

**THE ISSUE OF SAME RACE RACISM**  
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Since the publication of research results that indicated the existence of unequal treatment of blacks by other races, including a significant number of blacks, South Africans have been involved in a lot of debate and soul searching. The truth is that we can prove through scientific research that in official business and public outlets, some blacks have a tendency to treat other blacks, based on race rather than ethnicity, worse than they would treat say a white person. I personally do not see the need to debate this as research can prove it over and over again, and everyone knows about it anecdotally, despite some protestations to the contrary.

Revealingly, debate has been preoccupied with defining what racism is, and what it is not, rather than with how to solve this very big problem that gnaws away at the very fabric of our freedom and emancipation. Because of this obsession with defining what racism is, I will first dwell on this notion before hazarding some suggested solutions in future articles.

The World Conference on Racism in 2001 took on the title: "The World Against Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". The theme was equality, justice and dignity. The word racism, also previously referred to as racialism or race prejudice, has been in use for a little more than 75 years and has during that time evolved to include other manifestations of racially motivated unequal treatment including same race racism. The term is pejorative and therefore by definition controversial.

According to the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission (1998) racism means "attitudes, practices and other factors that disadvantage people because of their race, colour or ethnicity. Racism can be directed against any race, colour or ethnicity". This is exactly what the survey found: that there are some 8 million people in South Africa who perceive disadvantageous treatment at service points predominantly at the hands of other blacks. According to this definition this experience can be described as racism. Why then is it difficult to accept that such racially motivated prejudice is in fact racism? According to Barbara Field of Columbia University (Slavery, Race and Ideology in the USA), racism is a historical phenomenon which does not explain racial ideology. She suggests that the term should be regarded as a rhetorical device with a historical explanation, and not to be an explanation in itself, and further that using race as a word with real meaning is a common error akin to superstition.

I agree with her completely. In the book "I write what I like" Steve Biko did point out aspects of self rejection and negation due to historical ill-treatment. Biko does point out that this early experience of being segregated against irrevocably results in a long enduring culture of self-degradation which is retained by children

well into adulthood. What is revealing however is that such a phenomenon has the capability of becoming a culture, and like a virus can secretly encode itself into various spheres of life while it multiplies in number. This means that long after the segregation is removed, parents may pass on this racial stigma to their children, who in turn will pass it on to their children. Unless Africans accept and deal with this problem it may be impossible to rid ourselves of the shackles of a historical race based society, and therefore we cannot be completely free.

So does it really matter if this race based problem is called racism, classism, prejudism, xenophobia, ethnicism, or something else? The advantage of calling it racism is that it actually does stem from a history of racism and therefore gives it the high profile the matter deserves, apart from the fact that according to most definitions it is technically accurate. It would be more progressive if Africans were not obsessed with what is called "scientific racism", which is the use of science, or a veneer of science, to justify and support racist beliefs. For example between 1853 and 1855 Arthur Gobineau wrote an essay on the "Inequality of the Human Races", in which he attempted to frame racism within the terms of biological difference among human beings. The work of Charles Darwin on the evolution of the human species gave rise to other theories of evolution wherein it became common to consider other races as more evolved than others. This, it can be argued, is a source of modern day racism which has since mutated itself into a far more complex animal with socio-cultural implications that have as strong a chance of surviving as it easy to dismiss the concept of scientific racism.

Racism suffered by Africans has been severe in the sense that they have experienced it at all three levels, that is, individual racism, institutional or systematic racism, and cultural racism. Denying that they have themselves become "race conscious and slanted" in their behaviour is like arguing that if a black person kills another black this is not murder, but inflicting fatal wounds on the other person. We as Africans need to voluntarily put this issue high on the agenda and start examining issues of our inequality a lot of which may be self-imposed. One of the best things ever to have happened in South Africa was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was largely about what happened physically. There is a need to acknowledge that given the force, size and sophistication of historical segregation, something needs to be done to address what happened attitudinally and mentally in order to create a release from bondage as a result of the history. We have succeeded in the bigger battle of being free from external bondage, now we need to wage a war against its more wily cousin: internal bondage. Then we will be free indeed.