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### Race and community : coloured identity formation within nineteenth and twentieth century Cape Town, South Africa.

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Race and Community: Coloured Identity Formation within Nineteenth and  
Twentieth Century Cape Town, South Africa

By  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for Graduation *Summa Cum Laude*

University of Louisville

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### Introduction of “Coloureds” to Cape Town Society

In December of 1651, the Dutch East Indies Company, also known as the “VOC,” sent a merchant named Jan Van Riebeeck down to the southern tip of Africa with eighty-two men, along with his family and seven women, to establish a trading post for the VOC. On April 6, 1652, the nearly four month journey finally concluded when Van Riebeeck and his crew arrived at the Cape of Good Hope and founded the colony of Cape Town (Berger, 2009, p. 22). Yet for the colony to sustain itself, European settlers heavily relied on trading with the indigenous Khoi, who inhabited those lands long prior to European arrival.

Despite settling on Khoi lands, the relationship between settlers and Khoi started on good basis. Aran MacKinnon, author of *The Making of South Africa: Culture and Politics*, believes that within initial Khoi and European interactions, “physical or racial characteristics were not the determining feature of social status in the Cape” (2012, p. 32). Rather, both parties sought trade as the priority. Settlers benefited from obtaining Khoi livestock, such as “cattle and goats,” while the Khoi benefited from the offer of “tobacco, copper, iron, beads, and alcohol” (Berger, 2009, p. 32). A few Khoi individuals were taught the Dutch language, known as “Compradores,” and made trade possible by interpreting for both parties. Eventually, the gender imbalance of male settlers compared to women would encourage European men to marry Khoi women. These marriages “granted Khoi women social status within the colonial society,” which was the status that their bi-racial children would also inherit (MacKinnon, 2012, p. 30). Overall, the interactions between the two societies did enjoy a brief time of peace. However, peace

between the two would soon decline, as Cape Town would continue to grow.

Tension increased between the settlers and Khoi, as it became obvious to the Khoi that the Europeans were not intending to leave any time soon. Previously Khoi were under the impression that the “spice rich possession of the Indies” would be the next stop on the settlers’ journey (MacKinnon, 2012, p. 24). However by the 1670’s, the VOC reached the decision to keep Cape Town as a permanent establishment, which then prompted Cape Town settlers to begin laying down streets to form the “Central Business District” next to the harbor (Bickford- Smith, 2016, p. 20). Along with building up the colony around the harbor, the VOC encouraged settlers to spread further inland through leasing out their own shipping dock workers as farmers.

The released workers called “Free Burghers” were only freed under the condition that they farmed lands beyond Table Mountain. Van Riebeeck claimed, “in allowing settlers to plant food crops and raise their own livestock, the fledgling colony would become more self- sufficient” (MacKinnon, 2012, p. 26). However in reality, the VOC encouraged Free Burghers to form rag tag militia groups, called “Commandos,” to raid Khoi for “grazing lands, water sources, and trade routes” (Berger, 2009, p. 29). Due to the frequency of the commando raids mixed with the bubonic plague epidemic of 1713, the VOC controlled hundreds of kilometers of Khoi lands from the northwest at the mouth of the Orange River to the Great Fish River in the east by the year 1795 (Bickford-Smith, 2016, p. 21). The VOC simply did not have enough workers for farming the stolen lands. As a result, the VOC turned to slavery to provide the labor force.

During the near one hundred and fifty year control of Cape Town, the Dutch East Indies Company imported slaves from regions including East Indies, India, Madagascar,

and Mozambique (Berger, 2009, p. 32). Slavery influenced the intersection of race and class in Cape Town's society, as "Europeans increasingly associated servile labor with people of color" (MacKinnon, 2012, p. 32). The enslaved were forced into either manual labor for the Free Burghers or working at the VOC's shipping docks. At first, slavery was not a popular system in Cape Town, which is revealed by the total slave population only standing at just 350 by the year 1690, which was thirty years after the first slave ships docked. However during the span of the 1700s, the amount enslaved significantly raised to nearly 26,000 with enslaved women making up 25% of the total slave population (Berger, 2009, p. 32). The relatively large amount of women imported as slaves significantly contributed to the growth in the multi-racial population within Cape Town; although, often resulting from horrific acts of sexual violence that were committed against women enslaved. While sexual assaults occurred against women serving as domestic servants for Free Burghers on isolated farms, most assaults arguably happened inside the city's Iziko Slave Lodge where women were forced into prostitution, which even granted the lodge with the title of "Cape Town's main brothel" (Teelock, 2004, p. 95).

John Mason's research in regards to the sexual abuse during slavery highlights that white men tended to justify these abuses by claiming enslaved women with "an allure of sensual abandonment." How the settlers once claimed their violence committed against the Khoi women captured during commando raids to be justified by the women being "licentious with animalistic sexuality," European men now legitimized their sexual abuse against women slaves, such as Malay women in claiming to be "filling the void that Malay women were missing" (Teelock, 2004, p. 95). While it is true that enslaved

men and women did live in captivity with one another, Iris Berger argues slaves were not able to reproduce in sufficient numbers with one another because of the “poor diet, living conditions, hard physical labor, and disease,” (2009, p. 32). Therefore, this means that most offspring of enslaved women were, indeed, fathered by the European men who had raped them. Yet, these men were not punished for abandoning their children. In fact, Mohammed Adhikari claims white men “were not required by law to take care of any child they had with enslaved women” (2005, p. 26). Therefore, the multi-racial offspring were identified as slaves and received the last name “Van den Kaap,” which translates to “of the Cape,” for they could not be granted the last name of their absent fathers (Baderoon, 2014, p. 84).

In the present day, the descendants of multi-racial people who were once branded as Van den Kaap, along with the eventual racial mixing of other non-Europeans, created the largest cluster of “Coloureds” in all of South Africa. Currently two-thirds out of the country’s three and a half million Coloureds reside in the Western Cape province. As well, Coloureds make up approximately 40% of Cape Town’s current population (Adhikari, 2005, p. 02). However the Coloured identity, as it is known today, has not always referred to multi-racial people. Due to the current usage of the term “Coloured,” Adhikari believes, “there is an enduring myth that the Coloured people constitute a ‘mixed race’ resulting from prostitution and casual sex between slave and khoisan (Khoi) women.” Yet, historically the Coloured identity is known for its “inclusivity of all cultures” that were not either European, or of the indigenous Bantu speaking people within South Africa (1997, p. 283). So, if the Coloured identity was initially created as a catch- all phrase, then what shifted the term to now address those who are multi- racial

individuals?

The following essay examines the progression of the Coloured identity in Cape Town society by tracking the rise and fall of Cape Town's District Six neighborhood as a Coloured community. In exploring Coloured identity, the essay will follow British and Afrikaner governmental reports pertaining to the classification of Coloureds. In addition, first person accounts by Coloured South Africans will reveal the transition of the Coloured identity spanning from the emancipation of Cape slavery in 1834 until the forced removals from District Six in 1980.



## Chapter One: From Cape Liberalism to a Race- Based Society

### *Cape Liberalism*

In 1806, Britain seized control of Cape Town from the VOC. Under their control, they gradually shifted the economy from agriculture to industrial. The British's new form of governance, called Cape Liberalism, facilitated the evolution of a new belief system that accounted for the legacy of racism left by the VOC. Cape Liberalism was pragmatic in considering ways to maintain peace and order over a highly diverse population. Stanley Trapido claims "this form of politics focused on creating policies designed for equality of all colonists under British law, as well as male-colorblind franchises" (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 443). Cape Liberalism advocating for a "colour free franchise," and a "laissez faire economy," allowed a few rich non- Europeans to enjoy the social respectability of elite society alongside of upper class Whites (Bickford- Smith 1995, p. 147). To begin uniting the diverse Cape population, the British passed laws to reverse segregation and enslavement. Acts such as the Ordinance 50, passed in 1828, enfranchised the indigenous Khoi, who were originally forced off their homelands by the VOC, with rights that now allowed them to access the Cape Town area. The ordinance specifically called for Khoi to no longer be required to carry passes to enter into Cape Town, so that they could find work as more factories were being built. The ordinance even granted Khoi the right to buy and own property (Berger, 2009, p. 43). The British enfranchisement of Khoi eventually led to the decision to abolish slavery in 1834, which was most impactful in reshaping Cape Town's demographics in the early nineteenth century.

The Cape's dying agricultural economy in the midst of the industrial revolution only wasted British resources for maintaining the enslaved population. So, instead of

continuing to support the Cape's agricultural system, on February 1, 1834, British emancipated nearly 38,000 slaves around the Western Cape (Berger, 2009, p. 44). Cape Liberalism enfranchised these people with the intention for the British rule to be seen as a righteous one. In 1853, Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, explained his government's true aim was to "unite all the Queen's subjects at the Cape, without distinction of class or colour, by one bond of loyalty and a common interest... the exercise of political rights enjoyed by all alike would prove one of the best methods to attain that end" (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 444). Cape Liberalism's claim to be "colour-blind" did not mean that individuals were not identified by a race. However, the racial terms used were often broad and ambiguous, especially when referring to "Coloureds." One such example can be seen in how British enforced the term "Coloured" with two different meanings. Some times Coloureds referred to "all blacks," and at other times it was used to refer to those who were "not Bantu-speaking Africans" (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 145). The way the Coloured term was deployed by the British government reveals an understanding that "Coloured" was never intended to identify a specific race. Rather it was a loose, or umbrella, term broadly given to those who were not fully Europeans or of Bantu -speaking origins.

The Cape Liberal system was not well received by many white Afrikaners, who believed the British were targeting them due to their being of Dutch descent. Whites who resided in communities in the outskirts became fearful that the Ordinance 50 would encourage Khoi retaliations, as a result from the history of commando raids during VOC rule. Due to this fear, Whites, who once moved to areas like District Six, relocated from working class communities into upper class communities away from factories

(McCormick, 2002, p 37). As well, the actions of the British in freeing all slaves greatly upset Afrikaner pastoralists who rejected the idea of slaves being placed on “equal footing... contrary to the... natural distinction of race and colour” (Worden, 2007, p. 78). As a result, nearly 15,000 Afrikaner pastoralists, known as “Voortrekkers,” migrated from the Western Cape into the hinterlands of South Africa to establish separate sovereignties from the British. Voortrekkers became commonly referred to as "Boers," and they recorded in their new constitutions their rejection of the British rulings. The Boer constitution for the Transvaal republic explicitly stated that within the Transvaal, “the people desire to permit no equality between Coloured people... either in church or state” (Bickford- Smith, 2016, p. 23). So in essence, Cape Town was not diversified just through emancipation and granting Khoi access to the city. Its diversification also heavily relied on the counter actions of Whites clustering into upper class communities, and the migration of Boers away from the region.

White flight into upper class communities left many abandoned homes and businesses in working class communities. These abandoned properties would be of great aid to all the ethnicities encompassed under the umbrella term “Coloured,” in choosing where to live as the labor pool increased for factory jobs.

### ***Rise of District Six***

Cape Liberalism allowed many working class Whites to profit from the Industrial economy introduced under the British rule. Therefore, Whites were more able to buy their own homes, rather than, remain cooped up in the barracks next to the harbor. However in searching for places to start building, Don Pinnock claims Whites had to turn

to the “outskirts around the city bowl,” in order to build there “often modest two story homes.” He further explains, “rich merchants and officials already owned virtually all centralized locations in Cape Town,” even before the British gained control (2016, p. 16). In the southeastern corner of the city bowl, one community was constructed and eventually named District Six much later in 1867. District Six was created as a direct result of the White middle class expansion. However, this community would not remain White once the British enfranchised both slaves and Khoi roughly twenty years later. As previously stated, the White flight left District Six with abandoned infrastructures, which aided Coloureds to find a community in District Six for refuge.

The Khoi, East African, Indian, Chinese, Malaysian, and Indonesian ex-slaves relied on resettling into communities that could provide a plethora of resources to support all of their various cultural practices. District Six was one of these communities where the abandoned infrastructures, along with being supplemented later by small factories, provided enough resources for the Coloured population to thrive (Bickford- Smith, 2015, p. 24). District Six’s conversion to a Coloured community created a centralized area for Coloureds to blend their different cultures, which allowed District Six to have an influence within Cape Town’s working class society. This influence attracted a diverse population of Bantu speaking Eastern Cape Africans (i.e. Xhosa), Eastern European Jews, and Indian laborers to migrate to the Cape for work within these factories (Bickford- Smith, 2016, p. 24). These immigrants meshed well in District Six, for the community supported their values and practices. Eventually, District Six went on to arguably become the most popular Coloured community in all of South Africa. As time passed, the fusion of these cultures promoted an identity for District Six as a collective

Coloured society.

District Six became known as a “Kanallawerk community,” an Afrikaans term referring to community work done out of friendship. Kay McCormick, author of *Language in Cape Town's District Six*, claims that the bonds formed by the amalgamation of the various cultures, “might well have been like those in a family, but a family who had a normal share of tensions between members with different habits, values, and aspirations” (2002, p. 47). Many Coloureds in the elite class remained united with working class Coloureds through daily interactions. For instance in *Not White Enough Not Black Enough*, Adhikari projects Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman, a Coloured doctor in Cape Town, as “acculturated to Coloured working class,” in which Adurahman “freely spoke vernacular Afrikaans too in his day- to- day dealings with patients” (2005, p. 69). This is important due to how Afrikaans was deemed a working class language by the British control. Yet, upper class Coloureds still felt tied to speaking Afrikaans in order to continue communicating with Coloureds of the working class. Along with consistent interactions between classes, the upper class Coloureds also developed systems of welfare to aid the poor in supplying them with basic resources.

Coloured elites were able to generate systems of welfare for a wide spectrum of Coloureds to sustain their communities, especially by supplying the poor with resources to cover their basic necessities. Nomvuyo Ngcelwane’s *District Six* speaks a little on how Coloured welfare systems evolved to storeowners allowing in-store credit and small quantity purchases by the early 1900s. For this system to work, store customers simply brought a “credit book” with them to record their items, and “the owner would sign the date when the customer was expected to pay for the item(s)” (1998, p. 67). Also, if one

did not have enough money to buy the standard quantity of a particular item, then owners would often reduce the quantity to the amount of money that the customer could provide. For instance, owners would often “open jars of jelly and fish oil to dip out the content by the teaspoon,” until it equaled the amount of money that the customer had to offer (Ngcelwane, 1998, p. 67). By being lenient and flexible in working with poorer residents, storeowners provided the basic amenities for these people to live from day to day.

Bonds made through sharing the Coloured identity were not expressed solely through business transactions, but also in congregating with one another during holidays. Christmas was the biggest day of the year, and according to Coloured Don Mattera, Christmas for Coloured communities was “the day (that) relieved some of the tensions people experienced year around, so that those who had grudges would postpone them at a later date” (2007, p. 51). It was also a time when children who “had not known a real meal all year around were given as much as they could eat” by women who collaborated on group meals (Mattera, 2007, p. 52). It was also traditional for members of District Six to gather in the homes of the bereaved on Christmas Day, and offer their condolences for the loss of loved one(s) (McCormick, 2002, p. 64). Other days, such as the first of December, were holidays for Coloureds to commemorate the emancipation of their enslaved ancestors. The itinerary for Emancipation Day often included street processions followed by prayer services, and a community meal. Lydia Williams, a formerly enslaved woman, would even host celebrations at her house to “commemorate their slave roots,” a tradition that would continue for many years after her death (McCormick, 2002, p. 64). The celebration of Coloured holidays, i.e. Emancipation Day, in the District Six community reveals that Coloured residents were proud of their separate ethnic roots, their

collective strength in withstanding slavery, as well as their ability to remain alongside one another long after their freedom.

### ***Mineral Revolution***

From the early 1800's to the 1850's, Cape Liberalism remained intact with Europeans dominating the classist society by making up "90 per cent" of the "Cape Town bourgeoisie class." Yet the working class jobs, such as the ones in factories, were "fairly evenly divided between Whites and 'other than whites'"(Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 444). However as the end of the nineteenth century drew closer, the British grew weary of maintaining those classified as Africans in the Cape Liberal system when the discovery of both diamonds and gold incited a migration of mainly Eastern Cape (Bantu speaking) Africans to the Western Cape (Simkins & Heyningen, 1989, p. 79). This period is referred to as the Mineral Revolution, in which the Cape government shifted to targeting the large influx of Eastern Cape Africans within the Cape Town region.

Although the mining fields were far to the east near Johannesburg, the shipping docks at Cape Town were pivotal in exporting the minerals. As a result, by the 1890's, migrant workers mainly sought employment in Cape Town. However, their numbers rose too quickly, and by 1901, the near "10,000 immigrants from the Eastern Cape alone" over-saturated the amount of workers needed at the shipping docks. As a result, the migrant laborers were often employed ahead of Whites, and even over local Khoi, because they would work for cheaper wages (Bickford- Smith, 1995). Just before the Mineral Revolution, in 1875, Europeans held the majority population of Cape Town residents with 26,000 citizens, while the rest of the population broke down into 19,000

Africans, and 11,300 Coloureds (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 443). Yet the in-migration thereafter significantly increased the African population, which posed a threat to the minority British population in continuing to control the Cape. As a result, a greater embrace of the “ideology of segregation was the response of Cape Town’s dominant class, as well as the Cape government, to the economic and demographic change that threatened white hegemony” (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 445). Throughout the 1890’s, Africans who migrated to the Cape were disenfranchised from the system of Cape Liberalism and were subjected to further harassment based solely on their race.

Some of the first legal signs to mark the transition of Cape Town back to a race-based society can be seen in how the government sub- categorized the “African race.” In Cape Town’s 1891 Census, Africans were classified into the sub categories of “Fingo, Bechuana, and Kafir” (Simkins & Heyningen, 1989, p. 86). The sub- categories of Africans now distinguished exactly who was African in the Cape government’s eyes, which largely encompassed immigrants from the Eastern Cape. Meanwhile, those who identified as Coloured were not sub-classified into separate races. Even the indigenous Khoi from the Cape Town region were identified as Coloured instead of African, for targeting them would have contradicted the earlier re-enfranchisement of Khoi rights under Cape Liberalism. In addition, the Khoi’s lighter skin complexions and physical characteristics often did not resemble the features of those who were classified as Africans (Simkins & Heyningen, 1989, p. 87). With the distinctions between Africans and non- Africans made, White society was able to systematically discriminate against those classified as Africans.

The first people targeted by the Cape Town society’s racism were those in



working class jobs, such as “Africa George” who worked in the coal industry. In 1892, he claimed to constantly be referred to as “Kaffir” in the workplace; even though, he had always personally identified as an Englishman. Yet, despite his telling people that he was English, they laughed and pointed while calling him a “coal-carrying Kaffir.” Even though he had mannerisms of an Englishman, he was ultimately discriminated against due to his physical features, which resemble those who were classified as African. Some of these incidents involving race even resulted in physical violence. In 1889, “a mob of a hundred whites attacked about the same number of Africans with sticks, knobkerries and other paraphernalia” (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 451). Yet as previously stated, those who were Coloured, which also tended to include Khoi, were shielded from these forms of harassment based on their identity not being classified as African. In fact, Coloureds were even given relative privilege over their African counterparts. For example, “Cape Boys (Coloureds) were put in supervisory situations over Africans” at the shipping docks (Bickford- Smith, 1995, p. 451). However, racism against Africans did not stop the influx of Eastern Cape immigrants from resettling into Cape Town. Therefore, the city continued to grow to overcrowded levels, which pushed the government to begin removing those classified as African away from the city.

The government searched for reasons to justify the creation of policies designed to remove those classified as African from the over populated Cape Town. The government turned to depicting African men as beasts who set out to commit rapes against White women in what is known as the Black Peril. However contrary to the Black Peril rhetoric, South Africa’s Prime Minister John Merriman claimed prostitution as the actual reason for the high miscegenation rates of African men and White women in Cape

Town. He believed Cape Town to have nearly five- hundred White women working as prostitutes, many of whom would not discriminate against whom they had sexual relations with, including African men (Bickford-Smith, Heyningen, Worden, 2000, p. 39). Nonetheless, newspapers popularized the rhetoric of the Black Peril by publicly accusing Africans of false crimes, and claiming them to be “fantasizing over the boss’s wife” (Cornwell, 1996, p. 447). In the face of struggle for Whites’ security over Cape Town, Black Peril became the rallying cry to unite Afrikaners and British in maintaining control over the majority African population. From the Black Peril, the British government passed the Immorality Act of 1902, which forbade African and White sexual relationships. However, this law was only directed against African men, as White men were still able to have relations with African women (Blair, 2003, p. 586). Black Peril rhetoric was strengthened later by the accusations of Africans being the source of the Bubonic Plague epidemic in Cape Town during 1901.

The Cape government increasing the amount of doctors in Cape Town bettered their ability to project Africans as accountable for the epidemic. By 1891, the Medical and Pharmacy Act allowed for Cape Town to begin registering doctors, who then published biased medical findings. For instance, Doctor George Turner’s analysis in regards to the White infant mortality rates during the epidemic found that Cape Town’s rate of twenty- three deaths per thousand infants exceeded that of England and Wales’ infant mortality rate, which stood at eighteen deaths per thousand. Turner published his results in *The South African Medical Journal*, and concluded that in Cape Town, “preventable diseases are far too prevalent and prevail chiefly in the towns, and unless Municipalities are granted and exercise proper powers... the mortality from these causes

will continue to increase with the growth of the towns” (Simkins & Heyningen, 1989, p. 81). Yet, Cape Town’s records from the 1901 plague, ironically, reveal that the plague effected the White population more than any other race, including Africans. Out of all the deaths reported from the plague, 207 were White, while 157 were African (Bickford-Smith, Van- Heyningen & Worden, 1999, p. 19). Nonetheless the publication of findings, such as George Turner’s, popularized a panic among Whites in seeing Africans as unsanitary, which aided the passing of the 1897 Public Health Act. This act essentially provided the government with the power to “control for diseases” by relocating Africans away from Whites in order reduce the high mortality rate.

This act proved detrimental to Africans living in communities like District Six, who became primary targets for Whites to segregate away from city limits. By 1900, roughly fifteen hundred Africans were removed from the shipping docks, while another eight thousand were removed from District Six (Bickford- Smith, Van- Heyningen & Worden, 1999, p. 19). Under the Public Health Act, the large African population in these two places needed to be removed far away from Whites based on the their level of threat in starting another plague outbreak. W.J. Simpson, Medical Officer of Health and co-founder of the London School of Tropical Medicine, advised the Cape government:

It is absolutely essential... town planning should provide well defined and separate quarters or wards for Europeans... that there should be a neutral belt of open unoccupied country at least 300 yards in width between the European residences and those of the African (Nightingale, 2012, p. 181).

The Coloured population in District Six was able to remain safe because they were not viewed as anywhere near the level of threat compared to Africans. However the political climate was rapidly changing. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Coloureds were forced to assimilate into an identity that located them as neither African nor White.

## Chapter Two: Coloured Assimilation within the Cape Town Society

At the turn of the twentieth century, Coloureds grew worried of being identified as African despite their various cultural practices not being those that were classified as African. Therefore, Coloureds could not rely on their identity of simply being a non-European anymore to remain untouched by the Cape government. Instead, they needed to assimilate into a distinctive identity in order to separate themselves from being classified as Africans. Once assimilated into the Coloured identity, “the status of relative privilege over Africans within the racial hierarchy provided the Coloured with added incentive for cultivating Coloured separatism” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 284). Expressing a separation from Africans was vital for Coloureds to advocate for their rights to remain intact under the Cape Liberal system.

### *African People’s Organization (APO)*

In 1902, many Coloureds of Cape Town unified under the African People’s Organization (APO), which was designed to advocate for the protection of Coloured rights. However despite the title of the organization, the APO President, Abdullah Abdurahman, confirmed that the organization was for Coloured people only. During one of the early APO conferences, Abdurahman gave an address confirming “we (Coloureds) have a deep interest in the native races of South Africa... but my duty as President of the APO... to deal with the rights and duties of Coloured people of South Africa as distinguished from the Native races” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 284). The APO's claim to represent Coloured interests, along with their self- imposed separation from Africans, allowed White society the leverage to infiltrate the Coloured race with Eurocentric

beliefs. Lord Selborne, highest commissioner of South Africa and Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River colonies from 1905 to 1910, stated in a policy memo to General Smuts:

Our object should be to teach the Coloured people to give their loyal support to the white population... to treat them as Natives would force them away from their natural allegiance to the whites and into making common cause with the Natives... I suggest that the wise policy is to make any differentiation of treatment between them and whites the exception not the rule (Mattera, 2007, p. xv).

By 1909, the APO published its own newspaper that was referred to as *The APO*, which promoted Coloured separation from Africans. In the very first published issue, the APO revealed their separatist beliefs through stating, “Everyone is well aware that in South Africa there is a large population of Coloured people as opposed to native... the features of a large proportion of them are wholly Caucasian and their mode of life conforms with the best European model” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 285). Even though the Coloured population was not actually larger than the African, the APO used this rhetoric to highlight their wide variety of cultures that were not only different than the indigenous ones, but also aligned more with Europeans.

### *Coloured Education*

The APO newspaper went from promoting Coloured separatism to even implementing ideals designed to assimilate into whiteness as much as possible. The APO endorsed African American assimilationist Booker T. Washington’s opinion that, “the Negro, given the environment, the education, and the opportunity of a white man, will behave, think, and live much in the same way as the average white man” (Adhikari, 2005,

p. 76). Now it is important to realize that while the APO members rejected black Africans, such as Eastern Cape immigrants, they did not reject the expression of Blackness within the African diaspora. In fact, blacks in the United States impressed the APO because “they appeared to be making real strides in their civil equality” (Adhikari, 2007, p. 295). Yet, the APO believed that South African blacks specifically lacked “self-esteem” in comparison to black Americans, and “were too passive in promoting communal interests” (Adhikari, 2007, p. 295). Therefore Abdurahman, as a proponent of Booker T. Washington, believed that the Coloured race in South Africa needed to adopt Washington’s philosophy of incremental change for Coloureds to continue ascending to an elite status within the Eurocentric society. With this philosophy of incremental change, the APO proposed improving the educational level of the Coloured race to “seek to become proficient for (their) callings and trades” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 294). The philosophy of incremental change aligned with the APO’s belief that the change first had to come from educating the Coloured race with qualifications that were believed to be equal to Whites.

APO editorials highlighted that Coloured people should “perfect themselves in English, the language which inspires the noblest thoughts of freedom and liberty, the language that has the finest literature on Earth and is the most universally useful of all languages” (Adhikari, 2005, p. 70). However, pushing for learning the language of “freedom and liberty” also coincided with other beliefs the APO held in learning English to “prove that we (Coloureds) are worthy of...claim as loyal British subjects” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 294). However committing Coloureds in Cape Town to speaking English was a difficult task, since 80% spoke Afrikaans, or the colloquial Cape Vernacular Afrikaans

(KAAPS). Nonetheless, the APO still strived for Coloureds to learn and speak English in ALL of their daily interactions. Meanwhile, the APO believed that the language of Afrikaans needed to be disregarded for it “being the language of the Coloured laboring poor,” and a mark of “social inferiority” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 289). District Six residents primarily spoke Afrikaans due to it being a working class community. Yet as the centralized Coloured community of Cape Town, District Six had a plethora of schools to teach students English, while also furthering students’ education over their heritages and cultures in order to differentiate them from those classified as Africans.

By the 1910’s, District Six was the home of twenty- three schools and two training colleges. Fifteen of the schools were of religious affiliation with eleven Christian schools, three Muslim schools, and one Jewish school (McCormick, 2002, p. 57). Twenty- one out of the twenty-three used English as their medium language due to many students coming from immigrant households, such as Eastern European Jewish homes. Afrikaans was not popularly spoken amongst Eastern Europeans, nor did they particularly care to learn it (McCormick, 2002, p. 55). Therefore the schools, regardless of their cultural practice, collectively turned to English for it was projected as, “the most universally useful of all languages” (Adhikari, 2005, p. 70). Aside from teaching English as the primary language, these various schools bettered their students’ knowledge over their own cultural practices and traditions. Muslim schools taught students how to read and write in Arabic, and the Jewish school taught students how to translate sacred texts from Hebrew (McCormick, 2007, p. 57). As well, Coloureds who went to Christian schools learned how to recite scriptures, such as the “Lord’s Prayer and Psalm 23.” They learned how to recite these scriptures in both English and Afrikaans to appeal to Whites,

who also largely followed Christianity (Mattera, 2007, p. 39). Regardless of the cultural differences taught in District Six schools, they provided opportunities of community building for Coloured children from different schools through competitions, such as rugby (Ngcelwane, 1998, p. 20). These schools provided students with the English language needed to access upper class jobs, as well as knowledge in their various cultural practices to formulate a collective Coloured identity. Even though District Six had many schools, the community only had one school for African children. Nomvuyo Ngcelwane, one of the few Xhosa residents in District Six, claimed that the one African school only went to Standard Two (1998, p. 21). Through not providing sources of support for Africans, District Six helped project the APO's aim of Coloured separation.

Many White officials marveled at the Coloured people's ability to assimilate into whiteness and earn a respectable status. G.B. Van Zyl, an official in the Cape government, even remarked in 1907:

We who know something of Coloured people, know that according to class the majority of Coloured people are on a higher social status than the majority of white people in the same class. A Coloured man usually is better behaved than a white man of the same status... The Coloured man is constantly trying to rise, while the white man, when he gets to a certain stage, usually is on the downgrade (Martens, 2001, p. 324).

Van Zyl reveals that Coloureds were not viewed as a threat to the government and thus had the mobility to maneuver within the Cape class system. As a result, 5% of Coloureds earned an elite status through jobs, such as “artisans, small- retail traders, clerks, teachers, and a handful of professionals,” by the early 1910's (Adhikari, 1997 p. 287). Although a small percentage of Coloureds achieved an elite status, the fact that some had shows that Cape Liberalism still continued to enfranchise Coloureds in the class system. Nonetheless, the ability for Coloureds to appeal under a class system would gradually



dwindle as the urbanization of Cape Town and the coming of apartheid drew near.

### *Death to Cape Liberalism*

The true reality of the Coloured's ability to appeal to whiteness pertained to the government ultimately not viewing Coloureds as a potential threat to White rule. The Coloured population remained relatively smaller than the White population for years, which allowed Whites to maintain the power of a majority race within Cape Town. However in the early twentieth century, Cape Town underwent another period of migration, yet this time the migration was not by Africans. Rather, the Cape Coloured Commission of Cape Town claimed there to be "a shift in the Coloured population to certain large centers" (Maters, 2001, p. 327). One of these centers to undergo rapid growth was Cape Town's very own District Six. District Six's prominent identity as a Coloured community drove many Coloured immigrants to seek refuge there, as racial restrictions in the broader society tightened. The 1936 Census put District Six's population at over twenty-two thousand, thus placing it as the largest Coloured community in all of South Africa (Pinnock, 2016, p. 16). Therefore, authorities increasingly grew weary of the growing Coloured population intermingling within White Cape Town society. The government reacted by implementing specific policies to label the existence of Coloureds among Whites as an immorality that needed to be extinguished.

The spotlight was now switched away from Africans to Coloureds, as the Cape government began to scrutinize the large Coloured population accumulating inside the city. In correlation to the Coloured population increase, Cape Town was one of many

areas within South Africa dealing with the spread of an ideology some scholars call “poor whiteism.” Ironically, the very aspect that Van Zyl praised with Coloureds being “a higher social status than the majority of white people in the same class,” provoked the demise of Coloured status in maintaining the stability to live among Whites. Amid increasing fears of the instability of White supremacy, White officials now believed that the growth of the Coloured population placed more Coloureds in position of achieving a higher status than Whites. Tim Keegan’s research over various South African newspaper articles, yielded that poor Whiteism:

Threatened the psychological underpinnings of the control culture at a time when it was at its most vulnerable and insecure. If the prescription for reasserting psychological distance, submissiveness and deference between ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ races lay in... segregation... then that too was the first step towards moral rehabilitation of whites (Cornwell, 1996, p. 444)

General Jan Smuts, leader of the Cape government from the years 1919 to 1924, became aware of the poor White interactions with Coloureds, such as the ones by Jewish immigrants who lived in District Six. He pleaded for Whites to stop having children outside of their race, unless they were ready for “little brown children to play among the ruins of the Union Government Buildings” (Adhikari, 2006, p. 483). These warnings later transformed into government action to expand the Immorality Act in 1928 to forbid interracial relationships between Coloureds and Whites (Cornwell, 1996, p. 443). Amending the Immorality Act to include Coloureds officially shot down the notion of Coloured assimilation into White society. More than that, Coloureds were disenfranchised from the Cape Liberal system thus no longer having the ability to achieve a status equal to Whites. Like how those classified as African were targeted years prior in

the 1901 removals, by 1928, Coloureds were now marked as targets by Whites. As a result, the government soon implemented even more policies to directly attack and disperse the high population of Coloureds in Cape Town.

### *Liquor Bill of 1928*

From creating an official separateness between Coloureds and Whites, the government was now able to isolate and police Coloureds in similar ways to Africans. In doing so, negative stereotypes of Coloureds now became popular among White society, which included Coloureds being notorious for drunkenness. Coloured leader Abdurahman attempted to counteract these sentiments against his fellow Coloureds by attributing any increase of alcohol consumption to the Coloured population growth. Abdurahman claimed that the mass migration of Coloureds from rural areas, along with increased Coloured birth rates, as being the reason that “you see more drunkenness than you did 10 or 12 years ago” (Maters, 2001, p. 321). However the Cape government did not side with the reasoning of Abdurahman. Instead, they targeted the poor condition of Coloured communities as being the reason for the high rates of drunkenness. Projecting Coloureds as drunks pressured the Liquor Bill of 1928 to pass, which placed a prohibition on alcohol for Coloureds in order to rid White society of so-called Coloured immorality.

In 1932, the Cape Town commission publicly stated in regards to Coloureds, “there is a large class for whom elation is brought by alcohol... poor housing is a further incentive to their having recourse to the canteen” (Maters, 2001, p. 328). Therefore to extinguish the immorality generated from the over- consumption of alcohol by Coloureds, the Liquor Bill granted police the power “to search homesteads and curtail

breweries” of Coloureds, in the same fashion of a similar Liquor Bill that was passed thirty years earlier against Africans. In that bill, just before the 1901 removal took place, officials were granted the “power to search natives and their huts,” (Maters, 2001, p. 319). According to the Coloured newspaper *The Torch*, “It is a common occurrence to find pick- up vans scouting around the bars and other areas where Non- Europeans live, deliberately looking for trouble with the people. Any Non- European who smells of liquor, or who looks as if he may smell of liquor, or who merely looks, is fair game for the police raiders” (Pinnock, 2016, p. 21). To correlate the poor state of Coloured housing with the drunkenness, the Public Health Department published a report claiming, “of 25,000 Coloured households throughout Cape Town, three- quarter or more were living in three rooms or fewer. In most common cases, one- room households (Bickford- Smith, Van- Heyningen & Worden, 1999, p. 146). Reports now pointing to the crowdedness of Coloured communities, along with the high prevalence of alcohol consumption, granted the government power to classify these communities as “slums.” Being classified a slum played a significant role in how communities like District Six would soon be policed under the passing of the Slum Act.

### ***Slum Act of 1934***

The Slum Act of 1934 was intended to disperse the overcrowded Coloured population from inner cities. Removing Coloureds from these areas was believed necessary to protect white communities from the alleged vices of Coloureds, and to prevent a future epidemic from infecting Whites. There was no mistaking that the act was designed to solely target Coloured people, which can be inferred by the act’s provisions

“excluding African barracks, and compounds” from being targeted by police (Bickford-Smith, 2016, p. 139). The Slums Act increased policing powers against Coloureds, now referred to as skollies, which translates to “scavenger” or “scoundrel.” Special policing squads created for District Six would often times arrest vagrants and homeless people who did not commit any malicious crimes. The brutal policing perhaps explains why arrest reports in South Africa during the years 1934 and 1935 claimed twenty- six hundred Coloured minors alone were in South African prisons with “most of them being from Cape Town” (Pinnock, 2016, p. 19). Although the Slums Act targeted Coloureds in District Six, the community was able to withstand policing for their Kanallawerk system provided them various defense systems to protect against the Whites’ encroachment into the community. For instance, through switching languages, residents coded messages to create an unofficial alarm system to spread the alert of police presence in the community. Often times, neighborhood children were recruited by shebeen (drinking lounge) owners to alert the shebeens when police were near. The children would alert all residents in multiple languages to direct them to cover up their operations and hide the alcohol before police came to their doorstep (Mattera, 2007, p. 53). By the time police showed up to the people’s houses, they often could not pin point the person(s) in charge of the operations, thus minimizing the chance of arrests occurring.

In conclusion, APO’s beliefs in assimilating into the Coloured identity were initially successful in appealing to whiteness, for Cape Liberalism still identified Coloured people by their economic class status even after the 1901 removal of Africans. Yet, once the Coloured population rapidly increased in a society that was becoming more and more racialized, White officials abandoned Cape Liberalism in order to identify

Coloureds as a threat in much the same way that Africans had been deemed in 1901. This shift against Coloureds marked the end of their ability to obtain an elite status within the Cape Liberal system. Coloureds now were forced to succumb to racial stereotypes in regards to their “immorality,” which the APO did not provide a platform against. Yet in face of White pressure, District Six residents were still somewhat able to rely on their long established communal system to protect one another. However, the White government would soon turn to designing policies that blatantly undermined District Six’s communal system by isolating the cultures and ethnicities that were previously all grouped under the umbrella term of “Coloured.”

District Six was able to survive removals imposed by the Slums Act of 1934 through relying on the protection provided by the Kanallawerk system. However, this long established tradition would be unraveled by apartheid policies soon to hit South Africa. The election of the Nationalist Party in 1948, which held Afrikaners' interests and lifted up the ideology of both white supremacy and racial purity, marked the beginning of the apartheid era. Within the first couple years of apartheid rule, the government began segregating the various cultures and ethnicities within the Coloured class into sub-categories. Thiven Reddy argues that apartheid morphed the Coloured identity from an assortment of ethnicities, into solely representing the “impure, mixed, borderline, unclassifiable, (and) the doubtful” (Baderoon, 2014, p. 19). Don Mattera claims that the new categorization of Coloureds under apartheid was “the first I ever knew of a race called ‘mixed’” (Mattera, 2007, p. 25). With Coloured identity now based solely on race and ethnicity as opposed to the established culture and traditions allowed apartheid to undermine the ability of Coloureds to remain a cohesive group. The two infamous acts to bring the racialization to Cape Town society, and all over the country for that matter, were the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act, which both were passed in 1950. The combination of these two acts imploded District Six's Kanallawerk society through segregating Coloureds from one another.

### ***Population Registration Act of 1950***

The Population Registration Act of 1950 proved to be the foundation of apartheid, as it reclassified South African citizens into distinct racial groups. Under the Population

Registration Act, all South African Coloureds were now classified into the sub-categories of “Cape Malay, Cape Coloured, Griquas, Indian, Chinese, ‘other Asiatic’, and ‘other Coloured’” (Baderoon, 2014, p. 19). However more specifically, Cape Coloureds, Cape Malays, and Indians were the primary sub- groups that resided within Cape Town. White elites were chosen by the government to administer subjective tests that would scrutinize the physical and behavioral characteristics of Coloureds in order to classify them into one of the sub- categories. In the novel, *Memory is the Weapon*, Mattera, a Coloured man who resided in Johannesburg’s Coloured community of Sophia Town, recounts a discussion that he had with a group of boys who completed the classification test. When Mattera asked what happened, one boy responded, “Those dogs (Afrikaners) are using match sticks and pens... to run through our hair to classify us” (Mattera, 2007, p. 25). Mattera then mentioned how the test administrators would “inflict sudden pain” on individuals to see what language they first responded in. If the language were one other than Afrikaans or English, then the Coloured would automatically be granted a lower status (2007, p. 25). Henry Trotters interviews with ex- residents of District Six yielded that apartheid’s “concrete expressions to the (otherwise arbitrary) Coloured racial category,” enforced a “false sense of groupness” within the distinct sub- groups that was never there before apartheid (Jethro, 2009, p. 25). For District Six, the separation of Coloureds directly attacked the foundation of their Kanallawerk system, as some of these sub- groups were now privileged more by apartheid than others.

Apartheid held some Coloured identities, such as Indian, to be purer than other Coloureds. Apartheid believed Indians were the purest of all Coloureds, and sometimes even distinctively separate from the Coloured race due to their “pure blood lines”



(Mattera, 2007, p. 23). Author of *Regarding Muslims from Slavery to Post- Apartheid*, Gabeba Baderoon, claims that Cape Malays were also believed to be purer than Cape Coloureds. For one, Cape Malays tended to be “lighter” with “straighter hair than Cape Coloureds.” However, not only did Cape Malays’ phenotypes appear less African, but the “Muslim rituals, from clothing to festivities... asserted a cultural and racial distinctiveness” (2014, p. 19). Apartheid popularized ideals that regarded the Cape Malay race to be a “promise of purity,” and not marked by “the despise ‘mixedness of Coloureds’” (Baderoon, 2014, p. 19). Cape Coloureds were not viewed in the same light as Cape Malays, for they were of mixed race descent, which by apartheid’s definition classified them as “impure.”

According to Mattera, the term Cape Coloured specifically refers to the non-Muslim Coloureds that were living in Cape Town, and how their bloodlines “denotes a genetic link with... Khoi” (Mattera, 2007, p. 22). Cape Coloureds were often treated as a lower tier Coloured, or even potentially as an African. Yet, many Cape Coloureds also had European features, as sometimes they “had blue, gray, or green eyes with straight blond hair” (Mattera, 2007, p. 22). So if Cape Coloureds also closely resembled Europeans, then why were they the sub- category of Coloureds that arguably were the most discriminated against? The answer to this question lies in the fact that Cape Coloureds overwhelmingly accounted for 85% of the entire Coloured population within the Western Cape (Baderoon, 2014, p. 19). Therefore the government, once again, turned to their old ways of using negative rhetoric to stereotype the large Cape Coloured population as a threat to Whites' wellbeing.

The Kanallawerk system began to lose the unity that had once kept District Six

citizens a strong nucleus, as residents were set in competition against one another to be seen as a “good Coloured,” or “pure Coloured” under apartheid. The priority in the community shifted from being a cultural hub and safe haven, to a community of individuals focusing on distinguishing themselves from their fellow Coloureds. This is displayed in the mistreatment of Peter Abraham, a Coloured, who was targeted by his fellow peers for his physical resemblance to Africans. In his novel *Tell Freedom*, Abraham recounts a time when students refused to play with him. One of the boys stated, “Let’s not play with him. He’s got woolly hair like a Kaffir,” which Abraham then replied, “Go to hell! Yours may be straight, but your skin is black” (1981, p. 155). From this dialogue, it is inferred that the students’ phenotypes may not have been much different from one another. Yet, they continued to name call with derogatory words that were not even associated with the Coloured identity. This form of bullying resembles how Coloured children were conditioned to ostracize one another based on apartheid standards labeling them as separate. With a broken Kanallawerk system, Coloured residents of District Six were left susceptible to apartheid government coercing them into leaving behind their Coloured communities.

In sub- categorizing the Coloureds, apartheid was able to single out minority Coloured groups from the majority Cape Coloured population. As well, White society downgraded Cape Coloureds from opportunities of improving their status, even if an individual’s true prestige was internationally well known. For instance Richard Rive, a Cape Coloured from District Six, who studied at the prestigious Oxford University and taught at Harvard, claimed to have been denied a professorship at the University of Cape Town because the “position(s) were reserved for Whites only.” As for other jobs, he was

rejected for being an “over-qualified black man” (Rive, 1981, p. 161). Eventually, Rive found a job as a professor at the University of Cape Town. However, he was paid less than his white colleagues for doing the same level of work (Rive, 1981, p. 162). Even though Rive is Coloured, White businesses ultimately viewed him as African when it came to the opportunity for him to achieve the status of a middle class White. The discrimination against Rive would only be a small taste of what was to come for the entire District Six community under the passing of the Group Areas Act.

### ***District Six Removal***

Apartheid’s division of the various Coloured ethnicities proved to be only one step in the overarching plan to eventually remove Coloured residents from District Six. The Population Registration Act was vital in providing the race classification of South Africans to later enforce the Group Areas Act of 1950. The Group Areas Act then allowed the apartheid government to designate specific areas for certain races to live. For instance, some of apartheid’s first removals occurred in 1955 when Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd removed Africans from cosmopolitan townships around Johannesburg to townships far from the city, such as Soweto (Mattera, 2007, p. 143). Throughout the 1950’s alone, approximately “600,000 Coloured and Indian people were removed from cities” across South Africa into outlying townships (Mackinnon, 2004, p. 224). The Group Areas Removals did not hit Cape Town until later, yet Coloureds knew about the devastation that the removals already brought to many around the country. Therefore, Coloureds became fearful for their ability to remain in Cape Town, especially since their population was relatively large compared to the White population. These fears turned into

reality for the District Six residents when the community was classified a “White area” in 1966.

District Six citizens saw the intent behind passing the Group Areas Act as completely privileging White people in every economic aspect possible by having control of their entire community. In Rive’s *Buckingham Palace: District Six*, residents questioned if the removals applied to everybody. Father Rowland, pastor to one of the churches in District Six, replied, “No, the best areas are kept for whites. No single white family I know has been forced to move under this act” (Rive, 1986, p. 145). Unfortunately, District Six would eventually go on to be one of the many communities in South Africa destructed under the Group Areas Act.

The apartheid government declaring District Six a “White area” in 1966 legally prompted the forced removals of ALL Coloured residents from the community regardless of their sub- categorization. This removal took a period of over fourteen years with both the local and national government relying on tactics of manipulation to disperse residents. Without the stability of Kanallawerk, the apartheid government stepped in place to ensure Coloured residents that their families would receive better living arrangements in townships that were designated to them. Many Coloureds abided to the government’s wishes and left their homes. Within a time period of ten years, roughly two- thirds of District Six’s sixty thousand residents were removed by the year 1976 (Bickford- Smith, 2016, p. 188.) The character of Mrs. Knight, in Richard Rive’s novel *Buckingham Palace: District Six*, captures how some Coloureds were convinced to accept the governments’ proposal of housing arrangements. When sarcastically asked if she realized that she was moving to an area she did not know, Ms. Knight justified her choice by

stating:

We mustn't meddle in politics. We can not fight the government and hope to win... Everyone is desperate for houses and flats in townships... They won't even start considering you for another house unless you sign an agreement to vacate the present one. We were lucky to get a flat so soon. The waiting list is five years long" (Rive, 1986, p. 156).

The government's proposed options for housing sounded much better than ending up like the many thousands across South Africa who were forced out of their homes into horrid places. Yet Mrs. Knight personally never saw the housing she was promised. Nonetheless, Mrs. Knight trusted that her cooperation with the government would grant her a "nice two bedroom flat in the Coloured Township of Hanover Park" (Rive, 1986, p. 157). The manipulation used by the government to wean people away from District Six caused a further division between Coloureds who abided by the apartheid law, and those who resisted. As Mattera once commented, "The promise of four- roomed houses doused the spirit of revolution in many of them" (Mattera, 2007, p. 140). Yet, the government did not place an emphasis on the care for residents to whom they promised better housing. Rather, the government lied about offering places with better living conditions, and many times even placed Coloureds in conditions that were worse than before.

Often District Six residents who moved from the community received housing that was barely livable. In the townships, the electricity inside the housing flats usually did not work causing people to freeze during cold nights. As well, the physical structures of the flats tended to be cheap or dilapidated "with no ceilings, and cracks in the walls" (Rive, 1986, p. 161). Along with the homes being in poor conditions, the lengthy travel to Cape Town made living in the Cape Flats extremely difficult for Coloureds who often commuted "three or four hours" to and from work (Worden, 2007, p. 106). As well, in

many townships, such as Hanover Park, “there was no post office or neighborhood shops,” which meant that residents were forced to travel outside the townships to complete tasks that could have easily been done in a few minutes while living in District Six (Rive, 1986, p. 163). Hettie Adams, a former resident of District Six, complained over these same issues, which affected her in the township of Mitchell’s Plain. Adams praised her ex-community of District Six’s communal system for “everyone would lend you things, and do shopping for you.” However her new community “seemed be the total opposite of that in District Six,” in that out of the individuals in her new community, “no one will even lend you a match” (Jethro, 2009, p. 24). Education also became harder to obtain for Coloureds, as they now had to travel outside the townships to attend school, which made commuting to school a real issue for families to resolve. Yet before moving to the township, the plethora of schools in District Six had simply “allowed for students to walk to and from school” (Rive, 1986, p. 162). Left in isolation and confusion from the lies told by the apartheid government, Coloureds had a difficult time building cohesion amongst their new community members.

Unfortunately townships like Hanover Park went in the opposite direction of cohesion and became riddled with violence and crime. Gangs now living in close proximity to one another grew violent out of their desires to control the new territory. Gangs would often commit acts of violence, such as sexual assaults on girls and women, to “scare families into obeying” the gangs’ power (Mattera, 2007, p. 109). Residents were not able to combat the brutality of the gangs in townships because there was no Kanallawerk community to hold gangs accountable for their actions. Families were exposed to many instances of unnecessary violence, which caused for massive instability

in being able to claim a collective Coloured identity. The self- destruction occurring inside the townships only aided apartheid in preventing Coloureds from uniting against the government.

For roughly fifteen years after District Six was classified a “White area,” a few Coloureds resisted the government’s manipulations and remained in their homes despite the increased pressure to move to Cape Flats’ townships. Yet, the government began to apply pressure on these stragglers in District Six by threatening to bulldoze down their houses with them inside. With this threat in mind, the few remaining residents that stayed had to quickly vacate the properties and leave their belongings, as the bulldozers rolled up to their houses. Mattera is one Coloured individual who experienced the direct brutality of the demolitions. He recalls how his family was notified to move out the night before two bulldozers came to destroy his grandfather’s house (Mattera, 2007, p. 17). The next morning, the demolition crew wasted no time, as they did not even stop for Mattera’s uncle to dismount several stuffed Springbok heads from the living room walls. While continuing to destroy the house, the driver heartlessly yelled to the uncle, “I’m only doing my job” (Mattera, 2007, p. 17). Even though Mattera is not from District Six, his story as a Coloured victim of apartheid removals proved to be the similar fate of District Six residents who decided to remain in the community all the way until demolitions began in 1980. Richard Rive claims that those who did not move out before demolition were often forced to sleep in the random places still standing at the end of the day. Some of these places even included the “top of leftover piles of the homes demolished,” and “under the bulldozers themselves,” as they sat turned off during the night (1986, p. 197). By the year 1982, District Six was leveled with only a few churches

and mosques standing (Layne, 2008, p. 55).

In the time frame spanning from 1966 to 1980, the government spent the equivalent of eight million U.S. dollars to remove more than 60,000 residents from District Six (McCormick, 2002, p. 37). To this day, the former residential lands of District Six largely remain vacant, as the Apartheid government abandoned the idea of building “12,000 housing units” for usage by Whites only (Bickford- Smith, 2016, p. 188). The vacant lands of District Six ultimately prove that the apartheid government saw Coloureds as a subordinate race, even if they were viewed as a pure Coloured, which needed to be removed from the White population inside Cape Town.

## Conclusion



The term "Coloured," in Cape Town was initially used in ambiguity to attempt to identify those who were neither fully European nor Indigenous. Lord Selbourne, Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River colonies, addressed the vagueness of the Coloured identity to General Smuts when he directly stated, "The problem of the treatment of the Coloured people is, indeed, sadly complicated by the fact that they vary in every shade of character and colour." Then he goes on to claim, "There are many Coloured people who are quite white inside, though they maybe Coloured on the outside. There are some, indeed, who are quite white on the outside also" (Mattera, 2007, p. xv). Therefore, individuals who fell under the broad umbrella term were allowed by Cape Liberalism some opportunities to ascend to an elite status in White society based on their merit in appealing to whiteness. In remaining a vague identity in Cape Town, ultimately "5% of Coloureds earned an elite status" through obtaining upper class jobs (Adhikari, 1997 p. 287).

The initial Coloured identity proved remarkable in defining a group who set aside their individual physical and cultural differences to see the greater advantage in unification. The Coloured identity flourished in communities like District Six that represented the plethora of cultures embodied within the identity, which at times even included a few Eastern European Jews. In these communities, Coloureds created systems of welfare in order to protect one another. As well, Coloureds strengthened their bonds with one another through developing new traditions, such as Lydia Williams who hosted Emancipation celebrations in the following decades after the abolishment of slavery to "commemorate their slave roots," and to honor one another for their decision to remain united (McCormick, 2002, p. 64).

The identity of a Coloured gained its rigidity shortly after the African removals of 1901, which dispersed African migrants into the Cape Flats. According to Duane Jethro, “to be in exile... on the Cape Flats was to dwell in a different place, a place of chaos and disorder, a place without meaning, without blessing, without holiness” (2009, p. 33). Therefore with Coloureds seeing their potential fate being the same as Africans, they began to create boundaries for a Coloured identity to mark a distinct separateness from the racial category of “African.” This notion is shown in the African People’s Organization basing its standards “to deal with the rights and duties of Coloured people of South Africa as distinguished from the Native races” (Adhikari, 1997, p. 284). Although, Coloureds’ relative position of power would quickly fall into rocky standing, as the urbanization of Cape Town in the twentieth century placed Coloureds in line for removals. However, Coloureds were somewhat able to fend off Whites from disrupting their communities, for they still bought into the Kanallawerk system to look after one another. Yet, once apartheid became official government policy in 1948, the downfall of District Six soon came with the passing of the Population Registration Act of 1950, as it explicitly divided Coloureds into separate categories.

After the Population Registration Act passed in 1950, Coloureds then tended to be referred to by their genetically mixed ancestry, rather than, their Non- European identities. This is shown in how Indians often times were separated from the Coloured race because of their supposed “pure blood lines.” Yet before apartheid, Indian people were seen as no different than other Coloureds (Mattera, 2007, p. 23). As a result, the long established Kanallawerk system was broken once the sub- categories of Coloureds were set to compete amongst one another to be seen as racially pure by apartheid society.

With the dismantling of Kanallawerk, Coloureds were left susceptible to the government's eventual relocations. Under the Group Areas Act of 1950, Coloureds were coerced and forced into living in the poor conditions of the crime-ridden Cape Flats' townships. The daily lives of Coloureds within the townships were plagued by the "lack of resources," "isolation," and "gang violence" (Jethro, 2009, p. 24). Therefore cohesion was not possible in the townships, which undermined the established values behind the Coloured identity.

With apartheid ended, Coloureds are still trying in the twenty-first century to rebuild District Six even as they often still try to rescue their identity from the connotations being "impure," and doubtful," which has now even perpetuated into the psyche of some Coloureds. In an interview with Coloureds living in post- apartheid society, one working class Coloured remarked, "We Coloured people are not a proper nation, we don't have our own culture or land that we can say is our own" (Adhikari, 2006, p. 479). At the same time, some Coloureds still hold on to racist views against Africans to differentiate themselves as being better. In the same interviews of living in post- apartheid, one Coloured woman still claims, "A kaffir, even if he wears a golden ring, still remains an ape... They have nothing, they say they have a culture, they don't have a culture, they're raw" (Adhikari, 2006, p. 479). Even in the twenty- five years after apartheid ended, these interviews suggest that Coloured identity has not just morphed into implying one's multi- racial mixture. Rather, because of its condemnation by apartheid, the identity has been plagued by insecurities of claiming hierarchies among certain ethnicities within the identity. As a result, those seen as more pure abandoned the Coloured identity in order to project their individual ethnic or cultural one(s), thus

leaving mixed- race individuals to now be the classified Coloured by default. Despite the tragedy in which the District Six removal contributed to the alienation of the Coloured identity, there are efforts today in Cape Town attempting to reconstruct the inclusive legacy left by District Six.

One Methodist church left standing in District Six now houses the District Six Museum. The museum, which has been in operation since 1994, “prides itself on being... dedicated to those who suffered the trauma of being forcibly removed from District Six” (Beyers, 2008, p. 368). As well, the founders purposefully designed the museum to represent “the memory of District Six as proof that people of different religions, nationalities and racial groups can live together” (Nanda, 2004, p. 384). According to Serena Nanda, the museum still “self- consciously take a strategic and principled political stance,” which is highlighted in the museum’s *Memorial Text* stating, “In remembering we do not want to recreate District Six but to work with its memory... of achievements and shames. We wish to remember so that we can all, together and by ourselves, rebuild a city which belongs to all of us in which all of us can live not as races but as people” (Beyers, 2008, p. 367). With efforts by advocacy groups, such as the District Six Museum, the inclusivity that the Coloured identity once held remains alive in memory. Perhaps one day, the memory of District Six will provide a model for South Africa’s future integration of all cultures, races, and ethnicities that presently reside in the country.

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