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**Tracking the historical roots of post-apartheid citizenship problems: the Native Club, restless natives, panicking settlers and the politics of nativism in South Africa**

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**Citation**

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2007). Tracking the historical roots of post-apartheid citizenship problems: the Native Club, restless natives, panicking settlers and the politics of nativism in South Africa. *Asc Working Paper Series*, (72). Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/12905>

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

African Studies Centre  
Leiden, The Netherlands

**Tracking the Historical Roots of  
Post-Apartheid Citizenship Problems:  
The Native Club, Restless Natives,  
Panicking Settlers and the Politics of  
Nativism in South Africa**

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

ASC Working Paper 72 / 2007

This working paper is part of a larger research project entitled **Black Natives and White Settlers: Colonialism, Nationalism and Nativism in Zimbabwe and South Africa**. I would like to express my thanks to the African Studies Centre (ASC) for affording me a conducive environment to begin to write part of this book.

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## Preface

South Africa is a country with a kaleidoscope of cultural, ethnic, and racial identities. As such it is not yet a nation-state and is struggling with competing demands of difference and unity involving different races and different ethnic groups. All this is taking place against a background of a government concerned with constructing a durable 'rainbow nation' underpinned by principles of non-racialism, equality and common citizenship. The dangers of exclusive nationalism and even racism are alive in South Africa despite political rhetoric to the contrary. No wonder then that the mere launch of the Native Club in 2006 in South Africa under the theme of *Where Are the Natives?: The Black Intelligentsia Today*, as a new forum for black South African intelligentsia, provoked wide spread debate from the academic and political fraternity that even implicated President Thabo Mbeki as the brains behind the project. The debates revolved around key and sometimes very sensitive issues of race, citizenship, inclusion and exclusion in a country that has just emerged from inhuman apartheid legacy and a country that was promising to be a successful model of stable and pluralist liberal democracy in Africa. The Native Club was established amidst intense debates among intellectuals touching on the limits and dangers of neo-liberalism as well as the dangers and limits of populist and exclusive African nationalism. Currently the Native Club is housed under the roof of the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) in Pretoria (Tshwane) and it has a website which spells out its mission and objectives in very brief terms. This working paper takes a politico-historical approach in its endeavour to understand and define the essence of the Native Club going beyond the surface media exchanges that have characterised its launch, grounding the debate more earlier debates over, race, class and the national democratic revolution to reveal the historical 'rooted ness' of nativism and populism.

The Native Club is a product and a symptom of deeper contradictory and ambiguous embers of a fragmented, bifurcated and complex liberation tradition fashioned by the equally bifurcated and ambiguous settler colonialism and apartheid. Its roots must be traced and linked to nationalist politics dating back to the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in 1912 and the subsequent split of the African National Congress (ANC) into the Pan-African Congress (PAC) in 1959. Thus the Native Club is here understood as a reflection of the antinomies of black nationalist thought that was influenced by a coalescence of different but related liberation traditions such as Pan-Africanism, Garveyism, Populism, Negritude, Socialism, and Marxism. As such, it cannot be studied and understood as a phenomenon of 2006. This working paper's task involves historicising, theorising, conceptualising and contextualising the Native Club within the evolving body politic of South Africa while at the same time revealing broader hidden ideological meanings, essence and dangers of nativism in post-apartheid South Africa. The politics and debates sparked by the Native Club also resonates with the current crises within the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance and the whole post-1994 malaise crystallising around ideological, class and racial cleavages that are characterizing the second phase of South African democratic consolidation. This study is largely interpretive in its search for a comprehensive definition of the Native Club and making sense of Native Club in a post-colonial, post-settler and post-apartheid society in Africa.

*I am a native of South Africa, and therefore I would have no problem in approaching the Native Club to seek participation in its activities.*<sup>1</sup>

*Shaped by the immanent logic of colonialism, Third World nationalism could not escape from reproducing racial and ethnic discrimination; a price to be paid by the coloniser as well as the colonised selves.*<sup>2</sup>

*When we consider the narratives of decolonisation, we encounter rhetorics in which 'nativism' in one form or another is evident. Instead of disciplining these, theoretical whip in hand, as a catalogue of epistemological error, of essentialist mystifications, as a masculinist appropriation of dissent, as no more than an anti-racist racism, etc., I want to consider what is to be gained by an unsententious interrogation of such articulations which, if often driven by negative passion, cannot be reduced to mere inveighing against iniquities or a repetition of the canonical terms of imperialism's framework.*<sup>3</sup>

*In the context of a former settler colony, a single citizenship for settlers and natives can only be the result of an overall metamorphosis whereby erstwhile colonisers and colonised are politically reborn as equal members of a single political community. The word reconciliation cannot capture this metamorphosis...This is about establishing, for the first time, a political order based on consent and not conquest. It is about establishing a political community of equal and consenting citizens.*<sup>4</sup>

*In post-apartheid epoch, while people's expectations have been heightened, a realisation that delivery is not immediate has meant that discontent and indignation are at the peak. People are more conscious of their deprivation than ever before...This is the ideal situation for a phenomenon like xenophobia to take root and flourish. South Africa's transition to democracy has exposed the unequal distribution of resources and wealth in the country.*<sup>5</sup>

*Though we are Africans, many South Africans seem to have an identity crisis. Through our dress, music, cuisine, role models and reference points we seem to be clones of Americans and Europeans. The Native Club will grapple with this important matter so that there should evolve Africans who are truly native than exotic.*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> President Thabo Mbeki quoted in Louis Freedberg, 'Return of the 'n' word,' in <http://www.nativeclub.org/shared/news/article.asp?id=208>

<sup>2</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, 'Introduction: The Decolonization Question,' in Kuan-Hsing Chen (ed.), *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, (Taylor and Francis, London, 1998), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Benita Parry, 'Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism,' in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (eds.), *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, (University of Manchester Press, Manchester, 1994), p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'When Does a Settler Become a Native? Reflections on the Roots of Citizenship in Equatorial and South Africa,' (Text of Inaugural Lecturer delivered as A. C. Jordan Professor of African Studies, University of Cape Town, Wednesday 13 May 1998).

<sup>5</sup> C. Tshitereke, 'Xenophobia and Relative Deprivation,' in *Crossings*, Volume 3, Number 2, (1999), pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Statement by Titus Mafolo, senior adviser to President Thabo Mbeki and founding Chairman of the Native Club.

## Introduction

The South Asian historian Sumit Sarkar made this important intellectual comment that ‘unimportant events of no obvious consequence which stick out and refuse to fit into any of the established patterns of historical reconstruction’ are valuable insofar as they ‘afford oblique entry points into social history and can throw light upon dimensions obscured by dominant—all too often teleological analytical frameworks.’<sup>7</sup> This statement is relevant for the present study because to some people the launch of the Native Club in South Africa in May 2006 was not an important event at all while to others it was just dismissed out rightly as ‘April Fools’ joke’ and a move to deflect attention from failings of the state.<sup>8</sup> To some, it was just interpreted simplistically as ‘black racism’ and yet others described it as a form of ‘stirring a dark brew’ comparable to some nineteenth century millenarian fatal and false prophecies that influenced Africans into resorting to some irrational behaviours that cost them lives and material wealth.<sup>9</sup> However, they were some who immediately defined the Native Club in non-dismissive and broad terms like Eddy Maloka who wrote that the ‘Yet, the Native Club is simply a movement, or rather a network, of a section of our country’s intelligentsia which is ‘gatvol’ with the dominance that whites continue to enjoy in our knowledge production sector.’<sup>10</sup> Maloka went on to situate the Native Club within the broader African liberation traditions arguing that the agenda of national transformation cannot ignore the realm of ideas where intellectual debates and national discourse is articulated. In this study, the formation of the Native Club is not seen as an isolated event, but as a consequence of some embers which have been burning since the beginning of the struggle against apartheid and is situated historically within the broader terrain of power contestations and continuous reflections by different sections of South African society on the gains of the anti-apartheid struggle, post-apartheid development failures and disappointments as well as the future direction of democratic social and political transformation at this crucial second decade of South African democratic consolidation.

The launch of the Native Club brought to the surface some key issues that require systematic historical analysis like contested imaginations of liberation, contradictory visions of citizenship and democracy as well as equally contested imaginations of the nature of the post-apartheid nation-state itself. During the first decade of democracy, many black South Africans had pinned their hopes for change on the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and the socialist inspired Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that witnessed the construction of some low cost RDP houses among other few early achievements of the ANC government. Unfortunately, BEE ended up as a package benefiting the elite black South Africans directly connected to ANC political

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<sup>7</sup> Sumit Sarkar, ‘The Kalki-Avatar of Bikrampur: A Village Scandal in Early Twentieth Century Bengal,’ in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies VI: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Jansen, ‘Native Club: A Dangerous Move to Deflect Attention from State Failings,’ in *Sunday Times*, 28 May 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Democratic Alliance National Spokesperson, Motlajo Theetjen, ‘Native Club Racist,’ in *Financial Mail*, 26 May 2006 and Achille Mbembe, ‘Stirring a Dark Brew that Echoes Nongwawuse’s Fatal Prophecy,’ in *Sunday Times*, 24 June 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Eddy Maloka, ‘The Native Club and the National Democratic Project,’ in [www.sundaytimes.co.za](http://www.sundaytimes.co.za)

power structures such as Cyril Ramaphosa and others and the black poor remained mired in poverty and disease. The RDP was soon overtaken and replaced by the neo-liberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR), that took a form of the much hated World Bank (WB)-International Monetary Fund (IMF) concocted Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS) of the 1980s and 1990s in Africa emphasising economic growth whose benefits hardly trickled down to the poor communities of South Africa.<sup>11</sup> The recent adoption of Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) still symbolises the further drift of the ANC government into neo-liberal path of development. Through GEAR and ASGISA, the ANC made a swing from the little left of its Left leaning tradition to the Right, implementing an orthodox macroeconomic policy which stressed deficit reduction, accelerated economic growth, tight monetary policy and trade liberalisation.<sup>12</sup>

These ideological and economic policy shifts are taking place in the midst of some apparent failures to scale down poverty among the poor. Signs are clear from the public debates that not all was rosy and smooth within the process of transforming South African society from apartheid to democracy. The society is saturated with frustrations as well as optimisms depending on one's station in life. The white community has all the reasons to be happy about the transition because their economic power was left intact. This reality created political schisms within the tripartite alliance, revolving not only around succession and the fate of Jacob Zuma but more importantly relating to issues of class, nationalism, citizenship, legacies of a left tradition and contestations of the history of the ANC itself. Unless one reads all these recent developments backward they will remain baffling and unclear because they have a long history behind them that need careful analysis. Even though some historians like Frederick Cooper are critical of backward-gazing approaches to history stating that contexts gets lost in which concepts emerged, I will try here to remain sensitive to the contexts, disjunctures between the frameworks of the past actors and the present interpretations while simultaneously emphasising the issues of continuity and replays of ideological schisms in the past and present South Africa.<sup>13</sup> The formation of the Native Club is part of the symptom of some the deep rooted ideological and class schisms that can only be interpreted meaningfully by quarrying systematically into the various events and traditions carrying similar messages and contributing to the formation of such a phenomenon as well as interrogation of different political strands nursing and sustaining such thinking considered by others as dangerous and supported by some as emancipatory.

Therefore, this study ventures into the theoretical and definitional issues related to the politics of nativism, traces the antinomies of black nationalist thought revealing how such liberation thought as Negritude, Marxism, radical Pan-Africanism, Garveyism, Afro-radicalism as well as African cultural-populism became incubators of nativism, how

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<sup>11</sup> On poverty and inequality in South Africa see Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002*, (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> John Weeks, 'Stuck in Low GEAR? Macroeconomic Policy in South Africa, 1996-1998,' in *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol. 23, N. 6, (November 1999), pp. 795-811.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 18-19.

and settler colonialism (apartheid) created binaries of settlers and natives that are currently creating complex post-apartheid dilemmas including the questions of natives and non-natives, entitlements and indigeneity, culture and rights.<sup>14</sup> The study moves on to explore the foundational myth of the 'new South Africa' and the 'rainbow nation' emphasising that the triumphant non-racial ideology became the accepted public transcript forcing the populist Afro-radical thinking to take a dangerous form of hidden transcript always ready to re-emerge as public transcript. The emphasis on the role of native intellectualism as the progressive force and the emergence of the Native Club that is currently featuring as an native intellectual project of a few black intelligentsia is one indicator of the resurgence of black populist thought to occupy the centre of politics once more. The resurgence of black thought dovetails with the emergence of articulation and re-articulation of the national democratic revolution in the context of the second decade of South African democracy punctuated with a popular sense of betrayal. This sense of betrayal among the masses feeds into resurgence of populist politics crystallising around what has come to be known as the 'Jacob Zuma Saga' and its ripple effects on the succession debate in South Africa. The study locates the politics of nativism in between and betwixt fault-lines of reformist neo-liberal agenda and Afro-radical Africanist and populist revolution- oriented agenda, both co-existing uneasily and tendentially within the ANC.

### **Defining and Framing the Research Problem**

The launch of the Native Club in South Africa is used as an entry point into a broader analysis of nation-building and citizenship challenges and problems that are constantly threatening to derail the non-racial ethos of the 'rainbow nation.' While in post-apartheid South Africa, the challenges of nation-building and creation of common citizenship out of multinational society has not yet erupted into violence that has rocked such countries as Zimbabwe, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi in recent years, there is clear ascendancy of Africanist thought in South Africa demanding the recreation of South Africa into an African nation under black African hegemony.<sup>15</sup> Within the ruling ANC there is clear intensity of African feeling and the strengthening of Africanist tendencies within the movement.

It is within this background that the launch of the Native Club in 2006 is just a corner of a bigger Africanist ice-bag still lurking within the ANC and the broader South African society in this second decade of consolidation of South Africa democracy. Those scholars like Lwazi Siyabonga Lushaba who are continuing to pander to the celebratory mood and myth of the South African nation-building experiment as exceptional from other former settler colonies to the extent of arguing that the ANC adopted civic nationalism and the 'question of citizenship in post-apartheid era was resolved as early as 1955 with the adoption of the Freedom Charter which categorically states that 'South

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<sup>14</sup> Harri and Francis B. Nyamnjoh (eds.), *Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa*, (Zed Books, London and New York, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Irina Filatova, 'The Rainbow Against the African Sky Or African Hegemony in a Multi-Cultural Context,' in *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, Volume 34, (1997), pp. 47-56.

Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.’<sup>16</sup> This perspective has been overtaken by events on the ground and is glossing over continuing internal dualities pitting the Charterists against black republicans within the ANC whose embers are continuing burning threatening to burn not the anchorages of the Tripartite Alliance but also the weak foundation myth of the rainbow nation. While it is true that secular and civic nationalism as well as civic conception of citizenship constitute the religion of the South African state, underneath this state religion lies continuing tensions and differing visions of the nature of the state and the complexion of the nation, raising questions of who is a native and who is not, as well as the teleology of the national democratic revolution. The Freedom Charter did not settle once and for all the citizenship question and the broader national question. Since the adoption of the Freedom Charter, the ANC has produced other documents including *Nation-Formation and Nation-Building Challenges*, *A Better Life For All: Working Together For Jobs, Peace and Freedom* (1994), *Building the Foundation for A Better Life* (1997), and *Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa* and many others, which combine to reflect a continuous struggle within the ANC to find a more realistic and more acceptable vision for a durable South African nation-state and the continuing existence of an unfinished or unresolved national question.<sup>17</sup>

A key contour of South African political evolution that has not been subjected to systematic analysis is that of the rising tide of Africanism within and outside the ANC and its notion of the liberation struggle (anti-apartheid) as a black emancipatory movement since the departure of Nelson Mandela from active politics. ANC documents on the national question stress the issue of the liberation of black people without necessarily precluding the reality of diversity of South African society for strategic and hegemonic purposes. At the centre of this stress on Africanism is the task of building a black bourgeoisie and to create an enabling environment for ‘the fast growth of a black middle strata,’ on the one hand and the nativist demand for a black republic on the other.<sup>18</sup> That the ANC was throughout its existence dominated by Africanist thought is revealed by the fact that by 1969 when the Morogoro Consultative Conference of the ANC took place, there was strong opposition to the admission of non-Africans into the top posts of the ANC particularly the National Executive Council (NEC). It was not until 1985 at the Kabwe Conference that non-Africans were admitted into NEC.<sup>19</sup>

A number of historical developments help to explain the continuous ascendancy of Africanism in South African politics. Firstly, is the flowering of multiple African cultures and languages that were previously denigrated by apartheid. Secondly, is the realities of the first democratic elections in South Africa and its implications of the ANC. Despite

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<sup>16</sup> Lwazi S. Lushaba, ‘Nationalism and the Problem of Citizenship in Multi-National African States: South Africa and Nigeria Compared,’ (Research proposal/concept paper submitted to the African Studies Centre, Leiden, for a Visiting Fellowship Program, n.d.), p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> African National Congress, *A Better Life for All: Working Together for Jobs, Peace and Freedom*, (ANC Publication, Johannesburg, 1994), African National Congress, *Constitutional Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa*, (ANC Publication, Lusaka, n.d.), and African National Congress, *Building the Foundation for A Better Life*, (Draft Strategy and Tactics Document of the ANC, (ANC Publication, Johannesburg, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Filativa, ‘The Rainbow Against the African Sky,’ p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

the ANC's particular stress on non-racialism before the elections, the voting was racially divided and the ANC come out of it more overwhelmingly 'African' than it seemed to have hoped for.<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, the collapse of the white far right-wing threat to the ANC that culminated in the eventual swallowing of some members of the National Party (NP) by the ANC and the withdrawal of some into the Democratic Alliance (DA) under Tony Leon, opened space for the embers of Africanism to surge to the open within the ANC. Fourthly, through the resurgence and ascendancy of Africanism within the ANC, the ruling party was able to still the thunder from the Pan-African Congress (PAC). Even more importantly, the moderate old guard that crafted the Freedom Charter in 1955 like Govan Mbeki, Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba and others have died. Nelson Mandela the leading figure within those in favour of a multi-racial democracy is now too old and his influence on politics is now symbolic than practical.<sup>21</sup> The Mbeki orchestrated philosophy of African Renaissance and the popularisation of the ideology of *ubuntu* all indicates the resurgence of Africanist thought and how the ANC continues to survive by stealing and accommodating any strong ideology that seem to be popular at any given time.<sup>22</sup> Even the ANC driven foreign policy is couch in purely Africanist terms of African Renaissance laced with some strong doses of adherence to democracy and human rights.

But up to now the ANC has remained strategically ambivalent regarding its approach to national question, remaining caught up between and betwixt the embers of African indigenous definition of citizenship and those of neo-liberal civic definition of citizenship. This ambiguity has been a trade mark and a survival tactic of the ANC enabling it to mobilise across race, class and ethnicity. Nativism is definable as an outgrowth of the resurgence of Africanism within the ANC and in South African society in general. It takes the form of black natives asserting and claiming their exclusive citizenship rights and entitlements as a majority constituency in South Africa. Therefore, there is need for a more, careful and nuanced exploration of both the legacies of settler colonialism and African nationalism as the historical background from which citizenship conflicts emerge. Only that way can one understand the contemporary struggles within the ANC that are feeding into the rise of nativist politics at this crucial phase of democratic consolidation in South Africa.

Since 1994, a political approach to nation-building that is not well integrated with cultural and economic approach, predicated on 'unity in diversity'/ 'rainbowism' has carried the imagination of the nation and citizenship, but the second decade of democracy is revealing the limits of this approach. This is revealed not only by the formation of such exclusivist networks as the Native Club, but also by the controversy it generated, ANC succession debates and the mobilisation on ethnic lines, Afrikaner and Coloured expressions of economic, political and cultural marginalisation and these groups'

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> On the influences that made Nelson Mandela lean more on conciliatory politics see Tom Lodge, 'Code of Conduct: Mandela's Politics' (Paper presented at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, 30 November 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Deputy President Thabo Mbeki's Speech entitled 'The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World,' (Delivered at the United Nations University, 9 April 1998) where he emphasized the need to 'rediscover ourselves' as Africans.

problematic re-assertions of claims to exclusivity, the racial polarisation and identity politics in the Cape; racial tensions in schools and institutions of higher learning, exemplified by the ongoing racial conflict among black academics, on the one hand, and their white and Indian counterparts, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) on the other. These developments are indeed symptomatic of structural weaknesses in the negotiated settlement that papered over deep-rooted cleavages, dichotomies, differences and binaries accentuated by apartheid.

In summary terms, the central problem being investigated is that of different visions of liberation, democracy, citizenship and values defining a South African and the South African nation. It is an exploration of the complex issue of South African identity and the myth of South African exceptionalism. Why is radical black populist African thought continuing to co-exist uneasily and tendentiously with non-racial ethos within the ANC, thirteen years after the transition from apartheid to democracy? What is the danger and logic of resurgence of Africanist thought with its nativist claims in a country like South Africa? Which historical and current realities feed and sustain nativist thinking in South Africa? Why are 'natives restless' and why are settlers panicking? What are the linkages between the current politics, in particular the so-called 'Jacob Zuma Saga' and the tradition of liberation and ANC modus operandi? These are some of the key questions dealt with and explored in this study. I use a mixture of conceptual tools including C. R. D. Halisi's concept of antimonies of black thought, Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall concept of articulation and re-articulation of hegemonic struggles, Mahmood Mamdani's concept of bifurcation of the colonial state into citizens and subjects and his challenging question of when does a settler becomes a native as well as Ernesto Laclau's work on populism and James C. Scott's concept of hidden and public transcripts.<sup>23</sup> This study also benefited a lot in theoretical terms from the work of the following scholars: Frantz Fanon, Octave Mannoni, Albert Memmi, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Benita Parry, Kuan-Hsing Chen, Achille Mbembe, Peter P. Ekeh, and Kwame Anthony Appiah, particularly relating to the colonial and decolonization issues as well as nativism and identity questions.<sup>24</sup> These complex theoretical tools are deployed throughout the study whenever and wherever applicable and relevant to the core issues being explored.

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<sup>23</sup> C. R. D. Halisi, 'From Liberation to Citizenship: Identity and Innovation in Black South African Thought' in *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 1997; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1971); Stuart Hall, 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,' in *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, (UNESCO, Paris, 1980); Mahmood Mamdani, 'When Does a Settler Become a Native? Reflections on the Roots of Citizenship in Equatorial and South Africa,' (Text of Inaugural Lecture delivered as A.C. Jordan Professor of African Studies, University of Cape Town, Wednesday 13 May 1998); Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton, University Press, Princeton, 1996); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, (James Currey, Oxford, 2001); Ernesto Laclau, 'Towards a Theory of Populism,' in E. Laclau (ed.), *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*, (Verso, London, 1977) and James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (Grove, New York, 1967); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Grove, New York, 1968); Albert Memmi, *The Coloniser and the Colonised*, (Beacon Press, Boston, 1957); Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation*, (University of Michigan

## Theories and Definitions of Nativism

Nativism has been a subject of academic debate for some time across the world because it is both an old and a new phenomenon and it manifest itself in a variety of forms. Even dictionary definitions of nativism reflect its various versions understandable only within specific contexts. These include nativism as a socio-political position taken by those people who identify themselves as native-born, a belief in the importance of asserting an authentic ethnic identity, policy favouring native-born citizens over immigrants, perpetuating native cultures in opposition to acculturation, and a defence of native-born people predicated on a hostility to foreign-born as well as the desire to stop or slow immigration.<sup>25</sup>

What is clear is that there is no one clear definition of nativism. At one level, it can be defined as a nostalgic desire to return to the roots, particularly a return to indigenous pre-colonial life in Africa that is assumed to have been uncorrupted by colonialism and modernity. At this level, African history, African cultures, African traditions and values are deliberately essentialized to counter Eurocentric and imperial ideologies of Western civilising mission. The nationalist project in Africa contained strong and fertile seeds of nativism in the sense that it entailed rolling back colonialism and giving back the power to govern to native black sons and daughters of the soil. African nationalist spirit valorised and idealised pre-colonial African past and many heroes were created to symbolised African spirit of resistance. Peter P. Ekeh has meticulously analysed African bourgeois ideologies of legitimation involving fighting ‘alien rulers on the basis of criteria introduced by the them.’<sup>26</sup> The African bourgeois that spearheaded the nationalist struggle constantly used nativist argument to justify their right to replace white rulers to mobilise black masses.

However, looked at broadly, nativism has no single parentage, no single origin, no single genealogy and is watered from many springs, some local, some regional and some global. Its roots are located in both the present and the past. It magnifies both local and global power politics and it reflects both crisis and some hope in people’s broader struggles for emancipation. The search for identity as well as justice remains at the centre of nativist politics across the globe. For one to understand the meaning and essence of nativism,

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Press, Ann Arbor, 1990); Kwame A. Appiah, *In My Father’s House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992), Gayatri Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, (Routledge, London, 1990); Benita Parry, ‘Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism,’ in F. Barker at al (eds.), *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, (University of Manchester, 1994); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001); Achille Mbembe, ‘African Modes of Self-Writing,’ in *Public Culture*, Vol.14. No. 1, (2002); Peter P. Ekeh, ‘Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement,’ in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No.1 (Jan. 1975); Kuan-Hsing Chen (ed.), *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, (Routledge, London, 1998); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (Chatto & Windus, London, 1993); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (Routledge, London, 1994); Shula Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism and the State in Twentieth Century Natal*, (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986); John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness: Volume One*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/nativism>

<sup>26</sup> Peter P. Ekeh, ‘Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Volume 17, No. 1 (Jan., 1975), p. 103.

intellectual care is needed that goes beyond the present ahistorical dismissals of nativism as a 'catalogue of epistemological error, of essentialist mystifications, as masculinist appropriation of dissent, as no more than an anti-racist racism etc.'<sup>27</sup>

Nativism is widely discussed and critiqued in literary studies where it is traced to the movement/ideology termed romanticism. Romanticism began from the period of the French Revolution (1789) and was a revolt against neoclassicism that was characterised by emotional restraint, order, logic and technical precision.<sup>28</sup> Romanticism was marked by glorification of nature, idealisation of the past and celebration of the divinity of creation. It was an emotional movement.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, those studying nativism from a literary angle, particularly those using post-colonial theories saw it as largely 'romantic' ideology marked by idealisation of the past through appeals to human emotions. Matthew Engelke described nativism and nationalism as 'romanticism's more dangerous and problematic cousins.'<sup>30</sup> Those working within literary studies mainly discuss nativism in relation to the shifting focus of the themes of novels and poems from realism, nativism, nationalism to post-realism, post-nativism and post-nationalism.<sup>31</sup> For instance, Kwame Anthony Appiah defined nativism as 'the claim that true African independence requires a literature of one's own' and as 'the rhetoric of ancestral purity.'<sup>32</sup> Appiah made the following broad criticism of nativism in general:

Railing against the cultural hegemony of the West, the nativists are of its party without knowing it. Indeed the very arguments, the rhetoric of defiance, that our nationalist muster are...canonical, time tested.... In their ideological inscription, the cultural nationalists remain in a position of counteridentification...which is to continue to participate in an institutional configuration-to be subjected to cultural identities they ostensibly decry...Time and time again, cultural nationalism has followed the route of alternate genealogizing. We end up always in the same place; the achievement is to have invented a different past for it.<sup>33</sup>

As noted by Parry such a critique is weak in the sense that 'the effect of this argument is to homogenise the varieties of nationalisms and to deny both originality and effectivity to its reverse-discourse.'<sup>34</sup> The reality is that when nativism is defined within the post-

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<sup>27</sup> Benita Parry, 'Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance of Two Cheers for Nativism,' in Francis Barker, Peter Hume and Magaret Iversen (eds.), *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994), p. 176. Parry is very critical of this simplistic dismissals of nativism and refusal to make sense of it.

<sup>28</sup> Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch, *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (NTC Publishing Group, Chicago, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Theory: Third Edition*, (Penguin Books, London, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Engelke, 'Thinking About the Nativism in Chenjerai Hove's Work,' in *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 29, (1998), pp. 20-23.

<sup>31</sup> Neil Lazarus, 'Disavowing Decolonisation: Fanon, Nationalism and the Problematic of Representation in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,' in *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 24, Number 3, (1993), pp. 69-86.

<sup>32</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House*, pp. 56-61.

<sup>33</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>34</sup> Benita Parry, 'Resistance Theory,' p. 178.

colonial context, it becomes even more complex. It tends to soak up all the post-colonial theoretical conundrums as well as the psychological, cultural and political complexities associated with what Achille Mbembe described as the 'postcolony.'<sup>35</sup> A number of definitions of nativism have cropped up as scholars try to understand resurgent nationalisms in post-colonial Africa. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and H. Tiffin have defined of nativism as:

A term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society. The term is most frequently encountered to refer to the rhetoric of decolonisation which argues that colonialism needs to be replaced by recovery and promotion of pre-colonial, indigenous ways.<sup>36</sup>

This definition is slightly different from Appiah's conception of nativism in Africa as presenting itself as an opposition between 'universalism' and 'particularism,' translating into 'two real players in this game: us, inside; them, outside.'<sup>37</sup> This 'topology' of 'inside and outside' translates into 'indigene and alien.' The advocates of nativism in Africa and other parts of the world are currently mobilising supporters behind nationalist rhetoric to spread venom against the aliens including the white settlers whose parents came to Africa long ago carried by the successive waves of mercantilism, imperialism and colonialism.

In South African nativism is taking the form of xenophobia crystallising around competition for jobs, houses and transport between South Africans and immigrants from other countries.<sup>38</sup> In all intents and purposes, xenophobia is a key component and most dangerous part of nativism. It takes the form of hatred by the native-born people of immigrants. Francis B. Nyamnjoh in a recent study on citizenship and xenophobia in contemporary Southern Africa noted that xenophobia as a form of intense dislike, hatred or fear of others perceived to be strangers has intensified with globalisation.<sup>39</sup> Xenophobia is just one aspect of nativism as an ideology and social movement.

Nativism remain misunderstood because very few scholars want to understand its meaning and essence. As noted by Benita Parry nativism is approached 'with a disciplining theoretical whip in hand' leading to very simplistic dismissals of the phenomenon as a false philosophy.<sup>40</sup> What exists are robust dismissals of nativism coming from a group of scholars one can term 'post-modern cosmopolitanists' working

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<sup>35</sup> Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and H. Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, (Routledge, London, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father-s House*, p. 56.

<sup>38</sup> Bronwyn Harris, 'Xenophobia: A New Pathology for a New South Africa,' in D. Hook and G. Eagle (eds.), *Psychopathology and Social Prejudice*, (University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, 2002), pp. 169-184.

<sup>39</sup> Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*, (CODESRIA and Zed Books, Dakar and London, 2006), pp. 1-24.

<sup>40</sup> Benita Parry, 'Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism,' in Francis Baker at al (eds.). *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994), p. 176.

within the broader framework of promoting cosmopolitanism across the world.<sup>41</sup> Achille Mbembe falls within this scholarship which is at pains to contest essentialist notions of identity and to dismiss the emancipatory value of nationalism (s). They argue in the same lines as Eric Hobsbawm who described nationalisms of the late twentieth century as essentially negative and as mere ‘reactions of weakness and fear’ and attempts to erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world.’<sup>42</sup> To post-modern cosmopolitanists, nationalism and nativism are provoked by anxieties of modernity—a response with little positive value of its own.<sup>43</sup> It is no wonder then that Achille Mbembe defines nativism within a universal narrative. He understands it in cultural terms as:

Nativism is a discourse of rehabilitation. It is a defence of the humanity of Africans that is almost always accompanied by the claim that their race, traditions, and customs confer to them a peculiar self irreducible to that of any other human group.<sup>44</sup>

Defined this way, then nativism is nothing more than simple essentialism and a false comfort in a global age. Mbembe characterises nativism as ‘the burden of the metaphysics of difference’ and he links it directly to what he terms ‘historicism’ feeding into Afro-radicalism (a baggage of instrumentalism and political opportunism).<sup>45</sup> According to Mbembe, nativism emerged from an emphasis on the ‘native condition’ which in the long run ‘promoted the idea of a unique African identity founded on membership of the black race.’<sup>46</sup> The roots of nativism according to Mbembe are to be sought in three historical events of slavery, colonisation and apartheid that have been apportioned canonical meanings by nationalist inspired scholars. Three meanings were therefore attributed to slavery, colonialism and apartheid. One was pitched at individual level focussing specifically on the issue of individual subjectivities with slavery, colonialism and apartheid resulting in alienation of the African from the original Self, leading to ‘a loss of familiarity with self’ and culminating in estrangement of Africans from their identity, relegating Africans ‘to a lifeless form’ of objecthood.<sup>47</sup> The second meaning is related to property ownership in Africa. Slavery, colonialism and apartheid combined to dispossess Africans of their property and this issue of dispossession is cited as a key component making African history and African experience unique in the world. The third meaning is associated with human degradation with slavery, colonisation and apartheid standing accused of plunging ‘the African subject not only into humiliation, debasement and nameless suffering but also into a zone of nonbeing and social death

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>42</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1870*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), p. 164.

<sup>43</sup> Don Robotham, ‘Cosmopolitanism and Planetary Humanism: The Strategic Universalism of Paul Gilroy,’ in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 104, Number 3, (Summer 2005), p. 563.

<sup>44</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘The Cultural Politics of South Africa’s Foreign Policy: Between Black (Inter) Nationalism and Afropolitanism,’ (Unpublished paper presented at Wits Institute of Economic and Social Research (WISER), University of Witwatersrand, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘African Modes of Self-Writing,’ in *Public Culture*, Volume 14, Number 1, (2002), p. 240.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 241

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 241

characterised by the denial of dignity, heavy damage and the torment of exile.’<sup>48</sup> Finally, Mbembe makes the point that the above described meanings attributed to slavery, colonialism and apartheid ‘serve as a unifying center for Africans’ desire to know themselves, to recapture their destiny (*sovereignty*), and to belong to themselves in the world (*autonomy*).’<sup>49</sup>

If one follows closely the arguments of post-modern cosmopolitanists, Africa and Africans seem to be closed in a dead end revolving around fatalistic politics of victimhood. Victimhood becomes a signifier of African identity and African solidarity. Nationalist inspired Africanists are said to be peddling an Afro-radical ideology that is reliant on a troika of rhetorical rituals centred on refutation of Western definitions of Africa; denunciation of what the West had done and continue to do in Africa; and frantic efforts to provide ostensible proofs disqualifying the West’s fictional representations of Africa and refuting its claim to have a monopoly on the expression of the human in general and that way opening up a space in which Africans can finally narrate their own fables without imitation of the West.<sup>50</sup> According to Mbembe this is ‘a distinctively nativist understanding of history—one of history as sorcery.’<sup>51</sup>

Mbembe’s analysis of nativism exposes some tautologies and redundancies in African nationalism crystallising around the constant refrain of ‘victimhood’ that goes like this: Africans have been enslaved, colonised and oppressed by the West. African resources had been looted by the West since the time of mercantilism. Europe underdeveloped Africa.<sup>52</sup> African development is being deliberately thwarted by Europeans and Americans. Africans are currently suffering from neo-liberal imperialism and cultural imperialism. African experiences and realities are simply rendered as a catalogue of deprivations, denials, oppression, and exploitation proceeding directly from long history of slavery, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. Capturing this tautology, Mbembe elaborates his definition of nativism in this way:

Well, I define ‘nativism’ as one of the culturalist responses Africans have given to the fact of denial of their humanity. It is a response which, while arguing that ‘Africans are human beings like any other,’ nevertheless emphasises the difference and uniqueness of their traditions or what they call their culture.<sup>53</sup>

Mbembe saw the emergence of contemporary nativism as associated with ‘some kind of political disorder and cultural dislocation.’<sup>54</sup> In response to the formation of the Native

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.241-242.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 242.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 244.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 245.

<sup>52</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi, 1972).

<sup>53</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘The Cultural Politics of South Africa’s Foreign Policy: Between Black (Inter) Nationalism and Afropolitanism,’ (Unpublished paper presented at Wits Institute of Economic and Social Research (WISER), University of Witwatersrand, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘Stirring a Dark Brew that Echoes Nongqawuse’s Fatal Prophecy’ in *Sunday Times*, June 4, 2006.

Club, Mbembe wrote that ‘a dozen years after apartheid ended, a dangerous mix of populism, nativism and millenarian thinking is inviting South Africans to commit political suicide’ and he directly linked nativism to some form of African fatalism which he termed ‘Nongqawuse Syndrome.’ Mbembe defines the ‘Nongqawuse Syndrome’ as a reference to a ‘populist rhetoric and a millenarian form of politics which advocates, uses and legitimises self-destruction, or national suicide, as a means of salvation.’<sup>55</sup> The ‘Nongqawuse Syndrome’ is said to manifest itself in this way:

First must emerge a false prophet--generally a person of very humble origins. Backed by a level of mass hysteria, the prophet claims that a great resurrection is about to take place. He justifies himself in the name of his ‘ancestors,’ his ‘tradition’ or his culture.’<sup>56</sup>

To Mbembe, nativism in South Africa is nothing but a dangerous coalescence populism, and millenarianism heralding national political suicide.<sup>57</sup> Mbembe lamented how South Africa, not long ago, a ray of hope for a truly non-racial, modern and cosmopolitan society, was veering into nativism. This is how he put it:

Years of apartheid violence and, more recently, the utter degradation of urban life has had devastating consequences on the culture of civility. Poverty, crime and disease, hunger and pestilence have weakened state and social institutions and are threatening to unravel the content of civic and ethical life.

Even more dangerous is the shift from non-racialism to nativism. To the continuing denial of white privilege, many blacks now respond with an exacerbated sense of victimization. In the name of the ‘right to self-definition,’ they are paradoxically re-creating the mental ghetto of white rule. The recent founding of the Native Club is but one example of the nativist renewal engulfing the country.<sup>58</sup>

While Mbembe clearly identifies the causes of revival of nativism in South Africa as rooted in concrete socio-economic and political issues associated with the transition from apartheid to democracy, he still adopts a dismissive approach to the purpose and essence

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<sup>55</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘South Africa’s Second Coming: The Nongqawuse Syndrome,’ in *Open Democracy: Free Thinking for the World*, 15 June 2006, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘Stirring a Dark Brew that Echoes Nongqawuse’s Fatal Prophecy,’ in *Sunday Times*, 4 June 2006. The historical information to ‘Nongqawuse’ can be found in J. B. Peires’s book, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989) which carried the story of a sixteen year-old girl named Nongqawuse who had a vision while on the banks of the Gxarha River, involving his departed ancestors telling her to inform her Xhosa people to kill all their cattle in a ritualistic style invoking the Xhosa ancestral spirits to arise and sweep all the whites into the sea. This proved to be a false dream when after killing over 400 000 the resurrection to sweep all the whites into the sea never took place and instead hunger and poverty took toll on the people in the wake of destroying their livelihood.

<sup>57</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘South Africa’s Second Coming: The Nongqawuse Syndrome,’ in *Open Democracy: Free Thinking for the World*, 15 June 2006, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘Stirring a Dark Brew that Echoes Nongqawuse’s Fatal Prophecy,’ in *Sunday Times*, 4 June 2006.

of nativism. He rightly state that white nativism has always been about racial supremacy and black nativism has always been a product of dispossession. He surprisingly proceeds to state that nativism as a cultural and political protest has as its main task the creation of a common language of grievance as though grievances were not there already in South Africa and other post-colonial societies. He argues that nativism is never attached to any concrete social or political programme of reform. He is convinced that nativism 'can never be a progressive force.'<sup>59</sup>

Mbembe's constant attempt to dismiss resurgent ideologies like nativism has earned him severe criticism by those scholars still working within anti-colonial and nationalist paradigm. Mbembe is sometimes seen as an apologist of slavery, colonialism and apartheid through advocating that African people must forget these oppressive realities in order for them to move out of the ghetto to embrace cosmopolitanism and globalisation. He seems to be embracing neo-liberal cosmopolitan agenda that is running roughshod over realities of neo-colonialism in Africa.<sup>60</sup> Mbembe falls into the trap of supporting 'Euro-nativism' through being very negative of African ideologies of liberation.<sup>61</sup> Mbembe's critique of nativism ends up being fully ahistorical, marked by refusal to seriously engage with the socio-political and economic realities that promoted and continue to promote nativist narratives in Africa. Mbembe ignores the fact that African identities were forged within the broader terrain shaped by struggles against slavery, imperialism and apartheid.

There is no doubt whatsoever that nativism in post-settler societies is rooted in the intractable issues related to what the Left leaning scholars term the 'national question' and cannot just be dismissed as 'fake philosophies,' dogmas and doctrines that are constructed and reconstructed by neo-nationalists and neo-Marxists. The issue of the national question cannot be masked and veiled under formalities of liberal individualism. Defined broadly, the national question is an embodiment of land restitution, indigenisation of the economy, equitable re-distribution of the national cake, creation of a native or indigenous bourgeoisie, normalisation of the native-settler binaries, fulfilment of economic nationalism and the building of an independent state where black native intellectuals feel in control of the public discourse and the pulse of the nation.<sup>62</sup> Writing in response to Mbembe's dismissal of nativism, Sean Jacobs and Elke Zuern based in the United State of America argued that:

How do we avoid the language of Afro-pessimism that plays into many Western misconceptions of Africa from the time of colonial rule and slavery? We need to be explicit in addressing the politics that creates the challenges we face, as well as the local responses to them. This politics does not have to do with putative wellsprings of nihilism in the African soul. It revolves around the incredible

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<sup>59</sup> Achille Mbembe, 'South Africa's Second Coming,' p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> The African economic historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza has taken issue with Mbembe in the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, Nos 1 & 2 (2004).

<sup>61</sup> Godwin Rapando Murunga, 'African Cultural Identity and Self-Writing' in *Africa Reviews of Books*, October 2004.

<sup>62</sup> Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'The Nativist Revolution and Development Conundrums in Zimbabwe,' *ACCORD Occasional Paper Series*, Volume 1, No. 4 (2006).

challenges of addressing the gross human-rights violations of apartheid, of offering economic upliftment to a poor majority, of addressing pressing material needs, of providing healthcare, including access to life-saving anti-retrovirals, and establishing the institutional foundations for a democratic state and ruling party.<sup>63</sup>

In a clear critique of the broader cosmopolitanism discourse, Don Robotham noted that the tendency to see little or no merit in national identities and nationalism is not only an obstacle to understanding Third World nationalism, 'it also prevents an appreciation of the fundamental basis for nationalism in so-called developed countries.'<sup>64</sup> Nativism is not only about populism, millenarianism and essentialism, it has very deep foundations in objective economic, political, social and cultural processes. There is need to grapple with contemporary social forces that produce nativism rather than being carried away by pontifications of the so-called 'hyper-globalisers' like Paul Gilroy and his ideas of 'strategic universalism' and the notion of 'post-anthropological.'<sup>65</sup>

South Africa just like other contemporary African states has not escaped from problem of incomplete decolonisation with its attendant issue of unsatisfactorily resolved national question. This is reflected in the continued South African search for common identity crafted around the 'rainbow' imagery.<sup>66</sup> Abebe Zegeye noted that 'South Africa still suffers, as do many other African societies, from the legacy of an identity-assigning colonialism and racialism imposed by successive minority governments. Colonialism and racialism were powerful factors in forming the identities of Africans.'<sup>67</sup> This legacy is still making it hard for South Africa to achieve in concrete terms a 'rainbow nation' characterised by unity in diversity, tolerance of difference, equality, accommodation and common citizenship. One of the essential and common challenges in heterogeneous societies like South Africa is the constant potential for sub-groups based on ethnic, cultural, linguistic, racial, religious, regional, class or caste identities to feel excluded.<sup>68</sup>

Don Robotham is taking a materialist understanding of the roots of nativism. He wrote that:

When these hundreds of years of common history include merciless cruelties, denigrations, and exploitation by the same oppressor, a particularly fierce nationalism is often the result. This collective sentiment simmers over centuries and then may burst forth with fanatical ferocity. While at the abstract level one can extract the universally human from the particular experience of local groups, all people make history in the concrete. It is this actually concrete common

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<sup>63</sup> Sean Jacobs and Elke Zuern, 'South Africa's Political Crisis is Utterly Modern, Not Atavistic Millenarianism,' *The Sunday Times*, June 11, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> Don Robotham, 'Cosmopolitanism and Planetary Humanism,' p. 563.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>66</sup> Abebe Zegeye, (ed.), *Social Identities in the New South Africa: After Apartheid-Volume One*, (Kwela Books and SA History online, Cape Town, 2001)

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.15.

historical experience that generates distinctive identities and necessarily find expression in national movements dedicated to that specific cause.<sup>69</sup>

A closer look at nativism reveals Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism' at play as opposed to Paul Gilroy's 'strategic universalism.'<sup>70</sup> Spivak has recently defended strategic essentialism of identities in post-colonial societies including signification of indigenous (native) cultures in resistance to the onslaught of global cultures that threaten to negate cultural difference or consign it to an apolitical and exotic discourse of cultural diversity. Spivak noted that there are indeed times when it becomes advantageous for members of oppressed groups to essentialise themselves for strategic purposes. One only needs to be vigilant and very clear as to the temporality/provisionality of such a stance.<sup>71</sup> Benita Parry has mounted a positive defence of nativism in her theorisation of resistance, giving two cheers to nativism. In defence of nativism, Parry wrote that:

When we consider the narratives of decolonisation, we encounter rhetorics in which 'nativism' in one form or another is evident. Instead of disciplining these, theoretical whip in hand, as a catalogue of epistemological error, of essentialist mystifications, as a masculinist appropriation of dissent, as no more than an anti-racist racism, etc., I want to consider what is to be gained by an unsententious interrogation of such articulations which, if often driven by negative passion, cannot be reduced to mere inveighing against iniquities or a repetition of the canonical terms of imperialism's framework.<sup>72</sup>

Parry introduced the concept of understanding nativism as a reverse-discourse with its own agency and status. A reverse-discourse uses the same categories and the same vocabulary used by dominant discourse to pothole, subvert, undermine and decentre the same dominant discourse.<sup>73</sup> Nativism though currently viewed as a thing of a few black intellectuals in South Africa, it is clear that it is ranged against the remnants of settler colonialism and apartheid represented by the white dominated academy, the farm owned by white people, public discourse dominated by white neo-liberal scholars, as well as the mine and industry still owned by whites. Hence the relevance of Amilcar Cabral argument that as long as the reality of colonial exploitation, oppression and domination hover clearly over the heads of Africans then they are bound to remain in perpetual struggle.<sup>74</sup> Recent history including developments in Latin America is showing that such struggles sometimes degenerate into nativism in many parts of the world. At another

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<sup>69</sup> Don Robotham, 'Cosmopolitanism and Planetary Humanism,' p. 567. See also Don Robotham's critique of Paul Gilroy and post-modern cosmopolitanists in general, *Culture, Society, Economy: Globalization and Its Alternatives*, (Sage Publishers, London, 2005)

<sup>70</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, (Routledge, London, 1990)

<sup>71</sup> William Kelly, 'Postcolonial Perspective on Intercultural Relations: A Japan-U. S. Example,' in *The Edge: The E-Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 2, Number 1, (Winter 1999).

<sup>72</sup> Benita Parry, 'Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism,' in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Magaret Iversen (eds.), *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, (University of Manchester Press, Manchester, 1994), p. 176.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings*, (Heinemann, London, 1980).

level, globalisation and cosmopolitanism processes also contribute to the emergence of nativism as observed by Garth le Pere and Kato Lambrechts:

Globalisation and localisation have also, in many instances, unfolded in tandem and locality has survived alongside globality. Human affiliations and loyalties are still heavily influenced by a person's particular location in the 'global village,' whether based on place, age, nationality, community, and so on.<sup>75</sup>

Nativism must be understood as located in the confluence of what M. Featherstone defined as 'a global cultural ecumene (a region of persistent culture interaction and transformation); a medium of interaction and interpenetration between universalism and particularism.'<sup>76</sup> Globalisation has always generated tendencies of homogenisation and de-territorialisation, while at the same time provoking opposite forces of fragmentation and even re-nationalisation.<sup>77</sup>

Such theorists of colonialism as Albert Memmi and Octave Mannoni in their seminal books, *The Coloniser and the Colonised* (1957) and *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation* (1950) respectively began to deal with the issue of nativism long ago before the fall of the colonial empire. For instance, Memmi wrote that:

We then witness a reversal of terms. Assimilation being abandoned, the colonised's liberation must be carried out through a recovery of the self and of autonomous dignity. Attempts at imitating the coloniser required self-denial; the coloniser's rejection is the indispensable prelude to self-recovery.<sup>78</sup>

The anti-colonial struggle in Africa had always had a cultural component that fed and sustained the spirit of nativism particularly the desire by the formerly colonised people to wish to destroy anything built by the coloniser. While in reality African nationalist leaders were happy to takeover from where the white colonialists left in terms of governance structures and economy, there was also a strong populist spirit that emphasised that 'everything that belongs to the colonisers is not appropriate for the colonised' creating the need for establishment of an 'African interpretation' of things well described by Achille Mbembe in the following terms:

The emphasis is on establishing an 'African interpretation' of things, on creating one's own schemata of self-mastery, of understanding oneself and the universe, of producing endogenous knowledge have all led to demands for an 'Africa science,' an 'Africa democracy,' and 'African language.'<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Garth le Pere and Kato Lambrechts, 'Globalisation and National Identity Construction: Nation-Building in South Africa,' in Simon Bekker and Rachel Prinsloo (eds.), *Identity? Theory, Politics, History*, (Human Sciences Research Council Press, Pretoria, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> M. Featherstone, 'Global Culture: An Introduction,' in M. Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture, Nationalism, Globalisation and Modernity*, (Sage Publications, London, 1990), p. 6.

<sup>77</sup> Garth le Pere and Kato Lambrechts, 'Globalisation and National Identity Formation,' p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Coloniser and the Colonised*, (Beacon Press, Boston, (1957/1965), p. 128.

<sup>79</sup> Achille Mbembe, 'Africa Modes of Self-Writing,' p. 255.

All this type of thinking is part of the African leaders and African intellectuals' quest rebuild their nations, re-created African confidence destroyed by colonialism, rejuvenate African independence of thought, re-create African creativity as opposed to dependency and take the former colonised in the path down recovery of self respect and some semblance of authenticity.<sup>80</sup>

It is no wonder then that the scholar-activists like Aime Cesaire and Leopold Sedar Senghor became the founding fathers of *negritude*, a clear nativist thought that tried to challenge colonial legitimating ideologies of the civilising mission, scientific racism, and technology-based paradigms of progress and development.<sup>81</sup> *Negritude* has been exposed to serious criticism across the intellectual board but it remains a key tradition feeding into nativism. It was in reality part of the continuing search for African identity after long years of denigration under colonialism.<sup>82</sup> Pal Ahluwalia noted that because *negritude* was widely criticised 'for its reaffirmation of racial binaries, its critical role as a predecessor to decolonisation has received cursory attention.'<sup>83</sup> I should add that *negritude* has arisen from death in the form of nativism in Africa. According to Leopold Sedar Senghor:

In order to establish an effective revolution, our revolution, we had first to divest ourselves of our borrowed attire-that of assimilation-and assert our being, that is to say our *negritude*.<sup>84</sup>

Aime Cesaire had to elaborate that 'we adopted the word *negre* as a term of defiance' and as concrete cultivation of black consciousness and a counter to colonial rejection and enforced adoption of inferiority complex.<sup>85</sup>

Benita Parry has posed the challenging question: 'Does revisiting the repositories of memory and cultural survivals in the cause of postcolonial refashioning have a fixed retrograde valency?'<sup>86</sup> She posed this challenged as part of her endeavour to make 'two cheers for nativism.' Parry is critical of scholars who are according a totalising power to colonialist discourses while at the same time being dismissive of resistance discourses like nativism. As she put it:

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<sup>80</sup> This nativist drive included leading nationalists like Julius Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1968) as well as leading African intellectuals like Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996); Paulin Hountondji (ed.), *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*, (CODESRIA, Dakar, 1997), Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (James Currey, London, 1986)

<sup>81</sup> Aime Cesaire, *Return to My Native Land*, (Presence Africaine, 1968) and Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, (Presence Africaine, 1972).

<sup>82</sup> Pal Ahluwalia, 'Negritude and Nativism': In Search of Identity,' in *Africa Quarterly*, volume 39, Number 2, (1999), pp. 22-43.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> Cited in Ahluwalia, 'Negritude and Nativism,' p. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, (Presence Africaine, 1972), pp. 74-76.

<sup>86</sup> Parry, *Resistance Theory/Theorising Resistance*, p. 174.

Instead I would argue that the task is to address the empowering effects of constructing a coherent identity or of cherishing and defending against calumny altered and mutable indigenous forms, which is not the same as the hopeless attempt to locate and revive pristine pre-colonial cultures.<sup>87</sup>

Thus to Parry nativism must be evaluated as part the process of decolonisation as ‘as the agency of a transfigured social condition; hence holding in place that vision of the anti-colonial struggle as a global emancipatory project and projecting the radical hope of an oppositional humanism.’<sup>88</sup> Indeed over, the years the anti-colonial struggle and the decolonisation process developed into and evolved different revolutionary traditions ranging from Pan-Africanism to Black Consciousness Movement all permeated by the spirit of *negritude* that was nativistic in orientation. In support of nativism as a counter ideology to colonialism and racism, Chinua Achebe argued that:

You have all heard of the African personality; of African democracy, of the African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help use get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them any more. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Sartre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are as good as the next man but that we are better.<sup>89</sup>

Just like Sylvia Washington BA argued that negritude had two variants, one historical focused on recognition of being black in a white world, and the other essentialist based on the ‘explosive notion of race,’ nativism too has a revolutionary variant that is emancipatory and pan-Africanist and a counter-revolutionary one that is rabidly racist and xenophobic.<sup>90</sup>

Recently, Eddy Maloka sought to understand the roots of nativism through delving deeper into revolutionary traditions that particularly shape South African identity. He identified pan-Africanism that entailed a sense of unity among Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora based on common historical experiences and common destiny. Pan-Africanism also entailed notions of ‘regeneration,’ ‘awakening’ or ‘renaissance’ of Africa as well the ‘dream’ of an Africa united in social, cultural, economic and political spheres, predicated on the overarching spirit of solidarity among people of African descent.<sup>91</sup> With specific reference to the launch of the Native Club in South Africa, Eddy Maloka, saw it as taking the struggle further from the achievement of political power to the ‘realm of ideas’ as part of the continuum in the transformation of South Africa

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 179.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 193.

<sup>89</sup> Chinua Achebe cited in Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, (Verso Publishers, London, 1997), p. 179.

<sup>90</sup> Sylvia Washington BA, *The Concept of Negritude in the Poetry of Leopold Sedar Senghor*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973), p. 160.

<sup>91</sup> Eddy Maloka, ‘The Native Club and the National Democratic Project’ in [www.sundaytimes.co.za](http://www.sundaytimes.co.za)

society. This struggle pitched at the ‘realm of ideas’ relates directly to the role of intellectuals in such movements as nativism.<sup>92</sup>

To radical African thinkers, colonialism is not yet a legacy and the decolonisation struggle must be taken to the realm of ideas, particularly grappling with epistemological dominance of post-Enlightenment western knowledge. African intellectuals or native intellectual should see to it that they take their rightful place as producers of knowledge usable and relevant to Africa. Referring to the Native Club in South Africa, Eddy Maloka, wrote that:

Yet, the Native Club is simply a movement, or rather a network, of a section of our country’s intelligentsia which is ‘gatvol’ with the dominance that whites continue to enjoy in our knowledge production sector.<sup>93</sup>

The leading post-colonial theorist Edward E. Said has grappled with the problematic issue of post-imperial and post-colonial identity in a way that is very useful towards a clear understanding of the politics of nativism in general. He started by posing the pertinent decolonisation question: How does a culture seeking to become independent of imperialism imagine its own past? He then proffered three answers:

- The first is for the colonised to become a willing servant of imperialism, ‘a native informant.’
- The second is to be aware and accept the past without allowing it to prevent future developments.
- The third is of striving to shed off colonial self in search for the essential and authentic pre-colonial self.<sup>94</sup>

This analysis of the options available for colonised and the ex-colonised is very instructive to the debate on nativism and the three strands co-existed within the broader nationalist struggles for independence. South Africa had chosen the second option as state ideology. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was meant to acknowledge the past wrongs without necessarily dwelling in that past.<sup>95</sup> But they were some who favoured the third option of ‘complete decolonisation’ and the creation of a black dominated African Republic of Azania not South Africa. The third option is the nativist option. These issues will be clear as the discussion of nativism continues in the second part of this study. Suffice to say that nativism is currently expressed, articulated and orchestrated largely in Afro-radicalism terms that are seen as dangerous in a

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Edward E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (Chatto & Windus, London, 1993), p.258. See also Pal Ahluwalia, *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections*, (Routledge, London and New York, 2001), p.45.

<sup>95</sup> Mark Libin, ‘Can the Subaltern be Heard? Response and Responsibility in South Africa’s Human Spirit,’ in *Textual Practice*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (2003), pp. 119-140.

cosmopolitan country like South Africa. It also manifests a continuation of African struggles for emancipation in the midst of poverty and underdevelopment.

### **Antinomies of Black Political Thought**

A leading scholar on Asian cultural developments and cultural studies, Kuan-Hsing Chen wrote that 'right before and after national independence, nationalism has generated a by-product: nativism.'<sup>96</sup> He added that:

If, for centuries, colonialism has carried out a 'civilising mission' to remove 'backward' local tradition, and replace it with more 'advanced' modernisation programs on every front, then the anti-colonial, national independence movement could no longer trust anything coming from the side of the colonial devils. A 'self-rediscovery movement' was called upon to discover our uncontaminated self and authentic tradition, to replace the deeply invaded colonial imagination...colonialism works by the mechanism of identification, through aggression and establishing the coloniser as the figure of modernity, to bind coloniser and colonised together, then nativism works by an identification with 'the self.'<sup>97</sup>

Indeed there is no doubt that nativism is a creature of African nationalism as well as a product of settler colonialism. An ANC Youth League document alluded to two streams of African nationalism dominant during the struggle for independence in South Africa. This is how the situation was put:

There are two streams of African Nationalism. One centres around Marcus Garvey's slogan, 'Africa for Africans.' It is based on the 'quit Africa' slogan and on the cry of 'Hurl the white Man into the Sea!' This brand of African Nationalism is extreme and ultra-revolutionary. There is another stream of African Nationalism which is moderate and which the [Africa National] Congress Youth League professes. We of the Youth League take account of the concrete situation in South Africa and realise that the different racial groups have come to stay, but we insist that a condition for inter-racial peace and progress is the abandonment of white domination and such a change in the basic structure of South African society that those relations which breed exploitation and human misery will disappear. There our goal is the winning of national freedom for African people and the inauguration of a people's free society where racial oppression and persecution will be outlawed.<sup>98</sup>

The South African ideological situation is more complicated than this though it is possible to draw out some of the key contours of nationalist black thought. Two factors must be taken into account. South Africa has the oldest nationalist party that was formed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1912, two years after the establishment of the Union of South

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<sup>96</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, 'Introduction: The Decolonisation Question,' p. 15.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>98</sup> See ANC Youth League Policy Document quoted in Helen Joseph, *If This Be Treason: Helen Joseph's Dramatic Diary of the Treason Trial, 1956-1961*, (Contra Press, Johannesburg, 1998), pp. 135-136.

Africa. Secondly, South Africans fought the longest liberation struggle that stretched from 1912 to 1994. As a result of these two factors, there is no liberation struggle that was so cosmopolitan in ideological terms as the South African one. Over the years it soaked up too many strands of black liberation philosophies and traditions. At formation, what became later the ANC was initially called the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) and the founder Pixley Ka Izaka Seme outlined the purpose of the formation of this congress in this way:

Chiefs of royal blood and gentlemen of our race, we have gathered here to consider and discuss a scheme which my colleagues and I have decided to place before you. We have discovered that in the land of their birth, Africans are treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The white people of this country have formed what is known as the Union of South Africa—a union in which we have no voice in the making of laws and no part in their administration. We have called you, therefore, to this conference, so that we can together devise ways and means of forming our national union for the purposes of creating national unity and defending our rights and privileges.<sup>99</sup>

The overarching purpose was to unite the black people as a race and across tribal and ethnic division into a national political formation to fight against white oppression and for black rights. What later became ANC was initially formed as a ‘native’ organisation standing for ‘native’ interests vis-à-vis white interests which were saved by the Union of South Africa. According to the Natives’ Land Act of 1913:

Native shall mean any person, male or female, who is a member of an aboriginal race or tribe of Africa; and shall further include any company or other body of persons, corporate or unincorporate, if the person who have a controlling interest therein are natives.<sup>100</sup>

By defining and naming black people as ‘natives’ an identity was being created by colonialists based largely on race. The colonialists went on to acknowledge that natives are ‘an aboriginal race’ of Africa, indirectly accepting that as whites they were not ‘natives’ of Africa. This white settler racism was to form a fertile ground for the emergence of an African form of nationalism that crystallised around the plight of ‘natives.’ The ANC was no exception to this reality even though those writing the history of this movement after 1994 had to telescope events, creating an impression of the ANC as having a clear non-racial ideology from its formation to the end of the struggle against apartheid in 1994. A closer look at the long history of the ANC does not confirm the thesis that:

From the founding of the African National Congress in 1910 until it came to power in 1994, the ANC leadership at its core remained committed to ‘a belief in

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<sup>99</sup> R. V. Selope Thema, ‘How Congress Began,’ in Drum, July 1953 in <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/began.html>

<sup>100</sup> The Natives’ Land Act, 1913.

non-racial principles and ...a future South African society characterised and enriched by the growing interdependence and co-operation of its various population groups within one economic and political order.’<sup>101</sup>

The ANC like all African liberation movements had a general direction of its struggle but had no clear path of realising it. It had no clear ideological underpinning. Again like all African liberation movements it was often forced to react to the apartheid colonial state. The issue of ideology was never settled at any one time up until the negotiation time of the late 1980s and early 1990s that culminated in the transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994, whereby the ANC was forced to project more the non-racial strand as its public transcript for strategic and pragmatic purposes. The reality is that the ANC operated in a hegemonic fashion, consistently surviving by swallowing different strands and doses of African nationalist political thinking on liberation and soaking up different ideological strands of black struggles from within South Africa and from outside. At least Francis Meli was nearer to the reality when he wrote that Africanism ‘has always been a contradictory phenomenon’ within the ANC and that such luminaries of the anti-apartheid struggle like Anton Lembede, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki and many others learnt through the struggle and the exigencies of the struggle made them to realise the limits and exclusive tendencies of radical Africanism.<sup>102</sup> As put by Meli, they ‘grew away’ from exclusive black Africanist ideology.<sup>103</sup>

Issues of race and class always made the nationalist struggle complicated. If one adds the other issues of indigeneity, entitlements, culture and rights, everything becomes muddled to the extent that schisms, divergences, convergences, splits as well as alliances were determined by these issues. Four strands of thought can be identified within the broader liberation movements in South Africa and its intellectuals. The first strand is what Peter P. Ekeh described as the African bourgeois ideology of legitimation espoused by Western educated Africans.<sup>104</sup> It involved two desires. The first was a quest for inclusion in colonial governance which later developed into the second aspect of trying to replace white colonial rulers. It was basically a moderate and elitist thought that sought citizenship rights through miming imperial discourses and was not opposed to the perceived ideals and principles of Western institutions. It was predicated on the manifest acceptance of white liberal ideals and principles, accompanied by the insistence that African conformity with them indicated a level of achievement that ought to earn the new educated Africans the right to the leadership of their country.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Loius A. Picard, *The State of the State: Institutional Transformation, Capacity and Political Change in South Africa*, (University of Witwatersrand Press, Johannesburg, 2005), p. 93. See also Peter Wlashe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, A. D. Donker, Cape Town, 1987) and Sheridan Johns and R. Hunt Davis, Jr. (eds.), *Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress: The Struggle Against Apartheid, 1948-1990-A Documentary Survey*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1991).

<sup>102</sup> Francis Meli, *A History of the ANC: South Africa Belongs to Us*, (James Currey, London, 1998), pp. 109-112.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Peter P. Ekeh, ‘Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement,’ pp. 91-112.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 101.

The second strand of thought was Ethiopianist in outlook focusing on a separate and more exclusive black liberation movement. Pan-Africanism that was spreading throughout Africa since the achievement of independence by Ghana in 1957 reinforced and solidified Ethiopianist thought and its claims of 'Africa for Africans' and the establishment of back republics across Africa. Pan-Africanism dovetailed with Garveyism and its slogan 'Africa for Africans.'<sup>106</sup> Nativism was in-built into this strand that sought black native liberation from white settler domination and that interpreted the whole struggle in race terms, including seeking recovery of African past, African culture and restoration of African dignity. The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) under the charismatic and radical leadership of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe imbibed the key issues of Pan-Africanism while basing its identity on the value system of the 1949 ANC Youth Congress' Africanist Programme of Action.<sup>107</sup> African affirmation was viewed as a precondition to liberation in the context of colonial and apartheid racial oppression of Africans. The rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) under Steve Bantu Biko in Eastern Cape was part of African affirmation initiated by PAC. This connection is well put by Steven M. Davis who noted that:

Africanism as a ideology...would not wither with the PAC. Its popularity as an alternative to multiracialism was undiminished and was to manifest itself in later years through intermittent revivals of the PAC and through the rise of black consciousness.<sup>108</sup>

Back republicans were of the opinion that citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa should be rooted in African communal identities, values, and virtues. A true 'Azanian' was expected to be black African fully committed to the right of the African people to self-rule and reclaim all of their ancestral land.<sup>109</sup>

The third strand of political thought looked towards traditionalist ethnic-cultural leadership and espoused a form of ethnic nationalism that sought liberation of different ethnic groups as nations. The Inkatha Freedom Party under Chief Gatsha Mongosuthu Buthelezi was influenced by this strand of thought.<sup>110</sup> The final strand of black thought took the form of Afro-Marxism with an emphasis on class struggles and economic

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<sup>106</sup> Marcus Garvey was a radical black activist from Jamaica who was so fond of Ethiopia and the African continent to the extent of popularizing the idea of the blacks in the Diaspora coming back to Africa and the African continent becoming dotted by sovereign black republics. See James Barber, *South Africa in the Twentieth Century: A Political History—In Search of a Nation State*, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1999), p. 100. see also George M. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1995), pp. 282-283.

<sup>107</sup> Gail M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978).

<sup>108</sup> Steven M. Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War*, (A. D. Donker, Cape Town, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>109</sup> Halisi, 'From Liberation to Citizenship,' p. 68. See also C. J. Driver, *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan-African*, (Heinemann, London, 1980).

<sup>110</sup> Inkatha Freedom Party is still operating as an ethnically based Zulu politico-cultural movement. Its political symbols are Zulu cultural artifacts and cultural symbols.

liberation.<sup>111</sup> The South African Communist Party (SACP) took the lead on this strand of thought bringing together whites and blacks who were left leaning.

These strands were all shaped by what Kuan-Hsing Chen termed ‘the decolonisation question’ where settler colonialism shaped even its supposed opposite (African nationalism):

Shaped by the immanent logic of colonialism, Third World nationalism could not escape from reproducing racial and ethnic discrimination; a price to be paid by the coloniser as well as the colonised selves.<sup>112</sup>

At a broader level African nationalist ideologies were not completely disconnected from the broader global ideologies of liberalism, socialism, and republicanism. But as noted by C. R. D. Halisi, ‘at the core of black political thought there are two interrelated and recurring visions of liberation: one, the image of multiracial union; the other, black republican ideology.’<sup>113</sup> However, to see the intellectual debates in multi-racial and non-multi-racial binaries, ignores the third vision crystallising around what one can term indigenous conception of citizenship focused on native entitlements and black rights as opposed to those of white settlers whom radical Africanists considered as aliens if not enemies of black liberation. Halisi, however, raised an important point that has direct bearing on the formation of such phenomenon as the Native Club where he wrote that:

Nascent questions of national identity (how the people are to be defined, who belongs to the political community, and what are the criteria of inclusion and exclusion) embedded in various schools of liberation thought profoundly influence black popular attitudes towards South Africa’s fledging democracy.<sup>114</sup>

The central concerns of liberation in South Africa was intertwined with the key question of the relationship between capitalist industrialization and racial domination. The moderate nationalist black organisations that formed themselves around the ANC over the years, mobilised support across race and formed alliances across the racial divide. Those forces that formed themselves around the Pan-African Congress (PAC) interpreted the nationalist struggle in pan-African terms of mobilising black Africans and black South Africans to fight for a black republic of Azania. It was not the PAC alone that espoused the black republican tradition. The other organisations included the Non-European Unity Movement, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the South African Students Organisation and the Azanian People’s Organisation (AZAPO). Those that espoused multiracial tradition included the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People’s Organisation, the Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions. The divisions in ideological terms were however not rigid and the currents of black republicanism were strong also within the

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<sup>111</sup> Louis A. Picard, *The State of the State*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>113</sup> C. R. D. Halisi, ‘From Liberation to Citizenship: Identity and Innovation in Black South African Political Thought,’ in *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 1997, p. 61.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

ANC and the multiracial ethos was also present within PAC. This complexity of South African politics was well captured by Robert Thornton when he wrote that:

South African politics has constantly attempted to explicate and examine the grounds of its very being. This is a politics which has not been able to take for granted the nature or number of its primary actors. It is a politics that seeks not merely to distribute power, or to acquire and maintain power, but to define the nature of power itself. Many different political visions contend with one another in the political arena; even the limits and nature of the arena itself are questioned and tested.<sup>115</sup>

No wonder then that the BCM dug clear trenches within the broader liberation movement, 'trenches for physical and psychological warfare.'<sup>116</sup> The leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Bantu Biko, defined his issue of black consciousness as:

...an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its essence is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression—the blackness of their skin—and to operate as a group to rid themselves of shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude...Our culture, our history and indeed all aspects of the black man's life have been battered nearly out of shape in the great collision between the indigenous values and the Anglo-Boer (Afrikaner) culture.<sup>117</sup>

Black Consciousness Movement was clearly nativist in its claims, fighting against culturally imposed black self-negation, self-alienation and the feeling of inferiority. Nobody doubts that colonialism led to what Ali A. Abdi termed 'identity deformation' that needed to be reconstituted if natives/blacks were to regain lost confidence.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, those organisations affiliated to the ANC began to soak up issues of constitutionalism driving more and more for a constitutional pluralist democracy based on common citizenship with mutual respect for different cultural traditions.<sup>119</sup>

The ANC itself retained a strong pool of Africanists even after the defection of some to form the PAC in 1959. As a movement, the ANC became a bizarre mixture of liberals, traditionalists, Marxists, conservatives, radicals, Africanists, Black Consciousness activists, Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites. Anton Lembede a leading Africanist within the ANC protested against the *bambazonke* (catch all) ideological disposition of

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<sup>115</sup> Robert Thornton, 'The Potentials of Boundaries in South Africa: Steps Towards a Theory of the Social Edge,' in R. Webner and T. Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, (Manchester University Press, London, 1996), p. 157.

<sup>116</sup> Ali A. Abdi, 'Identity Formations and Deformations in South Africa: A Historical and Contemporary Overview,' in *Journal of Black Studies*, Volume 30, Number 2, (November 1999), p. 155.

<sup>117</sup> Steve Biko, 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity,' in *UFAHANU: Journal of the African Activist Association*, Volume 8, Number 3, (1978), pp. 14-15.

<sup>118</sup> Ali A. Abdi, 'Identity Formations and Deformations in South Africa.'

<sup>119</sup> J. Degenaar, 'Nations and Nationalism: The Myth of A South African Nation,' (IDASA Occasional Paper, No. 40, 1991), p. 12.

the ANC, arguing that the political movement must cease to run like an ideological omnibus ‘stopping at every station to pick up all sorts of passengers.’<sup>120</sup> The operation of the ANC as an omnibus was both a strength and a weakness throughout its existence, making it the largest organisation but also plunging it into constant crises. For instance, at the Morogoro General Conference of 1969, the ANC decision to allow whites to join its Executive Council immediately provoked the development of a hard line Africanist radical faction opposed to white membership of the party.<sup>121</sup> The Africanists were of the view that once the ANC was in power, black Africans as a group should be dominant in government and the economy. In 1975, ANC was hit by another crisis, with eight of its influential members attacking the decision of opening ANC ranks to whites. They also protested about the growing influence of the SACP within ANC.<sup>122</sup>

By 1979, the ANC was joined by some large number of Black Consciousness group with its radical Africanists ideology. Thus within the ANC co-existed uneasily radical Africanists with moderate non-racialists. At another level, internal struggles took class forms particularly in the 1990s, when the populist radical Left-leaning members felt marginalised by the moderate bourgeoisie Right within the ANC. Those who came to power in 1994 were described by radicals as the moderate bourgeoisie Right-wingers of the ANC.<sup>123</sup> So within the ANC itself, a strong Africanist voice continually questioned the dominance of whites within the movement and continually pushed the ANC towards black nationalism and nativism.

That nativism was going to be a problem in post-colonial Africa was pointed out long ago by Frantz Fanon when he states that: ‘From nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism.’<sup>124</sup> From as far back as 1961, Fanon had already noticed that there was ‘permanent seesaw between African unity, which fades quicker and quicker into the mists of oblivion, and a heartbreaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form.’<sup>125</sup> Thus the nativism that is symbolised by the formation of the Native Club in South Africa is taking the form of revivalist nationalist-cultural outlook even though currently is spearheaded by a few black intellectuals.

### **The Immanent Logic of Settler Colonialism and the Settler-Native Question**

The settler-native question is a problem of citizenship, rights, and entitlements to such resources as land and to political positions in post-colonial Africa. The settler-native problem was deliberately created by settler colonialism, particularly through the shift from direct rule predicated on the civilizational project to indirect rule predicated on use

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<sup>120</sup> Anton Lembede quoted in Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> Dirk Kotze, ‘Morogoro: Out of the Whirlwind,’ in *Politikon: The South African Journal of Political Science*, Volume 16, No. 1, (June 1989), p. 61.

<sup>122</sup> Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa During the Apartheid Years*, (Nan A. Talese Doubleday, New York, 1997), p. 494.

<sup>123</sup> Dale T. McKinley, *The ANC and the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Political Biography*, (Pluto Press, 1997) and David Goodman, *Fault Lines: Journey into the New South Africa*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999).

<sup>124</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (Grove, New York, 1968), pp. 156-157.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

of pre-colonial African institutions to rule over Africans. Mahmood Mamdani noted that in contrast to the single legal universe of direct rule, indirect rule divided natives into separate groups and governed each through a different set of customary law.<sup>126</sup> Settler colonialism in South Africa took the form of socio-political and economic domination of indigenous communities and the bifurcation of people under colonial rule into natives and non-natives. There were two bases on which the bifurcation was justified: race and civilisation. Mamdani argued that ‘as the litmus of a civilizational test, the law separated the minority of civilised from the majority of those yet-to-be-civilized, incorporating the minority into a regime of rights while excluding the majority that same regime.’<sup>127</sup>

Settler colonialism was a more resilient form of colonialism represented by white settlers, making permanent homes within colonies and preparing themselves to resist both metropolitan pressures and African resistance. Ronald Weitzer noted that:

The settlers’ characteristic intransigence makes the transformation of these states considerably more difficult and complicated than the decolonisation of conventional colonies, where imperial powers disengaged with the broad support of local social forces.<sup>128</sup>

Settler societies were founded by white migrant groups who then ‘assumed a super-ordinate position vis-à-vis native inhabitants and build self-sustaining states,’ organised around white settlers’ economic, social and political domination over the indigenous population.<sup>129</sup> In the earlier settler colonies in America and Australia, the settler-native issue was solved through what Ronald Weitzer termed ‘final solutions on their native problems,’ involving outright elimination and forcible displacement to open the way for ‘quasi-European societies’ to be established.<sup>130</sup>

The Dutch who first landed in the Cape in 1652 were the first settlers to come to South Africa. Francis B. Nyamnjoh noted that for purposes of economic, cultural and political hegemonies of the West vis-à-vis the rest, the early colonial whites managed to tame their differences and the early Dutch settlers actively encouraged immigration of whites from Europe and practically allowed them free access to territory.<sup>131</sup> Immigration of black people was not allowed except ‘for slaves or labour zombies, and on terms defined exclusively by the interests of the settler whites.’<sup>132</sup>

Settler colonies moulded themselves as ‘neo-Europes’ in Africa and a difficulty duality between the settler and the native ensured immediately the settler began to consider the

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<sup>126</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, (James Currey, Oxford, 2001), p. 24.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>128</sup> Ronald Weitzer, *Transforming Settler States: Communal Conflict and Internal Security in Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe*, (University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1990), p. 25.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa*, (CODESRIA, Dakar/Zed Books London, 2006), p. 28.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

colonised territory as his/her permanent home. As noted by Weitzer, ‘this paramount interest shaped all social, economic, and political relations with the indigenous population.’<sup>133</sup> The settler societies in Africa, faced a governance issue which they termed ‘the native problem’ which pre-occupied the minds of such colonial theorists as Lord Lugard, Cecil John Rhodes and Jan Smuts. On 23 June 1817, Rhodes told the Cape Parliament that:

I will lay down my own policy on this native question. Either you have to receive them on equal footing as citizens, or call them a subject race. Well, I have made up my mind that there must be pass laws and peace preservation acts and that we have got to treat natives where they are in a state of barbarism, in a different way to ourselves. We are to be Lords over them. These are my policies on native affairs...treat the native as a subject people as long as they continue in a state of barbarism and communal tenure, be Lords over them and let them be subject race and keep liquor from them.<sup>134</sup>

In a ground breaking book entitled *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Mahmood Mamdani grappled with the issue of how settlers ruled natives. Mamdani noted that the advent of settler colonialism entailed differentiating peoples in the colony. White settlers did not want to mingle with the black natives. In the settler colonial set up, the whites organised themselves into citizens inhabiting the city, enjoying full civil and political as well as economic rights. The black indigenous people were ascribed the status of subjecthood and denied the enjoyment of political and civil rights. Their permanent abode was to be the rural reserves.<sup>135</sup> This is how a minority white power was to rule over a black indigenous majority. This is how Mamdani put the issue of the nature of settler colonial governance:

Direct rule was the form of urban civil power. It was about the exclusion of natives from civil freedoms guaranteed to citizens in civil society. Indirect rule, however, signified a rural authority. It was about incorporating natives into a state-enforced customary order. Reformulated, direct rule and indirect rule are better understood as variants of despotism: the former centralised, the latter decentralised. As they learned from experience—of both the ongoing resistance of the colonised and of earlier and parallel colonial encounters—colonial powers generalised decentralised despotism as their principle answer to the native question.<sup>136</sup>

Under apartheid settler colonialism, the state was bifurcated with two systems of rule co-existing under a single hegemonic colonial authority. Racism was at the centre of colonial governance. Since the publication of his seminal book, *Citizen and Subject*, Mamdani

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<sup>133</sup> Ronald Weitzer, *Transforming Settler States: Communal Conflict and Internal Security in Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe*, p. 26.

<sup>134</sup> Quoted in Stanlake Samkange, *What Rhodes Really Said About Africans*, (Harare Publishing House, Harare, 1982), pp. 15-25.

<sup>135</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

has preceded to grapple with the question of citizenship in post-colonial Africa, beginning with pertinent question of when does a settler become a native. One of his key responses to that question is that:

The settler-native question is a political question. It is also a historical question. Settlers and natives belong together. You can not have one without the other, for it is the relationship between them that make one a settler and the other a native. To do away with one, you have to do away with the other.<sup>137</sup>

According to Mamdani there is no single answer to the question of when does a settler become a native because it is dependent on whether one considers it from civic or ethnic angle. If one replies this question from the vantage point of civic notion of citizenship, the answer is very simple: it is merely a matter of time and is dependent on constitutional provisions of the country. However, when one considers this question from the notion of ethnic citizenship, the answer is that a settler will never be a native. According to Mamdani, so long as the distinction between the settler and native is written into the structure of the state, the settler can only become a citizen but never a native.<sup>138</sup> This inflexibility is a product of the bifurcation of the colonial state into citizens and subjects that was readily inherited by the post-colonial state. The post-colonial leaders succeeds only in de-racializing the civic space, but retained the rigidities of the customary space and even reinforcing ethnicized despotism.<sup>139</sup> For the settler to be a native, it means having a native authority (a chief), an ethnic group to belong to and a native homeland. Already the white Afrikaner population in South Africa is demanding that it be considered and recognised as natives, complete with a native homeland as well as a native authority. This is not easy in a country like South Africa where the civic space was de-racialised and the customary/native space was not reformed of its rigidities imposed by settler colonialism.

How white settlers ruled Africans/natives is at the core of some of the post-colonial dilemmas of citizenship in Africa in general where the binaries and bifurcated identities of 'native' and 'settler' continue to shape politics in post-settler societies. Viewing the country as their permanent abode, white settlers typically monopolised the political system as their private preserve and the socio-economic order as the vehicle for their exclusive prosperity.<sup>140</sup> At a practical level, this included primitive accumulation of wealthy tactics such as expropriation of the richest land, forcible displacement of natives from their original lands, wholesale claiming of prime natural resources like minerals, introduction of open social segregation as well as enactment of exploitative practices to exploit native labour.<sup>141</sup> The native-settler divide was concretely created through the

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<sup>137</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'When Does a Settler Become a Native? Citizenship and Identity in a Settler Society,' in *Pretext: Literacy and Cultural Studies*, Volume 10, No. 1 (July 2001), pp. 63-73.

<sup>138</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'When Does a Settler Become a Native? Reflections on the Colonial Roots of Citizenship in Equatorial and South Africa' (Inaugural Lecture as A. C. Jordan Professor of African Studies, University of Cape Town, 13 May 1998).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Weitzer, *Transforming Settler States*, p. 29.

<sup>141</sup> For our case studies of Zimbabwe and South Africa, the white settlers introduced such pieces of legislation as the Land Act of 1913 in South Africa and the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 in Zimbabwe.

process of demarcation of land into reserves and homelands as abodes of natives and towns as natural abodes of white settlers where native entry was very restricted and closely monitored to ensure that those natives who entered did so for purposes providing cheap labour.

The settler-native question was also a legal one in the sense that these distinctions were crafted into colonial law. Mamdani wrote that ‘it strikes me that none of us—neither nationalists or Marxists—historicised the political legacy of colonialism, of the colonial state as a legal/institutional complex that reproduced particular political identities.’<sup>142</sup> This is a relevant issue in that settler colonialism created and promoted the native identity and made sure that it endured into a colonial reality sustained mainly by race attitudes. It was also the settlers who made a clear distinction between race and ethnicity, making it clear that only natives belonged to ethnic groups, identifying themselves as belonging to a racial identity.<sup>143</sup> It is imperative to summarise Mamdani’s concise analysis of colonial ‘rooted ness’ of the post-colonial citizenship-related conflicts:

- How colonialists governed Africa forms the background of post-colonial citizenship problems in Africa involving former settlers, former natives and different ethnicities.
- Colonialism bifurcated colonial population into citizens, subjects and numerous rigidified ethnic groups.
- Colonial denial of citizenship to Africans (black subjects) set the stage for African nationalism to be a struggle for citizenship rights.
- Colonialism was marked by deeply ingrained and deliberately promoted racism where race became a pre-condition for citizenship.
- Colonialism is the mother of citizenship problems in Africa.
- Colonialism ossified African ethnic identities and coded them in legal terms, affixing rigid boundaries.
- African nationalism failed to transcend the ethnic boundaries created by colonialism, instead it developed on the lines of ethno-nationalism.
- At independence, African nationalists concentrated on de-racialising the civic space while at the same time reinforcing decentralised despotism at the local level crafted around the African chief and customary law.
- Indigeniety of the black people was raised by African nationalist a basic premise for the black native to take over leadership from the alien white.
- Indigeniety was raised to a level of a minimum criteria for one to be accorded and enjoy citizenship rights in the country.
- Nationalist victory raised the black community from a subject race to citizenship.

Born out of colonialism, African nationalism became equally racist as the black bourgeoisie fought for power against white bourgeoisie. Nativism was deeply entrenched within the nationalist mobilisation strategies including that of land reclamation and

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<sup>142</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, ‘Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism,’ in *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 2001, p. 652.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, p. 654.

culture recovery from the past. In South Africa, following the launch of the Native Club, many white commentators and opposition leaders began to manifest fear and warn of the dangers of racial nationalism *a la* Zimbabwe where land has been violently taken from the white farmers and where the state has gone on to justify taking the land on nativist claims.<sup>144</sup> Montlatjo Thetjeng, a member of parliament and the Democratic Alliance (DA) spokesman, defined the Native Club as ‘racist’ and as an example of racial nationalism at its zenith. He wrote that:

But the Native Club isn’t about an antidote for liberalism. Philosophical considerations are nothing more than the veneer behind which a far more sinister and crude agenda lurks. It is about race. What it is to be ‘black,’ who is a ‘native,’ who is a ‘settler,’ how black people should behave; how white people should act. It’s a racial club for people obsessed with race. Nothing more, nothing less.<sup>145</sup>

Doug Blackmur of the University of the Western Cape, took the debate on settler-native division to the level where he argued that the aboriginal people of South Africa are the Khoisan, and implied that both white and black were settlers.<sup>146</sup> South Africa has a long history of the debate on nativity with the Afrikaners arguing that they are also native because they came into South Africa in 1652 and they occupied empty lands whose inhabitants have been devastated and depopulated by the *Mfecane* Wars.<sup>147</sup>

The debates on the settler-native question are central as they indicate the complexities of the post-colonial and post-apartheid task of nation-building in South Africa and the underlying problems attendant to the process of construction of common citizenship. The founding fathers of democratic South Africa knew that South Africa had a muddled racial and ethnic identity that needed to be handled with care. Nelson Mandela spent his whole term in office trying very hard to create a common South African identity to the extent that some of his supporters thought he was bending too much to accommodate the whites who were reluctant to be part of a new South Africa. Mandela pursued a policy of reaching out to his former Afrikaner opponents in ways which sometimes dismayed or puzzled his black supporters. He visited former President P. W Botha and the widow of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd in a show of oneness. His successor President Thabo Mbeki is well known for his famous ‘I am an African’ speech which was not just a show of African poetic mastery but a complex way of encapsulating the identity crisis that South Africans were supposed to transcend if not re-negotiate and re-define the conflictual past in positive terms for nation-building and state-consolidation purposes. A state and a people

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<sup>144</sup> Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, ‘The Nativist Revolution and Development Conundrums in Zimbabwe,’ in *ACCORD Occasional Paper Series*, Volume 1, Number 4, (2006), pp. 1-40.

<sup>145</sup> Motlatjo Thetjeng, ‘Native Club Racist,’ in *Financial Mail*, 26 May 2006.

<sup>146</sup> Doug Blackmur, ‘All Intellectuals,’ in *Business Day*, 13 June 2006

<sup>147</sup> The *Mfecane* refers to the 19<sup>th</sup> century political and violent developments that engulfed Nguni land involving raiding and migration of defeated chiefdoms. White literate observers emphasized the devastation caused by the Mfecane and used this argument to justify their land claims, particularly that they dispossessed non body of his or her land as they found empty and depopulated areas. See Julian Cobbing, ‘The Mfecane As Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo,’ in *Journal of African History*, Volume 29, (1988).

suffering from an identity crisis cannot articulate clear national, regional and international policies beyond being carried away by democracy and human rights discourse as the flavour of the moment at global level. Mbeki noted that the agenda of creating a single nation must start from the normalisation of difference. The discourse of development, transformation and reconstruction could not be achieved in a society shot through with racial and ethnic differences bordering on hatred and revenge. To try and normalise this difference, Mbeki resorted to a poetic definition of himself as an African. He said, 'I am an African' and:

I owe my being to the hills and valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land...I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of beautiful Cape- they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives to defend our freedom and independence and they, as a people, perished in the result...I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsha and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom. My mind and my knowledge of myself are formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown...I am born of a people who are heroes and heroines. I am born of a nation that would not tolerate oppression. I am born of a nation that would not allow that fear of death, torture, imprisonment, exile, or persecution should result in the perpetuation of injustice...I am born of the peoples of the continent of Africa. The pain of the violent conflict that the peoples of Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria experience is a pain I also bear. The dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share.<sup>148</sup>

In his attempt to normalise difference, Mbeki was clear in his mind that South Africa has many ethnic groups and races that all needed to feel part of the new South Africa and the rainbow nation. Thus instead of his speech being read as elegant poetry, Mbeki outlined the spectrum, contours and layers of particularistic and historical anchorages of South African identity and the complex cultural polyglossia and tapestry informing the search for a 'rainbow' national identity for South Africa. South Africa is a home to various racial groups such as the Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking communities as well as Coloureds and Indians. To accommodate these racial groupings in the imagination of the South African nation as a 'rainbow,' Mbeki meticulously and poetically mobilised history to good use in nation-building:

I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions they remain still part of me. In my blood courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture is part of my essence...I am the

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<sup>148</sup> Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki on the occasion of the adoption by the Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of South Africa Constitutional Bill, Cape Town, 1996.

grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St. Helena and the Bahamas, who see in the mind's eye and suffers the suffering of a simple peasant folk: death, concentration camps, destroyed homesteads, a dream in ruins...I come from those who were transported from China and India whose being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both be at home and be foreign, who taught me that human existence itself demanded that freedom was a necessary condition for that human existence. Being part of all these people and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that I am an African.<sup>149</sup>

In this widely quoted speech Mbeki was making a compendium out of different components of South African national mosaic, identity tapestry, and poetically addressing the complex issue of identity in South Africa. Eventually, he made the crucial point that a South African 'African' was a product of complex historical processes. When he declared that 'I shall claim that I am an African,' he made it clear that South African nationality and citizenship is based on 'claims' located deeply in history of the country rather than based on primordialist and racial claims. This strategy worked temporarily but currently fissures within the ANC are taking nativist directions threatening the whole 'rainbow' experiment. Even the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) has not helped matters much as it is lambasted of benefiting a few politically connected Africans who have joined the settlers on the high table.<sup>150</sup>

The colonially created non-native/settler and native/black identities have proven to be a problem in post-settler and post-apartheid societies. Mamdani has identified three of the 'postcolonial dilemmas.' Firstly is the issue of the growing tendency for indigeneity to become the litmus test for rights under the post-colonial state. Secondly is the fact that African founding fathers built their states on colonial foundations, turning indigeneity into a test for justice and entitlement under the postcolonial state. Finally, is the issue of the growing tendency to identify a colonially constructed regime of customary law with Africa's authentic tradition.<sup>151</sup> The attempts by both conservative and radical nationalist founding fathers to transcend the problems of native and settler binaries and that of ethnicity through the simple strategy of de-racialising the civic space and without de-ethnicising the customary sphere papered over crucial material inequalities and cleavages built during colonialism and apartheid. The problems of who is indigenous and who is not are feeding into different forms of nativism. In some former colonies, the question relates to which ethnic groups were indigenous and which ones were not. In South Africa, the question is still revolving around the settler and native binaries, with the settler being seen as alien and non-indigenous. Mamdani argues that immediately Africans began to engage with these questions within the postcolonial dispensation, 'the colonial world' is being turned 'upside down' without changing it. He elaborated that 'as a result, the native

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Martin Paut, 'South Africa's Political Turmoil,' in *Foreign Policy in Focus (FPiF)*, September 27, 2006 in [www.fpiif.org](http://www.fpiif.org)

<sup>151</sup> Mamdani, 'Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities,' p. 657.

sat on top of the political world designed by the settler.’<sup>152</sup> It is this reproduction of the settler-native dialectic that promotes the feelings and nativist claims to land, to jobs, to rights, to production of knowledge and to almost everything by the former native ahead of the former settler. In countries like Rwanda and Ivory Coast, the version of nativism is taking ethnic terms, with those ethnic groups like the Hutu claiming indigeneity ahead of Tutsi, plunging the country into genocide.<sup>153</sup>

Africa has witnessed more and more violent ‘nativist revolutions’ since gaining independence in the 1960s. Beginning with the ‘social revolution’ of 1959 that recurred again in 1994 with more violence in Rwanda, to the expulsion of Asians by Idi Amin in Uganda in 1972 and Zanzibar Revolution in Zanzibar concerning Arabs of 1963, to the more recent land struggles in Zimbabwe, subject races, former settlers as well as ethnic groups considered less native than others have been on the firing line. All these issues are intertwined with contemporary debates on citizenship and identity. For instance, in Uganda, those Asians who returned demanded that they be listed in the constitution as one of Uganda’s ethnic groups as a safeguard against any future harassment and as guarantee of the right to land too.<sup>154</sup> At another level, former settlers have supported neo-liberal politics predicated on civic conception of the nation and citizenship as their protection from the nativist inspired demands for justice and nativist claims to land.<sup>155</sup>

All this was generated by colonial governance political structures that were predicated on the logic of dualism, of spatial, institutional, and territorial segregation and law. Said Adejumbo correctly noted that the practice of colonial governance of fragmenting the local people into natives with different customary or tribal laws, constructed and fermented ethnic identities which were later to plague the state and polity in most post-colonial African states<sup>156</sup> It is imperative to add that the same colonial governance marked by bifurcation of people into citizens and subjects and natives and non-natives, is creating the current problems of nativism in post-settler and post-apartheid South Africa.

### **The Rainbow Nation, Common Citizenship and the Challenge of Populism**

There is no country in Africa that became obsessed with neo-liberal ideologies as South Africa in the wake of the collapse of apartheid. The South African constitution is a neo-liberal document par excellence. It was crafted during the time which was celebrated by Francis Fukuyama as; ‘The end of history and the last man,’ an epoch of triumphalism of neo-liberalism across the globe, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the implosion of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe that inaugurated the end of the Cold War.<sup>157</sup> For South Africa, democracy as a value and human rights as social imaginary, formed that basis of the post-apartheid political dispensation and became the

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p 658.

<sup>153</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, (James Currey, Oxford, 2001).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p. 660. see Also Jim Igoe, ‘Becoming Indigenous Peoples: Difference, Inequality, and the Globalisation of East African Identity Politics,’ in *African Affairs*, Volume 105, (2006), pp. 399-420.

<sup>155</sup> Said Adejumbi, ‘Citizenship, Rights, and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa,’ in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 23, No. 1, (2001), pp. 148-170.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1993).

‘foundation myth’ for an ‘imagined’ new, civic, democratic and open society and a common citizenship under the ‘rainbow nation.’<sup>158</sup> This must be understandable on the basis of the history of the country and the nature of the transition from apartheid to democracy as well as the racial and ethnic composition of the South Africa society. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in 1995 was scripted as the basis of laying to rest a racially divisive past and paving the way to a new future as a ‘rainbow nation.’<sup>159</sup>

The South African constitution also set out to be the basis for healing the divisions of the past and as a pre-requisite for the emergence of a single nation premised on equality and common citizenship.<sup>160</sup> Quickly, the neo-liberal discourse on democracy and human rights pervaded the South Africa society at an alarming speed to the extent that Roger Southall noted that:

There is no subject more out of bounds in South Africa’s contemporary political discourse than any suggestion that development may require constraints upon democracy. Democratic rights for the majority in South Africa have been so hard won that any hint that they have costs is distinctively unwelcome.<sup>161</sup>

Commenting on the swiftness with which South Africans embraced neo-liberal democracy, Roger Southall further noted that:

The ANC clings to its identity as the liberation movement which freed South Africa from the shackles of apartheid, the DA identifies itself as the embodiment of individual rights, and the New National Party found the burden of ridding itself of its apartheid past so great that it recently collapsed itself, unlamented, into the new ruling party. Everyone favours ‘freedom’ and academic commentators concur with the new global orthodoxy that the struggle for political and socio-economic rights democratises development whilst also developing democracy.<sup>162</sup>

Indeed the rank and file of South Africans became so obsessed with the idea of a new South Africa and the romantic idea of a ‘rainbow nation’ to the extent that there was overwhelming belief that democracy and human rights were naturally good values that were to be cherished by every one across race, ethnic, class and political spectrum. Democracy and human rights became associated with magical powers even to solve the

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<sup>158</sup> Benedict Anderson coined the now very popular definition of the nation as ‘imagined community’ in his widely read and quoted book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism: Revised Edition*, (Verso, London, 1993). The nation-builders of post-apartheid South Africa adapted this notion of the nation as ‘imagined community’ and added the ‘rainbow’ analogy to suit South Africa’s complex multi-ethnic and multi-racial mix.

<sup>159</sup> Nhla Valji, ‘Race and Reconciliation in a Post-TRC South Africa’ (paper presented at a conference on Ten Years of Democracy in Southern Africa, Southern African Research Centre, Queens University, Canada, May 2004).

<sup>160</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*.

<sup>161</sup> Roger Southall, ‘Introduction: Can South Africa be a Developmental State?’ in Sakhela Buhlungu, John Daniel, Roger Southall and Jessica Lutchman (eds.), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2005-2006*, (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2006), p. xxxviii.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

rich-poor divide that was deliberately institutionalised by apartheid regime. Little notice was taken of the fact that the celebrated neo-liberal democracy and its 'rights-talk' was in marriage with the exploitative capitalist economic system that was itself never supportive of the values of economic equality and achievement of social justice.

Neo-liberal dispensation is ontologically concerned more about civil and political rights (first generation rights) and pays lip service to second and third generation rights that are of major concern in post-colonial Africa in general and post-apartheid South Africa in particular.<sup>163</sup> Predicated on democratic and human rights values and norms, South Africans celebrated the democratic transition as the era of possibilities in every front and they vehemently rejected anything and anybody that warned them that the epoch of possibilities is also the era of deepening of inequalities covered under the veneer of the right to property ownership that was enthusiastically embraced by those who benefited from apartheid primitive accumulation policies mediated by race. In post-colonial Africa, the Bills of Rights that were enshrined into every independence constitution mainly benefited the 'Haves' that used it to justify the continued unequal ownership of land and other immovable properties like mines that they illegally took from the indigenous black people. There is no one who can deny the fact that in many post-colonial societies, particularly former settler colonies it is the settler that still owns the means of production. The mine, the farm, and the factory still remains a symbol of the victory of the settler over the native. This is not meant to ignore the advances made by some few Africans who now own these immovable properties in post-colonial Africa.

One area that suffered in this era of democratic possibilities was the silence on the crucial issue of identity that is always at the centre of nation-building in post-colonial Africa. There was an assumption that because of the transition from apartheid to democracy, both natives and settlers would overnight metamorphose into a common citizenship. Nahla Valji of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation noted the TRC 'was ironically silent on the issue of race—ironic given that it was functioning in the context of a country whose entire political and economic system was premised on the organisational principle of race.'<sup>164</sup> Critiquing the TRC as a safe foundation of new South Africa, Mahmood stated that:

...the violence of apartheid was aimed less at individuals than at entire communities, and entire population groups. And this violence was not just political. It was not just about defending power by denying people rights. The point of torture, terror, death, was even more far-reaching: its aim was to dispossess people of means of livelihood...[The TRC model] obscured the colonial nature of the South African context: the link between conquest and

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<sup>163</sup> Some scholars thought of human rights in terms of hierarchies following the division of the world into First (Western Democracies), Second (Soviet Union and the Communist World) and Third World (Africa and other formerly colonised parts of the globe). The First World was said to be more concerned about civil and political rights, the Second World about economic and social rights and the Third World about development as a fundamental right.

<sup>164</sup> Valji, 'Race and Reconciliation,' p. 1.

dispossession, between racialised power and racialised privilege. In a word, it obscured the link between perpetrator and beneficiary.<sup>165</sup>

Apartheid was a brand of colonialism ranking together with indirect rule and association colonial ideologies of governance. At another level it was a form of internal colonialism. These dimensions of apartheid needed to be taken into account before people could buy into romantic and mistaken perception that because of the fall of apartheid then: 'We are all South Africans, equal before the law. There are no longer blacks or whites.'<sup>166</sup> The nation-builders thought that through education a democratic citizen was going to emerge in South Africa that was truly de-tribalised, de-racialised and de-ethnicised.<sup>167</sup> The slogan that carried the day was that of non-racialism feeding into the romantic idea of an accommodative 'rainbow nation.' Below this euphoria of equality and common citizenship, lay dangerous forces that translated to the sad reality whereby:

When convenient to them, members of both groups were quick to abandon the idea of a South African identity and adopt an exclusive racial identity. The blacks argued that, while they accepted the principles of non-discrimination and merit, history and context demanded the retention of a racial criterion to prevent the perpetuation of white domination of top positions in the private and public sectors....Likewise, the whites adopted a group identity when minority rights were at issue. They argued that without minority rights, majority rule would lead to black domination.<sup>168</sup>

As rightly noted by Maphai, the South African transition was complex involving a double and simultaneous move: 'a shift from minority to majority rule, and a shift from an exclusive to an inclusive political system.'<sup>169</sup> There was, however, a third move, involving dismantling the idea of 'South African exceptionalism' at the regional and continental level. Mahmood Mamdani clearly defined the problem of 'South African exceptionalism' as based on the belief that 'South African experience is so totally and irrevocably shaped by the initiative of the settler, that South Africa is no longer, in any meaningful sense, a part of Africa, native Africa.'<sup>170</sup> President Mbeki's toying with African Renaissance; the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) as well as his active role in the African Union (AU) activities are all efforts meant to destroy the apartheid-created problem of 'South African exceptionalism.' On South African exceptionalism, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza writes that:

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<sup>165</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'The Truth According to the TRC,' in Ifi Amadiume and A. An-Naim (eds.), *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice*, (Zed Books, London, 2000), p. 179.

<sup>166</sup> Vincent Maphai, 'Race and the Politics of Transition: Confusing Political Imperatives with Moral Imperatives,' in N. Chabani Manganyi (ed.), *On Becoming A Democracy: Transition and Transformation in South African Society*, (University of South Africa Press, Pretoria, 2004), p. 12

<sup>167</sup> Department of Education, *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*, (Department of Education, Pretoria, 2001)

<sup>168</sup> Maphai, 'Race and the Politics of Transition,' pp.12-13.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted from Mahmood Mamdani, 'When Does a Settler Become a Native? Reflections on the Colonial Roots of Citizenship in Equatorial and South Africa' (Inaugural Lecture as A. C. Jordan Professor of African Studies, University of Cape Town, 13 May 1998).

But the myth of South African exceptionalism must be resisted; it is a conceit fuelled by the fantasies of racist and apartheid South Africa that is was an extension of 'Western Civilization' on the 'Dark Continent,' and encouraged by European imperialists who saw it as a European outpost in need of their material, moral and political support and protection.<sup>171</sup>

President Thabo Mbeki seems to be succeeding in Africanising South Africa at the level of its external relations level. But at home, the policy of reconciliation has constituted itself as a bulwark to radical changes. Reconciliation has become a legitimization of apartheid economic status quo. Writing on the meaning of reconciliation in Southern Africa, Ibbo Mandaza stated that it is in reality 'the mourn of the weak, even when pronounced from positions of apparent moral and political superiority over oppressors and exploiters of yesterday.'<sup>172</sup> He added that 'The reconciliation exercise, therefore, serves largely a political function, facilitating the necessary compromise between the rulers of yesterday and the inheritors of state power, within the context of incomplete decolonisation.'<sup>173</sup> Indeed in South Africa, the very rhetoric of reconciliation is constantly invoked to consolidate white privileges against all other initiatives that seek redistributive justice. The liberation struggle in South Africa ended up reduced to a simple anti-racism crusade to the extent that one liberation fighter lamented that he fought for freedom all his life but what he finally got was democracy.<sup>174</sup>

'South African exceptionalism' defined in the mould of the settler determining and shaping public discourse as well as the destiny of the country is generating intense struggles with the black native seeking to be on the driving seat and to shape the public discourse in this largely African dominated Southern African nation. One of apartheid's enduring legacies was the distortion of South African identity fragmenting Africans into rigidified and geographically ring fenced homelands while at the same time codifying race as a pre-condition to access to citizenship. Instead of promoting a single citizenship, apartheid South Africa became a home to dozens of de-franchised African ethnic groups and other racialised groups of coloureds and Indians, all subsisting under the Afrikaner *volk* democracy mediated through and through by legislated racism known as separate development (apartheid). This created a serious identity crisis that even the 'Madiba magic,' *ubuntu* philosophy, and President Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance and pan-Africanist politics could not solve until now.

What need to be clearly noted is that twelve years of limited democracy punctuated by unimpressive wealth redistribution and the slow pace of transformation has provoked a growing level of restlessness among the black natives who since the settlement of the Dutch in the Cape in 1652 have seen their land being taken and have suffered multi-level dispossession and impoverishment. The immediate post-1994 independence euphoria

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<sup>171</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 'Clouds Over the Rainbow Nation: South Africa and the Zuma Saga' in Zeleza.com. This is his official website.

<sup>172</sup> Ibbo Mandaza, 'Reconciliation and Social Justice in Southern Africa: The Zimbabwe Experience,' in M. W. Malegapuru (ed.), *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*, (Mafube Publishing, Cape Town, 1999), p. 79.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Albert Louis Sachs, *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter*, (Grafton Books, London, 1990).

and its expectation crisis is breeding not only despair but also agitation. High unemployment, high crime incidence, crisis of delivery of services, lack of affordable accommodation for the poor and many other unfulfilled expectations have become a fertile ground for re-thinking the direction of transformation, particularly the identity of who is continuing to benefit from it at the expense of who. Clearly the former white settler and a few black middle classes are benefiting at the expense of the majority poor black Africans. Inequality has deepened; poverty and HIV/AIDS pandemic have reached genocidal levels. As noted by Achille Mbembe:

This is the context in which a class-oriented millenarianism and nativist revivalism are fuelling mass disillusion, if not outright discontent. The discontent is spearheaded by trade unions, the ANC Youth League and the South African Communist Party (SACP).<sup>175</sup>

Mbembe forgot to add the role of the black intelligentsia which is also agitated against what it defines as the dominance of neo-liberalism. Mbembe also fails to recognise the radical Africanism in President Thabo Mbeki that co-exist uneasily with his celebrated cosmopolitanism. This is how Mbembe put it:

Although of a secular nature, this new millenarianism and nativist revivalism is using the eschatological language of the ‘revolution second coming’ in order to paint as the epitome of the Antichrist one of the most worldly, cosmopolitan and urbane political leaders modern Africa has ever known. Even though the followers of the *maprofiti* do not believe in the morality of the Christian church—especially in matters of adultery—they are threatening President Thabo Mbeki with God’s wrath. They want to exact vengeance, to humiliate him and to punish him for his alleged political sins—a neo-liberal, aloof, secretive and paranoid intellectual who is bent on centralising power and on driving South Africa towards a Zimbabwe-style dictatorship.<sup>176</sup>

But instead of defining the current development in South Africa and within the ANC in simple terms of the emergence of ‘prophets, healers and swindlers,’ and instead of being sarcastic about the revival and resurgence of black populist discourses, reducing these to *maprofiti*, African belief in witchcraft, anti-Christianity and millenarianism, we need to engage and historicise these as rational political developments with deep roots in the anti-apartheid struggle dating back to the formation of ANC in 1912. What is at play here is far from ‘stirring the darkest brew of South African culture’ unless Mbembe associates the subaltern struggles with barbarity rather than a different imagination of the nation, liberation and citizenship.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘South Africa’s Second Coming: The Nongqawuse Syndrome’ in [www.poenDemocracy.net](http://www.poenDemocracy.net).

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

Populist black republicanism with its radical dose of Africanism bordering on revival of African consciousness and building of a black republic of South Africa is deep rooted in the history of the ANC and in the competing imaginations and conceptions of post-apartheid nation and citizenship. It was very alive in the 1940s when the ANC Youth League wrested control of the party from an older and more liberal generation of leaders, and it was beaten back in the 1950s with the rise to dominance of the moderates again in the ANC. Fatima Meer's analysis of African nationalism reflected the populist appraisal of dominance of moderate liberal tendencies. She stated that there was ideological confusion during the early nationalist struggle that opened the gate for acceptance of political moderation including rejection of black popular culture while accepting assimilation of European culture. According to her, this development prevented a militant confrontation with white power when its defeat was possible.<sup>178</sup>

Some ANC leaders like Anton Lembede became the most sophisticated and daring theoretician of black liberation. Lembede sought to reconcile modern black nationalism with African tradition and to him land reclamation was at the centre of black nationalist struggles. He also linked the issue of black liberation with the liberation of black workers from exploitation.<sup>179</sup> Since the time of the ANC Youth League's 1944 *Congress Youth League Manifesto*, black intellectuals within the liberation movement began to wrestle with competing conceptions of the nation, the people as well as citizenship.<sup>180</sup>

What happened in South Africa in ideological terms is that the moderate non-racial strand of black nationalist liberation thought was found to be pragmatic in the context of the South Africa situation and in 1994, it was this strand that won the day. Even the whites found this strand accommodative of them. Hence it became in the words of James C. Scott the 'public transcript' and formed a more acceptable if not highly compromised basis of the transition from apartheid to democracy. The radical republican Africanist thought and vision with its trappings of nativism was relegated to a 'hidden transcript'—a discourse taking place and playing itself beyond the formal political arena.<sup>181</sup> Halisi is more convincing in his explanation of citizenship struggles and the role of populism in South African politics. This is how he put it:

Rival populisms, nourished by competing visions of liberation, are bound to have an impact on the evolution of South African citizenship because popular democratic traditions, of which populism is one manifestation, are among the most durable sources of inspiration for democratic thinkers. After centuries of racial domination, it would be unrealistic to expect an ethos of non-racial citizenship to prevail unchallenged by older political perceptions. Eventually, the black liberation struggle may come to be viewed by all South Africans as a

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<sup>178</sup> Fatima Meer, 'African Nationalism—Inhibiting Factors,' in Heribert Adam (ed.), *South Africa: Sociological Perspectives*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1971), pp. 125-136.

<sup>179</sup> Anton M. Lembede, 'African Trade Unions,' quoted in Halisi, 'From Liberation to Citizenship in South Africa,' p. 71.

<sup>180</sup> J. Ngubane (Khnyisa), 'Congress at the Crossroads,' in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, (13 March 1947). See also Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*, (Longman, London, 1983).

<sup>181</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990).

national achievement and, therefore, a cornerstone of non-racial citizenship identity; but, for the immediate future, successive governments will have to cope with the sensibilities grounded in both non-racial and race politics.<sup>182</sup>

One need to understand the fact that South Africa has the richest and deep rooted populist tradition than any other country in Southern Africa born out of the realities of the existence of the oldest nationalist party that fought the longest liberation struggle. Black intellectuals of South Africa have always reacted to white racial nationalism with their own black populist strategies of black liberation, designed to mobilise across class divides and ethnic divisions. Ernesto Laclau has noted that populist movements never fail to draw on the energies of intellectuals and political elites and to promote solidarities across and beyond class binaries. He adds that populist theories excel in their ability to synthesise seemingly contradictory ideas and identities into a pervasive sense of political solidarity.<sup>183</sup>

While populism has mainly emerged as right-or left-wing doctrines, nativism is another form in which it emerges in post-colonial Africa. The formation of the Native Club is partly building on long-standing black South Africa intellectual tradition that has consistently deployed African populist thought syncretically, injecting Africanist thought, pan-Africanist thought into Eurocentric traditions. With the fading of PAC, race-conscious black populism has been gradually accommodated by the ANC and ‘pulsates strongly within the ANC.’<sup>184</sup> It is no wonder then that the black populist thought that has been pushed into a ‘hidden transcript’ by the hegemonic and triumphant ‘public transcript’ of non-racialism is publicising itself via the launched of the Native Club. It is taking a public stage in the context of an enabling environment infused with Africanist philosophies of *ubuntu* and African Renaissance being pushed forward by the ANC government. It is developing as an intellectual project spearhead by native intellectuariat.

### **The Native Club, Native Intellectuariat and African Cultural Revival**

There is no event in post-apartheid South Africa that raised animated debate as the formation of the Native Club in 2006. As noted by Tom Nevin:

Since its existence became public, the passage of The Native Club, South Africa’s latest hot potato, has been baptism of fire. At the outset, it was accused of appropriating the politically loaded label ‘native’ for its own ends, more controversially, it has been accused of racial exclusivity. Its independence and objectivity has also been brought into question, not least due to its apparent

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<sup>182</sup> Halisi, ‘From Liberation to Citizenship,’ p. 78. On populism see Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, (The Macmillan Company, London, 1969), C. B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1966), and Ernesto Laclau, ‘Towards A Theory of Populism,’ in E. Laclau (ed.), *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*, (Verso, London, 1977).

<sup>183</sup> Laclau, ‘Towards A Theory of Populism.’

<sup>184</sup> Halisi, ‘From Liberation to Citizenship,’ p. 85.

patronage by government, although President Thabo Mbeki has more recently been at pains to qualify his acceptance of the forum.<sup>185</sup>

According to the Native Club's official website, it is a public initiative based at the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA), whose prime objective is to mobilise and consolidate South African intelligentsia as a social force.<sup>186</sup> The call for such a progressive intellectual force was initially made by President Thabo Mbeki when he delivered his *Inaugural Lecture of the Parliamentary Millennium Project*, where he raised critical issues about how the West distorted African history in its crusade to claim a superior position in global governance and history of inventions. Mbeki reminded his audience of the achievements and inventions of Africa including how the African civilisation of Ancient Egypt invented mathematics and a form of writing and how the Malian civilisation culminated in the emergence of Timbuktu as a hub of intellectualism and trade. In this lecture, Mbeki alluded to the dangers of neo-liberal imperialism and advised that the African struggle:

...is to engage in both the total emancipation of our continent from the social, political and economic legacy of colonialism and apartheid as well as to reclaim our history, identity and traditions and on the foundation that our ancestors built for all of humanity, rebuild our societies to ensure that they are developed and prosperous.<sup>187</sup>

Taking an openly Afro-radical position, Mbeki argued that 'true liberation' cannot be achieved in Africa as long 'we defer to our former colonisers the matters that affect our countries and people.' He proceeded to make it categorically clear that: 'We would not achieve true liberation as long as we do things merely to be in good books of those who are powerful, even when such actions are inimical to the independence and development of Africa.'<sup>188</sup> In his detailed exposition of challenges facing Africa and Africans at the moment, President Mbeki emphasised the urgent need to identify those forces constituting the African progressive movement in Africa and devise innovative ways of mobilising such progressive forces to ensure general convergence of views and perspectives on Africa in a manner that would accelerate the embers of the African Renaissance.<sup>189</sup> Mbeki also expressed his concerns about the identity and interests of those whose ideas continue to drive African societies in this century. The Native Club seems to model itself as this desperately needed progressive African intellectual force or is poised to mobilise such a force. Among its key purposes is to ensure greater participation by all South Africans in the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres. It has four core objectives: to create an environment in which ideas can be disseminated, debated and discussed by inquiring minds; to create a congenial climate for reflection and

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<sup>185</sup> Tom Nevin, 'New Club Triggers Race Tensions: Black South Africans Have Been Left in an Intellectual Limbo and Need to Correct This By Organising Themselves into Discussion and Debating Forums,' in *African Business*, 1 October 2006.

<sup>186</sup> The Native Club official website is: <http://nativeclub.org/>

<sup>187</sup> President Thabo Mbeki, 'Perspectives on and of Africa,' *Inaugural Lecture of the Parliamentary Millennium Project*, (Gallagher Estate, Midrand, South Africa, 1 April 2006).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

self-examination; to assert itself in the realm of arts, culture, politics and the economy; and finally to give a voice to the voiceless.<sup>190</sup>

While some scholars like Achille Mbembe are of the opinion that Mbeki is one of the 'most worldly, cosmopolitan and urbane political leaders modern Africa has ever known,' they risk underestimating his Africanism and strong nationalist allegiance. As noted by Patrick Bond, Mbeki is an astute politician able to 'talk left' while behaving 'right' in practical political terms.<sup>191</sup> Mbeki is able to speak both in Afro-radical language and also in clear neo-liberal terms, while remaining a respected nationalist leader in Africa and trusted as a 'new' crop of democratic leaders at the global level. It is under Thabo Mbeki's leadership that radical Africanist thought has permeated the ANC pulsating concurrently and uneasily with the ANC's tradition of non-racialism. Mbeki is one of the pillars of African Renaissance thinking and is a prolific writer in his own right as indicated by his contributions to the *ANC Today*.<sup>192</sup> The Native Club becomes understood as a presidential initiative and as an ANC project because it seems to have been formed as a direct response to Mbeki's call for a progressive force to sustain the African Renaissance and to produce ideas to drive African societies. The second reason is that it is partly sponsored by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). The third reason is that its founding Chairperson is Titus Mafolo who is a personal adviser to President Thabo Mbeki.

In its call for papers for the first Native Club Conference under the theme: *Where are the Natives? The Black Intelligentsia Today*, the conveners of wrote that:

The new millennium, with its own set of challenges, is bound to engender a new world order (or disorder?), which will require Africans to define themselves in terms of their relationship with other people. Above all, this will require Africans to sever the shackles of intellectual servitude and work towards becoming masters and architects of their own destiny. The term 'intelligentsia' holistically refers to home-grown/local/native African intellectuals, meaning those who use their intellectual prowess to further the interests of their people, to help create a living socio-economic, political, cultural and liberating hegemony.

Throughout lengthy periods of racial dehumanisation and imperialist colonialism, Africans have been alienated from indigenous cultural values and spirituality, which essentially contributed to shaping a nation. As a result, a significant number of African intellectuals find it difficult to think first as Africans, whenever they are confronted by issues that impact directly on the African perspective, mindset and identity.

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<sup>190</sup> Native Club official website: <http://nativeclub.org.za/>

<sup>191</sup> Patrick Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right: South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms*, (Merlin Press, London, 2004).

<sup>192</sup> *ANC Today* is an online ANC publication which carries Mbeki's writings.

This is precisely because ‘a quarter century after Africa’s political independence from European colonial powers, the colonial mentality still lies like a fog on the African consciousness’ (Chinweizu 1987:vii). The ideal of the African century will be a mirage without the meaningful participation and full de-colonisation of the African intelligentsia, in addressing its separation from majority base, defined and despised as the masses.

In as far as South Africa is concerned, the post-1994 context is that of a country in the process of fundamental change, from the legacy of apartheid to a democratic society grounded in a national cultural identity.

The challenge that the socio-political and economic transformation process and nation building project presents to all South Africans, especially the intelligentsia, is to seek to define themselves as a new society, and map the future. Accordingly, this process is expected to be pursued in a manner that will advance a unified cultural identity of South Africa as a country, and also enhance cultural, social, and economic development for the benefit of society at large.

In spite of transformation in various sectors, there is certainly no evidence of a South African intelligentsia emerging as a cohesive force. Whilst in many post independent African states, there was a mushrooming of local academics and intelligentsia, this has not been the case in South Africa for a number of reasons.<sup>193</sup>

This preamble to the Native Club’s call for papers had to be quoted in *extenso* because it gives some insight into the thinking behind the formation of the Native Club as well as the key concerns that drive it. The following key issues emerge as the central concerns of the Native Club namely engagement in the process of definition of African identity; mobilisation of South African intellectual capital in such a strategic way that it serves the local interests of the people of South Africa; revival of indigenous African cultural values and spirituality as the anchors for shaping the nation and formation of national identity; enabling African intelligentsia to participate effectively in the processes of decolonisation of the mind; connecting the intelligentsia organically with the African masses; and facilitating the take over of the public discourse by black intellectuals in order for them to define the contours of the new South African society and map the future direction of society.

The first Native Club Conference was well attended and it took place in Tshwane from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2006. It was characterised by animated debate and it reflected key issues about the direction of transformation, differing perceptions of the role of

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<sup>193</sup> The Native Club, ‘Where Are the Natives? The Black Intelligentsia Today,’ (Conference Announcement and Call for Papers, Burgers Park Hotel, Tshwane, South Africa, 03-04-May 2006). The conference was a joint collaboration of the Native Club based at the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA), African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), the Institute for Global Dialogue (IDG) and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC).

intellectuals in the political discourse as well as some participants questioning the very existence of the Native Club itself. What transpired at the conference and the aftermath of the conference partly reflects the differing visions of the democratic transition, the differing interpretations of the teleology of the liberation struggle, and the differing visions of the nature of South Africa nation and society and the nature of democracy. What is interesting to note is that at its Inaugural Native Club Conference, the debate was very open even among the so-called native intellectuals, that is those who were invited. There were areas of congruence and areas of disagreement. For instance, there was agreement on the reality of marginalisation of black intellectual thought within the national discourse and the dominance of white neo-liberal thought. The participants raised the issue of South African government's intolerance of criticism and its tendency to 'other' its critics as counter-revolutionaries and ultra-leftist loonies as well as how participation in the struggle for liberation paralysed black intellectuals creating a vacuum in the realm of black critical thought.

The issue of use of African frames of thought, civilisation and philosophy as the basis of intellectual engagement did not raise much disagreement. However, the issue of academic detachment and intellectual autonomy as a virtue of academia fragmented the participants and raised a lot of debate. Some participants challenged the notion of categorisation of intellectuals into hegemonic intellectuals, organic intellectuals, organic subservients, praise-singers, lampoon intellectuals, as well self-declared intellectuals as not good for the South African intellectual community. There was agreement on the necessity for research on *Ubuntu* as a major academic concern in its contribution to reconciliation and reconstruction. Some participants were very sceptical of what they termed black-on-black and native-on-native intellectual battles. Finally some raised the issue of the white intellectual establishment having copyright on defining who are the credible black intellectuals.<sup>194</sup>

The founding Chairperson of the Native Club Titus Mafolo fired the first bullets that set the whole nation ablaze with debate. He raised the issue of cultural decolonisation of the minds of South Africans as a very pertinent part of the current struggles in this way:

Colonialism and apartheid left 'nothing to chance' as they implanted in natives the belief that indigenous thought and philosophy did not belong to the era of civilization. To a very large extent, the dominance of neo-liberal ideology in South Africa today is testimony to the legacy of 350 years of apartheid colonialism. The question is whether we have accepted this hegemony as God-given?<sup>195</sup>

Mafolo noted that there was a decline in intellectual engagement by blacks since 1994 and that the intellectual vacuum has been filled by a small, but 'well-resourced, organised and strategically placed neo-liberals are consistent in trying to shape the form and content of the transformation of SA through public discourse, vocal and visible campaigns for

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<sup>194</sup> Xolani Xundu provided a comprehensive summary of the complex issues raised at the first conference of the Native Club in an article that was published in the Mail & Guardian a day after the conference.

<sup>195</sup> Titus Mafolo, 'By Invitation: Native Antidote to Liberals' in *Financial Mail*, 19 May 2006.

their causes and better networking.’<sup>196</sup> To him ‘the legacy of the past, which has imposed gross material inequalities,’ made it easier for neo-liberals to vocalise their concerns. He added that the supporters of the Native Club ‘firmly believed that neoliberalism is inimical to the objectives of transformation and national reconstruction, at least in terms set and determined by the historically marginalised sections of our society.’<sup>197</sup> On the purpose of the Native Club, Mafolo stated that:

We seek to build a climate congenial to continued reflection and self-examination by the native intelligentsia, asserting itself in the realm of arts and culture, socio-economy and politics. The SA intelligentsia faces a cardinal responsibility to mobilise the weakest and most vulnerable sections of the society to find their voices, to live up to its historical obligation of developing and sustaining critical consciousness among the people.

We see the scientific, literary and artistic members of our society playing a central role in the regeneration of our young people, in the form of creative writing, poetry, participating in debates and generally contesting ideas.<sup>198</sup>

Mafolo went on to highlight some of the issues that the Native Club will take on such as the reality of the indigenous cultures, languages and social values that are currently in a state of paralysis and ‘in a cultural limbo.’ The challenge for the Native Club was to find ways of codifying some of the values and traditions from the indigenous past and use them in strengthening African societies and nations. Articulating a clearly cultural-nationalist thought, Mafolo said:

Though we are Africans, many South Africans seem to have an identity crisis. Through our dress, music, cuisine, role models and reference points we seem to be clones of Americans and Europeans. The Native Club will grapple with this important matter so that there should evolve South Africans who are truly native rather than exotic.<sup>199</sup>

Writing in the journal *Umrabulo*, Mafolo clearly defined the Native Club as ‘the third pillar of our transformation,’ focused on cultural revival. The other two pillars were identified as politics and economy. He wrote that:

The Native Club is not an organisation and has no membership. It is a forum, led by a small committee that facilitates workshops, discussions and debates around different issues and will soon begin research around identified topics. It is a club that seeks to encourage on-going critical engagement, especially among blacks, around the many and varied matters confronting our transformation.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Titus Mafolo, ‘The Third Pillar of Our Transformation,’ in *Umrabulo*, Number 26, (August 2006)

According to Mafolo, the main focus of the Native Club is the area of culture, this culture is defined as ‘the totality of inherited ideas, beliefs, philosophies, assumptions, values, and knowledge that propel society in a particular direction’<sup>201</sup> According to him the critical area that requires the intervention of the Native Club is ‘the space of knowledge production, which is in the hands of whites, the majority of whom adhere to a liberal ideology...As in the economy, whites control and own the means of knowledge production and dissemination.’<sup>202</sup>

Giving details on the three pillars of transformation—politics, economy and culture, Mafolo noted that the South African national democratic revolution has made major strides in the arena of politics, dismantling the apartheid political edifice, repealing draconian laws and creating a more representative judiciary system as well as entrenching civil and political liberties. The second pillar, the economy ‘poses more difficulties than that of politics.’ According to Mafolo:

Twelve years after liberation the economy is still firmly in the hands of whites, most of whom continue to resist transformation of the economy and had to be dragged into the process of economic change through legislation.<sup>203</sup>

The Native Club, however, is not dealing with the economic issues, it is focused on the third pillar—culture. At this level, Mafolo notes that South Africa, like other former colonies, is dominated by ideas, beliefs, philosophies and assumptions emanating from the erstwhile colonial powers. These range from religions such as Christianity to ideologies such as liberalism, social democracy and different shades of socialism. The Native Club is therefore poised to grapple with the broad issue of identity and respond to such questions as:

- Which beliefs and philosophies define South Africans?
- What world outlook should inform the moulding of a new South Africa?
- On what philosophies and assumptions should we base our values, ideas and knowledge?<sup>204</sup>

According to Mafolo the South African transition is defined within existing exotic dominant global ideologies—‘whether liberal, social democratic or socialist—and adopt a negative stance towards anyone suggesting the indigenisation of our revolution.’<sup>205</sup> The key purpose of the Native Club is to research on *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of governance before the next step of codification. In this analysis of the Native Club, Mafolo is joined by Addy Maloka who locates the Native Club within the broader national democratic project and the revolutionary traditions of Pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness Movement and Negritude as well as Marxism. To Maloka the Native Club’s ‘battle-cry being to address the legacy of apartheid in the knowledge production

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

sector.’<sup>206</sup> In an important article entitled *Writing for Them: ‘Radical’ Historiography in South Africa and the ‘Radical’ Other*, Eddy Maloka raised issues concerning general disillusionment, feeling of being peripherized and general lack of connection between white scholars and black scholars. If read carefully Maloka’s article encapsulated the key issues that would in future create nativist thinking among black intellectuals. Firstly, Maloka raised the issue of: ‘The virtual absence of practising black historians—defined here in terms of research and publications—in the production of historical knowledge in South Africa is generally recognised.’<sup>207</sup> While this problem is generally attributed to the apartheid construction of Bantu education, repression of black universities and broad segregationist policies, Maloka adds that ‘racial and class dynamics within the South African academy are themselves equally responsible for the lack of black academics.’<sup>208</sup>

Because of the salience of Maloka’s arguments and their relationship to those that culminated in the formation of the Native Club is it vital to pursue them a bit. The dethroning of the liberal historiography of the 1950s and 1960s was achieved by self-appointed ‘radical historiography’ with its mantra of ‘history from below.’ It was these radicals who quickly proclaimed that by 1994 the decolonisation of South African history had been achieved.<sup>209</sup> Maloka realises that: ‘Surely, it is too soon to celebrate the achievements of the ‘radical’ school, not least because this self-appointed ‘decolonisation’ mission was a whites-only affair.’<sup>210</sup> Even those emerging black scholars like Thomas Nkadimeng and Ted Matsetsela did not rise to the pinnacles of South Africa Historiography, with Matsetsela losing his life in the turmoil of liberation and his research project appropriated by white radicals and Nkadimeng’s research on Transvaal African sharecroppers ‘did not survive the offensive of powerful ‘radical’ historians who not only ran the Oral History Project and its mother body—the Wits Workshop—but also commanded resources and contacts within the academy.’<sup>211</sup> Within this environment black South African historians never emerged, and whites like Phil Bonner and others are still the gate-keepers of the History Department at the University of Witwatersrand. Thirteen years after apartheid the Department is still ‘white.’ Such glaring issues of marginalisation of black thought have coalesced over the years to produce the Native Club.

At its formation, the Native Club raised the issues of who is producing the knowledge being consumed by South Africans. The answer was that a minority of white scholars who are well established in different academic disciplines produce knowledge for the

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<sup>206</sup> Eddy Moloka, ‘The Native Club and the National Democratic Project,’ in *Umrabulo*, Number 26 (August 2006).

<sup>207</sup> Eddy Maloka, ‘Writing for Them: ‘Radical’ Historiography in South Africa and the ‘Radical’ Other,’ in Fred Hendricks (ed.), *The Social Sciences in South Africa Since 1994: Disciplinary and Transdisciplinary Areas of Study*, (Africa Institute of South Africa Research Paper No. 74, Pretoria, 2004), p. 83

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Phil Bonner, ‘New Nation, New History: The History Workshop in South Africa, 1977-19994,’ in *Journal of American History*, Volume 81, No.3, (1994), p. 977.

<sup>210</sup> Maloka, ‘Writing for Them,’ p. 84.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. Maloka noted that the oral research work of Matsetsela and Nkadimeng ended up being published by white radicals like T. Keegan, *Facing the Storm: Portraits of Black Lives in Rural South Africa*, (Zed Books, London, 1988) and Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine: A South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985*, (Hill and Wang, New York, 1996).

majority African population. While knowledge has no colour it is shot through with ideologies and even sectarian interests. As noted by Xolani Xundu, the issue of who is producing knowledge and the contribution of black academics to knowledge production engaged the minds of those who attended the first conference of the Native Club.<sup>212</sup> The Minister of Arts and Culture, Pallo Jordan invited black intellectuals not only to contribute to knowledge production but also to play a leading role in shaping the nature of the transformation, emphasising that the national agenda is still full swing and that it only needed black intellectuals to play a leading role in the transformation to make sure the transformation vision of the ANC-led government became a living idea for all South Africans.<sup>213</sup>

Sandile Memela, a journalist, author and spokesperson for the Ministry of Arts and Culture took the debate to another direction, mounting a critique on what he termed 'coconut intellectuals: black outside, white inside.' His list of 'coconut intellectuals' included Xolela Mangcu, Siphon Seepe, Rhoda Kadalie, Vuyo Mbuli, Tim Modise, Themba Sono, Console Tleane, and Aubrey Matshiqi. His key issue was that these black scholars spend a lot of time criticising the ANC government and in the process reinforcing racist assumptions about black government in order to receive accolades from white liberals as fearless, independent and courageous intellectuals.<sup>214</sup> Memela argued that 'rather than help and support the democratic government carryout and fulfil its mandate, they limit their role to throwing stones at the government.'<sup>215</sup> Memela noted that: 'Inside the government, there are intellectuals who are giving their lives to the system.'<sup>216</sup>

What emerges clearly is that the Native Club is an ANC-project, meant to organise black intellectuals into a 'progressive' force of change. Its nativist outlook reflects the surging and pulsating Africanism within the ANC. The second issue to note is that the debates on the role of intellectuals in politics and development has occupied some of the best minds in Africa leading to the publication of Thandika Mkandawire's book *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*.<sup>217</sup> This book analyses the role of intellectuals in shaping passions, ideologies, national and societal visions. The pan-African nationalist agendas were shaped by intellectuals and up to now the central role of intellectuals in re-constructing the past, interpreting the present and mapping out visions of the future cannot be ignored.<sup>218</sup> Mahmood Mamdani justified the need for an indigenous intellectariat in his article entitled 'There Can Be No African Renaissance Without An Africa-focussed Intelligentsia.'<sup>219</sup> Raymond Suttner has noted

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<sup>212</sup> Xolani Xundu, 'Black Intelligentsia Stirs' in *Sunday Times*, May 7, 2006.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Sandile Memela, 'Black Brainpower' in *Mail & Guardian*, May 5 to 11, 2006.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, 'Introduction' in T. Mkandawire (ed.), *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*, (CODESRIA Books, Dakar, 2005)

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, 'There Can Be No African Renaissance Without an Africa-focused Intelligentsia,' in Malegapuru William Makgoba (ed.), *African Renaissance: The New Struggle*, (Mafube Publishing LTD, Cape Town, 1999), pp.125-134.

that the ANC has a long legacy of being comprised and backed by ‘collective organic intellectuals’ that shaped its direction and made sure its political messages were always congruent with the aspirations of compatriots and the grassroots.<sup>220</sup>

However, the transition to democracy led to the strong body of ‘collective organic intellectuals’ to fall into disarray as some thought the struggle had been achieved, some became government officials and other were taken by the private sector. This has created a vacuum that was noted clearly by Eddy Maloka who noted that: ‘During our struggle the realm of ideas always stood vigilant behind the barrel of the gun.’<sup>221</sup> The vacuum is also attributed to self-censorship, fear of being branded a racist since race card is used to discredit people who raise debates as well as the tyranny of political correctness. For example to call one a settler or a native is considered to be outside the discourse of political correctness and the ethos of the rainbow nation. The Native Club must therefore be seen partly as an attempt to assemble an organic indigenous intellectariat accommodative of the political project of the ANC and Mbeki’s African Renaissance. This argument was reinforced by Mandla Nkomfe who wrote that:

Every epoch has its own organic intellectuals. Their purpose is always to work for the mode of production. The ANC is a collective organic intellectual. It must articulate vision, strategy and tactics and the new civilisation of our times. This conception can move beyond the ANC to embrace most people in society to play the role of organic intellectuals. These should include teachers, academics, preachers and civil society formations.<sup>222</sup>

According to Nkomfe, for a long time the ANC was toying with the idea of an ANC Policy Institute as a launching pad to establish linkages with society and public intellectuals. The Native Club can partly be explained as emanating from this thinking within the ANC. According to Nkomfe, the main challenge is re-direction of academic and intellectual efforts to the African cause.<sup>223</sup> These views easily dovetail with those of the founding Chairperson of the Native Club.

The debate on the Native Club becomes more controversial when one looks at the critics of the Club and how they define the initiative. The critics engage first with the use of the term ‘native’ as part of the Club’s name. Under apartheid, the word native was transformed into an insult, ‘a way to describe and demean black people.’<sup>224</sup> It ranked with such other terms as Negro, nigger and *kaffir* that denoted black people as inferior, irresponsible and uncivilised. At the colonial legal level that was permeated through and through by race, the term native distinguished white European settlers from indigenous inhabitants and also entailed deprivation of rights to natives and conferment of the same

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<sup>220</sup> Raymond Suttner, ‘The Character and Formation of Intellectuals within the ANC-led South African Liberation Movement,’ in T. Makandawire (ed.), *African Intellectuals*, pp. 117-154.

<sup>221</sup> Maloka, ‘The Native Club and the National Democratic Project.’

<sup>222</sup> Mandla Nkomfe, ‘The Role of Intellectuals in our Movement and Society’ in <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo25/role.html>

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Rory Carroll, ‘South Africa’s ‘Native Club’ Stirs Unease,’ in *Mail & Guardian*, 15 June 2006.

to the white settlers.<sup>225</sup> In a previously racially divided society like South Africa still engaged in democratic transition, when one racial group begins to appropriate the term native to itself, the other racial groups are quicker to panic over their citizenship status. The term conjures up the colonial binaries of settlers and natives. This is the context within which the Native Club provoked racial interpretations. It is within this context that criticism of the Native Club took the form of ‘black-on-black’ intellectual battles as well as what the Executive Director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the University of Cape Town, Adekeye Adebajo referred to as ‘interracial verbal violence.’<sup>226</sup> South Africans are very sensitive about race branding because racism is still alive and the memories of institutionalised racism are still alive.

It is no wonder then that when the Native Club was formed with a once pejorative title, South Africans were quickly reminded of the Afrikaner-Broederbond (Afrikaner Brotherhood), a secret society established in 1918 for the purpose of countering the humiliating defeat of the Afrikaners by the British in the South African War of 1899-1902. Through the Broederbond, Afrikaner men hoped to foster Afrikaner culture and traditions in the face of ill-treatment by British South Africans and their perceived reduction to second class citizenship. The Broederbond’s silent network was considered to have been instrumental in the final rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the victory of Afrikaner National Party of South Africa in 1948 that authored apartheid policy.<sup>227</sup> The Native Club is severely criticised for being as exclusivist as the Afrikaner Brotherhood. However, its Chairman, Mafolo has reiterated that the Native Club has no membership. President Thabo Mbeki has told parliament that ‘I hope I would find in its ranks the Afrikaners...who hoped that one day they would have the possibility to proclaim that they were proudly South African and African natives.’<sup>228</sup>

If analysed as a government and a state initiative the formation of the Native Club could be seen legally as a violation of the South African Constitution particularly Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights which states categorically clear that the state ‘may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone’ on any grounds including race, ethnic or social origin, colour, cultural, language or birth. However, there were fewer legal critiques of the Native Club perhaps because the same constitution allows for freedom of association, assembly and expression. However the formation of the Native Club and its association with the ruling ANC raised serious questions at the political level, mainly from the white dominated opposition Democratic Alliance (DA). The DA national spokesman Motlatjo Thetjeng was quick to blame the ANC in connection with the formation of the Native Club:

The problem facing the ANC is that its ‘democratic, non-sexist, non-racial’ political programme is hypocritical in a number of ways, not least of all being that

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<sup>225</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subjects*.

<sup>226</sup> Adekeye Adebajo, ‘Natives Boobed on Strategy Alone’ in *The Sunday Times*, July 23, 2006.

<sup>227</sup> ‘Afrikaner-Broederbond,’ in <http://www.britanica.com/eb/article-9003955/Afrikanner-Broederbond> See also Rhoda Kadalie and Julia Bertelsmann, ‘Is the Native Club Another Broederbond?’ in <http://nativeclub.org/shared/news/article.asp?id=167>

<sup>228</sup> ‘Native Club for Afrikaner Too,’ in <http://nativeclub.org/share/news/print.asp?id=168>

fact that it defines people first and foremost by their race, relegating all other considerations to afterthoughts. As the state fails to deliver, as a few are enriched at the expense of the many and as the state undermines individual rights and freedoms, the veneer is getting rubbed away and South Africans are beginning to see the ANC for what it really is.<sup>229</sup>

The DA submitted the following parliamentary questions to President Mbeki to gain clarity on these issues:

- Whether the Native Club, as a presidential initiative, is a government-funded initiative; if not, what are the relevant details; if so:
  - (a) Which government department provides funding for the Native Club?
  - (b) How much money has been budgeted for the Native Club?
  - © What qualifies a person to gain membership of the Native Club?
- Whether there are any racially-defined limitations on membership of the Native Club, if so, which population groups are excluded from becoming members of the Native Club; if not, why was a name with clear racial connotations chosen for the club?
- Whether the Presidency agrees with a delegate [name furnished] at the inaugural meeting of the Native Club that the South Africa academic community is divided into native and settler intellectuals?
- Why was former ANC MP and current advisor to the President, Mr Titus Mafolo, appointed as Chairperson of the Native Club?<sup>230</sup>

The DA concluded the Native Club was certainly racially divisive, that its association with the Presidency threatened academic freedom, that South Africa did not have space for a class of praise-singing intellectuals and that ‘Only rigorous, fearless and open debate between independent thinkers of all races will enable us to tackle the developmental challenges that our country faces.’<sup>231</sup> Mbeki responded to these queries by stating that as a native South African he would himself consider taking part in the Native Club activities and he urged the Afrikaners who are proud of being native South Africans to rise to the occasion and enlist with the Native Club too.

Debates on the Native Club raises other crucial aspects, including the issue of the ability of African intellectuals to ‘speak truth to power’ lies behind the whole intellectual struggles for academic freedom. Those who associate themselves with power end up as ‘purveyors of apologetics or sycophants.’<sup>232</sup> Since South Africa gained its ‘independence’ from apartheid recently in 1994, many African intellectuals have warned South African intellectuals to avoid coming too close to power and maintain a safe

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<sup>229</sup> Motlatjo Thetjeng, ‘Native Club Racist,’ in *Financial Mail*, 26 May 2006.

<sup>230</sup> ‘DA Puts Questions to Presidency on Native Club,’ Press Statement Issued on 15 May 2006 found at: <http://www.da.org.za/DA/Site/Eng/News/print-article.asp?ID=6462>

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Thandika Mkandawire, ‘Non-Organic Intellectuals and ‘Learning’ in Policy-Making Africa,’ (Paper presented at the EGDI Seminar: What do Aid Agencies and Their Co-operating Partners Learn from their Experiences?’ 24 August 2000).

distance from the ruling political elites. At the moment it is not clear whether the Native Club will be able to ‘speak truth to power.’<sup>233</sup>

Raising the debate to the continental level, the reality is that the so-called ‘native’ intellectuals were all socialised in Western universities, Western intellectual traditions and Western epistemology. Together with the current African leadership, they suffer from what the philosopher Paulin Hountodji termed ‘theoretical extroversion’ characterised by the ‘feverish importation of paradigms, problematics and perspectives’ by the native intellectuals.<sup>234</sup> The key crisis for the African intellectual is that of being ensnared in Western epistemological tradition. The Native Club’s desire to formulate indigenous knowledge cannot succeed without a radical epistemological rebellion. Perhaps the rebellion must start from abandoning colonial languages as a mode of communicating and articulating African issues. The problem faced by the native intellectual and the native politician is well-defined by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza in terms of a group that suffered from double consciousness because they both straddled, often uneasily, coloniality and its modernist claims and nativity and is supposed atavism. This intelligentsia felt comfortable neither with Africa (which bred them) nor with Europe and America (which they were socialised to admire). Their current identity is bifurcated into and marked by the serious crisis of talking and dreaming in both indigenous and imported languages.<sup>235</sup> These issues are intertwined with the politics of identity. It is a big crisis that breeds nativism among some intellectuals. For example, Ngugi wa Thiong’o took a purely nativist line in his attempt to achieve what he referred to as the ‘decolonisation of the mind.’ This involved a ‘writing style rebellion’ ranged against the use of English language and other colonial languages like French, Portuguese and Spanish. Ngugi wa Thiong’o took the lead in the form of translating his novels into Gikuyu and he began to write others in Gikuyu.<sup>236</sup>

The point here is that the Native Club cannot make sense until one delves deeper into the trials, travails and tribulations of African political thought and the twist, turns, undulations, fragmentations, ambiguities, ambivalences and contradictions of the nationalist liberation struggles. The search for identity in Africa is still a major issue. This is a point made poignantly by Chinua Achebe:

African identity is in the making. There isn’t a final identity that is African. But at the same time, there is an identity coming into existence. And it has a certain context and meaning.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> The issue of ‘speaking truth to power’ is associated with the work of Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (Routledge, London, 1978).

<sup>234</sup> Paulin Hountodji, *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trials*, (CODESRIA, Dakar, 1997).

<sup>235</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, ‘Imagining and Inventing the Post-Colonial State in Africa’ in *Contours: a Journal of the African Diaspora* <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/contours/1.1/zeleza.html>.

<sup>236</sup> Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Writers in Politics*, (Heinemann, London, 1981) and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (Heinemann Kenya, Nairobi, 1986).

<sup>237</sup> Quoted in Pal Ahluwalia, ‘Negritude and Identity’: In Search of Identity,’ in *Africa Quarterly*, Volume 39, No. 2, (1999), p. 38.

The search for identity is inextricably intertwined with the search for ideology to guide South Africa in this crucial phase of democratic consolidation. The ANC can no longer manage to continue operating in an omnibus hegemonic style and standing as a 'universal church' where pagans, heathens, monotheists, animists etc co-exist united by the goal of constructing a rainbow nation. This takes us to the current issues within the ANC and the broader South Africa society and how they are replays of earlier debates about the nature of the liberation revolution, nature of democracy, nature of leadership, nature of the nation and nature of transformation.

### **'Bring My Machine Gun': ANC, Zuma and the Power of Populism**

The beleaguered Deputy President of the ANC Jacob Zuma has continued with his popular hit song *Leth' umshini wami* (Bring My Machine Gun) every time he meets his supporters. This is not just a song that Zuma selected randomly from the numerous other liberation war songs. It has a meaning in the context of the stage at which the national democratic revolution led by the ANC is at. It is at a crisis point, revealing once more glaring class positions and ideological cleavages, involving the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the South Africa Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC itself, with all of them operating under a Tripartite Alliance. Looked at from the perspective of Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall pivoted on the concept of articulation and re-articulation, the Jacob Zuma and his supporters represent the long existing but hidden populist re-articulation of the national democratic revolution.<sup>238</sup> Articulation refers to giving expression to something as well as the production of meaning through language. Zuma is communicating something through the metaphor of the machine gun and his constant cry for his machine gun. The popularity of Zuma is based on his ability to connect with the masses who are suffering from a popular sense of betrayal by the elitist black bourgeois who came to power in 1994. The ANC is accused mainly by its partner, the SACP of adopting capitalist tendencies and of serving narrow self-interests of an emerging black capitalist stratum at the expense of the ordinary peasants and workers.<sup>239</sup> As noted by Neville Alexander, the race-class debate in South Africa is refusing to go away and one can add that it then continues to re-ignite memories of revolution and continuation of the struggle.<sup>240</sup> Gramsci wrote that what is needed in transcending existing 'common sense' 'is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life, but of renovating and making 'critical' and already existing activity.'<sup>241</sup> The second decade of democracy unfolded against a bedrock of existence of frustrated multiple constituencies about the fruits of the

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<sup>238</sup> Stuart Hall developed the concept of articulation in his article 'Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,' in *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, (UNESCO, Paris, 1980), pp. 305-345. The concept of articulation is well deployed by Gillian Hart in 'Changing Concepts of Articulation: Political Stakes in South Africa Today,' in *Review of African Political Economy*, (March 2007-forthcoming) where he focuses on multiple and changing concepts of articulation and their political stakes.

<sup>239</sup> South African Communist Party, 'Class, National, and Gender Struggle in South Africa: The Historical Relationship Between the ANC and the SACP,' in *Bua Komanisi*, Vol. 5, (2006), pp. 3-31. See also South African Communist Party, 'Is the ANC Leading a National Democratic Revolution or Managing Capitalism,' in <http://www.sacp.org.za>

<sup>240</sup> Neville Alexander, *An Ordinary Country*, (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2002).

<sup>241</sup> Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 330-331.

national democratic revolution, feeding into a popular sense of betrayal. The popularity of Zuma is located in this fertile ground. What we are witnessing in South Africa is what Gillian Hart terms ‘coming together of a politics of grievance and resentment.’<sup>242</sup>

The bizarre combination of the stress of joblessness, poverty, transport problems, crime, poor service delivery, disease as well as racism, mixed with pressure on the leadership to give real substance to the model of a new state—this is generating a re-thinking of the content of neo-liberal democracy, civic conception of the nation and civic conception of citizenship with all the complex issues of rights, equality, and justice. The time has come for South Africans to reflect seriously on the indigenisation of their revolution and their transformation because the ‘natives’ are now very ‘restless’ and the whites are once more referred to as ‘settlers’ leading to general panic.<sup>243</sup> Jonathan D. Jansen, the Dean of Education at the University of Pretoria has rightly noted that:

Yet we should not fool each other that just below the epidermis of our conciliatory politics lies a growing level of racialised anger, resentment, alienation and fear among many South Africans...Anyone with doubts about this should read the entries on the so-called Friends of Jacob Zuma website to see the animosity raised by Zulu against Xhosa; or tune-in to the Cape Town’s call-in radio stations after a more qualified Coloured man was allegedly overlooked in favour of an African man for a job at Eskom; or listen to Radio Pretoria’s mode of reporting in heightened (and often exaggerated) emotional tones about the almost daily murders of farming families in the rural heartland at the hands of black men.<sup>244</sup>

The puzzling key question is why there is all this restlessness in the midst of a successful and robust economy. Achille Mbembe describes the puzzle in this revealing way:

Many poor whites are growing resentful. White professionals who genuinely want to belong are called ‘settlers.’ At the same time, many young blacks are angry. They feel victimised by their own government. They still cannot get even crumbs from the gluttonous feast going around them—the economy growing at more than 3% a year; the minister of finance triumphantly announcing tax breaks; the governor of the Reserve Bank gloating about the low level of inflation. In the middle of huge commercial emporium South Africa has become, their own experience is still one of joblessness, hunger, pestilence and disease. Who is to be blamed if they conduct their lives with deep suspicion, that after all, liberation might have been but cynical ploy to keep them where they have been?

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<sup>242</sup> Hart, ‘Changing Concepts of Articulation.’

<sup>243</sup> Jonathan D. Jansen, ‘The Natives Are Restless,’ in <http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:0IuyIOGxZ-oJ:https://www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstr...3/7/2007>

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

Such is the context that has created a desperate yearning of salvation by some heroic *maprofetis* eager to get back his machine-gun at a time when other nations compete with their knowledge and technologies.<sup>245</sup>

However, to reduce Jacob Zuma to a mere *maprofeti* inviting South Africans to commit political suicide is to misunderstand the key contours of the South Africa liberation revolution as well as the role of populism as an ideology in South African liberation politics. The problem is not Zuma. The problem is deep rooted in the ANC history and its omnibus modus operandi. What does the ANC stand for now? What form or forms of political thinking is/are dominant within the ANC? Can the centre of the ANC hold or things are falling apart?

A leading Marxist scholar and anti-apartheid activist, Harold Wolpe creatively deployed the concept of articulation of modes of production and predicated that the national democratic revolution itself will be the site of intense struggles, conflicts and contestations.<sup>246</sup> South African and the ANC are at that stage at this moment, symbolised by emerging cracks not only within the ephemeral Tripartite Alliance but within the centre of the ANC itself as a liberation movement. The ANC as noted in the previous sections of this study has always contained within itself multiple articulation of the democratic national revolution since its formation in 1912. After 1994, it tried to contain popular mobilization and worked to articulate interests of different races and classes utilising popular undertones of African nationalism. It tried to embody within itself different histories, different memories, and different meanings of freedom as anchorages of the rainbow nation, hence its image as a broad church. As noted by Gillian Hart, the ANC has tried to deploy a common conception of the national democratic revolution and was quick to use its own definition of the revolution to ‘other’ and discipline others as ‘ultra-leftist’ or even counter-revolutionaries.<sup>247</sup> The ANC also appropriated popular discourses and popular rhetoric to silence such formations as the PAC.<sup>248</sup>

Mbembe partly responded to some of these issues after raising three main challenges:

- How to foster a genuine commitment to the democratic premise that common men and women have something valuable to contribute to the formation of the public opinion?

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<sup>245</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘South Africa’s Second Coming: The Nongqawuse Syndrome,’ in [www.openDemocracy.net](http://www.openDemocracy.net)

<sup>246</sup> Harold Wolpe, ‘The Uneven Transition from Apartheid in South Africa,’ in *Transformation*, Volume 27, (1995), pp. 88-101. See the other influential works of Wolpe on South African political and economic developments, *Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid*, in *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1, (1972), pp. 425-456; Wolpe, ‘The Theory of Internal Colonialism: The South African Case,’ in I. Oxaal et al (eds.), *Beyond the Sociology of Development*, (Kegan Paul, Boston, 1975) and Wolpe, *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*, (James Currey, London, 1988). On the centrality of Harold Wolpe’s writing to the concept of articulations see A. Alexander (ed.), *Articulations: A Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture Collection*, (Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2006).

<sup>247</sup> Hart, ‘Changing Concepts of Articulation.’

<sup>248</sup> Hart, ‘Post-Apartheid Developments in Comparative and Historical Perspective,’ in V. Padayachee (ed.), *The Development Decade? Economic and Social Change in South Africa*, (HSRC Press, Pretoria, 2006), pp. 13-32.

- How to contain populism in the safer channels of electoral politics?
- How to recapture the ideal of non-racialism and attend to all South African citizens, black and white, in a resolute attempt to build, for the first time on this continent, a truly modern and cosmopolitan society?<sup>249</sup>

Neo-liberal democracy is not well suited to address issue number one raised by Mbembe. It is elitist by its very ontology. Worse still when it is adopted in a society that has been riddled by racial inequalities and dispossession of one racial group by the other, it tends to paper over these historical inequalities. The second challenge is of how to contain populism by confining it to electoral politics. Kenneth Anderson defined populism as ‘a sensibility inculcated into class over a long period of time by a form of production.’<sup>250</sup> No mere chimera, the popularity of Zuma among workers, dramatises a deep seated populist ideology that has always existed within the ANC that was committed to the complete decolonisation of South Africa. It had two strands. The first strand is deeply Africanist and its teleology is the transformation of South Africa into a black republic, involving changing all colonial and apartheid names and replacing them with purely African names of pre-colonial as well as those of fallen heroes of the liberation struggle. In this black republic African culture, African history and African values must occupy the centre stage. The black intellectual will determine and shape the public discourse.

The second strand is Afro-Marxist in orientation, and it consists of a two stage revolution. The negotiated settlement of 1994 was the first stage of the revolution where the black and white bourgeoisie accommodate each other, forgive each other, promise the rest of the people reconciliation and unity that papers over material inequalities. It is a necessary stage but not the teleology of the national democratic revolution. This is the stage of black bourgeois liberation, but does not include the liberation of the masses (the workers and peasants). Hence, the need for a second revolution now crystallising around the worker and peasant concerns and ranged against the bourgeoisie. A few revolutionary elements from the bourgeois class who are prepared to commit class suicide in the Fanonian and Cabralian sense, would work together with workers and peasants to achieve true liberation and the revolution comes to an end.

It is in this context of the ANC struggle that one finds Jacob Zuma very loyal to the movement, prophesying that he is prepared to take any task assigned to him by the ANC. Zuma represents no millenarian fatal thought but a strong populist thought existing within the ANC. The ANC has survived through a judicious and strategic deployment of a combination of populism and pragmatism. Gillian Hart sees Zuma representing a populist move not only to appropriate the national democratic revolution as the rightful heir, but also the traditional tendency of the ANC to articulate multiple and often contradictory meanings of liberation.<sup>251</sup> This he does at a number of levels. Firstly, masquerading and asserting himself as a leftist representative. Secondly, as a son of the soil, a man of the people and loyal traditionalist who dons leopard skins on key national occasions. Thirdly, he made reference to his lack of Western education and in the process digging a niche for

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>250</sup> Kenneth Anderson’s review of Christopher Lasch’s book found in *Times Literary Supplement* (22 September 1995), p. 4.

<sup>251</sup> Hart, ‘Changing Conceptions of Articulation.’

himself as connected to the masses as opposed to the highly educated elites. All these are strategic articulations of race, class, culture and nationalism in a very creative and populist ways. The whole Tripartite Alliance is shaking as the embers of black populism gain momentum within the ANC. As a solution, Achille Mbembe suggests that the alliance be disbanded but to an ANC that has a strong tradition of operating as a hegemonic organisation, Mbembe's suggestion is not palatable. But Mbembe states his point this way:

The so-called 'tripartite alliance' (of the ANC, the SACP, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions [COSATU] has outrun its usefulness. It is now becoming a major factor of instability for the country. It would be in South Africa's national interest for it to disband.<sup>252</sup>

The people of South Africa's particularly the poor people's frustrations and anger indicates many directions that are not so clear now. Zuma-ism is making full use of resentment and grievance, with the figure of Zuma himself being a point of reference of a cockpit and vortex of multiplicity of tensions, anger and discontents swelling and enveloping the South African society at large.<sup>253</sup> In this broad set of things, *Leth'umshini wami* becomes a popular call to *Aluta Continua* (the continuation of the struggle). Those cadres within the ANC that have supported and continue to support the populists strand of liberation are of the opinion that the revolution has been hijacked by a bourgeois class that is not fully committed to complete decolonisation of South Africa. Why they support Zuma is that they think those with a populist Africanist thought are being persecuted by those who have abandoned the struggle of the workers and the peasants and who have entered into concubinage with the exploiters of yester-years. The second line in the song is *Uyang'badezela* (you are oppressing me). It is also telling and meaningful to those subscribing to the teleology of the South Africa liberation in popular revolution, breaking both class and racial domination.

A leading African historian, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza has argued that South Africa has much to learn from what has transpired in Africa since achievement of independence. He writes that: 'We have all witnessed the destructive power of populist demagoguery. The Zuma phenomenon smacks of a desperate populist search for a more workable future.'<sup>254</sup> Zeleza also notes that the support Zuma is receiving is a reflection of creeping dissatisfaction by important social constituencies within the post-apartheid dispensation and a struggle not only for the soul of the ANC, but the country as a whole.<sup>255</sup> According to Zeleza:

The Zuma saga is embedded in and reflects at least four interrelated dynamics in South Africa's contemporary political economy and socio-cultural terrain:

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<sup>252</sup> Mbembe, 'South Africa's Second Coming,' p. 4.

<sup>253</sup> I owe this interpretation to Gillian Hart who is deploying the concept of articulation so creatively in his analyses of current political problems in South Africa.

<sup>254</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, 'Clouds Over the Rainbow Nation: South Africa and the Zuma Saga,' in Zeleza's official website Zeleza.com

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

fractures within the ANC alliance, the centrifugal forces of class, ethnicity, and gender. The cracks within the ANC coalition are born out of the overwhelming dominance of the ANC, the difficult transition from the commandist politics of a liberation movement, the accumulative imperatives of the new black bourgeoisie, and the challenge of transformation.<sup>256</sup>

Yes, South Africa is currently at a crucial phase of its political evolution, a phase which is dominated by attempts to consolidate democracy as well as by doubts on democracy, a phase of taking stock of the first decade of democracy as well as frustrated hopes that are calling for a new re-imagination of the mode of governance, a phase where South Africa is expected to settle into normalcy of ordinary politics as well as new questioning and rethinking of suitability and sustainability of the compromise of 1994. At this moment in time race-conscious populism is pulsating strongly within the ANC, giving birth to such formations as the Native Club and feeding broader populist and Africanist thinking.

### **Conclusion**

Two broad views emerge from any analysis of the post-apartheid South Africa. One can either take a broadly celebratory and very optimistic view of this Southern African country. In this positive perspective, one can point to a successful transition from apartheid to democracy, to an admirable democratic constitution guaranteeing expansive freedoms, admirable level of industrial development, endowment with minerals, a rapidly growing and robust economy, emergence of black bourgeoisie that now reach two million (10% of adult black population), peaceful democratic electoral practice, commendable efforts at gender mainstreaming at government level, robust civil society capable of keeping the state accountable, rich multicultural society, and of course one can celebrate the reality of South Africa hosting the World Cup in 2010, the first African country to be so honoured to host this momentous global sporting event. South Africa is playing a leading role in conflict resolution in Africa. South Africa is also blessed in being the home of the doyen and living icon of African liberation struggle and globally respected fighter for democracy and human rights in the person of Nelson Rolihlahla 'Madiba' Mandela. In addition, the current president Thabo Mbeki has proven to be an intellectually astute leader who clearly understands global politics and global developments and has kept the South African economy in a very robust state. But underneath this veneer of a successful society are numerable problems, warranting a second perspective that is not so rosy if not at all conjuring up pessimistic view of the same society. South Africa has the sharpest socio-economic inequalities in the world that led President Mbeki to talk of two economies in one country. South Africa has a very high rate of crime and sexual violence, making the citizens live in perpetual fear for their lives and properties. Rural and urban poverty is high among black citizens. Racial and ethnic tensions loom large, punctuated by rabid xenophobia. There is high levels of impatience among the blacks about the rate of change breeding dangerous restlessness. Rate of HIV/AIDS infection is reaching genocidal levels only second to India, making life very gloom for the poor workers and poor peasants. Mbembe has described these negatives of South Africa society in this way:

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

A growing chorus of discontent is swelling from multitudes of disadvantaged and disaffected poor young black men, many of whom firmly believe in the craft of witches and occult forces. How can it be otherwise? Their life expectancy is fast diminishing. They hardly trust the constitution. They deeply resent the new rights granted to women. Often, they will use rape as a means to discipline them while compensating for their own perceived loss of power. With nothing to lose, it is easy for many to choose predatory behaviour over political life.

From all corners, they are surrounded by death. In fact, today's Aids pandemic is not unlike yesterday's lung-sickness. Just as yesterday's cattle, today's poor blacks are dying in a particularly horrible manner. They cough and gasp for air. Fluid creeps over their lungs and as the disease spreads, they putrefy from inside. Unable to eat, they are wasted and die mere skeletons. All over the country, cemeteries are full. Who can reasonably argue that such a frightening scale of death, such a racialised way of dying, does not have radical implications for politics and culture?

This is the context in which a class-oriented millenarianism and nativism are fuelling mass disillusion, if not outright discontent. The discontent is spearheaded by the trade unions, the ANC Youth League and the South Africa Communist Party (SACP).<sup>257</sup>

I differ with Mbembe on the point that class-oriented millenarianism and nativism are fuelling disillusionment and that SACP, COSATU and ANC Youth League are spearheading discontent. Nativism is a product rather than a cause of disillusionment. SACP, COSATU and ANC Youth League are not spearheading discontent, but are articulating realities of poverty and disease among the poor.

Instead of buying into the thesis of a class-oriented millenarianism in South Africa, this study has deployed a historical approach to demonstrate that the embers of populist Africanist-oriented thought was just a hidden transcript lurking underneath the temporal, triumphant and public transcript of non-racialism. Now that the ANC is cut-across by some ideological fault-line pitting the reformist policies of neo-liberalism and its mantra of creating a black middle-class against the resurgent radical, populist and Africanist bloc wedded to the liberation war-time vision of structural transformation and empowerment of the working class, the populist and nativist hidden transcript is coming to the centre of African politics. The SACP, COSATU and ANC Youth League is swelled by this crop of radicals. President Thabo Mbeki is standing astride and uneasily across these fault-lines demonstrated by his controversial stance on AIDS, his two nations thesis on the economy, his drive for African Renaissance and his support for the Native Club, and some of his purely Africanist 'intellectual' writings and public political lectures.

On the way forward for South Africa, Mbembe thinks that the tripartite alliance must be disbanded since it is causing instability within the ANC and the country at large. Secondly, he thinks that a new political mainstream commitment to a liberal constitution,

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<sup>257</sup> Mbembe, 'South Africa's Second Coming,' p. 2.

social democratic agenda and Afropolitan cultural project should emerge. Finally, he call for electoral reforms in which people directly elects the president of the country and that parliamentarians and other representative bodies should be elected by constituencies.<sup>258</sup> I think the way forward lies beyond these formalities of liberal democracy. Structural changes rather than piecemeal reformist approaches that end up preserving the status quo of white privilege are needed to save the country from tension and conflict. The problem is economic in character. A more equitable redistribution of economic resources regime should be re-negotiated for the sake of the nation. The nativist spirit with its politics of indigeneity/nativity as the basis of citizenship and entitlement to resources is in reality an economic struggle as well as a power struggle. A formula for addressing poverty among the blacks will sweep away 'native restlessness' and secure the smooth development of the country. As noted by Zelela, the ANC has a long distinguished history of rising to new challenges and weathering storms, one only hopes that it will use its experience to mediate the fault-lines and keep the country together without succumbing to unreasonable populist demands as well as avoiding being captured by the technocrats and their neo-liberal agenda.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Mbembe, 'South Africa's Second Coming,' p. 4.

<sup>259</sup> Zelela, 'Clouds Over the Rainbow Nation.'