

Reflections on the continued resonance of race and identity in the postcolonial African state: The Case of Coloured identity in southern Africa.

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The building of a social and political system in which all citizens stand in the same relation to the state and feel equally incorporated into the structures of both political and economic power has been one of the major challenges confronting southern African societies since liberation. Nowhere has the postcolonial project of recomposing, restructuring and unifying the postcolonial state encountered more challenges than in the former settler colonies of the region where the settler/native dialectic was not only acute during the colonialism but the colonial legacy of race and racial inequalities among citizens and subjects have continued to haunt post-independence reform. Focussing on the experiences of the Coloured minority of southern Africa, this paper discusses how, through their reorganization of power and distribution of resources, the former settler colonies of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola and Zimbabwe and their post-independence discourses of citizenship and nationality have helped to reproduce racial identities and make race a salient feature of their societies. Specifically, it argues that postcolonial reforms like the agrarian changes in Zimbabwe, black economic empowerment and affirmative action in South Africa, while seeking to achieve justice and equity among citizens, have all helped to differentiate members of these societies, to define the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and to reproduce racial identities like Coloured. In fact, the way in which native/settler dialectic has characterised the postcolonial debate on reform, justice and equity in the former settler colonies of southern Africa has meant that race, as in the colonial period, rather than citizenship, has remained the main basis for inclusion and exclusion. Race, at the same time, has also remained the modality through which group relations are negotiated and the form through which political and economic struggles are fought.