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*MÉMOIRE DE MAÎTRISE*

THEME

DISCRIMINATION IN  
Peter ABRAHAM'S *MINE BO*

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## **Dedication**

This research work is dedicated:

- First and foremost, to God, the Almighty whose Holy Spirit has inspired me ever since my birth.
- Secondly, to my dear father OLADEYO Denis; my dear mother ODOUNFA Julienne and to those who are proud to be Africans.

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## INTRODUCTION

Africa is known as an underdeveloped continent. Yet the main objective of a state is to contribute to its development and ensure better welfare for its citizens. Thus, it must seek strategies to fight poverty and diseases, and to promote education and security. To achieve these goals, some conditions are required. The first is human resources, the existence of material resources, and we know that in Africa, there exist 28 % of the world's uranium, 34 % of its bauxite, 42 % of its cobalt, 60 % of its gold and 96 % of its diamonds<sup>1</sup>. The second condition is technology which is not well developed in Africa. The third condition is the role played in international exchange to earn foreign currencies, and we know that Africa is marginalized on the international market, the terms of exchange being fixed by Western (American) countries. Moreover, Africa's material resources are mismanaged by leaders and devalued on the international market, and finally are not profitable to the black continent. These economic facts are at the root of Africa's underdevelopment. But there is more.

Many socio-cultural and political phenomena jeopardise Africa's take off, since they determine the economic environment of Africa and concern the people, main actors of a country's development. Among these socio-political facts, there is an important namely racism, which especially has harmful consequences on Africans. This situation aroused the anger of some African writers and they began writing novels so as to rouse citizens' awareness. In addition, those writers devoted a great deal of energy to

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<sup>1</sup> Mazrui Ali, *The African Condition* Cambridge, University Press, 1990. p. 71

portray the slave trade and the different forms of discrimination Africans have undergone. On Anglophone side, such writers include the Nigerian Wole SOYINKA and the Kenyan NGUGI WATHIONG'O who strongly reacted to the European's misbehaviours towards Africans. The main concerns of the former are justice, freedom and good management whereas those of the latter are concentrated on land problems, tribalism and acts of resistance against colonisation. In other words, Africa's contact with White people and problems generated added to relationships among African tribes and strategies (education) to help Africa to take off. These themes are present in his novel *The River Between* (1965). The author himself declared in the speech he gave at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nairobi in 1970: "*I write about people. I am interested in their hidden lives, their fears and hopes, their loves and hates and how the very tension in their hearts affects their daily contact with other men: how, in other words the emotional strain on the man within interacts with the social reality*"<sup>2</sup>.

The South African novelist, Peter ABRAHAMS is also among those protest writers. He worked on racism and relationships between Blacks and Whites, especially in *Mine Boy* (1946).

This novel is a **stinging satire on apartheid politics**. It is a catalogue of pain and sufferings which the Blacks in South Africa have undergone through their colonial masters. Moreover, every Black in this country is dehumanised and sometimes reduced in status. The Blacks are to carry

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<sup>2</sup> Chesaina Jane C. "Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between and the African Oral Tradition*", in *Teaching of Literature in School*, p. 62

passes wherever they go. Failure to carry passes means violation of the law and subsequently a fine or imprisonment. This aspect of the book agrees rightly with this research work (of ours) whose theme is: “Discrimination in Peter ABRAHAMS’s *Mine Boy*”.

Before tackling the core elements of the work, it is necessary to have an overview of racism and its underlying features. This will consist in looking into the definitions pointed forward by some others as far as racism is concerned.

Racism is a sociological and an ethnological phenomenon. But it is also political. Etymologically this concept is composed of « race » and the suffix « ism ». The suffix « ism » gives the concept a pejorative connotation. We can clearly see that racism is a negative phenomenon. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, “race is any of several large subdivisions of mankind sharing physical characteristics, for example, colour of skin, colour and type of hair, shape of eyes and nose”<sup>3</sup>. Besides the same dictionary defines racism or racialism as the belief that human abilities, etc depend on race and that some people are better than others. Xuma is an example of an African illtreated in this novel. Discrimination as far as the above mentioned dictionary is concerned, is defined as the practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others: racial or sexual. Thus, Racial Discrimination can be considered as the way of treating somebody because of his or her race.

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<sup>3</sup> Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, sixth edition. Edited by Sally Wehmeier, p.959

The purpose of our study here is to contribute to a better understanding of the book by determining the links between the theme and concrete life events. We also wish to study the impacts of racial discrimination on Africa's development, and suggest strategies to fight it. The work essentially based on the book is divided into four parts. The first part entitled "Literature review, Background and Biography" sheds some light on what people said and wrote about racism in the first chapter, the author's life and career in the second chapter and on Michael Wade's point of view on ABRAHAM'S writings together with the social and political environments in which ABRAHAM'S grew up, in the third chapter. The second part in the dissertation deals with the contexts into which Peter ABRAHAM'S *Mine Boy* fits and its contents.

The third part is entitled "Manifestations of racism in South Africa as seen in *Mine Boy*". Here, the first chapter deals with racism, ethnocentrism and the implementation of apartheid and the second chapter is an attempt to illustrate the impacts of racism on South African. At the end we have the fourth part entitled the reactions of the South African to the condition created by racism and strategies to overcome this evil. At this stage, the first chapter shows how South Africans react to the condition created by racism and in chapter two we have strategies to overcome this evil.

**PART ONE: Literature review, background  
and biography**

## Chapter one: Literature review

A great deal of writings and speeches has been devoted to point out the phenomenon of racism in its forms all over the world. The most important representatives of such a trend are, without any doubt, Oyono Ferdinand's *Houseboy*, Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Neslon Mandela's *No Easy Walk To Freedom*, Martin Luther King's *I have a dream* and Jules Justinien's dissertation *Whose theme is Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Dictatorship, Three Africa's challenges as Dealt with Peter Abrahams, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka*.

Talking about *Houseboy*, the novel of Oyono Ferdinand, we can say that it is a novel about conversion. Thus with wit and subtlety, Oyono presents a microcosm of the colonial situation in the private life of a houseboy. He shows us how Africans are ill-treated by the Whites. Joseph Toundi starts his houseboy career with naive expectations of advancement from his White patrons, with naive faith in the White man's benevolence. He willingly gives devoted service to his masters but this devotion is never rewarded let alone reciprocated. For all that he does, he earns humiliation, physical suffering and finally death. However, before he dies, Toundi awakens to the fact that he has been a victim of a great deception and withdraws his faith in his White "benefactors". He dies a rebel and through this rebellion, harmless as it is, he rehabilitates his personal integrity. He is glad to die in Spanish Guinea, out of the way of his treacherous masters. It is this complete reversal of attitudes and the experience that makes it possible that forms the subject of the novel. Toundi's disillusion comes through a slow and painful process which we begin to perceive clearly when we start reading the second exercise book of his notes. By the end of the first notebook we are no longer listening to the simple-minded and trusting Toundi of the beginning. Toundi's simplicity and naivety is made a vehicle of Oyono's acute irony. The young houseboy is made to record his experience with pride instead

of bitterness. His attitude is a result of the systematic brainwashing to which he has been subjected by his master, Father Gilbert. The relationship between the master and servant is brought out in entries. He has been taught to hate himself and his colour. His contact with Christianity has conditioned him to believe that everything good comes from the Whites and that everything black is primitive. He hopes to live a better and more civilized life through his contact with the White man. However, beneath this curiosity lies an assumption which is inevitable in a child brought up under colonial rule: White men are better people than blacks.

When Father Gilbert dies, things change drastically for Toundi. Since he no longer has the option of returning to his community, he has to look for a job within the community. During his interview with Commandant Decasy for a job, we realize that Toundi has already changed a great deal. He has learnt to tell lies to the White man because that is the only way to find favour with him. It is because he pretends to be religious that he gets a servant's job. His stay at the commandant's house eventually opens his eyes to the fact that White men are not the gods he thought they were. When the commandant's wife starts sleeping with the prison officer, M. Moreau, Toundi finds it difficult to hide his contempt and feeling of moral superiority over her. Every time he meets her a faint smile develops at the corner of his mouth. This, together with the somewhat bizarre reaction to the discovery that the commandant is not circumcised, leads Toundi to feel a moral superiority over the Whites and thereafter he is no longer awed by them. Because the masters are aware that the servant has begun to find fault with their life they feel he is a threat to their security. It becomes implicitly agreed that he must be got rid of. But his habitual loyalty keeps him on until he reaps its bitter reward death. After Toundi's arrest, events move hurriedly towards the tragic end. He is interrogated, tortured, starved and finally mortally wounded.

These segregated behaviours are also noticed in their environments. Because of the attitude of the Whites there is no real contact between them and the society in the middle of which they live. The two communities live side by side without communication except through kicks, whips, slaps and insulting commands. Nothing but mistrust exists between the two colour groups. We see this in Father Vandermayer who never lets his African assistants take the Sunday collection. Out of necessity, however, one day he lets Toundi take the collection. Afterwards he takes Toundi to his room, undresses him and searches him. He then makes one of the catechists stay with Toundi throughout the day just in case the latter has swallowed any of the coin. Another incident which illustrates the same absurd suspicion is when Sophie's lover swears to take her to the hospital after she has accidentally slept in the same hut with Toundi. Besides in Dangan, life is strictly segregated including church services and cemeteries. This segregation is designed to protect the image which the Whites believed they project to the Natives, little knowing that the natives see through their pretences. Any native who is discovered to be knowing what he is not supposed to know has to pay a very heavy price probably his life, as happens in the case of Toundi. Everything takes place against a background of suspicion and misunderstanding and this background underlies both the humour and the tragedy of the novel. Although Toundi lives within the White community he is never admitted into it beyond the physical fact. He therefore views the life of the White man from the outside. Sometimes he confesses his failure to interpret their gestures and sometimes we see the Whites misinterpreting the gestures of the blacks. The turning point in the war of nerves between Madame Decazy and Toundi comes when the latter is seen turning rubber tubes in the bedroom with a broom. Toundi does not know that they are contraceptives but his mistress misunderstands the gesture and flares up. Toundi is made to learn simple things through bitter and harsh experiences, to learn serious things through comic incidents and to miss other things through his ignorance as the Whites miss a lot

of things through their arrogance. And it is because of this arrogance that they finally kill him for his knowledge.

Then; *A Walk In The Night*; Without pathos, is a short novel written by the South African Alex La Guma .It creates a powerful impression of the rhythm of violence which characterizes South Africans' life. The novel opens with a rather frightening scene in which a young man recklessly jumps off a moving truck and throws himself in the middle of a busy street. He ignores the horns and the curses of the drivers and dodges through the traffic until he reaches the pavement. Here begins his evening of aimless walking from café to café, smoking cheap cigarettes, drinking cheap wine and quarrelling. Earlier in the day he has lost his job because he returned the insult of a White factory boss. The young man keeps swearing saying that he will get him, but deep dawn he knows he won't and because of this frustration he commits a pointless murder that same evening. Michael Adonis' wanderings which culminate in the killing of Doughty, a retired actor, his escape from the police and the immediate effect of this experience upon his life, form the central plot of the novel. Subplots develop as Michael Adonis crosses at different points the unending flow of derelicts, bums, loungers, domestic workers off duty, loiterers, FAH-FEE numbers runners, petty gangsters, thugs-and of course the police. The principal walkers in the night are Michael Adonis, Raalt, the White constable who is on patrol duty in Cape Town's District Six and Willieboy, a habitual loiterer and petty criminal who gets killed by Raalt during the hunt for the murderer of Doughty. As the lives of these people cross each other during the night they meet a wide range of District dwellers. All these bar-tenders, drunkards, loungers, sailors and labourers are in some way or another victims of "the foul crimes" of their society.

Doughty, the old drunkard ex-actor, speaks for numerous members of his society when he recites the words from *Hamlet*:

I am thy father's spirit, doomed for a certain time to walk  
the night... and ... and for the day confined to fast in fires,  
till the foul crimes done in my days of nature ... nature are  
burnt and purged away...<sup>4</sup>

This retired actor, who is dying of alcoholism, diabetes and old age, before he is finished off by Michael Adonis, has once been a famous man. Now he is left trapped in the *atelier* of a derelict tenement waiting for death which comes even sooner than expected. When Doughty recalls the words of the ghost in *Hamlet* he is recalling them for all the characters in the novel, all of whom, in one way or another, experience the terrors of the South African night, where in a life punctuated by violent encounters, imprisonments and murders, the people fast in fires of hatred, fear and frustration.

The rhythm of life in District Six, Cape Town, is one of violence, and the incidents, the language and imagery of the novel are carefully chosen to give the reader a lasting impression of this harsh rhythm. Michael Adonis, the protagonist is described as “trailing his tattered raincoat behind him like a sword-slashed, bullet-ripped banner just rescued from battle”. Wherever he goes he seems to be involved in a desperate fight in which he is doomed to lose. As soon as he loses his job he becomes a potential recruit for the gangster groups that roam the streets of Cape Town. He spends most of the evening dodging and resisting the urgings of the petty criminals who want to assign ‘job’ to him. Before the night is over he has succumbed to their urging and sets off with one of the gangs ‘to fix some job’.

Willieboy is addicted to habitual violence. To the gangster groups who want to recruit him he says: “*No, man, me I don't work. Never worked a bogger yet. Whether you work or don't, you live anyway, somehow. I haven't starved to*

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<sup>4</sup> Alex La Guma's *A Walk In The Night*, African Writers Series, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1962 p.28

*death, have I? Work. Eff work.*”<sup>5</sup> With a knife in his pocket he is always wandering aimlessly, getting involved in quarrels and fights and occasionally robbing men who are weaker than himself. We see him knocking down a harmless drunkard, Mr. Green, picking a quarrel with sailors in a café and finally we see him dying violently. Police constable Raalt is perhaps the most sharply drawn figure in the novel. He is the incarnation of the fears and complexes of the White man in South Africa. He is dehumanized instrument of supremacy and terror. Raalt is frustrated by nights of boredom, of driving around on patrol, armed to the teeth, without locating the enemy. He wants to come to grips with something which can absorb his anger against the failure of his marriage. His wife has grown seedy, dull and boring and she no longer cares for him. What Raalt would really like to do is “wring her bloody neck” but he is afraid of possible consequences. She is a White woman. Raalt is therefore compelled to transfer his aggression to the non-Whites, the necks of whom he can wring without any fear of consequences. And with this urge driving him he goes around bullying non-Whites in the bars and on the road until the discovery of Doughty’s dead body gives him the opportunity to fulfil his wish. His inquiries are rough and hurried. As soon as he learns that there was a man in a yellow shirt who ran out of the corridor of Doughty’s tenement he decides to get hold of any coloured in a yellow shirt. He embarks on the chase with brutal efficiency and does not rest until he has shot Willieboy twice in the chest.

So the way Raalt, Adonis and Willieboy live through the evening shows parallel transfers of aggression. All these characters are victims of a system that denies them the facility of living in harmony with fellow human beings and their society. Their failure to see themselves as integral parts of any living community

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<sup>5</sup> Alex La Guma’s *A Walk In The Night*, African Writers Series, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1962, p.4

is their plight to which the novel suggests no solution. Hence the sense of doom which overhangs the novel.

As for *Heart of Darkness*; a novel of Africa; written by Joseph Conrad, one can clearly see how Whites consider Africa as a jungle and their thoughts of God's given mission. The story opens with an unnamed narrator on board a sailing yacht anchored in the Thames Estuary downstream from London and near Gravesend. He is with four friends, and dusk is falling as they wait for the turning of the tide. The narrator briefly describes the others, all of whom seem to be middle-aged men. One is called Charlie Marlow the only one who still followed the sea. Marlow makes a comment about London having been "one of the dark places on earth", and then begins a story of how he once took a job as captain of a river steamboat in Africa.

Marlow describes his securing of the job and that when he arrives in Africa, he immediately dislikes the other White men he encounters, who work for the company, as they strike him as shallow and untrustworthy. The company's main business seems to be buying ivory from the natives with beads, cloth and bits of brass. They speak often of the company's most remarkable agent, a man known only as Kurtz, stationed up-river, who has quite a reputation in many ways and who seems commonly regarded with a sense of mystery. Kurtz is apparently a completely ungovernable ivory collector, revealed much later to be also "*essentially a great musician*", *journalist, skilled painter and "niversal genius"*<sup>6</sup>. Marlow arrives up-river at the Central Trading Station run by a manager who is an unwholesome, conspiratorial character. Marlow discovers one day at the Station that his steamship has been sunk and secretly suspects the manager of causing the accident. He spends three months repairing it, including a frustrating wait for spare parts. His first assignment is a voyage

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph CONRAD, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Popular Classics, 1994. First published 1902 p.103

up-river to Kurtz's station to collect ivory and Kurtz himself, who seems to have gone rogue. There is a rumour regarding Kurtz's being ill; this makes the delays repairing the ship all the more inconvenient. During the delay, Marlow overhears the manager expressing his fearful distrust of Kurtz, who appears to be a threat to the manager's powerful position, and how he wishes to execute a particular one of Kurtz's minions. Eventually Marlow, the manager, and three other White agents set out, with a crew of blacks from a cannibal tribe, on a long and difficult voyage up the river.

As they near Kurtz's station they unexpectedly find a hut by the river with stacked firewood and a note saying that the wood is for them and that they should proceed up the river cautiously. Shortly after the steamer has taken on the firewood it is surrounded by a dense fog. When the fog clears, the ship is abruptly attacked by an unseen band of natives, who shoot arrows from the safety of the forest. They kill one of the crew who, although black, Marlow describes sentimentally and whose death he recounts with great sadness. Although Marlow suspects that Kurtz and his associates have already been massacred, the steamship surprisingly reaches Kurtz's unharmed station, which is early surrounded by a collection of natives' severed heads on poles. Marlow and his crew are first met by a guileless Russian traveler, who is reminiscent of a harlequin because of his motley like clothing. The Russian assures them that everything is fine and informs them that he is the one who lived in the downstream hut and left the firewood. The Russian, a lone and aimless trader in the wilderness, came across Kurtz's station unexpectedly and has become something of a disciple of Kurtz, a man who seems to have the power to dominate anyone he meets. Marlow and his companions find that Kurtz has persuaded the natives to treat him as a god, and has led brutal raids in the surrounding territory in search of ivory. Marlow also recounts the brief appearance at the station of an awe-inspiring and enigmatic African woman,

who may be Kurtz's mistress. The Russian, learning through Marlow of the manager's prior talk of executing him, quietly flees the station, though not before admitting that it was Kurtz, refusing to be taken away from his god like throne in the wilderness, who ordered Marlow's boat to be attacked.

Due to Kurtz's ailing condition, however, Marlow and his crew take him aboard their ship themselves and depart. Kurtz is lodged in Marlow's pilot-house and Marlow begins to see that Kurtz, although skeletal due to his failing health, is every bit as grandiose as previously described, especially with regards to the enthralling tone of his speech. However, Marlow finds himself disappointed with Kurtz's childish schemes for fame and fortune. During this time, Kurtz gives Marlow a collection of papers and a photograph for safekeeping, as both witnessed the manager going through Kurtz's belongings. The photograph is of a beautiful young woman whom Marlow correctly assumes is Kurtz's fiancée.

One night Marlow happens upon Kurtz, obviously near death. As Marlow comes closer with a candle, Kurtz seems to experience a supreme moment of complete knowledge and speaks his last words: "*The horror! The horror!*"<sup>7</sup> Marlow believes this to be Kurtz's reflection on the weight of the terrible actions he took in his life. Marlow does not tell the others immediately of Kurtz's death; the news is instead presented to the whole crew scornfully by the manager's child-servant who has peered inquisitively into the room with Kurtz's body. Marlow later returns to Europe and is confronted by many people seeking objects and thoughts of Kurtz. Marlow visits Kurtz's fiancée about a year later; she is still in mourning and strongly maintains naïve notions of his virtue. When she asks him about Kurtz's death and his final words, Marlow is unable to tell her the truth, instead telling her that his last words were "*your*

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph CONRAD, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Popular Classics, 1994. First published 1902 p.106

name”<sup>8</sup>. The story concludes back on the boat on the Thames, with a description of how the river seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.

Besides, one cannot deal with racial discrimination and forget famous person like the SOUTH African Nelson Hlahla Mandela. In fact, he is a person who fight and even went to jail for the freedom of the black South africans. He wrote *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, an autobiography of his, to explain to those who are not living in South Africa to be aware not only of the bad living condition of the black South Africans but also how he himself, suffered. As far as Martin Luther King is concerned, he defended black South Americans and even led marches. The greatest march he led when he was alive was held in washington on August 28, 1963 with more than 200,000 people. He opened his famous speech that day with “*I have a dream*”. With that speech, he called for the liberation of the Blacks who were still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. He also thought that things would change in the future if African were united. He said:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self- evident, that all men are created equal”. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.<sup>9</sup>

Finally HOUNKPATIN Jules justinien Mahougnon in his dissertation whose theme was: *Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Dictatorship, Three Africa’s challenges, as dealt with Peter Abrahams, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o and Wole*

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph CONRAD, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Popular Classics, 1994. First published 1902 p.110

<sup>9</sup> Martin Luther King Jr, *I Have a Dream*, Washington, August 28,1963

*Soyinka* has tried to point out their causes and manifestations. He also tried to make a link between them and suggested strategies to overcome them.

## **Chapter two: Peter ABRAHAMS' life and career**

### **A. Peter ABRAHAMS' life**

Peter Henry ABRAHAMS was born on March 19, 1919, in Vrededorp, near Johannesburg, South Africa, the son of a black African father and a mixed French/African mother. This mulatto background made ABRAHAMS “coloured”, according to racial divisions in South Africa. Though at the time of his birth, apartheid was nearly 30 years away from being institutionalized, racial discrimination was endemic and, as “coloured”, ABRAHAMS was considered just barely above the lowest class, “Bantu” or Black. His father, James Henry ABRAHAMS Deras, had migrated to South Africa from Ethiopia and died when ABRAHAMS was just a boy. His death sent the family already on the brink of poverty even deeper into destitution. ABRAHAMS' mother, Angelina Du Plessis, struggled with poor health and was often unable to work. As a result ABRAHAMS, along with his elder siblings Harry and Maggie, was shuffled between the households of extended family members in the slums surrounding Johannesburg.

In order to pay his way into school he began to work odd jobs at a very young age, including stints as a tinsmith's helper, a kitchen worker, and a dishwasher. When he finally began school at the age of nine, he was like most children in the slums illiterate.

However, ABRAHAMS quickly learned how to read and made up for lost time by immersing himself in English classics such as the Romantic poets and Shakespeare, as well as any other books he could get his hands on. Books were a welcome refuge from the harshness of his daily life and he wanted more. As fate would have it, ABRAHAMS soon landed a job at the Bantu Men's Social Centre. There, he was introduced to the works of black American writers and thinkers such as Langston Hughes and W.E.B. Du Bois.

Deeply inspired by the world of literature, ABRAHAMS began writing short stories at the age of 11. His literary training expanded when he enrolled in Grace Dieu, a Diocesan school located near the northern city of Pietersburg. A religious training ground for would-be teachers, the school exposed ABRAHAMS to the literary history of the ruling Afrikaner class. Impressed by the beauty of the language, ABRAHAMS tried his hand at writing verse in Afrikaans. He was also strongly influenced by the literary aspects of the Bible. Elements of this religious influence can be seen in some of his earliest novels.

ABRAHAMS left Grace Dieu after two years and returned to Johannesburg where he enrolled at St. Peter's Secondary School. A well-regarded school for non-Whites, St. Peter's was home to a number of progressive thinkers actively seeking ways to deal with the oppression of racism. ABRAHAMS was particularly impressed by the Marxists; some of his earlier works were decidedly Marxist in tone. While a student at both Grace Dieu and St. Peter's, ABRAHAMS published several stories and poems. Meanwhile, ABRAHAMS had left school early in a fruitless attempt to find work as a journalist. Marxist papers found him too conservative, black papers found him too radical, and White papers simply would not hire a non-White. Unable to find writing work and with racial tension in South Africa reaching a boiling point, ABRAHAMS decided it was time to leave. "*I had to escape or slip into that negative destructiveness that is the offspring of bitterness and frustration,*"<sup>10</sup> he wrote in his 1953 book *Return to Goli*.

## **B. Peter ABRAHAMS' career**

In 1939 ABRAHAMS took a job on a merchant marine ship and spent two years at sea before finally disembarking in England. He never returned to live in South Africa. In England he became a regular contributor to the *Daily*

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Return to Goli*, Faber and Faber, 1953, Pp 13-15

*Worker*, a Communist paper, and married his first wife, Dorothy Pennington. He soon began pursuing writing with a vengeance. He was determined to reveal to the outside world the harrowing consequences of the racial divisions that marred the South African social and political landscape. Not only was he concerned with how governmental policies oppressed non-Whites, but also how non-Whites often wittingly became part of the problem, drawing divisions amongst themselves and retreating into violence.

Three of his earliest works illustrated this duality: 1942's short story collection *Dark Testament*, 1945's novel *Song of the City*, and 1946's *Mine Boy*. The latter, described by *Black Issues Book Review* as "a prophetic and revealing novel in which his portrayal of South African racism predated the formal declaration of apartheid,"<sup>11</sup> was the first literary work to address the dehumanising effects of the South African racial system. The book established ABRAHAMS as an international literary force and went onto become a classic. With its publication, ABRAHAMS was also making a political statement. South African "coloureds" often held themselves apart from "Bantus," effectively reinforcing the racial divisions imposed by the Afrikaner government. With *Mine Boy* as well as his subsequent work ABRAHAMS sided with his black countrymen and declared the fight against racism to be something that all non-Whites should take part in. As ABRAHAMS' literary career took off, his first marriage floundered and he divorced in 1948. However, in June of that same year he married artist Daphne Elisabeth Miller, whom he later credited as the love of his life in his 2000 book, *The Black Experience in the Twentieth Century*. The couple would have three children together: Anne, Aron and Naomi.

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<sup>11</sup> *Black Issues Book Review*, May 2001, p.58

ABRAHAM'S next novel, *The Path of Thunder*, explored interracial love in South Africa and was published in 1948, the year that apartheid was adopted as law in South Africa. *Wild Conquest*, a historical novel which rethought the role of South Africa's black ethnic groups in the development of modern South Africa was published in 1950. In 1952 ABRAHAM'S returned to South Africa and Kenya as a newspaper correspondent for London's *Observer* and the *New York Herald Tribune*. From his travels grew 1953's *Return to Goli*, a powerful commentary on race relations. This was followed by his 1954 autobiography *Tell Freedom* which covered the first 20 years of his life. His next novel, *A Wreath for Udomo*, was published in 1956 just as African independence from European colonial rule was getting underway. It was a fictionalized examination of the difficulties African governments would encounter as they had to choose between the financial benefits of establishing ties with apartheid South Africa versus the sacrificing of those benefits by supporting black liberation movements. It presented a very pessimistic outlook for post colonial Africa that in many instances sadly proved to be prophetic.

In 1955, ABRAHAM'S was hired to write a book about Jamaica for the British government for its Corona Library series. During the course of researching the book 1957's *Jamaica: An Island Mosaic* ABRAHAM'S fell in love with the country and in 1956 he and his family relocated there. "*The land is glorious, the people, at their best (and we were fortunate to have known some of the best) without peer: open, warm-hearted, imaginative, and with great generosity of spirit,*"<sup>12</sup> he told the *World and I*. He soon became interested in Jamaican politics and began working as a news commentator for Radio Jamaica. From 1958 to 1962 he also held the post of editor of the Jamaica based *West Indian Economist*. In the late 1970s, he was chairman for Radio Jamaica and helped restructure the business to become more profitable.

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<sup>12</sup> Larson Charles R., *World and I*, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002, p. 260

However, he continued to write. In 1965 he published *A night of Their Own*, described by Wade as “a response to the crushing defeat inflicted on the South African liberation movement.”<sup>13</sup> This was followed by ABRAHAMS’ first novel not based in South Africa, 1966’s *This Island Now*. In it, ABRAHAMS explores the role of history and race in the politics of a fictional Caribbean island, presenting a very dismal forecast for the future of Caribbean nations. Following its publication, ABRAHAMS did not produce another novel for 19 years. Then he returned to the literary forefront with his 1985 historical novel the *View from Coyaba*, which follows four generations of a Jamaican family and the ongoing struggle for black autonomy. Though it was well-received by critics, some dismissed it as more a political treatise than a novel. Throughout the 1990s, ABRAHAMS once again turned his attention to political commentary, journalism, and travel writing. As he explained to the *World and I*, he had no regrets about this shifting of focus from fiction to journalism. In addition his next major foray into literature was *The Black Experience in the Twentieth Century*, which is an Autobiography and Meditation published in 2000. Despite the ambitious title, the novel is a final installment in ABRAHAMS’ autobiographical series. It is a moving farewell from a man who has lived and has much to impart. His commitment to truth and the telling of freedom has not been easy, but he dared to hope, write, and speak.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael WADE, “Peter Abrahams at 70”, *Southern African Review of Books* June/July 1989

## Chapter three: Influences on Peter ABRAHAMS writings

### A. Michael WADE'S point of view on ABRAHAMS' writings

ABRAHAMS' writings have greatly drawn the attention of some readers. Michael WADE is a bright example. The latter, a South African, gave his point of view about the author's books when he was seventy years old.

Thus when *Tell Freedom* was published, Michael was ripe for its impact, as he said:

“From the first word I knew that there was the truth, that this was the real happening all round me every day, that this was the truth, that this was the real childhood of South Africa. Even the dorp of Elsburg in which the young ABRAHAMS was fostered might have been the village of that name that sprawled unbeautifully across the hills just east of our town. The book changed my life”<sup>14</sup>.

But there was more to come. Soon after, *Return to Goli* was there. However, WADE was both mystified and attracted by the descriptions of Peter's life in Europe and England. But ABRAHAMS own ringing declaration of ideological fealty to liberal humanism in the opening pages where he began with the archetypal conversation on the aeroplane with the White South African who wouldn't believe that the author was also South African had no meaning for Michael at this stage. It was years later, in the second half of the 1960s, when he began in England, himself and exile from South Africa by that time to write his book on ABRAHAMS' work that he discovered the intense emotion those books aroused in the White South African English speaking literary establishment. The paucity of whose achievement had to be concealed and

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<sup>14</sup> Michael WADE, *Southern African Review of Books* June/July 1989

defended before the emotional power and truth of the author's statement in a slither of patronising.

Note that WADE was a good scholar of Peter's work as he described deeply all his works. Thus, he found *Mine Boy* (1946) as a reinscription of the urban reality Peter had tried in his first effort. The same person appreciated the style, the way, especially the literary genre which is literary life and thought he used in his works. In fact, Peter considered the urgent problems and the realities of the dawn of independence in other parts of the continent to write his novels. Such talents influenced some other important personalities. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, for example, told Michael WADE in an interview, when he asked him about Peter literary influences: "*Peter ABRAHAMS, I first read him at university when I was an undergraduate. I read also almost all his novels. He inspired us because, as Ekwensi has pointed out, he suggested the possibility of an African living by writing.*"<sup>15</sup> However, ABRAHAMS was a central factor, without, perhaps, knowing it, in the development of the new Anglophone African literature.

Finally, Michael thought that the author's last writing till 1989, the *view from Coyaba* turns out to be a summation of his writings. It will be a magnificently consistent final movement to the symphony of a lifetime's thought and writing. But if there is still more to come, we the readers will be that much more rewarded.

## **B. The social and political environments of Peter's writings**

Black South African literature is closely tied to political developments, which it mirrors and which either advance or retard its growth. An appreciation of black South African literature, at any stage in its development, requires some

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<sup>15</sup> Michael WADE, *Southern African Review of Books* June/July 1989

knowledge of the corresponding political developments. Thus, born in 1919 in Johannesburg, started school at eleven, remained in South Africa, his own country until he was twenty before travelling to England in 1939, from where he went to settle in Jamaica, Peter ABRAHAMS experienced the four different periods of South Africa's contemporary history such as Union (1910), Apartheid (1948), Republic (1961) and the Law of Majority (1994).

Although he was abroad, he was tried to keep track of political developments in South Africa. The theme of the politics in plural societies such as South Africa and the West Indies is central in his work. South Africa, in particular, has provided him with the setting for his novels. *A night of their own* (1965) deals with political developments in South Africa after Sharpeville. In fact, Sharpeville, Vanderbijl Park, Langa and other Black residential areas were caused by the application of the Pass Laws. Commenting on passes as a perennial source of grievance among Africans, Edward Roux writes:

“Anti-pass law agitation in some form or other never completely dies down in South Africa, for the pass law is a perennial source of grievance among Africans. The pass laws held the African people in conditions of abject poverty and subjection. The pass laws were the cause of sharp racial friction between the peoples of South Africa; upheld the cheap labour system which resulted in malnutrition, starvation and disease; and filled goals with innocent people, thus creating widespread crime. The pass laws, which had become the symbol of the African people's oppression, roused Africans to new heights of protest and plunged South Africa into Sharpeville crisis, “so that the name Sharpeville has become, like Amritsar, St Bartholomew and Peterloo; a symbol of massacre” .

Passes remain a burning issue among Africans and the subject recurs among Black writers of every generation.<sup>16</sup>

However, at a press conference in Johannesburg on Friday, 18 March 1960, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, leader of the Pan-African Congress (P A C), a splinter group from the African National Congress (ANC), announced the launching of an anti-pass campaign, which would begin on the following Monday. P A C organizers met with their greatest success in Vereeniging, about thirty five miles south of Johannesburg, and in Cape Town. In Vanderbijl Park, the centre of South Africa's steel industry, several thousand people gathered outside the police station and demanded to be arrested for being without their passes. The police tried to disperse them with tear gas. Some people retaliated with stones and the police opened fire, killing two people. The demonstrators scattered and dispersed. In Sharpeville, a number of demonstrators had been swelling outside the police station since morning. Around midday police reinforcements from neighbouring stations arrived. The police opened the fire on demonstrators and continued to shoot as the crowd fled. One hundred and eighty-seven people were wounded, including forty women and eighty children. Sixty-seven died, many of them shot in the back. In Langa, near Cape Town, police with batons charged a crowd of about 10.000 people gathered to hear the official reply to their demands for better wages and an end to the pass system. Some people resisted and the police opened the fire, killing two and wounding several others. The people turned on the police and set government buildings on fire. In fact, demonstrations and strikes broke out in many parts of South Africa. The government retaliated in a way which was to have far reaching consequences for African politics and culture. Government spokes-men circulated reports to the effect that instructions had been issued to the police on

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964) p. 320

26 March to stop arresting people for pass offences. However, the police intensified their secret raids on suspected leaders of the African resistance movement. They arrested many strike organizers and their followers. Armed vehicles patrolled the townships and public meetings were banned throughout the country. In defiance, Phillip Kgosana, a 23-year-old student at the University of Cape Town who was also the regional secretary of the P A C in the Western Cape, marched at the head of a column of 30,000 Blacks on Wednesday, 30 March. They marched the ten miles from the townships to the Houses of the Parliament to demand the release of all the people who had been arrested in connection with the anti-pass campaign, an end to police harassment, and an interview with the Minister of Justice. The police promised to arrange the interview and asked Kgosana to dismiss the demonstrators, which he did. Two days later he was arrested and the promised interview never took place.

On the same Wednesday as the march ended a state of emergency was declared. The Minister of justice, Mr. Erasmus, armed himself with sweeping powers including the power to detain indefinitely without trial any person suspected of engaging in subversive activities against the state. Heavy penalties were imposed for distributing any publications or pamphlets critical of the state. In the next three years these censorship laws were to be tightened and applied in such a way as to make no distinction between imaginative writing and political writing of a purely polemical nature. In addition, the Unlawful Organization Act was passed on 8 April 1960, and both the ANC and the P A C were outlawed. By the middle of April Africans who had burnt their passes, following the example of Chief Albert Luthuli, President of the ANC, who had burnt his publicly, had begun to apply for new ones, as a result of police intimidation. An attempt by the ANC, now operating underground, to organize a general strike on 19 April met with little support. African morale was low and remained so for almost a decade during which government repression intensified. This low

morale, in the years intervening before the rise of Black Consciousness, is a recurring theme in Black Consciousness literature.

In 1962, the General Law or Sabotage Act, providing for house arrest and the banning of individuals suspected of subversive activities, was passed. To this was added the General Law or No Trial Act of 1963, providing for detention without trial or charges being laid for ninety days, with these days increased to one hundred and eighty in 1965 and subsequently made indefinite by the Internal Security Act of 1976. The rights of *habeas corpus* were completely waived.

The African resistance movement modified its strategies as government repression intensified. In 1961, the liberation struggle entered a new phase, after its leaders had been convinced that passive resistance was no longer viable. The A N C formed a sabotage organization called M K or *Umkhonto we sizwe* (the Spear of the Nation), with Nelson Mandela as its chief of operations. M K began as an organization dedicated to symbolic act of sabotage against government installations. P O Q O, a Cape based organization with P A C links, emerged late in 1962 and carried out attacks on White settlements in the Cape. However, with a minimum of formal leadership after the arrest of Sobukwe and his ablest lieutenants, P O Q O was soon eliminated; many of its members were banned or arrested, while others fled into exile. In July 1963, the police swooped on the hideout of M K in Rivonia, where members of the organization's high command were living. The Rivonia Trial, which ran until May 1964, ended with life sentences being passed on Nelson Mandela, already serving a five-year sentence with Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Abraham Fischer, and four others for incitement and leaving the country illegally. Thereafter, the organization of the A N C and the P A C fell into the hands of Oliver Tambo and Potlako Leballo, respectively, who had both gone into exile. By 1966, the old African resistance movement inside South Africa had been effectively suppressed. Radical

opposition politics, outside the framework of apartheid, became hazardous. This repression is reflected in the sparseness of radical literature, written by Blacks inside South Africa, which addresses itself to the political problems of this period. The Sharpeville and Rivonia eras, however, also brought the protest tradition in South Africa literature, which flourished mostly in exile, to its zenith.

Due to this, Peter ABRAHAMS showed us how the main protagonist of his novel *a night of their own*, Richard Nkosi returns to South Africa as a courier for the underground resistance movement. Then engaged in acts of sabotage against the South Africa Regime, Richard Nkosi personifies the people's irresponsible craving for freedom: the security police fail to capture him, just as they fail to destroy the urge for freedom among the oppressed. His significance grows as the repressive measures increases and their campaign intensifies.

Besides, *a Night of their own* is dedicated to Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and other freedom fighters. It takes cognizance of their gradual despair in bringing about a non-violence revolution and shows how they came to acknowledge the inevitability of a violent uprising. ABRAHAMS does not condone guerrilla warfare but shows how political discontent, where an opposing side proves intransigent, inevitably culminates in violence. There is in the novel a strong didactic element, which is one of its major weaknesses. Richard Nkosi is not convincing as a character. As he moves through the Indian section of the Congress Alliance, he reveals the uneasy relations, suspicions, and prejudices which bedevil relations between the various sectors of the people, African, Indians, and others engaged in the liberation struggle. However, nothing ever ruffles him personally. He is the embodiment of an ideal and his image is blown beyond recognizable human proportions. ABRAHAMS embodies his vision for a multiracial future in South Africa on Nkosi, so that, the very ideals such as freedom, **unity** etc. that are propagated are almost

deprived of their feasibility and credibility. The failure of Abraham's novel reflects the shortcomings of a great deal of South African literature, as Lewis Nkosi has observed:

“The South African situation provides ABRAHAMS with ready-made plots and heroes from Sharpeville, Rivonia, and other real episodes. These leave him little scope to exercise his imagination in recreating character and situation, except in some melodramatic direction. The situation is generally made to override character. Writers in exile trying to depict conditions in the home country labour under another strain and the longer the period of their exile the more obvious their shortcomings become. Writing by exiles is usually marked by political overtones. Distance sharpens criticism and perspective, but the conclusions are not always realistic. The exile writers suffer from having been removed from their primary audience and sources. The political overtones of their work, at once more radical and less realistic are as much the driving force of exile literature as the cause of its deterioration and banality”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lewis Nkosi, “*Fiction by Black South Africans*”, *Home and Exile* (London: Longmans, 1965) p.126

**Part two: The contexts and the contents of the  
novel**

## **Chapter one: The contexts of *Mine Boy***

### **A. The setting of the novel**

The novel is set in South Africa. All actions take place in South Africa where the Whites are inflicting pains on the Blacks. This novel therefore is a catalogue of exactly what has happened in South Africa. The incidents take place in different parts of Johannesburg like Malay Camp, Vrededorp and the street. Different types of people are involved in the incident of the country. There are three main groups of people in South Africa, they are: the Blacks that's means the inhabitants, the Whites and the Coloured. The Coloured are those who are born of a mixture of White and Black parents.

However, what Peter ABRAHAMS is doing with *Mine Boy* is to tell those not living in South Africa to see and to know the sufferings of blackmen in South Africa. He wants us to know the various responses of the blacks to their unfortunate conditions. A strange policy of government is used in South Africa. The policy is called "apartheid policy". The meaning of the policy is that the tree main groups living in South Africa live separately, so that each people can develop according to their tradition. It then deprives the Blacks from having equal right with their White counterparts. The apartheid policy is an obnoxious policy that gives all the power of controlling the people and riches of South Africa to the White minority. The overall effect of the policy is that it gives enjoyment to the Whites and great suffering to the Blacks. The Whites live in the decent parts of the country that means Johannesburg where there is, electricity, pipe-borne water, good streets and hygienic living and good eating houses. The Blacks on their own live in slums where the condition of those areas are bad and human beings are treated like animals. At times they kill themselves because of money, jealousies, rivalries and other resentments, the Whites also

use their police to kill innocent Blacks or beat, harass and even imprison them without any offence.

## **B. Socio-economic and political contexts of the novel**

The 1946 novel *Mine Boy*, by Peter ABRAHAMS is certainly demonstrative of the political, cultural and economic in South Africa, and in any African country where imperialism and exploitation continue to exist. With this offer, the symbolic alternatives for the poor Black as represented by Xuma are clear. He can lose his life and soul to the capitalist system which is epitomized in the mines, or he can become corrupted through the business of helping other poor, miserable Blacks to become numb through the use of alcohol, thereby corrupting himself at the same time. The major characters around Xuma in his awakening to this political radical position are Leah who has adapted to the corruption spawned by capitalist exploitation by building her own bootlegging business; Ma Plank who has been worn down by her hard life but who has acquired a deep visceral knowledge of life and death; the drunks Liz, Johannes and Daddy who have given up and turned to the numbers of alcohol; Eliza, Xuma's love interest who yearns, essentially, to live the life of the bourgeois White; and Maisy, strong within herself despite external circumstances, and finally perceived by Xuma to be the woman for him instead of the would be bourgeois Eliza.

When we analyse the behaviours of the above mentioned characters of our work and make comparison with those of South Africa, it is clear that this work of ABRAHAMS is a realistic one. However, South Africa is an extreme example of the corrupting and exploitive impact of imperialism in Africa, but it is particularly poignant precisely because it offers such an extreme opportunity for ABRAHAMS to show, simultaneously the awakening of Xuma, and the need for radical action if capitalistic imperialism is to be defeated by indigenous

peoples in Africa. At the time of the book's publication, ABRAHAMS was a young black South African and he clearly meant the book as a warning to all humane people White and Black, within and outside South Africa, that there was in that nation a pervasive evil which was becoming more and more entrenched. ABRAHAMS' attribution of the problems of South Africa to the flaws of capitalism derives from an unmistakable Marxist perspective. As the book was published at the beginning of the cold War, when Soviet Marxism was being denigrated as a force favouring totalitarianism, it is not surprising that the novel was greeted with ambivalence in the West. Those who recognized the urgency of the warning about apartheid favoured the book, but those who were wary of a Marxist solution to the problem were not so favorable in their reception.

So, ABRAHAMS is first and foremost a purveyor of the Marxist line. The fact that he has a particular ideology to expound through his novel, the ideology of Marxism makes the story verge at times on the simplistic rather than the simple, as, for example, in the two-dimensional portrayal of Eliza and her longing to be rich and White. The progress of Xuma from innocent to **radical is** slow but steady; **strong** and free. And also, a black man must tell the black people how they feel and what they want. Note that the reviews which followed the publication of ABRAHAMS' book were more favorable outside of South Africa than within, as might be expected, considering that the media in South Africa even before the legalization of apartheid were controlled by racist powers. Outside of South Africa, reviews were mixed depending on the pro-or anti-Marxist viewpoint of reviewer. At the same time ABRAHAMS is telling the story of a nation. However, for the most part, ABRAHAMS successfully translates his political learning into a moving and compelling story about a young man who discovers himself in difficult and oppressive circumstances. Thus, Xuma early in the novel is puzzled when the other Blacks flee at the

approach of policemen, because, as he says “*we have done nothing*”<sup>18</sup>. The narrative advances the scene: *A policeman was only ten yards away and he was coming straight at Xuma. Xuma waited*<sup>19</sup>

Xuma fights the policeman, demonstrating that he is a brave young man, but he still believes idealistically that certain humane values exist in a place where they do not exist. “*He (the policeman) raised his stick and brought it down with force.*”<sup>20</sup>

However, as a Marxist artist, ABRAHAMS argues as the plot advances that the behaviour of the Blacks in South Africa is the direct result of the socio-economic conditions which are an essential part of the capitalist system of exploitation of the poor and powerless. It is not until the last pages of the novel that Xuma is finally able to break loose and assert himself as a free man, a man who can join with other men in fighting the exploitive capitalist system: “*Xuma felt good suddenly. We are men!*”<sup>21</sup> he shouted. The opening scene, for example, shows that Blacks are hardly perfect human beings, but fight amongst themselves and demonstrate any number of petty jealousies and resentments and rivalries, as we can see through the following:

“And the men in the streets spoke in loud voices and took out their purses and counted their money for others to see. And they wore their best and most colourful clothes. Red shirts and green shirts and yellow shirts and pink shirts. And they wore wide-bottomed trousers that swept the ground and tight jackets that reached down only as far as their waists. And sharp-pointed shoes.

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.16

<sup>19</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.16

<sup>20</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.16

<sup>21</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.181

And others wore only singlets and a pair of trousers to show how manly they were. And they were manly, these, they were tall and strong and their chests stood out and there were confident smiles in their eyes and they did not step aside but made others step aside.

Only if one big man in singlets meet another big man in singlets did they step aside. And then they would watch each other like sparring dogs, ready to jump.

They were called the strong men in Vrededorp and Malay Camp, and sometimes they would fight among themselves to determine the strongest. Two men would fight and the winner would fight another and another and another. And so it would go on till only two were left. And that would be the big fight. And the winner of that fight would be the strongest of the strong men.

Many men have died in these fights, for they fight with sticks and knives and shoes. Even stones.<sup>22</sup>

We have quoted this passage at length because it displays detailed information about the real image of some Africans' ways of living. But this awakening is a long time coming. The basic plot of *Mine Boy* is the loss of innocence of the protagonist, Xuma, as he comes to Johannesburg for work, and learns of the corruption of life that has touched everybody in the city, Black or White. ABRAHAMS does not merely indict the Whites who control society in South Africa, however, but instead shows how Blacks are participants to some degree in their own corruption. This novel *Mine Boy* explains to us that this history of man's inhumanity to man has yet to be broken. Leah, the woman who takes Xuma under her wing, declares: "*The mines are no good, Xuma, later on*

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Pp.13-14

*you cough and then you spit blood and you become weak and die*".<sup>23</sup> Besides the mines are the symbolic evil of the capitalism system, but the reader is shown that the poor black from the rural area of the nation is leaving a place where there is no work for a place where there is miserable work which will ultimately steal his life and soul. Since the days of slavery, Africa has been exploited and corrupted by White imperialists.

In fact the book was published two years before the Nationalists gained control of South African politics and just before apartheid became entrenched into the South African legal system and realism became a sanctified governmental policy. The book was published in South Africa, precisely because its publication preceded what was to shortly be the beginning of official and legal crack downs against such expressions of protest especially from black South Africans against the racism and apartheid of the powers that be in that country. Xuma expresses the view of the authors, certainly, when he declares that: "*It is good that a black man should tell the White people how we feel.*"<sup>24</sup> Each of these characters teaches something negative or positive to Xuma and helps him along the path to his own manhood and his connection to other human beings in the struggle for political, social and economic justice. He believes in fairness and truth and justice, and he will not find any of them in his dealings with the power structure of South Africa, he says: "*It does not matter if our skins are black*"<sup>25</sup>. So, the innocent Xuma must first be initiated into the harsh reality of the world of South Africa, and the legal and illegal oppression which is imposed on Blacks by the White forces of capitalism and government.

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.5

<sup>24</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.183

<sup>25</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.181

## Chapter two: The contents of the novel

### A. Summary of the novel

The novel *Mine Boy* is a story about love and race published two years before the official implementation of apartheid in South Africa in 1948, but which highlights the racial discrimination and prejudices that existed in South African society at the time. We follow Xuma, who has migrated from his village in the North to Johannesburg in search of a job in the mines, as he goes through one heartbreak after another. The book opens with his entry into Johannesburg where he was spotted and taken into the residence of the benevolent Leah, at Malay Camp, one of several sprawling black only quarters devoid of social amenities. This gesture is common in most African societies, where people are obliged, by tradition, to help one another, especially those who have travelled from afar, known and unknown.

After Leah got to know the purpose of Xuma's migration she offered him a job which he declined, subtly, opting for a job in the mines because it is a man's work even after he had been informed that the miners cough and then spit blood and become weak and die. Leah was a Skokiaan Queen dealing in locally brewed beer, a product that has been banned, of which a culprit could serve a jail term if arrested. Abrahams used something as simple as beer to show how deeply divided the society was at the time. For as we read later when Xuma has become aware of the ways of the city, he questioned : *why is it wrong if Leah sells beer and right if a white person sells beer?*<sup>26</sup>

In spite of this, Leah provided for Xuma until he got a job at the mines as a Boss Boy for Paddy (or the Red One), after he was introduced by Johannes . Johannes is Lena's man who is loud and boastful and arrogant and told the world

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<sup>26</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.168

that he was J. P. Williamson and he would crush any sonofabitch when drunk and the one who is quiet and retiring and soft spoken ,gentle as a lamb and seemingly ashamed of his great size and strength when sober. Johannes introduction as a character and his behaviour is very metaphorical. It's almost parallel to the workings of the read Johannesburg society, not finding itself, drawn by two opposing ideologies: blacks are humans or blacks are not.

At the residence of Leah, at Malay Camp, are Maisy, the sprightly lady who made Xuma laughed even when he doesn't want to; Eliza, who loves the things of the whites; Daddy, the always-drunk man who was once a respected and wealthy man, took Leah into his residence and catered for her until he began to assert his rights and mobilise people to do the same; Lena who had educated children but worked with Leah; and Ma Plank a worker at Leah's place. Xuma fell in love with Eliza but Eliza is enigmatic. She wants the things she knows she could not have. She wants the things of the white man and this made her unhappy and this unhappiness fed into her relationship with Xuma, *loving* him and *unloving* him at the same time, so that sometimes she would willingly decide to be with him only to leave a few seconds later. The madness of the city, that had affected her mood caused it to swing from one extreme to the other stochastically. But Maisy also loved Xuma and made him smile.

Besides, just when Xuma thought all was well with him, after Eliza had asked him to take her as his woman, things began to fall apart. First, Daddy died after he was knocked down by a car, then Eliza went on a long train journey from which she will not return. Then, Leah who had been bribing some policemen for information on her activities, was trapped and arrested. Thus, once the major tree was cut the birds had to leave and so all the people at Leah's residence left. Xuma became devastated at the arrest and jail of Leah to the detriment of his work at the mine. Paddy having noticed Xuma's desolation attempted to imbibe some activism into him. However, this activism was to rear

its head when Johannes and his white master, Christian, died underground in the mines. Xuma and Paddy led a demonstration against the mine manager, requesting that the problem be solved before they go in and work. The police were called in to effect the arrest of the striking miners. They arrested Paddy and jailed him. Xuma run away to tell Ma Plank and Maisy that he was going to join Paddy so that he could tell everybody, Blacks and Whites, how the black people felt. He also engaged Maisy who promised to wait for him untill he comes back to marry her.

One by one the lights of Malay Camp were turned out. One by one Vrededorp and the other dark places of Johannesburg, of South Africa, were turned out. The streets were empty. The leaning, tired houses were quiet. Only shadows moved everywhere. Only the quiet hum of the night hung over the city. Over Vrededorp. Over Malay Camp.

Regarded as the first modern novel of Black South Africa, the novel is told from the point of view of Xuma, his travails become ours and his heartbreaks too. By using the simple and everyday life of Black South Africans, Abrahams showed us how racism or apartheid had become endemic in South African society so that from birth to deaths one is discriminated against. It is believed that this was one of the first books to expose universally the condition of black South Africans under a white regime. And yet the author never exhibited hatred in his narration for there were likable whites as well as detestable blacks. He propounded 'the man first' ideology, as explained by Paddy to Xuma.

### **B. The plot of the novel, language and style**

There are several incidents taking place in different places and at different times. A character which binds all these incidents together is Xuma whose presence is felt in almost all the incidents in the novel. Most of the things

we learn about South Africa are learnt through the actions and feelings of Xuma and some other characters in the novel. Xuma comes from the northern part of South Africa, that means he comes from the rural areas where there is no school, no job, and where there are no Whites to victimize the Blacks. So, Xuma comes into the city for the first time to experience a new and cruel kind of life with the Whites.

Thus, like Xuma, the Blacks in South Africa do not have freedom of movement. When they move along the streets, the policemen will just pounce on them and beat them severely. The Blacks experience very poor condition of service. Xuma's first experience in the mines show this (pages 43, 44). Apart from the poor standards of living, there is fear, suspicion and loneliness.

Besides, the Blacks also respond to the evil of racial discrimination in several ways. Some of them drink, dance make jokes and spend money to ward off depression anger. However, Daddy's response to the problems of colour bar in South Africa is that of drinking. Johannes does the same thing anytime he is not drunk, he is sad and moody.

Most of the characters take to fighting and other kinds of violence. This is very true of Dladla and Daddy who derive pleasure in fighting. There are characters that face the situation with extreme emotional reaction. At times, they are happy and later sad; Eliza is an example. There are those who watch the situation with anger and bitterness. By this side we can quote Xuma and Paddy.

Moreover, the Blacks in South Africa are seen by their White counterparts as inferior. The Blacks have to carry permit-cards before they can move from one part of the country to another. The Whites are seen in decent places and eat good food while the Blacks share the sufferings of colour bar with other Blacks and eat very poor food like pap.

Peter ABRAHAMS pointed out from this country through the novel injustice. So, there is much injustice shown to the Blacks through beating, constant arrest and imprisonment of the Blacks even when they are innocent. Xuma carries with him the courage to protest and strength of character to stand by what he says and believes. We see this in him in the episode of the mine in which Christ and Johannes died and he protested loudly and angrily that they are human beings and not animals. He goes to the extent of knocking one of the Whites with his fist to withstand the oppression of the White fists.

Peter ABRAHAMS, with *Mine Boy* showed a real sense of a classic novelist by using racial language and style. So in this story, we do not have the main line of the story which moves from the beginning through a middle to the end of the story as in some novels. Instead, we have several incidents taking place at different places and at different time. There are also many characters which point to the subject matter of the novel like Xuma, Leah, Eliza and Daddy. As the story is one that prohibits the devilish consequences of looking down on a race who owns the land as inferior to another race, aliens, who have imposed themselves on the legitimate people by mere force, one would feel that the story would have been straight forward but the author chooses to tell the story in an indirect manner. Several little events that happen to the characters makes the novel to look loose but one character knits all the events of the novel together, and this is Xuma.

It appears ABRAHAMS makes Xuma to pass through the whole experiences and his presence can create a feeling of a story and not any little incidents which do not lead to the other. Xuma's experience is the experience of other Blacks and Coloureds living in South Africa, a bitter experience which allows them to feel angry at the sight of any White man. Thus, Xuma is seen at the mines sufferings, feeling angry and exploding at the White oppressors.

ABRAHAMS makes use of variety of characters, and this is a credit to him. He relieves his hero of carrying the burden of a one man show. Several characters, participate but the major character Xuma appears in almost all the story. In addition, the scenes are described vividly which is an evidence that they are events that took place in the presence of the writer. This type of technique in writing is called “the omnipresent style”. In the novel, it is discovered that certain events are the causes of other incidents while certain incidents are similar to certain other ones either earlier or later mentioned. As a matter of fact this style does prevent the reader from being bored, as one is urged, to want to read series of episodes within a short period of time.

Through the characters, ABRAHAMS is able to reveal that not all Blacks are good and not all Whites are bad. Paddy OSHEA is a typical example to show that not all the Whites in South Africa agree with social and racial Apartheid. The latter was not a racist, he was not a dreamer but he was an active defender of the black man’s case. That is why he yearns for being Xuma’s friend. Without his intervention Xuma could not have helped the sick man.

One can also notice that the language is very simple and easy to understand. The sentences are short, making it possible to bring out the deep feelings of his characters particularly the mind of Xuma as he thinks. Then, Abrahams used some figures of speech to convey the message in his novel. For this reason, he used repetition of words or phrases: the word “Shadow” is used nineteen (19) times and “dark” twenty four (24) times in the story. These two words are significant in literature and they fit well in the context of the story of *Mine Boy*. In addition, we have contrasts or opposites as he wrote these words or expressions to make story more vivid: light dark, life and death, love and hatred etc...

Besides the use of oxymorons appears. For example we have the expression “heavy emptiness” in the novel. A few symbols are also used. For

example Xuma, Eliza and Maisy “One way love” is the interpretation of the South African pursuit of freedom. It seems to be a vain pursuit. But there is hope in it because in Xuma’s love affair, we see hope for he finally becomes engaged to Maisy. Daddy also talks of the city and the custom which means the Whites and the Blacks.

Finally, ABRAHAMS used some special words which have meanings in the story to perform his work. Thus the word “Indunas” means special police in the mines. They search the black miners; intervene in case of trouble (revolt like in chapter 16). “Kaffirs and native” are another pejorative names for the Blacks. “Pass” is paper carried by Blacks. It shows where you work, the monthly signature of the employer with his comments on the employee’s behaviour. It also show if he has paid the annual tax. “Boss Boy” means gang leader; the native miner who leads the other miners after the White man. Xuma and Johannes for example. “Baass” is a mispronunciation of boss. “Skokiaan Queen” means local beer brewers and sellers like Leah. And then, the word “Sonofabitch” means son of a bitch; bitch is a dog. “Coloured in the novel is those who are not white or black. There are either Chinese, Asian or those born from the union of Blacks and Whites.

**Part three: Manifestations of racism in South  
Africa as seen in *Mine Boy*.**

## Chapter one: Racism, ethnocentrism and the implementation of apartheid.

### A. Racism and ethnocentrism

Like racism, ethnocentrism is a sociological, an ethnological and a political phenomenon. So, etymologically, the word ‘ethnocentrism’ is composed of three language roots which are «ethnos», «centre» and «ism». Meanwhile the word «ethnos» means «origin». It is also clear that it is a negative phenomenon. “The expression «ethnic group» connotes a set of human beings sharing the same ancestor, the same language, the same culture and history”<sup>27</sup>. Each ethnic group has a specific location. For instance in Benin, the “Yoruba” and the “Batombu” are respectively located in the South and the North of the country. Thus, when we define racism as the way of treating somebody because of his or her race, ethnocentrism can be defined as the social phenomenon by which, within a society, or a country, an ethnic group considers itself as the centre to which it compares and subordinates the other ethnic groups. This definition is backed up by Dieu-Donné Latadera, who thinks that “*ethnocentrism is an attitude which consists of the negation of cultures different from a given one and the refusal of cultural diversity*”<sup>28</sup>. For André Jacob, “*ethnocentrism is the fact that an ethnic group presents its language, culture and territory as the centre of the world by which it judges other ethnic groups*”<sup>29</sup>.

It appears that the definition of ethnocentrism is very close to that of racism except for the terms «race» and «ethnic groups» which only have a different meaning. That is why article 1 of the International Convention on the

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<sup>27</sup> Dieu-Donné Latadera in *Encyclopedia Universalis*, France, SA, 1990, p.120

<sup>28</sup> Dieu-Donné, op.cit p.878

<sup>29</sup> André Jacob, in *Encyclopedie Philosophique Universale*, Paris, PUF, 1990, p.878

Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination makes no difference between race and ethnicity in its definition of racial discrimination:

Distinction ,exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life<sup>30</sup>.

Racism is practised everywhere in the world, but we know the cases of America and South Africa where Blacks suffered too much. According to legal texts, racism is abolished all over the world. But in reality, some of its manifestations still exist. For instance in South Africa, though apartheid was abolished in 1990 and the Constitution has no track of racism, we notice when we go there that the mentality of people has not changed yet. The media broadcast a racist act in the country as late as in 2000. A White businessman dragged his driver who is a black, by means of his car on the tarred road over five kilometres before throwing him away on a farm. This White man was arrested and Blacks threatened to retaliate: “*we shall kill them all*”<sup>31</sup>; they said. This threat, if put into practice, can set off acts of violence leading on to racial conflict again. So racism has not died either in Africa or in the world. Like ethnocentrism, it is still a potential cause of danger and social unrest in the black continent. Both phenomena share four main characteristics, namely, prejudice intolerance, ideas of superiority and violence.

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<sup>30</sup> Article 1 of the international Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination quoted in “*the conclusion and Recommendations*” after the regional seminar of experts on the prevention of ethnic and racial conflicts in Africa, held in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, 4th – 6th october, 2000

<sup>31</sup> Edward Dede gbé, TV. News, ORTB, 5th, 2000

Prejudice, most of the time, is a judgment that people of an ethnic group or of a given race pass on others but often such judgements are not valid, as they have to do with ancestry in the past. For instance, one often hears people in Benin say that Fon people should never be trusted. These prejudices are so deep-rooted that collaboration between two ethnic groups in Benin Republic is difficult or impossible.

Three factors can be quoted as source of racism. First, English language favours racism in so far as it identifies “black” with evil and debasement, and “White” with goodness and purity, and “this has conditioned the way Whites perceive blacks.” Phrases like “black market, black sheep, black mail and black list”, would testify that this language is racist as Gachukia and Akivoga wrote it: “*this racism is expressed in the very structure of the English language, probably the most of all human languages*”<sup>32</sup>. Second, slavery contributed to racism. As professor Mazrui put it in the second lecture *The cross of humiliation* in his book, “*Africa has been humiliated, brutalized through slavery*”<sup>33</sup>. This slavery has developed in White men’s mind that their race is superior to that of blacks and that they must command them.

“Another source of racial myth is the ostensibly scientific investigation and speculation which was at its peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The theories of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer were also misused while biology was similarly misinterpreted”<sup>34</sup>. These theories show that the White race is human and that black race is composed of savages. Blacks have been called all sorts of names by the Whites. “*They have told him, his ancestor’s continent was a vast haunt of savages, a continent of cannibals who lived on trees. That*

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<sup>32</sup> E. Gachukia and Akivoga, *Teaching of African Literature*

<sup>33</sup> Mazrui Ali, op. cit, Pp.23-45

<sup>34</sup> Oyebola Areoye, *Black Man’s Dilemma*, p.58

*the Negro is a link between the monkey and man-meaning of course the Caucasian (White)”<sup>35</sup>.*

The third source of racism is religion which has used stories from the Bible to justify racism: “*The White also refer to the legend of Ham and the curse of Cain. This explains the reason when the Whites first came in contact with the Black man, they thought of him as a sinful, cursed, inferior and beast-like human being*”<sup>36</sup>.

But apart from these sources of racism, the uneducated mind, develops racism easily. So, like ethnocentrism, racism has its root in psychology. An investigation made by Fatoumata, Agnès D. and Pierre F. revealed that in Senegal the Toucouleur, Serer, Dioula and Mading consider the Wolof as rude; for them, the Wolof like money too much and exploit others for its sake. At the same time, the Wolof think of these ethnic groups as backward.

As for racism, the physical characteristics of mankind are used to attribute vices or qualities to races. In this sense, blackness is linked to *barbarity, savagery*. In *Heart of Darkness* written by Joseph Conrad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can see that for White people, Blacks are like animals, monkeys. In his racial book titled *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler, ex-leader of Germany associated the Aryan race with power and prosperity. God’s angels are always painted as White while the devil is painted Black. These statements and ideas have no scientific basis: “*those White racist lies were reinforced by religion, Christianity especially, which saw God, Christ, Angels in terms of Whiteness while sin and devil and Satan were black*”<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Oyebola Areoye, *Black Man’s Dilemma*, p.27

<sup>36</sup> Oyebola Areoye, *Black Man’s Dilemma*, p.57

<sup>37</sup> James Ngugi, *Satire in Nigeria, in Protest and Conflict in African Literature*, p.58

The second characteristic of ethnocentrism and racism is intolerance. People do not bear that other people should be different from them; they look down on other cultures. In Africa, intolerance is present; we can cite the examples of Algeria, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, to mention just a few. People are surprised to notice that human beings share the same attributes. It is intolerance that leads some people to subjugate others, and exercise the right of life and death on them. The 'BBB' wars in South Africa at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century between the British, the Boers and the Bantu show this. Peter Abrahams based his novel *Wild Conquest* on this important topic. In *Mine Boy*, we can clearly see that White people are intolerant to Blacks. Paddy, Xuma's White boss, reacts to this intolerance toward Blacks.

Intolerance leads to social conflict as it is the case in Rwanda and Burundi and in Côte d'Ivoire. Intolerance prevents the protagonists of ethnic groups in conflict from engaging in dialogue in order to come to consensus. So intolerance leads to verbal, moral and physical violence. In the same way, the separation of Whites from blacks in *Mine Boy* shows that Whites and blacks can't come to a consensus. They will never be unified.

The fact of thinking more civilized than others is another characteristic of ethnocentrism and racism. Through the definition of racism in the dictionary, we can see that up to a recent past and even now, races are classified up down like this: the White, the Yellow and the Black. That is what we understand when we read the status of Whites and Blacks in *Mine Boy*. The population of South Africa in *Mine Boy* is composed of Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Blacks, and Blacks are the most down trodden race. For instance, Blacks are jailed for selling alcohol while Indians who sell liquors are undisturbed. So in South Africa, the races are classified from top to bottom like this: Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Blacks. From this analysis, we can argue that Whites behave as superior to Blacks. White people believed and still believe that they are superior

to Blacks, and the latter themselves believe that they are inferior to the Whites; so they try, some of them from African States especially, to ape White civilisation. This is one cause of Africa's underdevelopment. Rights are granted to races according to that ranking. As a matter of fact, White people would think they have more rights than Blacks as it occurs in *Mine Boy* by Abrahams. In this novel, there is dichotomy or opposition in all domains between Whites and Blacks. This superiority of Whites is also constant: Whites' places are neat, beautiful with smart buildings and roads, while Blacks' ones places are unclean, ugly, with dirty and dusty roads<sup>38</sup>. The Whites are bosses in the mines whereas the Blacks are workmen, as reflected in *Mine Boy* by Xuma and Paddy, his boss. Moreover, Whites eat and drink things of quality but Blacks are ill-fed. Whites' places are quiet while Blacks' surroundings are known for their violence, excessive sex life and smoking<sup>39</sup>.

Like the racist, the ethnocentrist sees his culture with such pride that he considers it as superior, and looks down on other cultures. He thinks that only people of his ethnic group are intelligent, learned, honest, and that other people are subhuman, savages. Like the racist, he thinks that his people should have more rights than the others.

The last characteristic of ethnocentrism and racism is "acts of violence". This is not only open or physic violence. Moral and verbal violence also characterise an ethnocentrist or racist. Acts of violence are the most noticeable characteristics of ethnocentrism and racism. The ethnic group or race which exploits very often performs such acts on minority groups. In *Mine Boy*, constant raids are carried out by the police. Wanderers (Blacks) and those selling traditional drinks are jailed. These minorities always seek ways to retaliate, which creates an atmosphere of insecurity. Analysing the particular

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Pp.65-77

<sup>39</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Pp.15, 18, 28

case of ethnicity, professor Mazriu writes: “*Ethnicity is a more serious line of cleavage in black Africa than religion. Africans are far more likely to kill each other because they belong to different ethnic groups than because they belong to different religions*”<sup>40</sup>.

So, both racism and ethnocentrism are very close in their definitions and characteristics. That is why Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (6<sup>th</sup> edition) makes no difference between “ethnic, national, racial and tribal”, as adjectives related to the same idea: it defines “ethnic” as: “*of a national, racial or tribal group that has a common cultural tradition*”. In fact, racism was enforced with the implementation of the apartheid policy that we shall now focus on<sup>41</sup>.

## **B. The implementation of apartheid**

Apartheid is a social and political policy of racial segregation and discrimination enforced by the White minority government in the South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s.

The implementation of the apartheid policy, later referred to as “separate development” was made possible by the Population Registration Act of 1950, which put all South Africans into three racial categories: Bantu (black African), White, or Coloured (of mixed race). A fourth category, Asian including Indians, Pakistanis, and Chinese, was added later. The system of apartheid was further elaborated by a series of laws in the 1950s. The Group Areas Act of 1950 assigned races to different residential and business sections in urban areas, and the Land Acts of 1954 and 1955 restricted nonWhite residence to specific areas. These laws further restricted the already limited right of black Africans to own land, entrenching the White minority’s control of over 80 percent of South African land. One of the most repressive apartheid restrictions was the law

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<sup>40</sup> James Ngugi, *Satire in Nigeria, Protest and conflict in African Literature*, p.36

<sup>41</sup> *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, p.410

requiring that blacks and other non-Whites carry a “pass book” stating their legal residence and workplace. Those without the proper papers could be stopped by police and expelled to the countryside. In 1952, the government passed the Natives (Abolition of Passed and Coordination of Documents) Act. The new laws tightened pass regulations, renamed the passes reference books, and required women to carry them for the first time.

Other laws prohibited most social contacts between the races. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 bared interracial marriage, and the Immorality Act of 1950 prohibited sexual relations between different races. The 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act permitted the systematic segregation of train stations, buses, movie theaters, and virtually all other public facilities, and bared the courts from overturning such restrictions.

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 closed private schools for Africans and forced them to attend a separate, inferior education system. Labor regulations in the 1950s prohibited the formation of trade unions except by Whites, and reserved most skilled occupations for Whites. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 furthered geographic division between the races by creating ten so-called homelands or bantustans for the black population.

The government continued to implement new apartheid regulation in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1964, for example, gave the government complete authority to banish blacks from any urban area and from White agricultural areas. During the 1970s the government stripped thousands of blacks of their South African citizenship when it granted nominal independence to their homelands.

Apartheid extracted a huge human cost. In its efforts to create completely segregated residential areas, the South African government destroyed thousands of houses in racially mixed areas. With their homes

destroyed, tens of thousands of people were forced into small, substandard houses located in bleak townships and neighbourhoods with poor services. Limits on black residence in urban areas also broke apart families in cases where one parent obtained a residence permit but the other did not. Therefore, apartheid was a cruel hardship for South Africans. As a matter of fact, racism has social, economic, political and psychological impacts on Africa in general but on South Africa in particular.

## Chapter two: The impacts of racism

### A. Socio-economic and political impacts of racism

When we hear “South Africa”, the first idea that comes to our mind is Apartheid. Apartheid as it is claimed by the leaders of South Africa is a separate development of the three racial groups of the country. But we know that separate development is impossible since the Blacks constitute the majority of manpower and they are also those who are used as houseboys. Thus; in the first time this system led to social marginalisation or sectarianism. In this regard, groups of people are looked down upon and do not take part in public life. Each race stands aloof, separated from the others, and no contact exists between them. As a matter of fact, they do not enrich one another and acts of violence can be frequent. To explain this more thoroughly we shall resort to *Mine Boy*, the novel we are concerned with. In fact the apartheid system depicted in the novel is based on social and cultural division. Blacks and Whites do not share the same cinemas, Stadiums, eating-houses or schools. Marriage between both races is forbidden. That is why when Paddy asks Xuma to be his friend, the latter answers in these terms “*but a White man and a Black man cannot be friends*”<sup>42</sup>. Xuma and Paddy do not share the same point of view on humanity right and existence. The analysis of this novel shows that social division or sectarianism is one consequence of racism. It prevents communication among different races so that they do not enrich one another. Still, since united we stand, and divided we fall; we must stick together to foster and promote development.

Racism is also at the core of unequal local or regional development. It means that when in a country two races do not integrate, the direct consequence is that geographical integration is difficult. This picture appears in *Mine Boy* with regard to Blacks and Whites as **shown on page50**. In this logic, natives do

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, pp.63

not share their specificities with foreigners on any level: cultural, technological, linguistic or economic. So they always go with their archaic way of life. And Whites also can't introduce Africanity into their habits and technology in order to adapt to local circumstances. This is clearly perceptible with Paddy's wife who cannot understand blacks' customs. Likewise are saddled with illiteracy, poverty and violence. Unequal local or regional development characterises almost all African countries. But colonisation accounts for some aspects of this situation which is worsened by racism. Unequal local development causes **dichotomy** in the equipment of all localities for education and training system is fragmented along racial and ethnic lines and is saturated with the racial ideology and educational doctrines of apartheid. There is also lack of access or **inequal** access to education and training at all levels of the system. So, vast disparities exist between black and white provision. More over, these colonisers have **carved** the localities so that there is tension among the population. The case of Benin is clear because the creation of new departments is difficult to do. In such a regime there is social injustice; you can't say what you think. Peter Abrahams himself was obliged to flee the country with his novel *Dark Testament* "under his coat", to translate professor Dossou Yovo's phrase<sup>43</sup>. His counterpart Dennis Brutus whose works are known to denounce apartheid regime had fled South Africa too. He wrote "*my case is not an extreme one; so it might be as well to start with that. I was banned from writing and I was banned from publishing anything (...). Merely to write was a criminal act*"<sup>44</sup>. That is lack of freedom of speech and thought. In fact, these characteristics are also the impacts of racism that lead to underdevelopment. When, there is no development, poverty appears. So the other bad effect of racism is poverty.

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<sup>43</sup> Noël Dssou-Yovo, *Trois Pionniers du Roman Africain* : Achebe – Paton et Abrahams in annales de la FLASH, 1994, pp.17, 18

<sup>44</sup> Dennis Brutus, *Protest Against Apartheid in Protest and conflict in Africa Literature*, p.92

Right from the first page of the story (*Mine Boy*) the description we have of Xuma is that of poor man. To Leah's question to find out what he had, he answers: "Nothing" and to that to know if he had money, he says "No"<sup>45</sup>. His journey to the city (Leah's house) was not a short one. He'd have taken a taxi or a train if he had enough money, but he came on foot and thus: "*His legs ached with tiredness. There was a throbbing in his head that flowed from the emptiness of his stomach*"<sup>46</sup>. He had nothing to drink nor to smoke. Also the physical description we have of him is that of a poor man. His old shoes held together by means of cords and wires with the toes peeping out, his dusty colourless old trousers were ripped at both knees and looked as though they would burst at the waist because they were so tight. Then, the shirt also was equally tight and tattered. And, in addition to all this, all his luggage consisted of one bundle. Peter ABRAHAMS doesn't say what he has got inside that bundle but surely nothing more important than what he is wearing now. This same effect of racism is noticed on the streets in Malay Camp, because the latter are dirty, narrow and dark. They are not like those in the city centre where the Whites live. Malay Camp as ABRAHAMS says reveals poverty, so do the houses and the inhabitants. The protagonist while eating where the native should eat was shocked by the aspects of dirt and poverty the place shows (chap 16). Besides, it is full of flies and the waiter himself is a dirty ragged old man. He is enough to ruin the customer's appetite off. He points out "*the White man has good eating places*"<sup>47</sup>. However it is clear that the wealth, on which the White man lives, is nothing but the fruit of the Black man's work. That is what we call exploitation; and the latter leads to acts of violence. Both are other consequences of racisms.

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, pp.1

<sup>46</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, pp.2

<sup>47</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, pp.178

On this side, Blacks are ill-treated by White men in *Mine Boy*. In the mines, the Blacks are workers and Whites are bosses; this is exemplified through Xuma and his boss Paddy. The death of Johannes and Chris due to the accident which happens towards the end of the novel shows this<sup>48</sup>. Just after this accident, the manager asks the workers to get ready in order to go down (in the mines). So the lives of these people do not matter. But Xuma refuses:

«No! No! Let them fix up the place first. We warned them about it.

They said it was all right. Now two men are dead....

Get ready!

No! A voice cried “fix up first”, Xuma felt good suddenly. Strong and free, a man»<sup>49</sup>

Paddy answers Xuma in these terms:

“I am a man first Xuma”, he said. Then he turned to the other *Mine Boys* and shouted”:

Xuma is right. They pay you a little! They don't care if you risk your lives! Why is it so?

Is not the blood of a Black man red like that of a White man?

Does not a Black man feel too? Does not a Black man love life too? I am with you!

Let them fix up the place first!<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, pp.179, 180

<sup>49</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.180

<sup>50</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Pp.181, 182

Still dealing with exploitation, we give thanks to Xuma through whom we have seen how difficult the conditions of work are in the mines. People work hard from sunrise to sundown. Talking of the sand they dig, he says: “*a truck load would go and another would come from the bowels of the earth. And yet another. So it went on all day on and on and on and on*”<sup>51</sup>. And despite all this, man’s conditions do not change. What actually frightens Xuma is not the fact that the mine dump does not grow but what worries him is when he does this what is his share? If only he were paid according to his efforts, he could understand. But it was not so. They work like slaves or even animals. That’s why Nana, a miner retorts to Xuma: “*Are we not sheep that talk?*”<sup>52</sup>. Also when Xuma talks of “a mountain of White sand made by black men”, we should understand this by the fact that the White man gets rich thanks to the Black man’s work. The most shocking and revolting of this is that despite all his work, the black is denied his freedom and the fruit of his work remains the forbidden one. He can’t move freely. There are places where he can’t go, shops where he can’t buy and some business he can’t participate in. So, racism is dangerous for development. Apart from socio-economic and political impacts, there are some other impacts. The most important ones we will deal with are the psychological ones.

## **B. Psychological impacts of racism**

Psychological impacts are another bad drawback of racism. In *Mine Boy* while Xuma is realistic, Paddy grounds his analyses on idealistic considerations: “*Zuma, I am a man like you, and afterwards a White man*”<sup>53</sup>. Paddy can only imagine the pain Xuma and the other Blacks undergo. As for Xuma, he feels the pain, he lives it. He is the pain itself. The following quotation explains this:

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.42

<sup>52</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.43

<sup>53</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.171

“I want you to be a man first and then a Black man. The White people in this country think only as White people and that is why they do this harm to your people. You must think as a man first. You must be a man first and then a Black man”,<sup>54</sup>.

These words which put an end to the novel are philosophic and come from Paddy’s mouth. His philosophy is based on the purity of the mind. We can believe that Paddy is sincere. But Xuma answers: “*You understand with your head. I understand with pain. With the pain of my heart. That is understanding*”,<sup>55</sup>. In this regard we can notice that if everybody could forget his colour and think in terms of mankind there would certainly not be racial discrimination.

Another effect of racism is the immortality of the crowd. In *Mine Boy* Xuma compares people to the crowd and he concludes: “*People died, people went away, people went to jail, maybe one maybe a hundred. But they were people not a crowd. Maybe the crowd never died. Maybe the crowd was the same as it had been since the beginning of time*”,<sup>56</sup>. That is a truth because what ever happens, death in wars, in accidents, there are still people to make up crowds. In other words, despite Daddy, Dladla, Chris and Johannes death, Leah, her man, and Joseph’s imprisonment, Eliza fleeing there were still people to make up crowds and crowds. People were killed during Sharpsville conflicts, but there are still crowds in South Africa who continue to fight for their rights today. For example, South Africa’s 2011 strike season was in full swing, with tens of thousands of workers in the country’s mining industry determined to go on strike until their demand for salary increase is met. The workers sung a song that

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<sup>54</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, Pp.171, 173

<sup>55</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.172

<sup>56</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.177

said: “*the work underground is very hard. But we’re getting too little money*”<sup>57</sup>. They want an annual wage increase of at least 14 percent, but the mines have offered only less than ten percent increase. That means that what happened in about fifty years ago in South Africa still exists in the memory of the population. Lesiba Seshoka, member of National Union of Mine workers said:

“Well, the three strikes are continuing. In the gold, diamond and coal sector there’s no resolution as yet. We were hoping by this time we’d have a resolution. But it’s not happening. So, they will continue. The offers are between seven and nine percentage, which we’ve rejected in favour of a 14 percentage wage increment”<sup>58</sup>.

The time’s unconcern with man and his problems is another consequence of racism. People born, live, fight, die in accidents, in wars, by sickness or by old age, people starve, eat, drink, laugh, cry, etc. But time always runs out. Time always flows; that’s why Xuma says: “*and above this unreality was the sky and the earth and people. Eliza went and it kept on. Daddy died and it kept on. Leah went to jail and it kept on. How is it? Who cares about people?*”<sup>59</sup>

To all this we can add the spiritual sickness and physical sickness. When we analyse the speech of Paddy to the doctor, he talks of the sickness a doctor can cure and the sickness of the mind only the fight can cure. So a physical pain can be cured by a doctor but a spiritual one cannot be. In fact, South Africans today suffer from both forms of sickness. SADAG said:

“while South Africa’s neighbouring states are economically disadvantaged, the tide of illegal immigrants is not going to stop, and while there is still unemployment

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<sup>57</sup> South African Miners strike, Johannesburg, South Africa, July 30, 2011

<sup>58</sup> South African Miners strike, Johannesburg, South Africa, July 30, 2011

<sup>59</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.178

in South Africa, Xenophobia will thrive. The consequences of this situation and the impact it has on mental health are a reality. Surely South Africans must have learned by now, that the human condition, no matter what the person's race, culture or legal status is the same. Everyone is looking for happiness and fulfilment and a better life for themselves and their families. This applies also to responses to disillusionment, stress and discrimination.<sup>60</sup>

Then through our analysis based on the novel we notice that the philosophy of reincarnation is touched on implicitly by Abrahams but not in the way, for instance Armah and Soyinka successively dealt in *Fragments* and in the play entitled *a Dance of the Forest*. As a matter of fact, in traditional African society, when a person dies, his memory remains just for a while and then grows lesser and lesser to totally be forgotten after. Speaking of Daddy Abrahams says:

“For a time people would mourn Daddy and then they would forget him and the mention of his name would grow rare. Another old man would ultimately become the drunk old man of the street. May be they would call him Daddy too. And Daddy who was Francis N'DABULA would be forgotten. Only those of his house would remember him. And even for them the memory would grow faint and misty. Life is so...”<sup>61</sup>.

In these cases we can loudly say that racism is harmful for all people no matter which race they are. It also causes moral violence. In *Mine Boy* moral violence, stands as a consequence of racism, when on pages 30 and 31, the manager threatens and yells at the workers so that they can be afraid and go down in the mines, without fixing the place as Xuma has suggested it. Being ill

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<sup>60</sup> SADAG, updated, November 2010, by Health 24

<sup>61</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.144

treated, exploited and seeing now all the system set in order to keep the black man down, South Africans do not neglect the proverbs of our forefathers that says “there is no smoking without fire”. So due to their conditions, they decided to react and suggested strategies to face this evil which is racism. That is the objective of part four.

**Part four: The reactions of the South Africans  
to the condition created by racism  
and strategies to overcome this evil.**

## Chapter one: The reactions of the South Africans to the condition created by racism

### A. Physical reactions

Apartheid met numerous resistances which led to the demise of minority rule. In fact black political groups sometimes supported by small numbers of sympathetic Whites, opposed apartheid using a variety of tactics. Anti apartheid groups such as the African National Congress (ANC), Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the United Democratic Front rely on tactics such as strikes, demonstrations, sabotage and other forms of violence. In *Mine Boy* the unsteady Daddy loves violence and he enjoys it so much that he even drops tears when he is deprived of it. It is the same of Dladla. When we hear that name, we automatically think of his knife. Leah says: “*he is all knife and nothing*”<sup>62</sup>. No sooner had Xuma arrived in Leah’s house than Dladla wanted to knife him and Leah stopped the fight .Daddy said: “*Women! They always spoil a good fight*”.<sup>63</sup> But resistance often resulted in severe reprisals by the government in South Africa. In the novel the police beat black people whenever they fight.

To put an end to racism, the International Community denounced apartheid. In 1961, South Africa was forced to withdraw from the British Commonwealth by member states that were critical of the apartheid system. Moreover in 1974 South Africa was expelled from the United Nations General Assembly and in 1977 the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on South Africa. In the late 1970s many countries began imposing their own sanctions against the apartheid regime. In 1985, the Widespread International sanctions campaign culminated with severe new sanctions imposed by the government of the United States and the United Kingdom.

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<sup>62</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.5

<sup>63</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.4

As antiapartheid pressure mounted within and outside South Africa, the South African government, led by President F. W. de Klerk, began to dismantle the apartheid system in the early 1990s. It legalized black opposition groups such as the ANC and the PAC, and ordered the release of some political prisoners, such as ANC leader Nelson Hlahla Mandela. In 1994, a new interim constitution was adopted and free general elections were held for the first time in South Africa's history. The constitution prohibited racial and other forms of discrimination. With Mandela's election as South Africa's first black president, the last vestiges of the apartheid system were finally eliminated.

Today, African countries should continue fighting for their freedom and well-being in order to become totally free one day. This is shown through Xuma's good behaviours in the novel and his characters at the end of the novel which shows a kind of hope. But not only South Africans reacted physically but they also reacted psychologically to overcome their bad conditions.

## **B. Psychological reactions**

When we compare our ways of living to those of the South Africans we have met in the story of *Mine Boy*, we realise that we are different. South Africa is like a stage on which we can see drunkards, criminals, idlers, lovers, traitors etc. But how come they are drunkards, criminals, idlers, lovers, gamblers etc. They were not primary drunkards, criminals and so on. They have been changed by a situation and that's what makes them differ from us and from what they should be. We are to a certain extent more natural than them. In fact we do drink but not as so heavily as Daddy or Johannes or Lena do. We do fight but not as so often as Dladla does. We do like money but not because of the same motive as Xuma, Maisy or Eliza. We do laugh but we do not make it our daily occupation as Maisy does.

One cannot see all the evils with bare eyes. So to bear those evils of the apartheid policy, the South African has to wear masks because on one hand they can't see and remain action less and on the other hand they can do nothing. For example, the response of Xuma to Paddy when they discuss about segregation is: *"how can you fight guns with bare hands?"*<sup>64</sup> Abraham's comments when Leah was arrested by the Police and Eliza began crying: there was nothing one could do. The White man came and said "come" and she had to go. And those remained behind could only watch. They could do nothing. It was hopeless.

So one of the masks they bear to escape from apartheid and its evils is drinking. The prototype of that is Daddy. Daddy who as Ma Plank puts it, was the one everyone respected when he walked down the street. The one Men thought it was an honour to be his friend, and for whom women longed. The one who helped when there was trouble about passes and the one the Police feared. *"See him now, on the floor Daddy grunted and kicked in his sleep. Sworn words tumbled out of his mouth. He rolled on to his side and began to piddle and a pool of water grew on the floor"*<sup>65</sup>. It is disgusting indeed to see a man rolling in his piss; but what can he do? There is no course left to him because as Xuma compares the life in the countryside to that of the city where people have already been fashioned; he remarks: *"but here it's different"*<sup>66</sup>. No one trusted anyone else.

Lena or Johannes are one person when they are drunk and other person when they are not. Drinking then seems to be the main occupation of people and a remede to their condition of living. When Eliza left Xuma and he became anxious, Leah said: *"Maybe you should drink tonight. Drink a lot and maybe it*

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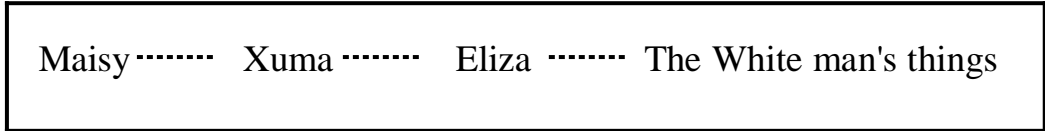
<sup>64</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.171

<sup>65</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.80

<sup>66</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.74

*will help you to forget*”<sup>67</sup>. During his lecture on the city and the custom, Daddy tells Xuma the reason why he drinks: “*and now they go to jail if they drink beer. That’s why I like beer*”<sup>68</sup>. So Daddy drinks to declare his liberty. In the novel if people are not drinking they smoke or gamble. So we met people here and there either smoking opium or gambling, if not they love. Xuma’s search for love is one of the secondary themes of the novel. Xuma and Eliza’s love affair starts in chapter three to end in chapter thirteen, to continue with Maisy who had been dogging Xuma’s steps, wishing that he would understand that Eliza doesn’t fit him so that she would take Eliza’s place: “*I new your love would end. I just knew. Eliza is so. She wants things that we do not understand. I waited. I thought I would be happy when she left and you turned to me*”<sup>69</sup>, she once said. When everything was all right with Eliza, Xuma once told her: “*Life is good*”<sup>70</sup>; and he wanted to do shout it at the top of his voice to tell everywhere that life is good. So loving is good potion. It blinds and deafens because Xuma tells Eliza: “*if a man loves a woman, he loves her. That is all. There is no bad and there is no good. There is only love*”<sup>71</sup>

But Xuma, Eliza and Maisy’s love is just a “ONE WAY LOVE” for Maisy loves Xuma and she is not loved back. Xuma loves Eliza and he is not loved back. As for Eliza, she loves the White man’s things she will never get. So, people love and are not loved. All this can be summed up in the following diagram:




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<sup>67</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.158

<sup>68</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.11

<sup>69</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.164

<sup>70</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.120

<sup>71</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.119

Besides Xuma's age group is not the only one involved in love affair. Lena is always clinging to Johannes. Dladla longs for Leah. Ma Plank praises Daddy and even if it is in jokes, one can see that she is interested in love affairs. She says she is an "*experienced horse*"<sup>72</sup>. If Xuma turns to Eliza or Maisy to drown his sorrows, Leah in her turn turns to money to console herself. Thus in the same way Johannes takes refuge in drink, Leah takes refuge in money making. When she was arguing with Xuma, she told him:

"Listen to me Xuma. I will try again to make you understand. In the city it is like this: all the time you are fighting. When you are asleep and when you are awake and you look only after yourself. If you do not you are finished. If you are soft everybody will spit in your face. They will rob you and cheat you and betray you. So to live here, you must be hard. Hard as a stone. And money is your best friend. With money you can buy a policeman. With money you can buy someone to go to jail for you" ect.<sup>73</sup>

Leah seems to have devoted all her life to money making. That is why despite the many Police raids, she does not lose faith. That is why she pays money to get the information from that policeman who also takes advantage of the situation. Now if people are not drinking, if they are not loving, they are either walking or dancing.

In this regard when Xuma was feeling pain in his heart after Eliza's departure, Leah told him: "*now... Go out Xuma. Go out and walk. Walk for a*

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<sup>72</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.51

<sup>73</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.50

*long time and when you are tired come back*"<sup>74</sup>. Whenever Leah, Xuma, Maisy and Eliza have problem, they just take a walk if not they dance.

During his dance in the corner of the street with Maisy, Xuma exclaimed: "*It is very good*"<sup>75</sup>. And Leah told Maisy: "*You have made the sour one laugh*"<sup>76</sup>. We know Xuma's mood before the dance. We know he had been thinking of the conditions of life of the Blacks in the city. He couldn't understand why Leah doesn't want to inform the other Skokiaan Queens of the Police plans. That is what saddened him. So, Maisy seeing that he was in a bad mood took him to a dancing party against his own will at the beginning. But finally, he enjoyed it so well that he didn't even want to leave the party. Moreover when Francis Ndabula alias Daddy died, Leah organised a party. During that Party she got drunk. That party is just like Maisy's laughter. A bitter laughter which hides many sufferings just as she tells Xuma: "*... you smile but inside you bleed*"<sup>77</sup>. So, Leah's joy was a false one. When in the course of her dance she fell down and Xuma carried her to her room... "*she opened her eyes and smiled at them, a sad, crooked smile then she closed her eyes*"<sup>78</sup>. And that, the wise Ma Plank understood it well and explained. She said, talking of the love Leah had for Daddy: "*She loved him*"<sup>79</sup>. On the contrary some other people never care for the others and they don't mind feeding themselves on them or at their expenses. That's means that they betray themselves.

South Africa is a jungle where people fear one another. Everyone struggling for life, all the means are good to achieve one's goal. Dladla had

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.154

<sup>75</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.56

<sup>76</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.56

<sup>77</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.163

<sup>78</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.146

<sup>79</sup> Peter Abrahams, *Mine Boy*, p.146

betrayed Leah's man. He had also betrayed Joseph and finally Leah herself. The black policeman also was betraying the Police by selling the plans to Leah. How can an honest person live in such a society if not by joking about the situation. Ma Plank for her part takes it easy. She does not bother herself. She conformed herself with the situation and made jokes about it. On one hand some people draw advantages created in South Africa. See corrupt policeman who takes bribe from Leah to inform her. Some other policemen also organize private raids and share the bribes they collect from the Skokiaan Queen or others. Some other policemen just abuse the Blacks in the streets etc. etc. On the other hand some other people are horrified by the situation and they side with the Blacks to protest and fight for their rights. That is the case of Paddy O'SHEA.

This work of ours, as one can see, analyses not only the South Africa's socio-economic and political image after independence but also the image of the countries of African continent and leaders. But we should not forget the other countries of the world where racism is still practised. However, some strategies are needed to face this evil. These strategies include human rights implementation, education and sensitisation.

## Chapter two: Strategies to overcome racism

### A. Guaranteeing implementation of human rights

The powers and the attributes of the supernatural agents are to be **considered** and utilised for the welfare of humans in this world. In fact a human being needs help and it is a human being that is needed. However, the XXI st century must be that of human rights implementation as Federico Mayor, former Director General of UNESCO recognised it when he declared “*the most important question, the one compulsory in the future, is to give political, social and individual means to implement human rights and to transform them into daily preoccupation*”<sup>80</sup> (translation mine). The UNDP Representative follows the same logic when, during the ceremony celebrating the African Human Rights Day (21st October) he says in his speech: “*The main challenge of the XXI st century is to achieve human rights in all countries*”<sup>81</sup>. Due to this, let us first see how human rights principles help to prevent racism, in other words the links between both racism, and human rights.

In this regard, we are going to focus on a simple and international instrument; simple in its form but complex in its content. Today many International norms, multilateral as well as bilateral are decided upon to promote the respect of humanity, to protect human beings in regard to political power and to ensure solidarity among human beings. For instance we can quote the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, the international pacts on civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights, the African court for human and peoples’ rights, the international criminal court,

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<sup>80</sup> Federico Mayor, in *Agir pour les droits de l’homme au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p.1 “la question capitale, la seule qui soit décisive pour les temps à venir, est de se donner les moyens-politiques, sociaux, individuels, d’appliquer les principes et de transformer les droits de l’homme en réalité quotidienne”

<sup>81</sup> Moustapha Soumaré, speech given in Cotonou 21st October,2000

the Vienna declaration and program of action, ... All these international instruments are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>82</sup>, dated 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1948. So this document is very important as a means of preventing racism.

Though it is not a treaty in the logic of international law, it is important through its multilateral aspect (UNO declaration) and the fact that many universal as well as regional agreements are signed and ratified, which agreements basically draw their principles from it. The UNO declaration on human rights contains thirty articles; each of which takes into account one important aspect of human beings' lives. All thirty articles prevent racism but thirteen of them are more important. Focussing on them, we can clearly see that they are related to this phenomenon.

- Article 1: Raises three principles all related to racism.

- \* All human beings are born free and equal, so racism is banished; it shows that no race has more rights than the other races.

- \* All human beings are endowed with reason and conscience; so no one is more intelligent than another. When Whites think they are more intelligent than Blacks, they are watering racism.

- \* All human beings should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood which is our final goal working on this theme. They should be no boundary among human beings.

As one can see, apartheid acts contrarily to these three principles of article 1. Such regime does not guarantee equity and solidarity among peoples.

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<sup>82</sup> This document is annexed to this dissertation

- Article 2: States that any human being can benefit from the rights and freedom guaranteed for human beings; this is a consequence of article 1.
- Article 3: Raises two principles:
  - \* Every human being has the right to life. This concerns racism, since most of the time, leaders happen to kill people, especially opponents to their regime.
  - \* Every human being has the right to security. This is also related to racism.
- Article 5: States that nobody will be manhandled or tortured. This reminds us of genocide and political assassination as crimes related to racism.
- Article 7: Declares that everybody has access to law protection, which implies the banishment of racism.
- Article 9: States that nobody will illegally be arrested, jailed or exiled, which implies the banishment of this evil.
- Article 13: Grants to everybody freedom of movement; during the regime of apartheid Blacks are not free to go wherever they want.
- Article 16: States that all human beings have rights to marriage without any limitation due to race nationality or religion. We can notice that there is an apartheid law which is opposed to marriage between Whites and Blacks.
- Article 18, 19 and 20: Grants to everybody freedom of thought and religion, of speech and of association: It is mainly related to racism because this is contrast to it.

- Article 23: States that everyone without any discrimination has the right to equal pay for equal work. This article banishes the difference forms of injustice and exploitation, as shown in part 3 of this dissertation.
- Article 26: Concerns the right of education for everybody, which banishes racism.

So human rights already prevent this evil we are working on. But are these human rights respected in Africa? Taking into account the events occurring in Africa, we can't say that they are respected. Many countries show this, namely Rwanda, Democratic Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Tchad, Lybia ... The particularity of these countries is that this violation is done by the populations themselves supported by politicians or the elite with the complicity or incapacity of the political power. The case of some lybian (rebels) supported by French in order to kill Muhamed Kadhafi in Lybia and the one to arrest Laurent GBAGBO in Ivory Coast can be quoted as examples. It is important to grant everybody, the possibility to run after the political power and in the Africa of the third millennium, we can no longer talk of pure race. We all are from mixed races. Today, nobody is stranger somewhere . The most important thing being development, articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 18, 19 are constantly violated. Faced with racism, faced with its manifestations and human rights violation, strategies and actions should be found to ensure peace, security and solidarity in Africa.

Action need to be taken not only to settle the ongoing armed conflicts in Africa, but also to prevent racism. The following actions are useful as means of struggle against this phenomenon. They can be classified in three categories, namely political actions on the one hand, legal and institutional actions on the other hand. These actions are drawn from the conclusion of the regional seminar held in Addis Ababa in Ethiopia from 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2000, by experts on the prevention of ethnic and racial conflicts in Africa, and from the European

seminar titled “European contribution to the world conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, held in Strasbourg (France) on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2000. Concerning political actions, six actions can be taken to fight racism, ethnocentrism and dictatorship as they are related in characteristics, and therefore guarantee a few fundamental human rights.

1. Establish and reinforce democratic systems: Though this regime is not quite perfect, it is the one in which human rights are best respected and the people participate in the management of their country. This leadership should not be ethnicity or race based. So countries in Africa which still adopt dictatorship should stop it; otherwise history will decide in their place.
2. Participation of minorities in decision making process on a national Level: This is one cause of frustration with the minorities, one cause of ethnic conflict. It is not securing to have only few ethnic groups or only one ethnic group leading the country, giving the others the impression that they are useless and are born to obey, not to command.
3. Non-discriminatory treatment of all regions and ethnic groups: The same law must be applied to all people, without any distinction of race or ethnic group. Moreover, all regions in the countries must have the same treatment. It is dangerous to give a project that fits a given region to another one that is not naturally capable of it.
4. Combat discrimination against migrants: This is important since today many refugees, because of wars, are obliged to trek out and seek shelter in peaceful countries, and globalisation obliges the people to be very mobile. So, racism must be avoided as much as possible.

5. Provide equitable distribution of wealth, access to economic advancement and full realisation of the right to development for all groups in the society. This will once again help avoid frustration with some ethnic groups. National wealth must be regionally and individually distributed adequately so that people behave as real citizens and participate in building the country (taxes payment).
6. Develop solidarity programs: this is the conclusion of the first five actions.

Concerning legal and institutional strategies, ten actions may be taken:

- a. Ratify treaties for human rights protection and the fundamental freedom rights.
- b. Integrate international human rights principles in internal texts (constitutions, laws, regulations) and apply them.
- c. Allow individual complainants to have access to international community in order to denounce leaders who violate human rights, since normally they are not subjects of international law. In fact the international society is organised in such a way that private persons (physical or companies) don't have access to it. Only States, public international organisations, have access to international law. But at the same time, United Nations and its organisms are striving to have human rights respected. How can this be done without possibility for individuals to have access to international law court?
- d. Ensure that all persons have access to tribunals, courts and laws; this implies alphabetisation, civic and juridical education for the population.

- e. Ensure that racist, ethnocentrist or xenophobic acts are severely punished by tribunals and courts.
- f. Legislative framework in civil, criminal and administrative law should expressly and specifically prohibit discrimination.
- g. Ensure respect for the rights of minorities as well as accountability, transparency and entrenchment of the rule of law.
- h. Governments should reinforce dialogue with NGOs.
- i. Afford the possibility for NGOs to support complainants of racism with their consent in legal procedures.
- j. Set up per county national commissions to daily investigate on tribal, ethnic and racial discrimination.

These sixteen actions will be completed with that by the African Union whose ambition is African unification and development<sup>83</sup>. These actions can be taken in each African country.

But not only the implementation of human rights is needed to face racism, but also the promotion of education and the sensitisation of the population are too important.

## **B. Educating and sensitising the population**

The fulfilment of the different actions quoted above should be a reality through education and sensitisation of the masses and of the young generation as President Mikhaïl Gorbatchev stated in a book published in French that «Pour renforcer la mise en oeuvre des droits de l’homme, il faut aviver chez chacun d’entre nous la conscience d’habiter une même planète et d’appartenir au genre

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<sup>83</sup> See the constitutive act of the African Union, article 25

humain»<sup>84</sup>. Which means that one of the best ways to reinforce human rights implementation, is to develop in everybody's consciousness that we share the same planet and we are all human beings. Adolfo P. Esquivel adds: « Il faut développer des programmes d'études dans les écoles, lycées et universités, dans lesquels les droits de l'homme soient, presents »<sup>85</sup>. This is to say that human rights must have a determined place in curricula, and in his famous inaugural address speech of May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1994, Neslon Mandela said:

We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of the new world.

Let there be justice for all.

Let there be peace for all.

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

Let each know that for each, the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves.

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the shunk of the world.<sup>86</sup>

This passage expresses not only the pride of being free after a long struggle but it also sensitises Africans especially South Africans to be unified. These quotations stress education as means to promote human rights. To reach this goal the actions by the family and schools, by confessional groups, NGOs and political parties are compulsory.

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<sup>84</sup> Mickhaïl Gorbatchev, p.30

<sup>85</sup> Adolfo Perez Esquivel, p.46

<sup>86</sup> This document is annexed to this dissertation

Before saying how the actions by family and schools are important to banish racism, it is evident to explain what education is. In fact the same importance is given to education, schooling or instruction by Njoroge in *Weep not Child*, Ngugi's second novel; Indeed here he thinks that only education can help Blacks in Kenya retrieve their lost lands and dignity back. But he is only a boy and cannot create a school. The two heroes do not belong to the same "Riika" or age-group, though they share the same opinion about education. Unfortunately, Njoroge's dream fails because the sun will no longer rise . He says: "*I know that my tomorrow was an illusion*"<sup>87</sup>

The "Education" that we are referring to here is not only instruction or schooling which are very important; we want to emphasise morality and civism more than knowledge and know how; that is moral and civic education. The concept "education" can, be defined as the action adults exerce on children and young generations to teach them how to behave in terms of what the society expects from them so that they can be positive citizens. In this context, not only families or schools are today's educators, but every single person and institution. Education is the first condition for development, and our politicians must know it. To reach our objective, we shall first consider the content of this education before we say who will achieve it and how to have it done as well as the conditions required for its success.

Through moral education, we must develop in children and youth the spirit of tolerance, non- violence and respect for human personality. This must be started even before the child is five or that education must start early, even when the baby is not born yet. A person, who is educated and has become non-violent, tolerant and respectful of humanity in each person, is not likely to develop into a racist, all other things being equal. Moreover, this moral

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<sup>87</sup> Ngugi WA Thiong'o, *Weep Not Child*, p.132

education must be completed with civic education and it can start when the child enters primary school, as prescribed by Benin constitution in article 13. Let's notice that both subjects of education were already withdrawn from the academic programme in Benin, some years ago but President YAYI Boni in his speech on the independence day August 01<sup>st</sup>, 2011, recommended to re-insert them in the programme. For instance civic education will consist in teaching students, adolescents and even grownups, human rights, social justice and democratic system and institutions. They will be taught how to vote, the importance of voting as well as consequences of fraud... For sure, methods used will not be the same and account will be taken of the age and living conditions of each category of people.

Civic education will enable students and people generally to get to know about democracy, to understand their rights and duties, and finally acquire the capacity for the respect of public institutions and property, and of every citizen. So moral and civic education go hand in hand and must be the task of all and sundry, namely families, churches / mosques, schools, NGOs, political parties, the press and the State. All these institutions must deal in moral and civic education at the same time. But they may not use the same materials, aids, or methodological approaches. Families and schools have a great part to play there. They are a main responsibility for children's education. Moral education starts at home. This means that families in Africa must take the habit to gather at least once a week, may be a few minutes before or after the family daily prayer. During this meeting, parents share with their children the joys and sorrows which they had during the week and vice versa; through this, adults will find ways to develop in their kids the components of moral education we referred to above. They may use tales, legends, riddles; they may rely on TV programs, especially the most exciting ones.

But do our families want to play such a role today? Availability of parents is necessary. Our society is very mobile today. Money plays a more and more important role. If you don't drive a car, if you don't wear expensive clothes today, then you are not a powerful person. Moreover, goods become more and more expensive. As a matter of effect, women are obliged to work, to be employees in services. So in many African families, father and mother are running day in day out to get money to face life problems and at that time, children education is sacrificed. Many children therefore indulge in delinquency, (toxicomania, prostitution,...) When, these children become authorities, they don't have enough sense of morality. So the real question is "what kind of father and mother do we need for our children?" Is it normal to forget children's education in order to run after more and more money? Between wealth and education which one is the more important for children? We think education is more important than everything. Therefore Father and mother must try to be with their children at least a few hours a day and on Saturdays and Sundays which actually are their rest days.

The second condition for children's education is "positive environment". The society in which children are living is corrupt. Each of us has his or her moral flaws in specific social, economic and political field. Now, how can we expect children to be educated when the environment in which they are living is polluted, is corrupt? Children very often are prone to imitate the behaviours that they see in the society rather than listen and do what they are told by their parents. Before adults can succeed in educating children, they must be educated themselves.

Concerning schools, especially primary and secondary ones, civic and moral education can be done through History, French, English Spanish, German, Sport and local languages. The images of Mahatmat Gandhi, of Jesus-Christ, and Muhamed can be used as materials. This means that the curricula must be

renewed and adapted to African realities; they can derive materials as well from African culture. The active methods used nowadays will help highly to this aim. In Benin, this idea is already understood by political authorities. Since that great meeting on education in Benin held in Cotonou in 1990, we have understood in Benin that curricula need to be changed and applied to new technology and to our cultural specificities. In many fields and at many levels, curricula are changed or are being changed. The case of primary schools is known to everybody. Also in secondary cycle, some classes are having their curricula changed. But this beautiful reform can't succeed unless three conditions at least are fulfilled. The first condition concerns those repetitive strikes that characterise Benin education system. Each year, teachers always have something to demand the government. A deep analysis of these needs shows that they are related to better working and living conditions. How can the teacher live in misery while he is asked to improve his output? How can we imagine that the administration owe each teacher millions as salary arrears, while most teachers' salaries are around 45000 or 54000 F CFA, and they are asked to educate children well? Those who are informed of these new methods can't concretely apply them. They prefer traditional methodology because it does not need too much effort and it helps them save time. Training is a real problem in Benin and in Africa education system.

The first condition is students' availability to study and to be educated. In many African countries students come from poor families and don't have enough food to eat. So in classroom, they just sleep; they can't follow anything. Most of them are constantly ill and don't have money to buy drugs. Concerning books and school materials, these children don't have any, since they can't even eat well. The drawback is that either the child fails his/her studies and joins the roads if he/she can't be apprentice to a craftsman, or he/she becomes a thief who steals to survive. This situation is one cause of the failure of Africa's

education system. This issue is not limited to Benin only; in fact teachers are badly paid in Africa, and African States owe teachers many millions of money. The government and trade unions in each country must sit down, negotiate and adopt a plan to solve the problems in that field so that if two problems are planned to be dealt with, the government will be loyal and they will really be solved, instead of waiting for the beginning of strikes before calling on to workers' representatives. In so doing, if it is a five-year plan, by 2016 no problem will remain unsolved in this field and education will reach its goals.

The second condition is related to teachers' training. In fact, real and concrete training is necessary. New teaching methods are being discovered and teachers should not be unconscious of them. Today, it is known internationally that active methods are more useful than "passive methods". Still today in African countries, many teachers are using passive methods.

These actions by families and schools will be backed by churches, mosques, NGOs and political parties.

According to African countries' Constitutions, political parties' actions are to educate people and to seek political power by lawful means. These parties must have programs covering civic education of citizens generally and the youth in particular. They must use seminars, workshops, and stress human rights, tolerance especially during election periods. So at first, political parties are means of development, education, political and civic education; but in Africa and in Benin in particular, we are too far from this, first because we do not have yet true political parties; secondly, what we have by way of parties serves only the purpose of fighting for personal or ethnic interests. African political parties and those in Benin Republic specially, will be useful only when they start really educating their members for democracy, peace, freedom, tolerance... They must enable their members to know about legal texts for them to acquire information on their rights and duties. So, before we can talk of real political parties in

Africa, apart from the desire to get political power which is not the most important thing for the populations, several conditions must be fulfilled. First, our political parties must use no ethnic or regional exclusion policy. From parties of the North or of a given ethnic group, they must become national parties so that the minority ethnic groups will have the same rights as the ethnic group of the leader of the party.

Therefore the second condition is justice and equity. In Africa parties, it seems that people from some regions or a given ethnic group have more rights than others, and you'll notice that to be candidates for legislative or local elections, only these people are named. It is from them that the members of the party's board are chosen. And no justice, no equity exists. African political parties must get rid of these vices in order to play their roles.

The third condition is financial; most of the time, the founding members or the founder of a party are the only ones who support the party financially. In so doing, they think that this party is their property. The other members of the party bring nothing, no share. According to them, their role is just to vote for the leading members, which is a mistake. Financing a political party is very important and concerns all the members of this party.

NGOs and the press have a great role to play in civic and political education too. But do we really have Non Governmental Organisations in Benin? NGOs are expected to solve specific development programs. But our NGOs simply get formed to look for funds; they make no effort to generate funds for their own actions. We do not need foreign aid to do everything in our countries. For instance, the creation of an NGO to help children in situation does not need too much money; all teachers can help students free of charge if they do not have daily bread problems. NGOs should be created to provide civic, political and legal education. Especially learned men and jurists living in rural areas can organize people in their villages or areas for this objective. But before

this can be done, we must ask ourselves the kind of NGOs that we need in Africa. Do we need NGOs to fight poverty or to give job? This question is essential because normally, the main goal of an NGO is to fight poverty. In this logic an NGO is a set of people sharing the same ideals for their population, who gather funds and devise projects which are supposed to bring satisfaction for the population. But in Africa, NGOs are not that; they are just things people create in order to have their daily bread. NGOs must be created mainly for poverty sake. Now by way of struggle against poverty, people may be engaged and paid back in wages.

Second, NGOs should now learn strategies to generate funds themselves and not wait for donors. With the population, they may find activities which can help get money. Moreover, everybody is not poor in Benin or in Africa. There are wealthy men and they can finance such associations. Anyway, our NGOs must change their mentality.

Third, there must be **credibility** in NGOs management. Embezzlement and corruption are frequent vices, just because the person, who has created it, becomes its executive director and wants to have back the money he spent in creating the association. It is also mainly because there is almost no legislation and transparency, through laws and regulations.

Religion has a role to play in the field of moral and spiritual education. It must contribute to unity among the peoples. It can use life stories of prominent characters in the Bible or the Koran (Moses, David, Jesus-Christ, Muhammad) to influence peoples' world view. As a matter of fact, people rather consider the souls of such characters than their cultural heritage. Apart from the apartheid system, people are not separated in the Church or Mosque according to their skins, languages or customs. God is a means of connection among different ethnic groups. We understand this, when we read these words from Andrew Gonzalez:

Religion and self identity go hand in hand so much so that one gets the impression that the self identity is dominated by or assumed by the religious dimension... Belief and practice dominate one's personality so much so that self identity is co-terminus with religion and in some ways at the group level acts as icon for unspoken policy formulation and implementation.<sup>88</sup>

Ultimately, religion is part of the civil society; therefore it must play the role of a lobby with leaders, publish articles to give its opinions on how the State affairs are managed. Religion must, from time to time function and act like NGOs through Information, Education and Communication (IEC). But can confessional groups play well this role when they aren't pure themselves? What kind of religions do we have today? First, religions in Africa and in Benin are so numerous that we don't know which one we shall practise. Why is it so? Two reasons can be found. The first one is that the secret objective of religion creation is money. Today when you go to church it seems that you "buy" spiritual protection from God, which shouldn't normally be that while the people are suffering to save money for their church activities, church leaders are building gorgeous flats, though they have no job, except spiritual activities. The second reason is leadership; everybody wants to lead, to command others. Where is that education that confessional group are expected to bring? Moreover our churches have become places of acts of violence, of love affairs or sexuality. Women have no security in some mosques and churches; either the priests, the pastors, the imams or one of those near them will woe women already married. Even if they aren't married, is it good to court in disorder girls and women who have come to be educated and to worship their God? Because of money, leadership or women, acts of violence are frequent in churches and mosques

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<sup>88</sup> Andrew GONZALEZ, FSC, "*Religion as Identity*", Panel 5 : Identity and Character in a Pluralistic world. The Seventh International Congress of Professors World Peace Academy, Washington, DC, USA, November 24-29, 1997, Pp.17, 18

today and we can ask the kind of education these confessional groups can bring today.

In a nutshell, education and sensitisation of the population are necessary for ethnic, racial and region integration, to struggle racism; and the actors of this are families, schools, political parties, NGOs and confessional groups, in a word, the civil society. But these actors are not yet ready since they don't fulfil the conditions laid down for each of them, because there is still lack of morality, justice and equity with most of them. So there is a big problem.

Racism and all other problems related to it can be summarised in "bad mentality". It is a problem of mentality or ignorance; those who will fight and those who are going to be fought have all the same mentality, an under development mentality, the mentality of selfishness. Now how to make mentality change in Africa, in Benin? The answer lies in the hands of African leaders. When the president of an African country decides to fight these vices, who can oppose it? When he decides to sack the minister who indulges in corruption, who will refuse it? If Africa Heads of State and of government decide to have texts applied and administrative structures work loyally, so will each minister do and so on. So the answer to that question lies in the executive's hands. People would say that there are influences from voters, from the political party which the president has come from. Only a Head of State that wants to be influenced will be influenced. If African leaders can know that they are there to help God correct the society, for justice, equity..., they won't be afraid of attacking the vice that nobody up to now has attacked. It is preferable to die by struggling for welfare, for one's citizens than live long life exploiting and maltreating the population. Through these actions, we can clearly notice that education is the major means for fighting racism and other vices related to it. Education is the best legacy.

# **Conclusion**

The dream nourished by Abrahams which is to depict the problems related to life in the city or urbanisation for what he began his work as novelist in England, finds its realisation through his first novel, *Song of the City* as well as the second novel entitled *Mine Boy*. These novels deal with the lives of human beings with ideas of injustice, inequality and call for behaviour change in order to arise the development of the world and particularly the one of the African continent. In fact, development is not only economic and industrial as some people have thought it up to now. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, “development” was seen in terms of economy, commerce, industry, agriculture. The more money a country had, the more developed it was; the more food citizens in a country had to eat, the more developed that country was. This conception as we know, gave rise to the development of capitalism and individualism in Europe and in America so that human being was mere creature. But by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people started introducing human and social issues to define development. In addition to economy, there is necessity of health, peace, security, justice and freedom. These are the real conditions for economic development. Indeed no economic activities are possible when the populations, the economic activists live constantly in conflicts; in insecurity. Conflicts are inevitable in any society where people are denied their basic human needs for identity, equality, recognition, dignity and participation. Africa is among the continents which are sick in the world. Its sickness most of the time is seen only from the economic angle, which is not true. Africa has been and is still being threatened with racism, ethnocentrism and dictatorship. Ethnocentrism and racism share many characteristics and we can put them in the same category. Dictatorship, stands as the normal consequence of those two social phenomena. And those three evils have severe drawbacks on the development of African countries. The main ones are wars, acts of violence, injustice, corruption, embezzlement; in a nutshell, gross mismanagement of both individual and national material. The worst is that

the youth's future and education are jeopardised, since they always try to imitate what they see in the society and around them.

Two African countries, Nigeria and South Africa, can be quoted as real examples to these situations of people's discrimination. Both countries are among the richest in the continent in terms of natural resources. Nigeria can boast of its oil, coal, tin, bauxite and gold whereas South Africa is rich in gold, diamonds and other strategic minerals. Unfortunately, the majority of South Africans did not benefit from these riches because of racism and apartheid. That however, does not rule out the presence of a strong and diversified private business sector and a substantial middle class including the Blacks. So, Nigeria and South Africa could be likened to the Biblical Aaron and Moses, who were endowed with the responsibility to bring Africa out from the bondage of despair, decline and underdevelopment. As regional powers, history has imposed on them the enormous tasks of finding solutions to some of the most pressing African concerns.

As our research work is based on *Mine Boy*, this enabled us to give full details about discrimination practices, with man at the centre. Peter ABRAHAMS wrote and published this novel in 1946 to inform those who live out of this country about the living condition of the natives. On a very simple level one would have to agree with the blurb on the cover that the novel is an attempt to draw attention to the plight of Africans via South Africans in a White-dominated country. This is on the very simple level because it only reveals part of the author's purpose. The novel is a protest against inhuman belief of the White minority that social acceptability is based on race rather than humanity, ability or whatever term we want to use to indicate a society based on equality. It is also a novel which is concerned with reactions of human beings inside South Africa. On the whole, it is informative as it tells us about the hopeless conditions of the Black and coloured people in this country.

It informs us of the adversities of the apartheid policy of the South African government. It is also a moving story as it enlists our sympathy for a race who otherwise would have been rejoicing on their fatherland but seen to be suffering. ABRAHAMS wrote this novel that year to draw the attention of Africans upon their conditions but he is not listened to. What use are literature and social sciences then? More than sixty years after the book was published, those problems still exist, but in new forms most of the time. Like poverty and sicknesses, these vices (betrayal, corruption, embezzlement, mismanagement etc.) are eating up the continent. Africa does not have a consensus; Africans don't share common socio-political goals. In each country, there is just apparent unity and understanding. The populations are like slaves in African leaders' view. Rebels in Ivory Coast and Lybia are still granted arms by White people to kill their fellow citizens in this year 2011. Mohammad Kadhafi whose desire is to unify African countries fails to unify his own country Lybia by opening fire on the population. When will the beautiful Ones Be Born? While the populations are fighting for survival, their leaders are interested in political power and are ready to use any strategy to reach this goal, even by killing the citizens. Today real good White people like Paddy (in *Mine Boy*) are rare. Paddy's help is a punctual solution and an isolated one. Black African workers need a system of coherent action which can bring about political changes and improve their living and working conditions. The main solutions are education policy for all black men, trade unions for Black and the Black's will for political awareness. Therefore, the solution should be an armed fight against the existing system by the Blacks. But could violence be a successful solution? Whites are much more equipped and it will be risky for the Blacks to measure themselves to them. Even if the White progressive helps them, they are so few in number that we wonder whether they will win the fight. In such a case it is better to be wise. That is why we suggest negotiations as long as possible. We think that mutual understanding between both races will help improve bit by bit the situation.

Education can also participate a little bit. We know that the affair between Xuma and Eliza can have no permanence. It is doomed inevitably. How many other similar relationships are doomed just as inevitably and for the same reasons? (Greediness, dissatisfaction, illiteracy of one of the lovers, etc...). Eliza has become ensnared by the savage vanity of “the city”. Her education and her social awareness reject the illiterate, simple Xuma. The new values she has acquired are in direct conflict with the old ways. So it is the new values which have created the basic division in the hearts of Black people in South Africa. ABRAHAMS is not saying that the removal of apartheid would solve this problem immediately, but he is suggesting that it would go a long way towards it.

As a matter of fact, before Africans can talk about development, they need to think over what the concept “development” means for them. There must exist peace, security and unity among the population. In other terms, there must exist national consensus. Besides this, industrial, commercial and economic activities can play their role correctly. Investors can come to African countries. But if armed conflicts are frequent as we can see now, Africans are just beating about the bush. After this, Nkrumah’s advocacy must come forth-unity or union. Africa has everything for its development except three things: peace or security, industry and unity. Unless Africans stops looking at western countries, unless we look at one another as brothers and develop brotherhood, we still have a long way to go. Africans must get rid of their escapist attitude and ponder seriously over the development of their continent.

Concrete actions must therefore be taken to face racism and the other evils related to it and their consequences. African leaders should promote education, democracy and decentralisation because they would be the main strategies. Not mere education, but moral, civic and spiritual education. Not the kind of democracy which enriches only the leaders and not the kind of

decentralisation based on politics. Above all, brothers and friends, have a long way to go. Human rights must be promoted and respected. We should copy the White man things not in a blind way but by taking into account African's realities and history. So let's continue to fight for the development of Africa because it is the end that justifies the means.

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# **APPENDICES**

## **Inaugural Address speech by Nelson Hlahla Mandela**

**May 10th 1994**

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Distinguished Guests, Comrades and friends:

Today, all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to newborn liberty.

Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.

All this we owe both to ourselves and to the peoples of the world who are so well represented here today. To my compatriots, I have no hesitation in saying that each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld.

Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. The national mood changes as the seasons change. We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom. That spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland explains the depth of the pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict, and as we saw it spurned, outlawed and isolated by the peoples of the world, precisely because it has become the universal base of the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression.

We, the people of South Africa, feel fulfilled that humanity has taken us back into its bosom, that we, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil. We thank all our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity. We trust that you will continue to stand by us as we tackle the challenges of building peace, prosperity, non-sexism, non-racialism and democracy. We deeply appreciate the role that the masses of our people and their political mass democratic, religious, women, youth, business, traditional and other leaders have played to bring about this conclusion. Not least among them is my Second Deputy President, the Honourable F.W. de Klerk. We would also like to pay tribute to our security forces, in all their ranks, for the distinguished role they have played in securing our first democratic elections and the transition to democracy, from blood-thirsty forces which still refuse to see the light. The time for the healing of the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.

The time to build is upon us. We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination. We succeeded to take our last steps to freedom in conditions of relative peace. We commit ourselves to the construction of a complete, just and lasting peace. We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.

As a token of its commitment to the renewal of our country, the new Interim Government of National Unity will, as a matter of urgency, address the

issue of amnesty for various categories of our people who are currently serving terms of imprisonment. We dedicate this day to all the heroes and heroines in this country and the rest of the world who sacrificed in many ways and surrendered their lives so that we could be free. Their dreams have become reality. Freedom is their reward. We are both humbled and elevated by the honour and privilege that you, the people of South Africa, have bestowed on us, as the first President of a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa, to lead our country out of the valley of darkness. We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.

Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves. Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.

Let freedom reign. The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!

**God bless Africa!**

# **THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

## **PREAMBLE**

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1:

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2:

- Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3:

- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4:

- No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade

shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5:

- No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6:

- Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7:

- All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8:

- Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9:

- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10:

- Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11:

- (1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
- (2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12:

- No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13:

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14:

- (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
- (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15:

- (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16:

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17:

- (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20:

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21:

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22:

- Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

#### Article 23:

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

#### Article 24:

- Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

#### Article 25:

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

#### Article 26:

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in

the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27:

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28:

- Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29:

- (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
- (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of

securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

- (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30:

- Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.