

*The 'Nasyon': A Critical Exploration of the  
'Nasyon's' Persisting Dissociation from Political  
Power in Mauritius*

By

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DWXMOS001

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Centre for African Studies  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Date of Submission: 20 November 2022

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20 November 2022

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## ABSTRACT

The '*Nasyon*', persons of (imagined, claimed and proclaimed unmixed) black African ancestry in Mauritius, have always stood at the lowest rungs of the Mauritian socio-political hierarchy, persistently dissociated from political power therein. In this thesis, I set out to uncover and explore the reasons for this through the prism of historical ethnography and from the following question: What are the modes of action ( $x$ ) that give rise to the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius ( $y$ )? From and through this prism, I find the '*Nasyon*' to have been fixed as permanently incomplete humans, if human at all, and their incompleteness to have been institutionalised toward keeping them at the margins of the country as non-citizens thereof. Naturally, they could not access or should not be allowed access to political power. To get to political power, they would need to be complete or be made so, as per the claims and requests of political observers and activists on the matter of the marginalisation of persons of black African ancestry. This is the quest for completeness. But this quest is problematic because completeness is unreal, and incompleteness is the normal order of things in the socio-political world. I take from the works of Amos Tutuola and Francis Nyamnjoh to explain this, putting incompleteness forward as a more wholesome lens from and through which to read the case of the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius: the '*Nasyon*' are incomplete humans, but this is not a problem to be solved.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis would not have been possible without Professor Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Professor Lungisile Ntsebeza, who supported me emotionally and intellectually, and saw to my being financially comfortable as I pursued this PhD. I am grateful to the National Research Foundation (Land Reform and Democracy) for investing in this pursuit.

Friends and family were always there for me, for everything that I needed to complete this PhD. This thesis is their hard labour.

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# CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

This is a thesis on the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. The ‘*Nasyon*’ are a Mauritian socio-political group or category composed of persons of (imagined, claimed and proclaimed unmixed<sup>1</sup>) black African ancestry. They had been forcibly taken and then traded from the shores of various African countries, growing into various generations enslaved since the sixteenth century in service of white European colonisers in Mauritius. They were formally freed at the local abolition of slavery in 1835, to be replaced by indentured labour from India. Mauritius remained a colony until its political independence in 1968, which came with the promise that it would be turned into a democratic rainbow nation accommodating of all in total equality. This promise, however, was not realised – not for the ‘*Nasyon*’ who would remain at the lowest rungs of the Mauritian socio-political hierarchy, persistently dissociated from political power in Mauritius. I set out to uncover and explore the reasons for this through the prism of historical ethnography and from the following question: What are the modes of action (x) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (y)? From and through this prism, I find various modes of action (x) at play that, together, lead to the ‘*Nasyon*’ being fixed as permanently incomplete humans, if human at all, and their incompleteness being institutionalised toward keeping them at the margins of the country as non-citizens thereof. Naturally, they could not access or should not be allowed access to political power. To get to political power, they would need to be complete or be made so, as per the claims and requests of political observers and activists on the matter of the marginalisation of persons of black African ancestry. This is the quest for completeness. But this quest is problematic because completeness is unreal, impossible to achieve. It is the normal order of things in our universe. And the examples brought up later in this thesis, of hashtag (#) movements such as the #RhodesMustFall<sup>2</sup> movement started by black students in 2015 at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the #BlackLivesMatter<sup>3</sup> movement peaking in

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<sup>1</sup> None of us can claim pure DNA or singular lineage at this point in the history of humankind, and this thesis runs carefully along these lines, avoiding going along statements too bold on the matter of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ biological purity, retaining this instead as imagined, claimed and proclaimed – but not certain. This thesis does, however, take the ‘*Nasyon*’ to be the blackest of Afro-Mauritians, the closest to black African DNA in Mauritius or the least mixed descendants of African slaves in the country.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/debates/Transform-UCT/>; <https://items.ssrc.org/where-heritage-meets-violence/rhodesmustfall-the-university-of-cape-town-and-the-deep-inscription-of-colonialism/>.

<sup>3</sup> #BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in the USA: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

2020<sup>4</sup> across the USA following high-profile killings of African American men by police confirm this, proving dangerous, futile and counterintuitive to bringing about completeness. I take from the works of Amos Tutuola and Francis Nyamnjoh to explain this, putting incompleteness forward as a more wholesome lens from and through which to read the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius: the ‘*Nasyon*’ are incomplete humans, but this is not a problem to be solved.

### **Thesis Background**

Mauritius is an island-nation of about 1.3 million inhabitants that lies 2400 kilometres off the eastern coast of the African continent in the Indian Ocean<sup>5</sup>. It is suggested to have been spotted by Malay and Phoenician explorers some two-thousand years ago (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 1) and was mapped by Arabs between five hundred and one thousand years later (le Comte 2007: 14). The Portuguese sojourned there in the fifteenth century on their way down and up the African coastline and then east into the Indian ocean to ensure their monopoly of the spice trade between Asia and Europe (Kelly 1947: 469; Kaplan 1967: 29; Toussaint 1971: 19). These stories have been quickly brushed over in Mauritian History to get to those that actualised the socio-political history of Mauritius into what it is today, with its socio-political hierarchy built along a scale of humanness ranging from complete (or completed, perfect, real, solid) humanness to incomplete humanness, at the incomplete end of which are the ‘*Nasyon*’. This is the background against which the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius is built, briefly explored in this chapter.

The socio-political history of Mauritius began with Dutch explorers in 1598. Due to the heavy sea-traffic between the Netherlands and the Dutch East India Company, and to secure trade monopolies in the Indian Ocean, the Dutch settled in the country in 1638 along with the black Africans that they had forcibly taken from Madagascar and other parts of Africa, making the island the port of call from which they wandered the Indian Ocean (Moree 1998). 60 of the first 105 slaves taken to the island escaped during their first week there, of whom an “upward of 30” men, women and children (Barnwell 1948: 32) were able to remain in hiding in the mountains, forests and ravines, then guilty of ‘*maronnage*’, condemned as maroons or fugitive slaves of the Dutch East India Company. Maroonage persisted throughout the Dutch era in

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<sup>4</sup> #BlackLivesMatter “shook the world” in 2020: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/12/31/2020-the-year-black-lives-matter-shook-the-world>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/mauritius.htm>.

Mauritius (MTJC 2011a: 60), leading to slave resistance peaking on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1695 (Allen 2002: 131-152) when a few maroons set fire to one of the Dutch forts on the island, Fort Frederik Hendrik<sup>6</sup>. The Mauritius Truth and Justice Commission<sup>7</sup> (2011a: 60) spoke about this as so: “[...] The enslaved people developed resistance to exploitation and oppression, and they marooned and moved into the forests, ready to attack the Dutch settlements, whenever necessary”. One too many maroon attacks and slave conspiracies along with cyclones that continuously destroyed local plantations leading to food shortages, and their own diminished drive to make of Mauritius their port of call (Grove 1994: 330; Kaplan 1967: 28) convinced the Dutch to abandon Mauritius in 1710, taking with them their labour – those slaves that had not run away (Fokeer 1922: 197). The maroons remained on the island, building “a culture of their own before the following colonisation” (Maurer 2015: 51).

The French took control of Mauritius in 1715 and settled there in 1721, naming it ‘*Ile de France*’ (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 11-12). Their aim was to develop the island’s economy where the Dutch had failed. Heavy, intensive labour was necessary, and so they went about Africa first, for close by, enslaving black Africans to work Mauritian soil: “Since the early days of French settlement slaves had been constantly brought to the island to provide its main labour force. Initially most came from Madagascar. From the late 1720s an increasing number were brought from West Africa, mainly from the East India Company’s base at Goree off Senegal” (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984). The African slave trade was “in full operation, unchecked by any law”<sup>8</sup> under French rule in Mauritius, save for the ‘*Code Noir*’. This was the set of laws that fixed the conditions of slavery, and its sole purpose was to see to the organisation of Mauritian society “openly based on racist considerations, ensuring the domination of the white man over the black man, through the rule of law”<sup>9</sup>. This implied the hyper elevation of white men and women as complete humans along the socio-political hierarchy at that time, and the treatment of black African slaves as ‘*bien-meubles*’, i.e., humans to own, humans to treat as property or merchandise (MTJC 2011a: 87) – incomplete humans then, if human at all.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://histoiresmauriciennes.com/histoires-marronnage-lincendie-fort-frederik-hendrik/>.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter abbreviated to MTJC.

<sup>8</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1836/feb/15/state-of-the-mauritius>. See point 402 in online Hansard document.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.portail-esclavage-reunion.fr/en/documentaires/slavery/the-code-noir/the-code-noir-legal-document-regulating-relations-between-masters-and-slaves/>.

Not too long into their settling in Mauritius, the French also sought a few craftsmen from Pondicherry, India, who were to develop the Port Louis harbour and build shipyards there that expanded the island's conquest and defence capacity in the Indian Ocean (Hazareesingh 1966: 242; Kelly 1947: 469). Their work on the island differed greatly from that of black African slaves. Their general treatment under French rule also differed from the latter's – it was better, more humane, more dignified and approving in all appearances. For example, they were allowed to retain genealogical ties with India while black African slaves had been denied this. Serge Ng Tat Chung (2003: 122-123) brought up this difference in treatment through Lésiméon (main character in his *Terre d'Orages*), an African slave under French rule in Mauritius, as so:

*Ils regardaient, dans le plus grand silence, tous ces objets qu'ils voyaient pour la première fois exposés ainsi dans un ensemble qui produisait, à leurs yeux, un effet de mystère. En effet, c'était la première fois qu'ils voyaient autant d'objets, statuettes, gravures, livres, bâtons de santals ranges de manière à imposer le respect, en faisant tous face à ceux qui entraient, comme pour leur parler, pour les écouter, pour dialoguer. Ils sentaient qu'ils étaient dans un lieu sacré, un lieu des dieux, comme dans l'église. Lesiméon, dans le silence de son coeur, se mettait, tout à coup, à se demander pourquoi les noirs comme lui et les siens, eux, n'ont pas pu venir avec leurs divinités. Pourquoi cette possibilité leur a-t-elle été niée?*<sup>10</sup>

It must be noted that an early form of a Mauritian socio-political hierarchy was evident then, structured “in a steep pyramid of power and wealth” (EISA 2009). At the top of this hierarchy were the white French elite (Houbert 1981: 78). Then were Indian craftsmen to whom would be added a small merchant community of free Indians (Muslims and Hindus) who established themselves on the island from 1758 (Houbert 1981: 78; EISA 2009). And at the lowest rungs of this hierarchy were black African slaves. Vijaya Teelock and Abdul Sheriff (2016: 27) confirmed the Indian and black African slave socio-political categories in their analysis on the

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<sup>10</sup> Translation [mine]: They watched, in the greatest silence, all these objects that they saw for the first time exposed as a whole, which produced, in their eyes, an effect of mystery. Indeed, it was the first time that they had seen so many objects, statuettes, engravings, books, sandalwood sticks arranged in such a way as to command respect, all facing those who entered, as if to talk to them, to listen to them, to dialogue. They felt they were in a sacred place, a place of the gods, like in the church. Lésiméon, in the silence of his heart, suddenly began to wonder why blacks like him and his family could not come with their divinities. Why were they denied this possibility?

matter: “In the eighteenth century, the majority of the slaves came from Guinea and the West African coast; Mozambique which included the whole of the East African coast, Ethiopia, Egypt, from the Cape of Good Hope to Port of Suez; Madagascar and India from the Malabar Coast and east of Cape Cormorin”. With time, still under French rule, Mauritian socio-political categories grew with one more added to these, i.e., the ‘*Créoles*’ (in French) or ‘*Kreol*’ (in Mauritian Creole) – black African “slaves born locally” and their descendants (Teelock & Sheriff 2016: 27) who eventually saw their very socio-political category begin to hierarchise (MTJC 2011a: 107): “The Company had also, as shown earlier, began to differentiate between different groups of slaves and their potential to be ‘good’ slaves: ‘*Les tirer de Madagascar plutôt que de Guinée car ceux de Madagascar sont meilleurs ouvriers, plus intelligents. Les noirs de Guinée ont tendance au marronnage et à la perfidie*’”<sup>11</sup>.

The British captured the island from the French in 1810, playing a pivotal role in restructuring the realms of power, wealth and labour there. They allowed the French to retain economic power in Mauritius under “quite generous terms of capitulation to the French colonists, accepting to respect the country’s laws and customs, its use of the French language and practice of the Catholic religion” (Selvon 2012: 243). John Addison and Kisoonsing Hazareesingh (1984: 45) wrote on the matter that, “[s]o long as political and, therefore, military control remained in their hands, they were, on the whole, content to allow the French to remain in a dominant position. The French continued to dominate the economic life of the island. Most of the cultivated land was owned by French settlers and worked by slave labour”. Daniel North-Coombes (1997: 40) added to this saying that political power in and over local affairs was also vested in the hands of the ‘*grands blancs*’ (the French sugar planting elite) until the late 1940s and early 1950s, who would until then actively prevent any sort of change through political action in the country to remain the exclusive decision-makers and therefore sole beneficiaries of the local sugar industry. Ryan Saylor (2012: 467) expanded on this restructuring as imbued with racism:

Mauritius’s state building success came on the backs of relentlessly exploited slaves and indentured labourers. Sugar planters compelled the government to ignore mistreatment on sugar estates, implement unreasonable fines and annual

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<sup>11</sup> Translation [mine]: To draw them from Madagascar rather than Guinea because those of Madagascar are better workers, more intelligent. Black people in Guinea tend toward maroonage and treachery.

passport fees in the name of preventing ‘vagrancy’, and harass those workers who tried to search for a better life in urban professions. Planters’ actions were expressly designed to subjugate and repress the politically powerless in order to maximise their economic power. Moreover, the fact that class divides coincided with racial difference meant that economic and political contention between elites and labourers on Mauritius became imbued with what was, at times, virulent racism.

Determined to aid the Franco-Mauritian elite, the British had turned to importing hundreds of thousands of indentured labourers from India who gradually replaced the thirty thousand slaves that were to be freed at the abolition of slavery in 1835 in Mauritius (Allen 1999: 15; Moerkamp 1998: 17). “A significant number of Indian traders followed to supply the needs of the rapidly increasing Indian population”, which also pushed for an influx of Chinese migrants to the country (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 65, 67).

By the end of the nineteenth century, various socio-political categories had been formed and fixed that would become the multicultural Mauritian population of today – as defined by Schedule 1, Paragraph 3(4) of the Mauritian Constitution<sup>12</sup>: minority groups of white oligarchs typically identified as Franco-Mauritians (although a diverse socio-political category since composed of persons of Anglophone or other white European origin too) who together with Afro-Mauritians and everyone who would not appear to belong to identifiable Mauritian socio-political categories formed the “General Population”; Sino-Mauritians; a Muslim community; and the majority, (Hindi-speaking) Indo-Mauritians (Mathur 1997; Reddi 2018). This is when the stage was set for the restructuring of the Mauritian socio-political hierarchy, with indentured labourers outnumbering every other socio-political category in the country to become both its strongest economic force and its largest group of voters now encouraged by India’s liberation struggles against the British (Moerkamp 1998: 21): “As the century progressed, and Indian immigrants began to develop their own sub-elite on the plantations from amongst labourers who had risen through the ranks to become overseers and job-contractors, employers became locked into a power struggle with their own labour managers in an effort to retain control over the workforce” (Carter 1995: 101).

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<sup>12</sup> <https://mauritiusassembly.govmu.org/Documents/Legislations/constitution.pdf>.

Thomas Hyllard Eriksen (1992: 6) added that this economic force was to turn political too: “In any political system with functioning parliamentary institutions, there is strength in numbers. In Mauritius, people of Indian descent have made up more than half the population since the 1870s; today, they comprise approximately 65 per cent of the total population of roughly one million. In other words, by sheer force of numbers, it was likely that Indo-Mauritians should play a major part in national politics after the introduction of universal suffrage in 1948”. Indeed, the existing Mauritius Labour Party (MLP) had then drawn in the Indo-Mauritian elite, who had aligned themselves and the cause of the Indo-Mauritian sugar industry labourers with the party’s founding principles: the protection of labourers’ rights and freedoms. Among this elite was Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (known as the father of the Mauritian nation<sup>13</sup>), who headed the MLP from 1959 and whose politics rigidly revolved around the need “to end the social cruelties rampant in our society” starting with universal suffrage and the forging of “interethnic class solidarity” between the Indo-Mauritian and Afro-Mauritian labour forces, now mobilised by the MLP on a class struggle basis (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 90, 92; Miles 1999: 215). The MLP and Ramgoolam were to drive Mauritius toward its full independence, and the people of Mauritius toward their political and economic freedom from colonial powers.

This did not come without opposition by the Ralliement Mauricien later reformed to the Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate (PMSD), whose interests had been vested in the upkeep of the white oligarchy in the country and its members and supporters: “The PMSD did not want independence: the other parties did [...]. The PMSD [...] was afraid of independence and of the political dominance of Indo-Mauritians which they believed would follow” (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 94). Jeffrey Frankel (2012: 26) confirmed this: “It was opposed by the Franco-Mauriciens, who accurately described themselves as ‘oligarchs’, and who feared ‘Hindu hegemony’. This phrase referred to what the majority ethnic group were expected to do if and when the country became independent, which the Franco Mauriciens opposed”. The MLP and Seewoosagur Ramgoolam succeeded despite opposition, officialising the move of the country from a British colony to a constitutional parliamentary democracy<sup>14</sup> on the 12<sup>th</sup> of

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<https://ssrbg.govmu.org/Pages/About%20Us/About%20Sir%20Seewoosagur%20Ramgoolam.aspx#:~:text=Sir%20Seewoosagur%20Ramgoolam%20served%20as,%22Father%20of%20the%20Nation%22.>

<sup>14</sup>

<https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/160134.pdf>;  
<https://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-mauritius/government/>;  
<https://countrystudies.us/mauritius/23.htm>.

March 1968 – Independence Day. Then, Ramgoolam promised a wholly new Mauritius, “a strong and happy Mauritius” (Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 97). He said: “The daring and valour of our seamen, the creative imagination of the early colonisers, who included men and women from all continents, the hardy patience of those legions of workers whose efforts have enabled us to reach our present position, the respect which we have always shown for democratic principles, our love for justice and liberty, these will be the guiding lights of our national policy”.

For about half a century after Independence, Mauritius grew in reputation as a “model postcolonial state” (Lionnet 1993: 106) to be envied by the rest of the world<sup>15</sup>. It stood specifically as the multicultural rainbow nation that no other country in Africa was able to achieve, as if the Singapore of the continent, the wunderkind of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela’s South Africa, complete in its transition from colonialism to democracy. Now, democracy comes from the Greek ‘*demokratia*’ (δημοκρατία) and is composed of ‘*demos*’ (people) and ‘*kratos*’ (to govern or rule) (Keane 2004: 3). It is an infamously unclear and ambiguous term used as an elastic synonym for government of the majority or good government by vote. It is typically stretched to stand for everything and anything that can prevent human rights abuses, popular conflict and the suffering of the citizenry. This is all to say that democracy “is a dead horse which may be offered annually to students for remorseless flogging in examinations but is otherwise not worth serious academic consideration” (Mulgan 1968: 3). But even if without much of a practical exactitude to it, democracy seems dedicated to one thing (in theory, at least): political equality. Political equality implies that all citizens of a polity are equal and must be treated as equals, especially in the manner of their right or access to, and exercise of, political power. It is equality shadowing citizenship. This grounds democracy in the ideal of political pluralism and relational equality among citizens (Viehoff 2014), and the violation thereof automatically undermines democracy. With a recent score of 84 out of 100 in general Inclusion and Equality<sup>16</sup>, a score of 79.2 out of 100 in Equal Political Power<sup>17</sup>, and a score of 77.6 out of 100 in Equal Political Representation<sup>18</sup> secured on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), the promise is there that Mauritius rejoices in

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<sup>15</sup> De Chazal, M. (1961) quoted by the Observatoire Réunionnais des Arts, des Civilisations et des Littératures dans leur Environnement; See also Mauritius Government Press Release of 4 November 2019: *Mauritius, a Model of Socio-Economic Achievement for the Whole World, says Governor of Uttar Pradesh, India.*

<sup>16</sup> <https://iiag.online/data.html?meas=INCLEQ&loc=MU&view=overview>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://iiag.online/data.html?meas=EqPolPow&loc=MU&view=overview>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://iiag.online/data.html?meas=EqPolRep&loc=MU&view=overview>.

enough political equality to stand as a democracy: “[...] the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Mauritius among the 20 most democratic countries in the world”<sup>19</sup>. It has also stood over the last decades as the African example to follow: “Over the past few decades, Mauritius has built a glowing international reputation. It is regarded as one of the best managed democracies in Africa, as a place to do business, and as a country where the rule of law is upheld”<sup>20</sup>.

But as successful as Mauritius is said to have been in its transition from a colony to a democracy, it also appears to have some cracks, falling from grace<sup>21</sup>, likely to have slid into authoritarianism<sup>22</sup>, maybe even drifting toward dictatorship<sup>23</sup>. Philip Allen stated (1966: 18) as far back as 1966, two years before Mauritian Independence, that there might never have been a Mauritian rainbow nation at all: “Mauritius is indeed ‘multiracial’ but it has never [...] developed a strong national sense that cuts across communal lines. Ill feeling between the communities has in fact intensified with the approach of national independence. The world of the Hindu canefield proletariat stands in opposition not only to the occidental world of the Franco-Mauritian and Creole, but also to the ‘third world’ of discrete oriental minorities – the Moslems, Chinese, and Tamils. Like the occidentals, most members of this third world view the coming of independence with some apprehension, for to them it means a withdrawal of British protection and an endorsement of Hindu sovereignty”. Indeed, while the pre-independence era in the country was fully governed by Europeans, the era of independence in Mauritius would be the playground of Indo-Mauritians (typically Hindus).

Loga Virahsawmy, Mauritian activist, added to the latter part of Mauritian socio-political history saying: “Politicians here are fond of saying: ‘Enn sel lepep enn sel nation’ and ‘nation larkansiel’, but Mauritius is a country where the colours of the rainbow don’t mix”<sup>24</sup>. Virahsawmy’s argument went further: “Afro-Creoles have become the wretched of Mauritius, living in ghettos with the barest minimum of infrastructure and inferior schools. Drugs, alcohol,

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/06/25/can-mauritians-save-democracy-trouble/>. See also Ramtohul, R. (20 January 2020) *Mauritius is Africa’s Leading Democracy, But it has Fewer Women in Politics*. African Liberty; Frankel, J. (2012) Mauritius: African Success Story. HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP10-036, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

<sup>20</sup> <https://africanarguments.org/2021/05/mauritius-a-picture-perfect-democracys-fall-from-grace/>.

<sup>21</sup> Kasenally, R. (12 May 2021) *Mauritius: A Picture Perfect Democracy’s Fall from Grace*. See more at <https://africanarguments.org/2021/05/mauritius-a-picture-perfect-democracys-fall-from-grace/>.

<sup>22</sup> Saramandi, A. (12 May 2021) “This New Social Media Law in Mauritius could Land Users in Prison for ‘Annoyance’”. See more at <https://restofworld.org/2021/mauritius-social-media-law/>.

<sup>23</sup> Signal Risk Team (2 June 2021) *Signal Risk on Mauritius – Dictatorial Drift?*

<sup>24</sup> ‘Enn sel lepep, enn sel nasion’ means one people, one nation, and ‘nasion larkansiel’ means rainbow nation. See more at <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC144708>.

prostitution, child delinquency, street children and failure at school are rampant”<sup>25</sup>. She was supported in her observations by other local activists and activist groups including Lindsey Collen, the *Muvman Morisyen Kreol Afrikain* (MMKA, the Movement for Black Mauritian Creoles), the *Rassemblement Organisations Créoles* (ROC – Union of Creole Organisations), the Catholic clergy through famous Mauritian priest, Father Jocelyn Grégoire<sup>26</sup>, and scholars such as Rosabelle Boswell (2006) and Sheila Bunwaree (2002). They speak of the non-success of the rainbow nation showing in the manner of the most severe form of unequal power distribution among the various socio-political categories and the suppression of the civil and human rights of persons of black African ancestry in the country<sup>27</sup>. This is specifically in the manner of ‘*le malaise Créole*’ (Boswell 2006) in reference to the ‘*Nasyon*’, affirmed at the bottom rungs of a communalist Mauritian socio-political hierarchy just like their enslaved ancestors in colonial times. The ‘*Nasyon*’, these activists and observers affirm, stand the farthest from political power in Mauritius today.

I set out to uncover and explore the reasons for this through the prism of historical ethnography and from the following question: What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)? This prism takes from historiography and ethnography to attempt making sense of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ reality, their socio-political positionality, their being and their becoming in Mauritius and, naturally, their existence in the larger socio-political world. I choose historiography because it takes us back in and through time and space. If we imagine that problems of the present are the consequence of modes of action of and from the past, we ought to go back and read history to uncover these. Ethnography comes in to explain the present, the current state and complexities of these problems, and coupled with historiography here, proposes a wholesome story on the matter of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political in Mauritius. I put forward, as I get through this case, modes of action of the past (*x*) running the latitudes of a singular story that took root in the science of the colonial era fuelled by Christianity to fix white Europeans as embodiment

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<sup>25</sup> <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC144708>.

<sup>26</sup> Grégoire said in his reading of this “*malaise*”: “[...] there is among the Creole community a feeling of being abandoned by politicians and the government in general, by the Catholic Church, by the private sector, and by their own fellow middle-class Creole. The Creole feel that they have been forsaken by politicians and the government in general. Out of twenty-two ministers, only three Creoles have a ministerial portfolio in today’s government. They feel forsaken by the church of which they are the majority. The chances for ... the Creole community seems to have been left behind by the high speed train of social, economical, political and academic development” (Grégoire 2009: 111-112).

<sup>27</sup> Collen, I. (January 2009) *Another Side of Paradise*. In New Internationalist.

of the most complete typology of humanness, and persons of black African ancestry as lesser than humans, incomplete humans, if human at all. This story continues today in spaces of public commemoration and is reinforced by way of the Law in complicity with the Media, keeping the ‘*Nasyon*’ as non-citizens of Mauritius. The ethnographic analysis confirmed this, exposing parallel systems of governance, a coercive police force and systemic discrimination in the education sector as actively solidifying the continued dehumanisation of the ‘*Nasyon*’ toward the denial of their citizenship in or belonging to the Mauritian socio-political world. This is all to say that the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power reads as the consequence of their incompleteness as this was brought about by modes of action ( $x$ ) solidly external to them.

Interestingly, the story of the ‘*Nasyon*’ is not new to the socio-political world. Incomplete humanness is the inevitable topic of our age. We can see this in the fact of recent protests, i.e., hashtag movements such as the #RhodesMustFall movement started by black students in 2015 at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the #BlackLivesMatter movement peaking in 2020 in the USA following high-profile killings of African American men by police. These are manifestations of the contemporary global quest for cosmic justice or the quest for completeness (the uncompromising relief from misfortune, i.e., the absolute correction of inequities for all) as a manner of addressing and redressing what traditional justice (formal, legal justice delivered, trusting in and of the fairness of its own process) appears unable to do or does not do (Sowell 2002). This runs in favour of the problematising and undoing of the external modes of action that would fix persons of black African ancestry as incomplete humans, with the implication that once complete or made complete, the latter should have access to those spaces in and of the socio-political world that they had been marginalised from, including that space where political power lies.

At its very core or in its strictly scientific definition, completeness implies elemental functional completeness where this also has to do with propositional functionality<sup>28</sup>, which is the assumption of the value of ‘true’ and ‘false’ or ‘yes’ and ‘no’ of all things. A tree, for example, is a tree if it functions completely as one; a human is a human if it functions completely as one; a giraffe is complete if it expresses its propositional function completely. We can read this the

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.math.wichita.edu/discrete-book/section-logic-quantifiers.html>;  
[https://uomustansiriyah.edu.iq/media/lectures/6/6\\_2017\\_02\\_08!01\\_11\\_58\\_AM.pdf](https://uomustansiriyah.edu.iq/media/lectures/6/6_2017_02_08!01_11_58_AM.pdf).

other way around. If component parts (*a*) function completely as a tree, they are a tree; if component parts (*b*) function completely as a human, they are a human; if component parts (*c*) function completely as a giraffe, they are a giraffe; if component parts (*d*) function completely as a black hole, they are a black hole; if component parts (*e*) function completely as a Norse god, they are a Norse god. Any deviation from their elemental functional completeness would make them not that which they could be determined to be. A giraffe with a stumped, short neck, for example, would not be expressing its propositional function completely and therefore would stand, by the logic of elemental functional completeness, as less of a giraffe or not a giraffe at all – deficient, insufficient, incomplete. A Norse god relinquishing their duties would no longer stand as Norse god. And, as current debate goes, a person who is not born internally, biologically female or whose gender was reassigned from male to female would also not be a ‘real’ woman: “As trans women like me struggle to be seen and respected as women, the most frustrating conversation to witness has been the one that probes at a trans woman’s realness. It is a question that is so seemingly simple, yet insidious at its core as violence towards trans women continues: ‘What is a woman?’”<sup>29</sup>

We hold rigid definitions of what is and what is not and who is and who is not, leaving little or no space for what and who else there is or can be or could be around us. We fix those elements of our universe that we imagine or perceive express their propositional function completely as they were complete (the norm model), and we stand violently against everything and everyone that we imagine or perceive does not, i.e., those that are then, by our geographies of interpretation, unlike the ‘self’ – those that are the alien ‘other’, incomplete (the non-norm model) (de Beauvoir 1976; Duncan 1993; Fanon 1963; Said 1978; Todorov 1994; Staszak 2008; and Pandey 2004). This is the common, dominant, binary – a black or white – mode of making sense of our universe. This is also where we see power in its most direct, uncomplicated manifestation both as a discursive process and a tangibly violent ability: the power to determine belonging and non-belonging; the power of inclusion and exclusion; the power of a dominant in-group to create one or many dominated out-group(s), which we would have seen unfold in Nazi Germany as so: “I understand now that nothing but ‘otherness’ killed Jews, and it began with naming them, by reducing them to the other. Then everything became possible. Even the

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<sup>29</sup> <https://coveteur.com/what-is-a-woman>; See also Matt Walsh’s documentary “What is a Woman?” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ta8NjfVrkI>.

worst atrocities like concentration camps or the slaughtering of civilians in Croatia or Bosnia” (Drakuli’c 1992: 145).

Along these lines, persons of black African ancestry such as the ‘*Nasyon*’ being interpreted as incomplete humans, the ‘other’, those who do not belong to the category of ‘real’ humans, implies that they would not be expressing their propositional function (as humans) completely; they would not fulfil the requirements for humanness. Of course, this is not true. Persons of black African ancestry are humans. Science today goes against the previous story of their being incomplete humans or not human at all, calling ethnocentric bias, if not outright scientific racism<sup>30</sup>, anything that still treats them as so. And the stage would have been set by civil and political rights activists and proponents around the world for meaningful socio-political transformation to support this. We would think here about Sojourner Truth<sup>31</sup>, an African American abolitionist of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, who had fearlessly dedicated her life to ending slavery and bringing about gender equality; Frederick Douglass (1845), born into slavery in the nineteenth century who, after teaching himself how to read and write, became one of the leaders of the American abolitionist movement; Simone de Beauvoir (1976), French philosopher and author who, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had paved the way for modern feminism; Robben Island political prisoner, Sedick Isaacs (Wieder 2001), considered one of the most brilliant intellectual powerhouses that stood against apartheid in South Africa<sup>32</sup>; and Guy Rozemont<sup>33</sup>, who fought for workers’ rights and compulsory education for all in mid-twentieth century Mauritius, and so on and so forth. Despite this, the hierarchy of humanness is still not undone. The socio-political hierarchy at the very bottom of which persons of black African ancestry find themselves is still not redressed. Their story as incomplete humans or not human at all continues around the world in the same manner that it runs on the ‘*Nasyon*’ about their being nothing much. As so, where everything and everyone seems to fail or have failed the ‘*Nasyon*’, where everything and everyone sets out to keep them incomplete, the quest for their completeness would appear unavoidable, if not necessary. It is understandable.

But as noble as this quest is and as necessary and understandable as it stands to be, their completeness is impossible, unreachable, unreal, and seeking to achieve it comes with the risk

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<sup>30</sup> <https://library.harvard.edu/confronting-anti-black-racism/scientific-racism>.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/sojourner-truth>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5639894/>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.lemauricien.com/actualites/magazine/histoire-lempreinte-guy-rozemont-lhistoire-constitutionnelle-maurice/126449/>.

of highly counterintuitive outcomes – as we can see with the violence that came with the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which, at some point, began to spread “the very hatred and racism they were supposed to fight, hurting the black community above anyone else”<sup>34</sup>. Here, the quest for completeness must be understood as dangerous because it is a quest for something that cannot happen and does not exist, and therefore, can only breed frustration the more it is pursued and the less it actualises. Incompleteness, on the other hand, is the normal order of things in our universe and therefore in the socio-political world too, and when or if accepted can lead to more relaxed, friendly, sociable, tolerant and cheerful global atmosphere and socio-political engagements – an easy connectedness or conviviality amongst all of us (Nyamnjoh 2002: 111-112). To better understand this, we can think about parallels between incompleteness and Zygmunt Bauman’s (2000) more concrete proposition of post-World War II “liquid modernity”, which he established as the condition of constant mobility and change in relationships, identities, and global economics – the liquid form of being. We would also take from the works of Amos Tutuola and Francis Nyamnjoh to expand on the fact that everything is liquid, permanently incomplete, constantly in a state of becoming but never finished, with our entire universe showing instead “as one of infinite possibilities where nothing is ever complete, and where to seek or claim completeness is to ignore, to one’s peril, the reality of incompleteness as the normal order of things” (Nyamnjoh 2015: 2). To take the quest for completeness as dangerous and incompleteness as the normal order of things is, of course, not simultaneous attempt to diminish past or current activism or deter future activism on the matter of the marginalisation of persons of black African ancestry, including the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. This thesis is not a call for us to tolerate the many injustices that they suffer. It is also not suggestion that we ought to take in the persisting dissociation of the ‘*Nasyon*’ from political power as ‘*fait accompli*’. What it does or seeks to do instead is propose a perspective on the matter that should work in favour of a truly meaningful and long-lasting socio-political transformation for the ‘*Nasyon*’ and the socio-political world at large.

Along these lines, we would approach the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius in a manner that takes into consideration their natural, inevitable incompleteness while avoiding the risk of causing more protests, more frustration, more counterintuitive outcomes on the matter, and going toward and into conviviality instead. There

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1840931>.

is no way around this since the modes of action (*x*) mentioned earlier in this section<sup>35</sup>, explored through the prism of historical ethnography, eventually show on their own as manifestations of incompleteness rather than problems directly causing the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. Democracy, for example, which is assumed to have failed or be failing in the country, proof of which is supposedly the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ socio-political positionality there, is not necessarily a problem to fix, to remedy, to undo or to turn complete, but is a state of politics and one of the many systems of governance around the world and through history, all of which are incomplete, never finished, not fully realised in their promises or practices. The singular story about the ‘*Nasyon*’ that fixed them as incomplete human beings and turned them into non-citizens of Mauritius is also incomplete, reminding us of the story of the Haitian revolution, or the non-story of the Haitian revolution – a crucial moment in the history of Haiti written out of it while simultaneously twisted to suit its time and serve the interests of French colonisers<sup>36</sup>. We can look at parallel systems of governance in Mauritius too, including the Freemasonry, which would directly and indirectly oversee charitable Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the country, as incomplete for not bringing much change to the underprivileged there. The local education system can be assessed in the same manner, which, even if free and assumed accessible to all today because within a democracy, is built on systematised discrimination against the ‘*Nasyon*’. It is thus incomplete. And this list can go on and on about all the possible modes of action that would be keeping the ‘*Nasyon*’ at the margins of the country: journalists and journalism, the justice system, scholarship, politicians, policies and so on and so forth – none expressing their propositional function completely.

But their incompleteness does not make them any less ontologically true. A giraffe with a short neck is still a giraffe. An infertile giraffe with a long neck is still a giraffe. A giraffe in a zoo is still a giraffe. A giraffe with a blue coat is still a giraffe. It is us, humans, that imagine that the giraffe’s elemental functional completeness needs to be fulfilled perfectly, completely, solidly to make of it a giraffe. A better argument is that the giraffe, any giraffe, is never complete or never will be. Imagining that if it were once a perfect, complete giraffe, it would still, one day, get old and ill and therefore show incomplete. Would that make of it less of a giraffe? If or once we understand this, we can agree that from an entire universe composed of permanently

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<sup>35</sup> On pages 10-11 of this thesis.

<sup>36</sup> See Michel Trouillot’s expansion on this in his 1995 “An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event,” in *Silencing the Past: Power, and the Production of History*”.

incomplete component parts, we cannot expect and should not expect the ‘*Nasyon*’ to be any different than incomplete – but still human. They are naturally, by virtue of existing, incomplete. This is the normal, permanent order of things – for everything and everyone.

And, wonderfully a door opens here as a first step toward meaningful transformation rather than reactive responses to the matter of the ‘*Nasyon*’s persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius: since everything and everyone is permanently incomplete, since everything and everyone is liquid, lacking, deficient, permanently unfinished, continuously becoming, insufficient, incapable of expressing their elemental propositional function completely, and since this is the normal order of things, we can agree that everyone and everything is the same, equal already – equal because incomplete, equal in incompleteness. We can also agree that claims for or attempts toward completeness are temporary – illusions – and should the ‘*Nasyon*’ ever access political power in Mauritius, this could only be incomplete, fleetingly solid, liquid then. We can see this in whiteness, for example, having once stood at the highest levels of the political hierarchy in Africa and today, being relegated to the backbenches thereof while black people have replaced them. Once, black people had also been the kings of Africa. They would be replaced by white colonisers. Here, incompleteness manifests as eternal equality in liquidness or the permanent liquidness of life, which only gives us liquid seats in political power. But this is exactly what assures us that the ‘*Nasyon*’s persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius can only also be liquid; that we can expect their socio-political positionality to change; that those who are currently in power in Mauritius will not be there forever. As so, this thesis goes on to explain that the ‘*Nasyon*’ are indeed incomplete humans, but this is not a problem to be solved. On the contrary, their incompleteness is to be embraced – because incompleteness itself is to be embraced; because it is the very aspect of our universe that would take the ‘*Nasyon*’ to political leadership. The rest of this thesis speaks to this from the structure that follows.

### **Thesis Structure**

The question of ‘What are the modes of action ( $x$ ) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius ( $y$ )?’ guides the rest of this thesis such that its organisation runs along five other chapters following this introductory one, i.e., Chapter One: General Introduction.

Chapter Two introduces and explores the concept of incompleteness as the framework for this thesis, drawing from various works on the subject that include those of Amos Tutuola and Francis Nyamnjoh. It also brings into perspective the danger and futility of reading incompleteness as liquidness of being suffered by persons of black African ancestry and demanding that they be made complete or extended some sort of finality, a permanent solidity, which should then allow them access to those spaces that they had previously been marginalised from – or so say activists and protesters on the matter. To make my point, I expand on a few manifestations of the marginalisation of persons of African ancestry around the world, focusing on famous cases of the post-colonial era that peaked into protests running as hashtag movements including the #RhodesMustFall movement started in 2015 at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the #BlackLivesMatter movement peaking in 2020 in the USA. I speak about the quest for completeness of and for those that are taken to be incomplete, which concurrently breeds extreme frustration, tension and anger, and leads to violent and quick reactivity more than permanent transformation toward completeness. I make the case for the fact of incompleteness as the natural, inevitable order of things instead. This includes the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness too.

Chapter Three is the methodology chapter and focuses on the ‘*Nasyon*’ as persons of African ancestry who exist at the far margins of the Mauritian socio-political world. It brings forth their case through the prism of historical ethnography, separated into historiography and ethnography and seeking those modes of action (*x*) that would be preventing the ‘*Nasyon*’ from accessing political power in Mauritius since the dawn of its history (*y*). The historiographic reading of this case goes into the world of the ‘*Nasyon*’, who they are, where they come from and where they stand in the Mauritian socio-political world. This exposes the context within which the ‘*Nasyon*’ exist – a socio-political world that would fix them along the singular story of their being permanently incomplete human beings as if they were the only ones standing as so in the country. The ethnographic analysis follows this and expands from African Town, a ‘*Nasyon*’ township in the south of Mauritius, wherefrom is explored the content of their existence in the country – how they exist, what their lives are about, what they have to say about themselves and what is said about them –, which runs the latitudes of their lives as the only incomplete humans in Mauritius also made non-citizens, even in the democratic era in Mauritius.

Chapter Four is that of Critical Analysis. This is a reflection on the data gathered from and through the historiographic and ethnographic analyses of Chapter Three, and in the footsteps of Francis Nyamnjoh inspired by Amos Tutuola, the case is made here against the typical reading of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as incomplete humans to make complete. Without diminishing the fact of their marginalisation from political power in Mauritius and the need for meaningful transformation in the matter of their mistreatment in the country, this chapter runs instead for the fact of liquidness or incompleteness as the normal order of things, the natural state of being of all including the ‘*Nasyon*’ as a first step toward this transformation. The aim in this chapter is to avoid perpetuating the singular story on the ‘*Nasyon*’ that has so far run along the lines of their being perpetual victims of the socio-political world that they exist in and to avoid violent reactions or reactive responses to this (all of which seem to stand without practicable, long-term transformation to perceived injustice toward persons of black African ancestry) as we would have seen in South Africa (#RhodesMustFall) and the USA (#BlackLivesMatter) during this past decade.

Chapter Five concludes this thesis. This chapter runs in favour of a humble appreciation of the fact of incompleteness as the normal order of things in expectation that once this is fixed in our heads, the ‘*Nasyon*’s incompleteness ceases to be a problem to solve – because incompleteness itself ceases to be a problem to solve. None is with a more solid socio-positionality or is more complete than the ‘*Nasyon*’. Here, we read incompleteness as eternal equality in liquidness for everything and everyone in the universe. This means that those in political power in Mauritius also only hold liquid seats thereto, and that the ‘*Nasyon*’s persisting dissociation from political power there is not permanent; that we are to expect their access to political power in Mauritius at some point in history. This is the gentle, humble approach to the ‘*Nasyon*’s persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius.

## **Conclusion**

The idea with this thesis and the chapters along which it is organised is that, as they situate and expand on the fact of incompleteness, they bring forward the need to re-examine the ways in which we have so far observed Mauritius and Mauritian socio-political matters in particular, our expectations about to how these should actualise, if those are Mauritian expectations in the first place, and if the reactive responses to the cracks in Mauritian democracy are necessary or justified. With this in the background, this thesis has the potential to open a can of narrative-

eating worms that demand the halt of these reactive responses, which read, when through the lens of incompleteness, as if beating a giraffe for not birthing a zebra. The point here is the need to build a more holistic and localised understanding of this giraffe and what it can and cannot do and respond to this in a proactive manner. The immediate call with this is for the actualisation of a humble approach to this giraffe, a reconfiguration of the Mauritian knowledge system for convivial rather than reactive scholarship as Nyamnjoh (2017a) would propose and as this thesis sets out to do. Applied to Mauritius, this should run in the manner of allowing Mauritians to grow together in conviviality, finally, as the rainbow nation that they seem to have wanted or expected to be.

## CHAPTER TWO: READING INCOMPLETENESS AS A PERMANENT FACT OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE

### Introduction

This chapter introduces and explores the concept of incompleteness and sets this as the framework for this thesis on the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. As developed by Francis Nyamnjoh (2015: 10), incompleteness is the normal, natural and permanent state or condition of all the component parts of the universe that we live in. Nothing and no one is ever complete; nothing and no one is solid (Bauman 2000), unified in form and content; nothing and no one is ever finished; everything and everyone is liquid (Bauman 2000), lacking some parts that would be necessary to prove a consistent whole<sup>37</sup>. Still, the socio-political world appears bent on expecting, claiming and actualising the opposite, i.e., permanent solidity or completeness, especially when it comes to persons of black African ancestry. We can read this as the quest for completeness, which would supposedly see those persons stand elsewhere than at the lowest rungs of certain socio-political hierarchies and move specifically to those spaces where political power lies. Hashtag movements of our recent socio-political history such as the #RhodesMustFall movement started in 2015 at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the #BlackLivesMatter movement peaking in 2020 in the USA epitomise this quest. But the case is made here that, although understandable, this quest is dangerous and futile, breeding extreme frustration, tension and anger, and comes with violent and quick reactivity the more it is pursued and the less it actualises, more than it brings meaningful transformation to the problem of the socio-political marginalisation of persons of black African ancestry around the world. This is in favour of incompleteness as the natural, inevitable order of things instead. This includes the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness too.

### Completeness

Our universe is, in all appearances, operationally perfect. It is, after all, tuned to have brought about complex life on Earth. It is also maintaining this life along unreasonably specific and effective mathematical constants<sup>38</sup>. We can look to our solar system for this perfection, where

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<sup>37</sup> <https://americanethnologist.org/features/pandemic-diaries/post-covid-fantasies/a-post-covid-19-fantasy-on-incompleteness-and-conviviality>.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.livescience.com/31788-why-earth-perfect-for-life.html>;  
<https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/earth/in-depth/>;  
<https://math.dartmouth.edu/~matc/Readers/HowManyAngels/MiraculousJar/MiraculousJar.html>;

a single degree deviation from our planet's current position therein would lead to a drastic change in its temperature, either burning or freezing us to death<sup>39</sup>. Our reading of the universe stands in sharp contrast to what we observe about our own nature and place therein: we are not eternal; we are not perfect; we make mistakes; we move from one dysfunctional political system to another; we war; we have mental illnesses and incurable physical ones; our legal system fails many of us, and so on and so forth. Everything about the universe appears solid, complete, and everything about us is liquid, incomplete. Against this, we have given in to socio-philosophically idealistic superstructures<sup>40</sup> hypothetically immune to liquid action (weakening or reform) that offer, then, some measure of solidity, order, structure, confidence, sense, and manageability to declare that we are perfectible, that we can bring ourselves to be as complete as the universe that brought us about. We have politico-judicial systems to regulate our behaviour and desires, for example; we have medicine and technology to keep us alive when our bodies want to die; and we have economics to tell us how planetary resources ought to be distributed toward our survival. Yet, there is nothing that we do or attempt to do about our incompleteness that does not eventually melt into air (Berman 1982). Our imperfection does not go away.

Where are we going wrong? The answer to this is straightforward: we are asking for permanent solidity where there can only be liquidness. We are expecting material rigidity in a reality of permanently mobile identities and relationships. We are seeking completeness where there is only incompleteness. This is because the universe is not perfect, and we are not an anomaly within it. Even when it looks complete, mathematically perfect, the universe is in fact incomplete, in a state of constantly becoming but never finished (Nyamnjoh 2015: 2), liquid, evolving, shifting and shapeshifting, growing into time and space eternally, with planets and galaxies dying, others coming to life, and the centre of our own galaxy slowly but surely dragging us to the centre thereof – a black hole that will swallow up our planet eventually.

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<http://abyss.uoregon.edu/~js/cosmo/lectures/lec24.html>; <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/is-earth-s-life-unique-in-the-universe/>.

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<https://www.icr.org/article/planet-earth-plan-or-accident/>;  
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/what-would-happen-if-earth-and-mars-switched-places/>.

<sup>40</sup> We can look at the disciplines of law, politics, medicine and economics and others for details on how we, as the global citizenry, have given in to socio-philosophically idealistic superstructures<sup>40</sup> hypothetically immune to liquid action. We should note here, the debates on these being Western disciplines, highly contested and problematised in their application in the rest of the world, i.e., the non-Western world, because concurrently allowing the marginalisation if not the disappearance of indigenous knowledge systems. See Bohensky & Maru (2011), Bruchac (2014); Appiah-Opoku (1999), Fred-Mensah (2003), and Houtondji (1997, 2002), for example, for more on the subject.

Along these lines, everything and everyone within this universe must be taken to be of the same nature – for a giraffe cannot birth a zebra. Francis Nyamnjoh (2017b: 4) wrote on this:

Everyone and everything is malleable and flexible, from humans and their anatomies, to animals and plants, gods, ghosts and spirits. Anything can be anything. People and things adopt different forms and manifest themselves differently according to context and necessity. Something transformed can regain the state that preceded its transformation. A thing can double itself, and the double becomes the thing and the thing the double. Gods are humans and humans are gods. Spirits assume human forms, and humans can transform themselves into spirits, animals and plants. Sometimes a creature combines multiple forms of being – half-human and half-animal or half-plant, half-god, half-ghost, half-spirit, half-male or half-female, etc. – and assumes the consciousness akin to each form.

Black Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) comes to mind here, which we read as expression of his own incompleteness, his permanently half-something, half-something-else state of being in the colonial socio-political world. French-educated, French-dressed and French-spoken should have made of him a perfect, complete human. But no matter how French he had made himself to be, or was made to be, or thought he was, he remained 'not French enough'. He was still a black man, a "Dirty Nigger" (Fanon 1952: 33). In a colonial socio-political world that had fixed the impossible measure of humanness against whiteness, anyone black was only that – 'Negro', not white, not perfect, lesser than human, incomplete in humanness, if human at all: "The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black - whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness [...]. In the collective unconscious of homo occidentalis, the Negro – or, if one prefers, the colour black – symbolises evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine. All birds of prey are black" (Fanon 1952: 189). It was even common language fixed by the science of the colonial era that "as far as brain of negroes is concerned, [...] its morphology is scarcely comparable to the less developed brain of some European women. On the contrary, [...] very clever Caucasian men show an increase in the brain volume and a different morphology, mainly in the temporal lobe, than other populations" (Lidio Cipriani 1935: 184).

Black author Amos Tutuola is another example of incompleteness to look at here. Tutuola catapulted to world acclaim as he produced nine novels and three collections of short stories and folk tales with a mastery of African poetry and complexity lauded today. And yet, there was a time when his books were deemed unpublishable, and the message and merit thereof were glossed over (Nyamnjoh 2017a). This is because Tutuola was not writing in ‘proper’ English, the Queen’s English, the linguistic standard of colonial Nigeria. He was not writing good enough English to be published in or by the English world; he was not writing for the English-trained elite to be comfortable; he was imperfect, incomplete as a story-teller. The point to bring forth here is that even if he had been trained in English and if he had used it ‘properly’, there would still be no guarantee of his completeness as a story-teller – because he was black, and like Fanon, may not have been received any better. And being trained in English and using it ‘properly’ might, in fact, have worked against him. Would he have been able to write as he did? Would English have been enough for him? Would his tales have translated as he would have wanted them to? In a way then, English would not necessarily have been enough for Tutuola. It would have been imperfect, incomplete.

Let us remember that English being the language of the coloniser would not have worked in favour of Tutuola or others who spoke Yoruba because forcing them into a linguistic space that would take away from them their capacity to define and express themselves, serving to structure thought and expression in favour of the coloniser instead: “To take away one’s language is to take away their means of making themselves visible and perceiving themselves. To speak a certain language is to essentially identify with a culture, to assume it as one’s own and experience a felt unity in a group. The forceful imposition of colonial language on the colonized is not simply a matter of easy communication and convenience, it is to impose upon a group, the task of supporting the weight of a culture which refuses to recognize them as human” (Ravishankar 2020: 1). We can read here what Frederick Douglass (1845: 99) called the annihilation of the power of reason, the control of critical thought: “I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceased to be a man”.

We go to one of university professor Harry Garuba's poems here, *Leaving Home at 10*<sup>41</sup>, in which he told us that, when initiated into Western academia (as he attended boarding school), he found himself having lost the words that had once haunted his mind and crawled the tip of his tongue to write Nigerian landscapes, African shapes – life as he knew it:

On initiation night I recited the prescribed words:

“I am a fag, a rotten green toad. I promise  
to give up all my rustic and outlandish ways  
and to become a true student of Government College, Ughelli”.

Soon after I lost the language of guavas and spirits  
And ever since I have been boarded up in a new home,  
A new language with neither spice nor bite.

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<sup>41</sup> Garuba: “**Leaving home at 10**”

It was an old Peugeot 403  
They don't make them anymore  
Tyres inspected, engine oiled, brakes checked  
All in order as only an old Peugeot can be.  
Its creaking body held together by care,  
My father drove me to the boarding school  
In a small town one hour away from home ...  
My tears and the car held through the journey  
Through the pothole in my heart and the tear on the road  
Through the window, I watched the world rush past  
The houses and the trees and the streets and the names  
I had known and loved, all running backwards, with  
No time to pause for a goodbye, no time to wave  
To the departing son leaving the embrace of home and hearth  
We arrived over an hour later, father and son,  
driving through the school gate to the dormitory  
that was to be my home for the next five years.  
Then my father left ... and, averting my eyes, I cried.  
On initiation night I recited the prescribed words:  
“I am a fag, a rotten green toad. I promise  
to give up all my rustic and outlandish ways  
and to become a true student of Government College, Ughelli.”  
Soon after I lost the language of guavas and spirits  
And ever since I have been boarded up in a new home,  
A new language with neither spice nor bite.  
I miss all the coarse and colourful words I can no longer use  
The power and potency of the curse uttered with a gob of spittle  
Let loose in the language of the body and the spirit  
I miss the language that once lived in my body.

I miss all the coarse and colourful words I can no longer use  
The power and potency of the curse uttered with a gob of spittle  
Let loose in the language of the body and the spirit

I miss the language that once lived in my body.

We read from Garuba's poem that one of the most potent ways in which incompleteness appears to have come about is by way of (formal and informal) (mis)education, and we see this in the case of colonised peoples, blacks in particular, where the emphasis of their education was on those things that colonial languages could express such as colonial ideals while obscuring, effacing those of the colonised. It was about training and shaping the colonised to (internally, mentally) seek, accept and adhere to colonial standards and fit in the colonial world. The colonial "logic of elimination" (Wolfe 1999: 2) was at play here, as direct intervention toward the prevention of thought capacity and therefore behaviour counter to the colonial system. Any other way would have been dangerous to colonisers and the colonial system around the world: "The South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent" (Du Bois 1903: 27). We can further the point of (mis)education with the example of indigenous Americans who today find themselves in a state of perpetual re-imagining the manners in which to merge their cultural heritages with the values and ways of modern USA, forced in large part to let go of their own views to adjust to the country's vision of civilisation, again, by way of their education:

The first step in this transformation was to seize the children's possessions and alter their physical appearances by cutting their long hair. School officials even provided the students with new 'white' names. The institutions followed a rigid military setup that included school uniforms, communication through military terminology, strict daily schedules, and marching through the hallways. Despite the language barrier between the teachers and the students, the children were educated in English. This barrier led to resistance from the Native American children. Despite their greatest efforts, the institutions were unable to strip them of their native identities: School officials attempted to peel away layers of Indian

identity, working from the outside into the hearts and minds of Native American children. The outward transformation occurred immediately as Indian children lost their clothing and hair, but the inner deconstruction of Indian identity proved a much more complicated task, often impossible (Trafzer et al., 2006: 17).

As much as colonial languages, education, clothing, lifestyle and other aspirations appeared with the promise of completeness, they unfolded instead to take from humans, to diminish their stories, their struggles, their everyday lives, their truths and realities, and their capacity to express these. They were colonial assault that exacerbated or modified, in shape only and not in breadth, the fact of incompleteness. As a result, colonised peoples were left between their incompleteness and what they wanted to be or could or should be, disoriented between what is authentic to them and what is not – an internal contradiction, a neurotic duality. The global philosophies behind the official end of enslavement and colonialism could have been imagined pressing for and leading to the end of this contradiction. This is the reason for which this end was sought, after all. But here lies a problem that humankind has had to face at least since the dawn of the modern socio-political world and yet appears incapable of accepting: if the philosophical alone is taken as the standard against which the socio-political should unfold, the only thing that can or will happen is the denial of the autonomy of the socio-political, which leaves us in a state of double consciousness (Du Bois 1903), which we can take to mean incomplete in two different ways, incomplete times two.

Here we read the struggle for African Americans, for example, to remain truly black, true to black culture while existing in a white-dominant American socio-political world – the struggle of being too much or not enough of one or the other: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness...one ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois 1903: 8). This also runs along the concept of belonging or non-belonging in the USA today. As American as African Americans can be or think themselves to be, this is no guarantee of their socio-cultural or political inclusion in the USA (Bloemraad et al., 2019; Marshall 1950; Smith 1997). Like their slave ancestors, they remain at the margins of the country instead, likely too black, too African like Fanon and Tutuola:

The expansion of food stamps, unemployment insurance, and the Earned Income Tax Credit under Obama have disproportionately helped blacks, because blacks in America are disproportionately poor. Protecting jobs in state and local government with the \$787 billion stimulus bill, in 2009, has helped the black middle class, too. Other measures, including ending the federal sentencing disparity between crack and powdered cocaine, and new funding for historically black colleges, have been more directly beneficial to African-Americans. But the deeper problems – fourteen per cent black unemployment; four out of ten young black men caught up in the criminal-justice system – can seem intractable<sup>42</sup>.

Douglass (1854) expanded on this, speaking of alienness, the sense of being alienated from one's own land:

Aliens are we in our native land. The fundamental principles of the republic, to which the humblest white man, whether born here or elsewhere, may appeal with confidence, in the hope of awakening a favorable response, are held to be inapplicable to us. The glorious doctrines of your revolutionary fathers, and the more glorious teachings of the Son of God, are construed and applied against us. We are literally scourged beyond the beneficent range of both authorities, human and divine. American humanity hates us, scorns us, disowns and denies, in a thousand ways, our very personality. The outspread wing of American christianity, apparently broad enough to give shelter to a perishing world, refuses to cover us. To us, its bones are brass, and its features iron. In running thither for shelter and succor, we have only fled from the hungry blood-hound to the devouring wolf – from a corrupt and selfish world, to a hollow and hypocritical church.

Let us make the three-fold point here that marginalised groups such as African Americans are fully capable of marginalisation in turn, excluding from their socio-political world those who, at first sight, might appear their own: not all blacks are African American; not all African Americans are to be considered American or black; and African Americans are not African. On the first part of this point: “The Black population of the United States is diverse. Its

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/obamas-double-consciousness-on-race>.

members have varied histories in the nation – many are descendants of enslaved people, while others are recently arrived immigrants. The Black population also has nuanced ethnic and racial identities reflecting intermarriage and international migration. As a result, there are key distinctions in demographic and economic characteristics between different parts of the national Black population, highlighting its diverse multitude of backgrounds” (Tamir 2021). On the second part: extensive coverage of Barack Obama’s political campaign for the USA presidency was on his religious preference, birthplace and even citizenship, an event that came to be known as the “birther movement” that asserted him to be Muslim born somewhere outside of the USA and therefore being ineligible for presidency – he was supposedly not a natural or native-born citizen of the country as required by Article Two of the USA Constitution (Jardina & Traugott 2019: 60-80). And on the third: “In 1989, when the call to embrace ‘African American’ came, some readily accepted the relationship to Africa the label signified while others argued that they were Americans, not Africans [...] To the 2.1 million African-born people now living in the US [...] They are Nigerian, Ethiopian, Sierra Leonean, Liberian, or Ghanaian, with direct experiences of Africa”<sup>43</sup>.

To add to the examples given above about African Americans being capable of marginalisation, and to make clear the fact of incompleteness also meaning the state or condition of constantly becoming but never (being) finished, are the ‘niggas’ of popular culture who were never Duboisian ‘Negroes’ and never will be, now world-renowned black pop stars such as Kanye West or Jay-Z<sup>44</sup>, or the Dalits of India who are the backbone of its agrarian economy and still sit at the bottom rungs of the country’s socio-political hierarchy but now “are organising and demanding their dues” (Subramanyam 2020). There are also African Americans who cannot quite decide whether they are ‘Black’ or ‘black’, and how to diminish the fact of whiteness in the process: “So far, most news organizations have declined to capitalize white, generally arguing that it is an identifier of skin color, not shared experience, and that white supremacist groups have adopted that convention. But some scholars say that to write ‘Black’ but not ‘White’ is to give white people a pass on seeing themselves as a race and recognizing all the privileges they get from it” (Eligon 2020).

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-02-17-a-question-of-identity-african-americans-and-africa-through-the-centuries/>.

<sup>44</sup> See, for reference, their song “Niggas in Paris” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VS9W8OUqMLY>.

The list is long of those humans who ‘could be’ but ‘are not’ because ‘not enough’ or because ‘too much’, and longer is the list of the ways in which their incompleteness, their never-being, their constantly becoming manifests. Japanese Americans are clear example of this: “Take Japanese Americans, for example: For nearly four decades in the 20th century (1913 – 1952), this group was legally prevented from owning land and property in over a dozen American states. Moreover, 120,000 Japanese Americans were interned during World War II. But by 1959, the income disparity between Japanese Americans and white Americans nearly vanished. Today, Japanese Americans outperform whites by large margins in income statistics, education outcomes, test scores and incarceration rates”<sup>45</sup>. There are also whites who are white trash (Isenberg 2017) – not privileged enough to be white and too white to be liked by those against white privilege: “[B]ecause whites are the majority in Canada and America, more white people live in poverty or are incarcerated than any other racial group in those countries. If you were to randomly pick an impoverished individual in America, you are exponentially more likely to pick a white person than a ‘person of color’, because of population differences. Today, 15.7 million white Americans (almost twice as many as black Americans) live in poverty. Given such facts, why would we deem all white people as privileged, even if whites have lower poverty rates compared to African Americans and Hispanics?”<sup>46</sup>. The point is further complicated on the matter of white privilege as white Americans might be the new victims of oppression, imperfect in their whiteness, no longer immune to racism: “They are, some say, the new face of racial oppression in this nation – and their faces are white. ‘We went from being a privileged group to all of a sudden becoming whites, the new victims,’ says Charles Gallagher, a sociologist at La Salle University in Pennsylvania who researches white racial attitudes and was baffled to find that whites see themselves as a minority. ‘You have this perception out there that whites are no longer in control or the majority. Whites are the new minority group’”<sup>47</sup>.

Each of the socio-political categories mentioned here would be consumed by the fact of incompleteness. Fanon, educated and well dressed, remained a Negro in France. Amos Tutuola, enunciated depth of the African spiritual world, was not taken seriously because he could not write in perfect English. Harry Garuba, poet, had once been without tongue. Indigenous Americans would straddle the line of being and becoming and not being and not becoming indigenous and American, unsure of how to reconcile the two. African Americans experience

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<sup>45</sup> <https://nypost.com/2020/07/11/the-fallacy-of-white-privilege-and-how-its-corroding-society/>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://nypost.com/2020/07/11/the-fallacy-of-white-privilege-and-how-its-corroding-society/>.

<sup>47</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/12/21/white.persecution/index.html>.

American freedom but as non-citizens of the USA. And white people are ostracised because of their claimed privilege. These are all manifestations of incompleteness encompassed within 'othering', colourism, and mobile identities.

'Othering' is the discursive process by which the 'self' encounters another and determines itself to be with desirable if not perfect characteristics while simultaneously stigmatising the 'other' as with undesirable characteristics, lacking, imperfect, incomplete. An implicitly superior in-group and an out-group explicitly inferior to it are constructed here, with the latter standing as the unessential, negative possibility of the 'self' (Staszak 2008). We see this with colonial regimes reducing Africa and its complexities such that it "had no history prior to European exploration and colonisation, that there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness [...] the unedifying gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe" (Trevor-Roper 1963: 871). Georg W.F. Hegel (1956: 99) treated Africa along the same lines, as it were "no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit". And Edward Said (1978) spoke to this as continued and maintained pathological epistemological ordering of the socio-political world into asymmetric imagined geographies or imaginative geographies that underwrote and animated the idea of the 'self' (the Occident, superior, enlightened) and the 'other' (the Orient, inferior, barbaric) – "a cipher for the Western unconscious, a repository of all that is dark, unacknowledged, feminine, sensual, repressed and liable to eruption" (Batchelor 1994: 234). Rosi Braidotti (1994: 147) confirmed the ordering of the socio-political world: "In the European history of philosophy, 'difference' has been predicated on relations of domination and exclusion, to be 'different-from' came to mean to be 'less than', to be worth less than".

But we note that anyone of us can be the 'self' or the 'other' depending on where we are in the socio-political world and against whom we find ourselves, with religion, sex, race, gender, ethnicity, socio-political and economic status, ability or disability, skin tone, language and culture and so on and so forth, coming into play as axes of difference that undergird our socio-political positionality. As so, we are at times superior and at times inferior; at times good enough and at times not enough; at times more complete and at times incomplete. We constantly straddle the line between the two ends. And, sometimes, we find ourselves stigmatised by those whom we would think of as our own. Here, the 'self' would have determined itself to be better than other 'selves', made 'other' then. We can look at colourism

for this, which is the ‘pigmentocratic’ treatment of darker skin as ugly and lighter skin as beautiful even within brown and black communities: “Dark skin just isn’t deemed as beautiful, whereas light skin just isn’t truly black” (Berry & Duke 2011). More than that, we ought to read here the difference between ‘two Negroes’: the field ‘Negro’ and the house ‘Negro’. While both identities were constructed during slavery, they endured and took different shapes over the centuries, with house ‘Negroes’ differentiating themselves from and eventually thinking about themselves as better than black people – even when they would both be colonised people of colour: “But there’s another kind of Black man on the scene. If you say you’re in trouble, he says, ‘Yes, you’re in trouble.’ He doesn’t identify himself with your plight whatsoever” (X 1963). We see this with Mohandas Gandhi who, for the better part of his political career at the time of apartheid in South Africa, campaigned for the rights of Indians whom he associated with the British while dissociating them from the “kaffirs”: “A general belief seems to prevail in the Colony that the Indians are little better, if at all, than the savages or the Natives of Africa [. . .] with the result that the Indian is being dragged down to the position of a raw Kaffir. I venture to point out that both the English and the Indians spring from a common stock, called the Indo-Aryan [. . .] The Indians were, and are, in no way inferior to their Anglo-Saxon brethren” (Gandhi 1999: 193).

Our socio-political positionalities are thus contextual. They are liquid, as would say Zygmunt Bauman<sup>48</sup> (2000) – mobile, morphing as they transcend into new geographies. And where this mobility was once mostly associated with human migration across physical, political borders and would have been interpreted as the constant renegotiation of the ‘self’ in a dialectic search for freedom and security in foreign spaces (Stivachtis 2008; Robinson 2007; Verkuyen, Wiley, Deaux, & Fleischmann 2019), it is today augmenting in the digital world as voluntarily decentralised digital experiences and encounters. We see this with the advent of the Metaverse<sup>49</sup>, which would host virtual clones of ourselves or our holographic selves<sup>50</sup>, and in

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<sup>48</sup> Bauman (2000) spoke about “liquid modernity”, which he claimed came about after WWII. I do not agree with Bauman on the matter of the time at which liquidness came about in the socio-political world. I argue, instead, and throughout this thesis, that liquidness was always the normal order of things. It is the way and nature of the entire universe (including our planet and our kind). But his rendition of liquidness is extraordinary take on the fact of no part of our universe ever being complete. As so, I keep Bauman’s explanation of liquidness but not the time that he limits this to.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.wired.com/story/what-is-the-metaverse/>.

<sup>50</sup> <https://stealthoptional.com/ar/hologram-video-calls-meta/>; <https://www.verdict.co.uk/metaverse-holograms-avatars-future-of-work/>.

virtual environments in general, with digital bodies or avatars<sup>51</sup> of ourselves that we can end, recreate, and customise *ad infinitum*: “A great thing about the virtual world is that there’s no physical limitations. People will have a lot of different virtual identities and avatars that they use for different types of experiences. One can be connected with your real-life identity. You might have a realistic one for work meetings and you might have a more aspirational version for playing games with your friends or going on a date. And then there can be also just a fantasy identity that can be a different gender or an animal”<sup>52</sup>.

What is interesting to note about the manifestations of incompleteness encompassed within ‘othering’, colourism and mobile identities expanded on here is that they show that incompleteness can take the shape of anything because it is impossible to pin down a solid, final, complete self in a liquid universe, and it unfolds everywhere, touching every one of us in some way or form at various points in time. Some of us are not white enough. Others are too white. Some are not black enough, and others are too black. Some are women and others are not woman enough. Some are too short and others are too tall, and so on and so forth. But we do not appear able to accept this persistent, permanent condition of incompleteness. We try to fight it. We even try to fight the ‘problem of death’, “a technological problem”<sup>53</sup>, a mere “technical problem”<sup>54</sup>, an option for us now. Yuval Harari had this to say on the matter:

[...] the attitude now towards disease and old age and death is that they are basically technical problems. It is a huge revolution in human thinking. Throughout history, old age and death were always treated as metaphysical problems, as something that the gods decreed, as something fundamental to what defines humans, what defines the human condition and reality. Even a few years ago, very few doctors or scientists would seriously say that they are trying to overcome old age and death. They would say no, I am trying to overcome this particular disease, whether it's tuberculosis or cancer or Alzheimer's. Defeating disease and death, this is nonsense, this is science fiction. But, the new attitude

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<sup>51</sup> [https://discover.hubpages.com/technology/Make-a-metaverse-avatar-to-reinvent-your-online-identity;https://sybershel.com/the-first-step-towards-being-immortal/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=the-first-step-towards-being-immortal](https://discover.hubpages.com/technology/Make-a-metaverse-avatar-to-reinvent-your-online-identity;https://sybershel.com/the-first-step-towards-being-immortal/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=the-first-step-towards-being-immortal).

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/future/identity/will-we-have-different-identities-in-virtual-spaces>.

<sup>53</sup> <https://evangelicalfocus.com/print/647/Death-is-just-a-technological-problem-to-be-solved-says-popular-historian>.

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/apr/20/yuval-noah-harari-will-coronavirus-change-our-attitudes-to-death-quite-the-opposite>.

is to treat old age and death as technical problems, no different in essence than any other disease. It's like cancer, it's like Alzheimer's, it's like tuberculosis. Maybe we still don't know all the mechanisms and all the remedies, but in principle, people always die due to technical reasons, not metaphysical reasons<sup>55</sup>.

Harari added:

You take fantasies, which for thousands of years belonged to the religious realm - overcoming death or our merging with the universe - and you suddenly start talking about them in a more technical perspective as something that can be achieved, not after you die with the help of supernatural beings, but in this very life with the help of technology. So all the old promises of traditional religion, whether it's happiness, justice or everlasting life, it's the same promises that are now being made by the new Silicon Valley religion and Silicon Valley gurus. But they promise to make this possible with the help of technology and not with the help of supernatural beings<sup>56</sup>.

Francis Nyamnjoh (2015: 23-24) also spoke about us seeking to achieve completeness, perfection, running after perfectibility by treating our incompleteness as if a matter of technological or technical lack or deficiency, the seeming solution to which would be to add unto the incomplete human self, those lacking technologies ('*juju*'<sup>57</sup>) to make it complete:

[...] where one's nature taken together is the cause of one's incompleteness, one looks outside oneself for technologies – supernatural or otherwise – of self-activation to attend the potency one needs for efficacious action. In some such cases, it calls for reaching out and harnessing the potentialities of others through acts of dependence or interdependence [...] Still in other instances, the technology is beyond simple dependence or interdependence. It is a thing

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<sup>55</sup> [https://www.edge.org/conversation/yuval\\_noah\\_harari-daniel\\_kahneman-death-is-optional](https://www.edge.org/conversation/yuval_noah_harari-daniel_kahneman-death-is-optional).

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/harari-on-homo-deus-immortality-dataism-and-health-the-infinite-market/a-19523293>.

<sup>57</sup> To add '*juju*' to the incomplete self implies the magical appropriation of things that do not belong with and to some of us in the first place, which we pick and choose for ourselves that help us transform, shapeshift, for a little while, into what or who we would like to be or look like. '*Juju*' is the typically West African term for magical power or fetish, charm or amulet (any object) that has been infused with magical power. See <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/juju> for dictionary definition.

external to oneself, available to be activated to enable or render possible what one desires – something one can acquire, master, manage, own and share with others. Something as juju and magic [...].

This is a quest with severe, counterintuitive consequences said Nyamnjoh – a dangerous delusion, “a costly illusion”<sup>58</sup> because no matter what ‘*juju*’ we add unto our selves, we cannot go against the nature of that which we belong to or come from (our universe). But we try at it, and the more we do so and the less our completeness manifests, the more frustrated we get and the more violently reactive we become, impatient with ourselves, impatient with others, impatient with the socio-political world, radicalised in our approaches and engagements with everything and everyone. The case of hashtag movements including those of the #RhodesMustFall and #BlackLivesMatter brought up in the next section of this chapter (Hashtag Movements) expands on this.

### **Hashtag Movements**

Since the 2010s, we have seen the pouring out of humankind’s overgrown frustrations with the fact of incompleteness in the manner of global online and in-person activism intensified by new technologies and social media platforms as well as endorsement by influential public figures. We no longer have to wait decades until we stop our (imagined, felt or known) oppressors in their evil endeavours. No. Today, we can act quickly. We can hashtag our disapproval of them and have them #cancelled from the socio-political world as immediately as we find them causing or fixing our incompleteness while demanding that these be remedied under the guise of social justice to compensate where legal justice appears to have failed or be failing. We do this as a whole planet, a singular public sphere (Habermas 1989: 176), a sort of one world citizenry. In other words, the quest for completeness is not localised, dispersed, history-specific or up for political debate today. The online bridge is there to bring us together, and where we would once have been fighting our battles alone, we now fight each other’s battles as they are our own. This, unfortunately, is still no remedy for incompleteness. We can argue that, on the contrary, the hashtag is only exacerbating the fact of incompleteness, making more and more visible its permanence instead. The hashtag movements that follow, including #BlackLivesMatter and #RhodesMustFall, expand on this.

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<sup>58</sup> <https://stias.ac.za/2015/04/francis-nyamnjohs-stias-lecture-rhodes-fell-because-of-an-illusion/>

The past decades have seen an unprecedented dispersion of information and the congruent heightened use of social media platforms around the world. New tools have had to be developed to maintain order and sense as this unfolded. This includes the hashtag, used on every possible online platform today, including and especially Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, to mark into searchable and identifiable topics just about anything that has to do with the socio-political world. This is hashtag flooding, which the Columbia Journalism Review<sup>59</sup> speaks of as “a good way to introduce a story or perspective into the mainstream news cycle” and “a way to figure out what the public wants to discuss and learn about”. #DressLikeAWoman, for example, was introduced online after a report that Donald Trump had asked his staff to dress like women, which was taken to mean that they were incomplete in their femininity if not dressed to satisfy the male gaze, leading to famous or privileged women (medical doctors, astronauts, judges, and so on...) from all over the world rallying online to show that femininity did not stand on clothing style<sup>60</sup>. #StopFundingHate went viral as the online protector and defender of migrants and minorities who are, let us remember, the embodiment of incompleteness in the manner and matter of not belonging<sup>61</sup>. And #BringBackOurGirls, which had to do with the abduction of Nigerian school girls by terrorist organisation, Boko Haram, had as far as one million users (hashtaggers) around the world, including Michelle Obama posting about and thus advertising the matter, now no longer a Nigerian or an African socio-political matter whose direct victims are women and children but a global one instead.

This leads us to the fact of digital technologies enabling the world toward what looks like a global quest for completeness. With the right hashtag cutting through immense amounts of information, solidarity and collective experience are immediately sought and encouraged, and the entire socio-political world is called to organise against manifestations of incompleteness. We are talking about transnationalism here, with the hashtag as the bridge connecting us in fighting each other’s battles where we would have once done this separately, fighting on our own, alone, for completeness – a sort of rallying in numbers as a singular public to address and resolve socio-political issues that had led to our incompleteness. We are now global citizens (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller 2012) naturally geared to adhering to global citizenship content, values and behaviour (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Turner et al., 1987) under six clusters (Reysen &

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<sup>59</sup> [https://archives.cjr.org/realtalk/hashtag\\_journalism.php](https://archives.cjr.org/realtalk/hashtag_journalism.php).

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/03/dresslikeawoman-backlash-over-reports-of-dress-code-for-trump-staff>.

<sup>61</sup> See page 31-32 of this thesis for more on migrant identities as mobile identities.

Katzarska-Miller 2013): intergroup empathy, valuing diversity, social justice, environmental sustainability, intergroup helping, and the sense of responsibility to act for a better world, a better tomorrow for all. Criticism is however on the rise on the matter of the likelihood of a meaningful global citizenry and this having been brought about by way of digital technologies, and the actual impact of such tools as the hashtag. David Carr (2012) condensed this as so: “If you ‘like’ something, does it mean you care about it? [...] ‘Another week, another hashtag, and with it, a question about what is actually being accomplished’”. Is the hashtag bringing about change in the world? Is it leading to completeness?

Susan Hopkins and Eric Louw (2019: 34) took on the case of celebrity engagements on digital platforms to reveal a first answer to these questions: “celebrity fail”. This has to do with “the hypocrisy and shallowness of those celebrity activists, who make moral claims for female equality and freedom, while at the same time profiting as a symbol of material success and ideal femininity within an inherently unequal and exploitative system” (Hopkins et al., 2019: 34). We can take as example the women who went against Donald Trump and his comment on femininity and clothing, running with Hopkins et al., (2019: 34) again, as they argued that those women would “inadvertently contradict the cause of global gender equality” because they were sitting in privileged positions, profiting from the very system that they were standing against, and yet spoke as if suffering as equally as the women who were not as privileged as them. Is it that privileged women felt incomplete even when they had reached the high echelons of the socio-political hierarchy? Is it that, no matter how far up the socio-political ladder they got, however famous they got, it was still not enough for them to feel ‘enough’, complete, which should then prove that completeness is unachievable? Are we also to speak about who has the right to speak? Or whose voice matters on this matter? What do lesser privileged women have to say on the matter? Are they allowed their say about it or are they being forced into another level of incompleteness where they are not ‘privileged women’ enough to be heard at the level of the global citizenry on the matter of gender equality and freedom?

Adding to these questions: Did it take a hashtag by Michelle Obama for the global citizenry to demand justice on the matter of the Nigerian girls who had been kidnapped by Boko Haram? Did these girls need Obama’s hashtag? Did that hashtag do anything at all, practically? Did it resolve the conflict in the region and sort through the layered complexities that lead to this type of violence in the country (Gay 2013; Goldberg 2014; Murphy 2013)? Why is it appropriate

for an American politician to put Nigeria on the world map as that country with terrorist groups and kidnapped girls and unresolved conflicts? We should be talking about the right to speak for Africa here, looking at Binyavanga Wainaina's (2005) satirical piece on the matter, *How to Write about Africa*, which would say nothing less than the USA 'othering' Nigeria and Africa in general instead of crying out justice for these:

Always use the word 'Africa' or 'Darkness' or 'safari' in your title. Subtitles may include 'Zanzibar', 'Masai', 'Zulu', 'Zambezi', 'Congo', 'Nile', 'Big', 'Sky', 'Shadow', 'Drum', 'Sun' or 'Bygone'. Also useful are words such as 'Guerillas', 'Timeless', 'Primordial' and 'Tribal' [...] When writing about the plight of flora and fauna, make sure you mention that Africa is overpopulated. When your main character is in a desert or jungle living with indigenous peoples (anybody short) it is okay to mention that Africa has been severely depopulated by Aids and War (use caps). You'll also need a nightclub called Tropicana, where mercenaries, evil nouveau riche Africans and prostitutes and guerillas and expats hang out.

And why is the global citizenry less virulent about hashtagging first-world problems including American ones such as #schoolshooting? We could be looking at levels of open access and participatory parity, inclusion and exclusion unfolding on digital platforms, and the tools that were meant to lead us all toward and into completeness now undermining some of us, weaponised against some of us with the global citizenry eventually not showing united in empathetic oneness. All of this takes us back to the fact of incompleteness. At first glance, it may seem like an exciting new phase of global socio-political history where information, communication, media, morality and socio-politics have converged, and power stands to have moved into the hands of the masses who now hashtag what they feel is good or right and what is not, whenever they feel so, demanding that all are complete, i.e., that every individual in the socio-political world become complete. But this speaks directly to our incapability or maybe unwillingness to see the forest from the trees, swimming in knowledge and wanting none of it: the very fact of activism expanding into the virtual world and hashtag movements growing in intensity at global scale speak directly to completeness being impossible as the quest for justice

for all leads nowhere solid<sup>62</sup>. For, how are we to bring about completeness at global scale when we are all permanently incomplete, always ‘other’ to others, ‘other’ to the ‘self’ at times, and only contextually more complete than others? This is well recalled by Valentin-Yves Mudimbe in his 1988 (20) *The Invention of Africa* wherein he quoted Paul Ricoeur (1965: 277) on the matter of the sort of delusional human aspiration to global completeness or sameness, attributing this to our continued global intellectual and perceptual imprisonment within the walls of Occidental science:

The fact that universal civilization has for a long time originated from the European center has maintained the illusion that European culture was, in fact and by right, a universal culture. Its superiority over other civilizations seemed to provide the experimental justification of this postulate. Moreover, the encounter with other cultural traditions was itself the fruit of that advance and more generally the fruit of Occidental science itself. Did not Europe invent history, geography, ethnography, and sociology in their explicit scientific forms [...] When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with destruction by our own discovery, Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just *others*, that we ourselves are an ‘other’ among others. All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through civilizations as if through vestiges and ruins. The whole of mankind becomes a kind of imaginary museum: where shall we go this week-end – visit the Angkor ruins or take a stroll in the Trivoli of Copenhagen?

Now, if our incapability or unwillingness to understand and accept that we are all ‘other’, all permanently incomplete, stems from our imprisonment within the walls of Occidental science, would stepping out or breaking out or being out of there make a difference? Absolutely. Africa and Africans and other component parts of the continent are proof of this. Let us use the

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<sup>62</sup> This is not suggestion that (liquid) changes are impossible and are not to be sought – because activism has in fact shown necessary for our world to change – for women to be allowed the right to vote, for girls to attend school, for blacks to be allowed other socio-political positions than slave labour, and so on and so forth. The argument here is against solid or permanent changes. With activism still being necessary, we are looking at changes not having permanent effects or meaningfulness or impact in the world. They remain liquid, incomplete too.

example of the modern-day African city of Lagos to explain this. Lagos, Nigeria, is a city known for its state of being in permanent chaos – a space in the making, a world becoming, a socio-economic and cultural system constantly changing, never finished, shapeshifting. It is both developed and underdeveloped, never one, never the other, never both, never complete in either one of these states, never in the past, never in the present:

To some Western intellectuals, Lagos has become the archetype of the megacity – perhaps because its growth has been so explosive, and perhaps because its cityscape has become so apocalyptic. It has attracted the attention of leading writers and artists, who have mounted international exhibitions in London and Berlin. All this interest has somehow transformed Lagos into a hip icon of the latest global trends, the much studied megalopolis of the future, like London and Paris in the nineteenth century or New York and Tokyo in the twentieth. For several years, the Dutch architect and urban theorist Rem Koolhaas has been working with his students at the Harvard Graduate School of Design on a project to thesis the future of cities; he has gone to Lagos four times and produced several articles as well as a book to be published early next year, “Lagos: How It Works”. Koolhaas once described Lagos to an interviewer as a protean organism that creatively defies constrictive Western ideas of urban order. “What is now fascinating is how, with some level of self-organization, there is a strange combination of extreme underdevelopment and development,” he said. “And what particularly amazes me is how the kinds of infrastructure of modernity in the city trigger off all sorts of unpredictable improvised conditions, so that there is a kind of mutual dependency that I’ve never seen anywhere else”. With its massive traffic jams creating instant markets on roads and highways, Lagos is not “a kind of backward situation,” Koolhaas said, but, rather, “an announcement of the future”<sup>63</sup>.

Lagos and its incompleteness are the epitome of what Nyamnjoh (2017b) defined as “African potentials”, the African capacity to mediate “frontier modes of existence”, a sort of intuitive African acceptance of identity pliancy in and of all things and all humans – a characteristic particularly African, we ought to read here. Amos Tutuola must be brought up again, not for

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<sup>63</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/11/13/the-megacity>

his own incompleteness as a non-normative English writer (as explained earlier in this chapter<sup>64</sup>) but for his poetic expression of this pliancy in his *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1954). In it, Tutuola spoke of the skull, a “curious creature” that decided to leave its cave and borrow human body parts and clothing that became his ‘*juju*’, to temporarily but fearlessly show itself as a “‘complete’ gentleman” instead, charming the most beautiful lady at the village market then, and eventually luring her to his cave through an endless forest “in which only all the terrible creatures were living” (Tutuola 1954: 18-19). Still, more debilitating than those terrible creatures is that the longer she spent following the “beautiful ‘complete’ gentleman”, the more glaring the insidiousness of his initial charm: he would strip himself back to a skull, deactivating the ‘*juju*’ over his fully realised humanness when giving this back to its rightful owners along the way – to the absolute fright of the lady who then only wanted to run back to her father but was kept prisoner of the skull with a cowrie tied around her neck that would and could “reduce the power of any human being” (Tutuola 1954: 27). This is until the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world” took on his ‘*juju*’ in turn, changing himself (itself) from “lizard” to “thin air” to “a very small bird”, outmanoeuvring the skull and saving her (Tutuola 1954: 28).

A first point to retain from and about Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is of the liquidness of socio-political positionalities along a scale of incompleteness (ranging from completeness to ever-diminishing levels thereof) in the manner of contextual and continued identity performance, with each positionality being lacking, temporary and dependent upon the employ or lack of ‘*juju*’ in interaction with others: the lady moved from being the beautiful daughter of the town head to the woman that nobody could drag into marriage, to an enamoured, naive woman, then to a prisoner of the skull with a cowrie binding her to it, later to be the lucky human freed by the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world”, and back to being the beautiful daughter of the town head; the skull became a fully realised human, borrowing body parts and clothing from those whom it met on its way to the town where the lady was, to turn skull again when returning the borrowed body parts and clothing back to their rightful owners, and to be outmanoeuvred by the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world”; and the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world” became lizard and thin air and a very small bird, back to being the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world”, and so on and so forth, and back and forth (Tutuola 1954). With each new

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<sup>64</sup> See page 23 of this thesis.

interaction, which Louis Herns Marcelin (n.d.) imagined forming “contact zones, arbitrary or opportunistic spaces [...] that constitute natural space for ‘claim’ or ‘disclaim’”, the positionality of the lady, the skull, and the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world” changed to be at times superior and at times inferior, in between, close to or far from completeness.

It is within this context that we retain a second point from Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, to enter the realm of “subalternity” (Spivak 1994) where the lady was automatically fixed in the subaltern positionality because she had no particular ‘*juju*’ but her beauty or not enough extra layers of petition to borrow and activate, which could have helped her express some solidity, some proximity to completeness – against her own father (the town head), for instance, whose protection (from the persisting seductions and desires of the men around her) she appeared unable to rely upon; then against the skull, to see through and resist its charm or at least not fall for it as quickly, helplessly, haplessly and naively as she would; and finally, against the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world”, upon whom she had her life and freedom (only, freedom back to being her father’s beautiful daughter) fully depend on. In all appearances, she was ill-equipped to be or to become anything or anyone else than her father’s daughter seduced by a skull temporarily turned “beautiful ‘complete’ gentleman”, and saved by the “father of the gods who could do anything in this world” – in an obviously male-dominated, patriarchal contact zone, where she existed only in relation to men as their subaltern, in perpetual need of saving.

This should remind us of the abolition of the Hindu traditional practice of ‘*sati*’ (or widow burning) by the British in 1829, which would be “generally understood as a case of ‘White men saving brown women from brown men’” (Spivak 1994: 93) – an assured, internalised and institutionalised order of violence occurring along the scale of incompleteness, where the idea or the act of saving brown women would be disguised, misplaced and mislabelled violence done by white men unto brown men unto brown women, in that very order. This would have brown women suffer the most in the socio-political world – because victim of brown men; because not saved by white men at all; because needing saving in many more ways than just from brown men; because needing saving from white men too; because between father, suitors, skull and the “father of the gods who could do everything in this world”, women would be nothing but subaltern, object, subject, left with no discursive room to exist – disappeared,

silenced and spoken for instead; because for women to be anything at all, anything beyond men, to exercise any form of agency and mastery and power over her own life, '*she*' would have to be a '*he*', and a specific typology of '*he*' – insidiously cold and calculating. Of course, in a liquid universe, this is possible. Nyamnjoh (2018: 12-13) captured this as so:

If those in power show themselves to be weak, however indirectly, they see themselves running the risk of losing that power. So, even when they do indulge in the temptations of the flesh and succumb to the weaknesses of the body – i.e. when they admit that 'we are all human' in the manner of someone who has fallen from grace, they must do all in their power and privilege to keep this a secret, to hush things up, including bullying and killing (known as 'catch and kill') potentially compromising stories, if necessary. Boys don't cry, we hear every now and again, and boys who yield easily to the lure and allure of their emotions, are urged to control themselves, or to hush up those who have tempted them with the pleasuring weakness of being. Girls in power, on the other hand, can only be taken seriously if they are able to assert their boyishness of being, through tom-boy like affirmations to earn accolades such as Margaret Thatcher's 'Iron Lady' nickname. A girl with ambitions of power who expresses her feelings, making known for example that she is unhappy in her relationships with men – be these her father, brother, husband or simply an acquaintance – is thought of as displaying a weakness incommensurate with being in a position of power and showing leadership [...] Iron fists, iron ladies and stiff upper lips are called for in a world configured narrowly around and championed by a conquering supremacist masculinity and its diktaks.

The conquering supremacist masculinity that Nyamnjoh brought up here speaks to the typology of masculinity that is emotion-less, thus feminine-less, thus unambiguously masculine, thus normal, thus complete – deserving of power, political. Of course, this typology of masculinity, i.e., complete masculinity, is not possible and cannot be possible because the very fact of conquering supremacist masculinity infers being human, which in turn infers being with emotion. And when complete masculinity shows itself, it can only be temporarily so – borne of '*juju*' worn over the naturally incomplete masculine self, which would occupy strategic place in the legitimisation of '*he*' as complete then. This makes Angela Merkel and Margaret

Thatcher prime examples of women turned “‘complete’ gentlemen” (Tutuola 1954) because embracing the ‘*juju*’ of conquering supremacist masculinity in their career as politicians.

By this, it is clear that our socio-political positionalities are liquid, that we shapeshift depending on context, and that any promise or expectation of the contrary speaks instead to human hysteria at its throbbing worst – collective madness caused by the fact of our permanent incompleteness –, which would have us eventually stand not only against each other but against humanness itself, against human nature, ultimately stuck in a continuous cycle of ‘othering’ each other as we were all inadequate, insufficient, not fully made yet, not enough of what we imagine we could be or should be, short-changed by our maker(s). This is exactly as would stand Eve, tempted by the fruit of the tree of knowledge against God’s orders<sup>65</sup>, and more clearly so, the Monster in the face of Viktor Frankenstein (Shelley 1998), wanting, proud, envious, desperate and incapable of accepting the brutal truth of existing as incomplete parts of an imagined complete whole. We are hardwired to deny and defy ourselves, recklessly and violently crossing into forbidden territory to usurp a solidity that would not be ours in the first place. Lila Abu-Lughod (1991: 139-140) remarked on the subject as she read *Anthropology against Feminist Theory*:

If anthropology continues to be practiced as the thesis by an unproblematic and unmarked Western self of found ‘others’ out there, feminist theory, an academic practice that also traffics in selves and others, has in its relatively short history come to realize the danger of treating selves and others as givens [...] From Simone de Beauvoir on, it has been accepted that, at least in the modern West, woman have been the other to men’s self. Feminism has been a movement devoted to helping women become selves and subjects rather than objects and men’s others [...] As Harding (1986: 246) puts it, the problem is that “once ‘woman’ is deconstructed into ‘women’ and ‘gender’ is recognized to have no fixed referents, feminism itself dissolves as a theory that can reflect the voice of the naturalized or essentialized speaker [...] From its experience with this crisis of selfhood and subjecthood, feminist theory can offer anthropology two useful reminders. First, the self is always a construction, never a natural or found entity, even if it has its appearance. Second, the process of creating a self through

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<sup>65</sup> Genesis 3, Bible.

opposition to an other always entails the violence of repressing or ignoring other forms of difference.

The examples that follow, of #RhodesMustFall and #BlackLivesMatter especially, show this. South Africa counts a population of about 59.67 million people, mobile connections sitting at 168.5%, 38.19 million internet users, and 25 million social media users<sup>66</sup>. With this as its digital capacity background, it is only natural that local activism moved online too, augmenting influence, involvement and crowd capacity. This is evident in the case of the #RhodesMustFall movement<sup>67</sup>, started on 9 March 2015 at the University of Cape town (UCT), South Africa, to protest supposed ongoing unequal access to opportunity and mobility at the university – inequality suffered by students of colour, black South Africans especially. The demand was for real post-apartheid socio-political transformation, decolonisation, which the ‘born free’ should have enjoyed along the lines of the South African transition from apartheid to democracy two decades earlier. The bust of Cecil John Rhodes, which sat at the centre of the main campus of the university was to fall, symbolical of the expected outcome of this protest. It (he) fell one month into the protest: “When the crane removed the Cecil Rhodes statue, it was a huge victory for black South Africans fed up with a lack of education and job opportunities more than 20 years after apartheid ended. ‘We finally got the white man to sit down and listen to us’, said a student who had campaigned for it to be taken down. Some were chanting ‘one settler; one bullet’ – a sign that anger could boil over if the lives of black people do not improve”<sup>68</sup>.

There are two points to make here, both speaking to incompleteness. The first point is that Rhodes (man or bust) was not always unwanted in South Africa. Robert Rotberg (1988: 65, 99-104) wrote that there was a time when Rhodes was regarded as a great entrepreneur and imperial architect, a dreamer, a man with unparalleled emotional intelligence who knew how to forge fruitful bonds with talented others, a natural leader, a visionary pursuing in Africa what he believed were the noble objectives of expanding the ‘civilized’ British Empire, the ‘finest race in the world’, while bringing the ‘uncivilized rest’ under British rule. Rhodes was then acclaimed for his work on the continent: “Hitler described him as the only Englishman who

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<sup>66</sup> <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-south-africa>.

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/debates/Transform-UCT/>; <https://items.ssrc.org/where-heritage-meets-violence/rhodesmustfall-the-university-of-cape-town-and-the-deep-inscription-of-colonialism/>.

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32236922#:~:text=When%20the%20crane%20removed%20the,it%20to%20be%20taken%20down>.

truly understood Anglo-Saxon ideals and destiny”<sup>69</sup>. And Rhodes justified his plan to conquer African soil from Cape to Cairo (Van Waarden 2021: 2) from the point of his assumed racial superiority: “I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. I contend that every acre added to our territory means the birth of more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence”<sup>70</sup>. Rhodes is also said to have thought this plan possible under a secret church, a secret organisation or intellectual, spiritual and financial support under one roof, one temple. Secret societies were not new to him then, who had claimed himself or would be asserted a member of Freemasonry<sup>71</sup>. This made of him a member of the African and European elite, adding to his stellar status in Africa and the world. It is along these lines that he supposedly pushed for the foundation of the Round Table in Africa (Brown 2015). There are now 239 Round Tables in Southern Africa alone, with 1000 members<sup>72</sup>.

Today, Rhodes is asserted “one of the people who helped prepare the way for apartheid by working to alter laws on voting and land ownership”<sup>73</sup>, nothing more than “murderous land-grabbing racist”<sup>74</sup>:

Cecil Rhodes was a man responsible for untold, unending devastation and violence. An architect of South African apartheid, he explicitly believed in the existence of an Anglo-Saxon master race – an ideology that drove him to not only steal approximately one million miles of South African land, but to facilitate the deaths of hundreds of thousands of black South Africans [...] His establishment of a paramilitary private army, the British South Africa Company’s Police (BSACP) resulted in the systematic murder of approximately 60,000 people; his amendment of the Masters and Servants Act (1890) reintroduced conditions of torture for black labourers; his infamous racist “land

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bbc-unveils-a-victorian-hero-a-moneymad-racist-closet-gay-1330823.html>.

<sup>70</sup> <https://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Rhodes-Confession.htm>.

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.kimberley.org.za/today-kimberleys-history-2-june/>; <https://www.mail-archive.com/ctrl@listserv.aol.com/msg14576.html>; <http://worchesterlodge280.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Famous-Freemasons.pdf>; <https://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Rhodes-Confession.htm>.

<sup>72</sup> <https://roundtable.co.za/history-of-rti/>.

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32131829>.

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/12064939/We-dont-want-to-erase-Cecil-Rhodes-from-history.-We-want-everyone-to-know-his-crimes.html>.

grabs” set up a system in which the unlawful and illegitimate acquisition of land through armed force was routine. Rhodes despised democracy. In 1887 he told the House of Assembly in Cape Town: “The native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise. We must adopt a system of despotism in our relations with the barbarians of South Africa”. His 1892 Franchise and Ballot Act effectively eliminated African voting rights. He repeatedly reminded his colleagues of the “extreme caution” they must exercise when it comes to “granting the franchise to coloured people”<sup>75</sup>.

The permanent liquidness of Rhodes’s socio-political positionality is undeniable: one day he was admired and on another, he was hated. One day he was enough, and on another he was not. One day he was perfect, complete, and on another he was disgustingly incomplete. And for some, like members of the Round Table, he might still be complete. This see-saw movement in his identity, a sort of duality that cannot be pinned into solidity, is exacerbated by the possibility of his homosexual or asexual proclivities (Brown 2015) that would make of him less of a “‘complete’ gentleman” (Tutuola 1954) or not a masculine man or not a man that we could imagine conquering with cold, calculated brutality the African continent if we went along with the debates of today about completeness running the latitudes of “what is a woman?”<sup>76</sup>, for example. We find the same duality everywhere else in the socio-political world, including in black South African students at UCT who would claim themselves contemporary victims of Rhodes, and on another day were throwing faeces at his bust at UCT<sup>77</sup>. We can push this further: one day South Africa was governed under apartheid laws, and on another day, it had the Constitution<sup>78</sup> promising democratic ideals and principles with black South Africans at its head.

The second point about the #RhodesMustFall movement to bring up here is more of the next question. What change unfolded with the fall of Rhodes? Did it bring about the completeness

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<sup>75</sup> <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/161552>.

<sup>76</sup> Mentioned earlier on page 12 of this thesis. <https://coveteur.com/what-is-a-woman>; See also Matt Walsh’s documentary “What is a Woman?” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ta8NjfVrkI>.

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.news.uct.ac.za/news/debates/Transform-UCT/>; <https://items.ssrc.org/where-heritage-meets-violence/rhodesmustfall-the-university-of-cape-town-and-the-deep-inscription-of-colonialism/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/nov/18/why-south-african-students-have-turned-on-their-parents-generation>.

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/saconstitution-web-eng.pdf>; <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-1>.

that was sought through and from it? Does it look today to have been “a crucial harbinger of broader social issues affecting South Africa”<sup>79</sup>? Or are we to go with the idea that it takes time for socio-political transitions to fully manifest, to reach their state of potential completeness? Would this not go against the very thing that was deemed impermissible as the #RhodesMustFall protest unfolded: the passing of time, the waiting on change? Nyamnjoh (2016: 84) explained about the #RhodesMustFall movement that it came about exactly because students had become impatient, unwilling to wait on meaningful change any longer:

The students are impatient that over twenty years into the so-called free and new dispensation, South Africans are yet to disrupt ‘enough the structures that maintain and re-produce “white power and supremacy”, and which ensure that the mostly black majority continue to be ‘trapped in a ‘bad life’ that keeps wearing them out and down’. They are revolting against the terms of agreement dictated to them, terms that have only compounded their predicament. The students are voicing in no uncertain terms their dissatisfaction with the lacklustre manner in which those in charge have gone about the business of transforming a skewed, racialised South Africa into an inclusive, egalitarian society.

We should begin thinking about the quest of the black students of UCT for completeness as without permanent solidity, liquid then, because Rhodes falling would not appear to have brought about meaningful change in and about their lives: “After my PhD, I don’t think I want to be an academic. There are so many barriers to jump. My Black body still needs to be accepted by white academics. It’s not just about whiteness: I’m queer, I’m poor, I support several of my family members — I need to earn a salary. There’s more job security in other careers. Of course, there’s the feeling of ‘If I don’t change it, who will?’, but self-care matters, and I’m exhausted”<sup>80</sup>. We should also note that #RhodesMustFall went as far as Oxford University a few months after starting at UCT<sup>81</sup>. The students there demanded that the bust of Rhodes, towering Oriel College, fall too: “Our demand,” according to activists, “is for decolonisation, not diversity” (Ahmed 2020). Another protestor insisted: “Removing the statue...would address our colonial past in an effort to decolonise our collective conscience”. The statue did not fall. Does this mean that the students at Oxford University and their hashtags failed at

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<sup>79</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall>.

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01321-3>.

<sup>81</sup> <https://harvardpolitics.com/rhodes-must-fall/>.

addressing the colonial past or decolonise their collective conscience? Did they fail at bringing about completeness at their university? Are we to talk about these students as being incapable of completing what they had set out to do? Are we looking at “slacktivism” (Cook et al., 2014) here? Are we to be more “techno-pessimist” (Bosch et al., 2020)? Or are we simply to be cautious about the promises of the global citizenry and hashtag activism in bringing about completeness – because completeness is impossible in a liquid universe?

Regardless of the road we choose to take, and whatever case we are met with on the subject, we always end up at the crossroads of completeness and incompleteness, with incompleteness standing out as the only viable option between the two. Case in point: in the early months of 2017, students of the Evergreen State College (ESC), USA, began protests that seemingly had grown from right and righteous demands and support for the implementation of a Strategic Equity Plan that should supposedly dismantle institutional racism and achieve fairness of treatment and equality of outcome for all there. This was planned along improvement in “the experiences of underserved students on our campus so that we close equity gaps in student learning and student success”, speaking to “an unequitable difference [...] between the experiences, opportunities, and/or outcomes of underserved students” as a consequence of their “historical exclusion from ‘the academe’ and its power and resources”<sup>82</sup>. But the demand and support for what should have been addressing and redressing the positionality of “underserved students”, eventually grew into the active and aggressive exclusion of many – those who did not meet the narrow and quite vague criteria of being “underserved”, such as those claimed privileged and whites especially<sup>83</sup>. At some point during the protests, for example, the “underserved” student protesters denied food and chairs to the white students who had joined their cause and had been protesting alongside them all along. A three-part documentary by Mike Nayna spoke to this<sup>84</sup>, putting out the fact that anybody at ESC who questioned or challenged the demands and ways of the “underserved” student protesters even when these stood injurious to others would be dismissed as anti-equity or racist – demonised, dehumanised.

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<sup>82</sup> <https://www.evergreen.edu/sites/default/files/equity/documents/FINAL%202016-17%20Strategic%20Equity%20Plan%20--%20FOR%20CAMPUS-1.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/80-evergreen-protesters-sanctioned-for-breaking-student-conduct-code/>.

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FH2WeWgcSMk>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0W9QbkX8Cs>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vyBLCqyUes>.

A similar line of challenges on the matter of the quest for completeness as those of the #RhodesMustFall movement and the protests for decolonisation at the ESC can be raised about #BlackLivesMatter. The movement came about as a response to the acquittal of white neighbourhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, who shot to his death 17-year-old African American Trayvon Martin in 2012 in Florida, USA<sup>85</sup>. Frustration and anger then grew among African Americans in the country, leading to protests bearing ‘Black Lives Matter’ as slogan to denote and denounce the various socio-political injustices and inequalities that they suffered<sup>86</sup>. Police brutality against African Americans was their main concern, which began trending on digital platforms as more cases of police shootings like that of Martin were brought to light. #BlackLivesMatter was fully established with the death of George Floyd under police arrest in 2020 in Minnesota and the riots that followed<sup>87</sup>. The movement was then imagined bringing about completeness for the African American socio-political category where the Civil Rights movement had supposedly been unsuccessful: “The Black Lives Matter movement is essentially picking up where its predecessor, the civil rights movement, left off. Both movements champion the progress and advancement of Black people; however, the Black Lives Matter movement isn’t as narrow sighted [...] It is about the full recognition of our rights as citizens; and it is a battle for full civil, social, political, legal, economic and cultural rights as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (Grimes 2019: 5).

Criticism has however been growing about racism, discrimination, fear mongering, ‘cancel culture’<sup>88</sup>, and the promotion of ideals and ideologies operating toward a sort of zero sum game

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<sup>85</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/05/us/trayvon-martin-shooting-fast-facts/index.html>.

<sup>86</sup> <https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/BLM>.

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/george-floyd-death-live-updates-protests-erupt-200529124843031.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Donald Trump had spoken about this in his 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2020 Address to the Nation: “In our schools, our newsrooms, even our corporate boardrooms, there is a new far-left fascism that demands absolute allegiance. If you do not speak its language, perform its rituals, recite its mantras, and follow its commandments, then you will be censored, banished, blacklisted, persecuted, and punished” (<https://europost.eu/en/a/view/trump-attacks-cancel-culture-totalitarianism-29906>). This is what has come to be known as ‘cancel culture’, a real shutting up and down of voices, a severe gag on the freedom of speech, the ‘cancellation’ of anything and anyone that stands in the way of the story (or stories) that the ‘woke’ and the failing Fourth Estate throw at the rest of the socio-political world – an extension of their reach and power in the socio-political world “not by persuasion but by socially marginalising and economically ruining their critics” as well as those who refuse to engage in their ‘woke uprisings’ (<https://unherd.com/2020/06/the-woke-have-no-vision-of-the-future/>): “This is harmful in the obvious sense: It diminishes open, enriching political discourse. However, even more harmful is the reduction of individuals with whom we disagree to nothing more than their political beliefs. We allow our own self-image to be defined by our political identification. We fail to realize that people are more than their votes for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. People have families, friends, hobbies, passions, thoughts, and priorities. A Trump voter is not necessarily a raving racist, and a Clinton voter is not necessarily trying to

denial of the right of others to matter if black lives must matter: “Support for ‘All Lives Matters’ linked to implicit racism and narrow definitions of discrimination”<sup>89</sup>; “Black Lives Matter has increased racial tension, 55% say in UK poll”<sup>90</sup>; “Did Last Summer’s Black Lives Matter Protests Change Anything?”<sup>91</sup>; “Former HFFA President Called Black Lives Matter a ‘Racist Hate Movement’ in Email”<sup>92</sup>; “BLM and education: are we any closer to a school system that works for all?”<sup>93</sup>; “Black Lives Matter: the world has changed, but the problems remain: Historic shifts in social attitudes followed in the wake of George Floyd’s death and protests in many cities and towns. But in justice, education and work, what concrete actions are being taken to ensure a real and lasting transformation?”<sup>94</sup>; “The group’s radical Marxist agenda would supplant the basic building block of society – the family – with the state and destroy the economic system that has lifted more people from poverty than any other. Black lives, and all lives, would be harmed. Theirs is a blueprint for misery, not justice. It must be rejected”<sup>95</sup>; “Why you should stop saying ‘all lives matter’, explained in 9 different ways”<sup>96</sup>; “‘It is your duty *not* to burn your own house down for anger with an enemy’, said Atlanta rapper Killer Mike on May 29 after protests in his city, sparked by the death of George Floyd, left businesses, homes, and cars scorched. ‘It is your duty to fortify your own house, so that you may be a house of refuge in times of organization. And now is the time to plot, plan, strategize, organize, and mobilize’”<sup>97</sup>; “Note to self: White people taking part in #BlackLivesMatter protests”<sup>98</sup>, and so on and so forth<sup>99</sup>.

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leech off your hard-earned money. They are simply people who have different opinions than you. Those opinions do not make them dumb or evil. Those opinions do not have to mean that they are not woke. They are different, but they are not invalid” (<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2018/4/6/dolgin-why-im-not-woke/>).

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.psytopost.org/2021/10/support-for-all-lives-matters-linked-to-implicit-racism-and-narrow-definitions-of-discrimination-62016>.

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/27/black-lives-matter-has-increased-racial-tension-55-say-in-uk-poll>.

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/did-last-summers-protests-change-anything>.

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.vulture.com/2021/04/former-hfpa-president-black-lives-matter-racist-email.html>.

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/blm-and-education-are-we-any-closer-to-a-school-system-that-works-for-all>.

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/black-lives-matter-the-world-has-changed-but-the-problems-still-remain-vbxzxcz8f>.

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/the-agenda-black-lives-matter-far-different-the-slogan>.

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/11/12136140/black-all-lives-matter>.

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/06/03/when-black-lives-are-valued-property-becomes-worth-saving/>.

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.afsc.org/blogs/acting-in-faith/note-to-self-white-people-taking-part-blacklivesmatter-protests>.

<sup>99</sup> There are more examples of criticism of the movement, a non-exhaustive list, of course: “Ostensibly, the BLM movement was created to push for reform within law enforcement to stop the use of force against African American suspects and civilians, which is a noble cause. But the movement has adopted an extreme left-wing

Still, the likely failure of #BlackLivesMatter to bring about completeness in African Americans, the exacerbation of black incompleteness in the manner of the looting and destruction of underprivileged black neighbourhoods by the movement's protesters (following Floyd's death, for example)<sup>100</sup>, and the marginalisation of non-blacks from the movement are rare hashtag finds. Where is the global citizenry in all of this? Where are the proponents of "civil, social, political, legal, economic and cultural rights as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Grimes 2019: 5)? Should we also raise the questions: Black Lives Matter? Which black lives? Do black African lives matter? Do black European lives matter? Is there a typology of blackness that matters more than others? Is there a shade of blackness that deserves more attention than others? Is there a geography of blackness that is more incomplete than others? Is this a typology of African Americans? Are we then to talk about levels of incompleteness, a sort of hierarchy of grievances at the worst end of which this typology would find itself?

Let us also go about #BlackTwitter<sup>101</sup>, which followed #BlackLivesMatter and on which the voice of non-black people was 'othered', unwelcomed because lacking blackness, supposedly too far removed from the socio-political issues that African Americans would deal with, too incomplete in blackness to belong:

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socialist agenda, calling for the redistribution of wealth, decriminalization of drug-related offenses, abolishing police and prisons, and tearing down monuments. In other words, the movement, set up with the best of intentions, has become the core of the problem, spreading the very hatred and racism they were supposed to fight, hurting the black community above anyone else [...] BLM leaders made a major mistake when they decided to appeal to only half of the American population, sidelining conservative African Americans and painting the movement as a partisan entity that targets the other side of the political divide. Having a one-sided conversation makes no sense, unless there is a hidden motive to deepen the division between the American people, continue the chaos we have been witnessing for the past year, and promote anarchy and violence in the name of social justice" (<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1840931>); "The baby boomers who drove the success of the civil rights movement want to get behind Black Lives Matter, but the group's confrontational and divisive tactics make it difficult. In the 1960s, activists confronted white mobs and police with dignity and decorum, sometimes dressing in church clothes and kneeling in prayer during protests to make a clear distinction between who was evil and who was good. But at protests today, it is difficult to distinguish legitimate activists from the mob actors who burn and loot. The demonstrations are peppered with hate speech, profanity, and guys with sagging pants that show their underwear. Even if the BLM activists aren't the ones participating in the boorish language and dress, neither are they condemning it" (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/08/24/i-was-a-civil-rights-activist-in-the-1960s-but-its-hard-for-me-to-get-behind-black-lives-matter/>).

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/06/03/when-black-lives-are-valued-property-becomes-worth-saving/>.

<sup>101</sup> <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23BlackTwitter>.

Whiteness lacks the sense of ancestry to initiate a similar project. The entire purpose of whiteness, since Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, has been to respond to their basic question they ask themselves about the end results of the West: What to do with Black people? Their answer was perpetual, matrilineal slavery, and, after Union rifles were through with them, sharecropping, convict leasing, segregation, redlining, mass incarceration, the crack epidemic, subprime mortgages, and police shootings. Half of White people, based on their voting behavior, would see us dead. A strong percentage of the other half would police our protesting or have us wait eternally for the power we seek to live free and within justice; they would not terribly mind if we disappeared. The divisions with White people break any sense of ancestry they seek to forge. A divided people can never have accurate antecedents from which to draw justice. All they can do is either create spaces that attack Black personhood or latch into our communities and profess empathy<sup>102</sup>.

#BlackLivesMatter and the various ways in which it would 'other' certain people reveal a hierarchy of incompleteness that is undeniably operational in the larger socio-political world, and this hierarchy declared in 2020 that certain African Americans were the most incomplete of all incomplete humans. This stood fiercely true alongside #MeToo<sup>103</sup>, until the war in Ukraine<sup>104</sup> in 2022, which then made of the Ukrainian public the new most incomplete of all incomplete humans for the global citizenry to focus on and protest for<sup>105</sup>. The next socio-political problem or natural disaster that comes about would shift this again, of course. What is of note here is that, while #BlackLivesMatter may run the latitudes of being a sort of zero sum game denial of the right of others to matter if black lives must matter, it really looks to have more to do with permanent incompleteness see-sawing in context instead, where we are sometimes more or less incomplete than others but never complete: black lives should matter all the time, but they mattered the most until the war in Ukraine; black lives are always incomplete but Ukrainians are more incomplete than them right now; black lives were the most

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<sup>102</sup> <https://level.medium.com/tspaces-8eba125542c9>.

<sup>103</sup> <https://metoomvmt.org/>.

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/ukraine-war-timeline-one-year/>.

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/global-demonstrations-mark-year-of-war-in-ukraine/a-64811261>;  
<https://www.peaceinukraine.org/>; <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greenpeace-activists-in-berlin-protest-russias-war-on-ukraine/2829654>;  
<https://www.brusselstimes.com/380340/thousands-gather-in-brussels-to-protest-russian-invasion-of-ukraine>.

incomplete of all incomplete lives until the white Ukrainian public showed itself victim of a war; white lives did not really matter when black lives did, but white lives mattered when Ukrainian lives did; white victims of an international war matter more than black victims of localised systemic racism, and so on and so forth. #RhodesMustFall can read similarly as it was overrun by #AmINext in 2019 in South Africa following the rape and murder of University of Cape Town student, Uyinene Mrwetyana<sup>106</sup>. In the same vein, we can expect #IndianLivesMatter or #MuslimLivesMatter to overrun and ‘other’ a manifestation of incompleteness or to be ‘othered’ by the next at some point in our socio-political history.

Taking from the hashtag movements explored here, the argument is retained that our socio-political positionalities are contextual, liquid, mobile, shapeshifting, just like the rest of the universe, and we should think carefully about how to approach the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’ and their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. After all, the demands and expectations that their sitting at the bottom of the Mauritian socio-political hierarchy be redressed appear as manifestation of the quest for completeness. This would run along the same lines as the #RhodesMustFall and #BlackLivesMatter movements, against the fact of incompleteness, and therefore as a dangerous and delusional quest from the get-go.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the concept of incompleteness as the state of permanent liquidness or identity mobility and set this as the framework for this thesis on the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. It showed that none of us is ever complete, no matter what ‘*juju*’ we add unto our ‘self’. We only permanently sway from one state of incompleteness to another, where we are more or less incomplete than others depending on the context in which we find ourselves. Along these lines, the next chapter (Chapter Three) goes into historiographic and ethnographic analyses of the ‘*Nasyon*’ to later uncover the complexities of their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius as a case of incompleteness first and foremost.

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<sup>106</sup> <https://memeburn.com/2019/09/aminext-twitter-hashtag-south-africa/>.

# CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING THE ‘NASYON’ THROUGH THE PRISM OF HISTORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY: SOME METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

## Introduction

This chapter explores the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power as far and wide as possible to bring together the complexities of their socio-political positionality, first as a case of incompleteness. It goes into the two-fold approach of historical ethnography to help us reconstruct and understand this. The first part of this approach is a reading or an interpretation of Mauritian History or the history of Mauritian History in the manner of historiography, which should give us some sense of how and why the ‘*Nasyon*’ came about and how and why they would suffer their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. This should give us enough information to eventually see patterns that would be invisible, unclear on the matter – patterns that contribute to their current socio-positionality in Mauritius. The choice of historiography is simply because we could not explain the present socio-positionality of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as if without a history, without cause – as if emerging from nowhere or nothing, from a vacuum. The slight problem with historiography, however, is that it would not be enough to uncover the full breadth of this case. The patterns here would come from the observer thereof, from outsider observation, and therefore might be tainted, limited, biased. The solution to this, i.e., to avoid a biased historiographic reading of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, is to pursue an ethnographic analysis, which is also the second part to the two-fold approach to the matter. This entails intensive, first-hand contact with the ‘*Nasyon*’ and should allow us to capture the objective (rather than only the potentially biased) truth thereof since heavily reliant upon the ‘*Nasyon*’ themselves and with minimised influence on their activities, thoughts and engagements – or a partial truth at the very least, either to correct or to add to the patterns uncovered through historiography. The following questions guide this two-fold analysis: Who are the ‘*Nasyon*’? What is their socio-political positionality in Mauritius? And how did they end up in this socio-political positionality? This chapter expands on these, focusing on the question that follows: What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)?

### **Historiography of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as Non-Humans**

The research on the modes of action ( $x$ ) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ supposed persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius ( $y$ ) was first imagined sparking from a reading of Mauritian History. For, it should assumedly be by way of what History says or has to say on the subject, along the notion that there is “language always, before any question, and in the very question, comes down to the promise” (Derrida 1989: 94), that we would be able to make sense of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ case. Language, after all, is the promise that an event would have already happened, that it existed, that it was caused, that it had cause, that it had trace and trail anterior to, presupposing, older than, in advance of, the questioning thereof – “a sort of promise of originary alliance to which we must have in some sense already acquiesced, already said yes, given a pledge” (Derrida 1989: 94, 129). Along these lines, reading the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius should come with the promise that the ‘*Nasyon*’ exist and that they exist in History. Asking the question of ‘What are the modes of action ( $x$ ) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius ( $y$ )?’ would then stand as pre-originary pledge to ( $x$ ), or, in other words, a sort of complicitous, closed acceptance of, and response in intellectual authority to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ existence in the first place. It would also run in acceptance of their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius as this were possible event in History, with the possible language to promise it, to (re)present it, where event would announce language, and language would announce event, and event would announce language, and so on and so forth. Language cannot be independent from event, and should event have occurred, it would have to have the language that followed it to speak back to its past – to speak to its linear progression in time and space until it became, until it unfolded.

If there was a clear ‘*Nasyon*’ socio-political category to start with, we would go forward with History as the space-time model of causal networks and directions (Imai et al., 2011; Burgess & Small 2016) to read the language on the matter and take from it the reasons ( $x$ ) for ( $y$ ) on the basis that ( $x$ ) can be assumed causing ( $y$ ); that there are causal relations between points in space and time; that the past can be invoked to explain the present; that the past determines the future; that earlier stages produce later ones; that causes precede their effects; that, simply put, as navigating Physics and related fields gave us the Big Bang as cause of our existence, going into the socio-political history of Mauritius should give us the cause(s) of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power therein. This would be a reading of historical

causation from which cause or causal wave-chains ((x) as multiple and interrelated causes)) should become visible, which explain effect (y). But, although a very real component part of the Mauritian population and therefore of Mauritian socio-political history, there is little direct data on the '*Nasyon*' themselves, as if they did not exist or that they exist but in translucence, invisible in the country, outside of it as if a non-event. While this certainly complicated the space-time model imagined practicable, it did not nullify it. The Haitian Revolution of August 1791 is crucial here – a story whose historical value was set upon the sensibilities of the local, dominant intellectual corpus of French intellectuals as fundamentally non-Historical, “unthinkable” (Trouillot 1995: 73).

The Haitian Revolution presented categories of blackness and whiteness, humanness, agency, freedom, equality, and the nature and function(s) of revolutions and racial ideas that were uncharacteristic of, and that challenged, traditional, official narratives of the colonial era: (black) slaves as freedom-fighters with (some form of) agency, capable of defeating ‘superior’ beings (white, French colonisers); and colonisers as inhumane, tyrants, defeated by savages. The French, who were in power or were those with the power to write History, naturally chose to “stay prudently away from the word ‘revolution’ more often using words as ‘insurgents’, ‘rebels’, ‘bands’, and ‘insurrection’” when writing about the Haitian Revolution (Trouillot 1995: 104). They imagined the revolution otherwise and allowed it in other forms instead – forms obscured, distorted and diminished, and/or that ignored the local context and historical agency of Haitian slaves. They wrote it as the unfortunate by-product of the French Revolution that led the economic downfall of Haiti (Stoddard 1914: x); the result of yellow fever, which struck the white population, weakening their might against unruly slaves (James 1963: 161); and/or black slaves’ predisposition to and experience in extreme brutality and warring, having been trained in and brought from the midst of civil war in the Kongo (Thornton 1993: 184). Put simply, the Haitian Revolution existed in sharp contrast to the intellectual foundation of colonial France, with the risk of shaking it to annihilation if accepted as it happened. It was thus made invisible, purposely disappeared from History.

As so, if we wanted to expand on the complexities of the Haitian Revolution, we would not find much on the matter in History. This does not mean that there is nothing to find, and we would shift here from a reading of History that did not acknowledge the Haitian Revolution and therefore had no data on the matter, to historiography, which would speak to its very

invisibility as data, meaning that the fact of no data on the matter would be data on the matter – indirect data. Historiography is clear in its stance as the purposeful, conscious, critical and systematic breaking apart and reconstruction of History (Becker 1938), where History is turned and churned into a meta-machine with a communicative, discursive function with poetic truth to retrieve – a sort of reading in between the lines of what is said and not said. As so, instead of a course of research that was imagined sparking from a reading of History on modes of action (*x*) to make for an understanding of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*), the shift was made here too, at the level of methodology, where this unfolded as confrontational excavation of (*x*) against History, with everything that (*y*) would imply as this now stood as an unthinkable story, a non-event, an invisibility (Trouillot 1995: 73) to read through historiography.

The questions were raised immediately here: where do we look for the ‘*Nasyon*’? Where do we find the ‘*Nasyon*’? How do we read their socio-political history and their socio-political positionality if they were not penned as a socio-political category in the first place, i.e., if they technically do not exist? A first look at the data (un)available on them showed that we would have to turn to the Afro-Mauritian socio-political category for this, where the ‘*Nasyon*’ and ‘Afro-Mauritians’ would be interchangeable terminologies, denominations, modes of identification of persons of black African ancestry in Mauritius. Ethnographic analysis (which runs right after this section on historiography) can certainly prove their existence, their being, their presence, but until then, we could only go with the data that opens to their limited existence, their absence in and from the socio-political history of the country. And we would have to take a step back here, to the points made on the matter of locating the ‘*Nasyon*’ within Mauritian socio-political history and the interchangeability of ‘*Nasyon*’ and Afro-Mauritians.

A first translation of ‘*Nasyon*’ from Mauritian Creole (local language) into English speaks to the people of a country, its ‘*nasyon*’, its nation, and is mostly used to refer to the entire Mauritian people or nation in common slogans such as ‘*enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon*’ or one people, one nation. Patrick Eisenlorh (2007: 59) wrote on this as commanding slogan during national elections: “The MMM, campaigning under the slogan *en sel lepep en sel nasyon*, intended by the party leadership to mean ‘one people, one nation’, won the 1982 elections, ousting the Labor Party of Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who had led the country since

independence in 1968”. The local Newspaper *Le Mauricien*<sup>107</sup> spoke about this being sports slogan: “À un moment où il est important de drainer tout un pays derrière ses athlètes, à un moment où il faut susciter la passion patriotique, c’est au slogan « *Enn sel lepep, enn sel nation* » auquel on a recours”<sup>108</sup>. This cry for peoplehood or singularity in belonging to the Mauritian nation, can also be seen in the Mauritian Government’s Covid-19 campaigns that asked for ‘*Enn sel lepep kont Covid-19*’ or one people against Covid-19<sup>109</sup>.

The term, insofar as it refers to a nation, is confirmed in the Mauritian ‘*Kreol*’-English online dictionary<sup>110</sup> set up by the Mauritian political party Lalit (meaning ‘the battle’ in Mauritian Creole) as follows:

*nasyon* (n)nation.

*nasyon* (n) nation, **Nasyon Zini** = United Nations Organisation<sup>111</sup>.

Lalit calls itself “one of those parties that bears the memory of working class struggles and other stories of rebellion within its structures” whose political program “analyses the realities of present-day history and presents the demands that flow from that analysis and around which we can mobilize today to build tomorrow’s future”<sup>112</sup>. Despite what it claims to be and do, Lalit omitted the ‘*Nasyon*’ and added ‘*nasyon*’ only to its dictionary to reinforce this meaning nation. At Lalit’s head and heavily steering it is Linsley Collen, South-African grown observer of the Mauritian socio-political world, which could explain that in her observation thereof, the fact of the ‘*Nasyon*’ with a capital letter ‘N’, i.e., the ‘*Nasyon*’ as socio-political category, was brushed over to indirectly contribute to the absence of the latter in Mauritian socio-political history. Her foreign-footedness likely worked against her developing a full understanding of the country’s socio-politics and its complexities, with the ‘*Nasyon*’ therein.

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<sup>107</sup> <https://lexpress.mu/article/enn-sel-1%C3%A9pep-enn-sel-nation>.

<sup>108</sup> Translation [mine]: When it is important to drag the entire country behind its athletes, when it is necessary to arouse the spirit of patriotism, it is the slogan ‘*enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon*’ that is used.

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/mfdc2/videos/covid-19-enn-sel-lepep-kont-covid-campaign-13/502424104201440/>; <https://reliefweb.int/report/mauritius/whole-nation-together-against-covid-19-awareness-campaign-launched-jointly>.

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.lalitmauritius.org/dictionary.php?ltr=N&pg=2>.

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/dictionary.html?letter=n>.

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/about.html>.

Interestingly, other foreign-footed observers of the Mauritian socio-political world have leaned toward '*nasyon*', brushing over the fact of the '*Nasyon*' as a distinct socio-political category in Mauritius. Their analyses land at the surface of Mauritian socio-politics, at a sort of political smokescreen of language and linguistics that speaks to '*nasyon*' in reference to Hindu socio-political ranks in the Mauritian context, where it is used to differentiate between the '*gran nasyon*' and the '*ti nasyon*' or high caste and low caste. Mathieu Claveyrolas (2015) spoke about this as so: "You are identified as a Maraz (Brahmin), a Babujee (Kshatriya) or a Vaish (Vaishya). These three categories are known as *grand nasyon* or 'high castes,' as opposed to all others, known as *ti nasyon* or 'low castes.' *Grand nasyon* here corresponds to the Hindu *dvija* (twice-born). An individual, a neighbourhood or a shrine can be classified *ti* or *grand nasyon*. Depending on the context, the Vaish can be considered intermediary castes".

Thomas Eriksen and Ramola Ramtohul (2018: 210) added to this in the manner of a footnote in their *The Mauritian Paradox: Fifty Years of Writing Development, Diversity and Democracy*: "In Mauritian Creole *nasyon* is a polysemic concept that covers other meanings besides 'nation'. In everyday life, Hindus more often use it to denote 'caste', such as in *gran Nasyon* (high caste) and *ti Nasyon* (low caste). It can also be understood as a reference to 'African' or 'person of African phenotype,' or 'Creole,' depending on the context. Eriksen has pointed to the confusion this caused during political campaigns". Eriksen seems to have ignored the fact of his own penning this confusion down by minimalising the term '*Nasyon*' to mere footnote relating to persons of African ancestry, and his book with Ramtohul and other contributors would have been better called '*The Mauritian Paradox: Fifty Years of Writing Development, Diversity and Democracy Badly*' since they did exactly that in giving the world quite the wooden expression of the term that would only brush over the fact of the '*Nasyon*' as a socio-political category. Patrick Eisenlorh (2007: 982) added to their slack on the matter, stressing '*nasyon*' over '*Nasyon*' while blurring the very hard fact of the latter standing as a distinct socio-political category in the country: "Nasion is a polysemic concept in Mauritian Creole, which apart from 'nation' is in everyday usage more often taken to mean 'caste' among Hindus, or is also understood to be synonymous with 'African' or 'person of African phenotype', or 'Creole', depending on context. See Eriksen (1994) on the confusion this caused during the 1982 campaign".

The third volume of the Mauritian Truth and Justice Commission (MTJC) used the term ‘*nasion*’ to speak to the ‘*Nasyon*’, pinning them down as a socio-political category composed of “Descendants of slaves” (MTJC 2011b: 52) and adding that “the terms *Nasyon* and *Mazambik* are used as pejorative terms to refer to African ancestry” (MTJC 2011b: 567). These terms are part of Mauritian vernacular, used as a biological identification that “associates the African phenotype, skin colour (being black) and hair style (frizzy hair) with slave ancestry” (MTJC 2011b: 20). At the same time, the MTJC was clear on its analysis on descendants of slaves as that population that “changed from being Afro-Malagasy to becoming ‘Creole’. Did they become citizens?” (MTJC 2011a: 83). The MTJC does not offer any more clarity on the ‘*Nasyon*’ than foreign-footed observers thereof. But there is a sure African slave history attached to those that it takes as ‘*Nasyon*’ – as ‘*nasion*’ as descendants of slaves as persons of the African phenotype as Afro-Malagasy as ‘Creole’, finally. There is thus some language to follow on the ‘*Nasyon*’, just not directly and clearly.

Mauritian-born South African scholar, Rosabelle Boswell (2006: xvii), spoke this language, revealing to us the major Mauritian socio-political category of ‘*Kreol*’ or Creoles to refer specifically to persons of black African ancestry in Mauritius against a common usage of the term as ‘*Zilwa*’, a (colonial) mainland reference to citizens of (colonised) islands: “[...] Under slavery Mauritian society and identity have experienced both fragmentation and hybridization, such that three hundred years later, Creoles are a people of mixed African, Indian, Chinese and European heritage”. As per Boswell (2006: xvii), Creoles are a socio-political category composed of various minor socio-political categories including ‘*Kreol Madras*’ (Creoles of Indo-Tamil ancestry), ‘*Kreol Sinwa*’ (Creoles of Chinese heritage) and ‘*Kreol Lascar*’ (Creoles of Arab ancestry), all of whom have as common, core identity marker, their Creoleness, their ‘*Kreolite*’, their Africanness. Boswell, however, did not accurately identify the minor groups composing the ‘*Kreol*’, failing to add to her list the ‘*Gran Kreol*’ or ‘*Kreol fess blan*’ (High Creoles or Creoles of European ancestry) and the ‘*Ti Kreol*’ (Small Creole or Creoles of African ancestry or Afro-Mauritian Creoles i.e., persons of imagined, claimed and proclaimed unmixed black African ancestry in Mauritius) who are identified elsewhere in Mauritian History as so:

**Creole (noun)**

Grand Creole (Big Creole): a person of mixed European and black descent.

Ti Creole (Small Creole): a person descended “only” from African slaves, or those economically marginalised<sup>113</sup>.

For Megan Vaughan (2005: 3), “‘Creole’ is both a racial category (those who allegedly look most ‘African’ in their features are members of it, though their descent is likely to be very mixed) and a residual category, and therefore one that signifies lack. The Creoles in contemporary Mauritian terms are those who are not: they are neither Hindus nor Muslims nor Tamils nor Chinese nor ‘whites’ of either the Franco or Anglo variety. The Creole community is the residue of these racial/ ethnic/ cultural categories [...]”. The table below (Figure 1) by Sylvie Maurer (2015: 57) gives a breakdown of these residual socio-political categories, clearly demarcating the ‘*Creole Mazambik*’ as of pure black African ancestry, whom she states are sometimes also given the derogatory name of ‘*nasyon*’. But she fails to see through the fact that the latter is the modern expression of the former.

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<sup>113</sup> <https://africanarguments.org/2019/05/07/nu-tou-creole-mauritius-african/>.

Creoles	Descriptions
Creole Mazambik Recalls of their African origin, from the Mozambique, but it is also a derogatory term.	Also called “big leaf” (“Gro fei”), referring to their thick features. Other derogatory names are: “ti-seve, seve maymaye, fandja, nasyon, nass”.
Coloured Creole	Also called “half-white skin” (“Demikle”) – Europeans-Africans mestizo, Europeans-Asians (mostly Indians) mestizo or Asians-Africans.
Creole-Malbar	Children from marriages between Creoles and Hindus. Creoles with straight hair, like Hindus; sometimes baptised.
Creole-Madras	Same definition as for the Creole-Malbar.
Madras-Batize (Baptised Tamil)	Tamil converted into Catholicism, in India or in Mauritius. Differentiated by their surnames and phenotype; religions: Catholic and Tamil. Rejected by “True” Tamils (Information from interviewees).
Creole-Sinois (Chinese-Creole)	Born from Creole and Chinese parents, have Chinese traits, sometimes dark or brown skin, hence qualified Sinois-Noir (Black Chinese).
Rasta	Sometimes dark-skinned. Claim their state of belonging to African soil. 1980-1990: sought to revive the Africanism in all Creoles (Information from interviewees). Physical characteristics: dreadlocks, often wear Jamaican flag colours.
Creole rouz (Red Creole) Definition given in 2011 by Father Alain Romaine, a Mauritian Creole Roman Catholic priest.	Born out of miscegenation (Africans and Whites); clear-skinned, blue or clear-coloured eyes sometimes, dark, red or brown hair, often frizzy.
Mulatto	Originally called coloured people, “Milat”: interbreeding between white settlers and Indian women (De L’Estrac 2007:191-192).
Creole fer-blanc	“Do like the Whites”. Dress, act, eat, mimic speaking French like the Whites. During one of the many walkings I did with a group in Mauritius, in 2011, I met two girls named C.F. and V.O. They had a fairly clear complexion. They spoke only French with a strong accent, while everyone in the group was speaking kreol. I asked them if they were Mauritian. They chuckled and replied, “In fact, we have always lived in Mauritius, but our family never spoke anything else but French, so we have difficulties speaking Kreol.” I insisted, “So you are not Mauritian, you are French.” They responded, giggling, “No, but we do not speak Kreol that’s all.” They did not say clearly whether they were French or Mauritian. This is an example of “Creole Fer-Blanc”.
Ziloi or Creole Chagossian	Group grafted onto the Creole community. Ancestors: African, Mauritian, Indian, Seychelles (De L’Estrac 2011:37). 1968-1973, deported from Diego Garcia to Mauritius and the Seychelles by British and Americans. Seen as foreigners.

Table 1: Names given to Creoles and their definition. (Sources: books and interviews).

Figure 1: Names given to Creoles and their definition.

Robert Roupail (2019: 108) brought to the fore the interchangeability of ‘Mazambik’ and ‘Nasyon’, referring to Vinesh Hookoomsing’s (1987: 222) ‘Diksyoner Kreol Moriyen’ (Mauritian Creole Dictionary): “Mazambique [alternatively spelled mazambik] speaks to a specific historical memory that links Afro-Mauritian identity to the African continent and to the history of slavery. In his authoritative dictionary of Mauritian Creole, Vinesh Hookoomsing defined *mazambik* as ‘a derogatory term for a Mauritian of African descent’. But he also notes that *mazambik* is phonetically distinct from the name of the country, Mozambik, though the two words are no doubt cognate”. Roupail (2019: 109) added to this saying that ‘mazambik’

was an ethnic category ascribed to enslaved persons in Mauritius in the early nineteenth century, thus becoming a racial identity that held black Africanness and continental Africa at its core and existed separately from and alongside Creoles, Indians, Malagasy and others in the country. But it is now the term ‘*Nasyon*’, he concluded (2019: 109), that was “most often used colloquially within Afro-Mauritian communities, an ethnic grouping. Unlike for Indo-Mauritians for whom the term, as mentioned earlier, graphs onto caste differences, for black Mauritians *nasyon* confers inclusion within a broader historical narrative that ties the community to Africa and the slave trade: the history that makes one *mazambik*”.

Laval Jocelyn Chan Low (2004: 402), Mauritian-grown observer of the Mauritian socio-political world, confirmed the Afro-Mauritian socio-political category as composed of Afro-Mauritian Creoles: “*Parmi les ‘exclus’ du développement, le groupe désigné communément à Maurice comme les ‘ti Créoles’ ou ‘Créoles afro-mauriciens’ est largement majoritaire. En effet, de nombreux rapports, études et enquêtes n’ont cessé de démontrer, ces dernières années, les conditions misérables de marginalisation, d’exclusion et de précarité matérielle effroyable dans lesquelles survivent un nombre important de Créoles*”<sup>114</sup>. Still and all, the Cultural Atlas, a collaborative research project that aims at giving an understanding of the dominant culture within countries, separated Creoles from Afro-Mauritians:

### **Afro-Mauritian**

Afro-Mauritians are those who associate their heritage with African slaves – mainly from Madagascar and Mozambique – transported to the islands during the colonial period. Their language, culture and ethnic origin reflects the interactions between the European settlers and African slaves. While in contemporary times they typically work as teachers, civil servants or manual labourers outside of agriculture, they continue to be in the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. At times, Afro-Mauritians may be referred to as ‘Creole’.

### **Creole-Mauritian**

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<sup>114</sup> Translation [mine]: Among those ‘excluded’ from development, the group commonly known in Mauritius as ‘*ti Créoles*’ or ‘Afro-Mauritian Creoles’ is the majority. Indeed, numerous reports, studies and surveys, in recent years have shown the miserable conditions of marginalisation, exclusion and appalling material precariousness in which a significant number of Creoles survive.

The term ‘Creole’ is often used to describe Mauritians who have mixed ethnicity. Typically, their heritage is part African and part European. Most Mauritians who have migrated to Australia since the 1960s have been Creole<sup>115</sup>.

William Miles (1999: 219) read the Africanness associated with Creoles as socio-political categories grown along slave trade routes of the colonial era and made invisible across the world save for Sierra Leone: “Indeed, the term ‘Creole’ refers to a minority at risk in only one country in the world: Sierra Leone. Close equivalents are ‘Afro-Caribbean’, who are recognized as experiencing discrimination in the United Kingdom and Panama; ‘African-Americans’ in the United States; ‘Black Africans’ and ‘Coloureds’ in South Africa; ‘Black Caribs’ in Honduras; ‘Afro-Brazilians’ in Brazil; ‘Antillean blacks’ in Costa Rica; and ‘Afro-Americans’ in Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic. Absence of a common terminology for all these African diasporas (excluding those in South Africa and, arguably, Sierra Leone) is itself symptomatic of the identity problem faced by the world’s Creoles”. Miles (1999: 218) also went against all socio-political categories and sub-socio-political categories by which Afro-Mauritians were fixed as Creoles – including those of Eriksen, the MTJC, Vaughan, Maurer, Chan Low and Boswell –, explaining that “[O]fficially, however, ‘Creoles’ do not exist”. This is despite their holding themselves as the only true Mauritians:

Accentuating their marginalization, Creoles themselves view their group as being ‘stripped of ambition, identity, and future planning’. Creoles are stereotypically regarded, by themselves as well as by other Mauritians, as those Mauritians who have adopted an epicurean philosophy, enjoy partying, eschew savings, and put little stock into education. Ironically, despite their current second-class status and their ancestors’ forced exodus to Mauritius, the Creoles regard themselves as the only genuine Mauritians. It is they whose attachment to their land of birth is complete and unequivocal, unlike Hindus whose culture remains strongly Indian, Muslims whose anchor is world Islam, Chinese who emigrate according to opportunity, and Franco-Mauritians whose cultural reference, of course, is France. Not surprisingly, it is the Creoles who have bequeathed the more characteristic of Mauritian hallmarks: sega, a style of song and dance, and Kreol, Mauritius’s lingua franca (Miles 1999: 219).

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<sup>115</sup> <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/mauritian-culture/mauritian-culture-core-concepts>.

When Creole is not used to refer to a socio-political category, it is to explain the language of Mauritius: Mauritian Creole or ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’<sup>116</sup> or ‘*Kreol*’. ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ is a French-lexifier Creole that grew from contact zones forming between French colonisers and their black African slaves on French plantations in the eighteenth century in Mauritius (Baker & Corne 1986). From its complex history of colonialism, slavery, indentured labour and free migration, the country paved the way for a multi-cultural population currently sitting at about 1,262,523 (the large majority of which is Indo-Mauritian<sup>117</sup>). Some (ancestral<sup>118</sup>) Asian languages remain used mostly in classroom, private and religious settings while English is set as the official language of parliament and French is its unofficial language<sup>119</sup>. Newspapers and local television programmes are mostly run in English, French and Bhojpuri (a bastardised Indo-Iranian language<sup>120</sup>). And Creole remains, as it was during the French colonial era, the language of informal communication for almost all Mauritians (on radio channels<sup>121</sup>, in everyday interactions, and so on and so forth). It is the most widespread language of everyday contact zones, and right after it come Bhojpuri and French:

In 2022,

- 90.0% of people reported to speak only Creole at home, compared to 89.8% in 2011;
- 5.1% speak Bhojpuri only, compared to 5.5% in 2011; and
- 4.4% speak French only, compared to 4.3% in 2011<sup>122</sup>.

‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ is both loved and loathed, spoken by most but denied in official spaces, and linguistically able to bring almost all Mauritians together under the umbrella of national solidarity but socio-politically announcing incompleteness as determined without weight in prestigious settings and with no international value. We see this first in the celebration and

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<sup>116</sup> Note that this is also written ‘*Kreol Morisien*’.

<sup>117</sup> <https://africanarguments.org/2019/05/nu-tou-creole-mauritius-african/>;  
[https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/d/Demographics\\_of\\_Mauritius.htm](https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/d/Demographics_of_Mauritius.htm);  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Mauritius>;  
[https://www.indexmundi.com/mauritius/demographics\\_profile.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/mauritius/demographics_profile.html).

<sup>118</sup> See Eisenlohr, P. (2004) “Temporalities of Community: Ancestral Language, Pilgrimage, and Diasporic Belonging in Mauritius”.

<sup>119</sup> <https://mauritiusassembly.govmu.org/SitePages/Index.aspx>.

<sup>120</sup> <https://mbcradio.tv/bhojpuri-channel>; Note that, although there is a “*Kreol*” channel, there is nothing offered on it: <https://mbcradio.tv/kreol-channel>.

<sup>121</sup> <https://worldradiomap.com/mu/port-louis>.

<sup>122</sup> Statistics Mauritius (18 November 2022) *Economic and Social Indicators*.

public expression of the need to promote the language in the country: “The promotion of Creole as a unifying element in the enhancement of social harmony and peace remains integral in maintaining a sense of common identity among the Mauritian population. Government is committed to cementing the nation as one and raise the status of the language on the international front”<sup>123</sup>. And against this is the fact that ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ is associated with slavery and is received as the language of slaves in Mauritius. It is the language of the ‘*Nasyon*’, the language of incomplete humans: “‘Creole’ the way it is used in Mauritius refers not only to slave ancestry and cultural impurity, but to low class; it belongs to the proletariat of the *milieu populaire*” (Erisken 1999: 9).

We can go on about Afro-Mauritians as ‘*Creole Mazambik*’ as Creoles as ‘*Ti Kreol*’ as ‘*nasion*’ as a people that technically do not exist but who speak Creole, and then deny all of this and start over as we try to explain who the ‘*Nasyon*’ are, but the consensus stands at least by most extrapolations on the subject, that we are to speak about the ‘*Nasyon*’ as term interchangeable with Afro-Mauritians or persons of imagined, claimed and proclaimed unmixed black African ancestry in Mauritius. And we must do so bearing in mind that the implication here is that the ‘*Nasyon*’ are not just persons of imagined, claimed and proclaimed unmixed black African ancestry in Mauritius. They are the blackest of Afro-Mauritians, the closest to black African DNA in the country. The historiographic approach to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius is set along this line of identification of the ‘*Nasyon*’ and unfolds through primary and secondary archives across Mauritius (See Figure 2 below).

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<sup>123</sup> Statement by Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth in 2018, expanded on here: <https://allafrica.com/stories/201811260836.html>.



archives, none of which are hard to locate since the island is rather small (2000km<sup>2</sup>). A quick walkabout in the capital city and other towns and main villages, guided by locals, easily take us to these archives, which the Ministry of Arts and Culture of Mauritius also provides a list of<sup>125</sup>. This list includes the ‘*Musée de la Photographie*’ (Photography Museum) in Port Louis, the National History Museum of Mahebourg, the National History Museum of Port Louis, the Robert Edward Hart Memorial Museum in Souillac, the Sookdeo Bissoondoyal Memorial Museum in Tyack, the Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam Memorial Centre for Culture in Plaine Verte, the Peopling of Mauritius Museum in Mahebourg, the Mauritius Postal Museum in Port Louis, the ‘*Château de Labourdonnais*’ (Labourdonnais Castle) in Mapou, the Eureka House in Mount Ory in Moka, the Sugar Museum and Factory in Pamplemousses, the Appravasi Ghat in Port Louis, the Paul and Virginie monument in Poudre d’Or, the ‘*Jardin de la Compagnie*’ (Company Gardens) monument and plaque in Port Louis, the site of disembarkation of slaves in Port Louis, the Port Louis Theatre, the ‘*Cimetière des Noirs*’ (Black People Cemetery) in Pamplemousses, the site of first Dutch/slave landing in Mahebourg, the slave valley of Chamarel, the Malagasy burial site of Trou aux Cerfs, Le Morne Cultural Landscape, the ‘*Monument aux Esclaves*’ (Slave Monument) in Pointe Canon, the ‘*Bain des Nègresses*’ (Female Negroes/Negresses’ Bath) railway-bridge, Montagne Signaux as rumoured site of activity of Prince Ratsitanina (Malagasy prisoner in Mauritius), Le Bagne, ‘*Camp des Noirs*’ (Black People Township) in Pamplemousses, and Grande Rivière Nord Ouest Prison/hospital for slaves, amongst others. We take these as sites of memory, “*lieux de mémoire*” as Pierre Nora (1989) called them – actual, physical sites turned depositories or custodians of memories, sites of remembering, sites where we ought to remember, sites whose direction and function, whether these be social, cultural or political, are to make or help Mauritians remember those moments and people in History that are integral to the identity of the Mauritian nation or specific socio-political categories in Mauritius.

Of the sites that were accessible and open to the public during the application of the historiographic approach to the persisting dissociation of the ‘*Nasyon*’ from political power in Mauritius, the majority was found impracticable for having to do with the extinct Dodo, the lifestyle and/or jar-preserved body parts of high ranking colonists on the island, shipwrecks and other naval memorabilia, the colonial prowess of exploration, local colonial architecture,

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<sup>125</sup> See the website of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, Mauritius at <http://www.nhf.govmu.org/English/National%20Heritage/List%20of%20National%20Heritage/Pages/default.aspx>.

colonial artefacts, as well as Indo-Mauritian socio-cultural mobility and political impact in the country. One such site even holds the false memory of Paul and Virginie, characters in the 18<sup>th</sup> century novel by the same name, by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre:

Originally a novel of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that met with phenomenal success, the story of ‘Paul and Virginie’ has since become a legend. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s masterpiece tells the story of the impossible love between two young teenagers living in Mauritius, in an idyllic and natural setting. Everybody knows Paul and Virginie in Mauritius. So much so that some people think that these two young people really existed. However, they are only the fruit of the imagination of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a French writer of the Enlightenment period<sup>126</sup>.



*Figure 3: Statue of Paul and Virginie in Poudre D’Or, Mauritius.*

Other sites simply disappeared, are limited and without context, or have nothing but their names or rumours of their existence to speak to some sort of past related to Afro-Mauritianism and the period of the enslavement of black Africans in Mauritius. These include (but are not

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<sup>126</sup> <https://www.mythic-resort.com/en/paul-and-virginie-monument-poudre-dor-mauritius-resort/>.

limited to) the site of disembarkation of slaves in Port Louis, which is now the site of the fanciful shopping centre, Le Caudan Waterfront; the ‘*Bagne*’, colonial prison also in Port Louis whose main function “was the public regulation and discipline of the institution of slavery” (Anderson 2008: 4; Peerthum 2005) and whose structure has been fully replaced by that of the Postal Museum, with a small plaque to the side honouring the slaves that had been imprisoned there; the slave monument of the Port Louis Theatre raised in memory of slaves in Mauritius as victims of crimes against humanity; the ‘*Cimetière des Noirs*’ also referred to as ‘*Cimetière des esclaves*’ or Slave Cemetery in the district of Pamplemousses, where the slaves that lived in the region should have been buried although there are only a few tombstone engravings speaking to this and there are no burial records for them; Chamarel in the southwest of the island, which is well known for having had as its permanent inhabitants slaves and their descendants, although no archaeological study has been carried out on the matter and so data cannot be retrieved therefrom as it were primary source; and the mysterious and decrepit ‘*Bain des Nègresses*’<sup>127</sup> railway-bridge in the south of Mauritius, “[u]ne structure faite de pierre de taille, souvenir de la période de colonisation”<sup>128</sup>, crossing “a stream running in a deep rocky bed, known by the odd name of ‘*Bain des Nègresses*’” (Palmer et al., 1859: xxx), where some can apparently imagine “des ‘*nègresses*’, comme on les appelait jadis, se baignant sous ces chutes d’eau aux différentes nuances de bleu et de vert, protégées des regards indiscrets par le rideau de verdure”<sup>129</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/315708/bain-negresses-beautes-caches>.

<sup>128</sup> Translation [mine]: A structure made of cut stones, a memory of the period of colonisation.

<sup>129</sup> Translation [mine]: Nègresses, as they were once called, bathing under these waterfalls of different shades of blue and green, protected from prying eyes by the curtain of greenery. See <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/315708/bain-negresses-beautes-caches>.



*Figure 4: Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. 'Bain des Nègresses' railway-bridge.*

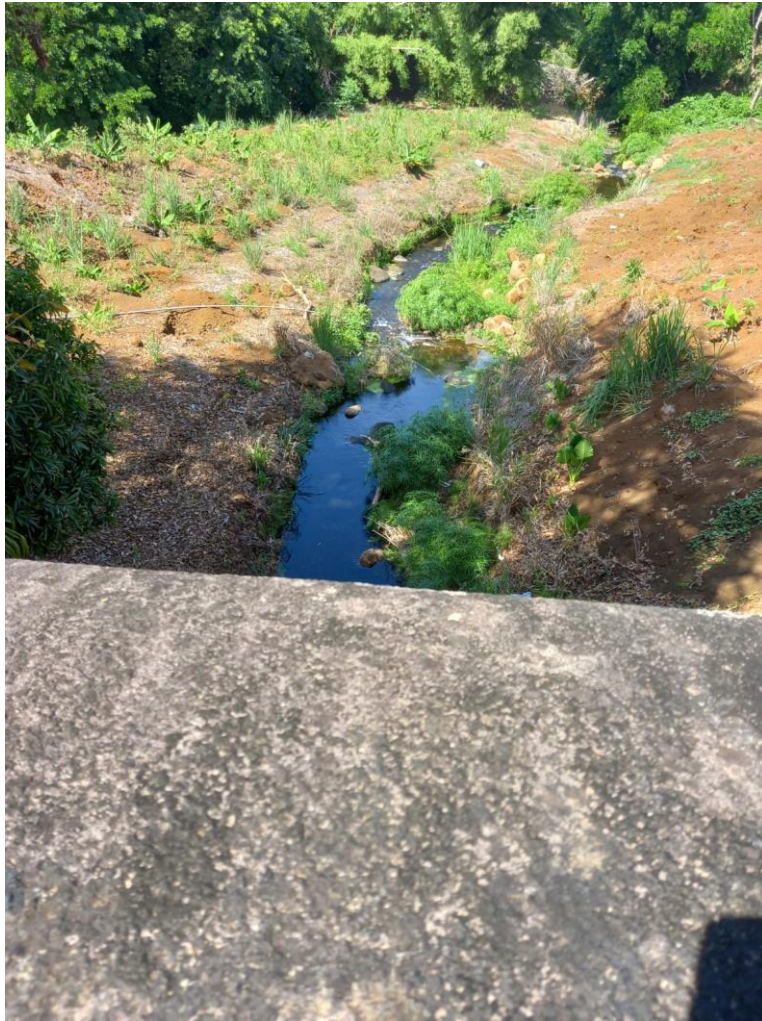


Figure 5: Photo Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. 'Bain des Nègresses' Stream.

There is also Le Morne Cultural Landscape in the district of Riviere Noire<sup>130</sup>, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and iconic mountain in the southwest of Mauritius. This was once a refuge for maroons but is commonly known for its straight cliff drop waterfall that runs into the sea's 'Valley of Bones'<sup>131</sup>. Legend<sup>132</sup> has it that maroons eventually threw themselves

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<sup>130</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1259/>.

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.cipdh.gob.ar/memorias-situadas/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Le-Morne-Slave-Route-2018-A5x3-Preview.pdf>.

<sup>132</sup> I keep the term 'legend' here to leave the space open for the contested history about the maroons having jumped from Le Morne into the Valley of Bones. There is no proof yet, no archaeological evidence, that they in fact jumped into the ocean. See the following for more on the matter: "It should be noted that there is yet to be any archaeological evidence of the tragedy like bones found on the beach" (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/le-morne-slave-route-monument>); "It is still contested whether this was a massacre or a mass-suicide" (<https://www.earthwisecentre.org/blog/a-trilogy-1-the-fall-the-maroon-queen>); "**Legend** has it that after slavery was banned in 1835, a company of colonists wished to inform the maroons atop *Le Morne* of their rights to freedom –they could 'come down now'. This approach of many officious looking people, soldiers included, **is said** to have alarmed the maroons who, in fear of being recaptured, decided instead to jump to their deaths" (<https://deliberativehub.wordpress.com/2021/09/20/maroon-democracy-and-le-morne-brabant/>); "The Le Morne mountain on the island of Mauritius is a symbol of resistance to slavery, since its

from Le Morne mountain in the hundreds in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, fearing recapture by colonial authorities. Benjamin Moutou (2002: 89) said on this: “*Toujours dans la croyance populaire, c’est la région de la Rivière Noire qui aura été durant toute la période servile (1723-1835), le paradis des marrons*”<sup>133</sup>.



Figure 6: Photo Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. Le Morne.

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impressive shape served as refuge for people that managed to run away from slavery” (<https://www.cipdh.gob.ar/memorias-situadas/en/lugar-de-memoria/le-morne/>); and UNESCO’s criteria for making Le Morne a Heritage site runs along the following with no clear mention of the jump into the Vallee of Bones: “Le Morne Cultural Landscape is an exceptional testimony to maroonage or resistance to slavery in terms of the mountain being used as a fortress to shelter escaped slaves, with physical and oral evidence to support that use” (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1259/>).

<sup>133</sup> Translation [mine]: Still, in popular belief, it is the area of Black River that would have been, during the period of enslavement (1723-1835), maroons’ paradise.

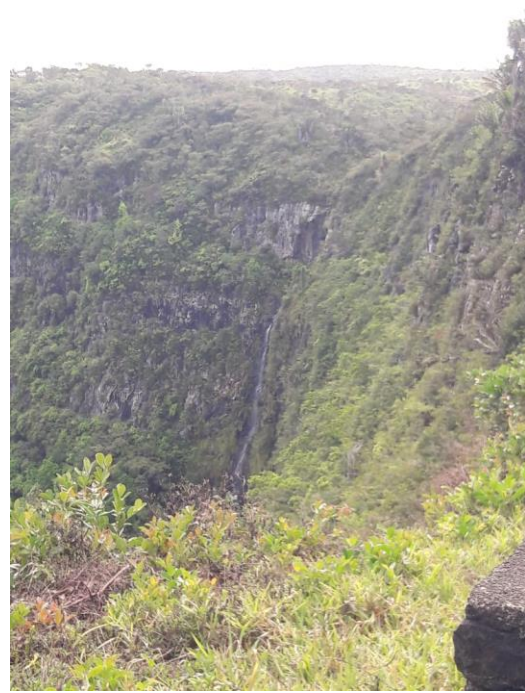


Figure 7: Photos Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. Le Morne Waterfall/Cliff Drop.

Connected to Le Morne is the International Slave Route Monument, the ‘*Monument aux Esclaves*’, raised in memory of the abolition of slavery in a garden in Mahebourg, southeast of Mauritius. This monument was imagined by Afro-Mauritian Jean Michel Hotentote<sup>134</sup>, whose name is reminder of Sara Baartman, the Hottentot Venus of South Africa (Moudileno 2009), whose story is that of black incompleteness – a story about an abused young black woman, a destroyed black body, systemic racism by the colonial state unto black Africans, hypersexualised black womanhood, and so on and so forth (Holmes 2007; Gordon-Chipembere 2011; Magubane 2001; Young 1997).

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<sup>134</sup> <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g293816-c120101/Mauritius:Abolition.Of.Slavery.Monument.html>; <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/337790/michel-hotentote-entre-mains-pierre-ne-reste-pas-marbre>.



Figure 8: Photo Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. "Monument aux Esclave".

A building of the National Heritage Fund is attached to the 'Monument des Esclaves', which is supposedly permanently closed, say the locals. No information on the monument could be drawn from this primary archive.

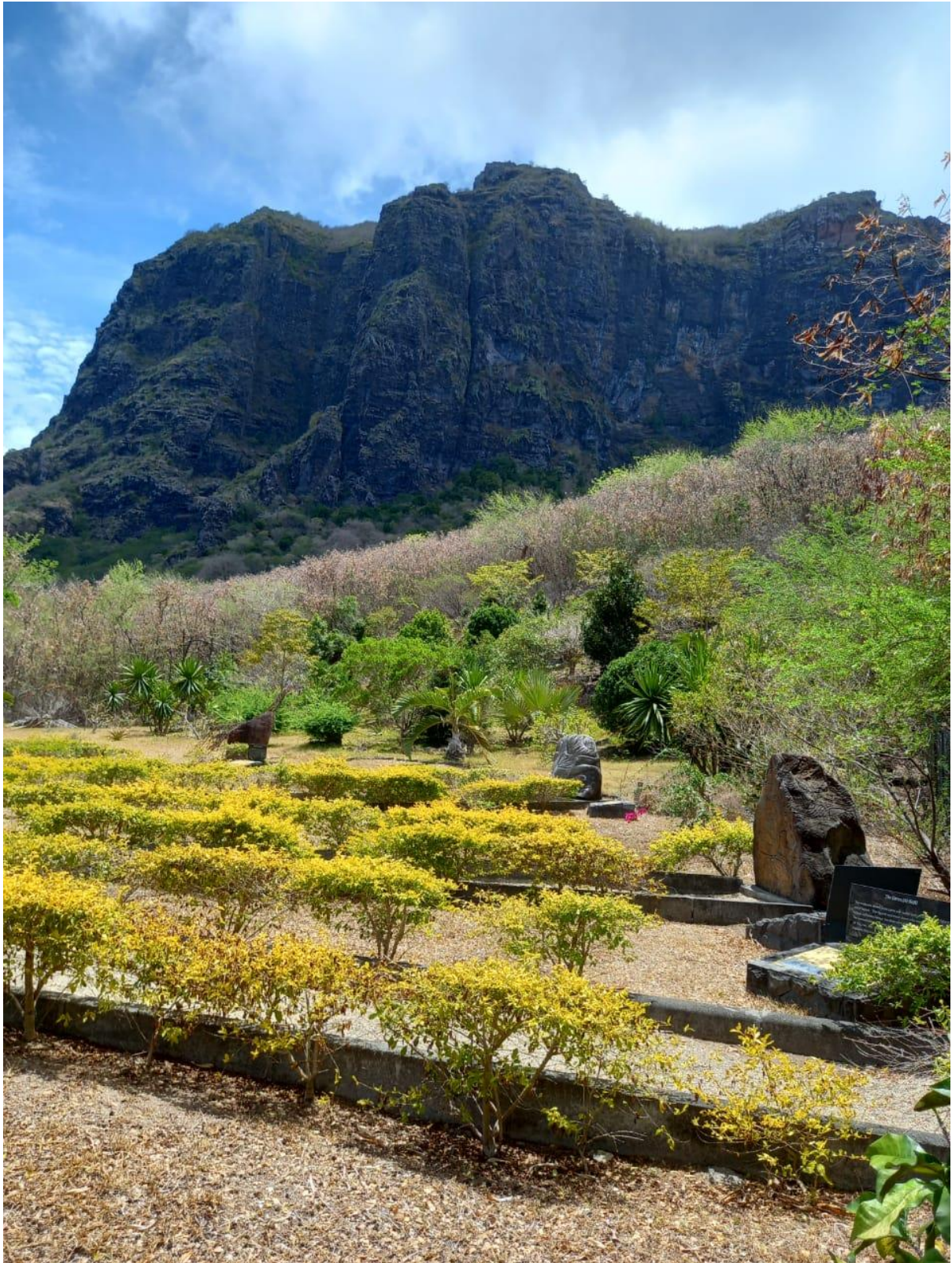


Figure 9: Photo Courtesy of Moshumee. T. Dewoo. National Heritage Building.

We must also note here that, against the ‘*Monument aux Esclaves*’ stands the monument in honour of British soldiers who lost their lives in a naval battle against the French as the latter conquered Mauritius to become its final colonial rulers.



Figure 10: Photos Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. Signpost for direction to Naval battle Monument (left) and monument in memory of British soldiers who lost their lives in the Naval Battle at Grand Port against the French (right).



*Figure 11: Photo Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. Garden in Mahebourg where is raised the 'Monument aux Esclaves'.*

Smaller sculptures can be found in the garden where the '*Monument aux Esclaves*' is, which were raised in memory of slaves too. Plaques are attached to these, whose titles are in English,

French and ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’, but whose descriptions are specifically in English. It was interesting to note here that these descriptions are not in ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ instead, i.e., the language that the ‘*Nasyon*’ (descendants of slaves) and almost all Mauritians speak.



Figure 12: Photos Courtesy of Moshumee T. Dewoo. ‘The Caves’ sculpture (left) and plaque (right): “The Sculpture shows three caves and inside each of them human figures are sculpted. The figures represent slaves who were trapped in a place where, as human beings, freedom was denied to them. The sculpture is the remembrance of agony, suffering, fear and anger that fugitive slaves, on the run, had to go through while seeking shelter in caves. Being fugitives, there were invariably unable to move as free man” – Mr Zul Bin Idris. Malaysia.

There is the ‘*Montagne Signaux*’ or Signal Mountain in Port Louis, which is rumoured to have been the main site of an insurrection by Prince Ratsitanina – Malagasy Prince imprisoned at the Bagne in Mauritius for crimes committed in Madagascar (Ballarin et al., 2013: 446-447). Ratsitanina was supposedly decapitated in Mauritius for being too much of a risk to the colonial regime or too much of an ‘other’ then<sup>135</sup>. His remains (his head<sup>136</sup> to be exact) were never found while the story of his insurrection remains mostly in the background of Mauritian History – a

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.lemauricien.com/le-mauricien/en-marge-du-bicentenaire-de-sa-mort-ratsitanina-lahantise/484478/>.

<sup>136</sup> [http://ilemauricekaya.free.fr/oly\\_k/lammystik08ou\\_est\\_le\\_crane2007.htm](http://ilemauricekaya.free.fr/oly_k/lammystik08ou_est_le_crane2007.htm).

myth until proven otherwise; an “unthinkable” hero-of-slaves (Larson 2009: 24); a non-event *à la* Haitian Revolution (Trouillot 1995).



*Figure 13: Prince Ratsitatane.*

Only two sites of memory were determined outwardly useful and practicable toward researching Afro-Mauritians (and thus the ‘*Nasyon*’). These include the National Archives of Mauritius and the Intercontinental Slavery Museum.

The National Archives of Mauritius was the most difficult place to access, living up to its long-standing bad reputation in the country. Telephonic calls to set up appointments for the physical viewing of records were near-impossible; the decision was made at some point during the

research to go to Coromandel where the archives are held, without appointment and detailing the many reasons for which physical access had been difficult and appointment dates impossible to secure. Finally, access was granted into the building. Once there, however, the promised archives were found to have been mishandled<sup>137</sup>, mismanaged and/or misplaced, or had to do only with slavery re Afro-Mauritians. These archives include volumes IA to IG, as so: IA: Miscellaneous Correspondence relative chiefly to Slave Trade (1803-1844), IB: Minutes of Evidence and other Records of the Eastern Enquiry Commission (1810-1828); IC: Correspondence – Records of the Slave Registry and Protectorate of Slaves (1815-1838); ID: Statistics – Return of the Slave Population, Complaint Books, Registers of ‘*Maronnage*’ and other similar materials (1813-1859); IE: Certificates of Manumission or Liberation from Slavery (1793-1836); IF: Certificates of Liberation from Apprenticeship (1814-1840); and, IG: Claims for Compensation submitted to the Indemnity Commission (1813-1835). An email address was given as mode of subscription to online databases supposedly making up for the limited physical access to the archives on Afro-Mauritians, which was allowed for three days with possibility of perpetual renewal. After the first three days, renewal was asked for via email as indicated online<sup>138</sup> but this was not answered. Access to the online databases was asked repeatedly for years after that until December 2021, when the representative of the Deputy Director of the National Archives of Mauritius responded via email to say that access to the archives was not possible at the moment due to “the Covid-19 pandemic and two lockdowns in the years 2020 and 2021”, which caused “a delay in the project and re-opening of our electronic online services”<sup>139</sup>.

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<sup>137</sup> See Figure 14 as an example thereof, where original archives are handled without proper care or equipment.

<sup>138</sup> <https://nationalarchives.govmu.org/nationalarchives/?pageid=1349>.

<sup>139</sup> Email dated 24 December 2021 from:

**MINISTRY OF ARTS & CULTURAL HERITAGE  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT  
Development Bank of Mauritius Complex  
Petite Rivière, Mauritius**

*Tel: 233-4199*

*Fax: 233-4299*

*e-mail:arc@govmu.org*

**Ref: G 6/3/32/1**

**Subject: Access to online services**

Madam,

We refer to your email dated 21 December 2021.

We inform you that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and two lockdowns in the years 2020 and 2021, there is quite a delay in the project and re-opening of our electronic online services.

We therefore advise you to provide us with your contact details and/or you may contact us on 233-4199 for further assistance.

Please send us a detailed request on the nature of your research to enable us provide you with the right information and assistance.



*Figure 14: Scene from the National Archives of Mauritius.*

Then, there is the Intercontinental Slavery Museum (ISM), which was launched in 2020 upon recommendation of the Mauritian Truth and Justice Commission a decade prior as an attempt toward “Breaking the Silence” against slavery and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean<sup>140</sup>. Jimmy Harmon, former director of the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture in Mauritius<sup>141</sup> spoke to the need for this museum as so:

The idea of having slavery museum in the capital city of Port Louis is to give more visibility to slavery and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, promote slave history and emphasize the contribution of the African diaspora in the world development [...] Reconnecting with the past is not always a comfortable exercise be it at an individual level or as a community of human beings. The history of slavery and slave trade will surely unravel unexpected features of the

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Submitted for your information and thanking you for your comprehension.

Kind regards,

**S. MOHUN (Mrs.)**  
*for Deputy Director.*

<sup>140</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/mauritius-establishes-international-slavery-museum>.

<sup>141</sup> Dr Harmon would also serve as Deputy Director of Secondary at the Diocesan Service of Catholic Education in Mauritius and would be famous there for pioneering ‘mother-tongue education’, especially that of Creole, alongside multilingualism.

past. It happens then that places like a slavery museum become more a site of conscience or an act of community memory than just a display of artefacts. The MTJC (2009) recommends to introduce ‘socio-biography’ of groups and life histories of individuals, with particular emphasis on History and the forging of patterns in values, attitudes and behaviours. This is also a form of narrative therapy [...] In fact, the slavery museum will be a cultural reparation for the Creole community<sup>142</sup>.

If this project was approved in 2016 to start in 2018 and end in 2019<sup>143</sup>, it was only started at the end of 2019 to not have much to show for today<sup>144</sup>, save for perpetuating a singular story about slaves with the support of the Mauritian Government “to recognize the sacrifice of slaves and to highlight their contribution to the development of the country”, and to present this to the world as if helping to “promote respect for the African people and recognize their contribution to Mauritius and consequently to strengthen the autonomy of Mauritian citizens of African descent”<sup>145</sup>:

In his address, Prime Minister Jugnauth highlighted that it is crucial to keep alive the painful memories of slaves who fought colonial oppression to gain back their freedom and dignity. He reflected on the inhuman conditions of slave trade wherein slaves were denigrated as mere objects of exploitation and emphasised on the need to remember their struggle for freedom and their contribution to the country’s progress. The Government is keen to safeguard historical sites and tangible cultural heritage that allow us to probe into the country’s past, he added<sup>146</sup>.

But the warning is there against the great dangers of exhibiting atrocity and remembering violence, and the tense politics and ethics around this. This is because every act of remembering implies ‘othering’ in the manner of the silencing and suppression of certain stories by those

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<sup>142</sup> <https://www.lemauricien.com/article/promises-of-the-intercontinental-slavery-museum-remembering-the-past-educating-for-present-building-our-future/>.

<sup>143</sup> <http://www.steget.it/slavery-museum-mauritius/>.

<sup>144</sup> <https://www.lemauricien.com/article/slavery-museum-saga-when-ministers-blunder-what-do-we-do/>.

<sup>145</sup> <https://mauritiushindinews.com/le-mauricien/slavery-museum-pravind-jugnauth-a-place-of-memory-serving-to-build-the-future-le-mauricien/>.

<sup>146</sup> <http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Open-Air-and-Intercontinental-Slavery-Museums-to-safeguard-memories-and-struggle-of-our-slave-ancestors,-says-PM.aspx>.

with the power to write History – as we see in the case of the Haitian Revolution (Trouillot 1995). One such danger is the turning of memory into political ideology growing into memorial industry, with the very act of remembering becoming political and moral tool toward accessing and/or maintaining power (Tilmans, van Vree, Winter & Assman 2010; Boyer 1996; Finkelstein 2000; Kavanagh 1994; Glover 2008; Young 1993; Williams 2007). Another problem with exhibiting atrocity and remembering violence is that the intellectual and political elite typically determine “how works are preserved, reproduced, and disseminated over successive generations and centuries” (Morrissey 2005: 207). We are reminded of Frank Harte here who said that “those in power write the history, while those who suffer write the songs”<sup>147</sup>. And with the ISM, we cannot but also consider the fact of public commemoration within the historical context of the black African socio-political world (including its diaspora) having been consistently plunged into darkness (Conrad 1899; Stanley 1878; Landau 2002: 2) – to be continuously remembered or not remembered by those with the power to write black African History (including African diasporic History) “through a series of lacks and absences, failings and problems, plagues and catastrophes” (Ferguson 2006: 2). Everything else, anything else if anything at all, about Afro-Mauritians was and is silenced.

The ISM does not appear to have escaped these dangers<sup>148</sup>:

In the context of Mauritius, the ISM is vital but an orientation to and uncritical focus on trauma risks several things. One of these is to forever associate Creoles with slavery. The other risks are commodifying slave heritage, displacing meaningful places in slave history and advancing trauma of various kinds. Visitors, for example, may be encouraged to ‘consume’ the tragic history and to

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<sup>147</sup> frankharte.net.

<sup>148</sup> This is not denial of the efforts made toward an ethical museum, which includes a “Public Consultation Process on the theme ‘Breaking the Silence’, organised by ISM (Mauritius) Ltd from 21 October 2020 to 21 January 2021 in the context of the implementation of the ISM project” (<https://gis.govmu.org/News/SitePages/Prime-Minister-Jugnauth-inaugurates-Wing-A-of-Intercontinental-Slavery-Museum.aspx>). See also Zimba, B., Harmon, J. & Karghoo, S. (2021) *Intercontinental Slavery Museum*. But we would raise the matter of the need for decolonisation in the museum, as raised by African scholar B. Anthony Bogues, for example (<http://duval-carrie.com/art-history-and-slavery-a-discussion-with-the-artist-edouard-duval-carrie/>; <https://www.aicanederland.org/review-of-the-aica-webinar-decolonisation-in-the-museum-interrogating-the-history-of-slavery/>; <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/slaverys-wake>). See also Bogues, A. (2012) “And What About the Human?”.

be ‘done with it’ before moving on to other recreational activities that the island offers (Preben 2020: 55).



Figure 15: “This Museum will bring new light to the suffering and contribution of slaves”.

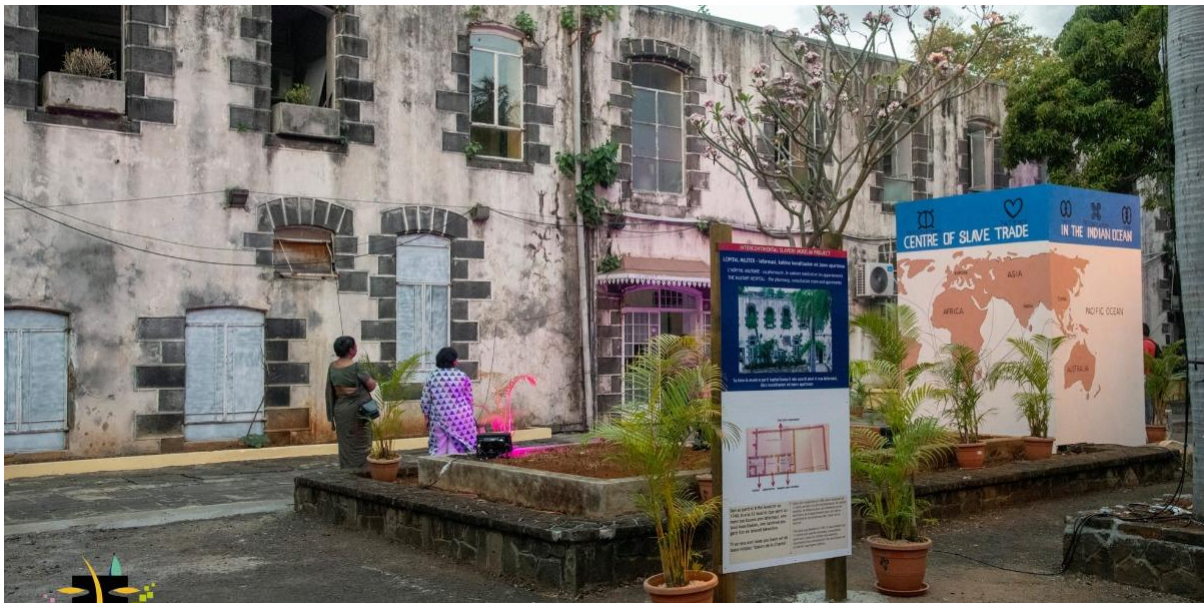


Figure 16: Beginning Phase of Intercontinental Slavery Museum, Port Louis, Mauritius.



Figure 17: Completed Intercontinental Slavery Museum, Port Louis, Mauritius.

Secondary archives, which we now go into, were imagined adding to or making up for the singular story of slavery on Afro-Mauritians. These archives are the interpretations of and discussions by others about what is known, said and available or not on the ‘*Nasyon*’, including the reports of the Mauritian Truth and Justice Commission and various books and academic papers such as those by Kissoonsing Hazareesingh (1975), Laval Jocelyn Chan Low (2004), Jean-Marie Leclezio (1914) and Sylvie Maurer (2010, 2014 & 2015), and news articles, amongst others. But even these were found to centre on slavery, separated this time into three distinct Mauritian epochs, with the first two being of the colonial era and the cruellest for the Afro-Mauritian socio-political category, and the third unfolding into the Mauritian democratic socio-political world and the most hopeful:

Slavery as it developed in Mauritius falls in three epochs. During the earliest period the institution gradually took the form of a system somewhat like that of the bondage of the Hebrews, modified in the case of Mauritius, however, according to the requirements of the temper and habits of the natives and the situation of the planters. There was no regard for the comfort of the slaves and

they tended to degrade to the lowest depths. Yet the slaves were not considered altogether as chattels, convertible at the will of their masters. In the second stage, however, the bondage of the Negro reached the darkest age of irresponsibility to law and cruelty absolutely intolerable. A few officials and planters protested, and travellers who saw the horror appealed for mercy in behalf of the unfortunate. A change in the attitude of the planters toward the slaves was finally forced and characterized the third stage of slavery in Mauritius. These cruelties were mitigated largely by the agitation of Les Amis des Noirs, among whom were some of the most distinguished actors in the grand drama of the French Revolution (Fokeer 1922: 200).

The first two epochs correspond to the institutionalised dehumanisation of non-whites and persons of black African ancestry especially, which rested upon scientific and religious thought systems developed and imposed by white Europeans at the time of their expanding conquests and colonisation of the rest of the world. This ran the latitudes of 'Negroism' to define persons of black African ancestry in Mauritius as "The Negroes in Mauritius" (Fokeer 1922). Now, "[B]y the term Negro, in so far, at least, as it is applicable to Africa" (and therefore to Mauritius here), said John Crawford (1866: 212), "we understand a human being with the hair of the head and other parts of the body always black, and more or less of the texture of wool, with a black skin of various shades; dark eyes, a flat face, depressed nose, jutting jaws, thick lips and large mouth, with oblique incisor teeth. To this is to be added a peculiar odour of the skin, offensive to and unknown in the other races of man". W.E.B. Du Bois (1915: 8) went along these lines too: "It is reasonable, according to fact and historic usage, to include under the word "Negro" the darker peoples of Africa characterized by a brown skin, curled or 'frizzled' hair, full and sometimes everted lips, a tendency to a development of the maxillary parts of the face, and a dolichocephalic head. This type is not fixed or definite".

But more than that, the science of the era of European colonialism was clear on the incompleteness of 'Negroes': "As far as brain of negroes is concerned, [...] its morphology is scarcely comparable to the less developed brain of some European women. On the contrary, [...] very clever Caucasian men show an increase in the brain volume and a different morphology, mainly in the temporal lobe, than other populations" (Lidio Cipriani 1935: 184). 'Negroes' were then assured different from white Europeans, lesser than them, not as

wholesomely bio-cognitively developed as them, incomplete in their humanness. This demarcation had to do with the psycho-spiritual repudiation of blackness as a colour symbolising that which is not acceptable within humans, which Frantz Fanon (1952: 151) explained as “Negro-phobogenesis” or the European (white, coloniser) fear of darkness. Fanon (1952: 189-191) said on the matter: “The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black - whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness [...]. In the collective unconscious of homo occidentalis, the Negro – or, if one prefers, the colour black – symbolises evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine. All birds of prey are black”. It was common language, singular language during the colonial era, that “he is Negro who is immoral” (Fanon 1952: 192). Black, the colour, thus played the role of the shadow, a looseness of being and a backwardness that was everything that whites believed should be rejected for humanness to be achieved, complete, i.e., for the human to be fully human: “The barbarian is of the same race, after all, as the Roman and the Greek. He is a cousin. The yellow man, the black man, is not our cousin at all. Here there is a real difference, a real distance, and a very great one: an ethnological distance. After all, civilisation has never yet been made except by whites... If Europe becomes yellow, there will certainly be a regression, a new period of darkness and confusion, that is, another Middle Ages” (Césaire [1850] 2001: 50).

The storyline here runs along who Europe once fixed to be fully human – solid, complete in their humanness: they who were devoid of blackness. Anything tainted, anyone with the slightest drop of black in their human bodies was a threat to (imagined) completeness, to be automatically sent to the margins of the socio-political world as neither man nor beast, enslavable, usable, re-usable, tradable, to study or exhibit, dehumanised then and condemned to disappear: “In the degree to which I find in myself something unheard-of, something reprehensible, only one solution remains for me: to get rid of it, to ascribe its origin to someone else. In so doing, I eliminate a short circuit that threatens to destroy my equilibrium” (Fanon 1952: 190). We can see this in the fact of the stolen generations of Australia or the Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families between 1890 and 1970 to be assimilated into the white Australian socio-political world so that they would produce whiter children over time or to simply stop reproducing with other Aborigines and have their socio-political category die out, which we know today as cultural genocide (van Krieken 1999).

Edgar Rice Burrough's fictional *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912) and South Africa's very real Sarah Baartman as a Hottentot woman (Fausto-Sterling 2002) are other examples of humans that Europe took or made to be deficient, incomplete in their humanness, intriguing beasts as much as they were a threat, "wilderness in human form" (Spurr 1993: 165), savagery to fantasise about, beastly bodies to display and portray naked, the spectacle of their fixed primitiveness consumed by a public that saw its obsession over other human bodies as making a contribution to the evolutionary process and understanding of socio-political history. Baartman was exhibited live in Europe, for example, at which point the obsessive white gaze at her black body would read as moving into the realm of paraphilic disorders showing as sexual longing for the beastly – unhinged libidinousness for the primitive. Fanon (1952: 165, 177) described this longing as "unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest" that represented sexual instinct in its raw state, the "incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions".

The Church and its missionaries fuelled the dehumanisation of non-whites in the colonised world. This includes Mauritius. Explaining the construction of Africa and the representation of its various peoples, Jacques Derrida (1978: 27) proposed that the Christian missionary metaphor of darkness and light was "the founding metaphor of Western philosophy and metaphysics...The entire history of our philosophy is a photology, the name given to a history, or treatise on, light". This treatise framed Africa as a homogenous dark continent in utter need of Christian intervention, in need of light, famously inspiring Joseph Conrad's (1899) *Heart of Darkness* and Henry Morton Stanley's (1878) *Through the Dark Continent*. Thomas Fowell Buxton (1967: 10-11) said about this: "Bound in the chains of the grossest ignorance, [Africa] is a prey to the most savage superstition. Christianity has made but feeble inroads on this kingdom of darkness".

From this came the legal treatment of two distinct types of humans: citizens (whites – non-natives) and subjects ('Negroes' – natives, black Africans, persons of colour in general) (Mamdani 1996). Colonial law came into play here, with rights belonging to citizens and citizens being of European ancestry who then denied these rights as they pleased to subjects, and subjects being non-whites, disenfranchised across the world. One such moment of disenfranchisement came in the passing of the Native Land Act (No. 27) of the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1913 in South Africa, which addressed the 'native question' – subjective ethnicities and related

rights and entitlements – by laying down the foundation for legislation that would further natives’ subjective status. The Act prohibited natives from owning land in spaces that were identified as white, circumscribing natives’ ownership of and access to land. It also relocated them to areas created for natives<sup>149</sup> and became a forerunner for other racist legislation that had the effect of “reducing an African to a third class citizen, a squatter, a labourer and a landless person in the country of his or her birth”<sup>150</sup>. Lungisile Ntsebeza (2007: 33) explained about the Act that “the colonial strategy shifted [...] to compelling Africans to becoming wage labourers”. Along these lines, citizens and subjects in Africa can be understood to have been fixed in separate legal universes that defined and controlled their participation in the state at the time of colonialism (Mamdani 1996, 2002).

It is thus nothing out of the ordinary that the black Africans in Mauritius be sent to the margins of the country, suffering the worst parts thereof during its first two epochs of slavery, i.e., during the largest part of the colonial period in the country:

They are landed with just a rag around their loins. The men are ranged on one side and the women on the other with their infants, who cling from fear to their mothers. The planter, having examined them as he would a horse, buys what may then attract him. Brothers, sisters, friends, lovers, are now torn asunder, and bidding each other a long farewell, are driven weeping to the plantations they are bought for. Sometimes they turned desperate, fancying that the white people intended eating their flesh, making red wine of their blood, and powder of their bones. They were treated in the following manner: ‘At break of day a signal of three smacks of a whip called them to work, when each betook himself with his spade to the plantation, where they worked almost naked in the heat of the sun. Their food was bruised or boiled maize, or bread made of cassava root, their clothing a single piece of linen. Upon the commission of the most trivial offence, they were tied hands and feet to a ladder, where the overseer approached with a whip like a postilion’s and gave them fifty, a hundred, and perhaps two hundred lashes upon the back. Each stroke carried off its portion of skin. The poor wretch was then untied, an iron collar with three spikes put round his neck, and he was

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<sup>149</sup> <http://www.parliament.gov.za/content/land%20act%20bochure%203.pdf>;  
<http://www.apartheidmuseum.org/sites/default/files/files/downloads/Learners%20book%20Chapter2.pdf>

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.parliament.gov.za/content/land%20act%20bochure%203.pdf>.

then sent back to his task. Some of them were unable to sit down for a month after this beating – a punishment inflicted with equal severity on women as on men. In the evening, when they returned home, they were obliged to pray for the prosperity of their masters, and wish them a good night before they retired to rest. There was a law in force in their favor called the Code Noir or the Black Code, which ordained that they should receive no more than thirty lashes for any offence, that they should not work on Sundays, that they should eat meat once a week, and have a new shirt every year; but this was not observed’ (de Saint Pierre 1775: 100).

The ‘*Code Noir*’ was cemented when ‘Negroism’ peaked in Mauritius, i.e., during the second epoch of slavery, which would see to their being baptised and instructed in Roman Catholicism and condemned to servitude for eternity as they were descendants of Ham<sup>151</sup> (Boswell 2006: 69-70). Roman Catholicism played a crucial role in maintaining slaves as so, under the pretence that they would or could atone for their sinful Hamitic nature by way of suffering through slavery (Sala-Molins 1987: 65). Charles Seligman (1930: 96) wrote on the subject that “the civilizations of Africa are the civilizations of the Hamites, its history is the record of these peoples and of their interaction with the two other African stocks, the Negro and the Bushmen”. He employed the polygenist Hamitic hypothesis that reads that prior to their encounter and engagement with the Hamites (the supposed Caucasoid human migrants from north of Africa), Africa and therefore Africans lacked all those things necessary that would have had them move from a state of barbarism into and toward the homo sapiens age of enlightenment, civilisation – full humanness.

Any desire or aspiration for a non-Hamitic life was simultaneously destroyed and removed from the psyche of slaves. This unfolded in Mauritius around what Sylvie Maurer (2014: 89) described as “the tree of forgetfulness” standing in Port Louis, Mauritius, in the seventeenth century as that which slaves had to walk around to forget the life that they had previously enjoyed in mainland Africa:

The slaves were taken from different countries, inside these countries they were ripped from different tribes, which had no shared customs and no shared cultures.

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<sup>151</sup> Also condemned to servitude according to the Bible’s Old Testament, Book of Genesis.

Some other slaves were also taken from other colonies where they were born from African slave parents. Contrary to other groups that settled in Mauritius, those who are qualified Creoles today, especially the group having slave ancestors can hardly rely on ancestral customs, since they were stripped of their ancestral cultures. Indeed, slaves were not allowed to keep their cultures. There was even a tree called ‘the tree of forgetfulness’ situated near the port of Port-Louis, which, according to José Rose, the Rasta’s president, all slaves, brought to Mauritius, had to walk around in order to forget their past lives as free people. Hence, they were stripped of their identity; they were baptised according to the Code Noir and were given new names by their white master.

Maurer (2010: 56) wrote on what we can take to be an attack on the black African slave psyche in greater detail in her work on the genetic identity of slaves and their descendants in Mauritius, saying that the surnames given to the latter, for example, forced them to the margins of the Mauritian socio-political world as they then carried the stigma of belonging or coming from “an uncivilised, untamed continent, and everything that comes from there is considered bad and worthless”. She added: “Mauritians of slave ancestry are still stigmatised today in Mauritian society, they are seen as the lowest rung of the population because of the colour of their skin and their African look”. She went on to explain that this stigmatisation also fixed their worthlessness in Mauritius, objectifying them as far as sexualising them (Maurer 2010: 55-56):

Slaves were given surnames with negative and sexual connotations according to gender. Women slaves were given surnames such as:

- Lapuante meaning stinking
- Lachair meaning flesh
- Prude meaning prudish
- Lapoule meaning hen

For the men, surnames were given in relation to animals or to the way the masters perceived the slave:

- Bourrique meaning donkey
- L’étourdi meaning stunned

- Résidu meaning residue.

No attempts appear to have been made to have slaves socio-politically positioned differently in Mauritius until the arrival in 1841 of French Catholic priest, Jacques Désiré Laval, who “refused to accept the common opinion that regarded them with contempt” (Sala-Molins 1987: 65). Jocelyn Grégoire, contemporary Catholic priest from the Afro-Mauritian socio-political category and president of the ‘*Fédération des Créoles Mauriciens*’ (FCM – Mauritian Creoles Federation) remembered Laval and the weight of his work with Afro-Mauritians, which “was perceived as a form of social and political emancipation and was not warmly received by the minority European settlers” (Boswell (2006: 70), as so:

My dear confrere Jacques Desiré Laval [...] In your heart was a deep love for Jesus Christ and an incredible zeal to set free from any spiritual bondage the captive black slaves of the colony among whom, unbeknownst to you, were my ancestors. You knew them as your ‘poor Blacks’ with whom you spent your entire life being the doctor of their souls (Bernier, 1978; Michel, 1976). Your missionary zeal, the sanctity of your life, and your genuine eagerness to win as many souls as you possibly could for Jesus Christ were so wondrous that they won you the title of Apostle of Mauritius and led the Church to beatify you in 1979 (Grégoire 2009: 110).

British parliamentarian and abolitionist Thomas Fowell Buxton (1826) complained to the British House of Commons in 1826 along similar lines, telling of slaves being treated as fully disposable beings at the margins not only of the Church but of the Mauritian socio-political world, because of the Franco-Mauritian socio-political category that had power over the Church and local economy then:

I mean the very dreadful treatment of the slaves at the Mauritius. I am one of those who think, that wherever there is slavery, there is cruelty; and, therefore, mere cruelty would be no proof. But the excessive ill-treatment of the slaves at the Mauritius, and the mortality which that ill-treatment has produced, coupled with the fact, that the population has not diminished, are at least a strong corroboration of my opinions. Excessive labour, or excessive punishment, may

be restrained by the reflection, that a substitute is not to be found, or only at a very great price, for that being, whom those excesses send to the grave. But, where the Slave-trade prevails – where there is a market, and that market abundantly supplied, there it is plain to experience and plain to reason, that the life of man will be held at a very cheap rate indeed. There was an officer of the Mauritius, whose duty it was to make a report to the governor, day by day, of the deaths of the negroes in his district. The population of that district was, I am told – for I have not proof – in 1816, somewhere about 11,000: in the next six years 6,565 died. Such a mortality proves excessive ill-treatment. But a population existing under such a mortality is proof of Slave-trading.

This new-found empathy for slaves in Mauritius marked the third epoch of slavery, a more hopeful one for Afro-Mauritians, which grew into its eventual abolition on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1835 under British rule in Mauritius:

[...] The public opinion was evolving rapidly in Britain in favour of the abolition of slavery. This was reflected in the debates in Parliament where government had pledged to abolish inhuman and shameful practices. The black person was increasingly perceived not as a piece of furniture as was the case under the infamous Code Noir, but as a human being equal to any other. The Anti-Slavery Society ‘and friends’ were holding public meetings that were widely supported by the public and more particularly within the ranks of British MPs, of whom a leading figure was Baronet Thomas Fowell Buxton, a former Evangelical missionary, who twice introduced a motion in Parliament to abolish slavery. The motions failed until a Whig government replaced the Tories at the general election of 1832 voted for abolition (Selvon 2012: 285-286).

Human trafficking to Mauritius stopped then:

From 1834 the traffic in human flesh ceased. In 1839 all slaves in Mauritius six years old and upwards became apprentice laborers and remained so until 1841 as, regarded field laborers, and until 1839 for those unattached. There were then in the island 39,464 men and boys and 25,856 women and girls, in all 65,320.

Knowing that the change in the status of so many inhabitants might interfere with the labor supply, the planters prepared for this contingency by importing coolies from Ceylon and India (Fokeer 1922: 205).

The British opened the exportation of Indian labourers to Mauritius in the 1830s and 1840s by putting out a work contract that guaranteed the latter a new beginning in Mauritius, which was then land that welcomed those “people taken from the refuse of the population of Madras” (Parliamentary Papers 1840: 194-197) mostly, who sought to grow differently in the socio-political world, moving up the socio-political hierarchy (Hazareesingh 1975: 80-90). Active Indian immigration came to an end in 1924, at which point only 160,000 out of 450,000 Indian labourers had paid for their passage back and returned to India (Hazareesingh 1975: 80). Those who remained eventually formed the Indian Diaspora, a Hindu middle class emerging from ‘*le grand morcellement*’ or the great land subdivision by white sugar estate barons to indentured labourers following the severe decline in sugar prices and trading activities at the time:

During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, with the stagnation and gradual decline of the sugar industry, many of the sugar barons sold their marginal lands which were located on the fringes of their sugar estates to thousands of Old Indian Immigrants and a few Indian merchants and traders in what became known, according to Richard B. Allen, an American historian, as the ‘Great Morcellement Movement’. By the early 1920s, the Indo-Mauritians owned around 40% of the island’s valuable arable lands. As a result, most of them became small cultivators, many others became small-scale sugar growers, and a handful were large-scale sugar producers. This Great Morcellement Movement of the late 1800s gave rise to a large Indian bourgeoisie and peasantry by the early 1900s which was gradually becoming involved in the island’s politics during the first half of the twentieth century<sup>152</sup>.

We note here that members of the Indian diaspora were also fixed as People of Indian Origin (PIOs) in Mauritius (Appravasi Ghat 2017) – a socio-political positionality that could be turned into ‘Overseas Citizens of India’<sup>153</sup> by the Indian Government from 2017 to grant dual

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<sup>152</sup> <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/significance-indian-diaspora-mauritius>.

<sup>153</sup> <https://defimedia.info/mauritians-now-eligible-overseas-citizen-india-card>.

citizenship to Indo-Mauritians, i.e., Indian and Mauritian citizenship then, making them claimants of legal ‘*appartenance*’ or belonging to India and Mauritius.

Despite the abolition of slavery and the promise that came with it about black persons finally being taken and treated as human beings, their newly-acquired freedom and their being replaced (at least as labour in and of the Mauritian sugar industry) by PIOs, Afro-Mauritians’ socio-political positionality did not evolve in Mauritius – the singular story on them also did not: “The former slave, or Creole, population was not provided with cultivated land; it established its own cultural life on the margins of colonial society” (Greig et al., 2011: 159), and those among the “ex-slaves who were evicted from the sugar estates had to leave for the slums in Port Louis or near the coasts and other areas to look for food and shelter. The ex-slaves were not provided with any form of assistance neither from the Colonial Office nor their former ‘owners’. They had to find their way through to their new lives”<sup>154</sup>. Henri Leclezio (1914: 139-140) confirmed their ill-treatment despite the abolition of slavery, saying that at the bottom of the Mauritian socio-political hierarchy was that socio-political category that could neither read nor write, that was fit for manual labour and servitude because with “Malagasy and African blood” that made of them cooks, coachmen, carpenters, woodcutters, cane cutters, carters and masons that provided for and to the upper classes of Mauritius. Then followed the conservative Mauritian news editorial, *Le Cernéen* (1954), which spoke of African slaves and their descendants as the ‘*Kreol*’ after the abolition of slavery in Mauritius, for whom slavery turned to misery because left with little support and resources to move from and beyond their previous slave positionality. In 1965, Hassam Rassool (119-120) depicted Afro-Mauritians as the most miserable of all Mauritians, whose rights on Mauritian soil would and/or could never be retrieved because they were illiterate, which had them be and remain masons, fishermen and dockers of the local port, Port Louis.

Jeremy Chilin (2017: 34) confirmed this as the current socio-positionality of Afro-Mauritians:

*L’ère de l’indépendance change la donne à Maurice sans pour autant améliorer le sort des Créoles. Les leaders gouvernementaux sont désormais majoritairement des Indo-Mauriciens et vont, à tous les échelons, favoriser les membres de leur groupe (malgré une égalité formelle publiquement). Les*

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<sup>154</sup> <https://defimedia.info/sylvio-michel-slave-descendants-are-still-enduring-legacy-slavery>.

*Créoles perdent ainsi l'accès au fonctionnariat dominé par les Hindous (l'exemple le plus flagrant étant celui des forces de l'ordre, hier très créole, aujourd'hui presque totalement indianisé). En 1946, 70% des fonctionnaires étaient Créoles, 3% seulement le sont dans les années 2000. Or, dans une société pluriethnique, le contrôle des emplois publics (par l'importance de cette offre de travail) par un groupe, confère symboliquement à celui-ci une représentation de sa domination sur le pays. Si, dans un tel contexte, une communauté ne peut accéder à l'emploi public, cela accroît son sentiment d'un traitement inégalitaire. Cela affaiblit d'autant les Créoles qui, majoritairement, ne possèdent pas de biens d'importance, de patrimoine, d'outils de production, de terres, de logements propres, d'épargne... Cela accentue leur sentiment d'être des victimes de la majorité hindoue<sup>155</sup>.*

Directly and radically against the unchanged if not worsened socio-political positionality and unchanging story of Afro-Mauritians would be that of PIOs growing into the twentieth century and well into the present day as that of 'saviour of the damned' or saviour of all in Mauritius. Theirs was and remains a story of 'coolie' heroism following the heavy influence of Hindu revivalist and reform movements in India such as the 'Arya Samaj' or the 'Satyagraha' as well as the success of the more general anti-colonial movements around the world, which motivated PIOs to rise in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s from the miseries of their indenture or "from passive sufferers to active rebels, from political subjugation to political awareness, from being exiles to islanders as they learn about their rights to land ownership, education, and a separate identity" (Ravi 2010: 33). The history of Indian displacement and relocation became the weapon of indentured labourers in Mauritius – a means of '*détournement du pouvoir*' (Chambers 1991), a means to persevere and produce themselves socio-politically anew (Hall 2000: 244); a story about indentured labourers reborn into the political elite that was to save Mauritius and Mauritians from their oppressors. It is along these lines that Mauritius would see

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<sup>155</sup> Translation [mine]: The era of independence is changing the situation in Mauritius without improving the fate of Creoles [...]. Government leaders are now mainly Indo-Mauritians and will, at all levels, favour the members of their group (despite formal equality publicly). The Creoles thus lose access to the civil service dominated by the Hindus (the most flagrant example being that of the police, yesterday Creole, today almost completely Indianised). In 1946, 70% of civil servants were Creole, only 3% were in the 2000s. However, in a multi-ethnic society, the control of public jobs (by the importance of this offer of work) by a group, symbolically confers on this one a representation of its domination on the country. If, in such a context, a community cannot access public employment, this increases its feeling of unequal treatment. This weakens the Creoles all the more, who, for the most part, do not hold significant assets, heritage, production tools, land, clean housing, savings, etc. This accentuates their feeling of being victims of the Hindu majority.

the gaining in strength of the Mauritius Labour Party (MLP), better known as the *Parti Travailleiste* (PTr), a militant coalition faction composed of Indo-Mauritian labourers, small-scale Indo-Mauritian sugar planters and smaller miscellaneous PIO-led political parties and spearheaded by Indo-Mauritian Seewoosagur Ramgoolam in the 1950s (Akung 2016: 338). This stood against the British and against white Mauritian sugar estate barons and some charismatic (mixed) Afro-Mauritians such as Gaëtan Duval standing together as the *Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate* (PMSD – Mauritian Socio-Democratic Party) to resist the idea, possibility and project of Mauritian Independence (Eisenlorh 2006).

Only one year later, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1968, the PTr secured a new Constitution<sup>156</sup> that enfranchised Mauritius toward its independence despite resistance from the PMSD, at which point PIOs stood to have pushed the country toward a supposed democratic ethos that would forever uphold labour and other rights, guarantee improved conditions (of all kinds) for all, and maintain parliamentary and electoral representation of all groups in the country (Allen 1999; Addison & Hazareesingh 1984). The country was then propelled into what was imagined as the century of equality for all (Mukonoweshuro 1991: 199-224), although the Mauritian population was divided between those who wanted Independence (PIOs) and those who opposed it (the rest of the country and especially Afro-Mauritians). This showed at the very start of the independence era in Mauritius, on Independence Day, with the history of Afro-Mauritians disappeared and disappearing from Mauritian socio-political history, and the myth of ‘*coolie*’ heroism becoming institutionalised to fix PIOs as owners of the success of Mauritian Independence, and consequently, as the legitimate beneficiaries and executives of post-Independence Mauritian political power (Tinker 1977: 321-338; Salverda 2010). Prime Minister Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (1979: 129) then addressed independent Mauritius as so: “As we open a new chapter of our history we shall always remember that we are the inheritors of a great tradition, which is vested in the very history of our land. The daring and valour of our seamen, the creative imagination of the early colonisers, who included men and women from all continents, the hardy patience of those legions of workers whose efforts have enabled us to reach our present position, the respect which we have always shown for democratic principles, our love for justice and liberty, these will be the guiding lights of our national policy”. This had Ramgoolam remain in political office for a whole decade until his death in 1986 (Jahangeer-Chojoo 2010: 121-133).

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<sup>156</sup> <https://mauritiusassembly.govmu.org/Documents/Legislations/constitution.pdf>.

After Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, came the PIO duo of Anerood Jugnauth, Indo-Mauritian leader of the *Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien* (MSM – Mauritian Socialist Movement), and Navin Ramgoolam, son of Seewosagur Ramgoolam (Jahangeer-Chojoo 2010: 121-133) and subsequent leader of the PTr. Both held political power as Mauritian democracy unfolded, either one at a time or sharing power by political alliance, actualising the fact that political power now rested in the hands of PIOs. There was only one exception to this: Paul Raymond Bérenger, member of the Franco-Mauritian socio-political category, who became the fourth Prime Minister of Mauritius in 2003. He was handed and not voted into the role by Anerood Jugnauth:

Port Louis - After 21 almost uninterrupted years as prime minister of the tiny, prosperous Indian Ocean island state of Mauritius, Sir Anerood Jugnauth prepares to hand over power on Tuesday to Paul Berenger, the first non-Indian to become head of government. Jugnauth, 73, will stand down as prime minister on Tuesday, before taking the office of president on October 7 [...] The transfer of power is in line with an agreement reached three years ago between the island nation's two main political parties - the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), led by Berenger, and Jugnauth's Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) [...] In succeeding Jugnauth, Berenger brings to an end a long-standing tradition in Mauritius, which has seen Indians from the Vaish caste hold the premiership since independence<sup>157</sup>.

Adding to the political polarisation between PIOs and Afro-Mauritians was that the former retained their ties with India, enforcing in Mauritius the Hindu caste system or Casteism as they ruled it at will: “In Mauritius as in India, hierarchy along purity lines, which is foundational for the system, persists” (Claveyrolas 2015: 12). It is along these lines that PIOs strategically laid claim to positionalities higher, purer than their own in Mauritius, which served them better (Singaravelou 1991: 16; Servan-Schreiber 2001: 173) as they were able to move from being the refuse of Madras to “Brahmins [priestly, high-caste] from the boat” (Singaravelou 1991: 16) – desperate to hide or re-write their Indian socio-political positionality, desperate to escape the oppression that came with this in India (Servan-Schreiber 2001: 173).

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<sup>157</sup> <https://www.news24.com/news24/non-indian-pm-for-mauritius-20030929>.

This shows in the surnames<sup>158</sup> that they adopted or said were theirs upon their setting foot in Mauritius, for example, associated now with Indian godhood or positionalities close thereto. Maharaj<sup>159</sup> (from the Sanskrit word ‘*Maharaja*’, which means Great King or High King), Rampersad<sup>160</sup> (from the Sanskrit words ‘*Rama*’ and ‘*Prasada*’, to mean Gift of Lord Rama) and Ramnarain<sup>161</sup> (or Ramnarayan, combination of Lord Rama and Lord Vishnu) are a few of these surnames. Against this were the surnames given to Afro-Mauritians during the slave era in the country, such as those that Sylvie Maurer<sup>162</sup> spoke of and that include Lapuante (stinking), Bourrique (donkey) and Résidu (residue), which certainly did not do or hold very well in the now PIO-ruled and casteist Mauritian socio-political world. Elaborating on Casteism and its impact in Mauritius, Mathieu Claveyrolas (2015: 15) said: “[...] castes are denounced today as a recent invention of unscrupulous Hindu politicians wishing to mobilise caste networks as a basis for vote-catching strategies. The aim is both to federate this or that caste group beyond social-class differences and to use castes as a means to activate a criterion of differentiation in relation to Mauritian nonHindus. The result is a kind of ethnicisation of castes, already witnessed on the island of Réunion (or in Sri Lanka) and in India”.

PIOs also enforced the Indian village system in independent Mauritius as a manner of facilitating the propagation and institutionalisation of Indianness throughout the country, actively maintaining “genealogical and cultural links with their ancestral country” – links that enabled “them to construe their past as an unbroken and continuous narrative that harks back to the mists of prehistory” (Eriksen 2007: 159). Their continued commitment to India was brought to the fore in the Indian Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora (2004: xvi), which elaborated on the commitment of the Indian diasporas of Reunion Island and Mauritius to their Indian origins: “Mauritians of Indian origin, who originated primarily from the Bhojpur district of Bihar, harbour a commitment to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage. The Indian community in both islands is active in promoting Indian culture and Indian festival”. This would be with the consequence that Afro-Mauritians remained and/or were further marginalised from the Mauritian socio-political world:

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<sup>158</sup> <https://forebears.io/mauritius/surnames>.

<sup>159</sup> <https://forebears.io/mauritius/surnames>.

<sup>160</sup> <https://forebears.io/mauritius/surnames>.

<sup>161</sup> <https://forebears.io/mauritius/surnames>.

<sup>162</sup> See page 91 of this thesis for more on this.

*La visibilité culturelle hindoue (voire asiatique en général) est aussi plus tangible: instituts culturels (comme le Mahatma Gandhi Institute de Moka), temples et constructions monumentales comme le grand complexe religieux du site de Grand Bassin avec la statue géante de Shiva. Ce qui nuit aux stratégies socio-culturelles créoles, liés aux racines occidentales du pays. De plus, malgré une forte mixité, les Créoles n'arrivent pas à former la communauté creuset valorisée de l'île, comme dans d'autres territoires (en Guyane française par exemple)<sup>163</sup> (Chilin 2017: 81).*

This played a major role in fixing Indo-Mauritians specifically against Afro-Mauritians in the Mauritian political arena:

*Les politiques publiques semblent aussi favoriser la majorité hindoue qui bénéficie plus des améliorations structurelles (loisirs, soins, éducation, logements) permises par le boom économique depuis les années 1970. Si le développement de l'industrie (grâce aux zones franches) et du tourisme offrent des emplois aux Créoles, cela ne suffit pas et ils restent cantonnés à des postes subalternes. Nombre d'entre eux vivent dans le dénuement, tout en bas de l'échelle sociale. La mobilité par alliance matrimoniale est aussi bloquée par l'endogamie stricte pratiquée par les autres groupes, y compris celui des proches élites chrétiennes (blanche et de couleur), et les portes de l'émigration se sont également refermées. Seules les voies de l'éducation supérieure (où les Tit'Créoles/Ti Kréols sont bien souvent en échec) et de l'accession au pouvoir (impossible du fait d'une majorité électorale indienne) pour tenter de changer ce dénuement récurrent sont également inatteignables. Les Créoles se sentent donc dans une impasse<sup>164</sup> (Chilin 2017: 35).*

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<sup>163</sup> Translation [mine]: Hindu (and even Asian in general) cultural visibility is also more tangible: cultural institutes (such as the Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Moka), temples and monumental constructions such as the large religious complex on the site of the Grand Bassin with the giant statue of Shiva. This is detrimental to Creole socio-cultural strategies, linked to the country's western roots. In addition, despite a strong diversity, the Creoles do not manage to form the valued crucible community of the island, as in other territories (in French Guiana for example).

<sup>164</sup> Translation [mine]: Public policies also seem to favour the Hindu majority, which benefits more from the structural improvements (leisure, healthcare, education, housing) allowed by the economic boom since the 1970s. If the development industry (thanks to the Free Zones) and tourism offer jobs to the Creoles, it is not enough and they remain confined to subordinate positions. Many of them live in poverty, at the bottom of the social ladder. Mobility by matrimonial alliance is also blocked by the strict endogamy practiced by other groups, including that of close Christian elites (white and colored), and the doors of emigration have also closed. Only the paths of higher

The marginalisation of Afro-Mauritians grew over the decades following Independence, showing clearly in the 1990s as the '*malaise Créole*' (Creole ailment), which Rosabelle Boswell (2006) and Thomas Eriksen (2007) brought up as cluster of social problems that Afro-Mauritians unendingly faced in Mauritius. Jocelyn Grégoire (2009: 111-112) explained this '*malaise*' as so:

[...] there is among the Creole community a feeling of being abandoned by politicians and the government in general, by the Catholic Church, by the private sector, and by their own fellow middle-class Creole. The Creole feel that they have been forsaken by politicians and the government in general. Out of twenty-two ministers, only three Creoles have a ministerial portfolio in today's government. They feel forsaken by the church of which they are the majority. The chances for...the Creole community seems to have been left behind by the high speed train of social, economical, political and academic development. The chances for most of our children to enrol in a Catholic primary or secondary school are very lean. They feel forsaken by the private sector, which for economic or even political reasons has preferred to give more support to the other components of the Mauritian community, namely the Hindus. They feel forsaken by their own fellow middle-class Creole who have chosen to immigrate instead of staying behind to help make a difference. Most of the jobs associated with Creole genius are facing extinction and thus point to a gradual genocide of the Creole community, since the job market for the Mauritius of the future will require candidates with university degrees, something that is very scarce among the Creoles.

The Afro-Mauritian feeling of being abandoned by politicians and the government in general stood clear as day upon the mysterious (unsolved) death of famous Rastafarian Afro-Mauritian music icon, Kaya, in police custody in February 1999 in Mauritius, which set off riots (declared racial violence) by Afro-Mauritians, debunking any sort of '*romanesque*' expression of or belief about equality for all (including equality of treatment) in democratic Mauritius: "On

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education (where the Tit'Créoles/Ti Kréols are very often in check) and the accession to power (impossible due to an Indian electoral majority) to try to change this recurring destitution are also unattainable.

February 21st, a much-loved singer, Joseph Topize, known as Kaya, who blended West Indian reggae with the island's 'sega tipik' (typical or traditional 'sega' music), to produce 'seggae' died in police custody. Since then the capital, Port Louis, has been convulsed by riots and mayhem. Public buildings and cars have been set ablaze, shops looted, schools and businesses closed and roads blocked with burning tyres. About 250 prisoners have escaped from the local jail. In calm, orderly and rather prosperous Mauritius, such events are unheard of' (The Economist 1999). What occurred then, said Julia Waters (2019: 68), was the "expression of a widespread desire for change, of a common 'longing to belong'. The outbreak of violence – and the spontaneous encounters that it occasions – embodies a shared wish to cleanse society of its deep-rooted social divisions and economic inequalities and so to break the stranglehold of internal, communalist constructions of belonging".

Where they had once been enslaved and dispossessed by a white minority, Afro-Mauritians were now dominated and marginalised by Indo-Mauritians (Mukonoweshuro 1991; Eisenlorh 2006). Wergin (2012: 121) pronounced them victims of a Hindu-dominated "mother(is)land" – ironically now an anti-African African island. Laval Jocelyn Chan Low (2004: 403) spoke to this as follows: "*L'étude des rapports officiels et des recensements confirme que si, au lendemain de leur libération de l'apprentissage, quelques ex-esclaves avaient pu acquérir une certaine aisance, d'autres vivaient dans des conditions de dénuement matériel dans une société insulaire où s'institutionnalisait le racisme anti-africain*"<sup>165</sup>. It is in this context that the Mauritian narrative of 'enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon', which accentuates the potential for national unity, would fall away to show a 'nation arc-en-ciel' (a rainbow nation) failing to live up to the depth and breadth of its own aspiration, potential and promise. Thomas Eriksen (1992: 82-92) hit the nail on the head here, stressing that "*l'idée d'une nation arc-en-ciel voulait dire que chaque individu devait trouver sa couleur*"<sup>166</sup>. This would be along the colour ladder that had been built over time in the country, with Afro-Mauritians not only standing as the darkest colour of the Mauritian rainbow nation (MTJC 2011a: 202; Miles 1999: 211), but as the human manifestation of the colour black, which does not exist in a rainbow at all, thus sitting away from it, under-represented, unseen, unwanted, impossible to merge with and embrace. Jimmy Harmon<sup>167</sup> had this to add: "Although people of African-Malagasy origins

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<sup>165</sup> Translation [mine]: The study of official reports and surveys confirms that if, following their release from apprenticeship, some ex-slaves had acquired a certain comfort, others lived in conditions of material destitution in an island society where anti-African racism was becoming institutionalised.

<sup>166</sup> Translation [mine]: The idea of a rainbow nation meant that every individual had to find their colour.

<sup>167</sup> <https://defimedia.info/dr-jimmy-harmon-museum-memorial-abolition-slavery>.

represent 25% of the population, the system excludes them and renders them invisible. As soon as you land at the SSR Airport going through control and check, you will not see anyone of them. That's why we can often hear foreign delegations asking 'where are the Africans?'".

The 2011 report of the Mauritius Truth and Justice Commission (2011: 296) confirmed the continued, contemporary marginalisation of Afro-Mauritians in and from the Mauritian socio-political world: "There is enough evidence collected in numerous surveys, including those conducted by the Commission, which show that Creoles are discriminated against and do not enjoy the same fruits of development to the same extent as others do. As several surveys undertaken by the Commission indicate, discrimination and racial stereotyping also persist". The Mauritius Human Rights Report (2018: 13) by the United States Department of State stated on the matter:

Poverty continued to be more common among citizens of African descent (Creoles) than in any other community. In November 2017, L'Express reported that it was in possession of a video wherein former vice prime minister and minister of housing and land Showkutally Soodhun was heard reassuring a group of Hindu residents of Quatre Bornes that 90 percent of a new housing project would go to Hindus, 10 percent to Muslims, and that Creoles would get 'zero houses' in order to 'prevent prostitution from spreading in the neighborhood'. The minister stepped down in November 2017 but continued as a member of parliament. On August 28, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions referred the case to court for prosecutions, and the case was heard for the first time in court on September 24. At year's end the court proceedings continued.

In 2018, Jean Claude Veder, Catholic priest, director of the Institut Cardinal Jean Margéot and founder of the Affirmative Action movement in Mauritius, stood up to Showkutally Soodhun and his comment against Afro-Mauritians as prostitutes, saying in an interview with L'Express that this was racial discrimination:

*En 2017, il y a eu les propos de l'ancien ministre Showkutally Soodhun concernant les maisons de la NHDC et les Créoles. J'ai suivi tous les commentaires qui en ont découlé sur Facebook. À ce moment-là, tout ce qui se*

*disait tout bas sur les Créoles a éclaté au grand jour. On disait que Créole est égal à problèmes sociaux, prostitution, drogue et j'ai vu comment on les dénigrait sur les réseaux sociaux [...] Tous les deux ans avant août, le gouvernement mauricien soumet aux Nations unies un rapport qui est un état des lieux de la discrimination raciale à Maurice. Le tableau dépeint est toujours idyllique. Nous, à Affirmative Action, nous voulons montrer que tout ne va pas bien dans le domaine de la discrimination raciale à Maurice [...]»<sup>168</sup>.*

We note here that Afro-Mauritians would not be the only socio-political category to suffer unjust treatment in the country. The Indo-Mauritian socio-political category once fixed as the refuse of Madras and then manipulated to journey to the land of milk and honey for a better future only to find themselves working in sugar plantations in colonial Mauritius stand as an example of this. But it is Afro-Mauritians who would grow into Mauritian History suffering racial discrimination the most and the longest, said Veder: “*Oui, elle existe dans toutes les composantes de la population mais elle est plus évidente chez les Créoles*”<sup>169</sup>. Gaetan Jaquette called this a “second crime against humanity”<sup>170</sup>. Jimmy Harmon (2008) affirmed along the same lines that socio-political marginalisation by way of limited access to healthcare, lack of access to education and unemployment (or unemployability) were some of the ills that affected Afro-Mauritians, and that this was particularly evident from the beginning of the twenty-first century. Laval Jocelyn Chan Low (2004) quoted Armand Maudave on the matter: “*Il ne s’est rien passé durant ces 160 ans parce qu’on a voulu occulter l’existence de l’esclavage, son abolition et surtout les conditions dans lesquelles s’est passée cette abolition. Les gens qui sont aujourd’hui des descendants d’esclaves se rendent compte qu’ils sont des hommes et qu’ils ont une dignité et ceux qui sont des gens indignes sont ceux-là mêmes qui se sont servis d’eux. Et ils prennent conscience qu’ils se disent: ‘Nous étions des esclaves, certains se sont servis de*

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<sup>168</sup> Translation [mine]: In 2017, there was the comment by former Minister Showkutally Soodhun about the NHDC houses and the Creoles. I followed all the comments that ensued on Facebook. At that moment, all that was murmured about the Creoles came to light. It was said that Creole is equivalent to social problems, prostitution, drugs and I saw how they were discriminated against on social media. Every two years before August, the Mauritian government submits to the United Nations a report on racial discrimination in Mauritius. The report is always a positive one. We, at Affirmative Action, want to show that this is not true. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/329950/pere-jean-claude-veder-tout-ne-va-pas-bien-dans-domaine-discrimination-raciale>.

<sup>169</sup> Translation [mine]: Yes, it [racial discrimination] affects all socio-political groups but it affects the Creole socio-political group the most. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/329950/pere-jean-claude-veder-tout-ne-va-pas-bien-dans-domaine-discrimination-raciale>.

<sup>170</sup> <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/346914/gaetan-jacquette-lexclusion-ce-deuxieme-crime-contre-lhumanite>.

*nous et... il est temps de lever la tête*”<sup>171</sup>. Chan Low (2004) buttressed this, quoting Jean-Clément Cangy this time: “*160 ans ont passé depuis l’abolition de l’esclavage et les conditions de vie des descendants d’esclaves ont peu évolué*”<sup>172</sup>.

This would be topped at times with the idea that the marginalisation of Afro-Mauritians is consequence of their own being and doing. Sheila Bunwaree (2002: 8) said about this that it is possible that persons of black African ancestry are in great part responsible of their situation in Mauritius: “Some people argue that the creole group is responsible for its own plight, that they do not have a culture of savings and that they have developed a culture of dependency”, building on their slave ancestry. This is also deemed the inheritance of the children of slaves in Mauritius: “*Quand vous avez un bien quelconque que vous léguerez à vos enfants, petits-enfants, vos arrière-petits-enfants...il perdure. Quand vous n’avez que l’exclusion, c’est tout ce que vous pouvez léguer, de génération en génération*”<sup>173</sup>.

The Law and the Media would perpetuate this singular story too, persistently codifying and presenting Afro-Mauritians as they existed at the farthest margins of the Mauritian socio-political world – as criminals. We note that it is both the narrative that they codify and present (Hjarvard 2008: 128; Krotz 2009: 24) and the visual imagery (Schnell 2008; Butler 2009) that they attach to their coverage of Afro-Mauritians that would have as direct consequence our perception or reception of the latter as criminals. We are to speak of power and representation, and then of the ethics of visual representation here. In a first instance, while it may appear that there is a relationship of political and moral intervention between journalistic photography in democratic Mauritius and Afro-Mauritians as a vulnerable and marginalised socio-political category therein, photographing is not the same as intervening. Those taking photographs of Afro-Mauritians do not intervene upon the scenes that they photograph. They operate from zones of power, dissociation and safety, photographing those who show to have little or none

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<sup>171</sup> Translation [mine]: Nothing happened during these 160 years because we wanted to hide the existence of slavery, its abolition and especially the conditions in which this abolition happened. The people who are today descendants of slaves realise that they are men and that they have dignity and those who are unworthy people are the very ones who used them. And they realise that, saying to themselves: “We were slaves, some used us and... it is time to lift our heads up”.

<sup>172</sup> Translation [mine]: 160 years have passed since the abolition of slavery and the living conditions of slave descendants have barely evolved.

<sup>173</sup> Translation [mine]: When you have something to pass on to your children, grandchildren, your great-grandchildren...it endures. When you only have exclusion, that is all that you can pass on, from generation to generation. See more at <https://lexpress.mu/article/346914/gaetan-jacquette-lexclusion-ce-deuxieme-crime-contre-lhumanite>.

of these. As so, we cannot and should not speak about the Media in Mauritius as defender of Afro-Mauritians. This is even when it looks like favourable coverage of the latter.

We also read with this the power of those behind the camera to represent the ‘other’ – those in front of it, those who then have no choice in the manners in which they would be represented – with the Media in democratic Mauritius inviting ‘us’ to engage with them along their chosen photographs of ‘criminals’ (Afro-Mauritians) and what they choose to ignore about ‘them’. This should remind us of colonial and non-decolonised representations of black Africans as barbaric and in need of policing and saving (Mudimbe 1988; Mbembe 2016; Said 1978) – a one-directional conversation or a dictatorial line of representations that determines and silences the ‘other’: “A conversation of ‘us’ with ‘us’ about ‘them’ is a conversation in which ‘them’ is silenced. ‘Them’ always stands on the other side of the hill, naked and speechless, barely present in its absence” (Minh-ha 1989: 67).

This takes us to opening up to the possibility that Mauritius might not be the democracy that it claims or is assured to be since its storytellers, its Media, operate within a framework that has yet to show truly democratic. In other words, a democratic Mauritius would make way for a democratic Media, and a non-democratic Mauritius would make way for a non-democratic Media. We take the example of the giraffe and the zebra again: a giraffe can birth a giraffe; a giraffe cannot birth a zebra; and so, if a zebra is born, it would not have been from a giraffe. In the same manner, a truly democratic Mauritius would not have had a Media that continued the ‘othering’ of Afro-Mauritians – both in their narrative and visual imagery. The political context here is of a non-democracy. The following serves to exemplify all this, starting with the story of openly Rastafarian Afro-Mauritian, Kaya, brought up earlier<sup>174</sup> and continuing with photographs of the ‘*Nasyon*’ by contemporary Mauritian Media.

Riots by thousands of members of the Afro-Mauritian socio-political category ensued the death of Kaya in police custody in 1999 in Mauritius. This was a violent and public reaction on their part against police ill-treatment and their general ill-treatment – as they were not fully realised in their humanness and stood as secondary citizens in Mauritius, undeserving of those democratic rights promised in the Constitution<sup>175</sup>, which had to do with their fair, equal, and

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<sup>174</sup> See page 101 of this thesis.

<sup>175</sup> <https://mauritiusassembly.govmu.org/Documents/Legislations/constitution.pdf>.

dignified or dignifying treatment in the country. This event shook Mauritius. The Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation (the MBC, the main and government-owned news platform in Mauritius to this day) chose as its news bulletin headline that day, the official opening of a new building somewhere on the island<sup>176</sup>. Kaya's death and the riots were mere footnote to this bulletin, a brief without footage or any other type of proper, wholesome, clear coverage of the matter. In this manner, the most significant information presented to the Mauritian socio-political world on Kaya was and remained his being a criminal – arrested for drug possession. His story was fixed in the singular, perpetuating the idea that he not only existed at the margins of the Mauritian socio-political world but that he also caused this by his not conforming to its norms and rules (because a criminal). This was a presentation that mirrored the way the 'Negro' had once been shown too, which Fanon (1952: 192) had told us about<sup>177</sup>: "He is Negro who is immoral".

The MBC's purposeful non-coverage of Kaya's death in police custody was also excused on the basis that it did not want to participate in aggravating the already grave situation in Mauritius, although the evidence is there that "the coverage of politics and news items by the Corporation is far from balanced, and does not cover the full spectrum of political events taking place in the country. Prioritisation of news is skewed, with newsworthy items often being dropped for pieces that portray government in a positive light" (African Media Barometer 2010: 47). This is against the direction that most of the democratic socio-political world appears to have chosen or taken:

For most countries on the planet, the most consistent trend over the last two decades has been the decisive shift from government control to private (and to a much less extent, community) ownership and control of media. Most of the inhabitants of the planet, encompassing the former Soviet Union, China, most of Africa, and large parts of Asia including several democratic countries such as India, were to one degree or another exposed to information that their governments wanted them to be exposed to. In many countries, particularly in Latin America, where government control of media was not exercised through ownership, it was exercised by proxy, particularly where media were controlled

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<sup>176</sup> [https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human\\_rights/1999\\_hrp\\_report/mauritius.html](https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/mauritius.html).

<sup>177</sup> This was brought up on pages 22 and 87 of this thesis.

in large part by private interests closely linked to government or other elites [...] Information and communication have become impossible to control, and many countries where information used to be subject to absolute government control have seen unprecedented public debate and the arguable emergence of a fresh kind of public sphere. New spaces have been formed, independent of government (Deane 2005: 179, 182).

Twenty years after Kaya's death, coverage of Afro-Mauritians does not appear to have progressed or moved beyond the singular story about them belonging to the margins of the Mauritian socio-political world. The case of Jean Caël Permès<sup>178</sup>, which made headlines in Mauritius May 2020, exemplifies this. Permès was a 'Nasyon' who had died in police custody after allegedly being beaten by policemen seven hours after his transfer from the maximum-security Central Prison in Beau Bassin to the Special Protection Cell No 1 of the high security La Bastille prison in Phoenix. He had been arrested earlier that year for "damaging government vehicle"<sup>179</sup>. The private Media covered his case, only, along the latitude of a steady stream of details that fixed him as criminal centrepiece in the story of his death in police custody. He was depicted as 'other' by his own being and doing; an outsider because behaving and existing against and outside the norms of the Mauritian socio-political world. The story of his being another Afro-Mauritian man brutalised and killed by policemen in police custody was only secondary to this, silenced for the most part: "*Il était l'ancien bras droit du présumé trafiquant de drogue Louis John Brant Vivian, alias John Brown [...] Il avait été arrêté sous une accusation provisoire de damaging government vehicle en début d'année*"<sup>180</sup>; "*Quatre gardes-chiourmes ont été arrêtés ce vendredi 8 mai après l'agression mortelle du détenu Jean Cael Permess, qui a été retrouvé mort dans sa cellule dans la nuit du mardi 5 mai à La Bastille, à Phoenix*"<sup>181</sup>; "*Le détenu était à moitié nu et avait des ecchymoses sur le haut de son corps ainsi que des blessures au coude droit. Il était déjà mort au moment de cette découverte macabre*

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<sup>178</sup> Jean Caël Permes would be written differently in some news reports (Jean Cael Permess, Jean Caël Permess, Jean Cael Permès).

<sup>179</sup> <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/376463/deces-en-cellule-cael-permes-rapport-dautopsie-accablant>.

<sup>180</sup> Translation [mine]: He was the former right-hand man of alleged drug trafficker Louis John Brant Vivian, aka John Brown [...] He had been arrested on a provisional charge of damaging a government vehicle earlier this year. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/376463/deces-en-cellule-cael-permes-rapport-dautopsie-accablant>.

<sup>181</sup> Translation [mine]: Four prison guards were arrested this Friday 8 Mai after the fatal assault of inmate Jean Cael Permès who was found dead in his cell on Tuesday night at La Bastille in Phoenix. See more at <https://defimedia.info/deces-de-jean-cael-permess-la-bastille-4-gardes-chiourmes-arretes>.

*dans sa cellule*<sup>182</sup>; “*Deux détenus de la prison de La Bastille, à Phoenix, affirment que Jean Caël Permes, décédé dans sa cellule le mardi 5 mai, a été tabassé par des officiers de la Carceral and Emergency Response Team (CERT), puis par des gardes-chiourmes affectés à cette prison*”<sup>183</sup>; “*A savoir que Jean Cael Permes est un récidiviste de Cité Ste-Claire, Goodlands, placé en détention provisoire dans le cadre d’une affaire de ‘damaging property’ contre un véhicule de police en mars dernier. Le détenu, âgé de 29 ans, a succombé à une hémorragie causée par de multiples blessures*”<sup>184</sup>.

Many more stories by the Media run the same latitudes as those of Kaya and Permès, along their standing at the margins of the Mauritian socio-political world of their own doing and being (because criminals). In May 2018, L’Express (private news outlet) covered the story of Christopher Fozoo on the matter of policemen cutting off his dreadlocks – symbol of his religio-cultural affiliation, i.e., his being a Rastafarian of the Afro-Mauritian socio-political category – while he was in police custody, taken in for having in his possession 0,2 grams of Gandja (Gandia or Marijuana)<sup>185</sup> on his person: “*Il conteste le fait que les policiers lui ont coupé ses dreads alors qu’il était en prison. Du coup, Christopher Fozoo, qui a récemment été libéré, réclame une enquête*”<sup>186</sup>. His lawyer, Maharaj Madhewoo, added to this: “*Il a été malmené par les officiers de la prison, car il voulait garder ses dreads, à travers lesquels il revendique sa culture*”<sup>187</sup>. And while Fozoo’s ill-treatment in prison could have been and perhaps should have been the focus of this coverage, it was lost to the longer, more detailed fact of his incarceration – the story of him being a criminal above and beyond anything else:

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<sup>182</sup> Translation [mine]: The inmate was half naked and had bruises on his upper body and injuries to his right elbow. He was already dead at the time of this macabre discovery in his cell. See more at <https://www.lemauricien.com/article/meurtre-du-detenu-jean-cael-permes-trois-gardiens-de-prison-interrogés-under-warning/>.

<sup>183</sup> Translation [mine]: Two inmates from La Bastille prison in Phoenix say that Jean Caël Permès, who died in his cell on Tuesday, May 5, was beaten up by officers of the Carceral and Emergency Response Team (CERT), then by prison guards assigned to this prison. See more at <https://www.lemauricien.com/article/meurtre-du-detenu-jean-cael-permes-trois-gardiens-de-prison-interrogés-under-warning/>.

<sup>184</sup> To be noted that Jean Cael Permès is a repeat offender from Cité Ste-Claire, Goodlands, remanded in custody in connection with a “damaging property” case against a police vehicle last March. The 29-year-old inmate died of bleeding from multiple injuries. See more at <https://www.lemauricien.com/actualites/faits-divers/meurtre-de-jean-cael-permes-les-images-des-cameras-cctv-visionnées-par-la-mcit/348756/>.

<sup>185</sup> This would be an illegal drug in Mauritius. The country would stand to have the highest level of consumption of this drug in the whole of Eastern Africa (UN World Drug Report 2011).

<sup>186</sup> Translation [mine]: He is disputing the fact that the police cut his dreads off while he was in prison. As so, having been recently released from prison, Christopher Fozoo is calling for an investigation into the matter. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/332244/dreads-coupés-en-prison-un-rasta-reclame-une-enquete>.

<sup>187</sup> Translation [mine]: He was mistreated by prison officers because he wanted to keep his dreadlocks, through which he asserts his culture. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/332244/dreads-coupés-en-prison-un-rasta-reclame-une-enquete>.

“L’affaire remonte à 2017. Christopher Fozoo est condamné à purger une peine de trois mois d’emprisonnement après la découverte de 0,2 mg de gandia sur lui [...] Le comble, c’est que cet ancien détenu, qui habite la cité EDC, à Rose-Belle, est autrement capable. ‘Il dépend d’une pension d’invalidité et doit faire face à de nombreux problèmes. À mon humble avis, il n’aurait même pas dû être envoyé en prison’, fulmine le Dr Madhewoo”<sup>188</sup>. Again, the treatment of Fozoo by the Media and even his lawyer’s presentation of him are of a “détenu”, an inhabitant of a township who is also handicapped, a faceless man<sup>189</sup> – all the right ingredients that only preserve an image of him as another ‘other’, an outsider, naturally invisibilised because, like Kaya and Permès, behaving and existing against the norms of the Mauritian socio-political world (because a criminal).



Figure 18: Fozoo's faceless head in L'Express.

Raphaël Audibert’s dreadlocks, on the other hand, came with no troubles. He was lauded, applauded in the same newspaper that Fozoo was in, i.e., L’Express, as out-of-the-ordinary citizen of Mauritius – his belonging to the Rastafarian socio-political group and his dreadlocks not bothering any policeman or anybody else in the country, at any point. L’Express had this to say about him, against which we should read how Kaya, Permès and Fozoo were spoken (or not spoken) about:

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<sup>188</sup> Translation [mine]: The case dates back to 2017. Christopher Fozoo is sentenced to serve a three-months prison sentence after the discovery of 0.2mg of Gandia on him [...] The worst part of his matter is that this ex-inmate, who lives in the EDC township in Rosebelle, is differently capable. “He is dependent upon a disability pension and has to deal with many problems. In my humble opinion, he should not even have been sent to prison”, fulminates Dr Madhewoo. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/332244/dreads-coupes-en-prison-un-rasta-reclame-une-enquete>.

<sup>189</sup> See Figure 18.

*À 18 ans à peine, Raphaël Audibert veut bousculer les codes établis. À travers son art, il se fait l'écho d'une autre façon de vivre qu'il fait miroiter. Quitte à déranger certains... Rafiki. Trois syllabes. Trois mots: authenticité, simplicité, maturité. À seulement 18 ans, Raphaël Audibert étonne. Dérange. Il y a quelque chose de Rousseau chez ce jeune artiste amoureux de la nature et de randonnées. Lorsque nous sommes allés à sa rencontre, il était pieds nus, simplement vêtu. Raphaël Audibert, plus connu sous son nom de scène Rafiki, a été découvert il y a deux ans, par Lionel Permal. C'était lors du festival Kaz'out. Que de chemin parcouru depuis. Mais ne comptez pas sur Rafiki pour prendre le melon. Ce jeune rasta, qui habite avec sa famille sur la côte ouest, au pied de la montagne, a les... pieds sur terre. Il sait que sa musique peut déranger. C'est le but<sup>190</sup>.*



Figure 19: Raphael Audibert in L'Express.

In support of the clearly singular story on the discrimination in reporting and police ill-treatment of Afro-Mauritians, also to be read against the coverage of Raphael Audibert, is the case of Laval Roland Raegan Chutoo, Afro-Mauritian member of the Rastafarian socio-

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<sup>190</sup> Translation [mine]: At only 18 years old, Raphaël Audibert wants to shake up established codes. Through his art, he echoes a different way of life, which he promotes. It can be disturbing to some... Rafiki. Three syllables. Three words: authenticity, simplicity, maturity. At 18 years old only, Raphaël Audibert astonishes. Disturbs. There is a little bit of Rousseau in this young artist who loves nature and hiking. When we went to meet him, he was barefoot, simply dressed. Raphaël Audibert, better known by his stage name, Rafiki, was discovered two years ago by Lionel Permal. This was at the Kaz'out festival. Quite the road he travelled since then. But do not think that Rafiki has grown a big ego. This young Rasta, who lives with his family on the west coast at the foot of the mountain has his... feet well on the ground. He knows that his music can disturb. That's the point. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/312311/rafiki-griot-temps-modernes>.

political group in Mauritius, accused of assaulting a policeman: “*Il était accusé d’avoir agressé un policier dans l’exercice de ses fonctions. Laval Roland Reagan Chutoo, un rasta de 34 ans, a été acquitté jeudi 24 octobre en cour de district de Port-Louis. Il faisait face à une accusation d’assaulting an agent of civil authority. Le magistrat Kevin Moorghen a estimé que la poursuite n’a pu apporter des preuves contre l’accusé*”<sup>191</sup>. Interesting in Chutoo’s eventual acquittal – due to the lack of evidence against him – is that, once again, a story that could have been and should have been covered to speak to the police ill-treatment of Afro-Mauritians in the supposed Mauritian democracy was lost in details that only showed Chutoo to be a criminal (with the photograph used in and toward the coverage of his arrest certainly not speaking otherwise, and with police batons and several policemen in and out of uniform holding him as he were dangerous): “*Laval Roland Reagan Chutoo faisait partie des rastas qui avaient été arrêtés en 2016 pour avoir manifesté avec un plant de cannabis au jardin de la Compagnie en 2016*”<sup>192</sup>.



Figure 20: Scene from arrest and eventual acquittal of Rastafarian in Port Louis, Mauritius.

Other such stories show throughout the Media in Mauritius. Défi Media, for example, put out the following on the matter: “*Le chanteur Wendy Ambroise, plus connu comme Jahfazon, parle d’arrestation arbitraire. ‘Comme les charges contre nous ont été rayées, à travers notre avocat*

<sup>191</sup> Translation [mine]: He was accused of assaulting a police officer on duty. Laval Roland Raegan Chutoo, a 34-year-old-Rasta, was acquitted on Thursday, 24 October, in the district court of Port-Louis. He was facing the charge of assaulting an agent of civil authority. Magistrate Kevin Moorghen ruled that the prosecution had not provided evidence against the accused. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/364100/agression-dun-policier-port-louis-un-rasta-acquitte>.

<sup>192</sup> Translation [mine]: Laval Roland Raegan Chutoo was among the Rastas that had been arrested in 2016 for manifesting with a cannabis plant in the Company Garden in 2016. <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/364100/agression-dun-policier-port-louis-un-rasta-acquitte>.

*Erickson Mooneapillay et notre avoué, nous avons fait servir une mise en demeure à l'État pour arrestation arbitraire, brutalité policière et discrimination raciale', a expliqué le chanteur sur les ondes de Radio Plus ce lundi 19 mars*<sup>193</sup>. Zinfos974 covered this arrest too, using the same language and visual interpretation (using photographs from L'Express) of the events as others, in the singular – criminalising: *“Neuf hommes et deux femmes ont été interpellés par la police. Ils participaient à une séance de Nyabinghi, rituelle des rastafaris, dans le Jardin de la Compagnie, à Port Louis. Ils avaient en leur possession un plant de cannabis. Selon un manifestant, ils comptaient aussi remettre une lettre au Premier ministre sir Anerood Jugnauth pour réclamer la légalisation du cannabis. La police n'a pas tardé à intervenir, car le gandia est illégal à l'île Maurice et a procédé à l'interpellation de 11 manifestants. Les forces spéciales sont intervenues très violemment un peu plus tard, devant les Casernes centrales, pour calmer la foule qui manifestait pour réclamer la libération de leurs amis emprisonnés*”<sup>194</sup>.

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<sup>193</sup> Translation [mine]: Singer Wendy Ambroise, better known as Jahfazon, speaks of arbitrary arrest. “Since the charges were dropped, we served a formal notice against the State, through our lawyer Erickson Mooneapillay and our attorney, for arbitrary arrest, police brutality and racial discrimination”, said the singer on Radio Plus this Monday, March 19. See more at <https://defimedia.info/arrestation-arbitraire-et-brutalite-policiere-des-rastas-reclament-rs-5-millions-letat>.

<sup>194</sup> Translation [mine]: Nine men and women were arrested by the police. They had been participating in a Nyabinghi session, a Rastafarian ritual, in the Company Garden in Port Louis. They had a cannabis plant in their possession. According to a protester, they had also wanted to deliver a letter to Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, asking that cannabis be legalised. The police would be quick to intervene because Gandia is illegal in Mauritius, and they arrested 11 protesters. The special forces intervened violently a little later, in front of the Central Barracks, to calm the crowd that was protesting for the release of their friends who had been arrested. See more at [https://www.zinfos974.com/Maurice-La-police-reprime-violemment-une-manif-pour-la-liberalisation-du-cannabis\\_a100818.html](https://www.zinfos974.com/Maurice-La-police-reprime-violemment-une-manif-pour-la-liberalisation-du-cannabis_a100818.html).



Figure 21: Scene from arrest of Rastafarian in Port Louis, Mauritius.

The point of their protest appears to have been lost to the fact of their arrest instead, where the Rastafarian community in Mauritius had been demanding fair and equal treatment in the face of what they received as discrimination, indifference and violation of their rights, such that their religion and religious practices, which include the consumption of cannabis<sup>195</sup>, be acknowledged, respected, legitimised and legalised as are all other religions and religious practices<sup>196</sup> in the Mauritian democratic socio-political world. But this demand for equality has time and time again been rejected, vilified, turned to and into criminal act instead, to which Aneerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the country in 2016 said: “*Tant que je serai Premier ministre, il est hors de question de dépenaliser la consommation du gandia*’. *C’est ce qu’a déclaré samedi soir 7 mai le Premier ministre, sir Anerood Jugnauth, au Taher Bagh, où il participait à un diner organisé par le Haramayne Solidarity Movement*”<sup>197</sup>.

<sup>195</sup> The use and consumption of cannabis is illegal and punishable by law in Mauritius ([https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/english/ocindex\\_profile\\_mauritius.pdf](https://ocindex.net/assets/downloads/english/ocindex_profile_mauritius.pdf)).

<sup>196</sup> See Articles 3 and 11 of Mauritian Constitution: <https://mauritiusassembly.govmu.org/Documents/Legislations/constitution.pdf>; <https://acninternational.org/religiousfreedomreport/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Mauritius.pdf>.

<sup>197</sup> Translation [mine]: As long as I am Prime Minister, Gandia consumption will not be decriminalised”. This is what the Prime Minister Sir Aneerood Jugnauth said on Saturday evening, May 7, at Taher Bagh, where he was attending a dinner organised by the Haramayne Solidarity Movement. See more at <https://defimedia.info/video-saj-pas-question-de-depenaliser-le-gandia-tant-que-je-serai-premier-ministre>.

And just as importantly, the visual coverage of Rastafarian Afro-Mauritians and Aneerood Jugnauth here are severely contrasted, standing at opposite ends of each other. The former would be shown as drug users prompting police intervention, and the latter would stand with the glow of a religious man as shows the photograph below from Défi Media.



*Figure 22: Aneerood Jugnauth at a Hindu event in Mauritius, where he spoke about the maintenance of Marijuana as illegal drug in the country as long as he remains its Prime Minister.*

Although there is little on the ‘*Nasyon*’ in Mauritian History, there is enough in between its lines and silences that show a singular story about them that took root in the colonial era by way of science then fuelled by Christianity, which continues to this day to explain them as non-humans in the Mauritian socio-political world and determines their belonging to its margins as criminals instead. The country appears conditioned to this, having “imbibed and internalised the language of alienation” (Landau 2010: 230) toward and against the ‘*Nasyon*’ as the solid ‘other’. Mauritians are unphased, unbothered by the continuation of this story, placarding it in public gardens and museums instead, and reinforcing it by way of the Law in complicity with the Media. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie<sup>198</sup> would say here that the consequences of reducing the heterogenous and complex compilation of stories and the humans within them to a singular story is indeed nothing less than the taking away of their humanity – nothing less than their

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<sup>198</sup>[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)

dehumanisation. And the dehumanised human certainly stands little chance, if any at all, of claiming political power.

### **Ethnography of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as Non-Citizens**

The information uncovered through the historiographic approach to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, although strong on its own, ought to be confirmed by the ‘*Nasyon*’ themselves to hold valid too. This was imagined as the added pursuit of an ethnographic analysis, which entails intensive, first-hand contact with the ‘*Nasyon*’ to allow the capture of a more wholesome reality, a more objective truth about them, since heavily reliant upon the ‘*Nasyon*’ themselves and with minimised influence on their activities, thoughts and engagements. Ethnography runs as so: It is “[...] the art and science of describing a group or culture” (Fetterman 1998: 1) characterised by “a written description of people that focuses on selected aspects of how they lead their routine, remarkable, and ritual lives with each other in their environment and of the beliefs and customs that comprise their common sense about their world” (Muecke 1994: 189-190), and it takes the interpretative path to emphasise “the power of the scientific imagination to bring us in touch with the lives of strangers” (Geertz 1973: 16).

The ethnographic approach to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius lent itself to the systematic collection of data (marked as field notes) on and about the ‘*Nasyon*’ and their lived experience in the Mauritian socio-political world (the field). It made use of informal interviews as well as participant observation for an extended period of time – enough time to gather data, to identify and map out the meaning systems in which the ‘*Nasyon*’ would be evolving from and embedded that would give rise to their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. And if it does imply private, singular interpretation of the observer as part of the investigative or explorative process (Mackenzie 1994), the functional significance of the ethnographic approach here was that it also directed the thesis on the ‘*Nasyon*’ in the field while dispensing the imposition of its observer’s internal logic and external meaning and value assignment, i.e., it required neither internal nor external reliability to establish its own validity. Ethnography, then, let those observed in the field and the field speak for themselves to tell the story of their architecture and becoming.



The field identified and chosen for purposes of this thesis was narrowed to that which speaks the most to the ‘Nasyon’ and therefore, to their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. This is African Town, a township formed in the village of Surinam in the rural south

coast of Mauritius<sup>199</sup> composed of members of the ‘*Nasyon*’ socio-political group – both squatters whose residential status is continuously denied and upset, and legal residents of the township whose residential status is formally allowed by the Mauritius Housing Authority (MHA) only upon fixed monthly payment supposedly toward full ownership of their house there. African Town has a few hundreds of inhabitants, but the exact number thereof is impossible to determine due to the fact of constant human mobility to and from there – illegal and legal. Labelled ‘*Residence*’<sup>200</sup> today, African Town used to stand as a ‘*cit *’, a specifically Mauritian ghetto-type quarter formed by and reserved for poor Afro-Mauritians.

African Town does exactly what it pronounces. It enacts its own interiority. It is the town of black Africans in Mauritius – a space whose essence is not only entangled with but also stands as embodiment and extension of the ‘*Nasyon*’. Afro-Mauritians living in the ‘*cit *’ are by association the ‘*Nasyon*’, and the ‘*cit *’ is identified as so because composed of a ‘*Nasyon*’ population. The exchange value between these two is unambiguous and unambiguously equal. Neither the ‘*cit *’ nor the ‘*Nasyon*’ can exist beyond or separately from each other. And because it is an African town, this particular ‘*cit *’ naturally set itself up to be not only the most representative field to study but also the most performative one, and for that reason, the field that is taken to speak the most to the subject of the ‘*Nasyon*’ and their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius more than any other Mauritian ‘*cit *’ can.

The ethnographic approach to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius began in January 2016 and ended in July 2019. It was conducted in three phases (see Table below) retained through field notes that served toward the production of a Geertzian “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) – a detailed, contextual account – of the event pursued. This timeline was fixed upon the observer’s capacity to travel between the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where this thesis unfolded from, and Mauritius, the observed socio-political world.

PHASE	TIMELINE	FOCUS PLAN
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<sup>199</sup> See red arrow pointing to this in Figure 22 above.  
<sup>200</sup> <http://leboncoin.nu/2015/04/smart-residence-new-name-for-future-nhdc-housing-estate/>;  
<http://www.nhdcmauritius.com/bienvenue.html>.

ONE	January 2016 - December 2016	Inactive Participant Observation
TWO	January 2017 - December 2017	Thought Calibration
THREE	January 2018 - July 2019	Active Participant Observation

The first phase ran in African Town and took the form of single-participant observation that purposely left out active, obtrusive engagement in and with the field (written as ‘inactive participant observation’ here). This was made possible with the help and assistance of Michelle (pseudonym used in place of her real name, which she asked not to be published for fear of reprisals by police). Michelle was 34 years old in 2016 and had spent her entire life in African Town. She was one of the oldest residents and one of the few legal ones there. A first scouting stroll in African Town in December 2014 had led to meeting her on the street in front of her house, and having a following series of conversations with her that had her eventually, generously open up her house in January 2016 as main research headquarters in and for the first phase of the observation of the ‘*Nasyon*’ in and of African Town (and main research and living headquarters in the third phase of this observation). Michelle took on the roles of gatekeeper to the rest of the ‘*cit *’ and initial ‘*raconteur*’ (or ‘*raconteuse*’, story-teller) of the field realities of African Town during both first and third phases of this thesis. A research milieu was thus set up, that began at and was styled around a focal point of observation of the current, lived reality of the ‘*Nasyon*’ in the Mauritian socio-political world.

The idea behind first engaging in inactive participant observation was to avoid the risk of treading the path of a biased hunt for specificities embedded in pre-existing systems of knowledge specifically in support of the question posed in this thesis, and instead, let the field expose itself on its own terms, i.e., let the field create a portrait of itself that was free from the singular observer thereof<sup>201</sup>. In other words, instead of setting off as premeditated, controlled, calculated, purposeful tracking of data in African Town that accounted for the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, the first phase of the ethnographic approach ran as general observation of the field as it were and had to be free and free-standing phenomenon – a socio-political machine preceding and fully detached from the (intent and

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<sup>201</sup> This would be me, the observer-interviewer.

expectations of the) observer. Then the field would put out its own portrait, a sort of self-portrayal, communicating those specificities about it that the observer was to build on. During this phase, i.e., the first year of inactive participant observation in African Town, field notes were collected on the daily lives of the ‘*Nasyon*’, their lived experience as ‘*Nasyon*’, and the details and other phenomena around these. These are summed up in the following short conversation (translated from Mauritian Creole to English and transcribed below), taking from the following series of questions posed to Michelle and drawing from a first question: Who is a ‘*Nasyon*’?

*Interviewer:* I am writing on the ‘*Nasyon*’. This is the term known and used in Mauritius that speaks to persons of African origin in the country today who are not mixed. Pure Africans, if you will. The ‘*Nasyon*’ are usually found living ‘*cités*’ like this one. I know this much about the ‘*Nasyon*’ – only by stereotype or general reputation. Can you tell me if I am right or wrong? Can you tell me who would qualify as ‘*Nasyon*’? Who is a ‘*Nasyon*’?

*Michelle:* You are right. We are African. Children of slaves, right? Some maroon slaves too. See all my neighbours? There is only one Muslim close by. His mom is ‘*Nasyon*’ and his dad Muslim. The mulattos live in Curepipe, Quatre Bornes or Port Louis. Or Tamarin. Some of them, I know, have beach houses. They have money. We live in the ‘*cité*’. There is Cité La Cure, Cité Roche Bois, Cité Atlee, Cité Malherbes, Cité Tôle... My cousins live in Roche Bois. It’s too expensive to live elsewhere. And Government won’t let us. They are always waiting for the elections to give the houses. You know? The NHDC in Souillac (small village, southeast of Surinam<sup>202</sup>)? They don’t even leave us in peace here. We have nowhere to go.

*Interviewer:* How don’t they leave you in peace? Who are “they”?

*Michelle:* They come in vans... Just to scare us. We live in fear here. Government sent people to break down some tin houses a few years ago. Squatters. No right

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<sup>202</sup> See Figure 22.

to live here. Life is hard. We live in community here. So, we don't have any problems with the squatters. Some of them are family, you know...?

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me who comes in vans?

*Michelle:* Guards.

*Interviewer:* The police?

*Michelle:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Is there ever any reason for them to come? Do they come because there is a problem in which they would have to intervene?

*Michelle:* No. Just to scare us. Police presence. Supposedly to prevent crime. They are the biggest criminals. They are the ones selling drugs to the children. And then they treat us like dogs in the street! No. They treat dogs better. When I hear the van, I take my children inside. We all run inside. Some are not afraid. But I am.

*Interviewer:* Do you think that they would have a problem with me being here, talking to you?

*Michelle:* No. They will think you are a social worker. No problem.

*Interviewer:* Why would they think that of me?

*Michelle:* You are Indian<sup>203</sup>.

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<sup>203</sup> Note that later others also interviewed for purposes of this ethnographic approach to the 'Nasyon's' persisting dissociation from political power would call me "Frenchy". With being called "Indian" and then "Frenchy", it was clear that I was different from the 'Nasyon', that I was not one of them, that I came from a different, better elsewhere – or what they took to be a better elsewhere. My position of privilege and power came to the fore, which moved me as I engaged more and more with the 'Nasyon' of African Town.

*Interviewer:* And they would not have a problem with us here, with me, because I am Indian?

*Michelle:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Do social workers come to African Town often? What do they come here for?

*Michelle:* Yes. They are always around. Look busy but don't change anything. There are children whose mum and dad are both in prison, and the children live with the grandparents. There is one girl who is retarded. Mental. She goes to the school for the needy in Souillac. An Indian lady checks up on her. Her mother gets money from Government for the girl, so they send the lady to see if the mother is using the money to take care of the girl.

The historiographic approach to the 'Nasyon's' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius brought to the fore the miserable conditions of living and being of Afro-Mauritians in the Mauritian socio-political world, including the exaggerated policing thereof, and Michelle's experience and testimony of this during the ethnographic approach to the matter came as no surprise. But what stood out was the heavy hand of NGOs there since it is well known in the country that the 15,000 of them are entangled with Politics and Freemasonry<sup>204</sup> (also jokingly and commonly referred to as the Mauritius Freemasons Bar Association<sup>205</sup> because of the high number of Mauritian lawyers that are also Freemasons). Catherine Boudet, political analyst in Mauritius, had spoken about this as so:

*Le travail social est une aide de la société envers la société elle-même, reposant sur le bénévolat. Le travail social a toujours occupé une grande importance à Maurice depuis la colonisation et la création en 1866 par les loges maçonniques*

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<sup>204</sup> We note here that Freemasonry in Mauritius is set as the umbrella organisation or the nursery for the Lions Club and the Rotary Club, both known and publicly involved in charity work. See their charity golf competitions (<https://www.discover-invest.com/news-events/rs-2-515-000-recoltees-lors-l-edition-2022-de-la-charity-golf-competition-du-lions-club-port-louis-doyen.html>; <https://gymkhana.intelligentgolf.co.uk/competition.php?compid=202>). Lalit also speaks about this (<https://www.lalitmauritius.org/en/newsarticle/1867/the-nature-and-history-of-ngos-a-brief-outline-by-lindsey-collen/>). Directly or not, Freemasonry is involved in charity work in Mauritius.

<sup>205</sup> <https://weluvmu.com/blog/2010/06/10/today-a-reader-tomorrow-a-leader/>.

*d'une Caisse de Secours pour venir en aide aux travailleurs sucriers. Mais si le secteur privé donnait des salaires décents à ses travailleurs et si l'Etat-providence était réellement efficace, on n'aurait pas besoin d'autant d'ONG. Les ONG et les travailleurs sociaux, y compris les associations socio-culturelles, assument le travail charitable de lutte contre la pauvreté et contre les fléaux sociaux que l'Etat-providence aurait dû prendre en charge avec de véritables politiques publiques, et que l'esclavagisme moderne perpétré par le secteur privé contribue à aggraver tous les jours. En résumé, les travailleurs sociaux font le travail que l'Etat n'assume pas [...] <sup>206</sup>.*

For Freemasons to be imagined creating a welfare fund to help those that need it since 1866 in Mauritius is nothing short of mind-boggling. On the one hand, they do stand as the saviours of those in need of saving:

The brotherhood does not only look out for each other. They play an important role in assisting charities and organisation in South Africa and around the world. 'What is common amongst society is that the Freemasonry does a lot for the Freemasons. This is true, but we also do a lot for the non-Masonic charities,' said Mr Chris Adams, president of the Board of the Benevolence of the District of South Africa North, under the English Constitution. Around the world, it is widely accepted that Freemasons in America give over a million dollars a day to non-Masonic charities and organisations. Freemasonry in England are the second largest contributors towards charity after the Lotto. In the South African District, Freemasonry has given nearly R29-million over the past 26 years to non-Masonic organisations<sup>207</sup>.

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<sup>206</sup> Translation [mine]: Social work is help from society back to society itself, based on voluntary work. Social work has always been of great importance in Mauritius since colonisation and the creation in 1866 by the masonic lodges of a Welfare Fund to help workers in the sugar industry. If the private sector paid decent wages to its workers, and if the Welfare State was truly effective, we wouldn't need so many NGOs. NGOs and social workers, including socio-cultural associations, take on the charitable work of combating poverty and social evils that the welfare state should have taken charge of through real public policies, and that modern slavery perpetuated by the private sector is making it worse every day. In short, social workers do the work that the State does not do. But social work is not the only mission of NGOs. See more at <https://catherineboudet.wordpress.com/2016/03/>.

<sup>207</sup> <https://ridgetimes.co.za/155171/freemasons-encourage-others-get-involved/>.

On the other hand, Freemasonry composes members that included Cecil John Rhodes<sup>208</sup>, an architect of Apartheid South Africa and a “murderous land-grabbing racist”<sup>209</sup> hailed by Hitler<sup>210</sup>. The questions are obvious: How far can we trust anybody whose associations and actions were hailed by Hitler? Could we and should we trust any such secret society as Freemasonry if they would produce or have as their members people including Rhodes? Should we trust that NGOs in Mauritius, funded or overseen by Freemasonry since the 1860s, have the best interest of the people they claim to help or seek to save? Should we trust their intent, however benevolent this may seem at first glance?

We would make a note here of the puzzling presence and influence of Freemasons in Mauritius: “Freemasonry was also closely linked to both the slave trade and its abolition, as many traders were members of the freemason societies, as well as of the Amis des Noirs” (MTJCa 2011: 101). In 2018, four Freemasons in Mauritius (two women and two men), acquaintances all made aware of this thesis, agreed to speak on the matter of Freemasonry under pseudonyms. Getting them to speak was quite the easy task – they seemingly enjoyed doing so.

*Interviewer* [to 44-year-old woman, banker and member of a Mixed Lodge of Freemasonry in Mauritius, written under the pseudonym ‘Lily’ just as Freemasonry would want her to – to remain anonymous]: “What made you join Freemasonry?”

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<sup>208</sup> <https://www.kimberley.org.za/today-kimberleys-history-2-june/>; <https://www.mail-archive.com/ctrl@listserv.aol.com/msg14576.html>; <http://worcesterlodge280.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Famous-Freemasons.pdf>; <https://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/Rhodes-Confession.htm>.

<sup>209</sup> “Cecil Rhodes was a man responsible for untold, unending devastation and violence. An architect of South African apartheid, he explicitly believed in the existence of an Anglo-Saxon master race – an ideology that drove him to not only steal approximately one million miles of South African land, but to facilitate the deaths of hundreds of thousands of black South Africans [...] His establishment of a paramilitary private army, the British South Africa Company’s Police (BSACP) resulted in the systematic murder of approximately 60,000 people; his amendment of the Masters and Servants Act (1890) reintroduced conditions of torture for black labourers; his infamous racist ‘land grabs’ set up a system in which the unlawful and illegitimate acquisition of land through armed force was routine. **Rhodes despised democracy.** In 1887 he told the House of Assembly in Cape Town: ‘The native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise. We must adopt a system of despotism in our relations with the barbarians of South Africa’. His 1892 Franchise and Ballot Act effectively eliminated African voting rights. He repeatedly reminded his colleagues of the ‘extreme caution’ they must exercise when it comes to ‘granting the franchise to coloured people’”. See <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/12064939/We-dont-want-to-erase-Cecil-Rhodes-from-history.-We-want-everyone-to-know-his-crimes.html>.

<sup>210</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bbc-unveils-a-victorian-hero-a-moneymad-racist-closet-gay-1330823.html>.

*Lily:* I was approached by a colleague years ago...a very long time ago...when I was still young and influenceable [giggles]. He told me that he thought I would be a good fit in his Lodge, a good addition...that he had already spoken about me to his brothers and sisters, and then asked me if I wanted to join them. I did.

*Interviewer:* A colleague at the bank?

*Lily:* Indeed.

*Interviewer:* What about Freemasonry appealed to you then?

*Lily:* It was just a group to join, you know... I was already member of another group. I thought, "Why not?" It's social work and networking.

*Interviewer:* Is it really social work? Freemasonry, I mean...

*Lily:* That's the hiccup. I thought it was. To tell you the truth, I was pleasantly surprised when I joined my Lodge. I had friends and colleagues in there already. People from the Rotary. It was not a new environment. Not a 'new' group. I really thought that it was based on making the world a better place, a nicer place for everyone. That's why I joined [Freemasonry].

*Interviewer:* Do you no longer think that about Freemasonry, or your Lodge?

*Lily:* No. It's something else. Something more spiritual, more esoteric.

*Interviewer:* What did you do as you understood this?

*Lily:* I went along with it. I enjoy it now. I have made some really strong connections there. All kinds. Also, what can you do? You are a member [of Freemasonry], a colleague and a friend. If there is something that bothers you and you talk, you may lose a few friends. If you do anything, you lose your job.

*Interviewer:* That's a bit scary. You stayed anyway?

*Lily:* Yes. Beside the spiritual aspect, it's a great network! When I need something done, there is always a friend somewhere now. Or a friend who knows a friend.

*Interviewer:* In the banking world?

*Lily:* Yes. Everywhere else too.

*Interviewer:* Where else are those friends of yours and their friends? Could you tell me about that?

*Lily:* Law, police, education, import-export, tourism, politics, pharmaceuticals, car business, airport...whatever you need, wherever you go, there is someone somewhere... Things go quicker when you know who to call to get things done.

*Interviewer:* What kind of things did you ever need done that connections amongst you, Freemasons, made quicker?

*Lily:* Bank transfers. Huge amounts. We can do this without the accounts being flagged. We are the ones doing the flagging, usually. When it's a brother or some connection with Freemasonry, no flag.

*Interviewer:* Are there many of you, Freemasons?

*Lily:* A small percentage [of the Mauritian population].

*Interviewer:* Do you not find any ethical issues with Freemasons as they connect beyond or outside the lodge, in more official, civic spaces? No legal problems? No conflicts of interest? I would think that objectivity would be lost when private relationships become part of decision-making, for example – from what you just

said about bank transfers. Would those accounts be flagged under normal circumstances?

*Lily:* But that's what this is all about, no? Advancing each other, advancing those we already trust. Brothers and sisters.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by "advancing those we already trust"? How does this happen? And what does it mean?

*Lily:* I trust that they know what they are doing. I trust them. I'll help them with whatever they need, and they'll help me too. I'll tell you something else. Another example. If there is a job opening at my bank, for example, I'll tell my brothers and sisters first, before it's even advertised, because I know they will be good for it. I'll also put in a good word for them to get the job when I am not making that decision myself.

*Interviewer:* How do you know that? How do you know that they will be good for the job? Could there not be people outside of Freemasonry who could also be good for the job?

*Lily:* But they are Freemasons. That already shows me how good they are!

*Interviewer:* I don't understand...

*Lily:* We have already been checked and rechecked. If we weren't good members of society, valuable members, we wouldn't have got into Freemasonry. When we are in, that's like a stamp. We are good members of society. Valuable members. Useful. To be trusted.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by "good members of society"? How do you judge that? And from what you just told me about banking, to go back to that subject, those connections are a bit suspicious... I wouldn't trust them to be ethical or moral or even legal. Anybody engaging in a bank transfer above and

against what the Law would require of them would not be someone that I would call a “good member of society”.

*Lily:* Things aren't so black and white...although they are [giggles]. You change your mind and see things differently as a Freemason. You see things non-Freemasons see. You understand the bigger things, the bigger world. The Universe. In the Universe, things are not black and white.

*Interview:* But they are, to a certain degree. A person engaging in activity and behaviour that is unchecked by the Law, and if it were checked it would not be allowed or would be flagged as suspicious – that is black and white.

*Lily:* You wouldn't understand.

*Interviewer:* No. I wouldn't. I don't. The Law applies quite brutally to non-Freemasons. We [non-Freemasons] don't get a free pass – because we are not Freemasons. That is unfair, unjust, and quite frankly, not right for the rest of us. There seems to be a whole underworld unfolding out there... Something we cannot reach or reap anything from, and something that the laymen and women wouldn't know is running in the background of their everyday life, which is a complicated life of unending lines, job applications, many rejections, unapproved bank loans – never mind bank transfers, which would be immediately flagged if suspicious, etc...

*Lily:* You would understand if you were chosen.

A second Freemason (who spoke here under the pseudonym 'Pooja'), another woman in her early thirties working in the medical field in Mauritius and member of a Mixed Lodge there was asked about the criteria for standing as “good member of society”, for being “chosen” by Freemasonry. Her response was: “You must have something extraordinary that you can give back to society. You must have a base that we would help you build on over time, to be even better, even more extraordinary. It's like a flower bud that we can see in you, which we will help blossom”.

*Interviewer:* Don't we all have a flower bud that can blossom with help?

*Pooja:* Maybe. But some flower buds really are better when compared to others. They are prettier, stronger, long-lasting, smell better and serve society better... It's like a wildflower bud, right? When it blossoms, if it blossoms, it's probably nice in the forest. Not everybody will get to look at it or smell it. It will last for a few days only. You get the gist. It's up to us to find those better buds that we can help blossom into flowers that will be more valuable to society than a wildflower bud.

*Interviewer:* How do you make that choice? How do you leave the wildflower bud behind in the forest and choose to focus your energy on helping a very few, specific flower buds blossom?

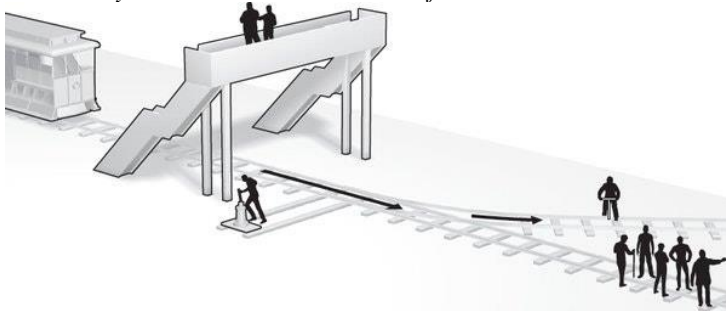
*Pooja:* It's a contentious decision, a moral dilemma, but the outcome is worth it. Do you know what the Trolley Dilemma<sup>211</sup> is?

*Interviewer:* I do.

*Pooja:* In this case, we would choose to let go of five less valuable members of society and save one only, who would be the most valuable of all. That's how it is. Tough choice, but a rational choice.

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<sup>211</sup> Pooja was here referring to the following, available at Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/us/10foot.html>.



*Interviewer:* By “let go of five less valuable members of society”, you really mean ‘let five flowers die, that would be considered not-so-valuable...’ When applied in the real, actual socio-political world, your leaving behind members of society that you would consider not-so-valuable would in fact be marginalising them, leaving them on their own, facing their death, because of a decision you made which took from them their right to live as you would...

*Pooja:* [No response].

*Interviewer:* Let me read to you a section of Graeme Mackenzie’s<sup>212</sup> interview with the Mauritius Times<sup>213</sup>. Maybe you can help me get a better grip of what I am struggling with here. The Mauritius Times asked Mackenzie: “The aim of Private Lodges engaged in the practice of Freemasonry is said to have always been about ‘making good men better’. Does the Freemasonry’s definition of ‘good men’ also encompass the influence that the prospective freemason would command in society – and that would explain the growth of the Freemasonry’s clout and power?” He answers: “Freemasonry is open to all men, of all faiths, and any occupation. No favour is provided based on occupation. There are as many artisans in Freemasonry as there are professionals”.

*Pooja:* [No response for a while] You must understand: the world is made of leaders and followers. Powerful and powerless. It is up to us to find out which one we are and do what we are meant to do. We must be who we are meant to be, without forcing a different way of being, a different order, an unnatural order. There are bankers and clients, politicians and voters, etc... Not everyone can be a banker, not everyone can be a politician. Do you get it?

*Interviewer:* Things would be quite ‘black and white’ then. Are you contradicting yourself here?

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<sup>212</sup> Mackenzie is a Grand Master of Freemasonry from South Africa.

<sup>213</sup> <http://www.mauritiustimes.com/mt/master-mackenzie-as-a-society-the-freemasonry-falls-very-far-short-of-being-secret/>.

*Pooja:* No. You won't get it. You have to be a Freemason to understand what I'm saying...

A third Freemason, a man in his 60s working in a leadership position in the Education sector in Mauritius who spoke here under the pseudonym 'Vishal', expanded on the criteria for choosing who to include in and exclude from their small circle of secret relationships and continuous 'you scratch my back and I scratch yours' Freemasonic tangles: "You have to be smart and come from a good family. You have to have good standing in society".

*Interviewer:* What is "being smart"?

*Vishal:* You must be educated. University level. The higher the better.

*Interviewer:* What is to "come from a good family"?

*Vishal:* There are good families and not-so-good ones. Good baggage and bad baggage. Good names and bad names... Who your parents are or how you carry your family name... Your name has to be out there. People have to know you, or your name, for good reasons.

*Interviewer:* One would have to be sort of famous, semi-famous, then, to be considered from a good family?

*Vishal:* Yes. What your name is, what jobs you can get, what contacts you can make, all these can help push our lodges.

*Interviewer:* Push them how?

*Vishal:* Making the bond stronger; making the network stronger. The stronger the tree, the better the fruit. For the tree to be strong, we need good fertiliser. Members [of Freemasonic lodges] are like fertiliser. Together they make a tree grow that bears good fruit.

*Interviewer:* You work in the Education sector in Mauritius. Do you think that with the right kind of education system, all Mauritians could be fertiliser?

*Vishal:* No [giggles]. Some are chemical pesticide. Nothing good. Nothing organic. They can kill the tree or ruin the fruit.

*Interviewer:* Who would you say would be chemical pesticide in Mauritius?

*Vishal:* Anybody we don't know [giggles]!!!

*Interviewer:* Graeme Mackenzie spoke to L'Express the other day and...

*Vishal:* Yes! A Grand Master from South Africa...

*Interviewer:* Yes. He spoke to L'Express about the common perceptions held on Freemasonry. He said...let me read this to you... I've got it in writing here. He was asked, "What makes you", i.e., Freemasonry, "different from a sect?" And his answer was: "Most sects have a belief. For example, that the world will end on a certain day. We are a classless society; anybody who meets the criteria of not having a criminal record and of having a belief in a higher power is eligible to become a member"<sup>214</sup>. But from what you are saying about chemical pesticide, Freemasonry would stand to be more of an exclusive club for specific people, and people need more than a clean criminal record to get in.

*Vishal:* That's the basic stuff. You need a little more. All lodges have their own spirit, and their choices are made from that spirit. The Freemasons I know hold high standards. The lodges too. We are very careful with who we let in. We take our time and assess everyone individually.

*Interviewer:* How do you pick who to assess?

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<sup>214</sup> <http://www.mauritiustimes.com/mt/master-mackenzie-as-a-society-the-freemasonry-falls-very-far-short-of-being-secret/>.

*Vishal:* We know the pesticide and we know the fertiliser. We come up with recommendations at the time of recruitment.

*Interviewer:* I note that you are bent on using symbols to answer my questions. Is this something that you do only with me or...

*Vishal:* All Freemasons do it at some point, I guess. Not just with you. What we teach and learn in the lodges is deep spiritual stuff, you see? I can't tell you about what we do. But...the more time you spend in it, the broader your mind gets. The less grounded you are. The stuff of everyday life...you don't see the point of it anymore. You start philosophising [giggles]... Do you know how many of us start reading Philosophy right after initiation [giggles]? We followed the wrong career path [giggles]. We should all have been philosophers!

A fourth Freemason (written under the pseudonym Raj), a man in his 40s, head of a number of scientific organisations and projects in Mauritius and Africa, cemented the unofficial fact of those relationships that serve the underworld of Freemasons and their friends, which the public, the laymen and laywomen, the everyday Jack and Jill in Mauritius, either do not see unfold or do not benefit from and certainly do not have say in or authority over, which they should be able to do – because with secret relationships and secret benefits going around, the very fact of the Mauritian democracy, which we are told Mauritians live in, would just fall apart: “You’d make a good Mason”, he said. This part of our conversation unfolded in 2018.

*Interviewer:* Would I?

*Raj:* You are doing a PhD, you speak well, you are not shy. Yes, you’d make a good Mason. Would you like to try?

*Interviewer:* Try what?

*Raj:* Do you want to join?

*Interviewer:* For now, I must focus on my PhD.

*Raj:* What about getting into Politics?

*Interviewer:* I'm not sure... What are we talking about here?

*Raj:* That's your ticket. We could push you in.

*Interviewer:* By that, you mean that if I join Freemasonry, my chance would be higher than it is now, which is pretty much naught, for me to get into Politics?

*Raj:* Not a higher chance. A sure ticket in. You know the kinds of people we push to the top?

*Interviewer:* No. But I'd love to know.

*Raj:* Hint: the highest advisers of the moment.

*Interviewer:* I would think Ministry of Finance, Ministry of...Foreign Affairs, or even Prime Minister's Office. These would be the most impactful ministries of Mauritius. Well, the biggest...

*Raj:* You guessed right. All three.

*Interviewer:* Is this something new?

*Raj?* You mean our brothers and sisters being in the shadow of politicians?

*Interviewer:* You take the words right out of my mouth!

*Raj:* [Giggles] From the very beginning...

*Interviewer:* Of what?

*Raj:* Of Mauritius. Of our history. Of our entire history!

*Interviewer:* You mean the history of humankind?

*Raj:* Exactly.

*Interviewer:* Is that right? Is that even legal or ethical? You could be setting Freemasonic agendas to run through and into politics, impacting the laymen and laywomen without their consent or knowledge. I mean... I would be silly to think that there are no secret, hidden puppeteers in politics or anywhere else in Mauritius from what you are saying...

*Raj:* Our brothers and sisters are pushed up because they are good at what they do and work as spiders in a common web that is meant to be woven for the good of society.

*Interviewer:* So... You would say Freemasons know better what the public or what politicians or experts and other potential advisers, non-Freemasons, would and should need?

*Raj:* Sure. But... Are any of them non-Freemasons?

*Interviewer:* Alright. I hear you. Tell me, if they really did a good job, if they really cared about the good of society and stand in those positions of authority and leadership in the country, why were we on Wikileaks for...let me read this to you...“questionable dealings under the surface”, or for the police planning to keep drugs found at the port “as part of an organised smuggling operation”, or for the murder of a smuggler in police custody that would serve “keep the corruption ring under wraps”, or for officers of the Major Crime Investigation Team taking “protection” money from “businessmen, bookmakers and others”<sup>215</sup>? And why are we only 56<sup>th</sup> least corrupt country out of 180 others –

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<sup>215</sup> [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08PORTLOUIS205\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08PORTLOUIS205_a.html).

that would be according to Transparency International<sup>216</sup>. Why are there talks of our Attorney General stepping down soon on money laundering charges<sup>217</sup>? The list goes on. Our country is not doing great. Whatever idea we sell of a paradise island to the outside world...it's not true. Poverty is rampant – that's 10% of our population according to official Government statistics<sup>218</sup>, which, I am not sure can be fully trusted. Why is the Gross Enrolment Ratio at secondary school level stuck at 72% only<sup>219</sup>? What is happening to the rest of the youth of this island? Why are we still talking about pronounced gender gaps in employment and education, and why is Gender Based Violence still on the rise<sup>220</sup>? If it were true that you put your people, your brothers and sisters, good men and women, in high places in this country, who would help forge a better Mauritian society, who would shape it into a better place, no part of this data that I am giving now would be there, surely!

*Raj:* A few bad apples. All societies have this. But I can assure you that our aim is to produce good men and women that we send back to the world to make society better. Look at you. Perfect example.

*Interviewer:* I am still perplexed. How do you know what society needs? How do you know what the public wants? What gives you the right to decide for them? For us? For me? Have you ever asked us what it is that we need or want? What is our idea of a good or better society than this one?

*Raj:* [No answer for a while] Do you believe in a god?

*Interviewer:* Why are you asking?

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<sup>216</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/mauritius/corruption-rank>.

<sup>217</sup> <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/4iivCer5SzVIVojTgqHfhK/Mauritius-attorney-general-quits-over-moneylaundering-probe.html>.

<sup>218</sup>

[http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/Poverty/Poverty\\_Analysis\\_Rep\\_Yr17.pdf](http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/StatsbySubj/Documents/Poverty/Poverty_Analysis_Rep_Yr17.pdf)

<sup>219</sup> [http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/Publications/Pages/Edu\\_Stats\\_Yr2017.aspx](http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/Publications/Pages/Edu_Stats_Yr2017.aspx).

<sup>220</sup>

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MUS/INT\\_CEDAW\\_CSS\\_MUS\\_32569\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/MUS/INT_CEDAW_CSS_MUS_32569_E.pdf).

*Raj:* If you do, you are good candidate.

*Interviewer:* Thank you... Since we are on the matter of candidature... I've got something to ask you. There is this young man that I know, and I would like to ask you if you think, by the details I'll give you about him...if you think that he'd make a good candidate too.

*Raj:* Shoot.

*Interviewer:* He is 23 years old, has a university degree from UoM [the University of Mauritius], has a lot of energy, believes in a god and is ready to pour all that he has and is back into [Mauritian] society.

*Raj:* Where is he from?

*Interviewer:* The Southwest. A village there.

*Raj:* What does he do right now?

*Interviewer:* As in...work?

*Raj:* Yes. Well, what's his current occupation?

*Interviewer:* He is looking for work. He can't find much, he says.

*Raj:* Why not? Where is he looking?

*Interviewer:* His dreadlocks... And a police record, which doesn't speak to him being a criminal. It's just that he got caught up in a little scuffle with the police when protesting in the Company Garden. Remember those arrests a while back?

*Raj:* Oh! No. Then he is not a right fit for us. His behaviour already shows that he is hot-headed and hot-tempered. No self-control, no understanding of society.

His dreads... I don't have an issue with that, not personally. But...you know...? He won't be good with structure and following our guidance and internal laws.

*Interviewer:* What makes him different from me? Beside the police record? Are the dreadlocks a problem?

*Raj:* You are going all the way to a PhD. This shows us that you have discipline, vision. You are a hard worker. You follow guidance and rules. You listen, you learn. A PhD has very little rebellion in them.

*Interviewer:* But this young man also would show discipline, no? He studied, he went to university, did his homework, passed his tests, submitted projects I imagine... He adapted to a structure.

*Raj:* But he didn't go far. He is happy with one degree and can't be bothered with more of that structure. Laziness. Lack of vision. Incapacity to pursue things to their very end. He doesn't understand what keeping his dreads mean.

*Interviewer:* You wouldn't take him then, and try to forge him into a better version of what you think he is? Isn't that something Freemasonry can do?

*Raj:* In a way, but we must be careful. Your character shows very early on. We can't forge someone who is a rebel at heart.

*Interviewer:* And can you tell me what "keeping his dreads" mean?

*Raj:* Rebellion. The lack of will and the incapacity to adapt, to conform, to follow in the same direction as others.

*Interviewer:* Like a sheep?

*Raj:* More like someone who can fit into society. Someone who wants to fit in. Someone who fits in and doesn't want to cause trouble or uproars. We have a

system in place that works. We cannot take in somebody who shows signs of rebellion, because they would cause uproar in the system.

*Interviewer:* Is that why you engage in social work? You can help from a distance, but you won't take those people in, who stand outside of your "working system", because that doesn't cause uproar in your system?

*Raj:* Freemasonry has always done charitable work. But for a society to operate well, we can only directly help those who want to help themselves. To the others, we give the means to try. You need good character. A first university degree isn't enough if you have a police record and dreads... You get what I mean?

We stopped at the point of the university degree not being enough: only a rare few 'Nasyon' seem to make it past a secondary school certificate, let alone a first university degree. This showed quite brutally in African Town.

*Interviewer* [to Michelle, in the same first interview with her]: Tell me about the children here. Do all of them attend school? And how do they do there?

*Michelle:* Mine do. I hope that they don't follow the others. I don't have money to send them to university like you. But they are intelligent, their dad and I pray to God that they finish SC or HSC<sup>221</sup>. I leave them in Jesus's hands every morning I send them off [to school]. The others are bad influence. They all stop school at 14, 15. I don't like that my children are friends with some of them. But what can I do? The other children are on the street all day. They drink. Rum. They fight. Blood runs out. They do drugs. They lose control with it. They drool. Their parents don't discipline them.

*Interviewer:* The parents allow their children to do drugs?

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<sup>221</sup> Cambridge School Certificate or Cambridge Higher School Certificate, equivalent to Grade 11 and Matric in South Africa.

*Michelle:* They [the parents] are in prison or out fishing or drunk or don't care. They do drugs themselves. Some beat the children up to make them stop. The other day one of the boys hit his dad back. He is known to be violent.

*Interviewer:* Is violence a problem in African Town? Is there a lot of it?

*Michelle:* Everyone is. Mum, dad, grandpa, grandma, uncle. Everybody is violent here.

*Interviewer:* How do you handle your children? How do you raise them?

*Michelle:* God looks over them. We go to church and I pray a lot for them. I don't hit them. Sometimes their dad slaps them if they come back home with a bad school report. Breaks my heart.

*Interviewer:* Where is he now? Your husband? Could I speak with him too?

*Michelle:* He builds houses. He is working right now. When you come back, come back when he is here. I have your phone number. I'll give you a missed call. You can come then. He likes hosting. Our house is not great for hosting, please forgive us about this.

*Interviewer:* There is absolutely no reason to feel or think that way. On the contrary, you are welcoming me into your home, and I feel nothing but gratitude for you. I love the photos that you put up. They are beautiful. Are these your parents?

*Michelle:* No. My grandparents. They both passed away. Let me show you some other photos. My children when they were young.

*Interviewer:* Cute. What school do they go to now?

*Michelle:* Sangeelee. Just up, on the main road.

*Interviewer:* What do you think of that school?

*Michelle:* Some teachers are good. But the children there! Messed up. They smoke cigarettes in the back of the school. They do many things they shouldn't do. My husband saw some jump over the fence many times when he was going to work. We all know they skip school and go drink at the beach. Smoke Gandja. They come back with red eyes. The school principal knows too, some teachers too. Nobody can do anything. These children are violent. You don't want to get into trouble with them.

*Interviewer:* Don't these children want to go or like going to school?

*Michelle:* Let's walk around. You can ask them.

We walked around for a while – the first scouting stroll. We met with adolescents, four boys, all around the age of 15 or 16. These are Rodrigo, Arnaud, Julien and Didier. They knew Michelle well, who explained to them what I was doing there or sought to do there. They smiled. They did not talk, not in the beginning.

*Michelle:* You can talk. She is a friend of mine.

*Rodrigo:* Why do you need to study us? What do you want to say about us? Will you say bad things about us?

*Interviewer:* I am not sure where my thesis will end, and how it will end. But I can assure you that I am not here with any malicious intent. I just want to know what has kept a group of people in the country so far away and removed from politics.

*Rodrigo:* What makes you think that we are far from politics? Maybe we are, maybe we are not.

*Interviewer:* Do you engage with politics?

*Rodrigo:* Nah! [giggles].

*Arnaud:* Nooooo! [giggles] They are dirty! Yuck! Never.

*Interviewer:* Who is dirty?

*Arnaud:* The politicians.

*Interviewer:* How are they dirty?

*Arnaud:* Liars!

*Julien:* Corrupt! Big traffickers themselves!

*Interviewer:* Drug traffickers?

*Arnaud:* What else? Everybody knows that out of every three containers that come in, two go to the Big Men.

*Interviewer:* Containers with drugs in? Who are the Big Men?

*Arnaud:* I prefer not to say right now, Miss Frenchy<sup>222</sup>!

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<sup>222</sup> Michelle had called me “Indian” during an earlier conversation with her (see page 121 of this thesis). By this she meant that the police would think of me as a social worker in African Town. I would not get into trouble with the police then. And now, Arnaud called me “Frenchy” (see page 142 of this thesis), a derogatory term in my opinion because it carries the weight of ‘house negro’, or a person of colour closer to whiteness or a person choosing to forsake their blackness for whiteness, finding whiteness to be better. The themes of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and not belonging, being ‘same’ and being ‘other’ or ‘othered’ came to the fore here, and quite brutally for me. I was not sure if I suddenly did not belong with those Mauritians who lived down the road from my parents’ house (some of whom had been my primary school friends), or if I belonged too much to an elsewhere that they were disconnected from. From the words they used to describe me or to interact with who they deemed me to be, it was clear that they saw me to be different from them, in a position of privilege. I suddenly no longer felt at home. I was an outsider in my own village – an outsider from the mountain, from a university, from South Africa, looking in. I was as Francis Nyamnjoh (2010) had said, “an intimate stranger”. And just like that, I was now incomplete; I was now an incomplete person interviewing those that I had first set as incomplete persons.

*Interviewer:* Miss Frenchy?

*Julien:* You speak Frenchy. Lycée or Loreto girl?

*Interviewer:* Loreto<sup>223</sup>, the one in Curepipe.

*Julien:* Did you come all the way from Curepipe?

*Interviewer:* No, I live 10 mins away, in Martinière, at the foot of the mountain behind us. That's where I grew up. I went to Robert Edward Hart primary<sup>224</sup>. On the main road.

*Arnaud:* What university do you go to, then?

*Interviewer:* The University of Cape Town in South Africa.

*Arnaud:* The good life, eh?!

*Interviewer:* What about your life? And your school?

*Didier:* We mess around. There is not much to do. Can't complain.

*Interviewer:* How do you feel about that?

*Didier:* It's okay. The hustle is hard. But it's okay.

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me more about the hustle?

*Arnaud:* Not now, Miss Frenchy.

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<sup>223</sup> Loreto College in Curepipe, Mauritius. A 'Star College' (considered one of the best secondary schools in the country).

<sup>224</sup> This is a public school in Surinam.

Later that same week, i.e., the week of the first scouting stroll in African Town, Michelle's 'missed call' showed, which meant meeting with Michelle's husband (who also asked that his name not be used here for fear of not finding work after the interview with him) as well as the boys from the street again (Rodrigo, Arnaud, Julien and Didier). It was the conversation with Didier that struck the most on that day. This is when he broke down, as we took a walk to the beach across the road – just the two of us. He cried then.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me what is making you feel like this? Can you tell me what you are feeling?

*Didier:* Sadness, Miss.

*Interviewer:* Why sadness?

*Didier:* Shame.

*Interviewer:* Why shame?

*Didier:* My cousin went to school with you.

*Interviewer:* Robert Edward Hart?

*Didier:* Yep, same class.

*Interviewer:* What's his name? Where is he now? How is he? Why would you feel sadness or shame about this?

Didier went on to talk about his cousin then, a wildly (in)famous classmate of mine. He had left secondary school at a young age and went on to build houses with his uncles as a career.

*Didier:* You went to Robert Edward Hart. You are one of the Big Men today. Well, Big Women. Makes me sad. I never even went on a plane. I have never seen one up close. You are travelling and going to a big school and studying for

a big certificate. Politics, Miss. This is the second car that you are coming here with. You have two cars, Miss. Beautiful clothes. You smell good. You speak good. I am a hustler. My whole family is hustling. My cousin is a mason [he wiped the few tears off his face that he had failed to keep in]. I messed up. I messed around.

*Interviewer:* What did you mess up?

*Didier:* School. Life. My life is shit.

*Interviewer:* If you could have done anything differently, what would it be? What would you do over?

*Didier:* I don't know. I don't think I could change anything. Even if I were a good student, I can't go to university. I had to drop out of secondary school. I repeated too many classes, and my family didn't have any money anymore. They didn't want to keep sending me to school and waste their money. Anyway! You should see my secondary school. Some of us had chairs without desks, and if I got into the classroom early, I would find a desk with half its top missing. My chair broke as I sat on it once. The canteen is too expensive for me. The teachers suck. There's nothing there for me. And the subjects they teach? What am I going to do with French Literature? What can I do with Camus? Or English Literature? We got tablets this one year. The Government gave them to us to learn internet stuff and technology. They didn't work. School is a waste of time and money. I had to drop out.

We take note here of the following: Neil Dempster (2013) wrote in his *Three Priorities for a Great Education* that one of these priorities had to do with parents first understanding their own influence on the mind and body of their children, fixing the emotional, physical, psychological and financial responsibility of the former toward the education of the latter. If Vinayagum Chinapah (1983: 163) had agreed with Dempster, he would show in his thesis on low primary school performance in Mauritius that parents were not the only variable in a child's academic performance, but that the type of homes and the type of schools that they evolved in,

from their earliest years, were those most important, obligatorily complementing variables that formed the conditions of learning both at home and at school. Didier, with half of his table missing, would not be encouraged in his education. As importantly, the question must be raised here: Would it have served Didier if he had been taught in ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ instead of being forced to read French and English literature?

Now, on the matter of primary and secondary school dropout rates in Mauritius: “Every year, some 7,000 children age 12 drop out of the primary school system in Mauritius after having failed their Terminal Certificate of Primary Education twice. While the formal school system – mostly government schools, also known as pre-vocational schools – will absorb approximately 1,000 of these children annually, the rest are left on their own. The children who have dropped out of school find themselves deprived of any further education; most often, these children are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds”<sup>225</sup>. We are looking at three different types of schools here: State Schools, Semi-Private (also called National or more commonly Star) Schools, and Private (privately funded and administered) Schools, bearing in mind the following: State Schools are found mostly in rural areas or at the margins of main towns in Mauritius and their school population comes from its lower classes; Star Schools are found in urban regions and cater to the middle and upper middle class mostly; and Private Schools are found in both rural and urban areas but cater only to the elite, the upper class in Mauritius.

Three school principals from State Secondary Schools (SSS)<sup>226</sup> were questioned on their dropout rates in 2016 and 2018. Their answers ran similar latitudes: it is the ‘*Nasyon*’ who do the worst in school and dropout very early on. The very few of them that did not drop out in primary school and managed to make it to secondary school were the most difficult to teach and manage. They were the ones causing the most trouble. The principal of an SSS in the south of Mauritius had this to say on the matter: “If it’s not cigarettes, it’s drugs. If it’s not drugs, they are trying to beat up the teachers. If it’s not beating up the teachers, they are bullying other students. If it’s not bullying other students, it’s stealing from the school or the other students – whatever they can steal. It’s impossible to even try to teach them anything. They are rowdy in class. They never do their homework. They are aggressive toward the teachers. They swear a

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<sup>225</sup> <https://acei.org/article/reaching-the-marginalized-children-in-mauritius/>.

<sup>226</sup> These schools are those that the ‘*Nasyon*’ typically attend because free (fully subsidised by the Government) and mostly in rural areas or catering to children from the margins of the country and mandated by the State to see to these children being allowed entry to schools that are within a specified Zone – within a delineated area around their homes.

lot at them. They insult them. Like we say in Mauritius: You must have fuel up your arse to keep going, especially so in the SSS, which those children attend. I'll be honest, the less of them there are, the easier it is for management and teachers. There is more peace and more safety for everybody when they don't come. It's just a constant fight when they come".

Two other school principals, one from a girls-only and one from a boys-only semi-Private (Star) Secondary School were questioned on the same matter of '*Nasyon*' attendance. We note here that these schools are free to attend too, but with incredible infrastructure and private sponsors (usually parents or alumni) as well as the luxury of holding money-raising events a few times per year. There were only rare cases of students dropping out, usually following family tragedy, said both principals. But the 'quota-filling students' gave them a bit of trouble. The principal of the girls-only Star School in the town of Curepipe, Mauritius, said on the matter: "They [the '*Nasyon*'], are allowed attendance to Star Schools usually because the Government and the Catholic Church ask that a percentage of our student body are of their ethnicity. They are our quota children. They are not bad girls, you know? But they come from hot zones<sup>227</sup>. Their families are usually broken, or they have alcoholic parents. Their morals are a bit skewed... They can be aggressive. A bit violent. Rough on the edges. Our job is to polish them. We have a counsellor here once a week to help them – if they need it. We have the chapel over there [pointing to the chapel in the school yard] if they need some quiet time with God. Our teachers are also well trained. You still see these girls repeat a few classes...struggling with school rules, the content of what we teach them and the exams. We are preparing them for university and work life. But they struggle. They only have three tries at every class. I have seen a few of them leave this school at the age of 21, still, unable to finish. We help them the best we can but, you know, energy also runs dry. We have to choose our battles wisely one of these days...between our hard-working girls and the ones who are unwilling to change their circumstances...those from the hot zones. All the other girls are done at 17 or 18, without repeating. You should see our alumni. Doctors, lawyers, writers, CEOs, big girls now.

*Interviewer:* Why do you think the girls from the hot zones struggle with those things? The rules, the content of what you teach them and the exams?

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<sup>227</sup> Dangerous or hazardous, usually poverty-, drug- and crime-stricken, predominantly '*Nasyon*' areas.

*Principal* [of Curepipe girls-only Star School]: They come from primary schools and families that did not prepare them for anything – school, homework, rules and life. When they come here, where there is structure, mentorship and an end goal to look forward to, they don't know what to do with it. The other girls – it's second nature to them.

*Interviewer*: What happens when those girls, the quota girls, fail at their third try at the same class?

*Principal* [of Curepipe girls-only Star School]: We call in their legal guardians and suggest they find another school for the girl. This is the policy anyway. We cannot have them doing the same class four times over. There is also a cut-off age: 21. They cannot be in secondary school past that age. Even if they could, they would be missing out on adult life, which every other 17- or 18-year-old would be enjoying then.

*Interviewer*: Do you know if those girls try for another school, then?

*Principal* [of Curepipe girls-only Star School]: I cannot be sure of that. I hope so. But I doubt it. If it wasn't for management, the counsellor and the teaching staff pushing them to try to finish, they probably wouldn't have done it. They don't have a sense of education as investment for the future – a good future.

*Interviewer*: What do you think they see education as then?

*Principal* [of Curepipe girls-only Star School]: A waste of time. A way to spend time, and a good excuse to come to a fun town five days a week, hang out with the boys from the other schools after hours, and hopefully they find one of them to marry right after school and that's their life usually. They are not interested in school. They prefer boys, fun and parties. It's that or they get into sports and do well there. They like running and handball. We can train them for these. We've got all the necessary facilities at the back [of the school]. They are good at these. They take us to national competitions and win them too. But these are the only

things that they like. Reading, writing, Maths, Science...they don't like that. We had some of them fall pregnant while here. 14, 15 years old. They are not interested in getting a good education. They have other things in mind. But we give them a chance. We must take them in because Government wants us to. The Church too, which we respect, of course.

The principal of an all-boys Star school in the same town had this to say on the matter of 'Nasyon' dropout: "They don't make it past SC. That's when external examiners come into play. There's no helping them then. If they fail, they fail. There's no re-doing their essays, trying at their tests again, nothing. Then, on their own, they leave for another school. Usually not a Star School".

*Interviewer:* How come they leave on their own?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: Shame and boredom or hopelessness...Who knows? What else can they do?

*Interviewer:* Why shame?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: Imagine repeating a class in this school. The standards are the highest of the country. We produce the most Laureates<sup>228</sup>. The worst our boys can do is a 90/100 [as grade] and then not be a Laureate. But that's very good still, at international level. We give them the best education. When they leave here, they are fully equipped for whatever universities they want to go to. If one of them fails, they don't belong here. If they stay, they will only spoil our reputation and lower our standards. We'll have to slow down our teaching for them, and the other boys will lag behind. We cannot let this happen. We are making the workers of tomorrow, the leaders of this country...

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<sup>228</sup> The final year of secondary school in Mauritius occurs on a national competition basis, with all the state and semi-private students competing for a seat at and a bursary for Cambridge University or elsewhere. The best of this competition are the Laureates.

The school culture in Star Schools in Mauritius, based on extreme competition, makes it such that the runners up are encouraged to remain runners up, and those who are not are simply left behind, with the result that Star Schools reinforce the idea that only the runners up, due to their assumed intellectual prowess, are allowed and pushed to leadership positions the country. These schools appear to be reproducing at micro level what shows at macro level in the world today, especially aligned with the essence of the modern age, Capitalism, whereby the role of education runs along Marxist lines to transmit to the youth, as it were reasonable, the principle of hierarchisation fixed by the ruling class and for the ruling class; to teach and train the youth along the values and norms of the bourgeoisie; to socialise the youth into accepting the fact of socio-political stratification, which sees them categorised as ‘ideal students’, ‘normal students’ and ‘problem students’ (Althusser 1971). The ‘*Nasyon*’ fall in the last category.

*Interviewer* [to the principal of the Curepipe all-boys Star School]: Is the competitive drive of your school something that you would let the students lagging behind know? Would you tell them that if they cannot keep up, there isn’t anything that you could or would do for them? I mean those from the ‘*Nasyon*’ socio-political group who cannot keep up with the rest of the student body?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: I don’t have to. Everybody knows that it’s how we perform. It’s the culture of all Star Schools. You must be the best or you know...nothing at all. We all know this. Life must go on, and life will go on, with or without you. You must keep up with the high achievers. If you cannot, that’s on you. That’s why most of the students attending Star Schools take private tuitions starting primary school. They never stop studying. They go to school to study, and they go to private tuition after school, to study some more. There is too much at stake to pull down a Star School to the level of a few students who can’t manage well.

*Interviewer*: Do you think the ‘*Nasyon*’ would have benefitted from extra studying time, by way of private tuitions?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: Yes! Of course! But if they can't keep up in school, can they be expected to perform after hours?

*Interviewer*: But that costs a lot of money, from what I know. About Rs2000 per subject, per month, for a good private tutor.

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: That's about the right amount, yes.

*Interviewer*: Now, your school is free. They can have access to that. But private tuitions for children from "hot zones", for the 'Nasyon' ... That's a lot to ask of them so that they can try and keep up with the rest of the student body, don't you think?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: That's the price to pay.

*Interviewer*: Have you had many 'Nasyon' students here over the years?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: A rare few. Not many that stood out, except for making trouble for the other boys. I had one who was quiet but bright! One of the brightest boys this school has ever had. He finished [secondary school] with us some years ago.

*Interviewer*: Was he from a "hot zone"?

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: No. Not from what I remember. Tamarin<sup>229</sup>. His dad is not Mauritian. His mother is – a 'Nasyon'. He is in the [United] States now. He went to a good university there. He wasn't a Laureate, unfortunately. He never studied [giggles]. He didn't have to. He was naturally intelligent. A bright boy! If he had studied for his exams, he would have been a Laureate.

*Interviewer*: Would he be a 'Nasyon' then?

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<sup>229</sup> Village on the west coast of Mauritius, known for its predominantly foreigner-inhabitant composition.

*Principal* [of Curepipe all-boys Star School]: Not in full, which is probably why he did better.

Two more principals were interviewed from Private Secondary Schools (running as privately funded international schools), two of the most prestigious and expensive mixed schools in Mauritius, for an understanding of ‘*Nasyon*’ dropout rates. They said the same thing: they have never had any dropouts. They also never had ‘*Nasyon*’ students – no student from “hot zones”. This is understandable for without Government or Church subsidy, their fees can only be high, and it is the elite of the country that can afford these. The ‘*Nasyon*’, the poor of Mauritius, cannot even afford to attend free schools in the country.

*Principal* [of the Private School in the district of Moka]: This is a holiday for our children. Most of them are children of politicians or businessmen, local or foreign. They are here because mum and dad are here, working... When they are done here, they go abroad, back home. They never come back, except on holiday.

*Interviewer*: “Done here”?

*Principal* [of the Private School in Moka]: Done with school. They stay until they are about 18.

*Interviewer*: You have never had any student drop out?

*Principal* [of the Private School in Moka]: We have a 100% pass rate. Nobody has ever dropped out. Some had to leave the country with their parents, who were diplomats – ambassadors. It’s transferring schools. Never dropping out.

*Interviewer*: Have you ever had ‘*Nasyon*’ students here?

*Principal* [of the Private School in Moka]: None. Never. We had foreign black students from Africa and America. But never black Mauritians.

*Interviewer:* Why not?

*Principal* [of the Private School in Moka]: Hmm... We are open to all students who want the type of education that we provide...

*Interviewer:* And can afford coming here too?

*Principal* [of the Private School in Moka]: [Giggles] Yes. That's it.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me a little more about the type of education that your school provides?

*Principal* [of the Private School in Moka]: Sure. The main language used here is English. It's an English-speaking school. But we teach various other languages: French, German, Spanish. We offer all the sciences at secondary level. We offer Accounting. We offer art classes too, music. We have a good sports programme, which sends our students abroad a few times a year for various competitions or friendly games. See at the bottom there? Just behind the trees? Our tennis courts. Security! Our school offers the highest level of protection for our students. We make use of high-tech too, to keep up with the Western world. So, you see, the parents never have to worry about sending their children here. Our teachers must have university degrees and extensive teaching training. Everything is made to get the best out of our students without them and their parents having to worry about anything going wrong. This school makes sure that the children are well-equipped to follow in their parents' footsteps, in terms of career.

The second conversation with Didier came to mind after this conversation.

*Interviewer:* If you could have gone to a good school, a Star School for example, if you had done well at that school, and/or your parents had had the money to allow you to pursue your studies, would you have done so?

*Didier:* At least until HSC.

*Interviewer:* From then, what would you have done?

*Didier:* Work, Miss. But my brain is a little slow, you know? I failed my subjects all the time. Couldn't understand anything. Besides, there is no work for people like me. So, it's a waste of money to go to school anyway. I wouldn't find work even with HSC.

*Interviewer:* What makes you say so?

*Didier:* Look around.

Looking around had lasted a year, running in 2016. This was the first phase of the ethnographic approach to the '*Nasyon's*' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, which provided an incredible repertoire of knowledge, immense background knowledge, on and about the '*Nasyon*' that would likely not have been uncovered in any other way (including the historiographic approach undertaken earlier). Themes of poverty, housing, land, infrastructure, employment, violence, police, drug abuse, religion, hopelessness, education, Freemasonry and so on and so forth, came to the fore, speaking immediately to the '*Nasyon*' as not allowed the spaces, opportunities and privileges to embrace their existence and live it fully, like other, more privileged Mauritians. The sense here was that they were incomplete for reasons beyond their control. This provided a basis for the second phase of the ethnographic enquiry into the '*Nasyon's*' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. This unfolded into one year spent away from the field to detach from it and think through the data collected in the first phase, leading to the planning of the methods of data collection, the purposeful sampling of core participants for interviews and the growth of the inactive participant observer into active participant observer<sup>230</sup>. This was the third phase of this ethnographic approach to the '*Nasyon's*' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius.

The third phase required full immersion in African Town, insisting that be 'felt' the specific lived experience and human reality under study, i.e., that the truths or themes of the field be

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<sup>230</sup> With the latter being that I, the observer, although an outsider to, a non-inhabitant of, African Town, eventually had to blend therein and make the necessary efforts to actively participate in this '*cité*' without disrupting and/or influencing its daily unfolding, its residents and their daily life.

lived for a truly informed (re)presentation thereof here. This began in January 2018 and lasted until July 2019, running both from and beyond Michelle's house from this point on, still in and around African Town, but in a more sporadic manner than the first and second phases since continually curving on, bending to field events, running with them, and scheduled around the daily life of its residents until this thesis was submitted. It continuously fed on an entanglement of field data (when and where available, and when and where relevant to this thesis), local storytelling as well as semi-structured interviews conducted with local '*Nasyon*' residents met in the earlier phases of the ethnographic study (officially research respondents now): Michelle, Dominic, Melody, Naomi, Elena, Didier, Arnaud, Laurent, Jean Claude. This third phase summarises as follows, beginning with the most flagrant fact of African Town, i.e., the matter of housing and land.

In 2012, the Mauritian Government enforced the demolition of squatter housing in African Town. The promise was that Government was to build and sell at low price new housing for those who needed it. This was part of the National Housing Development Company (NHDC) housing units programme that was intended to help those in need of proper housing:

The government has pledged to spend Rs12 billion to build and deliver 12,000 social housing units by the end of its mandate in 2024. If this looks familiar, it is because the same promise was made in the 2020-2021 budget in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak. While the MSM-led government that came into power in 2014 castigated the previous Labour Party led government for not doing enough on the social housing front, the data indicates that they too have underdelivered - consistently missing their own targets - making the problem even worse. During the 2014 elections, the MSM-led alliance promised that they would build 10,000 homes across the country, significantly improving the backlog for social housing. This reached a crescendo when in 2016 the government came up with the Marshall Plan against poverty to great fanfare, a major component of which was investing heavily in building and delivering homes to poor and middle-class families. The reality, NHDC figures show, is somewhat underwhelming. Far from the 10,000 units promised by the end of 2019, by the time 2018 rolled around, the NHDC had delivered just 1,057 homes. Then housing and lands minister Mahen Jhugroo insisted on May 15, 2018, that despite the numbers, the

government was still on track to deliver its target: “We are going to construct not only 10,000, but it will be above 10,000 housing units because this Government means business, and this is our target”. He added that in 2019, the government would deliver 2,588 more houses. In reality, it was 384 [...] Just how dysfunctional all this has become can be gleaned from a startling statistic. Out of the applications approved and put on the waiting list by the NHDC, the growing backlog means that by 2020, out of the 25,582 people on the NHDC’s waiting list, 30 percent of them have been languishing on that list for more than 10 years. And 13 percent (7,961 households) have been on that list for more than 20 years. This, according to a report released by the National Audit Office in June this year. Not just the NHDC... So far, the data has been about the NHDC. But the government has also been running another scheme, under the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) to build houses for those who own plots of land but are too poor to build homes on them. Although smaller in scope than the NHDC, nevertheless, here too, the government simply has not been able to keep up with its own targets<sup>231</sup>.

Dominic, 39 years old (in 2018, i.e., at the time of the third phase of the ethnographic research on the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from Mauritius), inhabitant of African Town and sugarcane labourer, remembered this event of 2012, saying during a semi-structured interview with him on the matter: “It’s communalism. The African community is a problem for this country. They don’t like us. They don’t want us on this soil. But it is our soil. We were here before them”.

*Interviewer:* Before whom?

*Dominic:* The Hindus. We worked this soil before they did. We’ve been here longer than they have. But we are all sons of Adam. We are all brothers and sisters. We don’t have a problem living side by side with them. But they do. They speak communalist speech. They say we are poor because we don’t do anything about it. But they are stealing in the millions, billions – they give themselves this right. They have the right to fill their pockets. We don’t ask for money. We just

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<sup>231</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/202109130348.html>.

want a place to live. In our country. It's saddening that some are still communalist today. Racist. Why don't they talk about this problem? Racism. Why don't they speak about why we can't afford proper houses? Do they think that we will magically make money and then buy land and build a house? They won't give us jobs. They don't have any jobs for us. There is a conspiracy against the 'Nasyon' in Mauritius. The Hindus hate us. They don't want to see us do well. They don't want us working where they work. Why do you think there is no 'Nasyon' at the higher levels of the Public Sector? This is not right! There is something seriously not right with this country! When King Gaetan died, our fate, our future, died with him.

*Interviewer:* "King Gaetan"? Sir Gaetan Duval<sup>232</sup>?

*Dominic:* Yes! Only when he was here, we got help, we had dignity. I was just a kid but I remember. The day the African community rises in this country, the day we stop being puppets to all these political parties, we will stop suffering. For now, we are asleep. But one day, we'll wake up. One day the soil will rise.

*Interviewer:* No other politician has cared for you or your housing and land situation since him?

*Dominic:* None. Our situation has only got worse. They don't let us live or breathe or have a house or a job. Nothing. They are sending us to our death, slowly. Genocide. That's what it is. Same thing they did with the Jews. You know some are buried in the South, right? When they ran from Germany. They were on their way to South Africa but never made it. They stayed here. They died here. Same thing with us. Genocide. Silent.

Naomi, 24-year-old inhabitant of African Town, said in the same year on the matter of 'Nasyon' employment in Mauritius: "They will send you to the docks if you're lucky. You can also clean

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<sup>232</sup> Leader of the PMSD in post-colonial Mauritius and also one of those persons of (mixed) African origin (a 'Gran Nasyon') who did not want Mauritius to become independent, for fear that the Indo-Mauritian majority would get to power and mis-rule the rest of the population.

the hotel rooms. But only the straight-haired have the right to get a nice job. Let's not kid ourselves".

*Interviewer:* Why?

*Naomi:* This is the law of this country.

*Interviewer:* Well, because Mauritius is a democracy, the job market should and would be fixed on the principle of meritocracy. This would mean that every citizen, regardless of the socio-political group to which they belong, should be allowed the right of employment and therefore selection based on merit. Are you saying that this is not the case?

*Naomi:* I am a toilet cleaner at Jan Palach<sup>233</sup>. I can't find anything else. This is what this country has us do. Clean its shit. They don't think we are worthy of anything else.

*Interviewer:* If you could do anything else, what would it be?

*Naomi:* Hairdresser. Or nail art. Something that smells good, you know? I could do your nails. You need it [giggles].

Melody, 52-year-old inhabitant of African Town, also interviewed in 2018 during the third phase of the ethnographic approach to the 'Nasyon's' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius said on the matters of the demolition of squatter housing in African Town in 2012 and unemployment in Mauritius re the 'Nasyon': "My heart broke that day. You should have seen. No pity for us. No plan. Just destruction. Destruction of our homes, our families. They want us out, not just out of African Town. They want us out of this country. Where will we go? The land of our ancestors? This is it! This is the only home we know. Can I show you my garden? This is what this land provides [pointing to a fully kept garden of vegetables of all sorts]. Where else are we supposed to go? This is where we live. This is our home. They have been teasing us for years with government housing. How many of these people you see around

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<sup>233</sup> Jan Palach is a central bus terminal in Curepipe, Mauritius.

have applied for this? How many are still on a waiting list? Ask them! What waiting list? Why is there a waiting list? Where do we live while waiting? Under bridges? There is a woman who used to live under a bridge for years with her two children. Then she moved here. She had neighbours and friends and a roof here. She had the ocean, she could fish. I fish too. I cannot steal. I cannot beg. People won't give me money. I cannot count on Government. So, I fish. Sometimes she came with me. She is one of those who applied for a government house. Mind you, she had to pay for it monthly the same price that she would if she had built it herself. She found a job at the hotel further up. Her cousin worked there and helped her get it. She was saving up for this house. It's not help from Government that we are getting. It's Government making money from us. What money do we have to pay for help? Who pays for help? They won't leave us in peace, they won't let us have a roof, they won't let us work, they won't let us do anything. You know, Government destroyed the houses of people that they left on the waiting list for years. What is the logic here? Tell me that I cannot squat, offer help, put me on a waiting list, no help comes for years, remove me from the house in which I am, destroy it then have me wait for another house that they never deliver? What's the logic? What is their goal? Take a guess".

*Interview:* I am not sure what their goal would be here. It makes little sense to me right now. It is, indeed, rather illogical. What would you say their goal would be?

*Melody:* Money. Money, money, money. It's all money going to their sisters and cousins and friends, and back into their own pockets. You know what a tender is?

*Interviewer:* A little bit.

*Melody:* Ask them who gets the tenders for all projects in the country. Ask them who got the tender for government housing. Father, child, sister, brother-in-law, cousin, friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, mistress. They aren't building these houses for us. It's for them. To make money. Did you see the state of those [NHDC] houses? Did you ever see a finished one? It's leaking. There is no electricity. The drain is clogged. There are weeds growing in the house. That's before it is even

given [sold] to us. Are we without dignity? Are we so stupid that we should accept these houses? What are they taking us for? Dogs? Dog houses are better than the ones they are building for us. But they go on TV with nice promises before elections. They sweeten our mouths [They make us salivate over their promises]. They get our votes. And then they disappear. Two birds, one stone. Money and votes. No, three birds. Money, votes, and getting rid of us.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by the latter part, “getting rid of us”?

*Melody:* If they are kicking us out of our homes and then don’t have anything constructive to propose, nothing concrete, then they are leaving us out on the streets, to die. They are making us homeless, hungry, isolated. They are stripping us of our dignity. Are we not humans? [Hitting her chest] Tell me! Are we not humans? [Melody is screaming and crying at this point].

*Interviewer:* Do you need us to stop [this interview]? Do you want to stop?

*Melody:* Not if you are going to get this story out. Get it out. The world needs to know what they are doing to us. I won’t keep my mouth shut.

Elena, 19 years old, single mother of one, inhabitant of African Town said on the matters of her homelessness, having to build a shack in African Town, and being treated by the Mauritian Government as if not having any dignity: “My siblings and I live on the same plot here. We can’t buy land. No money. But we all work! But coming end of month, we must pay back debts to the bank. No savings. Food – today there is some, by tomorrow, it’s all gone. It’s too expensive. We buy what we can when we can. When it’s finished, there is no stock in the house to run to. When it’s finished, it’s finished. Soodhun<sup>234</sup> promised houses to us. At least that’s one part of our Calvary that will stop, although most of us are still waiting. I pray that God sees our misery and finds a solution for us. I pray every day”.

*Interviewer:* How do you find the houses that Soodhun has had built?

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<sup>234</sup> Minister of Housing and Lands under the Jugnauth rulership in Mauritius at the time of forced removals in African Town.

*Elena:* What can I say? It's better than a tin roof that the slightest wind blows away! It's better for cyclones. You know how this house [pointing to her tin house] leaks when it rains? Better be outside then! There's less water there. But it's my home. Then the SMF [Special Mobile Force] came [in 2012] and destroyed that little bit that we have. My child's home. Only my wardrobe and mattress were left standing. The walls were brought down. Made my heart sore [Elena started crying then]. My boy cried that day. He was very small. You think that when a child sees this, he will grow up anything good? No! He will grow up with hatred in his heart because he has an image imprinted in his head now of being thrown to the streets. Don't be surprised! All these children are traumatised. These are the adults of tomorrow. Do you know what it feels like, to have nowhere to go, nobody to turn to, then to find a piece of land, find some tin sheets, put them together, save money, buy a second or third hand mattress, buy a small gas stove or buy some pots to put on wood fire, then buy an old wardrobe from one of the Big Men on the sugar estate, finally give a roof to your child, for the SMF to come destroy all of it? Do they not have children of their own? Do they not feel anything for us? Do they not feel anything at all? Do they go home and feel good about what they did during the day, to all those children? Are these children not important? They take away their home, then ask that we buy the houses in Souillac, but who would want to live in these houses? Would Soodhun want to live in them? No! He has a mansion, like all the other Big Men. But they give us four walls and a roof in bricks and cement, but inside...it's just like here. Dirty, small, leaking, invaded by plants, water doesn't run, there is no electricity. We just don't have a choice now. We live in fear. They can come back at any moment and destroy my house again [Elena had re-built her shack after the SMF had brought it down in 2012]. It's better that I do what they tell me. I live like a slave. I do what the Big Men want me to do. I work like a slave, I live like a slave, I am treated like a slave. A prisoner. There is nowhere to go. There is no solution. This is not the life I want for my boy.

Laurent, 70 years old, inhabitant of African Town for thirty-two years spoke about the '*Nasyon's*' state of being, not so much as slaves as they were prisoners in post-Independence

Mauritius: “I remember when I moved here with my wife and children. I had come from Port Louis<sup>235</sup>. Life was too expensive there for us. And the gangs scared my wife. I had some friends in the South, so we moved. They were speaking of how quiet and peaceful life was here. Back then, there were just a few shacks in the area [now African Town]. Just a couple of neighbours, far from each other. Life was good. Not great. But good. Nobody bothered us, we bothered nobody. A friend of mine was working on the sugar estate in Saint Aubin [two villages east of Surinam]. There was work then in the factory. Machinery stuff. I got a job there soon after moving. Work for money during the day, fish for a meal at night. Simple life. My friends and I would go fishing octopus almost every evening. This lagoon<sup>236</sup> right here was plentiful! Crabs, fish, octopi. Crabs were for Christmas. A crab soup, with some chilli. All these were easy to catch when the tide got low in the evening, just before the sun set. That’s when we’d take our harpoons and start walking [in the lagoon]. We didn’t even need a lure. They [the octopi] are stuck with us in the shallow lagoon. Once we see them, and they would have tried to hide in between the rocks, there’s no escape. Harpoon released, full speed, close distance. A good catch! We’d walk back home. A good meal, grilled or curried! Grilled in summer, with a cold Phoenix [Mauritian beer]. Curried in winter.

*Interviewer:* No Phoenix in winter?

*Laurent:* [Laughing] You cannot skip it. It goes with the cooked octopus too well. Always a cold Phoenix then, summer or winter.

*Interviewer:* Do you still fish with your friends?

*Laurent:* No. But not because I don’t want to. I want to. I wish I still could. I am still fit. I can do it. But the lagoon is empty now. Only urchins and sea cucumbers. The hotels killed everything here. See the water? It’s blue, yes, but not like it was when I was young. Bright blues and greens and the sun warming it up for the children to swim all day! The water stinks now. Life has left it. It was quite a sight back then. There were all kinds of colourful fishes everywhere, in between the rocks, by the shore, closer to the reef. We can walk to the reef during

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<sup>235</sup> Capital city of Mauritius.

<sup>236</sup> Laurent was speaking about the sea front of African Town, the public beach across.

low tide. The children were always laughing. They were happy back then, swimming, jumping into the water from the rocks, with the sun coming down on that lagoon. The women would be at home or watching from the beach. The children in the water. The men walking the lagoon. Good times. We made do with the little that we had. We cannot get this life back. Things can never go back to how they were then.

*Interviewer:* How so?

*Laurent:* Money. Everything runs on money now. You must have a permit to fish. A permit for this. A permit for that. A permit for everything. For what? The lagoon is empty! You must go into the deep ocean with a boat now. And you need a permit for that too. You are paying to risk your life at sea to feed your family. Do you know how many boats have capsized? Drowned or lost men. Husbands, brothers, sons. The women and children suffer the most here. All this because they [the men] were trying to get some food for their family. They go in even when the sea is rough. It's that or risk starvation. Nothing makes sense with this government. Life was better before them. I'll be honest with you, my daughter, the English should not have given us independence<sup>237</sup>. Duval<sup>238</sup> should not have let this happen. Hindus [Indo-Mauritians] – please forgive me for saying this<sup>239</sup> –, dirty race. They are heartless. They ruined everything that they touched – from the sea to the sky of our little island. The children today will never get to see what I saw. They won't know what I know. Do you know what freedom there was back then? Because we all lived together. There was a true sense of community. Hindus have created division on this island. People hate us. The police keep watch over us now. Even at the public beach! There is always a van somewhere, always close by. What do these children know of freedom? Prisoners have more freedom than them.

Laurent spoke the truth here. For, on every day spent in and around African Town as an observer thereof, police vans were spotted doing their rounds there, patrolling day and night,

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<sup>237</sup> Mauritius was British colony until 1968. Laurent remembered this era well, born in 1948.

<sup>238</sup> Referring to Gaetan Duval.

<sup>239</sup> Because I, the observer/interviewer am Indo-Mauritian and Laurent did not mean or want to offend me.

driving slowly enough to stare straight into people’s eyes, straight into people’s homes, straight into their privacy, leaving everybody nervous, unsettled, as if to be reminded that some evil master, some sort of overlord – the Mauritian Government in this case – was constantly watching. It haunted African Town along the lines of the notorious morphology of constant (real or imagined, physically omnipresent or only apparent) surveillance and the engineering of (coerced) self-discipline, or internalised authority, that forge the prison of the mind itself to make of the human a prisoner even in the absence of a prison guard (or a policeman in the case of African Town), even in the absence of an actual, tangible prison, running along the lines of Jeremy Bentham’s (1995) Panopticon prison.

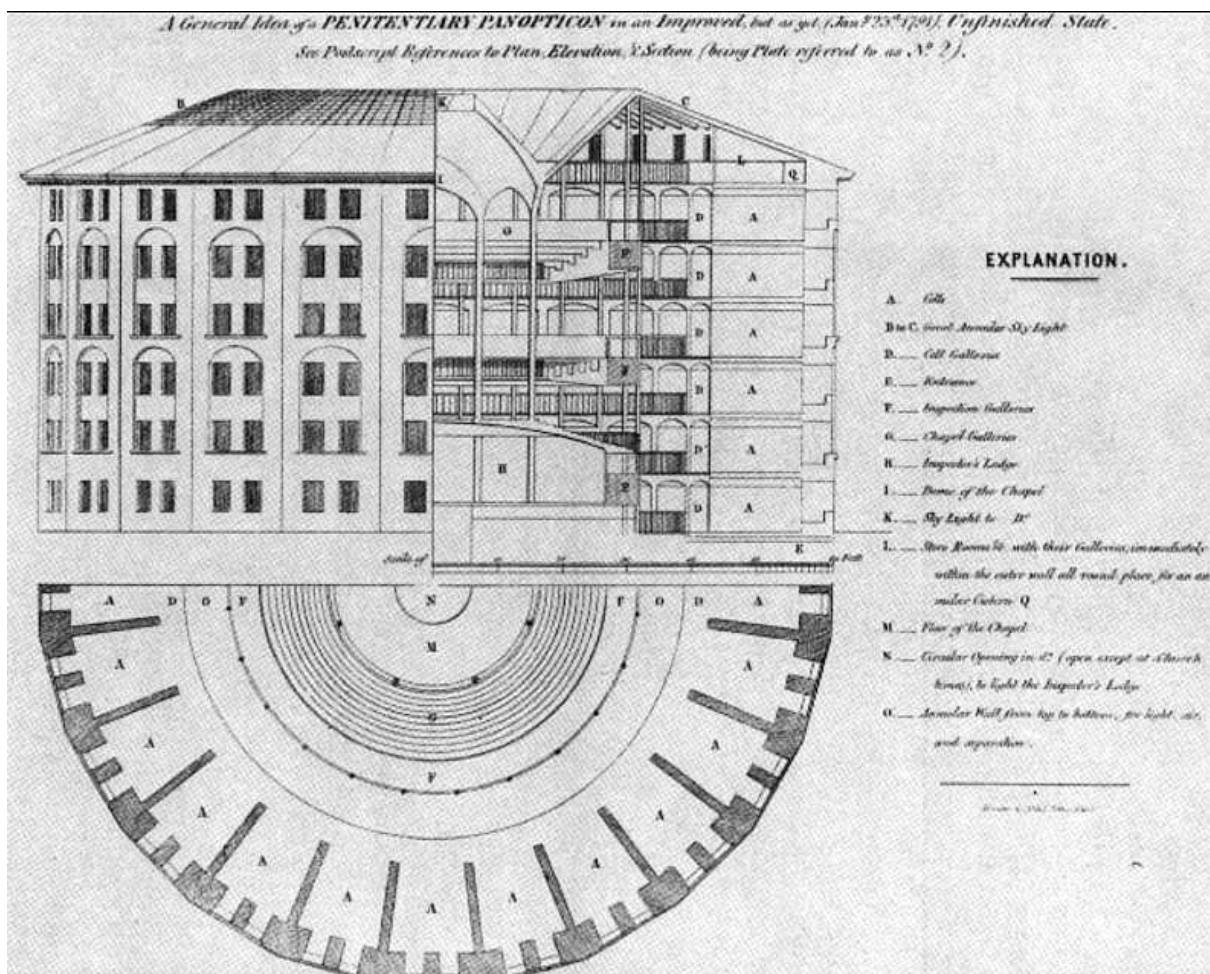


Figure 23: The Panopticon.

The Panopticon prison is brought to life in the manner of the constant (perceived) observation of (judged) criminals incarcerated along a circular tower line of prison cells by a guard sitting at that central point thereof. African Town is proper echo of this prison in the manifestation of invisible and unverifiable fear-inducing authority and the potential for punishment that this

authority comes with, which serve to alter and eventually bound movement, behaviour, the smallest details of daily life and activity as well as the psyche of those subject to (perceived) observation. We would see this at a much milder scale in an office, for example, with a boss walking in on us or the mere idea of a boss walking in on us, which would have us straighten our ties, clean up our desks and look like we were hard at work. We would be on our best behaviour, but frozen in fear (of being caught misbehaving). This is the power of constant surveillance and the perception of constant surveillance. With constant police presence in African Town or the perception of constant police presence in African Town, all cannot but be bounded, frozen in fear, with fear itself becoming assurance of the automatic functioning of one-directional, top-down, self-propagating regulation, discipline, by the Mauritian Government such that this turned to self-regulation, self-discipline, to avoid punishment in what now looks to be a modern-day panopticon for the '*Nasyon*': "There is research that shows that when people know they are being tracked and surveilled, they change their behavior"<sup>240</sup>. Jeremy Bentham (1995: 2) called this a "new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind", and Michel Foucault (1977: 364) assured us that it was a "cruel, ingenious cage".

Jean Claude, 59-year-old inhabitant of African Town and ex-night watchman at a private industrial/large-scale chicken farm nearby, spoke of the '*Nasyon*'s' state of being perpetually watched in post-Independence Mauritius, starting with his own short career as a private guard: "My job was to keep my boss unworried as he went to sleep at night. I did this for 5 years in my early days. Every night. He slept well, he told me, with me there. I was able to run and fight when I was younger. More importantly, I was always honest. I have always been honest. I never lied to the boss and never will. He knows this. That's why he kept me there. Friend or not, I called the trouble-makers out. I told the boss who did what, when and where. Before me, there used to be many unreported thefts, especially from the chicken farm. His own workers. They covered for each other. Some were drug dealers. When drug money ran out and they can't explain it to the wife, they'd steal the chicken here. Food on the table, happy wife. Greed. That's all there is to it. The boss paid them well for an easy life. It wasn't enough. They need more – only to show off, especially the wives. All housewives. But they need fancy clothes. Jewellery. Fancy food on the table. Fancy houses. Fancy prayer rooms. They don't even leave the house. It's all for neighbours to see and family visits. Show-offs! Whatever money the boss

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<sup>240</sup> <https://hapgood.us/2016/09/06/a-new-mode-of-obtaining-power-of-mind-over-mind-in-a-quantity-hitherto-without-example/>.

pays them is enough for a normal, simple life but not merely enough for all that fancy thing. Then drug money runs. The wives don't ask where it's coming from. They don't care. They just want money in their hands".

*Interviewer:* How do you know all of this?

*Jean Claude:* When they drink, they speak, Miss. It's guilt. They only allow themselves to feel it when completely out of their minds, with alcohol and amongst themselves.

*Interviewer:* The men working for your boss?

*Jean Claude:* That's right.

*Interviewer:* And have you ever witnessed this – the drugs part, the stealing?

*Jean Claude:* My own friends, sometimes. It wasn't easy. But I had to tell the boss. I ran after the few who were together stealing at night. I caught one or two. I called the boss immediately. He came down, fired them. He didn't want to involve the police because they all had children. He was a kind man. Very understanding.

*Interviewer:* Were they friends of yours from African Town?

*Jean Claude:* No, Miss. Friends from all over the place. Muslim, Kreol, Hindu. Many [primary] school friends, some of them. Money and greed don't care for colour. A demon it is, that can get any one of us... The ones I didn't catch talked when they got drunk! We used to catch a peg [of whisky] on Sundays. That was our day off. That's how I was able to get all of them. I took them to the boss on the Monday. They admitted to the theft. The chickens were already cooked. There was no way to recover that. But they all got fired.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me more about the drug dealing part?

*Jean Claude:* What do you want to know?

*Interview:* Who was involved? Who were the dealers? Who did they deal to?  
How they got into it?

*Jean Claude:* I can't give names, Miss. You understand that.

*Interviewer:* Because your friends were involved?

*Jean Claude:* Yes! [They are] Still involved. There is no choice for them. They got in because they wanted money. They can't get out because the Big Men won't let them. They know too much. Also, they get benefits from this.

*Interviewer:* Like what?

*Jean Claude:* The police protect you.

*Interviewer:* Why? How?

*Jean Claude:* The police work hand in hand with the Big Men.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me who the Big Men are?

*Jean Claude:* Politicians, Miss. You know the big cars that are sent to the mechanic up there [pointing to the mechanic shop at the foot of the mountain in the background of African Town]? Politicians' cars. Nothing wrong with the cars.

*Interviewer:* What are you saying?

*Jean Claude:* The tyres are full of drugs. Inside the doors too. In the panelling. Under the seat, in the seat. Millions [of Mauritian Rupees] worth of drugs.

*Interviewer:* What sort of drugs?

*Jean Claude:* Synthetic [Synthetic drug commonly shortened to Synthetic<sup>241</sup>].



*Figure 24: Synthetic.*

Didier had recounted his experience with Synthetic in an interview in the third phase of the ethnographic approach to the ‘Nasyon’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius: “Frenchy! You are back! Thought we scared you off”.

*Interviewer:* How would you have scared me, Didier?

*Didier:* Don’t know. Don’t I?

*Interviewer:* Don’t you what? Scare me?

*Didier:* Yeah!

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<sup>241</sup> See Figure 24 for what Synthetic looks like/is.

*Interviewer:* Would you have wanted to?

*Didier:* Don't know. Maybe a little [giggles].

*Interviewer:* You did not scare me, not enough for me to not come back, at least.

*Didier:* Oh! I am not doing a good job here [laughs]. I'll try again today.

*Interviewer:* Alright! Do your best!

*Didier:* Cool. What do you want to talk about today?

*Interviewer:* If it's okay with you, if you are comfortable with the subject, I would like to go back to your schooling. When we first met, you told me that you had dropped out of [secondary] school.

*Didier:* [Nods, in favour of going back on the subject] Yeah. I was not doing well there.

*Interviewer:* How so?

*Didier:* I was skipping class with friends.

*Interviewer:* What would you be doing instead?

*Didier:* Either back of school yard or the beach. We went there.

*Interviewer:* What would you do there?

*Didier:* Stuff.

*Interviewer:* What kind of stuff?

*Didier:* Stuff, Frenchy. You know...

*Interviewer:* Games? Cigarettes? Alcohol? These are the things students would likely be doing when skipping class or school in Mauritius. I know a few in my class, when I was in secondary school, who did just that [giggles].

*Didier:* Did you?

*Interviewer:* I was always too scared that the principal would find out and tell my mother. They knew each other well, too well for me [giggles].

*Didier:* That sounds boring!

*Interviewer:* It was, at times. What about you? What did you do?

*Didier:* Cigarettes on the football field. It's at the back of the school. We also broke the fence there. We made a hole into it and would sneak out of the school premises from it. Then, to the beach. Sometimes we'd have a beer but Synthetic is what got us going, you know... Life is too hard. We need an escape.

*Interviewer:* Synthetic, the drug? I have heard of it. What did it do to you when you took it?

*Didier:* Not much [giggles]. You just sort of lose yourself for a while and then you come back. You regain consciousness. Feels good because you are gone and your problems are gone.

*Interviewer:* How were you "gone"?

*Didier:* I just stop thinking. My mind goes blank. I can't move my body. It's like I'm dead but alive at the same time.

*Interviewer:* Did you like it, the feeling that it gave you?

*Didier:* It is a terrible come down from it afterward. But in the moment, when everything around you is going wrong, it's a moment of peace. Relief.

*Interviewer:* Do you still take it? Synthetic, I mean...

*Didier:* Yes. With my friends sometimes, or in bed at night.

*Interviewer:* At home? Does your family know about it?

*Didier:* Yes. My mother.

*Interviewer:* How does she feel about it? What does she think about it?

*Didier:* She cried when she found out. She beat me up that day, told me I should stop. But she didn't tell my dad. She keeps asking me about it.

*Interviewer:* What do you tell her?

*Didier:* I tell her not to worry. That I stopped.

*Interviewer:* How did she find out?

*Didier:* I did it at school, the first time. The teachers found out. When I went back to school, the principal told me to call my mother to his office. He told her about it then.

*Interviewer:* How did that happen? How did they find out?

*Interviewer:* I did it in class during lunch break with a couple of friends. They were used to it, so not much happened to them except for the high. I fell on the floor, shaking. I foamed from the mouth, apparently. When the teachers found out, they thought I was having an attack, you know...that disease...you know,

when you shake, and foam and your eyes roll back? You know what I am talking about? Hmm... [thinking].

*Interviewer:* Epilepsy?

*Didier:* Yes! The other students went on to tell the teachers when they saw what was happening.

*Interviewer:* They saw you take the drug?

*Didier:* No. They saw me foam.

*Interviewer:* From taking Synthetic?

*Didier:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* Is this an effect of the drug?

*Didier:* Foam and shake. It's normal especially the first time – when you don't know the dosage. I know how much to take now. Anyway, the other students panicked, they went to the staff room and told the teachers who were there. Some of them came to the classroom, where I was. It was lunch break. They called the hospital for an ambulance, thinking it was...epilepsy! I was there for the night. My mother came to get me the next day. They [the teachers] also called the police in case I had been poisoned or something like that.

*Interviewer:* How did it go? What happened at the hospital?

*Didier:* The nurses knew that I took Synthetic. They made me vomit. Then the doctor just put me on a drip. I don't know what for. They didn't tell me. They made me lie down on the side rather than on my back. They killed my high, man [giggles and sighs]!

*Interviewer:* What about the police?

*Didier:* They came to check on me in hospital but said they couldn't do anything. When they found out it was drugs, they left.

*Interviewer:* Did they not report this to social services?

*Didier:* No. Why would they? They are the ones passing the drugs around in the country.

*Interviewer:* Who do you get your drugs from?

*Didier:* There is a guy in Chemin Grenier<sup>242</sup> who sells it to us.

*Interviewer:* Is he a policeman?

*Didier:* Take a guess.

*Interviewer:* I'd say he is, by what you have told me.

*Didier:* Yep.

Arnaud, friend of Didier, confirmed the use of Synthetic amongst the youth of African Town as well as the matter of police involvement in drug distribution there.

*Interviewer:* It's been a while since our brief conversation about drug traffickers. You told me then that it was not the right time for you to expand on the subject. Would today be a better time?

*Arnaud:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* What has changed? What is different today?

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<sup>242</sup> Large village a few minutes past Surinam – northwest of it.

*Arnaud:* We kind of trust you now. We know we can trust you. I know I can. You are not like the others<sup>243</sup>, and you seem okay.

*Interviewer:* That's lovely to hear. Thank you for trusting me. Do you think we could go back on drugs and drug trafficking today?

*Arnaud:* Sure. What do you want to know?

*Interviewer:* Last time you said that out of every three containers that come in [the country], two go to the Big Men. What containers were you speaking about? And who are the Big Men?

*Arnaud:* Drug-filled containers. If three containers of drugs come into the port, two go to the politicians and the other is magically found and reported to the police. There is always a rat somewhere. But everybody knows what is coming in. Nobody is ratting anybody. It's a show to get the rest of us to think their hands are clean. Like, "Oh no, a container full of drugs just came through. Nobody here wants this. Who could possibly be involved?" And then the first container disappears. And then the second container disappears. The police take the third, and guess what they do with it? Where does that third container go to? It doesn't. It goes right back into the country. They send the drugs right back out. Only, a different route. The dockers know about that. All the confiscated drugs, they are the ones who handle it. It's not burned. It's hidden then passed around [distributed].

*Interviewer:* How do you know about the dockers? And what do you know about the dockers?

*Arnaud:* Friends and family, Frenchy. And friends of friends and so on... People talk, Frenchy. This country is small.

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<sup>243</sup> I was an assured "intimate stranger" (Nyamnjoh 2016) at this point: I was not black enough to be a '*Nasyon*', but I was not Indo-Mauritian enough to be taken as one by the '*Nasyon*', whom I was interviewing. The liquidness of my own identity in interaction with others had manifested then.

*Interviewer:* Do you know what drugs those containers would hold?

*Arnaud:* Whatever they can buy from abroad and then send around the country. Subutex. Heroin. Cocaine. But cocaine is for the people of Tamarin, Flic en Flac and Grand Baie.

*Interviewer:* Who are those people in Tamarin and Grand Baie, etc. who indulge in cocaine?

*Arnaud:* Whites. The rich. Local or not. Or the ‘*white arsed Kreol*’.

*Interviewer:* [By ‘*white arsed Kreol*’] You mean the mixed children [of Mauritius]?

*Arnaud:* Yes.

Arnaud could not make this story up. The list is long of the number of cases of maritime drug trafficking from, to and through Mauritius, which earned the Mauritian port of Port Louis, the title of “*passoire qui facilite l’accès de la drogue dans le pays*”<sup>244</sup> <sup>245</sup> and Mauritius, that of “*la plaque tournante du trafic de drogue dans l’océan Indien*”<sup>246</sup> <sup>247</sup>. In 2017, for example, 135 kilograms of heroin were seized at the port of Port Louis, Mauritius, worth Rs2 billions:

*C'est la plus importante saisie de drogue jamais réalisée dans l'océan indien a ce jour. L'ADSU de la douane avec l'aide des chiens renifleurs a intercepté 135 kilos d'héroïne jeudi soir dans un conteneur, dans le port. Le tout est estimé à Rs 2 milliards. C'est un bateau en provenance d'Afrique du Sud qui a transporté*

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<sup>244</sup> Translation [mine]: Colander that facilitates the access to drugs in the country.

<sup>245</sup> <https://defimedia.info/trafic-de-droque-resserrer-les-maillles-du-filet-dans-le-port>.

<sup>246</sup> Translation [mine]: The drug trafficking hub of the Indian Ocean.

<sup>247</sup> <https://www.sundaytimesmauritius.com/maurice-la-plaque-tournante-du-traffic-de-droque-dans-locean-indien/>.

*cette drogue dans l'île. Nous apprenons que plusieurs suspects sont dans le viseur des enquêteurs et des arrestations sont imminentes*<sup>248249</sup>.

And over a billion Mauritian Rupees worth of the celebrity drug cocaine were seized in 2019 and involved high ranking politicians, just like Arnaud mentioned in the interview with him:

*Ahurissant. 95 kilos de cocaïne, estimés à Rs 1,4 milliard, auront échappé au contrôle des douaniers et des chiens renifleurs au port, y compris à la vigilance de la brigade anti-drogue depuis le 4 juillet. Cela, alors que ces deux unités ont sorti l'artillerie lourde depuis ces quatre dernières années pour mener à bien le combat personnel des Jugnauth contre le trafic de drogue. Ce qui interpelle davantage, c'est que cette saisie record de cocaïne à Maurice, mercredi 10 juillet, a fait le voyage aux côtés du fameux Mauricio, le premier tram constitué de sept wagons, et accueilli au port avec tambours et trompettes, le 4 juillet. Cette importante cargaison de drogue – aussi appelée drogue des people – était donc elle aussi dans le ventre du transporteur de véhicules, battant pavillon bahamien Hoegh Antwerp. À bord d'une des tractopelles qu'il transportait. Mais la drogue se trouvait surtout sous le nez d'une horde de VVIP, dont le Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, le ministre mentor et de la Défense, sir Anerood Jugnauth, des policiers, des journalistes, tous présents au port ce jour-là. Par contre, la palme de cette saisie record revient aux employés de Scomat, firme représentant d'importantes marques internationales d'engins de chantier et autres. Un de ses employés se rend à la douane, au port, mercredi, pour récupérer une tractopelle en provenance du Brésil et commandée par un client*<sup>250</sup>.

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<sup>248</sup> Translation [mine]: This is the biggest drug bust recorded in the Indian Ocean to date. The ADSU division of Customs with the help of sniffer dogs intercepted 135 kilograms of heroin on Thursday in a container at the port. It's estimated at Rs 2 billions. It was transported to the island on a ship from South Africa. Several suspects are on the radar of investigators and arrests are imminent.

<sup>249</sup> <https://mbcradio.tv/article/saisie-record-de-drogue-%C3%A0-port-louis>.

<sup>250</sup> Translation [mine]: Mind boggling. 95 kilograms of cocaine, estimated at Rs 1.4 billion, will have escaped the control of customs officials and sniffer dogs at the port, including the watchful eye of the anti-drug brigade since July 4. This is even though these two units have come down with a sledgehammer for the past four years to carry out the Jugnauth's personal fight against drug trafficking. What intrigues even more is that this record seizure of cocaine on Wednesday July 10 in Mauritius made the trip alongside the famous Mauricio, the first tram made up of seven wagons, and welcomed at the port with drums and trumpets, on the 4th July. This large shipment of drugs - also called celebrity drugs - was therefore also in the belly of the Bahamian-flagged vehicle transporter Hoegh Antwerp. On board one of the backhoe loaders she was carrying. But the drugs were mostly under the noses of a horde of VVIPs, including the Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth, the mentor and defense minister, Sir

*Interviewer* [ during the same interview with Arnaud about drug trafficking]: The other drugs? Who would they usually go to? Who would typically take them?

*Arnaud*: Heroin is for those that are too far gone [the heaviest drug addicts]. You'd have to have done everything else before getting to this. But there aren't many of those addicts. They die quickly or are in rehab, but once they get out, they overdose and die quickly too. Pills are cheaper, so the rest of us can buy them. Subutex goes around like Panadol [off-the-counter painkiller variant]. We can mix them with other things. It's also easier to take mixed things. More manageable.

*Interviewer*: "The rest of us"?

*Arnaud*: Yes. Those who cannot afford the expensive stuff like cocaine.

*Interviewer*: What about you? Do you take other drugs?

*Arnaud*: To kill time. I used to smoke Gandja, but it's too expensive and sometimes you get really bad quality. Just stems. Then, the hunger. What's the point if there isn't much food – like good food for cravings? A good McDo [McDonald's] would do but that's expensive.

*Interviewer*: And now? Today?

*Arnaud*: Just Synthetic. Unless you got something else to propose [Arnaud winks].

*Interviewer*: I am afraid that I haven't got anything [any drugs] to pass on to you.

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Anerood Jugnauth, police officers, journalists, all present at the port that day. On the other hand, the prize for this record bust goes to the employees of Scomat, a firm representing major international brands of construction machinery and others. One of its employees goes to customs at the port on Wednesday to pick up a backhoe loader from Brazil ordered by a customer. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/356504/tractopelle-chargee-95-kg-cocaine-voyage-mauricio>.

*Arnaud:* You sure look like you don't have fun.

*Interviewer:* Because I haven't got any drugs on me?

*Arnaud:* Because you don't look like you'd have any drugs at all, anywhere, ever.  
Good girl, eh, Frenchy?

*Interviewer:* What about you? Do you have fun?

*Arnaud:* Because I take Synthetic? A little. I've done it for three years now. I know how to dose it and stuff. I know how to have my fun with it.

*Interviewer:* Where do you get it from?

*Arnaud:* Chemin Grenier. Or Martinière.

*Interviewer:* Where I live<sup>251</sup>?

*Arnaud:* Hmm... Yes. That's why I hinted at you proposing something other than Synthetic.

*Interviewer:* You mean to say that there is a dealer in Martinière, right where I live? There can't be more than a hundred people living there, including children. Why wouldn't I know of this dealer?

*Arnaud:* Where do you live in Martinière?

*Interviewer:* [I proceed to explaining this, drawing a map from African Town to my parent's house].

*Arnaud:* Two houses on the left of your house. That's the guy.

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<sup>251</sup> My family home is at the foot of the mountain in Surinam, only a few (maybe two) kilometres north of African Town.

Doul (nickname, kept as so here) is that “guy”. He was also one of those working at the nearby chicken farm and had been arrested and released shortly after his arrest. This was at the time of this interview with Arnaud. Doul’s mother (retained as ‘Mother’, again, to avoid causing trouble for Arnaud who had pointed him to us) explained his arrest as so: “He was selling drugs”.

*Interviewer:* Do you know for how long he had been doing this?

*Mother:* I can’t remember. Maybe six, seven years.

*Interviewer:* Did you know about this?

*Mother:* Yes. But that’s his business, right? He brings food to our table. He built the rest of the house. He bought furniture. He bought that plot of land over there [pointing to three houses down the street] and built that house on it. He wanted this to be for his family when he gets married.

*Interviewer:* You found no issue with him dealing drugs?

*Mother:* It brings money in. Way more money than the chicken farm. All my three boys work there. Only one makes real money. Besides, the neighbour [a policeman] and he were in on it. He was safe. How else are we supposed to live? My youngest doesn’t give us money. He works but keeps it all to himself [and his wife and son]. And the eldest must feed that fat pig [speaking about her eldest daughter-in-law].

*Interviewer:* How did he get caught? What about the neighbour?

*Mother:* ADSU [Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit of Mauritius] received an anonymous call about him. That’s what they said. They just came into the house one day. They had a warrant. They searched everywhere and found some [Ganja] plants in his bedroom, some pills and little packets. They arrested him right there.

*Interviewer:* Do you know what was in the little packets?

*Mother:* Synthetic.

*Interviewer:* By what you are saying to me, he would have made a lot of money.

*Mother:* A lot. There is a lot of money in this business. How do you think the neighbours built their house?

*Interviewer:* They inherited sugarcane plantations. That should bring in some money.

*Mother:* No! Gandja. And on our side, Synthetic.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever seen who your son sold the drugs to?

*Mother:* Only a few people around here. Most of his clients are further down in the village. He takes his motorbike for his deliveries. I asked him to buy a car. He won't. He said it's a waste of money and it would attract attention. He is also a humble kid.

*Interviewer:* For how long was he in prison?

*Mother:* I don't know. 6 months. I got him out. I usually get him out on bail. This time he was caught too many times for them to let him go quickly.

*Interviewer:* If he is caught dealing again, will bail be possible for him? Or do you think that they'll keep him in [prison] for longer next time?

*Mother:* He has been arrested a few times before and it went well.

*Interviewer:* On what charges?

*Mother:* Assault a few times and drug trafficking once.

*Interviewer:* And he was granted bail or freed not long after? Each time he was arrested?

*Mother:* I got him out each time – with his own money. I should be able to get him out again.

*Interviewer:* Drug money?

*Mother:* You think chicken farm money would be enough?

*Interviewer:* Nobody ever questioned you on the bail money? On where you would have got this money from? As I understand, your husband is a retired labourer, you stopped working too [as a labourer] since your son [the drug dealer] started bringing money into your household, I mean a lot of money [from distributing drugs], and your two other sons keep their money to themselves. Did the Court ever show any scepticism as to where you would find bail money?

*Mother:* Nobody asks. Nobody ever asked.

*Interviewer:* Where is your son now? The one who was arrested.

*Mother:* Home. He is out at the moment.

*Interviewer:* Dealing [drugs]?

*Mother:* Maybe.

*Interviewer:* Were you not scared for him when he was imprisoned?

*Mother:* No. They kept him here for a while. He was at the Souillac [police] station. It was better this way. I can go visit him. I can take the bus quickly to him and back. It's his friends at the station. I can go anytime. Now he's back.

*Interviewer:* Let me get this right. The ADSU, which is the anti-drug division of the police, arrested your son on drug trafficking charges and then put him in a cell at the Souillac station, where his police friends are. They kept him in for a little while, you could go visit anytime, he was allowed bail too a few times, and is now back home?

*Mother:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* And nothing bad ever happened to him in there?

*Mother:* That he was imprisoned was the bad thing.

*Interviewer:* So, he was treated well in there?

*Mother:* He got a bit fat [giggles].

We take note of two important things here. The first has to do with the involvement of the police in the distribution, the trafficking of drugs in Mauritius – real, known throughout Mauritius. The second is that while Douk received inordinately gentle and generous treatment despite being a drug dealer and being arrested numerous times by the police, Rastafarian ‘*Nasyon*’ are, for their religio-cultural partaking in Ganja in Mauritius, typically treated as dangerous criminals and pay the full price for it – abused and dehumanised especially by police. Let us remember the case of Christopher Fozoo, mentioned earlier<sup>252</sup>, who was arrested for having on his person a mere 0,2 grams of Gandja and then had his deadlocks cut while in police custody. We can also go back to the Rastafarian crowd that had been accused of clashing with the police and were subsequently arrested for this in the Company Garden in 2016. They spoke out against this in front of the Bail and Remand Court in Port Louis on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2016,

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<sup>252</sup> See page 109 of this thesis for more on Fozoo.

where they were meant to pay bail to stay out of prison for their ‘crime’ of clashing with the police at the Company Garden.

*Interviewer* [to Siva, one of the accused, standing outside the Bail and Remand Court, Port Louis]: What have you got to say about your arrest?

*Siva*: The police beat us up for peacefully protesting in the Garden, which we are allowed to do. That’s the law. They beat us up. They take us in. Accuse us of having Ganja on us, which we didn’t have. We don’t walk around with it. We smoke it! AT HOME! As a ritual. They didn’t find anything on us that day. Not on me, at least. They beat us up for demanding that we be allowed what our religion allows us to do. They accuse us of something we didn’t do. They take us to prison for no reason. Now we must pay bail??? I don’t have enough money for food. I hustle to feed my family. Now I must find bail money for something I didn’t do? If they don’t want us here, just say it! Don’t make things up. Don’t lie. Don’t cover things up. You can’t cover shit up with false accusations and then call it not-shit. It’s still shit, topped with false accusations. Any reason, even if false, is good enough for them to throw us in jail, to remind us they don’t like us, they don’t want us here!

*Interviewer*: Where don’t they want you?

*Siva*: They don’t want us in Mauritius. They could have sent us to Chagos<sup>253</sup> if they don’t want us here, but they sold that to the British. Then they deported some of the Chagossians here. What’s the point? They don’t want us here. They don’t want us there. They don’t want us anywhere. That’s our soil<sup>254</sup>. The soil of Jah! The soil of his sons. We are not making it hard for others to live here, on our soil. Why are they torturing us? It’s genocide. They will eradicate us from our soil one day, I promise you.

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<sup>253</sup> Chagos Islands, which used to be some of the outer islands of Mauritius, are now controversial geopolitical space in Mauritian History because sold to the British in exchange for the independence of Mauritius and contested now as an illegal sale.

<sup>254</sup> We remember William Miles (1999: 219) who supported the idea that Mauritius belongs to Afro-Mauritians: “Creoles regard themselves as the only genuine Mauritians”. See page 64 of this thesis for more.

*Interviewer:* Who are “they”?

*Siva:* Politicians. Police. Hindus. Muslims. Everyone.

*Interviewer:* Why don't they want you here? You are Mauritian, just like them. You have every right to be here. You are a citizen, an equal.

*Siva:* Is that what you see or is that what you think or hope?

*Interviewer:* I know what the Law says about citizens. I know that by it, you are an equal. My equal. The politicians' equal.

*Siva:* You don't have to find bail money to get out of something you didn't do. You don't need to fight for your freedom. You don't live on temporary freedom<sup>255</sup>. You have it permanently because of who you are, what your hair looks like. I don't. Because I am black. My hair is Rasta. I must fight to be allowed the right to be, the right to live, the right to be treated like a human! Every day is a fight.

Antonio, also present that day, and accused too of clashing with the police in the Company Garden in 2016, added: “My problem with this whole thing is... The problem that I face in my country is that I have been rejected by it. Rejected. I don't know why I am being treated this way. I don't know what I did to deserve this. I am going through some suffering, some violence, catastrophes that I shouldn't go through. But I am a Mauritian. I am a citizen. I have rights too here. This is my home. This is where I sleep. It's not right that I get beaten up, that I get gassed with my brothers and sisters when I am praying! I am a Rastafarian. This is my religion. When they shout ‘Allah’ in the microphone, every night, do they get beaten up? When every week, they are chanting from 18:00 to 06:00 to Shivji [Hindu God, Shiva] and my children can't sleep through the night, do they get beaten up? No. I am a foreigner here. A foreigner. I have a useless Mauritian identity card. I am not Mauritian. When they march to Grand Bassin [sacred lake in

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<sup>255</sup> I do not live on “temporary freedom”, indeed. Siva was right about that. There was never a space or time in Mauritius where I did not feel free to speak, to be, and to do as it pleased me. And the police never looked twice at me. My freedom was never even a matter that I had to worry about. It was something that I was born with, that I took for granted, a natural extension of my being. Suddenly, I was not like Siva who had to fight for his freedom.

Mauritius for Indo-Mauritians who go on pilgrimage there once a year] and they are smoking their Bang [a drug known to be taken by some Indo-Mauritian pilgrims on their way to Grand Bassin] the police guard them along the way. I am a ‘*Nasyon*’. I am Rastafarian. I cannot smoke my Ganja. This is racism. They must beat my brothers, my sisters, to make a point. If this is going to be the way they treat me, please deport me. Deport my brothers. Send us somewhere else. I’ll be direct. I am a Rastafarian. That plant, that one called Ganja, I smoke it. I have the right to smoke it here. It’s my religion. It’s my medicine. I don’t take painkillers. I don’t go to hospital”.

Seela, 44-year-old Indo-Mauritian inhabitant of the village of Surinam whose house stood right outside the eastern edge of African Town knew of the matter of Afro-Mauritians declaring their belonging to Mauritius soil – as ‘sons of Mauritian soil’ or Mauritian autochthons and thus as legitimate claimants of Mauritian soil (Jackson 2006; Nyamnjoh 2021; Pelican 2009; Geschiere 2009). She had seen me walk about and around African Town, and curious, approached me. This part of the conversation with her stood out: “What makes Mauritius land of the ‘*Nasyon*’? We [implying Indo-Mauritians] are more sons of this soil than them. We worked this land more than they ever have and ever will. We worked hard to be here. We worked for the land we own. Our forefathers also went through hard times here. We worked hard. Today, my husband and I own our land. See this house [pointing to her house]? It was built on our sweat. Our blood. We worked for it. Work hard. Like we do. Then you can have your own house. Then you can call land yours. But you are too lazy to do that. You want land for free”.

Seela’s husband, 45 years old, present at the time of our conversation added: “Do they know the meaning of sacrifice? They don’t know the meaning of sacrifice. Help yourself and the skies will help you! Instead of stealing and hustling for drugs and alcohol, find a real job, save your money, build a good life slowly. You can’t be handed everything for free. It’s like asking for a prize when you haven’t even played the game! Work! Get a job! Don’t expect Government to give things to you for free. We don’t get anything for free. Why should you?”

We go back to Ambroise here, who was present with Siva and Antonio at the Bail and Remand Court in Port Louis, Mauritius, in May 2016: “Can you pass a message to the Prime Minister for me?”

*Interviewer:* No. I don't think so. I don't... I don't know him. I don't have that kind of access...

*Ambroise:* Why are you interviewing us then? What are you going to do with what we say? Are you not a journalist?

*Interviewer:* No. I am not a journalist. I am a student, and I am writing on the 'Nasyon' in Mauritius. I am doing my PhD at the University of Cape Town.

*Ambroise:* You'll publish this somewhere? People will read it? In South Africa?

*Interviewer:* Very few in South Africa. Maybe a couple more in other places. I don't know...

*Ambroise:* Well, get the message out then. A few people outside this country – that's good enough for me. Record this [on tape]. Are you recording this? Record this: "Prime Minister Jugnauth, this is a message to you and to the world. About three weeks ago, in some religious ceremony you were attending, you said that all Mauritians, all Mauritian communities should be free to practice their religion in Mauritius. As a Rastafarian, I would like to remind you to honour your word. The Rastafarian community is not free here. Not only that! We are being chased away. Beaten up. Our women are being beaten up. If you can't do your job, if you can't honour your word, give the job to someone else to do. Get somebody who can do this to replace you. Jah bless".

*Jean* [also present that day, listening in on the previous conversations with Siva, Antonio and Ambroise]: We can't blame the British this time, can we? This is colonialism 2.0. It's racism 2.0. Jah is watching. When this island sinks, we will all sink with it. Nobody will be superior to another then. We will all sink. You know who colonial masters are today? Current politicians. You want to know something else? I worked hard in secondary school. Then I took small jobs here and there to pay university fees. I went to UoM [University of Mauritius]. I have

a degree. I have been looking for work. I'm always told to chop my dreads off. And when I didn't have my dreads, my hair was too coarse and then I'd be asked for a Certificate of Morality [Mauritian equivalent of a police clearance]. They just sent me to prison. I am now out on bail. They sent me to prison for something I didn't do. Only because they can't stand me and my religion and my religious practices. They don't like anything about me. My hair, my god, my skin, the way I talk, the way I dress. Now I need a Certificate of Morality. Let me ask you this: Have you ever applied for work here?

*Interviewer:* Yes. Many times.

*Jean:* Were you ever told your hair needs a cut?

*Interviewer:* No<sup>256</sup>.

*Jean:* Another question for you: Were you ever asked for a Certificate of Morality when you applied for jobs here?

*Interviewer:* No.

*Jean:* They ask only people like me. They make it impossible for us to live here. If I cut my dreads, I still have to give a Certificate of Morality. I have to deny my god to try to get a job. But then, without my dreads, when I try to get a job, I need this Certificate. But they just sent me to jail. My papers are not clean anymore. Even if I didn't do anything wrong. That paper is important for me. Not for you. But for me. But know this: even if I cut my dreads and give them a clean Certificate, they will find something else to ruin my life, to diminish my chances, treat me unfairly. There's always a reason for them to not let us in.

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<sup>256</sup> This conversation reminded me of Beyoncé's "Becky with the good hair", whom she brings up in her album *Lemonade*: "The inference is that 'Becky' has desirable, sleek hair, while Beyoncé has a naturally curly texture under the wigs and without hot tools. It sheds light on an overall picture when it comes to how black coarse hair is perceived, since the former is 'good' and the latter is assumed to be the opposite" (<https://www.popsugar.com/beauty/What-Does-Becky-Good-Hair-Mean-41062522#photo-41062585>). For more on "good hair", see "Good Hair" documentary (Stilson 2009), which also took me back to "Dark Skin" documentary (Berry & Duke). I had 'good' hair. I had the right skin tone. I was Becky. I was part of 'us', unlike the 'other', the ones with the opposite of 'good' hair.

There's always a door that they come through to take everything that we have. Look at the squatters. Look what they are doing to them. If we didn't have Jah, we would all jump like our ancestors did from the mountain [Le Morne mountain].

In June 2016, Divesh, a 28-year-old Indo-Mauritian lawyer from the south of Mauritius spoke to me on the matter of squatter housing. He said: "What about legal action? Legal action should have been taken against them [the 'Nasyon'] in 2012 already! But you cannot just break the squatter housing down! It will all pop up again. What you need to do is stop the squatters altogether. It should be punishable by Law. Look at what happened right after 2012! They rebuilt their houses. On the same land, which they still do not own! Just take a drive through African Town – don't go alone, okay? – and you will see the number of squatters has only increased. It won't stop until this is punishable by Law".

*Interviewer:* Shouldn't it be the task of a government that is supposedly pro-human rights to help the 'Nasyon' on the matter of housing and land, rather than break down the little space they found and made for themselves to survive?

*Divesh:* No! No! Government is doing the right thing! These people bring drugs and crime here. Government should not let them stay here at all! They are ruining our community.

*Interviewer:* Which community is that?

*Divesh:* The South! The whole South. In fact, the whole island. Everywhere where there is crime, one of them is involved. Rape, theft, drugs, murder.

*Interviewer:* Is this why you are advising me not to go alone there?

*Divesh:* Especially you! No! Don't go alone.

*Interviewer:* What do you think could happen to me if I did?

*Divesh:* I prefer not to say.

*Interviewer:* Why not?

*Divesh:* I cannot say it. A lady should not hear such things.

*Interviewer:* You are a lawyer. You are a master of words. I am sure you could find a way to say it.

*Divesh:* Dirty, terrible things can happen to you. Bad things. Things that can only happen to women.

*Interviewer:* I would assume that you are talking about some form of abuse. Rape? But is this something that can only happen to women? And are you sure that I will be in danger if I go there<sup>257</sup>?

*Divesh:* In African Town, anything can happen. To boys and girls. But especially for ladies like you. Young and pretty. They are predators. Hungry and violent. Please don't go there alone.

*Interviewer:* What about the police? They are often there, from what I understand. Couldn't they make African Town a little safer? I am sure that since they are always there, I should be safe. This is their job, after all... To keep us all safe.

*Divesh:* The police fear them. They stay in their vans when they are doing the rounds there.

*Interviewer:* Why would they bother doing the rounds if they are afraid of even leaving their car?

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<sup>257</sup> Divesh did not know that I had been to African Town already and had spent a lot of time there, alone and accompanied by its residents and had felt safe with them, as they had, hopefully, felt safe with me too.

*Divesh:* They have to. Government has to get them to do this. It's the only deterrent. It doesn't always work... But it works just enough to prevent a few crimes. Did you hear about that one time they threw things at police vans in ['*cité*'] Barkly? The police went in with tens of their vans and reinforcement. They still didn't make it. Those people threw heavy projectiles at them! Total loss for some vans. Bleeding policemen. Some who made it out of the vans to hide were chased and beaten up. These people are not good people.

*Interviewer:* Do you think drug dealers would qualify as good people?

*Divesh:* No.

*Interviewer:* May I bring up a list of policemen involved and/or charged for drug trafficking in Mauritius? The cases are well known, out in newspapers.

*Divesh:* What are you trying to do here?

*Interviewer:* If you say that drug dealers are not good people, it would stand that the police involved in drug trafficking are not good people – by your own standards.

*Divesh:* Okay...

*Interviewer:* Would you hold them to same standards that you hold the '*Nasyon*'? Would you ask that the Law be enforced against those policemen?

*Divesh:* If there wasn't a market, our people wouldn't be dealing. We don't do the drugs. We sell it because there are people who buy. Like the '*Nasyon*. It's because of them... They do drugs, they like drugs...

*Interviewer:* What is "It's because of them"?

*Divesh:* If there wasn't a buyer, there wouldn't be a seller. If there wasn't the need for drugs, there wouldn't be someone dealing. If the '*Nasyon*' weren't out there doing all those stupid things, we wouldn't go crazy. It's because of them... They make everybody crazy. It's their fault if some of us are going into bad things.

*Interviewer:* You wouldn't think that the policemen involved in drug trafficking are bad people then?

*Divesh:* Not at all.

The son of an ex-politician, trying his luck at Mauritian politics for the past few years, had this to say this during an informal conversation with him in April 2019 on the matter of police involvement in drug trafficking: "Somebody is getting the drugs in [the country]. The rumour, which I can neither confirm nor deny, is that it's that family at the top. They could be bringing drugs in. There is a war – that I am sure of. A war between drug lords, drug trafficking bosses, families".

*Interviewer:* Could you tell me who those people are? Or who you think they are? What are the rumours on this?

*Son of ex-politician:* The Prime Ministers. Current or previous ones... Their agents, their right hand... Those close to them. One would have to ask: How does a Prime Minister, who makes Rs200,000 per month (more or less), become a millionaire in the hundreds if they run the country for four years? I'm talking hundreds and hundreds of millions. Do the Maths. There is no business in their name. No company registered in their name. They are not re-investing their salary. They are getting their money somewhere else. By the way, did you see who was caught at the port [of Port Louis, Mauritius] for getting drug containers past customs?

*Interviewer:* Who is it?

*Son of ex-politician:* Jugnauth's right hand...

*Interviewer:* Aneerood Jugnauth?

*Son of ex-politician:* His son<sup>258</sup>.

*Interviewer:* The rumours might not be rumours after all...

*Son of ex-politician:* The only problem is having them talk. They are paid too much to tell us who they work for.

*Interviewer:* From what I understand, the police are also involved in drug trafficking in the country. Can you tell me about that?

*Son of ex-politician:* This whole system is corrupt to the core. I don't trust anybody who works for or with Government. I am sure that the big bosses pay the police a fair amount to distribute. They [the police] have too much to gain or too much to lose if they start talking. The guys at the top are protected for life. The first line of distributors are the ones doing the protecting and the distributing while growing a big, fat wallet. Mind you, the police do not make a lot of money [in terms of salary]. Can you explain to me how a policeman is driving a Merc [a Mercedes car]? With what money?

The list is unending of policemen involved in and caught for distributing or having in their possession drugs of all sorts intended for distribution in Mauritius, proving real the rumours that Arnaud, the son of the ex-politician and so many others can tell of. In July 2017, Defimedia put out the story of “*Un policier de 40 ans a été arrêté pour possession de drogue synthétique à son domicile ce dimanche 23 juillet. Au moment de son arrestation, il était en compagnie d'un homme de 21 ans qui avait sur lui du papier aluminium contenant du cannabis synthétique. Les deux hommes ont comparu devant la Bail and Remand Court le même jour. Le jeune homme de 21 ans a été relâché sur parole. Quant au policier, il reste en détention*”<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Pravin Jugnauth, then Prime Minister of the country and son of ex-Prime Minister Aneerood Jugnauth.

<sup>259</sup> Translation [mine]: A 40-year-old policeman was arrested for possession of synthetic drugs at his home on Sunday, 23 July. At the time of his arrest, he was in the company of a 21-year-old man who had aluminium foil

<sup>260</sup>. RFI (Radio France Info), French news and current affairs public radio station<sup>261</sup> held a bulletin along the same lines: *“Pour la 2ème fois de son histoire, l’île Maurice a institué une commission d’enquête sur la drogue. Alors même que ces travaux sont en cours, le pays a assisté à des saisies records de stupéfiants et à une série d’arrestations de policiers. L’opinion publique s’interroge sur le poids de la mafia de la drogue, dans les affaires du pays. Surtout depuis qu’un policier, arrêté pour trafic de stupéfiants, a été retrouvé mort dans sa cellule”*<sup>262</sup>. In September 2019, Le Mauricien reported on *“Un policier âgé de 29 ans, affecté à la SSU Technical Unit, a été arrêté hier, mercredi 11 septembre, en possession d’une drogue illicite. Cet habitant de Camp La Boue, Montagne Longue, se trouvait dans les toilettes de la Technical Unit de la SSU, aux alentours de 8h30, quand il a été vu en possession d’une feuille d’aluminium. Celui-ci contenait une poudre blanche soupçonnée d’être de l’héroïne”*<sup>263</sup>. In June 2020, L’Express reported: *“Dans la ville de Port-Louis à l’île Maurice, un policier a été arrêté avec de la drogue synthétique dimanche 7 juin. L’homme de 25 ans se trouvait sur la plage en compagnie de deux membres de sa famille âgés de 16 et 20 ans quand il a été fouillé par des agents de la brigade anti-drogue. Dans son véhicule, une grande quantité de drogue synthétique a également été retrouvée. Les suspects ont été interrogés. Le policier a été placé en détention et ses deux compères ont pu rentrer chez eux”*<sup>264</sup>. In July 2020, l’Express reported again on *“[...] Trois individus dont un policier affecté au poste de police de Rose-Hill ont été arrêtés hier, jeudi 16 juillet, pour trafic de drogue. Ils ont été coffrés sur le parking d’un établissement scolaire à Moka. Pour coincer les suspects, les policiers se sont fait passer*

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with synthetic cannabis on him. The two men appeared before the Bail and Remand Court on the same day. The 21-year-old was released on parole. As for the policeman, he remains in police custody. See more at <https://defimedia.info/droque-synthetique-un-policier-de-40-ans-arrete>.

<sup>260</sup> <https://defimedia.info/droque-synthetique-un-policier-de-40-ans-arrete>.

<sup>261</sup> <https://www.rfi.fr/en/about-us>.

<sup>262</sup> Translation [mine]: For the second time in its history, Mauritius has established a commission of inquiry on the matter of drugs. But even with this, the country has witnessed record drug busts and a series of police arrests. Public opinion tends toward questioning the influence of the drug mafia in the affairs of the country. Especially since a policeman arrested for drug trafficking was found dead in his cell. See more at <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/emission/20170712-maurice-paradis-face-enfer-droque-stupefiants-police-arrestations-mafia>.

<sup>263</sup> Translation [mine]: A 29-year-old policeman assigned to the SSU Technical Unit was arrested yesterday, Wednesday 11 September, in possession of an illicit drug. The resident of Camp La Boue, Montagne Longue, was in the SSU Technical Unit washroom at around 8:30 am when he was caught in possession of aluminium foil. This contained a white powder suspected of being heroin. <https://www.lemauricien.com/actualites/ssu-un-policier-arrete-en-possession-de-droque-dans-les-toilettes/300528/>.

<sup>264</sup> Translation [mine]: In the city of Port Louis in Mauritius, a police officer was arrested with synthetic drugs on Sunday, 7 June. The 25-year-old was on the beach with two family members aged 16 and 20 when he was searched by officers from the anti-drug squad. In his vehicle, a large amount of synthetic drug was also found. The suspects have been questioned. The policeman was taken into police custody and his two friends were able to return home. See more at <https://freedom.fr/maurice-un-policier-arrete-avec-de-la-droque-synthetique/>.

*pour de potentiels acheteurs. Les trois jeunes hommes sont tombés dans le piège. Du cannabis d'une valeur de Rs 248 920 et une somme de Rs 3 350 soupçonnée de provenir du trafic de drogue ont été saisis dans leur véhicule. Les trois suspects ont été placés en détention*"<sup>265</sup>. And so on and so forth...

There is a cyclical process to recognise in this chapter, which can read as an entanglement of various modes of action (x) preventing the 'Nasyon' from accessing political power and shaping as the active denial of their citizenship and/or belonging to the Mauritian socio-political world by and through decayed systems of power. These include parallel systems of governance, a coercive police force and systemic discrimination in the education sector that would force the 'Nasyon' to and into those conditions that make them exploitable toward their marginalisation from the Mauritian socio-political world, their socio-political status having been fully relegated to that of 'living-dead', non-citizens of the country: without a roof over their head, money in their pockets, and food in their bellies, the 'Nasyon' cannot go to school; if they do go to school, they are still not afforded the type of infrastructure and support necessary for them to grow into the Mauritian socio-political world as others; if they are lucky enough to get to the tertiary level of education and attempt to step foot onto the higher levels of the Mauritian socio-political hierarchy, perhaps through seeking employment there, something as simple as their hair quickly becomes disservice to them; they typically resort to a life on the streets, hustling through menial jobs or numbing their suffering down with drugs, which the police distribute to them and later imprison them for; the rare moments of their standing for themselves or asking the Mauritian Government to deliver on its promises of equality, justice and liberty sees them straight to prison, again, with the risk of being killed or abused there; they are promised help by secret societies overseeing charitable organisations but are unable to join these themselves to decide the course of their own lives; denied all possibility to exercise their rights and agency in Mauritius, the 'Nasyon' cannot hold a roof over their heads, have some money in their pockets and put food in their bellies; and the cycle continues – to keep them as the 'other', the outsiders, the refuse of the Mauritian socio-political world.

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<sup>265</sup> Translation [mine]: Three individuals including a police officer assigned to the Rose-Hill police station were arrested yesterday, Thursday July 16, for drug trafficking. They were locked up in the parking lot of a school in Moka. To corner the suspects, the police pretended to be potential buyers. The three young men fell into the trap. Cannabis worth Rs 248,920 and a sum of Rs 3,350 suspected of coming from drug trafficking were seized from their vehicle. The three suspects were taken into custody. See more at <https://www.lexpress.mu/article/380072/moka-un-policier-epingle-pour-traffic-droque>.

And the refuse of the Mauritian socio-political world (its non-citizens, the '*Nasyon*') certainly stands little chance, if any at all, of claiming political power.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius through the prism of historical ethnography. This was separated into historiographic and ethnographic analyses, which brought to light the context of their existence along a singular story that would fix them strictly within the bounds of slavery as unwanted blacks or the criminal 'other' – incomplete humans, if human at all, existing at the farthest margins of the Mauritian socio-political world. And if this story took root in the science of the colonial era fuelled by Christianity then, it continues today in spaces of public commemoration and is reinforced by way of the Law in complicity with the Media in a supposedly democratic Mauritius that keeps them as its non-citizens. The ethnographic analysis confirmed this, exposing parallel systems of governance, a coercive police force and systemic discrimination in the education sector as actively solidifying the continued dehumanisation of the '*Nasyon*' toward the denial of their citizenship in or belonging to the Mauritian socio-political world. This is all to say that the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power reads as it were the consequence of their incompleteness as this was brought about by modes of action ( $x$ ) solidly external to them. This would automatically open us to the possibility of the undoing of ( $x$ ) bringing about the '*Nasyon*'s' completeness as per the claims and requests of political observers and activists on the matter of the marginalisation of persons of black African ancestry, which should then allow the '*Nasyon*' access to political power. The next chapter (Chapter Four) addresses this against the framework of incompleteness developed in Chapter Two of this thesis, which expanded on incompleteness as internal to and a permanent fact of all component parts of the universe.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MODES OF ACTION (X) THAT GIVE RISE TO THE ‘NASYON’S’ PERSISTING DISSOCIATION FROM POLITICAL POWER IN MAURITIUS (Y)**

### **Introduction**

This chapter critically analyses the modes of action (*x*), uncovered through the historiographic and ethnographic approaches undertaken earlier, which give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*). It runs the latitudes of (*y*) reading as it were the consequence of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness as this was brought about by (*x*) as this was solidly external to them. But it rejects the solid externality of and the doing away with their incompleteness implied here. This is considering the existing data on incompleteness (expanded on in Chapter Two of this thesis), which shows that it is inherent to all parts of our universe, including the ‘*Nasyon*’, and therefore, is inescapable. As so, even with the undoing of (*x*), the ‘*Nasyon*’ would remain incomplete. Put otherwise, the undoing of (*x*) is no guarantee that the ‘*Nasyon*’ would finally have access to political power in Mauritius since the undoing of (*x*) would not be the undoing of their incompleteness. The ‘*Nasyon*’ cannot be solid in their socio-political positionality. They can never be complete in permanence. But they could clothe themselves with the right ‘*juju*’ to appear solid, complete, to have access to political power for a while in Mauritius. This is not to deny the need and usefulness of activism here, but it is swaying away from beseeching our indignation on the matter, which has shown in the past and in other cases including the #BlackLivesMatter and the #RhodesMustFall movements as the quest for cosmic justice leading to violent protests and exclusionary practices with little or no meaningful socio-political changes. With this, a way forward is proposed that runs the latitudes of Francis Nyamnjoh’s (2017b) gentle acceptance of incompleteness as normal, and consequently of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ liquidness or incompleteness as normal, for a convivial turn away from prior observations on the matter.

### **An Incomplete Story for an Unchanged People**

The previous chapter (Chapter Three) brought to light the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, which run the latitudes of a socio-political world rooted in the science of the colonial era fuelled by Christianity that

would fix persons of black African ancestry as non-humans, and that would keep them at its farthest margins as non-citizens through parallel systems of governance, a coercive police force and systemic discrimination in the education sector until now. This section of Chapter Four goes into (x), accepting that this is real – because this is what the historiographic and ethnographic approaches to this case showed.

The first modes of action playing toward the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius have to do with the cyclically self-fulfilling singular story on and of the larger socio-political group that the ‘*Nasyon*’ belong to, i.e., Afro-Mauritians, persons of black African ancestry in Mauritius persistently treated and taken as non-humans, incomplete humans. This story makes sense in context, with the three C’s that led to and justified colonial expansion, which Rudyard Kipling (1899: 2) gave us as Colonialism, Civilisation and Commerce: European colonisers were guided by the science of their days and ways, the need to justify their actions (including exploitation and enslavement, for example) to themselves (perhaps) and to the rest of the world, as well as their religious affiliations that fixed and had to fix persons of black African ancestry as lesser humans, therefore, persons to rightfully diminish, own and rule over. We go back to Lidio Cipriani (1835: 184)<sup>266</sup> here, who had written on the science of the colonial era that demarcated persons of black African ancestry as blacks as ‘Negroes’, different from white Europeans, bio-cognitively less developed than them, incomplete in their humanness: “As far as brain of negroes is concerned, [...] its morphology is scarcely comparable to the less developed brain of some European women. On the contrary, [...] very clever Caucasian men show an increase in the brain volume and a different morphology, mainly in the temporal lobe, than other populations”. This context is what we read today as the era of scientific racism according to which Sean Stillwell (2002: 5) wrote that “it was possible to ‘scientifically’ rank the various human races in order from the most primitive to the most advanced. This ideology helped to justify European expansion by suggesting that the conquest of Africa was ordained by nature and science because Africans were, according to this ideology, inferior to Europeans”.

This bio-cognitive difference, this ideological difference based on the science of the times, between white Europeans and black Africans supported the emergence of a professed European need to civilise Africa. We can read this as the white saviour complex, that bizarrely psycho-

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<sup>266</sup> Quoted earlier, on pages 22 and 87 of this thesis.

spiritual yearning by Europeans to cure and cleanse black Africans of their supposed non-humanness, their bestiality, their backwardness – their incompleteness –, which we see quite clearly in the role that Christianity played and the place that it held in Africa during the European colonial era, i.e., Christianity served as the religious arm of colonialism and colonisation, representing “the supernatural source of the white man’s power and assisted in delegitimizing indigenous sources of supernatural power such as kingship, chieftainship, and priesthood” (Khapoya 1998: 162-163). This deligitimisation was really the demonisation of everything that was not white and European in Africa and, of course, the need rose right there, to convert Africans to Christianity, to save their demonised selves, to salvage what was left of their lost souls, or to give them souls, to make them human. This was facilitated by Christian missionaries whose intention, on surface<sup>267</sup>, would not have rung evil but the singular story about Africans being incomplete was only fuelled further as missionaries set themselves as “visible saints, exemplars of ideal piety in a sea of persistent savagery” (Andrews 2010: 663), strengthening the science of the times that hierarchised humanness to endorse as fact the inferiority or ‘otherness’ of black Africans, those with “lesser spiritual agencies” (Horton 1984: 403) than white Europeans.

We can today excuse the science that European colonisers rested on that took Africans as lesser human beings or beings to rightfully dehumanise (without excusing their behaviour because it was conscious decision that they made about their dehumanising directions in Africa) because we are also able to understand scientific locality in the manner that the science of the past was all that it could be – because this was all that it could do. In other words, what was known in the past, what science gave us, was all that could be known and all that could be given to us back then. Along these lines, let us remember here that, once upon a time in the socio-political world, the assessment was allowed, made, and retained at its most influential by French anthropologist Paul Broca (Gould 1981: 103), for the bio-cognitive inferiority of women based on their observed and observable smaller brain mass than men’s. The treatment of and disposition toward women that followed from this assessment expectedly swayed toward a generalised, institutionalised mistrust of the latter and the latter’s decision-making capabilities and intelligent engagement in matters that would have to do with and lead to the good running

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<sup>267</sup> On surface, missionaries appeared to want to spread the Gospel and save Africans, believing that they needed this. But the literature exists on the matter that also speaks to missionaries knowing well that they would be bedfellows with colonisers, pushing for the expansion of European empires in Africa. See, for example, letter by King Leopold II of Belgium, dated 1883 (<https://www.fafich.ufmg.br/~luarnaut/Letter%20Leopold%20II%20to%20Colonial%20Missionaries.pdf>).

of the socio-political world. We can also look at the scientific recognition of Australia as '*terra nullius*' at the time of its colonisation despite the fact of its Aboriginal population – taken then as non-human just as black Africans were. One assessment, wrong for all kinds of reasons today, but localised, standing as all that it could be back then, was all that it took to justify the genocidal character of colonisers in Australia and the legitimised erasure and political and bio-economic de-selection, from the socio-political world, of the Aboriginal bloodline (Beyette 2019: 4). Only some hundreds of years before that, during the Middle Ages in Europe, the assessment was also allowed, made and retained about anything that would and could not be well explained or explained at all either by way of science or religion, as crime(s) of witchcraft in particular and crime(s) against authority in general, where this authority stood as the Law and the Church working concomitantly under the heavy hand of monarchs (Bailey 2003: xxi, 76-77). At a time when poverty was rife and land was barely producible for most, the good fortune of a very few that came about as good harvest, for example, only struck as un-ordinary, un-common, un-godly, non-godly, and the death sentence was imposed onto the latter, accused, suspected, or imagined to be practitioners of witchcraft. Tens of thousands of people, the majority of whom would be women, were killed then, burnt at the stake (Bailey, 2003: xxi).

Science has changed since then. It always changes because it cannot do otherwise; it cannot be otherwise; it is naturally incomplete. It allows itself to fall deep into rabbit holes, permitting cycles of inquiry that remain open in their entirety to endless self-correction and self-criticism, making space for progress, for more authenticity, for more adequate depictions of anything and everything that we can observe or imagine. And this is the very reason to forgive it for what it once was and what it once led to. It runs today with better technology and thought capacity, to show us, to go back to the examples used earlier here, that the brain of black Africans is as human as it gets, that women can think just like men, that colonisers in Australia are guilty of the genocide of its Aboriginal people, and that those who labour their fields well are not witches. Along these lines, we can understand that persons of black African ancestry were at some point in history fixed as non-humans, incomplete humans because this is all that science could take us to when it did so, as much as we can relax in the certainty that science could and should run today to tell us that the '*Nasyon*' are the bio-cognitive equals of all other Mauritian. The singular story that once told otherwise needs not be anymore and cannot be so anymore.

Just as science has changed, so has Christianity evolved to give us ‘Black Jesus’ while European colonisers and missionaries had once carefully curated Him in their image<sup>268</sup> (statues, paintings, and stained-glass windows in churches) such that, although passed down to Africans, He was separate from them, different, white. What we note here is that the Bible promises that humans are made in the image of God, and when humans affirm that God is white (or Jesus as God in the flesh is white), the default human can only be white. This means that non-whites are not human, more likely bestial then, and therefore to be righteously treated as so. For the Bible (Bible: Genesis 1: 22-28) does say that humans are to rule over every other living being on Earth:

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground”. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground”.

In their *The Color of Christ*, scholars Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey (2012: 4) read the European colonisation of the Americas and the images that this carried of a white Jesus as eventually serving to justify the oppression and suppression of Native and African Americans as so:

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<sup>268</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci’s “*The Last Supper*” and Raphael’s depiction of the transfiguration of Jesus, for example, paint Him as white at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Last-Supper-fresco-by-Leonardo-da-Vinci>; <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/la-pinacoteca/sala-viii---secolo-xvi/raffaello-sanzio--trasfigurazione.html>.



“By wrapping itself with the alleged form of Jesus, whiteness gave itself a holy face. But he was a shape-shifting totem of white supremacy. The differing and evolving physical renderings of white Jesus figures not only bore witness to the flexibility of racial constructions but also helped create the perception that whiteness was sacred and everlasting. With Jesus as white, Americans could feel that sacred whiteness stretched back in time thousands of years and forward in sacred space to heaven and the second coming”. With ‘Black Jesus’, however, the dominion of whites over blacks and the separation thereof as whites and blacks or humans and lesser humans or non-humans has neither need nor reason to exist: “When I say Black Jesus, He has to stand up; He understands the unique condition we are under” (McKinnis 2016: 246).

‘Black Jesus’ asserts the humanness of black people, including that of the ‘*Nasyon*’ in Mauritius, also victims of white Jesus during the colonial era in the country. As so, the singular story that Christianity would have once told of them, which made sense with white Jesus in context, cannot be so anymore.

Despite the science of today and ‘Black Jesus’, the story runs on the ‘*Nasyon*’ especially, about their being nothing much, still. This a story that modern scholars, post-colonial politicians, political observers, and the Mauritian justice system and journalists of the independence era have gone on perpetuating, clinging to as well. It is a story sewn deeply into the fabric of the Mauritian socio-political world, even in the Mauritian psyche – institutionalised in museums and other sites of remembrance as we saw in Chapter Three of this thesis, for example, such that it has gone on unchallenged, repeated without end. And repeated enough times, this story has become fact, normalised such that nobody really seems to question why it is that persons of black African ancestry are taken as if nothing else than victims, marginalised humans, non-humans, incomplete humans in Mauritius. They are spoken of as so, but the question does not come up about why this is so. In other words, the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ plight in the country is well spoken about, it is detailed, it is observed by many, but it does not serve to bring about any type of meaningful change to their socio-political positionality in the country. And perhaps this ought to be thought through: Does anybody who has told or tells the story (the plight) of the ‘*Nasyon*’ want that their socio-political positionality in Mauritius change? What is the purpose of story-

telling in this case, if it is a singular story that is being told over and over again that appears to have no lesson within it, no warning, no depth of meaning, no practicability to it, no solution to the problem that it raises, and therefore can only exist either for the sake of existing or for bolstering the career of those who found it a comfortable niche to expand on and from? What is the point of the perpetual iteration of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ story if it only ends up being complaints without solutions?

With this, a second layer of reinforcement of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as incomplete humans, permanent others, inevitably unfolds. There is not a single story on them, whether in scholarship on in museums and so on and so forth, that depicts them otherwise. Nobody tells the story of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as anything else. What are they good at? Why are they good for Mauritius? How have they been good to Mauritius? What are those elements about them that are positive? Where are those things that might be interesting to start thinking about that would take them to political power in the country? Is there anything about them that makes them better than Indo-Mauritians for example, that might get them to power? Why are those things not brought up? Why is the full extent and expanse of their being and existence not told? Is it that there is nothing else to them but incompleteness? Or is it that it is better for those who talk about the ‘*Nasyon*’ that the singular story of their incompleteness run to till the end of time? Scholars such as Rosabelle Boswell and political observers such as Jimmy Harmon give visibility to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ plight, but is this for the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ sake? It sure looks like nothing else is being brought to the table, and therefore, are we not to conclude that change in their positionality is not the end goal here? And what about the Media? What about current journalists? They are the Fourth Estate in the Mauritian democratic socio-political world operating in the era of highly advanced technologies that provide the entirety of the socio-political world with the fastest and cheapest (when not completely free) dissemination of, and unprecedented access to, information. As so, they are the best positioned to help the ‘*Nasyon*’ and change the singular story about them and/or help the ‘*Nasyon*’ by changing the singular story about them where no one else is or can or wants to. Still, they do nothing. Worse, they perpetuate this single story. And Lady Justice certainly is not helping, as we see with the many deaths of Afro-Mauritians in police custody or the violations against them by police with no retribution on the latter for those wrongs that they perpetually commit. Put brusquely, the very people that could have and should have helped the ‘*Nasyon*’ evolve differently in Mauritius are the ones keeping them there – because of the singular story that they continuously tell about them.

But there is nothing to do about this. There is nothing else, nothing different that modern scholars, post-colonial politicians, political observers of today, the Mauritian justice system of the independence era, and current journalists should be expected to do about it. There is nothing to condemn or complain about here. This is, of course, to still read in context – it makes sense, in context, that the story about the ‘*Nasyon*’ today (in the post-colonial era) remains as it was before (during the colonial era). And this is also the second answer to the question posed in this thesis: What are the modes of action ( $x$ ) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius ( $y$ )? It goes as so: even if science has progressed and Christianity gave us a new, black face to turn to for protection, salvation and freedom, Mauritius has not changed. Even if political observers and journalists can do differently today, because free and hyper-connected, they do not do so. Even when Justice should serve itself, it oppresses instead. The reasons for all of this do not really matter – not in and for this thesis at least. What does matter, however, is the fact that the Mauritian socio-political world has not changed. Although changed in terms of political title from a colony to a democracy, not much else has changed in and about the country. It certainly has moved, as the laws of Physics dictate, in a forward-facing linear manner in physical time but it has not progressed in topological time, not in epoch. Mauritius is still living in the epoch of the marginalisation of people of black African ancestry. It is still living its era of the person of black African origin as ‘Negro’, an incomplete human being. We can take this (this second answer to the question posed in this thesis) as so: Mauritius is not the democracy that it promises to be. It looks more like a deathworld, a necroeconomy in which the ‘*Nasyon*’ have been forced to and into those conditions that render them exploitable toward their natural marginalisation from the Mauritian socio-political world, their socio-political status having been relegated to that of ‘living-dead’ enforced and reinforced through various decayed or corrupted systems of power in the country. These include parallel systems of governance (Freemasonry, for example), a coercive police force (that polices and drugs the ‘*Nasyon*’ to the margins of the country) and systemic discrimination in the education sector (that keeps persons of African ancestry out of schools such that they do not develop their thinking capabilities). The rest of this section looks at these.

We turn first to a key faction of parallel forms of governance in the form of the (not-so-) secret society of Freemasonry, running in the Mauritian (colonial and post-colonial) socio-political world and raised in the manner of the Masonic participants in this thesis included in Chapter

Three – a society that defies the contemporary emphasis of democracy on the principle of and need for transparency. Let us note, before going any further, that Freemasons do not have the best of reputations in the socio-political world in general. Albert Pike, for example, was a member of Freemasonry who is rumoured (at best) to have also helped in founding the white supremacist organisation of the Ku Klux Klan in the USA<sup>269</sup>. Cecil John Rhodes was another such member of Freemasonry, who claimed loud and clear the superiority of whiteness over the rest of the socio-political world, and by this reasoning justified his plans to conquer the entirety of African soil from Cape to Cairo (Van Waarden 2021: 2) by any means necessary. Although affiliated with NGOs in Mauritius and therefore appearing to will the good of the country especially in the manner of the betterment of the underprivileged, Mauritian Freemasons have been, since the dawn of Mauritian socio-political history, “closely linked to both the slave trade and its abolition as many traders were members of the freemason societies as well as of the Amis des Noirs” (MTJCa 2011: 101). Knowing the type of evil and clear double-mindedness that members of Freemasonry have been capable of around the world and in Africa especially, including Mauritius in its colonial era, what can possibly make us think that they are morally stable today, swayed toward good only this time around? Are we to blindly trust Freemasonry to perdure differently, democratically even, in the Mauritian socio-political world if the Masonic participants in this thesis told us that Freemasons operate in the shadows of the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister’s office, charities and banks, and so on and so forth, and there still is no meaningful socio-political change in sight for the ‘*Nasyon*’? If the direction of Freemasonry was good and towards good, should we not have seen this manifest too, through those political, NGO and banking offices that they control? Are we truly expecting this giraffe that has been Freemasonry to be capable of birthing a zebra?

Sophie Coignard (2009) raised the perfect warning about blindly trusting Freemasons, reminding us that although they do not have (or do not appear to have) enough influence on the socio-political world to be taken seriously, they have had enough of it in the past for us to remain careful about them today. And we certainly take note of this in the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, clear on the fact that the

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<sup>269</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/trump-angry-at-police-leniency-as-statue-of-albert-pike-who-had-alleged-links-to-klk-is-toppled-and-burned-12010996>;  
[https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fidelio\\_archive/1993/fidv02n02-1993Su/fidv02n02-1993Su\\_060-how\\_albert\\_pike\\_proved\\_himself\\_a-lar.pdf](https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/fidelio_archive/1993/fidv02n02-1993Su/fidv02n02-1993Su_060-how_albert_pike_proved_himself_a-lar.pdf).

way the country was governed before, through parallel systems of governance, might very well be the same today. Along these lines, we can also think of Mauritian Freemasons today as its post-colonial or neo-colonial elite<sup>270</sup>: if Freemasonry in Mauritius was first fixed by and during the time of colonialism and has always been overseen by some mega-lodge, mega-branch, somewhere in Europe, and if its members operate in the shadows of the most important offices in the country today, are we not looking at the possibility of colonialism continued, i.e., that the Mauritian socio-political world might still be under the heavy hand of its previous colonial masters who require of it absolute obedience to the rite or the table? Could it be that previous colonial masters only strategically placed agents on Mauritian soil to continue their work for them? Could we speak here of some sort of potentially insidious machination of infiltration of the Mauritian government by powers beyond Mauritius, beyond the era of colonialism? And was Gustave Le Bon (1895: xii) not hitting the nail right on the head when he declared: “Civilisations as yet have only been created and directed by a small intellectual aristocracy, never by crowds”. Are Freemasons not this intellectual aristocracy in Mauritius? They have certainly affirmed this in Chapter Three of this thesis, with Lily telling us that they operated in the shadows of the following sectors: “Law, police, education, import-export, tourism, politics, pharmaceuticals, car business, airport... whatever you need, wherever you go, there is someone somewhere...”<sup>271</sup>. Raj confirmed this:

You know the kinds of people we push to the top?

*Interviewer:* No. But I'd love to know.

*Raj:* Hint: the highest advisers of the moment.

*Interviewer:* I would think Ministry of Finance, Ministry of...Foreign Affairs, or even Prime Minister's Office. These would be the most impactful ministries of Mauritius. Well, the biggest...

*Raj:* You guessed right. All three<sup>272</sup>.

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<sup>270</sup> This is, if we can even speak of any such thing as true post-colonialism and therefrom, neo-colonialism rather than just continued colonialism under a different mask.

<sup>271</sup> Lily was interviewed for purposes of this thesis. She is a Freemason in Mauritius. See page 126 of this thesis.

<sup>272</sup> Raj was interviewed for purposes of this thesis. See page 134 of this thesis.

The “crowds” here have to do with the ‘*Nasyon*’, kept illiterate by way of an education system with an early and secondary school curriculum clearly reserved for and advancing the already privileged, the elite of Mauritius. The leaders of the Mauritian education system may excuse this as the result of the ‘*Nasyon*’ not having a sense of education as investment for the future or not liking the subjects that they are taught<sup>273</sup>, but the reality is that we can look at the schools that the ‘*Nasyon*’ attend and the conditions of their schooling to quickly explain their dissociation from the Mauritian education system: their classrooms are not fitted with usable desks and chairs<sup>274</sup>, and beyond the subjects that they are taught in Mauritian schools, which Didier reminded us to be French and English Literature<sup>275</sup>, the typical languages of early and secondary school instruction are English, French and some Asian languages<sup>276</sup>.

On the first point: we cannot expect children to be encouraged to go to school and pursue an education when everything about and around this education shows that there is no interest in them, no desire to encourage them, no need to cater to their comfort and basic necessities. The types of school that ‘*Nasyon*’ children would attend are crucial formative variables in their education<sup>277</sup>. We would also raise the point here of the ‘*Nasyon*’ being kept at the margins of the Mauritian socio-political world as far as being made and kept invisible in its education system too as if they did not exist<sup>278</sup> or that they exist but in translucence, as a non-event instead<sup>279</sup> – humans ignored and excluded by the Mauritian education system<sup>280</sup> or humans whose education is clearly not important in the country. Dominic magnified this exclusion when he raised the point of communalism (Bunwaree 2002: 4) or a conspiracy by the Hindus, with the designers of country’s institutions creating and maintaining these such that they exacerbated its socio-political divisions while eradicating the ‘*Nasyon*’ from it, which we see in the Mauritian education system<sup>281</sup>: “There is a conspiracy against the ‘*Nasyon*’ in Mauritius.

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<sup>273</sup> See interviews with school principals starting on page 146 of this thesis.

<sup>274</sup> See page 145 of this thesis.

<sup>275</sup> Didier was interviewed for purposes of this thesis. See page 145 of this thesis.

<sup>276</sup> <https://lexpress.mu/article/why-cant-we-introduce-bilingual-evaluation-system>.

<sup>277</sup> See Dempster (2013) and Chinapah (1983) on page 145 of this thesis.

<sup>278</sup> See William Miles’s expansion on this, on page 64 of this thesis.

<sup>279</sup> See page 56 of this thesis.

<sup>280</sup> See Jimmy Harmon’s expansion on this, on page 104 of this thesis.

<sup>281</sup> We also see the ‘Best Loser system’ being associated with communalism. This is a system of affirmative action that reserves seats in Mauritian parliament for the best losers of national elections. These best losers would be specifically from minority groups and the losers among these appear to be the ‘*Nasyon*’, kept at the farthest margins of the farthest margins of Mauritian politics. See Mathur (1997) “Parliamentary Representation of Minority Communities” for more.

The Hindus hate us. They don't want to see us do well”<sup>282</sup>. Jocelyn Grégoire, Dominic and Siva spoke about this as silent genocide<sup>283</sup>.

On the second point: the linguistic policies of the Mauritian schooling system clearly cater to the elite of the country, with school subjects and the languages that these are taught in being far from the ‘*Nasyon*’ since their mother tongue is Mauritian Creole or ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’. There have been two sets of responses to this. The first came about in 1998<sup>284</sup> as reforms proposed by supposed Mauritian nationalists and Africanists – politicians and proponents of equal access and opportunity for quality education – who recognised the typical use of English, French and Asian languages in Mauritian schools as exclusionary practice against those whose mother tongue was ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’. The solution then was to implement ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ as language of instruction as pedagogical tool for effective learning in Mauritian schools – an African language in an African education system; an African language for African children. To this end, nationalists worked toward the valorisation of ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ by establishing a harmonised Creole writing system (‘*lortograf Kreol Morisien*’)<sup>285</sup>, the production of a monolingual Creole dictionary (‘*Diksioner Morisien*’)<sup>286</sup>, and a Creole Speaking Union (‘*Akademi Kreol Morisien*’)<sup>287</sup> to look into the matter of the implementation of ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ in Mauritian schools. Two decades later<sup>288</sup> and we are yet to see meaningful reforms in the Mauritian schooling system that should cater to the integration of the ‘*Nasyon*’ therein, save for the implementation of ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ as an optional language subject at primary level in 2012 and secondary level in 2018, and an examinable optional language subject again at secondary level in 2021:

For recall, Kreol Morisien was introduced in primary schools in 2012. Much progress has been achieved since then. In 2017, 2480 pupils of Grade 6 completed the six-year of cycle of primary schooling and sat for the first PSAC assessment in Kreol Morisien, Following which, the subject was introduced at

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<sup>282</sup> Dominic was interviewed for purposes of this thesis. See page 157 of this thesis.

<sup>283</sup> See pages 101, 157, 184 of this thesis for more on the subject.

<sup>284</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/pt/304411468110074054/pdf/multi-page.pdf>.

<sup>285</sup>

<https://education.govmu.org/Documents/educationsector/Documents/Lortograf%20Kreol%20Morsien.pdf>.

<sup>286</sup> See Carpooran, A. (2009) *Diksioner Morisien*.

<sup>287</sup> <https://www.5plus.mu/actualite/lancement-de-lakademi-kreol-republik-moris-et-du-nouveau-diksioner-morsien-la-jeunesse-en>.

<sup>288</sup> This is, at the time of the writing of this thesis.

the lower secondary level in 2018. Three years later, in 2021, the subject has been offered at the First Edition of the National Certificate of Education assessment. Around 1200 students thus sat for the Kreol Morisien for this assessment<sup>289</sup>.

At first glance, the introduction of ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ as an optional language subject could stand for the Mauritian Government’s willingness to integrate the ‘*Nasyon*’ in the Mauritian schooling system. But the reality is that it is an offer to integrate them in one subject only. It is not their integration in the entire schooling system: the rest of their schooling would still be done in languages that they do not speak and understand. And the lack of meaningful reforms is exacerbated by the functionalist take on the matter of English being held as language of global prestige and usefulness specifically against ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’, which the Government has explained as good only for Mauritius<sup>290</sup>.

But it is the idea of anti-literary much less than illiteracy that we are to look at here, which is one way for the country’s elite to maintain itself as so. For, a literate ‘*Nasyon*’ socio-political category is a thinking one and therefore also a dangerous one because then capable of challenging and even bringing down said elite. It makes sense that they are thus marginalised from the Mauritian education system into some sort of rational ignorance, to passively ignore and thence accept the ‘*status quo*’, the existing state of the Mauritian socio-political order, its elite, and their own positionality therein. Anti-literacy, we must also bear in mind, makes for an obedient workforce or docile labour kept in service of the elite, prepared through the education system to be production power in the manner of being on the receiving end of a

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<sup>289</sup> Statement by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) on the implementation of ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ in Mauritian schools. Available at [https://education.govmu.org/Documents/AboutUs/statements%20speeches%202021/Kreol%20morisien\\_US\\_L\\_25\\_05\\_2021.pdf](https://education.govmu.org/Documents/AboutUs/statements%20speeches%202021/Kreol%20morisien_US_L_25_05_2021.pdf).

<sup>290</sup> See parliamentary response by Vasant Bunwaree, Minister of Education, Culture and Human Resources, on the matter of the implementation of ‘*Kreol Morisyen*’ in Mauritian schools. This was in 2009: “While it is true that we do not discourage the use of the Kreol language to facilitate understanding and learning, English is and remains the medium of instruction across the different sectors of the system and it is also a fact that the principle has always been to expose all our learners to other languages like English and French that make up for our comparative advantage at all levels. This is all the more true for Tertiary levels studies since our emerging professionals have to be in a position to participate in activities in a global context. Evolving a policy to use the Kreol language as a medium of instruction has several implications in terms of legal provisions, international recognition, parental consent, school curriculum and training of teachers. All these are under consideration” (<https://education.govmu.org/Pages/About%20Us/PQs%20Statement%20Inner%20Pages/Primary-Curriculum.aspx>).

lacklustre type of education, only having or being allowed access to imagining themselves in working class, menial positions in the Mauritian socio-political world, if not unemployed or unemployable without the capacity to question this. Here, we note that an illiterate crowd is the easiest to use and abuse and therefore, to be used and abused easily, must be kept illiterate. Alberto Manguel (1996: 281) said this on the subject: “As centuries of dictators have known, an illiterate crowd is the easiest to rule; since the craft of reading cannot be untaught once it has been acquired, the second best recourse is to limit its scope”. W.E.B. Du Bois (1903: 27) reminded us: “The South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent”. And Frederick Douglass told us as far back as 1845 (99): “I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. It is necessary to darken his moral and mental vision, and, as far as possible, to annihilate the power of reason. He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceased to be a man”.

The inhabitants of African Town, interviewed for purposes of this thesis, presented and confirmed this in their exclusion from the Mauritian education system leading to their hopelessness and incapacity to imagine a different socio-political positionality than that which they have held since the beginning of Mauritian socio-political history. Didier could not finish secondary school and could not imagine himself finishing secondary school, let alone going to university, because according to him there was nothing for him after that anyway. But as hopeless Didier was (or is), he could not in fact point to the cause, the source of this hopelessness. And if he had known of it, we must also remember that his people were (or are) severely policed, kept confined within African Town so that they would not venture thinking beyond, outside of it.

Elena told us about this intellectual confinement, perhaps unaware that she was in fact speaking about having been robbed of the quietness that would be necessary for her to begin thinking. She was constantly working – just like Michelle’s husband (a mason)<sup>291</sup> and Naomi (toilet cleaner at a central bus terminal)<sup>292</sup> –, which, of course, would have sapped her of the physical

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<sup>291</sup> See page 140 of this thesis for more.

<sup>292</sup> See page 158 of this thesis for more.

and intellectual reserves that she needed for this: “I work like a slave, I live like a slave, I am treated like a slave. A prisoner”<sup>293</sup>. Laurent added to this, speaking about prisoners having more freedom than the children of African Town<sup>294</sup>. Michelle let out that this was because the latter were being drugged by the police: “They come in vans... Just to scare us. We live in fear here [...] Police presence. Supposedly to prevent crime. They are the biggest criminals. They are the ones selling drugs to the children. And then they treat us like dogs in the street! No. They treat dogs better. When I hear the van, I take my children inside. We all run inside. Some are not afraid. But I am”<sup>295</sup>. Julien had raised this early on during a conversation with him, outing the police as the ones distributing drugs to the inhabitants of African Town: “Corrupt! Big traffickers themselves!”<sup>296</sup>. And Didier had admitted to buying drugs from a policeman since his early teenage years:

*Interviewer:* Who do you get your drugs from?

*Didier:* There is a guy in Chemin Grenier who sells it to us.

*Interviewer:* Is he a policeman?

*Didier:* Take a guess<sup>297</sup>.

We can take the distribution of drugs to speak to the weaponisation thereof as further tactic by Mauritian systems of power (the police, at the very least) to destroy the imagination of the ‘Nasyon’ – adults and children alike, and the younger the better. This was evident at the time of slavery in the USA, when slave owners allowed rituals of drunken rebellion during holidays to keep slaves from thinking about their condition as they finally had the time and the energy to do this, and numb to the idea of escaping this when they had had so much alcohol that it left them sick and thus the freedom that they had enjoyed during their holidays appeared worse than the abuse that they suffered at the hands of slave owners. Frederick Douglass (1845: 75-56) had described as so: “So, when the holidays ended, we staggered up from the filth of our wallowing, took a long breath, and marched to the field, – feeling, upon the whole, rather glad

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<sup>293</sup> Elena was interviewed for purposes of this thesis. See page 161 of this thesis.

<sup>294</sup> See page 163 of this thesis.

<sup>295</sup> Interview with Michelle. See page 121 of this thesis.

<sup>296</sup> Julien was interviewed for purposes of this thesis. See page 142 of this thesis.

<sup>297</sup> See page 173 of this thesis.

to go, from what our master had deceived us into a belief was freedom, back to the arms of slavery”. Pairing (perceived) freedom with physical sickness was, of course, classical conditioning (Pavlov 1927), which would leave slaves unwilling to pursue freedom in the long run. The same would go for the ‘*Nasyon*’, encouraged by the very police of Mauritius toward drug use that would leave them numb and/or sick<sup>298</sup> and thus incapable of thinking about their socio-political positionality in the country or wanting to change this.

And with this, we are left with the forced confinement of the ‘*Nasyon*’ as excess population within the most precarious of Mauritian spaces – centres of disease, poverty, and crime akin to camp-forms. Any camp-form at any moment in the history of the socio-political world in general, said Achille Mbembe and Libby Meintjes (2003: 39), is manner of confining excess populations away from core spaces, showing excess populations to be unwanted populations too, i.e., populations to discard and disregard, to keep at bay, to keep away from what is then the wanted population. Examples thereof around the world are the French ‘*banlieues*’, Brazilian ‘*favelas*’, and, of course, Mauritian ‘*cités*’ such as African Town. These are surveilled and militarised precarious spaces made government-controlled toward enforcing unto excess, unwanted populations, a “permanent condition of ‘being in pain’” (Mbembe & Meintjes 2003: 39), numb and in fear – because of the racialisation of the national security apparatus to target unwanted populations and the hierarchisation of the organisation of the socio-political world bent toward marginalising them. This is enhanced by the establishment of complete dependency upon Government, which the ‘*Nasyon*’ are even set up to be grateful for. This unfolds in the manner of their being denied the security of a family and community as their houses (their homes) would be destroyed by the police<sup>299</sup> and then sanctioned to be rebuilt (to be sold back to them) under government control as if a favour to the ‘*Nasyon*’, although never (fully or properly) delivered<sup>300</sup>. Their scope of action would extend only as far as their being on the receiving end of a government making of them a dispersed, disunited “crowd”. And such a “crowd” would then not be able to communicate, think, organise, and plan their rebellion against their oppressor(s). This would be “social control” (Green 2015).

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<sup>298</sup> See conversation with Didier on page 172 of this thesis.

<sup>299</sup> See Michelle on page 120 and Melody on page 158 of this thesis. In interviews with them, they spoke about the Special Mobile Force of Mauritius being ordered by Government to destroy their houses in African Town.

<sup>300</sup> See conversation with Elena on page 161 of this thesis, in which she spoke about forced removals by the Mauritian Government and the Special Mobile Force of Mauritius destroying the shacks in African Town.

This would read as the purposeful destruction of the imagination of the ‘*Nasyon*’ through systemic anti-literacy, social control, and government control, where “[knowledge is both foundational and fundamental to any attempt at imagining a future that is fundamentally different from the present. Thus, a people without their own ways of knowing are a people without both a history and a future of their own making” (Ndlovu 2018: 95). And this runs the latitudes of coloniality and the colonisation of the mind (or the colonised mind) as a powerful and necessary part of the colonial structure, which endured past colonialism and past the (political) decolonisation of the African continent. Morgan Ndlovu (2018: 96-97) explained this as so:

As a point of departure, I would like to characterize coloniality in terms of a structure of colonialisms. This structure of colonialisms is both prescriptive and performative. In its prescriptive form, coloniality denies the possibility of change that is desired by an anti-systemic agency. In its performative manifestation, the power structure of coloniality is susceptible to transformation and re-arrangement but not total destruction and collapse. Thus, it is through the process of transformation and rearrangement that the power structure of coloniality can evade those fundamental changes that are desired by anti-systemic movements. This is how coloniality managed to survive the end – because the collapse of colonialism was simply a performative episode within a prescriptive continuous historical structure of coloniality.

As so, although colonialism was politically brought to a halt, the mind, the psyche of persons of black African ancestry who had been colonised was not decolonised despite the supposed (political) decolonisation of the systems put in place during colonialism in Africa, unfolding as systemic anti-literacy, social control, and government control too, to control the mind(s) of the colonised so as to maintain and sustain colonialism without challenge and interference even when colonisers left Africa. In other words, colonial systems of power remained after colonialism. We take this to be the fact of coloniality today: “Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-

image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243). This applies to Mauritius, geared to promote the elite and to keep the ‘*Nasyon*’ an incomplete, unthinking, thoughtless, hopeless, imagination-less people<sup>301</sup>.

We can push this further by arguing that observers of the Mauritian socio-political world are as imagination-less as the ‘*Nasyon*’, so far colonised in their psyche, so far destroyed in their imagination, that they cannot even point to this, which shows by way of their having been profoundly influenced by the West to explain and expose the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ marginalisation from the Mauritian socio-political world strictly as a manifestation, proof of broken or failing or failed democracy. We are speaking here about Eurocentric scholarship used to explain an

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<sup>301</sup> It is important to add to this the fact of my own incompleteness, the liquidness of my own being, manifested and manifesting throughout this study and especially so during the ethnographic part thereof. Before my encounter with the first respondent/interviewee in this study, Michelle, I had already stood at a privileged socio-political positionality in the world: I was a university student pursuing a fourth degree, a lecturer, a poet, a citizen of Mauritius fixed within the Indo-Mauritian socio-political category, an alumna of a Mauritian Star School, the recipient of various awards and bursaries since primary school, and so on and so forth. I was one of ‘us’, one of the ‘good ones’ with the ‘good hair’ and the ‘good skin’ and the good school, speaking French and living at the foot of a Mauritian mountain that stretched into a turquoise lagoon. And it did not matter all the troubles that I had had to face in life – personal and professional ailments. It also did not matter that I am certainly not ‘Indo-Mauritian’: my very dark-skinned mother’s hazel and grey eyes, and my pale, brown-eyed father who comes from a family of green-eyed people, and our being born in a socio-political world with a complex history of migration from Africa (which is how I explain my grandfather’s black African resilience) and elsewhere in the world, would make me anything but biologically and historically ‘Indo-Mauritian’. No Mauritian can claim any form of biological purity (and there are only a few of us to have children with on the island, making our gene pool incredibly small and certainly mixed). In any case, I was an ‘insider’ in Mauritius – solidly politically ‘Indo-Mauritian’. I carried this with me everywhere else in the world, always existing as one of ‘us’ with any ‘us’ that I came to encounter. I felt it. And I never had to think about it. I never feared losing it. I had looked at the ‘*Nasyon*’ as we do those friends that we do not want to hang out with. They were the ‘outsider’ – subjects of my study, an anomaly in the reality of ‘us’ who were living a good life, and not people that I could spend the rest of my life with. Now, I am sure to NOT be racist, but I cannot ignore that the ‘*Nasyon*’ and I live two very different realities although we are five minutes away from each other and everything about us overlaps, and that I do not want to live as they do – there was a part of me that felt lucky to have been born ‘elsewhere’, outside the ‘*Nasyon*’ socio-political category. But as I made my way into African Town as a PhD candidate writing this thesis on the ‘*Nasyon*’, my privileged positionality showed fiercely and it was also shaken around a little. In African Town and when faced with the ‘*Nasyon*’, I moved from being an ‘us’ in the Mauritian socio-political world to being ‘one of them’, the ‘other’ – an outsider of African Town. I did not belong. The ‘*Nasyon*’ there reminded me of this by calling me “Miss” or “Frenchy”. The terms did not sit well with me. They ignored my ‘lack of privilege’ – the work that I had been putting in to be where I was in the world. They also made me feel as if I was betraying them because I was privileged. Or is it that I felt like I had betrayed them by blindly accepting my privilege in the Mauritian socio-political world, which came at the cost of their lives? Or is that I thought, like the great grandchildren of colonisers in Africa, that “It isn’t my fault that you are without privilege. You cannot blame me for what my great grandparents did”. My socio-political positionality moved as so: I was sometimes an ‘us’, and sometimes an ‘other’ – depending on who was in front of me, depending on what was in front of me (Indo-Mauritian privilege or ‘*Nasyon*’ marginalisation). It was clear during my study on the ‘*Nasyon*’ that the point that I was making about incompleteness being the state of all parts of the universe was correct. I was experiencing it as I studied it. And it baffled me that the singular story of the ‘*Nasyon*’ went against this reality, speaking of them as with a solid socio-political positionality of victimhood within the framework of slavery.

African people in Africa, which those observers have been trained in and trained to do, blind, bold and cold in approaching the matter in no other manner than that. But what the points of parallel forms of governance, a coercive police force and systemic anti-literacy show us is that Mauritius never was a democracy in the first place. It does not run differently from its colonial predecessor, and all those things that were engineered to marginalise or to keep the ‘*Nasyon*’ away from the Mauritian socio-political world during the colonial era are still very much in place in the country. And this includes the education that its observers receive that keeps them blind to this, even if, in appearance, they would be more literate and given a better type of education than the ‘*Nasyon*’. As so, we are really looking at a socio-political world where there never was or never was successful the type of political transition that was imagined having happened in 1968 (Mauritian Independence). We are looking at an incomplete democracy.

We are left with modes of action ( $x$ ) that run the latitudes of a singular story about the ‘*Nasyon*’ as solidly lesser than human or non-human even, which took root in the science of the colonial era fuelled by Christianity and continues today in spaces of public commemoration reinforced by way of the Law in complicity with the Media. The ethnographic analysis confirmed this, exposing parallel systems of governance, a coercive police force and systemic discrimination in the education sector as points of social control, government control and systemic anti-literacy actively solidifying the continued dehumanisation of the ‘*Nasyon*’ toward the denial of their citizenship in or belonging to an obviously incomplete Mauritian democracy. Anthony Bogues would say here: “Racial slavery is gone, but social structures and aspects of everyday life from that time period still shape people’s lives”<sup>302</sup>. With this, the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power reads as it were the consequence of their incompleteness as this was brought about by modes of action ( $x$ ) solidly external to them, i.e., as it were the consequence of their being made incomplete by forces strictly outside of them, beyond their control.

### **The Unfinished Business of Being**

This section of Chapter Four: Critical Analysis accepts that modes of action ( $x$ ) cause the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness, which, in turn would give rise to ( $y$ ). It also accepts that this would be a case of socio-political injustice beseeching political undoing, assistance and solidarity

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<sup>302</sup> <https://www.brown.edu/news/2019-12-03/slavetrade>.

toward the correction thereof<sup>303</sup>. But this section also moves away from requiring our indignation on the matter of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness, which has shown in the past and in other cases, including the #BlackLivesMatter and the #RhodesMustFall movements, as the quest for cosmic justice leading to violent protests and exclusionary practices with little or no meaningful socio-political changes. This is because it rejects the solid externality that the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power presents, and the possibility of doing away with the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness as it is implied here. This is considering the existing data on incompleteness (expanded on in Chapter Two of this thesis), which shows that this is inherent to all parts of our universe, including the ‘*Nasyon*’, and therefore, is inescapable. In other words, the argument here is that the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness is internal before being anything else or coming from anywhere else. Their incompleteness is a case of the liquidness of being in a liquid universe. This is a fact of the African socio-political world that the ‘*Nasyon*’ exist in as much as it is a fact of every other part of our entire universe. And no amount of undoing the (external) modes of action (*x*) that give rise to their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*) will make them solid, i.e., internally, permanently complete, i.e., complete enough to access political power in Mauritius – although they could clothe themselves with the right ‘*juju*’ to appear complete for a while, to have access to this. And the invitation here is to take from African spirituality toward a, localised, gentle, nuanced, more convivial understanding of the incompleteness of the ‘*Nasyon*’ within this liquid universe. With this, a way forward is proposed that runs the latitudes of Francis Nyamnjoh’s (2017b) gentle acceptance of incompleteness as normal, and consequently of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ incompleteness as normal, for a convivial turn away from prior observations on the matter.

Although plural and varied in its manifestations, African spirituality’s acknowledgement of the mundane throughout the continent is singular. And it is as so that we would read it. Illness, for example, is not just ailment at the physical level of existence. It screams of ailment at the emotional level too, if not ailment beyond the human being or human life itself (at the level of the divine, where one would have angered the gods, for example) – and this is the way it unfolds across the continent. African spirituality explains everything – from politics to economics to life to death to relationships to sex trafficking to natural disasters – making those connections between the natural and the hyper-sensible that then make space for a unitive appreciation of

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<sup>303</sup> As it did in the manner of activism toward the abolition of the enslavement of persons of black African ancestry around the world, bringing about equality for women, and challenging to take down dictators, among other issues.

the totality of human experiences in the African socio-political world within the larger cosmos, or conviviality between the seen and the far away forces at play (or imagined at play) in human life in general. It is a holistic, wholesome approach to the African socio-political world, offering a sustained, rich and enriched system of meaning-making that stands as repository of African wisdom, African knowledge and African History – a universe “of infinite possibilities where nothing is ever complete, and where to seek or claim completeness is to ignore, to one’s peril, the reality of incompleteness as the normal order of things” (Nyamnjoh 2015: 2). The eye that can see this will see it. Those who believe in it will have in hand a philosophy of African life and causality that Eurocentric scholarship cannot provide.

This African realm or that space from which African spirituality blossoms is the context that Amos Tutuola had a great, first-hand grasp of, which provides “popular ontological insights that could contribute significantly to the reconstruction of a decolonised social science” (Nyamnjoh 2015: 1), a decolonised reading of African matters – an African take on African matters. And African spirituality is important to bring up here because this is the only way, not only the best way, to read the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius – because doing so from any other space on the planet, through any other type of scholarship, would diminish it, limit its true potential and hide the reality behind it, the truth of it. It has also already shown dangerous, pushing for the violent type of activism such as the riots and mayhem that followed the death of Afro-Mauritian singer, Kaya, in police custody in 1999, which ultimately would have resulted in nothing but the further soiling of the reputation in Mauritius of Afro-Mauritians and therefore, automatically leading to their further marginalisation in the country as they were the violent type – a characteristic pinned unto blackness since the colonial era in Africa. The African context is one without which the other two approaches (historiography and ethnography) taken here – or any other for that matter – to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius can only provide superficial, disconnected answers to, at best, answers to be understood by the West only. And in a powerful way, this is the context that “challenges a social science founded narrowly on dichotomies, dualisms and bounded identities” (Nyamnjoh 2015: 1), a social science that has until now not been able to translate the matter of the ‘*Nasyon*’.

We go back to Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) here, deeper into the context of African spirituality, from which he drew on Yoruba folklore to tell us the story of the

“‘complete’ gentleman”, a skull first, that borrows body parts and clothing on his way to the village market, to eventually stand out as the most handsome and the best dressed man there – the perfect, “‘complete’ gentleman” –, bewitching a young lady who decides to pursue him to his cave as he goes back to it. He warns her not to follow him, but she does not listen. On the way back to the cave, he returns the body parts and clothing to their rightful owners, to the horror of the lady who finds herself too far on the path to the cave to turn back. She is petrified; the trickster is revealed, a “curious creature” by nature (Tutuola 1952: 17) until transformed into a “‘complete’ gentleman” (Tutuola 1952: 17) when “[...] all the parts of his body were completed” and if he had “been an article or an animal for sale, he would be sold at least for £2000 (two thousand pounds)” (Tutuola 1952: 18). As for us, we can only fall from here just as Alice would in Wonderland (Carroll 1864), down a long and chaotic path to a sort of land of nonsense, only, for everything that she would have typically fixed as nonsense, to make sense, and for everything that she would or could have been assured to make sense, to lose it, to become nonsense. A trip! Not to Wonderland, but into the purely African realm – a space, a reality, a spirituality untainted by Eurocentric scholarship and unmoved by it, where invisible, supernatural, hyper-sensible forces are trusted and are experienced as enmeshed, entangled with, and influencing the physical world, our socio-political world.

In this context, there always is the space and potential to expect and understand that which is not said or not seen but nevertheless exists; that which is woven in the very fabric of life in Africa, and from which are two things to take. The first is the obvious lesson, the clear warning, to not let emotions and/or wishful thinking guide us in our observations of the socio-political world to the point that we blindly follow and support that which claims or appears perfect or complete, as the lady does with the seemingly perfect, “‘complete’ gentleman”, because we too can end up petrified, in situations unwanted, in caves unknown, in forests far away, in scholarship removed from reality, in protests unnecessarily violent and conversations that will not help make things better. This is a warning against what Nyamnjoh (2015: 3) called “the extravagant illusion of completeness”. The second is that nowhere in the African context that Tutuola brings to us is completeness possible, and at no point is completeness claimed therein as permanent, as shows the skull appearing as gentleman turned skull again with the capacity to do this without end, at will. What we are looking at here is the anti-Eurocentric, pro-African fact of the unfinished business of being – the impossible business of being complete in permanence, and the possible business of being complete temporarily if and when with *‘juju’*

– or the magical appropriation of things that do not belong with and to us in the first place, which we pick and choose for ourselves that help us transform, shapeshift, for a little while, into what or who we would like to be or look like, just as the skull.

Holding on to this warning by Nyamnjoh and the fact of incompleteness as the normal order of things until the employ of ‘*juju*’ as temporary remedy thereto, we cannot but take from the historiographic and ethnographic approaches to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius that accessing political power would be possible with the employ of the right type of voice that carries the right type of stories into the socio-political world to keep some in power and others far from this. This is a story with striking parallels with Hergé’s (2010) *Tintin in the Congo*. In this story, Tintin encountered the Babaoru’s socio-political category and tamed a lion that had scared off its warriors, threatening the local witch-doctor’s claim to spiritual authority. For, Tintin tamed, without witchcraft, a lion that the witch-doctor had not been able to, with witchcraft. The witch-doctor then devised a plan to restore his reputation, using the right type of voice to carry the right type of story to turn the Babaoru’s against Tintin. Now, the witch-doctor already had the right type of voice for this because with long-standing authority stemming from his practice as witch-doctor, and he only had to add to this the right type of story to get there, accusing Tintin of defiling the Babaoru’s fetish. The Babaoru’s believed him; Tintin was eventually captured and given the death sentence (Hergé 2010). The witch-doctor was unchallengeable and believable, and Tintin, quickly blackballed.

This is the ‘*juju*’ that would be activated in Mauritius, with the right type of voice carrying the right type of stories into the Mauritian socio-political world to keep white Europeans (colonial masters) and Indo-Mauritians in those spaces where political power lies and to keep the ‘*Nasyon*’ away from this – without challenge or with the least challenge possible. For centuries, white Europeans built and maintained the story of their being pure, godly, enlightened, fully human and only seeking to save those who were not (yet). This ran alongside the story that their science fuelled by Christianity fixed against persons of black African ancestry, i.e., that the latter would be primitive beings, without spirituality, without thought capacity and so on and so forth – lesser humans, if human at all. This story perdured in Mauritius for centuries. Later, Indo-Mauritians went about robbing themselves in god-like characteristics, throwing at the Mauritian socio-political world stories of their being the success story of torturous migration, where indentured labourers under colonial control moved to becoming the very

harbingers of political freedom in Mauritius or incomplete humans who made themselves complete enough to eventually sit at the head of Mauritian politics. Against this, the story would be and remains told in a singular manner about the ‘*Nasyon*’ as ‘Negroes’, non-humans, perpetual victims or perpetrators, sufferers of ‘*le malaise créole*’ – permanently incomplete human beings. Here, we see white Europeans and Indo-Mauritians speaking of themselves as better than the ‘*Nasyon*’, automatically making their own voice the right type in the country, and consequently carrying into the Mauritian socio-political world the right type of stories that would and should give them sustained access to political power while persistently keeping the ‘*Nasyon*’ far from this.

But there is another type of ‘*juju*’ that would be activated in the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, which has to do with white Europeans and Indo-Mauritians appropriating and activating over their selves the right type of clothes or qualities and potencies for the positionality that they would claim. To go back to *Tintin in the Congo*, we can think of this as the witch-doctor speaking of himself as better than Tintin but also actualising this in the physical world. We can read this along the lines of Amos Tutuola’s *Palm-Wine Drinkard*, wherein beings of all sorts would arm themselves with those things that eventually made them stand as unordinary, exceptional, flawless, hyper-capable, perfect in the physical world – solidly, permanently complete. The skull in Tutuola’s story is certainly one such being, just like white Europeans and Indo-Mauritians armed themselves with qualities and potencies that were external to them that made them stand as if solidly, permanently complete in their humanness. This included their own access to quality education and the exercise of absolute authority through and from parallel forms of governance, for example, which gave them a naturally higher and better socio-political positionality than everyone else, i.e., now the ‘other’, in the Mauritian socio-political world. This would be their upper hand in claiming the right to political power in Mauritius, violently against the ‘*Nasyon*’ who would be fixed without those qualities and potencies and automatically sent far away from the Mauritian socio-political world, to the deathworld. This is to say that the ‘*Nasyon*’ would be forced into the Mauritian necroeconomy, which we read as the production of death in large scale but in small doses, death delivered in small doses, small massacres unfolding in the manner of “unbounded social, economic, and symbolic violence” (Mbembe & Meintjes 2003: 39) resulting in the slow and casual destruction of the bodies of individuals in and of excess populations as well as the diminishing to naught the value of their socio-political existence – the value of their lives.

Those small doses of death, we can see, would happen in the manner of the constant, daily, public humiliation and denigration of, as well as the denial of basic goods and services including sanitation and housing in the Mauritian deathworld to the '*Nasyon*'.

What is of note at this point and is particularly important in the reading of the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, is the larger fact of the constant possibility of the appropriation and loss of '*juju*', which speaks to this not being internal, intrinsic to anyone and therefore, when appropriated, is also with the potential to be lost. It is not permanent. Again, Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* comes to mind, bringing to the fore *The King of Smelling Ghosts* who transformed the narrator of this story from a camel to a horse and so on and so forth: "After he changed me to a person then he went away to take the reins which he would put into my mouth when he changed me to a horse, but as soon as he went away I saw where he hid the juju which he was using to change me to any animal or creature that he likes, so I took it and put it into my pocket so that he might not change me to anything again" (Tutuola: 26). The same sort of loss of '*juju*' can be observed in Mauritius, from which we can assert that nothing and no one therein was, is and will ever be solid, complete, perfect, completed, perfected: the end of slavery, the de-colonisation of Mauritius, the democratisation thereof, the Indo-Mauritian elite promising equality to all in the country, its Media, its justice system, NGOs and Freemasons' charitable works in the country, its education system, and so on and so forth...

The mere possibility of a Mauritian transition from colonialism to democracy should get us to understand this incompleteness, i.e., that no political era is ever complete, that no socio-political category is ever finished, that no socio-political hierarchy is ever stagnant, but that socio-political values and demands are ever-evolving instead. The Dutch took a rain check on their political hold on the country. The French lost it to the English. The English gave it to Indo-Mauritians who have sat at the highest ranks of the island's political system since its independence in 1968, still, claiming allegiance to India while winning African trophies (be they in sports or business or politics). Enslaved persons from Africa were freed, set up activist organisations, moved to the socio-political category of General Population amongst whom are also white Europeans who were relegated to the single sub-category of plantation-owning Franco-Mauritians even if they have or had no connection to France or to plantations. Sino-Mauritians, once small shop owners during the colonial era, are amongst the most successful

businessmen of Mauritius today. We can add to this that the science of the colonial era moving to the type that accepts black persons as humans, and Christianity slowly but surely moving from blue-eyed and blonde-haired Jesus to the very black version thereof should convince us of this incompleteness or the permanent liquidness of our selves in a permanently liquid socio-political world in a permanently liquid universe. This is the unfinished business of being – the impossible business of being complete in permanence.

With '*juju*'s we might stand as complete, but only for a while. For, as soon as this is lost, we lose our completeness too. In this sense, we can all stand complete – as long as we can arm ourselves with '*juju*'. Importantly, there is always the potential for better '*juju*' to come along, to be appropriated and challenge another. Again, the case can be made here, with Indo-Mauritians using their better '*juju*' to oust colonisers from political power in Mauritius and replace them. And if the '*Nasyon*' have not accessed political power in Mauritius, it is not because they are not complete in their humanness but because they are simply without '*juju*' and without better '*juju*' than those already in power. They have not yet presented the Mauritian socio-political world with any '*juju*' better than that of those already in power. They have not yet challenged those who have shown to have better '*juju*' than them. We read here the non-activation of '*juju*' by the '*Nasyon*'. This, we can take, is the larger answer to the question posed here: What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)? As fair warning: those without '*juju*' can arm themselves with it at any point in history, as did Indo-Mauritians, and we can expect the '*Nasyon*' to arm themselves with '*juju*' one day. They too live out the unfinished business of being, and so their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius must be taken to be temporary: dissociated from Mauritian political power one day, kings thereof the next, as much as kings of the Mauritian socio-political world one day, dissociated from it the next. Dominic had told us about this: "For now, we are asleep. But one day, we'll wake up. One day, the soil will rise"<sup>304</sup>. And Ambroise sealed the liquidness implied here as so: "When the island sinks, we will all sink with it. Nobody will be superior to another then"<sup>305</sup>.

We can make a note here of the type of '*juju*' that the '*Nasyon*' might want to or could employ and exploit in the future, which should move them to being the kings of Mauritius one day, i.e.,

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<sup>304</sup> See page 157 of this thesis.

<sup>305</sup> See page 187 of this thesis.

to argue current Mauritian leaders out of their seats. This is the fact of their autochthony in Mauritius, or their being Mauritian autochthons<sup>306</sup> – their dangerously real belonging to the country, which materialises bio-politically and emotionally against every other socio-political category in Mauritius, and especially against Indo-Mauritians. Michaela Pelican (2009: 54) explains autochthony as equivalent to being “native and son or daughter of the soil, coupled with the negative opposites stranger and migrant”, i.e., being allochthon. Quoting Alec Leonhardt in his reading of autochthony and citizenship, Pelican (2009: 61) added that there are two typologies of autochthony: “One is symbolic and refers to what I have called “indigeneity”. The other is substantive; it derives from a people's intimate relationship with the soil and entails special rights conferred by the state”. The substantive type of autochthony does not require indigeneity and refers to the intimate relationship or spiritual bond between socio-political groups and “the soil” (Geschiere 2009; Nyamnjoh 2007; Pelican 2009). Both typologies are based on “ideas of priority in time (first coming)” (Pelican 2009: 54) as sure promise of the right to political power to autochthons, the unchallengeable passport to political power in today’s world (Geschiere 2009; Nyamnjoh 2007; Pelican 2009).

We have seen this promise materialise in parts of Africa and Europe, where autochthony has been discursively exploited in processes of right and access to political power and also in the processes of political inclusion and exclusion of parts of populations, which Peter Geschiere and Francis Nyamnjoh (2000) take as “discourses of autochthony” or “the politics of belonging” (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000), relating to Martin Heidegger’s ‘*Bodenständigkeit*’ and contemporary French constructions of ‘*autochtonie*’<sup>307</sup> (Geschiere 2009: 2, 26; Pelican 2009; Geschiere 2009; Nyamnjoh 2007):

The west African savannah region of the Black Volta, for instance, has a long history leading back into pre-colonial times of contested land rights based on first-comer claims among various ethnic groups. These groups apparently agree that first-comer claims provide a legitimate framework in which to negotiate various forms of land rights [...]. Europe has also recently witnessed a noticeable expansion of autochthony discourses. Against the background of accelerated

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<sup>306</sup> See William Miles (1999: 219) who supported the idea that Mauritius belongs to Afro-Mauritians: “Creoles regard themselves as the only genuine Mauritians”. This is on page 64 of this thesis.

<sup>307</sup> Rapport du Ministère de L’Intérieur. (Janvier 2014) *Politique D’Immigration: Bilan et Perspectives*. République de France.

immigration and globalization, the political right has increasingly evoked a rhetoric of autochthonous exclusion in countries such as Denmark, the UK, Austria, Italy, France, the Netherlands and Belgium (Zenker 2011: 69).

The *'Nasyon'* could employ the same discourses, i.e., those of autochthony. Their belonging to Mauritius more than anybody else there runs along their being biologically Africans on African soil (Mauritian soil): they are the only ones in Mauritius who can claim DNA that is the closest or the more closely related to Africa and to Africanness while the very term *'Nasyon'* is synonymous to persons of black African Ancestry. They are recognised as so. They recognise themselves as so. Their belonging to African soil is also politically unceasing, with colonisers having moved them from one part of Africa to another (Mauritius), making them doubly Africans on African soil. We can think of the *'Nasyon'* as Afro-Mauritians and, accordingly (as redundant as it is), as Afro-Africans on Mauritian soil or Afro-Mauritians on African soil or Afro-Africans on African soil. There is no other socio-political category in Mauritius that can claim or claims a political connection to Africa and to Mauritius as the *'Nasyon'* do or can. Indo-Mauritians, for instance, speak loudly about their not belonging to Mauritius, with the prefix *'Indo'* attached to their Mauritianness that asserts their allegiance to India instead. Then, there is the emotional aspect that reinforces the *'Nasyon's'* belonging to Mauritius, which we can take from the conversation with Siva who said: "They don't want us here. They don't want us there. They don't want us anywhere. That's our soil. The soil of Jah! The soil of his sons. We are not making it hard for others to live here, on our soil. Why are they torturing us? It's genocide. They will eradicate us from our soil one day, I promise you"<sup>308</sup>. The tone here is tenderly numb and nostalgic, running through emotional geographies where the *'Nasyon'* locate themselves in Mauritius, where Mauritius is their home. They are the sons and daughters of Mauritian soil, making them the most powerful claimants to political power there.

The *'Nasyon'* could take on their autochthony, wear it, and run with it to the seat of political power in Mauritius at any moment, moving from being incomplete to being temporarily complete, and starting with this the process of political inclusion and exclusion that would see Indo-Mauritians thrown out of politics as persons who do not belong to the country – incomplete citizens thereof. But that we seem to get lost in the details of the *'Nasyon's'* persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, skipping over the fact of the

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<sup>308</sup> See page 178 for this conversation with Siva.

incompleteness that runs through this is nothing to be surprised about since the colonial project was to colonise the imagination of all that were subject to it such that all of this became invisible to us. From here, we can also speak about the uselessness and senselessness – the incompleteness – of observers and observations of, and activists and activism that have to do with, the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius that are so bent on speaking and fighting about and against a broken or failed or failing Mauritian democracy to fix, for example – because there is no such democracy to begin with; because the matter at hand has nothing to do with democracy but is about incompleteness instead.

As so, we should not and cannot expect that the ‘*Nasyon*’ grow complete, into a better socio-political positionality than that of their persisting dissociation from political power in an incomplete Mauritius simply because we demand it or want this for them, and because once in a while, we write against it or protest about it, in the same manner that we cannot expect an apple tree to bear an orange because we demand that it be so, and for the same reason that we cannot beat a giraffe for not birthing a zebra. A different approach to the subject of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, something that we can work with, is necessary and this takes us to the point of incompleteness as a fact of the Mauritian socio-political world, from which we must understand that we cannot beat incompleteness for not birthing completeness there; we cannot beat completeness out of incompleteness as much as we cannot beat a giraffe for not birthing a zebra or beat a zebra out of a giraffe; because a giraffe not birthing a zebra is not a problem; because a giraffe not birthing a zebra is the most natural of things; because we should not beat anything out of a giraffe in the first place; because beating a giraffe leads to nothing good, nothing useful, nothing productive. It is beating a giraffe, only, simply, and nothing else. And this thesis will not add to this. It will not beat any giraffe. It will not want, seek, suggest, expect, or demand change toward completeness for the ‘*Nasyon*’ à la #RhodesMustFall and #BlackLivesMatter because this entails demanding completeness where completeness is impossible, where it does not exist, i.e., in a permanently liquid universe.

It is once we understand and accept this impermanence, the permanent incompleteness in and of everything and everyone, which the historiographic and ethnographic approaches to the ‘*Nasyon*’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius brought to us, that the space can be created toward what Francis Nyamnjoh (2002: 111-112) calls “conviviality” or

“different or competing agentive forces which need a negotiated understanding” privileging “the spirit of togetherness, interpenetration, interdependence and intersubjectivity” instead of a spirit of senseless activism and disconnected scholarship that keep us apart. Nyamnjoh’s (2017b: 1) sense of conviviality “invites us to celebrate and preserve incompleteness and mitigate the delusions of grandeur that come with ambitions and claims of completeness. Conviviality encourages frontier Africans to reach out, encounter and explore ways of enhancing or complementing themselves with the added possibilities of potency brought their way by the incompleteness of others, never as a ploy to becoming complete, but to make them more efficacious in their relationships and sociality”. This, according to him (2017b: 3) and which we can only agree with here, is the way to “point the wider world in the direction of alternative and complementary modes of influence over and above the current predominant mode of coercive violence and control”.

## **Conclusion**

What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)? The answers thereto came by way of historiographic and ethnographic approaches as the singular story told about the ‘*Nasyon*’ as non-humans and the consequent, now justified, active denial thereof as non-citizens – or permanently incomplete human beings fixed as so from the colonial and throughout the democratic era in Mauritius. These answers, although making sense for the rest of the world, the Western world in particular, were deemed not enough, not good enough (incomplete, if we were to be exact) to explain the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’ because they do not take into account the fact that this would unfold in Africa and therefore required an African understanding thereof from the African context, i.e., a physical reality enmeshed with the supernatural, the hyper-sensible, those forces at play on the continent, those African elements that we do not see and that Eurocentric scholarship does not include in its reading of the continent.

From this context, a larger answer was brought forward that consolidated the first two, but also made them almost inconsequential to the reading of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, and which we read as manifestation of incompleteness as the normal order of things, and the related fact of ‘*juju*’ and the activation thereof as necessary toward achieving or reaching temporary completeness in the Mauritian socio-political world. This answer came with the fair warning that permanent completeness is impossible for us, that

attempts to get there or to fight for us or for others to get there are vain, senseless, and that those who may stand complete in the Mauritian socio-political world do not and will not remain so forever, as much as the '*Nasyon*' will not stand incomplete (only, in appearance) once or if they exercise the right '*juju*' to get there. As importantly, the fact of incompleteness comes with a gentle reminder that, if all are incomplete, since all are incomplete in the Mauritian socio-political world, and if we understand and accept this as the normal order of things, anything and everything that would have previously been contentious matter in the country – everything that would have been separating peoples, holding some as superior, marginalising others, leading many to protest – falls away, as simply as that, opening up the space for conviviality amongst all there.

## CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL CONCLUSION

Mauritius has stood as the democratic rainbow nation that no other in Africa has equalled or achieved – a first, supposedly, complete in its transition from colonialism to democracy. But cracks in this completeness have shown over time, which have been met with shock by the Mauritian population running to the streets to demand that the rainbow nation be restored to perfection, and observers of the Mauritian socio-political world taking to their pens to express their disappointment at the Mauritian Government for failing to keep its supposed rainbow nation intact. There is trouble in paradise, which is said and believed to show in the unequal power distribution among the various socio-political categories and the suppression of their civil and human rights, especially in reference to persons of black African ancestry in the country, the ‘*Nasyon*’. The ‘*Nasyon*’ are affirmed at the bottom rungs of a supposedly communalist Mauritian socio-political hierarchy just like their enslaved ancestors in colonial times, a people who have suffered their persisting dissociation from political power in the country. Their story was the focus of this thesis.

The story of the ‘*Nasyon*’ departed, for purposes of this thesis, from the following question: What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)? A research framework was fixed along this, which asked first for a turning back to the past in the manner of historiography, where intellectual interest did not rest in the past itself but in what it said or could say about the ‘*Nasyon*’. The task here was of sense-making, the operational draw of which was in the treatment of the past as a place of memory – a map along which to find and follow the story of the ‘*Nasyon*’. Primary archives were sought and analysed to this end, that grazed the walls of public repositories in Mauritius, whose collections stood, for and in Mauritius at least, as if “true testimony of the historical and cultural wealth and diversity of the country, in a stunning layout”<sup>309</sup>. This first approach to the question of ‘What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)?’ led us to a first set of (*x*), which ran the latitudes of a hierarchy of humanness at the very bottom of which were the ‘*Nasyon*’, fixed as permanently incomplete humans, if human at all. This hierarchy was possible because of a cyclically self-fulfilling singular story that rested on the science of the colonial era fuelled by Christianity, and that was perpetuated over centuries by scholars, politicians, journalists and

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<sup>309</sup> <https://www.bluepennymuseum.com/About/Overview.html>.

other observers of the Mauritian socio-political world and would be reinforced by the Law and the Media in the country. The point was straightforward here: permanently incomplete humans certainly stand little chance, if any at all, of claiming political power in and over a socio-political world. For, who wants to be led by humans that are not quite, incomplete humans, non-humans? This was taken to forge the context of the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. This context allowed for movement toward and into making sense of the '*Nasyon*'s' present, the content of their story this time, in the manner of ethnography. This was to complement the historiographic approach because the patterns uncovered through this, although strong on their own, ought to be confirmed by the '*Nasyon*' themselves to hold valid too. Here, there seemed no better route to take than engaging in fieldwork research in African Town, a predominantly '*Nasyon*' township in the south of Mauritius, bringing to the fore a hierarchy of belonging in the country at the very end of which the '*Nasyon*' were found to have been fixed as non-citizens thereof. And without citizenship, if they do not belong to the Mauritian socio-political world, if are treated as if not belonging to it, it is natural that they could also not get to political power therein.

The typical approach or response to cases such as the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power has been as indignation pressing for redress in the manner of the quest for cosmic justice or the quest for completeness. This quest runs the latitudes of the absolute correction of inequities for all in the socio-political world where traditional justice would or could have failed such that all those taken to have been made incomplete by external forces turn complete and thus have access to those spaces that they had previously been marginalised from, especially that space where political power lies. Now, the hold and impact of external forces or modes of action ( $x$ ) upon the incompleteness of the self or entire socio-political categories are undeniable, as have shown the historiographic and ethnographic approaches to the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. But to go as far as expecting or demanding or attempting to materialise their completeness by correcting external inequities is impossible. This is because incompleteness is the permanent internal state or condition of all component parts of the universe that we live in, including the '*Nasyon*'. No matter what we do against this, no matter how we imagine doing away with this, none of us can be complete; none of us can be solid, unified in form and content; none of us can be finished. To fully grasp this, we ought to first turn to the universe that we come from, which is in constant dialectic movement within itself while expanding into eternity. As so, we read:

1. Our universe is incomplete;
2. We come from an incomplete universe;
3. Therefore, we are also incomplete.

It would be absurd to expect and demand that completeness or solidity come from an incomplete or a liquid universe. And we can recognise this in our socio-positionalities as they are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated, shifting and shapeshifting, diluting, strengthening, morphing, accepted or ‘othered’, raised to kingly status or banished to servitude depending on where we are and who we are faced with. This is to say that our liquidness perdures because we exist in context, i.e., because who or what we are unfolds in context, where we are sometimes more or less liquid than others but never complete. We are speaking here about permanent incompleteness see-sawing in context. We can see this in whiteness, for example, having once stood at the highest levels of the political hierarchy in Africa and today, being relegated to the backbenches thereof as black people have replaced them. Once, black people had also been the kings of Africa and today they are the ones leading political protests around the world demanding an end to their mistreatment. Once Indian indentured labourers had been the refuse of India, and today, they are Indo-Mauritians ruling Mauritius. As so, no amount of undoing the (external) modes of action ( $x$ ) that give rise to the ‘*Nasyon*’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius would or could make them solid, i.e., internally, permanently complete, or complete enough to access political power in Mauritius – because their socio-positionality unfolds in context. It remains permanently liquid and is bound to morph as it transcends into new geographies.

The examples of hashtag (#) movements such as the #RhodesMustFall movement started by black students in 2015 at the University of Cape Town in South Africa and the #BlackLivesMatter movement peaking in 2020 across the USA confirm this, also proving dangerous, futile and counterintuitive to bringing about completeness in anyone, including the ‘*Nasyon*’. I took from the works of Amos Tutuola and Francis Nyamnjoh to explain this, putting incompleteness forward as a more wholesome lens from and through which to read the case of the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius: the ‘*Nasyon*’ are incomplete humans, but this is not a problem to be solved. It is once we move from the Eurocentric take on the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius

that we begin to see this. We are speaking here about movement away from Eurocentric scholarship used to explain a black African socio-political category in Africa, into the African realm – a space, a reality, a spirituality untainted by Eurocentric scholarship and unmoved by it, where invisible, supernatural, hyper-sensible forces are trusted and are experienced as enmeshed, entangled with, and influencing the physical world, our socio-political world. After all, the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power cannot and should not be taken and observed separately from the space that it unfolds in, i.e., Africa, the African context of African spirituality.

From here, we read that the only way around incompleteness is that which is temporary and that this comes with the employ or activation of ‘*juju*’, i.e., those magical things that do not belong with and to some of us in the first place, which we pick and choose for and add to ourselves that help us transform, shapeshift into what or who we would like to be or look like, much like Amos Tutuola’s skull borrowing clothes and body parts to (temporarily) show itself as “‘complete’ gentleman”. As so, moving into the African world and reading the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius from an African lens would bring us to the fact that this would not be possible without the employ of ‘*juju*’. This first showed as the employ of the right type of voice carrying the right type of stories into the Mauritian socio-political world by white Europeans (colonial masters) and Indo-Mauritians to allow and sustain themselves in those spaces where political power lies. It also showed as white Europeans and Indo-Mauritians appropriating and activating over their selves the right qualities and potencies for the socio-political positionality that they would claim, such as having the best education and mastering the Media, parallel forms of governance and the legal system (police force) to their advantage. On the other side of this coin, white Europeans and Indo-Mauritians would be active in limiting, if not bringing to naught, the agency of the ‘*Nasyon*’, controlling the story on the latter that fixed them as criminals and drug addicts while sustaining the right socio-political system to make the ‘*Nasyon*’ show as criminals and drug addicts. After all, recent Mauritian Prime Minister, Aneerood Jugnauth, had promised to never legalise Gandja (or Marijuana) despite the ‘*Nasyon*’s’ plea to be allowed the exercise of the religio-cultural practice of Gandja consumption, which the democratic principles of multicultural Mauritius promise them, making the ‘*Nasyon*’ criminals for illegal consumers of what remains an illegal drug in the country. The police force was found to add to this, being the main distributor of all types

of drugs to the '*Nasyon*' who would find refuge in these as they numb themselves from the dire circumstances of their being and existing at the farthest margins of Mauritius.

At this point, the '*Nasyon*' looked to have nothing much and to have been allowed nothing much to present to the Mauritian socio-political world to claim political power therein. This does not mean that they do not have anything to present. From the lens of incompleteness, we could make out that they have not yet presented and activated any '*juju*' to challenge those who had done so already in Mauritius, but that they might do so one day. They could decide at any point in time to wear their autochthony, for example, moving from being incomplete to being temporarily complete, and starting with this the process of political inclusion and exclusion that would see Indo-Mauritians thrown out of politics as persons who do not belong to the country, and therefore, as incomplete citizens thereof. Dominic warned us: "For now, we are asleep. But one day, we'll wake up. One day the soil will rise"<sup>310</sup>. This is the bigger take on the question of "What are the modes of action (*x*) that give rise to the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius (*y*)?": the '*Nasyon*' have not yet employed any '*juju*' to get to political power in Mauritius. This should take us back to the fact of incompleteness, where the activation of '*juju*' by white Europeans and Indo-Mauritians, and the non-activation of '*juju*' by the '*Nasyon*' who are still with the potential to activate this at any moment in time, show that all in Mauritius can be temporarily more complete than others when with '*juju*', when activating this: dissociated from Mauritian political power one day, kings thereof the next, as much as kings of the Mauritian socio-political world one day, dissociated from it the next. We are looking at identity pliancy or the liquidness of being – incompleteness – because of which we are to expect the '*Nasyon*' to 'wake up' or to access political power in Mauritius one day. In other words, it is the very fact of their incompleteness that assures us that the '*Nasyon*'s' persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius can only also be liquid; that we can expect their socio-political positionality to change; that those who are currently in power in Mauritius will not be there forever. Their incompleteness is thus to be embraced.

As importantly, incompleteness comes with a gentle reminder that, if all are incomplete, since all are incomplete in the Mauritian socio-political world, and if we understand and accept this as the normal order of things, anything and everything that would have previously been

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<sup>310</sup> See conversation with him on page 157 of this thesis.

contentious matter in the country – everything that would have been separating peoples, holding some as superior, marginalising others, leading many to protests – falls away, as simply as that, opening up the space for conviviality amongst all there. And once it is fixed in our heads that incompleteness is the normal order of things or that incompleteness is a fact of all and for all, that we are all incomplete until we are with the right ‘*juju*’ to temporarily allow us to stand a little more complete than others, the ‘*Nasyon’s*’ incompleteness ceases to be consequential factor in their persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius and their incompleteness ceases to be a problem to be solved altogether. None is more complete than them as they are no less complete than anyone else. As so, the field is automatically levelled for them (and for all of us) to access political power. This is the gentle, humble, Tutuolan approach to the ‘*Nasyon’s*’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius, the gist of which ran in favour of Francis Nyamnjoh’s call for conviviality, a sort of necessary turn away from the binary, dichotomising and divisive observations of the Mauritian socio-political world, toward the appreciation of the fact of incompleteness as the normal order of things for all. This approach should take us away from the path that we might have wanted to take or that observers of the ‘*Nasyon’s*’ plight in Mauritius would have typically wanted, i.e., the beating of a giraffe for not birthing a zebra or reactive responses to incompleteness, built as the dangerous, futile and certainly violent quest for completeness, which we have seen as the #RhodesMustFall and #BlackLivesMatter movements.

This thesis and the chapters along which it was organised have shown that we cannot and should not beat any giraffe for anything, especially not for being incomplete since incompleteness is the normal order of things, and that the only way around this is temporary and comes with the employ of ‘*juju*’. The immediate call here would be for the actualisation of a Tutuolan approach to this giraffe instead, a reconfiguration of our knowledge systems for convivial rather than reactive scholarship built on a holistic and localised understanding of the giraffe that we want to beat or are expected or told to beat – a way forward without hashtags and finger pointing that, if applied in and to the Mauritian socio-political world for example, would and could calm, soothe, take away the neurotic experience of and approach to the ‘*Nasyon’s*’ persisting dissociation from political power in Mauritius. This could be a first step, maybe, hopefully toward building the Mauritian rainbow nation so fervently imagined for decades. We can, of course, think of applying this to the larger African socio-political world and to the entire planet, eventually.



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