; Chomsky, 1999; Apple, 2001; Garson, 2002; Monbiot, 2004) have shown that market-oriented social policy benefits the corporate interests and neglect the poor people. McChesney (1998) for instance, contends that all over the world,

neo-liberal policies are opposed to participatory democracy and help create individuals who feel demoralized and socially powerless.

In situations where people have to compete for material conditions, one's structural position becomes important and often such positions are determined by race, particularly in South Africa where discrimination was fundamentally based on race.<sup>xvii</sup> Pointing to an increasing poverty in people of color's neighborhoods, Desai (2002) implicates neo-liberalism and racism as the major cause of this poverty. As parents' bear witness in this article, it is schools in wealthy neighborhoods which have greater resources. Yet the very same schools keep away black and poor whose schools do not have sufficient resources. This situation certainly impedes on equal educational opportunities for all.

We should not assume that the World Bank policies and its neo-liberal influence are color-blind. Nor should we assume that individuals compete "freely" in a "free" market system. In what he calls new racism, Giroux (2006) connects neo-liberalism to racism by arguing that under the sway of the market forces, all discourse that engage race and racism is expunged. Simply put, freedom and democracy are framed on individual's success in the free market without much consideration of the racialized field in which the market competition takes places. It is worth quoting Giroux's (2006) analysis on this point:

*Within this market-driven perspective, the exchange of capital takes precedence over social justice, the making of socially responsible citizens, and the building of democratic communities. There is no language here for recognizing anti-democratic forms of power, developing nonmarket values, or fighting against substantive injustices in a society founded on deep inequalities, particularly those based on race and class.*  
(p. 74)

This analysis helps us realize that policies do not happen in a neutral field of power. Rather policies are mediated by struggles that exist in the society. The act of accessing wealthy schools and the difficulties encountered gives evidence on how neo-liberalism can be implicated in racism, which subsequently denies the goal for education for all in the post-apartheid reforms.

### **Conclusion**

The parents' voices in this paper provide a compelling testimony about race relations in South Africa's desegregated schools. This situation is complex and at times contradictory. In light of social policy changes, especially SASA, we see parents "endorsing" formerly white-only schools yet, by and large, parents recognize the challenges in these schools for their children and for themselves.

Undoubtedly, most of these parents, especially the poor, have been denied the promise of equal education for all. In addition, black students who experience racism as described by their parents are adversely affected to an extent that their educational opportunities are compromised. As I pointed out earlier, this does not mean to suggest that the post-apartheid government has back pedaled on issues of race in these schools, rather I am concerned that without rigorous monitoring of practice in desegregated schools, social inequalities may be (re) produced through the education system.

The absent presence of race in these schools can have a consequential effect on black students' educational outcomes. In a nation that is still emerging from apartheid, critical race theories can certainly contribute in discussion about social redress. Indeed Pollock's (2006) question is crucial here: How can we not talk about race in schools and communities which are so diverse? The government, scholars, and activists should intervene to curb Vryburg scenarios from happening again. This society cannot continue to live as if it is a color-blind when in fact race was the fundamental historical legacy for black oppression, including the denial of quality education to black folks.

Equally crucial is to interrogate the neo-liberal influence that has devastated the lives of many people in South Africa. These policies have a direct impact on education and as a result exacerbate the precarious living conditions of the poor. We should not compromise the progressive vision of our Constitution for the sake of the markets. The good news about this situation is that South Africa has shown signs of redressing these inequalities, albeit slow. The reviewing of the *Curriculum 2005* framework and the government's recent initiatives to improve economic growth through ASGISA, are all good signs. However, this is not enough, the government and all stakeholders need to become proactive in helping oppressed peoples towards achieving better lives, especially through quality education. We should heed warnings about the bad policies that come with ideas from the World Bank, IMF, and other neo-liberal driven reforms. There is no choice to better schools if people do not have equal access to these schools.

South Africa has overcome institutionalized oppression and there shouldn't be an excuse for social policies that deny anyone the opportunity to decent education. It is crucial to confront these issues affecting the well-being and future potential of children of South Africa, and of course children around the world. The frustration of black parents in this article is a serious concern facing education reforms in this country. In the nimble, yet cautious words of one parent, who is deeply concerned about the disparities in desegregated public schools, we need to prevent catastrophe in this young democracy:

*It is a catch 22 situation. On the one hand we need that education, but on the other, this will toughen up our children. You know, these white people don't realize that through racism in schools, they are breeding another generation of blacks [who may become very militant] and resist racism vehemently someday when they are older. We don't know when this one is going to explode, but I bet it is going to be stronger than the 1976 generation.<sup>xviii</sup> (Trans GH 3. 6/5/03)*

These parent's words are not apocryphal, but they are worth listening to by all those involved in school reform policy in order to implement educational policy and practice that will fight against institutional racism and promote the education for all agenda. This is the only way to sustain a democracy.

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- <sup>ii</sup> I am referring to the World Conference on Education for All of 1990 sponsored by the World Bank, United Nations Development Programs and others (Brock-Utne, 2000). I discuss later in this article the contradictions within the World Bank reform policies with regards to the education for all agenda.
- <sup>iii</sup> See for instance, SASA, 1996, chapter 2 no 5. (3), where the document talks about *equal* access to public education. The use of the word “equality” in this document as opposed to “equitable” is problematic, however. These two concepts have different meanings in that the former simply suggests equal quantity, whereas the latter refers to measures similar to affirmative action that compensate for the past inequities. This is a crucial differentiation worth examining.
- <sup>iv</sup> Just recently the government introduced Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), a program through which it expects to increase economic growth. This follows mounting pressure from below (labor unions, for example) pushing the government to adjust its economic policy to eliminate poverty.
- <sup>v</sup> For a detailed history of the education of black people in apartheid South Africa, see Kallaway, (1984); Christie, (1985); and Nkomo, (1990).
- <sup>vi</sup> While I agree with this assertion, Samoff (2001) may have overstated the role of education in social transformation. It is also important to realize that educational pre-conditions are necessary for social transformation. This means, therefore, that social transformation itself requires more than just education. It also requires social criticism, identity and cultural work, social and political mobilization, and unionization, among other things.
- <sup>vii</sup> For a detailed discussion of black parents and school choice in post-apartheid South Africa, see Ndimande (2005).
- <sup>viii</sup> I chose focus group interviews because I did not want to have strictly formal interview sessions. Fontana & Frey (2000) contend that a focus group technique straddles the line between formal and informal interviewing. This allows for a welcoming environment in the study; for participants to perceive themselves as part of the project rather than distant “subjects.”

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- ix The study was not focused on the age and sex of the children of these parents. However, I believe that such focus is necessary and warrants research.
- x All the names of the parents and places in this article are pseudonyms.
- xi Afrikaans is derivative of Dutch language. It was the language spoken by the Dutch when they settled in the Cape Colony in 1652 and it subsequently became the official language of apartheid South Africa.
- xii In Charlotte, North Carolina, for an example, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated districts needed to balance their schools racially, even if that required crosstown busing to do so (Clotfelter, 2004, p. 26). However, this doesn't mean there were no oppositions to this ruling; see Omi & Winant (1994) who discuss the anti-busing movement that emerged from the Christian Right in the United States.
- xiii I am indebted to Jonathan Jansen who brought this significant differentiation to my attention.
- xiv I am mindful of the problematic assumptions related to the concept of inclusion in schools. Soudien et. al (2004) make an argument that "inclusion" does not always equal "equality," because measures to include all students may be excluding to others.
- xv The wide criticism of this outcomes based education policy (see Jansen, 1999), subsequently pressured the government to form a Task Team called Curriculum 2005 Review Committee for the streamlining of OBE and its implication, see Chisholm, (2000). What is still of critical concern here is that this team focused on simplifying the learning outcomes rather than interrogating the philosophy of the policy, especially the curriculum content.
- xvi Although there are individual educators who do excellent work in promoting democratic education and diversity in their classrooms (see for instance Swadener & Goduka, 1998; Nkomo, et al, 2004)
- xvii I do not mean to suggest that race is the only factor or that class, culture or gender, are insignificant in this analysis. However, in a nation like South Africa that is slowly emerging from a rooted history of racism and white supremacy, the power of race is absolutely undeniable.
- xviii She is referring to the uprisings in Soweto in 1976, where black students protested the enforcement of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools. This was a turning point in black resistance to apartheid education as a whole.

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