

# Confronting the categories: Equitable admissions without apartheid race classification<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

South Africa's government requires information on apartheid race classification to implement and monitor racial redress. This has sparked resistance to race classification as a criterion for redress in higher education admissions. I argue that (1) jettisoning apartheid race categories now in favour of either class or 'merit' would set back the few gains made toward redress; (2) against common sense uses of 'race' and against the erasure of 'race' through class reductionism; and (3) for developing and testing new indicators for 'race' and class disadvantage with a view to eventually replacing apartheid race categories. I offer a critical-race-standpoint as an alternative conceptual orientation and method for transformative admissions committed to racial redress that is socially just. I conclude that admissions criteria should encompass the lived realities of inequality and be informed by a conception of humanism as critique. This requires resistance to ways of knowing orchestrated by apartheid's codes.

Humanism is the exertion of one's faculties in language in order to understand, reinterpret, and grapple with the products of language in history, other languages and other histories ... its relevance today ... is not a way of consolidating and affirming what "we" have always known and felt, but rather a means of questioning, upsetting, and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial, and uncritically codified certainties ... Edward Said (2004, 28).

The South African government requires information on apartheid race classification to implement and monitor racial redress. This practice is not without controversy. Resistance to ticking historical race classification boxes on official documentation emerges from various quarters with different motivations. Some opponents are merely against the act of classification, not its continued effects. They suggest that access to higher education and employment be based on 'merit' *alone*. This position is blind to the continued effects of 'race'<sup>2</sup> in the present. It is oblivious of the need for both distributive (rooted in political economy) and recognition justice (rooted in cultural and historical experience) (Fraser 1995; 2003) in SA. It is oblivious of the complex effort required to build an anti-racist society. Others who similarly oppose the act of classification, present distributive justice as the single answer to

all injustices. This position reduces race to class, leaving unaddressed the effects of its intersection with class. Some critical anti-racists are opposed to classification because of its discriminatory, divisive, violent and totalizing discursive and power effects in the past, in the present *and* for the future. They are concerned about these effects on both realms: distribution and recognition. These effects impose a bounded, predictable logic on fluid identifications and power relations. They erase the complexity of everyday life and of agency.

In the context of its growing black middle class, South Africans are often pressured to choose between race and class as indicators of historical disadvantage, or to jettison race in favour of 'merit' *alone*. The University of Cape Town's (UCT) Vice Chancellor's Admissions Review Task Team faces the same pressures (Senate Minutes 19.11.2008). This article asks: Why race *or* class? Why not a critical-race-standpoint?

### **A CRITICAL-RACE-STANDPOINT**

A critical-race-standpoint is premised on a conceptual frame I developed in an earlier publication<sup>3</sup> (Erasmus, forthcoming (a)). The project behind this frame renders fragile the coherence that apartheid ideas of race continue to offer popular, scholarly and official interpretations of South African everyday life. It shatters the lens of race so that what lives behind race can be revealed in order to disrupt underlying structures of privilege rather than tinker with or compensate for their outcomes. Here are some core tenets to this frame: (1) To conceptualise race as a social construct is to allow knowledge and political practice toward its eventual demise. (2) Methodologically, this requires a shift away from using race as an analytical category towards analysing the changing, often hidden, use of race. (3) In practice this entails resistance to both the effects of race *and* to the use of apartheid race categories for administrative purposes. (4) This implies doing the scientific work to devise and test new indicators – always imperfect approximations – for the inequalities that live behind apartheid race categories in order to eventually replace these as administrative categories. (5) A critical-race-standpoint calls for a provisional vision of the future, rather than an already scripted one, leaving open possibilities for further innovations on indicators that today might capture what lives behind apartheid race categories. (6) It adopts Said's conception of humanism as critique (2004, 22) premised on one's 'regard for *all* that is human' (Bilgrami in Said 2004, x) however remote or Other it may be from the familiar and the insular (*ibid.*). It acknowledges the alignment of this conception of humanism with the method and politics of Feminist Standpoint Theory. For Houle this theory 'is not unfairly characterised by the basic idea that a method of knowledge-making that begins with the lives of the least powerful [and of the historically excluded] ... results in better knowing' (2009, 174).

In summary, a critical-race-standpoint distinguishes between the theoretical and analytical conception of race as socially constructed, apartheid administrative categories of race, and the effects of both these instances of race. It holds that we

need the analytical conception in order (1) to name racialised inequalities that continue to live behind the apartheid race categories, which differentiate access to and performance in tertiary education today; (2) to understand what lives behind racialised identifications and challenge their deployment where necessary; and (3) to eventually undermine the idea of race. It grapples with the question: How does one recognize race and its continued effects on people's everyday lives, in an attempt to work against racial inequality, while at the same time working against practices that perpetuate race thinking? The continued administrative use of apartheid race categories is one such practice. A critical-race-standpoint encourages collective association across race in the process of building civic belonging. It does not advocate challenging or policing voluntary racialised identifications which do not amount to perpetuating violence (epistemic and physical) and inequality. It is against the imposition of such identifications.

I argue that this standpoint offers a conceptual orientation and method for thinking about a transformative admissions policy committed to racial redress that is socially just. Within this frame, I recommend five avenues for the Task Team to explore when working toward refining UCT's Undergraduate Admissions Policy and practice. That, as an interim measure, the institution (1) adds a disclaimer about race classification on all its official forms and (2) expands the categories it offers on these forms; (3) UCT partners with the *Academy of Sciences of SA* on research to develop sophisticated tools for assessing disadvantage for the purposes of redress in higher education, and that this partnership continues this work with a view to eventually abolishing race categories on *all* of South Africa's official documentation; (4) that UCT develops a more holistic, involved and transformative conception of recruitment in an effort to erode the complex barriers to accessing a place to study at the institution; and (5) given the discriminatory effects of the racialisation of students from elsewhere on the African continent, the institution should hire an agent to facilitate student study permits and visas to protect admitted students from the horrors of the Department of Home Affairs.

### **'RACE AS COMMON SENSE'**

Only five years ago, a colleague declared that he could look around a room and 'know' who was black, white and 'coloured'. More recently, in June 2008 Mr Jimmy Manyi, Chairperson of the Commission for Employment Equity, similarly declared, at a Colloquium on Anti-Racism, that he could walk into a room and identify who was white and who was black. These are indications that apartheid's 'common sense' use of race as obvious (Posel 2001a; 2001b) remains both in popular perceptions and professional practice (see Erasmus, forthcoming (a)). This use of race, reconfigured by contemporary history, enables young South Africans to name someone a 'coconut' when they experience a disjuncture between 'appearance' and 'social habits' – two criteria that shaped apartheid's discretionary judgments about race – and, to decide

that ‘coconuts’ are not ‘generally accepted as black’ – a third apartheid criterion for determining race.

Given South Africa’s history of common sense uses of race, consider the following: You are an administrator at the undergraduate admissions office of your university. A student has a mother classified ‘Indian’, and a father classified ‘African’ under apartheid. The student does not know which box to tick on the admissions form and seeks your counsel. Do you elect to continue apartheid’s bureaucratisation of common sense uses of racial difference (Posel 2001a, 87)? What are the implications of each classification for admissions to your particular university? What are the implications of each classification for the student concerned?

Posel raises important questions about the continued administrative use of apartheid race categories for the purposes of redress. How does one prevent a person considered ‘white’ from re-inventing him/herself as ‘coloured’ without specified criteria for determining racial type (2001b, 70)? By what criteria, post-1994, do we determine who is ‘African’, ‘Coloured’, ‘white’ and ‘Indian’? Who is authorized to classify by race? Which ways of knowing race will be used to justify classifications for their new use? (ibid., 68). Given my own resistance to race classification, I have difficulty answering these questions. I am, however, concerned about two matters. First, I am concerned about new classifications that erase apartheid’s history of racism. For example, Benatar’s declaration that black academics are ‘minimally disadvantaged’, ‘not disadvantaged at all’, and/or already compensated for past disadvantage (UCT *Monday Paper* 23.04.2007). Second, I am concerned about the consequences of continued race classification. We know that race as an administrative category does not simply count. It brings into being particular possibilities for ways of knowing and identification, and negates others (Nobles 2000). In the light of these concerns, this article asks: Do we need apartheid race categories for the purposes of redress? Can we devise indicators that capture what lives behind these categories to ensure redress while undermining both apartheid’s common sense use of race and its objective to fix these categories permanently?

These days, when we expect anyone to classify themselves by the categories of apartheid’s Population Registration Act of 1950, we confirm apartheid’s objective to have these categories permanently established even as we use them in a racial project for redress. This repetitive process of race classification entrenches the normalization of these categories. At the same time, the choices we are pressured to make are false. The debate on the choice between using race or class as a proxy of disadvantage remains stuck in ‘either-or-ism’. Both apartheid race categories and class (understood as income) are blunt categories, which mask the nuances of everyday life. Jettisoning the categories in favour of either class or ‘merit’ *alone* is not the solution. It would set back the few gains made toward redress.

## **FROM A POLITICS OF RACE TO MAKING RACE A POLITICAL MATTER**

The old South African habit of using race as common sense is often countered by an erasure of race through insisting on class as the primary social division. This binary thought demands a critical-race-standpoint which complicates class and works toward the demise of race, while recognizing the unearned disadvantages and privileges it continues to stand for. This requires moving away from common sense conceptions of race as 'bio-cultural' (Gilroy 2000, 33), as primordial or familial, as an administrative necessity and, as merely socio-cultural (Seekings 2008, 22). Bio-cultural, familial and administratively-necessary conceptions of race engage in a politics of race. Reducing race to socio-cultural perceptions divorces a politics of difference from a politics of inequality.

A politics of race – submission to and use of the category as a lens with which to look at the world and a tool with which to measure it – involves obedience to the category. Divorcing race from politics allows the category silently to live on. Making race a political matter locates it in history, politics and power relations. It helps one see the various intersections of race and class which teach us that people are not incorporated into class positions in undifferentiated ways. It helps one see the unfair moments of unimaginative implementations of equity policies which Jonathan Jansen witnesses and rightly speaks and acts against.<sup>4</sup> It helps one see how blackness (and South African nationality) has the potential to be constituted as privileged in certain circumstances. It helps one see how whiteness reconstitutes itself to sustain its already well secured privileges. It helps one see not only the pathologies of black victimhood, but also the 'pathologies of white privilege: innocence, entitlement, denial, benevolent patronage, oppressive courtesies, oppressive arrogance' (Erasmus, forthcoming (a)), deliberate ignorance and parochialism. Making race a political matter enables thought and practice in defiance of *both* the administrative category and its effects (Erasmus, forthcoming (b)). It challenges common sense notions and uses of race.

Ticking boxes with apartheid race categories submits to the category. When UCT simply asserts: 'This classification is required by the Department of Education for statistical purposes' (UCT Senior Executive Committee, Draft Admissions Policy Proposal, 3.11.2008) it submits to the category. Its requirements that applicants classify themselves, imposes on others its submission to the category. Thus self classification is more, not less, problematic than a disclaimer which clearly contextualizes apartheid categories. In its effects, relying on 'merit' *alone* submits to the category. When we mobilize exclusively around race, we submit to the category. This deference to the category will ensure a racialised future. On the contrary, to develop and test new sophisticated tools for assessing disadvantage for the purposes of redress in higher education is to work toward defying both apartheid race categories and their effects. A more holistic, involved and transformative conception and practice of recruitment would enhance this work.

## THOUGHTS TOWARD NEW INDICATORS

Unmaking race requires a critical-race-standpoint. This standpoint implies a conceptual and methodological shift from using race as a lens with which to look at the world toward analysing the changing, often disguised, use of race as a category in the world. This means moving away from ‘thinking with our eyes’ toward listening to our stories and counter-stories. When UCT talks about the need to emphasise ‘identification of academic potential at the individual level’ (UCT Council, Workshop on Admissions Policies, April 2007) it promises to listen to our stories. When it talks about further work on including in admissions criteria factors other than race namely, socio-economic indicators such as family income and school attended (*ibid.*), it promises to listen to our stories. The university needs to work toward making these promises real.

In thinking about new criteria for admissions we need to question the continued use of apartheid race categories. Substantive transformation is neither about ticking nor dropping these categories. It is about addressing *what lives behind* them. *That* is where race dances to a varied suite of choreographies. We need to work with multiple factors that enable and hinder access, completion of study and success. Many of these remain racialised, some are at the interface of race and class: primary school attended; last school attended; parents’ occupation; parents’ level of education; parents’ income; home language(s); African languages spoken; home address; number of generations in your family who attended university; access to books, libraries, computer facilities and study facilities. Building these and other criteria into admissions policy means that UCT will complicate class, while recognizing the unearned disadvantages *and* privileges that race continues to stand for. It will account for disadvantages in the present that are shaped by apartheid’s historical uses of race as an exclusionary measure. These factors will include between- and within-school inequalities.

However, a criterion such as competency in multiple African languages is likely simply to be reduced to a racial marker unless the university shifts its conception of ‘merit’ to include such competence as ‘socially valuable ability’ (Roithmayr 1997, 1449). In practice, ‘merit’ refers to high matric scores. This score is but one subjective measure that has become institutionalised as the socially acceptable measure of what constitutes ‘socially valuable ability’ for the purposes of academic performance. Evidence presented later in this article (Hall 2006; Bhorat and Oosthuizen 2008) reveals that matric scores are effectively a proxy for wealth and power, historically racialised predominantly as white in SA. Thus, ‘merit’ is neither class- nor colour-blind. This raises questions about other factors that might be considered of value as criteria for transformative admissions. It reminds us that not all aspects of redress and transformation can be settled by data. A large part of it is about a shift in orientation.

There are potential advantages to developing new indicators for disadvantage. Apartheid race categories will no longer be administratively reinscribed. Arguments against racial redress by those who are against classification *only* will have to be

more rigorous. The pressure to stipulate exactly when equity programmes should end can be eliminated as the indicators would be aimed at contesting racialised and class inequality, factors which are likely to shape our society for a very long time. Disadvantaged students will benefit from these indicators irrespective of race. These potentially positive outcomes are likely to enable more productive debates about inequality in our society.

To this end I recommend that UCT partners with the *Academy of Sciences of SA* on research to develop new indicators for assessing disadvantage for the purposes of redress in higher education, with a view to eventually abolishing race categories on *all* of South Africa's official documentation. It is not good enough to wait for the Department of Education (DoE) to provide an alternative system for assessing disadvantage. The academic community can utilize this information when it is available, but, it has to develop its own ideas and criteria for alternative measures independently of the DoE to enable constructively critical engagement with the DoE's measures.

### **A TEMPORARY COMPROMISE**

Given my argument to consider seriously the development of new sophisticated, productive indicators that encompass the core nuances of our stories, can we simply drop apartheid race categories now? No.

This is why: Using data from Statistics SA and UCT's Institutional Planning Department, Martin Hall notes that in mid-2005 overall participation in higher education in South Africa was 16 per cent. Furthermore, participation was racialised: participation for 'whites' was 61 per cent (70% in 1993), for 'Indians' 50 per cent, and for 'Coloured' and 'African' South Africans 12 per cent (for 'Africans' it was estimated at 9% in 1993) (Hall 2006). Significantly, this data implies that a) 'participation rates for white South Africans continue to be among the highest in the world, and [those] ... for African South Africans among the lowest' (ibid.); b) 'South Africa's higher education system remains markedly unequal, with only small changes over the past twelve years' (ibid.) and c) 'the primary factor determining whether or not young adult South Africans will have the opportunity to study at university is their race' (ibid.). This data is confirmed by UCT's figures: 'more than 50% of first-time, local entering undergraduates are "white"' (UCT Council Minutes 10.2006).

Given these figures, Hall concludes that 'the continuing prior advantage of white South Africans as a demographic segment (and, to a lesser extent, Indian South Africans), [implies that] a race-blind policy ... will perpetuate historical patterns of discrimination for as long as unfair disadvantage persists in the prior schooling system [and that it would be] appropriate to take disadvantage (indicated by the proxy of race) into account in admissions, but to ensure that qualifications are awarded solely on merit' (Hall 2006). He further illustrates that 'the playing fields are not level' in the learning environment, and that this un-evenness manifests in terms of race. He cites The Cape Area Panel Study evidence which shows that, 'for

this sample, Coloured, African and White learners of the same innate potential pass through different schooling worlds and present for university admission with very different matriculation scores' (ibid.). Jettisoning race and relying on 'merit' alone will not only exclude many learners with the potential to succeed but, 'would, in its effect, discriminate unfairly in terms of race' (ibid.).

Hall cites racialised differences in participation rates for 2005. Bhorat and Oosthuizen's (2008) work is the first nationally representative study of determinants of Grade 12 pass rates for the post-1994 period. The authors are clear that their results are not definitive and so should be treated with caution. Notwithstanding their caution, among their significant findings are that 'household vulnerability appears to be a weak predictor of performance' (ibid. 2008, 29). This indicates a need to complicate class. Furthermore, confirming Hall's argument, these authors found that in 2000 there remained significant differences in pass rates of former 'African' schools, on the one hand, and former 'white' schools, on the other (ibid., 11).

Does this mean that we are stuck with ticking apartheid race categories? Yes, but *only as a temporary compromise*, if UCT and ASSAf do the urgent work to develop more sophisticated tools to assess disadvantage. These tools should be piloted and compared with the use of apartheid race categories *before* implemented. Furthermore, given both the limits of econometrics to measure the multiple factors mentioned above (ibid., 3), and the poverty of metric imaginaries when it comes to assessing racial discrimination (Erasmus, forthcoming (a)), we would need to think of tools to supplement these 'measurements'.

In light of the above statistics Hall presents nuanced conclusions on reviewing admissions policy. He notes that inequalities that hinder both access to and success in higher education are 'a mix of race and class' (Hall 2006) (*my emphasis*). Significantly, he notes that we do not have (a) 'available reliable household data for all applicants' (ibid.); (b) 'a comprehensive understanding of those factors that constitute unfair disadvantage at the individual level' (ibid.); (c) 'a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of different forms of disadvantage' (ibid.); and (d) a 'viable alternative that we can *yet* use in order to take disadvantage into account in our admissions processes' (ibid.) (*my emphasis*). Given this, he concludes that 'we must work with what we have' which 'requires that we continue to use race as a proxy for disadvantage when considering applications for admission' because, 'considered overall, race is still the most suitable proxy for disadvantage in South Africa' (ibid.). Read closely, Hall clearly conceives of the use of apartheid race categories in this manner *as a temporary measure*, until such time that we have more sophisticated tools that take into account their historical and contemporary 'mix' or articulation with class. I recommend that this provisionality be made public by 1) adding a disclaimer<sup>5</sup> about race classification on all UCT's official forms and 2) expanding the categories indicated on these forms for 2010.

For example: following the 2008/2009 Undergraduate Admissions Policy,

The University of Cape Town is opposed to race classification. We are, however, conscious of the ways in which both “race” and class shape inequality in Higher Education. We are, therefore, committed to racial redress that is socially just. To this end, we are in the process of devising more comprehensive means for assessing disadvantage which transcend apartheid race classifications, while accounting for their effects. In the interim, we rely on these classifications knowing that they are but partial measures for disadvantage. Completion of this item is optional.

*If born during apartheid, how were you classified:*

White, African, Coloured, Indian, Chinese, Other, Decline.

*If born after apartheid, how were your parents/guardians classified:*

Mother: White, African, Coloured, Chinese, Other, Decline.

Father: White, African Coloured, Chinese, Other, Decline.

*If born after apartheid how would you define yourself:*

Black, White, Other, Own Definition, Decline.

Ncayiyana argues that ‘people are more likely to perceive the obligation to declare one’s “race” on a form as an affirmation of the validity of “race” classification, rather than as a means to erase it’ (2007, 1225). This disclaimer contextualises race classification historically and challenges its validity. The wording of the item to be completed also provides a context and, additionally, gives the person the options to define (not classify) themselves, and to decline entirely.

## **WHERE UCT FAILS**

A critical-race-standpoint ‘reveals and disrupts underlying structures of dominance rather than tinkering with their outcomes. It moves away from ... acquisition of knowledge about the Other ... toward critical reflection on the Self in history and the present’ (Erasmus, forthcoming (a)). On these counts the institution fails.

UCT is concerned with refining its *assessment* of potential applicants, and is the national leader on *alternative admissions testing*. It is also concerned with enabling the retention and success of *already admitted students*. All of these measures attempt to address the *outcomes* of racialised inequality in secondary schooling. Crudely understood, they are concerns about ‘who we let in’ and how ‘who gets out’ affects not only UCT’s state funding, but its conception of itself as the ‘top brand institution’ which does not have to compete for the jewels among bright, disadvantaged school leavers. These are concerns primarily about the *consequences for the institution* of letting in the Other. There is little sign<sup>6</sup> of thought regarding the exclusionary *consequences for potential applicants* of the Other’s experience of UCT given not only its history and current culture, but its admissions requirements and its fee structure. This is the side of a critical-race-standpoint that demands *reflection on the institution* in history and the present. UCT might think of and present itself as

accessible to historically disadvantaged school leavers, but in *their* lived reality, it is far from accessible.

During my conversation with Carl Herman, he illustrated this by paging through our Undergraduate Prospectus for 2010 and saying: ‘What must a mother on the Cape Flats think and feel when she sees that R30 000 is the base-line for *one* year of study at UCT?’ (C. Herman, pers. comm.). It becomes more daunting when he translates the differential admissions requirements illustrating that Grade 12 learners in disadvantaged schools have to, in some cases, attain between 70 and 80 per cent in *most* of their subjects in order to ‘get in’. How is this possible, when classes are overcrowded and your class mate was stabbed to death in a gang fight on the playground yesterday? How is this possible when your mother, who is the sole earner, is a domestic worker, and, because you’re the only female and the eldest child, you have to do most of the cooking, cleaning and caring for siblings after school? How is this possible when the school governing body has taken possession of the stationery provided by the DoE for your use; when it has charged all of you school fees when these should have been exempted, and, as students you are spending time trying to hold these adults accountable when you should be studying?

This self-reflexive aspect of a critical-race-standpoint requires that an institution’s redress practice be imbued with *care*; care for the perspective of the Other; care from the outset and along the way, not after the fact, not after the damage is done. Transformative redress is not only about addressing disadvantage. It is also about meaningful engagement with the perspectives of the Other. It is about unsettling perspectives of the Self with a view toward better knowing.

## **FURTHER AVENUES FOR CHANGE**

Cosser argues that among Grade 12 learners, aspiration to proceed to higher education is waning (2009, 7–8). For black learners this desire dropped from 86 per cent in 2001 to 56 per cent in 2005 (*ibid.*). For white learners it dropped less dramatically from 82 per cent in 2001 to 75 per cent in 2005 (*ibid.*). The key reasons for this waning desire are socio-economic status and academic performance at school (*ibid.*). At the same time, 72 per cent of Grade 12 learners want to further their education and 3 out of 5 aspire to proceed to higher education (*ibid.*). Significantly, the ambition to study further is far higher among black and ‘Indian/Asian’ learners (74% and 73% respectively) than among ‘whites and coloureds’ (both 64%) (*ibid.*). This suggests that there are black learners who have a strong desire to learn, but who are held back by lack of funds and poor matric scores. Does UCT think it needs those among these students who have the potential to succeed at university? Does UCT prioritise the provision of full funding for the bright students among this cohort? If yes, what is its record on delivery of financial support in these cases? Where are decisions made about funding in such cases? Should this decision making be located at the senior executive level to prevent the possibility of undermining the broader objectives at faculty or departmental levels? Does UCT think that these students are worth

competing for in the marketplace? These are some questions its task team might want to address.

UCT is strong on measuring ‘who it lets in’. It is working on measuring ‘who stays and how they get out’. It is, however, weak on enabling potential applicants to meet its *entrance* measures and on critical evaluation of what these measures signal as ‘socially valuable ability’. It is more focused on the disadvantaged student showing their potential in terms of these measures *at the end of the process* – graduation – than it is on enabling this potential *at the start*. This can be done through a more holistic, imaginative and transformative conception and practice of recruitment – the step *before* applications, admissions and throughput. A holistic recruitment strategy implies cultivating an institutional culture that conceives of recruitment as ‘everybody’s responsibility’ (C. Herman, pers. comm.). Such a strategy would expand and support the current practice sustained for the most part by only four recruitment officers: one annual 40 minute school visit, parents’ evenings, career exhibitions, Open Day, and requests from potential applicants for individual interviews.

Here UCT can learn from programmes at two institutions. The *Targetting Talent Programme* at Wits University involves its academics in the tuition of disadvantaged students from Grade 10 through to Grade 12, culminating in a residential programme at the university itself. UCT could expand SHAWCO’s ‘Saturday Class’ by developing such a programme and considering staff involvement as part of social responsiveness for the purposes of Rates for the Job and/or promotion. Professor Jonathan Jansen shared with me his knowledge of *Winter Programs* at ‘world class’ universities abroad such as Berkeley, California (J. Jansen, pers. comm.). In sum, potential applicants from excluded communities are brought to the campus during winter vacations. They attend lectures designed for the program. Some of these lectures focus specifically on the completion of applications for admission and for financial assistance. Others focus specifically on preparation for the up to 90 minute interview that is part of the process of admission at most of these universities (J. Jansen, pers. comm.). If UCT claims ‘world class’ status, it might need to start doing as those with such status do, and modifying their practice to suit the needs of our society: making the submission of written work in addition to an in-depth interview part of its transformative admission requirements. Professor Jansen suggests working with a ‘buddy system’ on such programs by partnering each student with a successful and sensitive student from the same or similar community who is already on campus (ibid.). All of these ideas have time, staffing and cost implications. But how can an institution such as UCT refuse to invest in building a future which undermines the legacy of apartheid’s racial project?

None of the work outlined here is easy. All of it is urgent. And, I have not even begun to address the racialised abuse of international students from elsewhere on the African continent. On this matter, I recommend that the institution hire an agent to facilitate student study permits and visas to protect these students from the horrors of the Department of Home Affairs, until such time that the government and this department change their practice.

## TOWARD CLOSURE

I have written against common sense uses of race and against the erasure of race through class reductionism. I offer a critical-race-standpoint as a possible alternative. My argument against continued administrative use of apartheid race categories is not an attempt to diminish the historical significance of anti-apartheid struggles that drew on racial identifications to achieve their goals. On the contrary, I recognise that these struggles brought us to the place we are now.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, it is important to think through the possible limitations of this strategy today, and particularly the possible consequences of the continued bureaucratisation of apartheid race categories. My aim is not to dismiss as unworthy of any serious engagement or as valid critique the knowledge that emerges from subjugated racialised experiences. Nor do I wish to drain admissions criteria and other redress strategies of the life of race. Instead, my aim is to urge our thinking toward encompassing these lived realities, these testimonies and this knowledge without surrendering to apartheid's codes; without fulfilling apartheid's certainty that its codes would be fixed. I do not advocate an unsituated transcendence of race. Nor do I subscribe to thought of its permanence. Instead, I want to imagine, with others, a future in which lived experience, political identifications and ways of knowing are less orchestrated by apartheid race categories.

## NOTES

- 1 This article is a revised version of a paper prepared for the University of Cape Town's Vice Chancellor's Admissions Review Task Team. Sincere thanks to the Institutional Planning Department at UCT for giving me the opportunity to participate in this significant process, and for providing me with the minutes of prior discussions in UCT's Senate. I am grateful to Professor Jonathan Jansen, to Carl Herman of UCT's Admissions Office, and to Professor Daniel Ncayiyana for long, powerful conversations that informed this article. This writing was enabled by funding for teaching release from the NRF Thuthuka Programme and the University Research Committee. My hope is that this article facilitates the work of the Task Team.
- 2 To remind us of its offensive and derogatory nature, I put the word *race* in quotation marks at first use. Hereafter I eliminate the quotes to facilitate reading and rely, instead, on the reader's continued vigilance. Writing '*race*' is a political choice. It signifies awareness of the tension between re-inscribing the idea, and acknowledging the inequalities it stands for in one's efforts to eradicate both these inequalities and the idea itself.
- 3 This frame draws on feminist standpoint theory, critical race theory, critical white studies and Fanon's 'stretched Marxism'. In this forthcoming work I refer to this conceptual frame as 'critical-race-literacy'. In conversation with Ari Sitas and Shawn Townes my thinking first evolved from 'critical-race-literacy' to 'critical-race-rhetoric'. Given the histories and limitations of both concepts – 'literacy' and 'rhetoric' – I have, for the moment settled on 'critical-race-standpoint'. This term more accurately reflects both the politics and method of the conceptual frame. This evolution away from the

concept ‘literacy’ is shaped by Sanders’s (2005) rendition of its history. He notes how this history imbued the idea of literacy with competitive power (2005, 157–158) and racialised domination (ibid., 161–162). He argues that literacy belongs to the same family of ordering and measuring terms as ‘eugenics, race, intelligence, [and] agnosticism’ (ibid., 158). The evolution away from the concept ‘rhetoric’ is shaped by the definition offered in *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Macey 2001): ‘the art of persuasive communication and eloquence’. This definition makes no reference to an explicit analytical method.

- 4 Jonathan Jansen tells this story, paraphrased here: ‘All her life, a student considered ‘white’ has dreamt of being a veterinary scientist. She has worked hard to achieve her 80 per cent matric score. She lacks the funds to enter the only school for veterinary science in SA. She is excluded from the school because of a racial quota system for admissions’. Is this unfair discrimination? Yes. Quotas are crude bureaucratic measures that silence people’s stories. UCT’s equity policies are not based on quotas.
- 5 The idea of a disclaimer arose in conversation with Professor Daniel Ncaiyana.
- 6 I refer here to the few documents to which I have had access and which record recent discussions on admissions.
- 7 I am indebted to Pumla Gqola for her constructive criticism of an earlier draft of this work; criticism that pressed me to clarify and refine my argument.

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## INTERVIEWS

- 1 Carl Herman, Director, Admissions Office. University of Cape Town.
- 2 Jonathan Jansen, Vice Chancellor, University of the Free State.