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*"Let us Live  
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# THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

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NOVEMBER 2014



# THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

## CRY, THE BELOVED CHILDREN: THE TRAUMA OF THE INNOCENT

One of the horrific features of the modern world is that millions of children instead of experiencing the joy of a carefree, love-pervaded childhood are subjected to a life of suffering that often ends in early death. It is a crime without a name that the adult world inflicts trauma on innocent children to an extent that makes one wonder if we can speak of modern civilisation when such widespread barbarism prevails.

We reject the cynical view that the suffering of children is due to overpopulation caused by poor people having large families. We are in the company of respected sociologists and economists when we say that our planet has the resources to ensure a happy childhood for all children. Our view is that the basic cause of children's suffering is that economic greed and political corruption have concentrated the bulk of the world's resources in the hands of an elite minority so that a minority of children have too much and the majority of them have little or nothing.

The traumatising of children is to be seen in many parts of the globe. With great regret and sadness we must say that millions of South African children fall into the traumatised category. South African children do not suffer the level of trauma of some children in other parts of the world. We think here of the children of Palestine who have inherited the suffering of their displaced parents and are subjected to water-deprivation, lack of medical care and regular bombardment if their parents rebel against Zionist oppression. Then there are child soldiers in parts of Africa who have been trained to kill when they should be playing children's games in the school playground..... But let us leave this horrifying list and concentrate on considering the plight of millions of South African children.

The children of the poor along with their parents are the victims of an unjust system produced by the pro-rich socio-economic, education and healthcare policies of the South African government. An unjust system has concentrated obscene levels of wealth in the hands of a small group of people who can provide their children with the best home environment, education, health services and recreation facilities that money can buy. The poverty-stricken millions in the country have to

contend with the bitter fruits of the government's anti-poor policies. Non-intervention in the economy to assist the poor and the promotion of privatisation have resulted in a dispensation which gives a privileged minority vast scope to accumulate great wealth and denies the underprivileged majority the State services that could enable them to free themselves from degrading poverty. The children of the poor suffer deprivation at various stages of their lives. Indeed the suffering starts even before they are born. Research in the medical field has shown that the unborn child of a poverty-stricken mother typically does not receive the physical support and emotional stimulation required for optimal development in the womb.

Poor mothers tend to suffer from malnutrition and thus their unborn children do not receive the nutrients required for normal physical development. A crucial fact in this regard is that ideally the mass of the child's brain should double in its first year of life, which is unlikely to happen if the mother is undernourished. Mothers afflicted by poverty are also likely to suffer from the stress of making ends meet as well as a pervasive depression thrust upon them by their demoralising socio-economic situation. The mother's emotional state is likely to have negative effects on the unborn child that could blight its whole life.

An article by UCT and Stellenbosch health experts in the *Cape Times* of 7 August 2014 stated: "The effects of perinatal depression and anxiety (common mental disorders) on children are well documented. Children of depressed mothers are likely to have physical health, developmental and behavioral problems throughout their childhoods, with possible long-term effects later in adolescence and adulthood."

Apart from the physical deprivation suffered by the poor child in the womb, there is also likely to be a lack of emotional stimulation. Modern research has shown the beneficial effects of the unborn child being stimulated by the mother's singing and reading to the child in the womb. Even placing suitable toys on the mother's belly has been shown to have a good effect on the developing child. Poor mothers tend to lack the energy, education and

facilities for this kind of stimulation. In short, the developing child of the affluent, well-fed and educated mother has ab ovo (from the very beginning) a better quality of life than its poor counterpart. Millions of disadvantaged children are born into hostile environments: overcrowded shacks, without electricity, water and proper sanitation. Often both parents have to work and babies are taken care of by older children. The first school of a child should be a comfortable home by an attentive mother where the child's mental and emotional development is stimulated in a safe, caring environment. What actually happens in millions of cases is that the child has to learn coping mechanisms to survive as it has to share the burdens of a struggling family. Heather Zar, UCT's head of paediatrics and child health at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, in her acceptance speech of the coveted World Lung Health Award, said that in South Africa under-five mortality is closely aligned with one's area of residence and socio-economic circumstances. She states: "Racial groupings are proxies for disadvantages around housing, education, nutrition and stimulation. We are still one of the most unequal societies and it really plays out in child health." (*Cape Times* 17 June 2014).

The fact is that the harrowing challenges of the home environment of the poor are hostile to normal child development. Thus one would hope that the school environment would compensate the disadvantaged child by providing what he/she lacks at home. Educationists stress the importance of early childhood learning to stimulate the cognitive, motor and social skills that will equip the child for the challenges the modern life. The committee on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states: "Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities." (*Cape Times* 18 July 2014)

How desperately the children of the poor and their parents needed the implementation of this approach after being crushed by the evil apartheid system! However, the present government's socio-economic and education policies have created two-tier education and healthcare structures that reflect the economic gulf in the country separating the elite minority from the struggling majority. Thus few poor children attend nursery schools and an estimated 650 000 children of primary school age do not attend school at all according to a

MUSTADAFIN FOUNDATION PUBLICATION dated July 2014. Statistics of that kind reflect the fact that government policies have made quality education and healthcare commodities that must be bought instead of State services that the poor can access and desperately need in order to overcome the pervasive and lingering effects of apartheid oppression.

For the children of the poor who manage to find their way into State schools their experience of schooling is all too often traumatic rather than educational as they have to cope with a school environment akin to their deprived home situations. Once again they are faced with conditions that are hostile to holistic child development: overcrowded, uncomfortable classrooms (some even without proper roofs) where children sit on the floor; trenches instead of flush toilets. There is also still the shocking phenomenon of children being taught under trees and in mud schools. The harrowing South African education terrain is the result of the government's corrupt education policies that have made it difficult for the poor to access quality education. The affluent have the money to see to it that their children's schools have the material and staff resources to deliver quality education. At the schools serving poor communities parents do not have the financial capacity to supplement the inadequate material and staff resources provided by the State. Yet, almost miraculously, there are disadvantaged schools that rise above the system, providing quality education through the dedication and sacrifice of teachers, parents and pupils. The stark reality, however, is that in international surveys of various countries' education system, South Africa has usually occupied the last position. Many academics, especially those working at university level, have pointed out that large numbers of matriculants are illiterate and innumerate because of the deeply flawed OBE (Outcomes-Based Education) system they have passed through. No wonder that 50% of this country's youth cannot find work or gain access to tertiary institutions! The youth unemployment figure is the third highest in the world after Portugal and Italy.

The fruits of a failed education system are bitter indeed.....After 1994 the establishment of a progressive system of free, compulsory education (one of the key demands of the liberatory struggle) located in a just socio-economic system should have been given top priority by government. Then real transformation would have occurred in South Africa and the country would have benefitted from an approach that would have equipped millions of young people to become educated, enlightened and

compassionate citizens who would help build a truly great South Africa

Instead we have millions of youths scarred by the destructive combination of a flawed schooling set-up and an unjust socio-economic system; and so they are not equipped for tertiary studies or work requiring high skills levels. That said, we must acknowledge that there are many youngsters who have miraculously risen above the systemic oppression of the poor and become outstanding people whose competence, integrity and compassion enrich the community.

We must face the painful reality that some young people who become frustrated with the conditions that undermine their aspirations for a fulfilling life are drawn into anti-social activities. Many youngsters are recruited by gangs who assure them that they and their families will be given protection in a violent environment and financial benefits amidst dire poverty. It is known that gang bosses pay the rents of struggling families in return for their turning a blind eye to the gangsters' illegal activities. Desperate people seldom ask questions about the source of money that enables them to survive. Readers may remember newspaper photographs of demonstrators outside the court where a drug lord was being tried; there were mothers urging his acquittal with posters such as: "Who will pay for my baby's milk if he is jailed?"

It is easy for affluent people to condemn the seemingly warped attitudes and choices of people who face dire poverty, but it is actually amazing that the overwhelming majority who are struggling to survive do manage to lead decent lives characterized by consistent honesty and a caring willingness to share the little they have. However, not all youngsters have the moral strength to resist temptation: there are some youngsters who are more vulnerable than others to being driven to anti-social activities as a means of escaping the hardship of poverty. Uncared for orphans are particularly vulnerable. A spokesperson for the LANAMO SANCTUARY in a radio interview on 14 Aug. 2014 described the difficulties that South Africa's estimated 5 million orphans face and the challenges workers at orphanages have to contend with as they endeavour to rescue the children from a life of begging and crime. She said that there are simply not enough orphanages to address the problem successfully. Many of the orphans lost their parents during the period where HIV-AIDS spread like wildfire amongst the poor as politicians refused to roll out anti-viral drugs at State hospitals because they had swallowed unscientific theories. South African's tremendously high murder and road accident rates account for thousands of children

losing parents every year.....

Vulnerable children are often used by adults to perform tasks that benefit adults' selfish interests at a time of their lives when they should be being educated at schools. Examples are: children working in the fields on farms; children becoming beggar proxies for adults in return for food and accommodation; children being used by gangs in burglaries because they can get into houses through small openings.

The research of sociologists has established that children who have been traumatised tend to become brutalised in the sense that they easily succumb to the temptation to inflict pain on others. Apparently there is a perverted sense of power in inflicting suffering after they have been on the receiving end: from victim to aggressor seems to them to become a good change of situation. Research has shown that the perverted individuals who molest, rape and murder children had in many cases themselves been subjected to physical and sexual abuse during their childhood. The brutal xenophobic mobs that killed foreigners living with them in poverty-stricken areas were often led by frustrated youngsters to whom it seemed that the foreigners were better off than they were. Then is also the shocking information from terrified people living in areas plagued by inter-gang warfare that gang leaders are using teenage assassins to eliminate their opposition, apparently with great success, because an approaching youngster is not identified as a threat by the "target".

The traumatising and the brutalization of children on a wide scale is a heinous crime. It is a crime that robs thousands of children of their childhood and scars them for the rest of their lives - lives which in many cases are tragically short. A system that brings tremendous suffering on our children must end! All of us must endeavour to contribute to the elimination of a wicked system that generates poverty and inflicts physical and mental suffering on the young. We must clamour in every way at our disposal for government policies and interventions that will create the socio-economic, education and healthcare landscape geared to providing all South Africa's children with a safe, healthy and happy childhood that will be a memorable stepping-stone to a fulfilling, enlightened and compassionate adulthood.

LET US LIVE FOR OUR CHILDREN.

## THE RACIAL TAG & HUMAN DISCRIMINATION IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

### PART 1: LESSONS FROM BRAZIL

The University of Cape Town has been struggling for some years now to 'depart' from widely-disputed race-based practices, especially in terms of its student admissions' policy. These 'transformative' endeavours, however, have sought to uphold the requirement for individuals to specify their 'racial category', a measure that is obsolete, offensive, and a very visible portrayal of a core aspect of life under apartheid. There is and can be no doubt about this. Emulating this outdated mindset is UCT's so-called Progressive Student Alliance which contends that parity and acceptability can only be attained through the racial tag. This perception is - in plain terms - idiotic because it is bereft of historical consciousness. It is perpetuated and jealously guarded by the utterly corrupt and discredited ruling Stalinist bureaucracy that continues to inflict incalculable destruction on the overwhelming majority of the country's 50 million citizens. There are a number of compelling arguments why the 'racial tag' cannot yield any viable solution to the quest to bring about meaningful change to the national situation.

As a start, and let it be repeated here, belief in 'race' is founded not on scientific determinations, but on claptrap presumptions inflicted on our shores by Dutch and English colonialism. The inherent superiority of some, and the inherent inferiority of 'the other', was the bedrock of the colonialist belief system.

Modern-day proponents of the race theory commonly profess that the concept of race is and remains important, *because 'race' has become a social construct*. This is tantamount to saying that, since many individuals in their heart of hearts believe that the world, really, is flat, that too, can be considered a 'social construct' and thus worthy of sober deliberation. Surely not! Believers in a flat world should be informed quickly and shown even more speedily, the foolishness of such ideas. The world is not flat but round, or roundish, to be more exact. In other words, when confronted with the enormous problem of human discrimination, analysts and lawmakers (rather than inflict widespread mayhem, bitterness, and resentment across all spheres of life in the new South Africa) should make it their duty to turn to science, and more exactly the biological sciences. Here we will find a completely different story to the one inflicted

upon our shores, one that, subsequently, became entrenched by covert patrons of Nazism.

The total misapprehension spawned by the 'different race' theory was particularly highlighted by the late Dr Neville Alexander, whose ideas and standpoints in this regard were informed by the visionary leadership of the Unity Movement, Africa's most theoretically-coherent and historically-significant post-WW II liberatory organisation. Throughout much of his scholarly life Alexander cautioned that it is not skin colour but social circumstances wrought by economic factors that ultimately mould an individual's social upbringing and thus his or her chances of progress in life. Alexander based this theory on Marxist socialist thinking, which, incidentally, had gained prominence in the Western Cape in the late-1940s (and not the 1970s as claimed by certain historians) and had undergone a global resurgence.

But the most perturbing, degenerative outcome of the 'different race' theory is lucidly and systematically expounded upon by the scholarly community of Brazil. Moving towards inaugurating a more inclusive and equal social landscape, the Brazilian government - like the South African government, to some degree - since 2008 has sought to pin its hopes on *affirmative action policies based primarily on 'race'*. The citizens of this country, previously only designated as 'Brazilians', would be assigned particular racial tags, presumably to accelerate and enhance social equality. Brazilian scholars together with the country's more critically-minded intellectuals have, however, fervidly challenged and denounced such retrogressive measures. They have cautioned about the enormous dangers and risks that would ensue from human classification practices based on widely held conjectures that are, in themselves, unscientific, groundless and therefore hopelessly unsound. Here is the crux of their argument, which is deserving of both concentrated attention and serious consideration:

*Belief in race is the article of faith of racism. The fabrication of official races, the selective distribution of privilege according to racial labels [commonly called Affirmative Action] inoculate the venom of racism into society's veins, with its correlates of rancour and hatred. In Brazil this would constitute a radical revision of our national*

identity and the renunciation of . . . effective citizenship. Racial quotas [and by implication, racial categorisation] are the tip of the iceberg and a symbol of what a racially-divided society would mean. By implementing such policies . . . we are teaching children that they will have different rights. (Daher; Jôia; Atila; Silva; et al 2008)

Part of a much longer and detailed public proclamation, this extract indicates how the very belief in, or perpetuation of, 'different races', in effect, forms the very basis for the emergence of racist ideas and discriminatory practices in the first place.

According to rationally-minded Brazilian thinkers, the application of the racial tag principally lays the basis for *human-otherness*, which, in turn, and quite intuitively, may spawn notions of *supremacy, subordination, prejudice, bigotry, partiality, narrow-mindedness, intolerance, exclusion, marginalisation, nationalism, xenophobia, repression*, and more. But these are merely some of the more obvious *manifestations* of racism. Hence, we need to pause and take stock of what *racism* really means.

That 'racism' has become part of the daily existence of many global citizens - a 'norm', so to speak - could easily divert attention from some of its most horrendous implications. Whereas Harris (1999, 437) calls it 'a polymorphous agent of death, premature births, shortened lives, starving children, debilitating theft, abusive larceny, degrading insults and insulting stereotypes forcibly imposed', for McBride (2012, 3) it is a process by which 'a population is systematically stripped of its humanity, typically involving degradation, unspeakable terrors, and humiliation'. Seen in its broader, anti-ethical dimensions, racism is thus an enormously destructive, dehumanising force, in the sense that it has the capacity not only to undermine some of our most basic universal values, but to emasculate them *all at once*. Core universal values, in varying degrees, most commonly are: *the right to life, human freedom, equality and dignity, as well as the pursuit of happiness*.

Needless to say, these universal values and aspirations were robustly and unfalteringly suppressed and annihilated by the apartheid state. The overwhelming majority of people did not enjoy freedom of movement, or freedom of speech; people, furthermore, were treated in the most undignified ways. To be treated in an undignified way, immediately indicates the presence of *disrespect*. As for the principle of *equality*, this, for quite obvious reasons, will never ever be worthy of consideration in the ranks of any racist order. All of this leaves a rather distressing yet interesting

supposition, namely, that an act of racism is so enormously devastating that it is only superseded by an act of murder, which denies an individual the most basic right of all - the right to life (a common occurrence, in any case, under the apartheid system).

If what Brazilian scholars say is valid indeed, i.e., that 'racial categorization' boils down to an act of racism and thus breeds constrained behaviour, then South Africa's chosen (race-based) path towards a new and happy (non-racial) tomorrow, is not merely a delusion, but a consummate illogicality. The passages following explore this assumption.

With the advent of democracy, the newly elected government immediately sought to eliminate the most obvious and appalling policies prevalent under apartheid rule. The Separate Amenities Act, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Schooling Act, the Population Register Act, and many other palpably racist acts and measures were consigned to the dustbin of ill-fated remembrances. In their place, not purely new policies but a new Constitution was enacted. The national cultural domain has seen the official proclamation of the maxims '*cultural diversity*', '*unity in diversity*', and '*rainbow nation*', which have become key expressions not purely in but of contemporary South Africa. 'Cultural diversity', to all intents and purposes, boils down to the official recognition, praxis, and celebration of the country's different cultures. In simple terms, however, pictures of the rainbow clearly show that its colours run parallel to each other and don't cross over. The image of the rainbow, in effect, visibly embodies an underlying theory of apartheid ideology itself, namely, the concept of *separate-but-equal*. Further, considered in the historical context of *enforced human partition bolstered by racist domination*, 'cultural diversity' could quite naturally perpetuate the identity/cultural patterns tainted by a belief system rooted in bigotry (see Rajasingham-Senanayake 2002; Scatamburlo-DAnnibale & McLaren 2004). For South Africans, especially, the prospective hazards of this turn of phrase are not hard to imagine. In her paper presented at the 1995 International & Cross-cultural Issues Seminar in Tasmania, Australia, Tamara Braam (1995) already warned of *cultural diversity's* potential perils, given the divisive, unequal, and racist nature of the country's historical development. Braam (1995, 5) argued that a 'multi-cultural approach' to addressing the challenge of human partition was *flawed* as 'culture' and 'group' have been used as synonyms for *race*. For Braam (ibid.) this approach 'could at best confuse issues, and at worse *entrench racist divisions*'. Taking up Alexander's emancipatory outlook, Salim Vally (2002) affirms that while

'cultural differences' in South Africa may be seen to be 'natural', in reality this could encourage and sustain 'prejudice, stereotypes and caricatures' (ibid.). Rather, says Vally (2002), *all of us have brought along meaningful influences to South African culture and this is what should flow into one river, our common South African identity*.

To test the Brazilian theory we need to ask the following (simple) open-ended question: to which extent has modern-day South Africa digressed from racist ideas and racist practices? A mere cursory reading of daily newspapers (not to mention scientific, scholarly studies) reveals some highly alarming data and facts. The recent, narrow-minded and entirely crude reaction (on the part of certain members of the Blackheath community) towards poverty-stricken, homeless people from the Llawandle informal settlement, is a case in point. And it was not long ago when this type of bigotry - directed then at African foreign nationals - played itself out across a number of impoverished, largely jobless communities. Who has forgotten the scandalous Reitz incident? This affair strongly suggests that covert acts of racism as well as bigoted ideas continue to be openly or subliminally promoted in certain quarters. How could one otherwise explain certain individuals' deep reverence for and fanatical protection of the names of central architects of the apartheid system? Names such as HF Verwoerd and DF Malan readily come to mind.

The Reitz episode compelled the Education Department to institute the Soudien Commission of Enquiry, which in turn, uncovered outright chauvinistic practices at arguably all of South Africa's 23 institutions of higher learning. The Soudien Report (2008, 43-87) documents dozens of undergraduates (from different institutions) professing that offending students ('thugs') are predominantly male and 'white', believing themselves (still) to be 'superior' to others. While university residences traditionally have been perceived as 'homes away from home', 'it is in the residence that racism has manifested itself in a direct rather than covert or subliminal sense'. The ordinariness of racism in residences disproves the contention that the Reitz event was a mere irregularity. For example, where two first-year students were attacked and their room trashed, this, too, was not an isolated case. Here perceptions were rife that the entire institution in question has become notorious for racist incidents: 'every black student will tell you that [this] campus is one of the most racist campuses in South-Africa'.

In terms of the experiences of academics, it was predominantly non-white staff (likewise from

across institutions) who felt 'immense unhappiness and frustration'. In this instance 'institutional cultures' was targeted as the primary offender, coming under fire for their preservation of past (mainly superior/exclusive) academic practices. The Soudien Committee was 'struck by the almost ubiquitous sense of disenchantment, alienation and anger' amongst these staff members, and by the fact that they did not 'feel at home' in their institutions. The degree of 'pain, hurt and humiliation' staff members have had to bear is shown by perceptions that 'they are treated as 'unknowns', as if 'their status and name are not known'. The Report furthermore concludes though many institutions have 'introduced programmes to sensitise students', as well as policies to deal with hurtful deeds, *problems of discrimination appear to persist without end*. This phenomenon strongly suggests that either there are fundamental weaknesses in these policies and programmes or that broader social forces obstruct the country's transformation process.

Since such contemptible conduct certainly does not start and end on university campuses, this, in itself, strongly suggests that racism has remained endemic across the length and breadth of the new South Africa. The testimonies of many rural employees (as articulated especially during the 2012-2013 farm workers' strike) similarly attest to enduring acts of barefaced discrimination, albeit on the part of certain landlords, their families, and associates. (Here it must be emphasised that, more enlightened, fair-minded farm owners have and continue to contribute to raising the working, living, and educational conditions of their workforce).

Considered overall, the official preoccupation with race has led to a multitude of diverse inconsistencies, confusions, frustrations, and miscalculations, - on all levels of society. There is a strong inference that the country has not moved away, but rather, increasingly closer towards a socially-structured governing order framed very specifically and purposefully on notions of race, and thus discrimination. The story, so to speak, unfortunately does not end there.

The persistence and prevalence of the apartheid mindset are also visible in official measures aimed at reinforcing ethnic and tribal identification. This is shown in governmental endeavours to pass new tribal laws largely based on past, outdated practices. As some analysts have warned, such a course would assuredly arouse Apartheid's grandest ambitions from slumber. Impending tribal bills compel people living in former homeland areas (as defined by the Apartheid government) to be subjected to traditional law, whether they are in agreement or not. While tribal groups most commonly strongly identify with

a specific set of communal practices and beliefs, tribalism, in itself, has an exclusionary element - where one is seen as 'part of us or part of them'. As Ndovela (2012) sums it up: 'Tribalism is one of the biggest threats to unity. Tribalism is divisive... and it tends to be fairly easy to garner political support on the basis of shared 'tribal blood'. Tribalism (like 18th-century European feudalism) incorporates a legal system operating at variance with bourgeois democracy. ('Bourgeois democracy' became formally instituted in the late 18th century, particularly with the American and French revolutions, a major historical advancement on ideas initially conceived by Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Socrates and others). Nonetheless, since tribalism involves preferential compensation and treatment, as well as acts of social retribution, all at the behest of a tribal monarch (South Africa currently has ten), it prevents tribal subjects from becoming equal members of a unitary state. It permits, in reality, 'town oligarchies', 'antiquated jurisdictions', 'elite privileges' and 'outworn territorial divisions' (Woods 2010), precisely key features of feudal society. More importantly, perhaps, given its blind exclusionary and unassailable disposition, tribalism can only lead to social fractures and ultimately bloodshed, as the African continent knows only too well. (See also the writings of Gasa 2012, Ngubane 2012; Dube 2012; Motsepe 2012).

Neo-liberal notions of *rainbowism*, *unity in diversity*, and *cultural diversity* have failed to bring about a non-racial social order. As a tool for social reparation this agenda is both ineffectual and perilous since it not solely promotes the continuation, but the celebration of difference (predominantly fashioned by Apartheid ideology in the first place). 'Cultural diversity' effectively calls on victims not purely to accept, but to revel in the historical legacy of human partition. As Tabata (1985, 77-78) forewarned: *Apartheid rulers first divide and classify the population into separate groups and then convince themselves that these divisions make it impossible to have a unitary state, that is a single South African nation in which all people enjoy full and equal democratic rights (emphasis added)*. The same critique, in large measure, can be directed at the country's intellectually-dispossessed ruling clique.

Emulating the Brazilian position, below are some plausible responses to ruinous developments that have taken their course across all spectrums of the "new", 'non-racial' South Africa. These ideas are basic, comprehensible, instructive, and restorative. Though officially disregarded and suppressed in the public domain, they are uncontested, universal,

human responses to those who seek to preserve slave relations, on the one hand, and on the other, those who find it hard to emancipate themselves from mental slavery:

*And there are those who say that even though 'race' does not exist, we have to respond to it as if it exists, i.e., appeal to people on the basis of their 'Colouredness', or their 'Africanness', for example. That is tantamount to treating the disease of racism with the poison of racist categorisation of people! Our response is that racism... exists and has to be fought on a strictly non-racial basis. This means that our campaigns, nation-building strategies and discourse to deal with racism have to be consistently anti-racist pushing towards the eventual realisation of a genuinely non-racial society (Hercules's 1995, 2, emphasis added).*

Cultural-anthropologist Basckin (1988, 144) claims that, while the 'biological and evolutionary origins of life are beyond doubt, it is fallacious to attribute biological causation as the basis for human society'. The latter, he reasons, is but a *cultural artefact (ibid.)*. This theory, as do others, refutes notions of the 'inherent superiority' of some, and 'inherent inferiority' of other human subjects. It contradicts doctrines professing cultural manifestations purely emanate from or are inextricably linked to predetermined biological factors. Basckin (*ibid.*) concludes that, human cultures are but the end result of human developmental processes, social relations, and ensuing human consciousness. In other words, people's mores, values, beliefs, creations, conducts and endeavours, are 'a reflective, exclusively human intellectual process mediated upon and dialectically transformed by the symbolic interchanges of social behaviour' (*ibid.*). Reinforcing this perspective are established theories from the genetic sciences. John Sulston received the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2002 for his pioneering contribution to unravelling the human genome code. He concluded, and reaffirmed, that in genetic terms, every human being is 99.8% the same as any other (Sulston 2002). Couched in universal ethical terms, the elemental value of 'human equality' is perhaps most sweepingly expressed in the United Nations Human Rights Charter (UNESCO 2001, 293):

*The UN CHARTER is based on the principles of the dignity and equality of all human beings [and] proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, in particular as to race, colour or national origin. Any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is*

*scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and there is no justification for it either in theory or in practice.*

In sum, equitable access to human progress must, as a rule, give full consideration to economic, educational, and social indicators, rather than fake notions of race. Such a course would signify a landmark departure from Apartheid racist philosophy, and set a meaningful standard for those who wish to build a real and truly non-racial community of citizens whose skin colour no longer defines either their progress or fate in life. A most critical factor staring the country squarely in the face today is simply this: any meaningful form of social restitution cannot be attained through processes embracing fundamental principles upon which the apartheid system thrived and eventually disintegrated and died.

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## CRISIS IN EASTERN CAPE EDUCATION SPIRALS OUT OF CONTROL

The protests and closure of schools in the Northern areas of Port Elizabeth by parents, teachers and pupils are symptomatic of an ever-deepening crisis in the education sector. As a result very few schools, if any, could successfully write the Annual National Assessment (ANA) examinations and in some cases even the trial examinations at some schools were put at risk. From the Limpopo Province to the Western and Eastern Provinces we have had numerous crises. None, I would venture to say, as damaging to the lives of our children as those in the Department of Education (ECED) in the Eastern Cape. Litigation suits have abounded, court judgments have been ignored, negotiations and resolutions by teacher-unions have been cast aside, and protests by communities have either fallen on deaf ears or, even worse, to quieten these protests, numerous false promises have been made. Lest we forget it was in Graaff-Reinet, Somerset East, Pearston (123 pupils in one class) and a host of other towns and villages where these problems first surfaced. The 12 km protests in Stanford Road were triggered by an inept, bumbling education department that has failed to carry out its mandate of ensuring quality education for the children of this province.

A task team was elected to represent schools. Taking into account the dearth of primary school teachers, especially in the Foundation Phase, and that the Universities are not able to 'produce sufficient teachers countrywide, demands were put forward by the school communities which, inter alia, included:

- that every class must be serviced by a teacher;
- that the 1% IQMS salary increase (2012) be paid to teachers as this impacted on the current pay notch, pension contribution, etc.;
- that schools take a stance of non-compliance with the education department, which included not writing the ANA exams as there were many learners who had not received proper teaching since the start of the school year (2014);
- that picketing start along Stanford Rd. on Monday 18 August;
- that if this elicited no response, schools would be closed from Wednesday 27 August to 29 August.

Of course letters were written to the District Office, the Provincial Office and the National Department of Education. At first, only the National Department responded and, much later, the MEC for Education in the EC. (It was surmised that this was on

instruction from the national office.) The Task Team consisting of principals and SGB Forum members met the local education department and, much to their amusement, the Task Team found that the departmental officials were unsure of the entry level for first-time (new) teachers. They were unsure whether it was REQV 13 or 14.

Not for the first time schools were promised that the issue of the chronic shortage of teachers in the Northern areas would be addressed as a matter of urgency. For the second time in as many years, the department promised that teachers would be appointed in vacant substantive posts within one week. A few appointments were subsequently confirmed but the majority of the appointments were not made. If truth be told, it cannot be done. The blame is now laid at the door of principals for not making the necessary submissions for vacant posts. This intolerant and exasperating mentality prevents the education department from learning from its mistakes. Shifting the blame onto the principals and eventually the parents for their own stupefying incompetence has been the political strategy all along. In Kuruman, with school closures driving the demand for road construction, they may have found a legitimate reason for charging the parents, but these are only the first salvos - they now have a reason to invoke existing regulations to charge or disband SGB's or forums that dare oppose their blundering. Why have appointments not been made? Pupils have relocated in droves to the Free State, KwaZulu Natal and the Western Cape. Pupils have abandoned township schools because they have not been providing quality education. In addition, there are those children whose parents are making supreme sacrifices to enable them to attend the Model C schools. This in turn has led to teachers "being in excess" in township schools. This has further led to a stand-off between, primarily, Sadtu and the Eastern Cape Education Department on the question of redeployment. How difficult is it to place teachers in substantive vacant posts? There is apparently a discrepancy in the number of teachers employed by the education department and that claimed as actual by Sadtu. We have had more than 10 headcounts in the Eastern Cape. Is the education department unable or incapable of this minor service delivery task?

Schools in all townships have been sadly neglected.

The collapse of schooling in all township schools is evidenced by the atrocious matric results, the results of the ANA examinations and the fact that SA is always ranked bottom (or close to it) of the class in international surveys. Add to this further:

- the abnormally high drop-out rate - only prevalent in township schools;
- infrastructure deficiencies in township schools;
- the want of decent school buildings;
- the absence of sporting facilities, school halls, libraries and laboratories;
- the inadequate supply of text books and stationery as well as a lack of adequate furniture.

All these compound the frustration, stresses and strains of parents, teachers and pupils alike. Add to this school closures because of service delivery protests in the townships and it is evident that we are sitting on an "Education Marikana" just waiting to happen. This, of course, is infinitely worse than Marikana as there the state could at least pretend to have acted in self-defence, *ruthlessly dishonest as that may be*. But here the lives of thousands of our children are actually being destroyed by those to whose care they have been entrusted.

Corruption in the crisis-ridden department is rife. The delivery of furniture has been fraught with problems for umpteen years. Stationery and textbook delivery has been a national problem. The feeding scheme has been overhauled on countless occasions and just recently it was reported in The Herald (9 Sept. '14) that the Bhishe provincial legislature had lost R1.1 billion in Grants as a result

of massive departmental underspending. Needless to say the education department is one of the major contributors to this fiasco.

It must be noted that during this whole debacle the silence from all the teacher-labour unions was deafening. Can we assume that the reason for this silence was that it did not directly affect the pocket of the teachers, but merely the welfare, the education of our children?

Teachers (class-based and office-based) and particularly principals are demotivated and cannot wait until they reach retirement age. Teachers and even departmental officials are retiring at the age of 60. Another cause for concern is the recently released promotion regulations which stipulate that learners in Grades 9 - 11 may not spend more than 4 years in this phase; three years in the Foundation Phase; and four years in the Intermediate phase. This is wholly illogical: fiddling with the outcomes (the results), instead of improving the input - that of the teaching and learning aspect - by providing an enabling environment in which effective schooling can take place.

We cannot remain quiet and do nothing when the ANC-led Education Department is at it again. We need to stand up for our teachers and oppose the demeaning anti-educational measures that are vulgarising the assessment process and debasing the education of our children. We owe it our children and their future!

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### THE EMERGENCE OF A PROGRESIVE NON-RACIAL SPORTS ORGANISATION

Schools and teachers that formed the Interim Progressive School Sports Organisation (IPSSO) are to be congratulated on staging a successful high school athletics competition. It seems that all over the country individuals are dissatisfied with the way school sport is being run. In Port Elizabeth rugby amongst the schools of the former Eastern Province Senior Schools' Sports Union has been successfully organised for the past two years; many primary schools that were members of the former primary schools' structure have never really completely disbanded and many former affiliates continue to organise local competitions on a multi-coded basis. No overall provincial or district sports structure is present, however. News of discontent has also reached us from Johannesburg, the South Cape and lately Durban.

The article that appeared in the Educational Journal of July 2014 about the state of school sport past and present does not do justice to the history of the South African Primary Schools' Sports Association (SAPSSA) and the South African Senior Schools' Sports Association (SASSSA). SASSSA was established in 1961, and, after a brief and unsuccessful attempt at establishing a national primary schools' sports organisation in the mid-1950s, SAPSSA became firmly established in 1965. It was realised from a very early stage that the struggle in sport and education was linked to the struggle for political emancipation and democracy. The demands of the influential Teachers' Federal Council, comprising the Cape African Teacher's Association (CATA) and the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLA), were for an unsegregated system of education at all levels. This was the basis on which our school sports organisations, SAPSSA, SASSSA and their predecessor, the SA Schools' Sport Board, were established. They also came about as a result of the seminal contribution of individuals in these teachers' organisations, who in their writings espoused the non-racial ethic. Progressive teachers realised that in the schools they were engaged in the battle for the minds of the youth. Schools in the forties then became "sites of struggle". And with the advent of non-racial sport in the fifties and sixties teachers realised that sport could be used to raise the social and political consciousness of the youth as well as to promote the

principle of non-racialism. SAPSSA and SASSSA had always practised non-racial sport and In 1977, SASSSA affiliated to SACOS, followed by SAPSSA in 1979. Many in the leadership of both organisations at national and provincial level were in any case either officials or members of adult codes, or officials of SACOS or the Provincial Councils of Sport.

After 1994 breakaways from SACOS became the order of the day as adult non-racial codes formed sham-unity with non-existent sports bodies and former "all-white" national codes. School sport was under threat and instead of amalgamating with non-existent bodies the non-racial schools' structures decided that the schools' sports organisations would disband. Both SAPSSA and SASSSA held constitutionally convened dissolution meetings. It is thus misleading to suggest that SAPSSA and SAPSSA "folded" to form the United Schools' Sports Association of SA (USSASA) or for that matter that SAPSSA teachers had been "used to smash SASSSA". Nothing can be further from the truth, and it is insulting to both former SAPSSA and SASSSA teachers.

USSASA never in its history organised mass multi-coded tournaments. Single-coded tournaments such as in Rugby and Cricket were organised under its umbrella in conjunction with the national bodies controlling the sport. By June 2006 USSASA had officially closed shop and had lost all pretence at organising sport for the masses. It thus could not have held any "secret" meetings with any organisation in 2007. We would, however, never discount the possibility of "former officials" or representatives of the remnants of the organisation being present at such meetings. The meeting which led to the establishment of the South African Schools Sports Organisation (SASSO) was the second attempt of its kind to have seen the light of day. A series of "workshops" was held from 19 - 21 November 2004 to review school sport. These "workshops", funded by the Dutch embassy and convened by the National Education Department, were attended by the Dept. of Sport and Recreation, teacher unions, school governing bodies, educators involved in school sport, learner representatives, the South African Sports Commission, the National Olympics Committee of South Africa, Disability

Sports South Africa, the United Cricket Board of South Africa (now Cricket South Africa) and USSASA. These gatherings were also attended by representatives from the British Council, Discovery Health and Transnet. All their machinations came to nought. SASSO is seemingly going the same way as they have not as yet established units nationally and least of all in the rural areas. It is easy to establish a national organisation as the previous attempts proved, but it is something else to sustain such organisation and to secure the support of teachers as in the case of SAPSSA & SASSSA.

Whilst we are at variance with some of the points raised in the article, we would like to agree wholeheartedly with the author(s) that economic apartheid prevents the development of the sporting abilities of the majority of our youth, for they still lack even the basic educational resources, let alone sports facilities. Equality in sport can only be attained when we have equality in education, which in turn can only be achieved in a truly democratic egalitarian society, in which there is not only social, but also economic justice.

Yours sincerely

Joe & Hammy

Former SASSSA secretary and former EPPSSB chairperson

October 2014

### EDITOR'S REPLY

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Dear Joe and Hammy

We disagree with the statement that the article disregarded or misrepresented the role played by SASSSA and SAPSSA. The article made it quite clear what SACOS, which included SASSSA and SAPSSA, stood for. Obviously to do justice to the entire history of these two sports bodies would require a book to be written. The article conveyed the most important fact, which is, that we need to establish once again a non-racial School Sports Organisation serving the interests of the poor.

For Hammy and company to suggest that the article is insulting towards SASSSA and SAPSSA is not correct. SASSSA and SAPSSA folded or were dissolved (a matter of semantics) because the mass of people supported (or were misled into supporting) the formation of new sport bodies. Otherwise these bodies and SACOS would still have existed. It is a hard fact to swallow but it is factual.

We do, however, understand the sensitivity about the implication that everybody in SACOS was guilty of capitulating to the new school sport dispensation - in fact, to the entire new debased school dispensation. And we say, therefore, without hesitation, that there were very many teacher officials and others who stood firm on progressive principles and preferred to go the dissolution route rather than allow their proud sports structures to be taken over by the new generation of reactionaries

# NOTES IN SCHOOL

I  
THE LEADING ARTICLE IN THIS ISSUE MENTIONS THE RECRUITMENT OF CHILD SOLDIERS as an example of the brutalization of children in certain war-torn countries. The writer goes on to say that such a crime is not committed against children in South Africa. However, something similar is happening in gang-plagued areas. Teenagers, sometimes even children, are pressurised into joining gangs to ensure protection for themselves and their families and to obtain much-needed cash. In some gangs there is a macabre initiation ceremony: youngsters have to demonstrate their commitment to that particular gang by killing a member of an opposing gang or, at times, a randomly selected target! Some teenagers show that they have a flair for this kind of "work" and are "promoted" to positions of official assassins of the gang concerned.

We have been told by someone who works in an economically depressed area that the parents of a certain family felt a sense of relief when their son was shot dead! He had already killed 12 members of an opposing gang and was being hunted by that gang's assassins; so the family had lived in fear of dying in a hail of bullets in their own home. In the end only the expert teenage assassin had been executed.....

This horrifying incident is an illustration of the fact that it is difficult for economically oppressed people to lead normal lives. Under normal circumstances a teenage boy would be occupied with his studies, sports, music and a burgeoning interest in girls..... Not with killing people! Parents who have lost a teenage son would normally be in mourning, grieving because the life of a beloved son had been cut short.....Not relieved that he was dead! It is tragic and unacceptable that millions of South Africans are living under conditions that undermine normality, distorting people's lives.....

## II

MANY SOUTH AFRICANS ARE SUBJECTED TO CRUSHING AND DEMEANING POVERTY that spawns social evils. Incredibly the majority of them rise above their environment and remain decent, good human beings. But some of them became brutalised by suffering, children especially being at risk. It is not enough to express shock at the deviant behaviour of youngsters. We need to think of the causes of aberrations; once we have identified the causes we must strive to remove them. We believe that all children are born pure and innocent;

some of them become problem children and even evildoers because of environmental factors and the shortcomings and corruption of adults. To our mind the springboard of anti-social behaviour amongst the young is a dispensation that degrades them, making them lose their self-esteem. We need to continue the struggle for the establishment of a South African dispensation in which education, healthcare and socio-economic policies and practices are people-friendly and geared to real transformation. We need a system that promotes human dignity, not the interests of the corporate world and the rich. In a people-centred South African dispensation our future citizens would be able to enjoy fantastic childhood experiences, adventurous teenage years and develop into enlightened and compassionate adults who are empowered to contribute to the progress of our country.

## III

THE CONTRIBUTION THAT PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT make to the all-round development of children is enormous. The neglect of this area today is close to criminal. One of our readers expressed his tremendous benefit from physical training by paying the following tribute to his PE teacher:

Dear Sir, I am in awe of the massive contribution that you and your colleagues have made to this country and I cannot even begin to do justice to a description of the legacy of the school. Because of this, whenever I take overseas visitors around Cape Town, a visit to the school is a compulsory stop. As I enter the grounds, the memories come flooding back of rich and stimulating experiences. Just about every square metre holds a pleasant memory, starting with the grade three classroom at the top of the avenue nestled between the chapel and a small residential area.

The area around the chapel was hallowed ground and out of bounds. Equally hallowed for many of us, however, was the area in front of the houses and immediately adjacent to it because this was where you held your physical education classes and it was with keen anticipation that we proceeded to these. There would be warm-up activities on the lower paddock followed by free standing /stretching/gymnastics on the upper level. Classes were well structured and carefully prepared and there was a clear striving for excellence in all that was presented and high standards were expected from the students. The professionalism and

enthusiasm you demonstrated brought out the best in us and many of your students developed a high level of proficiency in a number of physical activities which provided us with the basic skills to become accomplished sportsmen in a number of fields locally, nationally and internationally.

Thank you for being a wonderful role model: you were always immaculately dressed and gave us inspirational demonstrations. I can still see that hand-spring on the mat or headspring on the box with straight legs and pointed toes. You not only provided the skills; you emphasised when coaching team sports respect for oneself, respect for fellow team players as well as the opponents; playing the ball and not the man and good sportsmanship. These values were complemented and reinforced by your colleagues in so many other school and inter-school activities: rugby, soccer, athletics, choral competitions, concerts, essay competitions, and the stimulating weekly assemblies with rousing hymns and always a moral lesson. I can still hear the principal repeating, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you". Though never spelt out, the vision was clearly "A sound mind in a healthy body", and the comprehensive programmes of activities served to achieve this and the energy and zeal that drove your lessons were present in all that was presented by the rest of your colleagues. And all activities were treated as though they were equally important. Why, we even had as school song to promote soccer:

*You lucky lads, you happy fellows,  
You who are picked to play today,  
Put on your red and green and yellow  
And gird your knickers for the fray.  
Arrange yourselves in fighting fettle  
For fear and funk allow no room.  
Now mark your man, now get that ball, And score  
another goal for Zonnebloem.*

And the very stylish soccer jersey was of the highest quality. Indeed there was quality and excellence in everything presented. No wonder that other schools were envious and we received verbal abuse from them! The formal academic programme was provided with the same dedication as all other activities, and such was the quality of Zonnebloem graduates that those who proceeded to secondary and tertiary institutions were more than able to hold their own and excel at our leading educational entities. This sort of achievement could be claimed by many institutions. However, Zonnebloem teachers were unique. Theirs was indeed a labour of love and one felt as though one was part of family. Two maxims that teachers' training colleges encouraged teachers to live by were: "Any lesson provided without love is a waste of time" and "We

teach for eternity".

I believe, Sir, that you and your colleagues lived according to these philosophies in the selfless dedication that you displayed.

But the difference between Zonnebloem of your time and other institutions was the behaviour of Zonnebloem past students. The emphasis on a balance of physical and mental development resulted in your perfection of a formula which enabled students to convert

- "playing the ball and not the man" into "restrict your contribution in discussion and debate to ideas and not personal attacks on individuals";
- "respecting yourself" into "do not stoop to underhand tactics especially in promoting noble causes";
- "respecting others" into "doing unto others as you would have them do to you."

Students who passed through your hands felt compelled to go out into their communities and to right the wrongs in society. One such a person, at the youthful age of 16, introduced a motion in our soccer club to eliminate discrimination on any grounds to prevent any person from becoming a member. There were sufficient former Zonnebloem students present at the meeting to ensure that the previous discriminatory practices were thrown out. There are numerous examples of great achievement by your students, probably the most illustrious being Basil D'Oliviera and his achievements in the England cricket test team. Not only did D'Oliviera's achievements redound to the credit of Zonnebloem but as a result of the controversy resulting from repulsive treatment he suffered at the hands of the racist South African government, he was personally responsible for significant change in sport and social interaction.

Sadly the current government has chosen to use some of the same discriminatory practices of the apartheid era like continuing with the same racist divisive labeling of individuals according to skin colour. By continuing to use the same template used by the architects of apartheid even greater chaos will be created in future. In our soccer club over 50 years ago we showed how racism had to be countered by not giving legitimacy to the apartheid division of individuals on the basis of skin colour or any other physical attributes. We rejected, especially, the "coloured" label as derogatory and an affront to human dignity and we rejected acceptance of the label which meant approval of the second class status which was written into the statute books.

Thank you, Sir, and your colleagues, for the superior education that you provided and the values that you instilled. And most of this in the humble PE class!