Verbum et Ecclesia
ISSN: (Online) 2074-7705, (Print) 1609-9982

Addressing systemic racism in South Africa: A missio-public theological perspective

Author:
Patrick Nanthambwe[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Unit for Reformed Theology and Development in South Africa, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Patrick Nanthambwe,
patricknanthambwe@yahoo.com

Dates:
Received: 17 Nov. 2024
Accepted: 19 Jan. 2025
Published: 19 Feb. 2025

How to cite this article:
Nanthambwe, P., 2025, 'Addressing systemic racism in South Africa: A missio-public theological perspective', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 46(1), a3385. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i1.3385

Thirty years after the end of apartheid, South Africa continues to grapple with the deep-seated challenge of systemic racism. Despite significant strides towards equality, racial disparities persist in various sectors, impacting access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities. This enduring legacy of apartheid underscores the urgent need for effective interventions that transcend policy reform and tackle the social and cultural foundations of racial bias. This article argues that when integrated with missional engagement, public theology offers a transformative framework for addressing racism in South Africa. As a discipline concerned with the interplay between faith and societal issues, public theology invites the church to participate actively in social justice, promoting reconciliation and inclusivity within diverse communities. By embracing its prophetic role, the church can contribute to dismantling racial prejudice through dialogue, advocacy and grassroots actions that resonate with faith communities and the broader public. The missional approach within public theology emphasises the church's calling to serve society, not merely as a religious entity but as a beacon of hope and justice. Through intentional acts of service, solidarity and community empowerment, mission-focussed public theology can expose and confront systemic inequalities. This approach seeks to raise awareness and encourage ethical practices, shaping a national ethos that values and upholds human dignity. Ultimately, this study posits that a missio-public theology approach can foster a cohesive strategy for addressing the persistent issue of racism, paving the way for a more equitable and reconciled South African society.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article contributes to theology's role in addressing South Africa's challenges by presenting a practical framework for tackling systemic racism through public theology and missiology. It highlights the church's transformative, prophetic and reconciliatory role, enriching scholarly discourse on theology's engagement with societal issues. This perspective fosters interdisciplinary approaches to addressing social justice in South Africa and beyond.

Keywords: systemic racism; missions; public theology; reconciliation; church; South Africa.

Introduction

In 2017, Jan A. du Rand, J.M. Vorster and Nico Vorster edited 'Togetherness in South Africa: Religious Perspectives on Racism, Xenophobia, and Economic Inequality'. The book centres on a pivotal question: What insights and strategies can theology provide in addressing the underlying causes of racism, inequality and xenophobia in South Africa? Furthermore, it examines how theology and the church can actively foster reconciliation and cultivate a spirit of unity and shared identity among South African citizens.

Drawing on the insights of leading theologians from South Africa, the book explores practical and theological responses to these persistent issues. It highlights how Christian theology, emphasising justice, compassion and human dignity, can be a robust framework for addressing the nation's complex social injustices. Contributors argue that theology must critique systemic injustice and offer pathways towards healing and social cohesion, inspiring the church and individual believers to act as agents of change in their communities (Du Rand, Vorster & Vorster 2017).

Having read the discussions in this book, the following questions emerged: Why is racism still a challenge in South Africa? Many books and extensive research have tackled the issues of racism and inequality, suggesting ways for South Africa to move forward. What remains unaddressed regarding racism and inequality that this article may contribute as something new? Given these

questions, the worry is that this article on racism and how theology can address these issues might be seen as redundant. Yet before jumping to that conclusion, this article argues that the racism problem in South Africa still demands fresh examination, particularly within the current socio-political context.

South Africa, in 2024, faces a unique convergence of challenges – a deepening economic crisis, rising youth unemployment and persistent inequalities – that amplifies the urgency of these discussions (De Lannoy et al. 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2024). Eloff (2017:1) acknowledged the challenge of racism in South Africa when he points out that the country 'is suffering from many ailments, and some of the most difficult of these to address are racism, xenophobia, sexism, and economic inequality'. These conditions continue to fuel divisions, resentment and xenophobic tensions, underscoring that racism and economic inequality are not static issues but evolving threats that require ongoing theological reflection and practical responses. The church, positioned as a moral and social influence in South Africa, has a responsibility and an opportunity to respond in ways relevant to today's realities (Nanthambwe & Magezi 2024).

This article will argue that theology, precisely a missio-public approach, offers valuable, actionable insights into dismantling the systems and attitudes perpetuating racial divides. By actively engaging in community-building, reconciliation efforts and advocating for social justice, theology can address the root causes of social fragmentation. Instead of merely rehashing established ideas, this article seeks to propose dynamic ways theology can be mobilised to address not only the visible symptoms of racism and inequality but also the cultural and structural foundations that sustain these issues. In this way, the article aims to contribute a perspective that moves beyond abstract concepts, calling for practical, faith-driven action that aligns with the urgent demands of South Africa's present social landscape.

As this debate continues into 2024, the role of theology in addressing social divides remains urgent, given the persistence of racial tensions and economic disparities in post-apartheid South Africa (Nanthambwe 2022). With increasing calls for social responsibility, theologians argue that the church must step beyond its internal boundaries to address social justice issues directly, engaging with both state and civil society in transformative ways (Kim 2017b:40; Smit 2017:75). By championing an inclusive theology that addresses issues of race, identity and belonging, theology can contribute meaningfully to developing a reconciled, equitable South African society – where faith communities actively promote and embody values of unity and togetherness amid diversity.

How extensively has racism influenced South African communities? The forthcoming section will provide a brief analysis of racism's pervasive effects. This includes an examination of the concept of racism, its profound impact on various communities and the underlying factors contributing to its persistence.

The article explores the historical context of racial discrimination, its socio-economic repercussions and its ongoing influence on community dynamics. In addition, it delves into racism's systemic nature, highlighting its manifestations in areas such as education, employment, healthcare and housing. By presenting a thorough understanding of what racism entails, the extent of its impact and the reasons for its continued existence, the article aims to shed light on the challenges faced by South African communities and the imperative for concerted efforts to address and overcome these issues.

South Africa and racism today

Those who believed that racism would disappear with the end of apartheid in South Africa were mistaken. Instead, racism has intensified, though it now manifests in different forms compared to the apartheid era (Mulaudzi 2022). Before examining its current impact on society, it's essential to start with a clear definition of racism. Despite seeming self-evident, the concept of racism can be subtle, as evidenced by the ongoing situation in South Africa (Mulaudzi 2022:17). Because of this subtlety, defining racism is crucial for effectively understanding and addressing its presence.

What is racism?

Understanding the concept of racism is essential to ensure a shared perspective, given its complexity. Pillay (2017) argued:

> Racism is not easy to define today. The complexities abound in a variety of ways. For example, many accused of racism respond with the argument that their actions and aspirations are to do with patriotism, or that their claims revolve around matters of ethnic or national culture, not race. To which others add the view that everyone is racist. (p. 4)

A compelling example of how it's challenging to define racism is the town of Orania in the Northern Cape, which is exclusively inhabited by white residents. Smith and Pitts (2019) document a response from a resident, Sarel Roets, when questioned about Orania's all-white population in a diverse country such as South Africa. Roets (see Smith & Pitts 1991) responded:

> Orania is not all-white town. It just happened to be white because Afrikaners happened to be white. We don't perceive ourselves as white people, we perceive ourselves as Afrikaner people and that is a cultural thing, it's not a race thing. (p. 1)

This perspective underscores how appeals to cultural identity can sometimes serve to obscure underlying racial exclusivity. By framing Orania's homogeneity as a matter of cultural rather than racial identity, residents might attempt to deflect criticism related to segregation, emphasising Afrikaner heritage instead. However, this emphasis on

cultural uniqueness can function as a subtle justification for racial separation, blurring the line between preserving cultural heritage and perpetuating exclusionary practices. This illustrates how narratives of cultural preservation can inadvertently or deliberately mask racial dynamics, adding complexity to discussions about racism in contemporary South Africa.

Rattansi (2007) highlighted the challenge in defining racism, stating:

> It is clear that even the briefest inquiry into the meaning of the term 'racism' throws up a number of perplexing questions and various cognate terms – ethnicity and ethnocentrism; nation, nationalism and xenophobia; hostility to 'outsiders' and 'strangers', or heterophobia; and so forth – which require clarification. (p. 6)

Another example is when black people in South Africa deny that they are racists. Mzwakali (2015) outrightly denied that blacks are racists arguing that Black people can exhibit prejudice against white people but cannot be considered racist. Mzwakali (2015) clarifies that this distinction is based on the idea that racism involves systemic, socio-economic power structures that elevate one race above others. Because Black people historically lack the resources to create and enforce such structures, they are unable to impose racial superiority in the same way that white people have traditionally done through slavery and colonialism. Thus, while Black people may hold prejudiced views, they do not have the socio-economic power to engage in racism. Unfortunately, this has been the view of many Black South Africans (Vorster 2017:42). This view was reiterated by President Cyril Ramaphosa, albeit in a shrewd manner in his speech (South African Government 2022) when he said:

> We know that racism, here and around the world, is driven by feelings of superiority on the part of those who perpetuate it. And although racism can be directed against anyone, it is black people who bear the brunt, both in the past and in the present. As the 'Black Lives Matter' movement has so strongly asserted, we need to systematically dismantle and eradicate attitudes of white superiority. (p. 1)

We observe two distinct forms of racism denial, each rooted in cultural and economic factors, one from each racial group. This dual perspective makes it even more challenging to define racism clearly.

In understanding what racism entails, it is imperative also to look at the meaning of prejudice. What is prejudice, and how is it different from racism? Cuncic (2024) defines prejudice as:

> A negative preconception or attitude toward members of a group based on shared characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexuality, age, religion, language, class, or culture. Prejudice can be racial, but it can also be sexist, ageist, or classist, for example. (p. 1)

Prejudiced beliefs are typically formed early in life and can shape behaviour subtly and noticeably (Olson & Zabel 2016). While prejudice is a more general concept, racism, as we will explore, is a specific type of prejudice that is connected to race and power dynamics.

While the difficulty of defining racism remains, the definition provided by the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2001) reflects the understanding of racism with which this article aligns. According to ILO et al. (2001), racism is defined as:

> An ideological construct that assigns a certain race and/or ethnic group to a position of power over others on the basis of physical and cultural attributes, as well as economic wealth, involving hierarchical relations where the 'superior' race exercises domination and control over others. (p. 2)

The ILO et al.'s (2001) definition of racism typically highlights three main aspects that make it a pervasive issue. Firstly, structural and systemic power. Racism is not just individual prejudice but involves social, economic and political structures that institutionalise racial hierarchies, allowing one race to exert control or dominance over another (Makgetla 2020; South African Government 2019). Secondly, inequality and discrimination. This definition underscores that racism results in unequal treatment and discrimination based on race, impacting access to resources, rights and opportunities (Pillay 2017). Thirdly, embedded cultural beliefs and practices. It also acknowledges that racism is sustained by cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices that perpetuate notions of racial superiority and inferiority (Eloff 2017; Pillay 2017).

Having established the conceptualisation of racism in this article, it is essential to examine its impact on South African communities and explore the broader social, economic and psychological effects that it continues to impose.

The impact of racism on South African communities

When examining the impact of racism on South African communities, several critical questions emerge. How has systemic racism influenced the social and economic disparities faced by these communities? What enduring psychological and social effects does racism have on individuals and the cohesion within South African communities?

The impact of racism on South African communities is extensive and complex, influencing multiple dimensions of social, economic and psychological life (Nanthambwe 2022; United Nations 2024). Rooted in the legacy of apartheid, systemic racism has embedded severe inequalities, limiting access to quality education, healthcare, housing and employment for black communities (South African Government 2019; United Nations 2024). These disparities reinforce cycles of poverty and curtail social mobility. Psychologically, the effects of racism extend to mental health, fostering experiences of marginalisation, trauma and

diminished self-worth within these communities. Furthermore, these persistent inequalities weaken social cohesion, creating divisions that obstruct meaningful reconciliation and broader societal advancement.

To explore the multidimensional impact of racism on South African communities, the article examines its social, economic and psychological dimensions.

The social impact of racism on South African communities is deeply rooted in the historical and structural legacy of apartheid (Arnold 2000; Seekings & Nattrass 2005; UN 2024; Vorster 2017). This shaped inequalities that remain entrenched within society and that are visible until now. For instance, the spatial segregation enforced during apartheid has left a lasting mark on South African cities. Townships and informal settlements, predominantly occupied by Black and Coloured communities, still suffer from inadequate infrastructure, limited access to essential services and poor living conditions. These areas contrast sharply with affluent suburbs historically reserved for white residents, highlighting the enduring economic and social disparities (Nanthambwe 2022). Nanthambwe's (2022) study focusses on the differences between life in the suburb of Weltevreden Park and Lenasia South in Johannesburg.

Apartheid's role in perpetuating racism in South Africa is multifaceted and deeply embedded in the nation's history, as Vorster (2017:27) explains. He identifies three critical factors that illustrate how apartheid institutionalised and normalised racism. Firstly, white and Afrikaans theologians propagated a narrative that Afrikaners were divinely chosen to spread the gospel to black communities. This theological justification fostered a sense of racial superiority among Afrikaners, positioning them as inherently superior to black South Africans. Such ideologies rooted in religious misinterpretation reinforced systemic oppression and justified discriminatory practices.

Secondly, as Vorster (2017:67) elaborates, the segregationist mindset derived from the notion of Afrikaners as 'chosen people'. segregationist mindset derived from the notion of Afrikaners as 'chosen people'. This led to a clear demarcation of society into 'us' versus 'them', where racial features became the basis for exclusion and marginalisation. Segregation policies were not only physical but also psychological, embedding the belief that different racial groups were inherently incompatible and should remain separate. This attitude further entrenched racial divisions and shaped the social fabric of South Africa.

Lastly, apartheid perpetuated the lie that white and Western cultures were inherently superior to black and African cultures (Govender 2023; Vorster 2017). By devaluing African traditions, languages and social systems, apartheid systematically undermined the identity and dignity of black South Africans. This cultural superiority narrative justified the exploitation of black labour while denying black people equal rights and opportunities, creating a deeply stratified society.

Inequality in South African communities has been exacerbated as a result of racism which has enhanced poverty and unemployment. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki, in his 1998 parliamentary address, vividly described the nation's deep socioeconomic divide as being split into 'two nations'. On one hand, there is a relatively affluent white minority with access to advanced infrastructure and economic opportunities. On the other hand, a much larger black majority continues to endure poverty, living in underdeveloped and disadvantaged conditions (Mbeki 1998). This stark dichotomy, rooted in apartheid-era policies, highlights the systemic inequality that persists despite efforts to address it since the democratic transition in 1994.

Mbeki (1998) argued that South Africa's ability to uplift its impoverished black majority was constrained by limited public resources, a challenge that continues to define the post-apartheid era. Kganyago (2018:5), Makgetla (2020:4), and Stats SA (2019:2) allude that the government has relied heavily on public funds to address these disparities, but the scale of need far outweighs available resources. This resource gap, which was the result of rampant racism in the country, underscores a broader failure to create sustainable economic opportunities for the marginalised, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Even 30 years after apartheid, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies globally, with the gap between the wealthy and the poor continuing to widen. Recent statistics underscore the severity of this inequality: the wealthiest 10% of South Africans control 90% of the nation's wealth and receive 60% of the national income (IMF 2020; Webster, Valodia & Francis 2017). These figures illustrate a structural imbalance in wealth distribution, where economic power remains concentrated within a small segment of the population, predominantly aligned with the affluent white minority.

Efforts by successive governments to address inequality have yielded limited success. Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies, affirmative action and land reform were designed to correct historical injustices and redistribute resources more equitably. However, these measures have faced significant challenges, including corruption, inefficiencies and resistance from vested interests, limiting their effectiveness in creating meaningful change (Statista 2024; World Bank 2024). Consequently, the wealth gap and socio-economic disparities persist, fuelling frustration and social unrest among marginalised communities.

Moreover, the persistence of inequality has far-reaching implications for South Africa's social cohesion and economic stability. The failure to bridge the gap between Mbeki's (1998) 'two nations' exacerbates tensions as the marginalised

majority struggles for inclusion and justice. While addressing this divide requires targeted policies, systemic economic reform, investment in education and skills development, and a commitment to equitable resource allocation, I will propose a missio-public theology as one vehicle through which racism can be addressed in the country.

The enduring inequality in South Africa, which is fuelled by the impact of racism, reflects the deep-seated legacy of apartheid and the challenges of overcoming structural disadvantages. Mbeki's (1998) poignant observation remains relevant today as the nation grapples with the division between an affluent minority and a struggling majority. Bridging this gap is essential for achieving the inclusive and equitable society envisioned at the dawn of democracy.

While racism has negative impacts on social and economic life, it also impacts the psychological well-being of the victims. Racism significantly impacts the psychological well-being of its victims in various ways, affecting their mental health, self-perception and overall quality of life (Harriman et al. 2022; Lewsley & Slater 2024). Key impacts include but are not limited to stress and anxiety, depression and hopelessness, low self-esteem, identity conflict, intergenerational impact, and many others. For example, the study conducted by Harriman et al. (2022) shows that Africans in South Africa experience higher levels of psychological distress compared to White and Coloured individuals. The research highlighted that Africans in urban settings reported higher distress levels than those in rural areas. Why? Because there are more racial interactions in urban areas than in rural areas. The study also noted a cumulative association between the number of stressors and traumatic events and psychological distress. This evidence underscores the ongoing psychological impact of racism on South African communities, demonstrating how systemic inequalities and daily microaggressions contribute to mental health challenges.

What are the factors that are contributing to the prevalence of racism in South Africa despite the end of apartheid some 30 years ago? The next section explores this question.

Reasons for the persistence of racism in South Africa

President Cyril Ramaphosa (see South African Government 2022) acknowledges the presence of racism recently, pointing out that:

> [*T*]he country has, in recent days, been outraged at the sight of a white student at the University of Stellenbosch degrading and humiliating a fellow black student in a despicable act. (p. 1)

Ramaphosa's statement shows the following about the persistence of racism in South Africa. Firstly, the incident involving the white student degrading a black student at Stellenbosch University illustrates how racial discrimination and power dynamics still manifest in everyday interactions (Govender 2023; Nanthambwe 2022). The fact that such incidents occur in educational institutions meant to promote equality and development reflects broader systemic issues and the difficulty of eradicating deeply rooted prejudices. Secondly, the widespread outrage mentioned suggests that racism is not only a recurring issue but also one that continues to provoke strong emotional and societal reactions. This indicates that while progress has been made, the issue remains a sensitive and unresolved challenge in South Africa. But why is this the case?

Various scholars have highlighted different factors contributing to the persistence of racism in South Africa. The following have been particularly emphasised.

Firstly, the legacy of apartheid (Arnold 2000; Eloff 2017). The apartheid system institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination for decades, creating deep divisions and power imbalances that persist today. The economic and social structures established during apartheid continue to benefit certain racial groups disproportionately, perpetuating inequality and resentment. While most scholars acknowledge the legacy of apartheid as a central factor in explaining the persistence of racism in South Africa, there are perspectives – often linked to alternative interpretations of social, economic, or cultural dynamics – that downplay its role. For example, Cronje (2020) and Jeffrey (2023) have argued that apartheid's impact is overstated and that current governance and policy failures (e.g., affirmative action, corruption, or inefficiencies) are more to blame for South Africa's problems, including racial tensions. Willie Jennings (2010), however, adds that the colonial imagination ingrained a hierarchy of human values that persists even in the post-colonial era, perpetuating systemic racism through social and cultural norms.

Secondly, economic disparities (Nanthambwe 2022, 2023). Nanthambwe's (2023) study reveals that economic inequality remains closely tied to race, with many Black South Africans still facing poverty, unemployment and limited access to opportunities, while white South Africans often retain economic advantages. These disparities fuel perceptions of injustice and reinforce racial stereotypes, as noted by Pillay (2017) in the following:

> Consequently, economic power still lies mainly in the hands of white people who continue to provide market and labour leadership. Unless this issue is realistically and sensibly addressed, racism would continue to live with us because racism has perpetuated inequalities. (p. 7)

For example, a 2022 report by Statistics South Africa revealed that white households continue to earn, on average, three times more than black households, perpetuating economic inequalities (Stats SA 2022). Moreover, a study by the World Bank (2022) found that land ownership in South Africa remains predominantly in white hands, with less than 10% of arable land owned by black South Africans. Such disparities not only highlight the enduring legacy of apartheid-era policies

but also demonstrate how systemic economic advantages continue to be racially skewed, reinforcing perceptions of injustice. Unless this issue is realistically and sensibly addressed, racism would continue to live with us because racism has perpetuated inequalities (Pillay 2017:7).

Van der Westhuizen (2017) highlights the role of economic capital in reinforcing historical racial hierarchies, noting how white privilege remains embedded in institutional practices and societal attitudes. Forster's (2020) focus on racial reconciliation stresses the necessity of addressing economic inequalities as part of the healing process, suggesting that without redressing these imbalances, efforts towards racial harmony are likely to remain superficial and ineffective. Together (Forster 2020; Van der Westhuizen 2017), their works demonstrate that economic inequality must be confronted alongside racial issues to achieve genuine social transformation and justice.

Thirdly, segregated communities (Mbeki 1998; Vorster 2017). Residential and social segregation established during apartheid has not been fully dismantled, limiting meaningful interaction and understanding between racial groups. Following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the lack of restitution has compounded this issue, leaving economic and social grievances unaddressed. The TRC's emphasis on symbolic reconciliation, rather than substantive economic and social redress, has been critiqued for failing to dismantle the structural inequities underpinning segregation.

Verwoerd (2020) argues that meaningful reconciliation requires transforming these segregated spaces through structural changes and public engagement, while Steyn (2001) highlights how these unresolved grievances perpetuate mistrust and racialised dynamics in everyday interactions. This physical and social separation allows prejudices to persist unchallenged. While the TRC aimed to address past injustices, many feel its efforts were insufficient to achieve genuine reconciliation (Swartz 2024). The absence of thorough economic and social restitution has left many unresolved grievances (Swartz 2024). Steyn's work (2001) emphasises how everyday spaces remain racialised, perpetuating separation and mistrust between communities. This led Verwoerd (2020) to contend that reconciliation requires transforming these segregated spaces into inclusive environments, achievable through structural reform and active public engagement.

Fourthly, systemic and institutional racism (Pillay 2017; Vorster 2017; Webster et al. 2017). Structural inequalities in sectors such as education, healthcare and employment continue to disadvantage historically marginalised groups, creating cycles of poverty and exclusion. For example, Webster et al. (2017) detail how unequal resource allocation in public schools results in significant disparities in educational outcomes between urban, affluent areas and historically disadvantaged communities. In healthcare, unequal access to quality medical facilities and specialists disproportionately affects Black South Africans, with rural clinics often under-resourced and understaffed.

Furthermore, the labour market remains stratified, with Black workers often concentrated in lower-wage, insecure jobs, while higher-paying professions are dominated by white South Africans. These systemic disparities perpetuate cycles of poverty, reinforcing barriers to social mobility and entrenching racial inequalities. These systems often perpetuate racial divides, making it difficult for marginalised communities to achieve upward mobility. Jennings' (2017) theological insights in his commentary on the book of Acts highlight how systemic racism is not merely a social issue but is deeply spiritual, requiring structural transformation and human relationships reimagining in light of Christian unity. Jennings (2017) shows that book of Acts teaches how people of faith can yield to the Spirit to overcome the divisions of our present world.

While various factors contribute to the persistence of racism in South Africa, it remains unclear whether this is primarily a cultural phenomenon or a religious one. For example, scholars such as Willie Jennings (2010, 2017) and Christi van der Westhuizen (2017) argue that cultural dynamics play a significant role in the perpetuation of racism, while others, such as Melissa Steyn (2001) and Wilhelm Verwoerd (2020), emphasise the intersection of cultural and religious factors. However, a theological perspective attributes such challenges to the reality of living in a fallen world. Sin has profoundly affected the human heart, underscoring the need for solutions that encompass heart transformation (eds. Hermans & Van den Berg 2020:6). This is where a missio-public theological approach becomes essential, addressing issues of the heart within the broader context of public challenges such as racism. The work of Forster (2020) provides empirical evidence of how theological frameworks can inform practical reconciliation efforts, making the case for the church's active involvement in addressing both the cultural and systemic dimensions of racism. But how does theology engage with public issues? The following section will examine this question.

On theology and public issues

Instead of presenting arguments for why theology should engage with public issues, I will take a different approach. I will address critiques that characterise public theology as a sociological, humanistic, or relativistic discipline, claiming it has little or no connection to biblical principles because it employs 'public language' rather than 'biblical language' in its discourse (Marshall 2005). This leads us to ask this question: How can public theology address public issues without losing its theological integrity and grounding in biblical principles?

To answer this question, we must first understand what public theology means. Public theology has not been easy to define (Bezuidenhout 2007; Van Wyngaard 2008); however,

this article departs from Duncan Forrester's (2004) description of public theology when he stated:

> Public theology, as I understand it, is not primarily and directly evangelical theology which addresses the Gospel to the world in the hope of repentance and conversion. Rather, it is theology which seeks the welfare of the city before protecting the interests of the church, or its proper liberty to preach the Gospel and celebrate the sacraments. Accordingly, public theology often takes 'the world's agenda', or parts of it, as its own agenda, and seeks to offer distinctive and constructive insights from the treasury of faith to help in the building of a decent society, the restraint of evil, the curbing of violence, nation-building, and reconciliation in the public arena, and so forth. (p. 6)

Forrester's definition of public theology emphasises three key aspects. Firstly, commitment to the public good. Public theology prioritises the common good over the interests of religious institutions. This commitment is echoed in Dreyer's (2004:919) definition, which describes public theology as a critical reflection on Christian tradition about social and political issues. Secondly, engagement with public concerns. Unlike theology, which focusses on the doctrines and dogmas of the church, public theology addresses issues affecting communities Kim (2024). It seeks to respond to the broader societal challenges that impact the public. Thirdly, constructive contribution to the society. Public theology fosters a reciprocal interaction between faith and society. Nanthambwe (2024:6) explains that this two-way dialogue allows theology to influence societal change while enabling societal issues to shape and enrich theological reflection. This mutual engagement is fundamental to public theology's goal of transforming both the church and society, ultimately contributing to the common good. The constructive contribution of public theology was echoed by Juma (2015) when she stated that the purpose of her theological training is to represent God in the world effectively.

In what ways does this understanding of public theology counter the claim that it is merely a sociological, humanistic, or relativistic discipline that disregards biblical principles? I will present five ways.

Firstly, public theology is rooted in Christian tradition (Dreyer 2004:919). It critically reflects on Christian tradition in addressing social and political issues, showing that its foundation lies in biblical values and theological principles rather than secular ideologies. The Kairos Document, written in 1985 by a group of South African theologians, pastors and church leaders, is a powerful expression of how public theology is biblically and theologically rooted. It critiques the apartheid system from a biblical and theological perspective, emphasising the church's moral responsibility to engage with social and political issues (Solomons 2020). The document critiques the complicity of the church in the apartheid system and calls for active resistance against the injustices of segregation and racial discrimination, illustrating how public theology directly addresses public concerns such as inequality, racism and poverty. By asserting that the apartheid system was fundamentally incompatible with the teachings of the Bible, the Kairos Document applies Christian principles to challenge an oppressive political regime.

Secondly, public theology is committed to the common good (Nanthambwe 2022, 2023). By prioritising the common good, public theology aligns with biblical teachings about love, justice and care for one's neighbour, illustrating its alignment with Christian ethics.

Thirdly, public theology addresses public concerns (Forrester 2004; Kim 2024). It applies biblical principles to real-world challenges, moving beyond doctrinal debates to address pressing issues such as inequality, racism and poverty, reflecting a lived faith in action.

Fourthly, public theology presents constructive dialogue. The reciprocal interaction between faith and society enriches theological reflection. This engagement ensures that biblical teachings remain relevant and applicable, affirming theology's role in shaping societal transformation (Van Wyngaard 2008).

Fifthly, public theology encourages faith-based contribution. Public theology actively integrates faith perspectives into public discourse, using 'public language' to communicate biblical values in a way that resonates across diverse contexts without compromising its theological integrity (Kotzé 2022; Magezi & Nanthambwe 2024a; Nanthambwe 2024b; Van Wyngaard 2008).

Thus, this article argues that public theology is not detached from biblical principles but demonstrates their application in addressing societal challenges, making it a theologically grounded and practical discipline.

The next thing to consider is the nexus of public theology and missiology. How do these two fields interact and complement each other in addressing societal issues and advancing the mission of the church?

The nexus of public theology and missiology

The nexus between public theology and missiology lies in their shared commitment to addressing societal concerns through the lens of the Christian faith (Kim 2017a:7). Kim (2024) pointed out the following regarding this nexus.

> I would like to suggest that this is a good starting point when we discuss on the conversation between missiology and public theology since both are enhancing Christian theology and both are interested in God's world. (p. 8)

While each discipline has distinct emphases – public theology focusses on engaging societal issues through theological reflection and missiology traditionally emphasises spreading the Gospel – both operate within the broader framework of the *missio Dei* [mission of God] (Kim 2024).

The nexus of public theology and missiology was implied by Bosch (1992) in his groundbreaking book 'Transforming

mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of missions' where he contends that missiology plays a crucial role in theology by challenging complacency and self-preservation, pushing theology to remain dynamic and engaged. He further explains that examining mission practices and Christianity within specific contexts enriches theology by shaping how texts and traditions are read and interpreted. Consequently, Bosch (1992) asserts that missiology is not merely a servant of theology but also serves God's work in the world.

Bosch's statement (1992) reveals public theology by highlighting the interconnectedness of theology, mission and the broader social and cultural context. Public theology emphasises the role of theology in engaging with public life, addressing societal issues and promoting the common good. Bosch's view aligns with this by suggesting that missiology does not exist solely for internal theological reflection but actively informs how theology engages with the world. This intersection reveals their complementary roles in fostering holistic transformation across spiritual, social, economic and cultural dimensions. It is because of Bosch's understanding of theology's role in a public setting that Van Wyngaard (2008) regards him as a public theologian.

At its core, missiology reflects the church's participation in God's mission, encompassing both evangelism and the pursuit of justice, healing and reconciliation. Balia and Kim (eds. 2010) assert that the Gospel is inherently holistic, proclaiming good news for individuals' spiritual salvation and social and cultural realities. This expansive view aligns closely with public theology's concern for applying Christian values to societal challenges. Heaney (2020:212) argues that public theology engages in a prophetic, dialogic witness in the public sphere, addressing systemic injustices while promoting community-building and societal transformation.

This interconnectedness challenges the conventional separation of theology into silos, as noted by Fensham (2017:400), who argues that mission is a 'dimension of the church's whole life'. Public theology and missiology both embrace a vision that extends beyond ecclesiastical boundaries, recognising that Christian engagement must address issues such as poverty, inequality, cultural fragmentation and environmental stewardship.

Public theology's emphasis on addressing broader societal concerns inherently involves a missional dimension. As Kim (2017a) observes, mission has historically interfaced with public life, with activities aimed at promoting socio-economic justice, cultural understanding and peacebuilding. Similarly, Bosch's definition of mission as the church 'crossing boundaries in the form of a servant' highlights the alignment between mission and public theology in their shared goal of transformative engagement (Kim 2017a:15). Both fields recognise the inseparability of spiritual and social realities, challenging any dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. This is also visible in the Barmen Declaration of 1934, issued by a group of German Protestant theologians which was a powerful statement against the Nazi regime's manipulation of the church (Tshaka 2010).

The Barmen Declaration marked a crucial moment in the development of public theology, asserting that the mission of the church is not solely about spiritual concerns but also involves actively resisting oppressive regimes and working for justice (Tshaka 2010). This aligns public theology with mission by affirming that the church's witness extends to social and political action. In the South African context, the Barmen Declaration provided a theological foundation for later resistance against apartheid (Koopman 2009:60–61). It became a guiding document for South African theologians who saw the need to critically reflect on the church's role in an unjust system (Koopman 2009). Theologically, public theology in South Africa was shaped by the Barmen Declaration's call to resist state oppression and to reaffirm the church's commitment to justice, regardless of political pressures (Koopman 2009; Smit 2006).

The central theme uniting public theology and missiology is their pursuit of holistic transformation grounded in the kingdom of God. This transformation involves fostering human flourishing in all aspects of life – spiritual, relational, economic and ecological. Van der Watt (2023) emphasises that pastoral care and church practices are not merely for the edification of believers but are integral to God's mission of healing and wholeness in the world. This reflects Goheen's (2018) perspective on missional ecclesiology, where disciples are sent to share in the life of the triune God and embody this life in public witness.

Although not always explicitly evangelistic, public theology participates in this transformative mission by advocating for the marginalised and addressing societal injustices (Fensham 2017). It embodies the Gospel's call to engage with systemic issues, such as poverty and oppression, to create communities that reflect God's justice and peace.

Recognising the synergy between public theology and missiology invites a reconsideration of their distinctions. Rather than treating them as separate disciplines, they can be viewed as complementary dimensions of the church's engagement with the world. As pointed out by Kim (2024), the relationship between public theology and missiology serves as a valuable starting point for discussing their interaction. Both disciplines enrich Christian theology and share a common focus on engaging with God's world. This perspective aligns with Newbigin's (1995) assertion, as further developed by Bosch (1992), that mission encompasses the entire life of the church. While often framed as reflective and societal, public theology carries a missionary dimension as it seeks to embody and enact God's redemptive purposes in the public sphere.

The nexus between public theology and missiology reveals their commitment to holistically engaging with society. Both

fields emphasise the transformative impact of the Gospel, addressing not only individual salvation but also systemic injustices and societal well-being. By viewing public theology and missiology as interconnected expressions of the *Missio Dei*, the church can embrace its calling to serve as a prophetic, healing and reconciling presence in the world, fostering a kingdom vision for all aspects of life.

The challenge at hand is the persistence of racism in South Africa. How can the relationship between public theology and missiology contribute to addressing this deeply rooted issue? The following section answers this question by giving missio-public theological responses to deal with racism in the country.

Missio-public theological responses to deal with racism in South Africa

Before presenting responses from a missio-public theological perspective, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the term 'missio-public theological'. A missio-public theological perspective integrates the principles of public theology and missiology, forming a framework to address communities' pressing challenges. It emphasises a holistic approach that combines theological reflection, societal engagement and mission-oriented action to foster transformation and promote the common good in diverse contexts.

With this understanding, we must ask: how can churches in South Africa apply missio-public theological responses to address the issue of racism? Where must churches begin dealing with pervasive racism? From a mission-public theological perspective, I propose the following:

Firstly, emphasis must be placed on the transformation of the heart. Hermans and Van den Berg (eds. 2020:6) highlight that the heart is at the core of human problems, stating, 'If the heart is the location of the problem, then the transformation of the heart is the answer to the problem'. Racism, as a deeply entrenched issue, goes beyond what can be solved through policies or political reforms. It is not simply a matter of words or legal changes but a much deeper heart issue. Garcia (1996), in 'The Heart of Racism', argues that racism is fuelled by negative emotions such as hatred, animosity, hostility, dislike, contempt, ill will, cold-hearted indifference and a lack of concern for the well-being of others. While Shelby (2002) counters Garcia's perspective by suggesting that economic exploitation, false beliefs and other external factors also contribute to racism, the persistent racial struggles in South Africa and around the world emphasise that racism is ultimately a heart issue, not merely a political one.

The question then arises: How can the heart be changed? The answer lies in the transformative power of the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel is critical in addressing the root of racism (Nanthambwe 2022). Only through a proper understanding of the reconciliation offered by the Gospel can individuals experience genuine reconciliation with one another (2 Cor 5:17–21). It is important to note that I use the word 'genuinely' because, without the reconciliation that the Gospel offers, any other form of reconciliation remains superficial. True, heart-deep reconciliation can only come through the transformative work of Christ, which addresses the core issues of division, hatred, and unforgiveness.

In the context of South Africa, the church has a significant role to play in fostering this heart transformation. While political and legal measures are essential, the Gospel provides the foundation for lasting change by calling individuals to examine their hearts and embrace the radical love and forgiveness demonstrated through Christ. For true reconciliation to take place in South Africa, the church must focus on preaching the Gospel's message of healing, unity and forgiveness, helping individuals and communities confront the deep-seated racism in their hearts. This shift from surface-level solutions to genuine heart transformation is essential if South Africa is to move towards authentic healing and reconciliation.

Secondly, the belief that humanity is created in God's image must be emphasised and reinforced. However, this presents a challenge. In a secular education system where the theory of evolution is predominantly taught, learners may be exposed to conflicting worldviews that undermine this essential theological truth. Churches and faith communities must engage thoughtfully in education and foster dialogue to bridge the gap between faith and science. This can involve equipping believers with the tools to articulate the theological and ethical implications of being made in God's image, promoting a sense of shared humanity that challenges divisive ideologies such as racism.

To accomplish this, the church must recognise its prophetic role in society. Much like the prophets in the Old Testament, the church is called to speak truth to the people, shedding light on all human beings' inherent dignity and worth. By embracing this role, the church can effectively counter racism, helping to shift the mindset in South Africa towards greater unity, equality and respect for the diverse image of God reflected in every person.

The Christian interpretation of the image of God is arrived at upon understanding the meaning of the word image in Hebrew (Nanthambwe 2022:167) — in Hebrew, the word *image* is *shelem.* Originally, this word refers to 'something cut from an object' which makes the concrete resemblance between the object and the image (Currid 2015:83). In the Bible, this word *shelem* is used in Daniel 3 when King Nebuchadnezzar erected a statue of himself which was to serve as a symbol of his sovereignty. The usage of the word *shelem* to apply to human beings at creation indicates that human beings are God's representatives on earth and have a character and being in keeping with that of God. Humans are not created in the image of nature or their image but of God. Of all the elements of creation, human beings alone enjoy the

unique status and dignity of being made in the image of God (Watkin 2017:90).

This means that every human being, regardless of race or background, resembles the Creator and, therefore, possesses inherent value and significance (Assohoto & Ngewa 2006:11). This understanding challenges the racial divisions that persist in South Africa by reinforcing that no race is superior to another. It calls for the church to lead in promoting a vision of a society where racial equality is not just an ideal but a lived reality.

In light of this, the church's role in teaching and embodying this doctrine is crucial. The Gospel calls Christians to love one another as brothers and sisters, acknowledging the shared humanity that exists because all are made in God's image. This perspective not only provides a theological foundation for challenging racism but also offers a pathway for reconciliation and healing in South Africa, where the scars of racial division still run deep. By embracing and proclaiming this truth, the church can help dismantle the false ideologies that fuel racism and work towards a more just and unified society where every individual is recognised and valued as reflecting the image of God.

Thirdly, the church must actively advocate for a renewed focus on reconciliation in South Africa. Reconciliation remains a critical issue for the country (Swartz 2024). While we commend the leadership of Bishop Desmond Tutu and the work of the TRC, it is evident that the process did not fully address the underlying issues, nor can we assume that reconciliation has been fully achieved. The TRC served as an essential starting point, opening the door for dialogue, but it was not the culmination of the journey. Meaningful reconciliation requires ongoing conversations and actions, until the tangible outcomes of true unity and healing are evident.

Through a mission-public theological lens, churches are uniquely positioned to reignite this process, acting as catalysts for authentic reconciliation. Unfortunately, many churches have remained silent on key social issues, including racism (Masuku 2014:163–164). There is an urgent need for an awakening within South African churches, inspiring them to proactively foster justice, reconciliation and unity in the nation. By stepping into this role, the church can help guide society towards genuine healing and transformation.

In the South African context, where the scars of apartheid still shape societal structures and relationships, the church's involvement in reconciliation is indispensable. By stepping into this role, the church can help guide society towards genuine healing and transformation, moving beyond superficial unity to create a nation where all people are valued and treated with dignity. This renewed focus on reconciliation, driven by the church's commitment to justice and unity, can significantly contribute to dismantling racism and building a more inclusive and equitable South Africa.

Fourthly, the church must embrace public theology as a valuable tool in its mission endeavours rather than viewing it as an adversary. Public theology extends the scope of theology beyond Christian traditions, addressing pressing social, political and environmental challenges (Dreyer 2004). Unlike traditional church theology, which often focusses on internal ecclesiastical matters, public theology emphasises active engagement with societal issues (Smit 2017). This shift allows churches to have a broader and more significant impact on the challenges facing communities (Nanthambwe 2022). Public theology is not confined to isolated worship spaces, academic institutions or theological circles. Instead, it operates as a dynamic, outward-facing theology that engages openly with society and encourages participation from various sectors. This approach enables the church to bring theological insights into the public domain, contributing meaningfully to discussions on justice, equity and reconciliation. Public theology moves beyond internal discourse to meet people where they are – in streets, markets, schools, and other community spaces – promoting inclusive dialogue and collective action (Nanthambwe 2024a). In the South African context, where racism continues to undermine unity and equality, public theology offers a vital framework for the church to address these issues effectively. By actively engaging in public discourse, the church can bring theological and moral perspectives to the forefront of conversations about race, challenging the ideologies and structures that perpetuate racism. Public theology also enables the church to collaborate with other sectors, such as education, media and government, to promote policies and practices that foster racial reconciliation and justice.

In embracing public theology, the church positions itself as an active agent of change in South Africa's struggle against racism. This outward-facing theology empowers the church to engage society meaningfully, offering transformative solutions that address both the personal and systemic aspects of racism. Through public theology, the church can lead efforts towards reconciliation, justice and unity, reflecting its mission to be a light in the world and a voice for the marginalised.

Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing systemic racism in South Africa requires a multifaceted approach that integrates theological insights with practical action. A missio-public theological perspective provides a robust framework for the church to engage meaningfully with this pervasive issue. By focussing on the transformation of the heart, reaffirming the theological truth that all humanity is created in God's image, advocating for a renewed commitment to reconciliation and embracing public theology as a tool for societal engagement, the church can serve as a powerful agent of change. This approach enables the church to confront the personal, relational and systemic dimensions of racism, fostering justice, unity and healing in South Africa. Rooted in its prophetic and reconciling mission, the church is uniquely positioned to inspire hope and model a vision of a reconciled society that reflects God's justice and love.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

P.N. declares that they are the sole author of this research article.

Funding information

The research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Data availability

All data supporting this study and findings are available in this research article.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. The article does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

Arnold, G., 2000, *The new South Africa*, Macmillan Press, Hampshire.

Assohoto, B. & Ngewa, S., 2006, 'Genesis', in T. Adeyemo (ed.), *Africa Bible commentary*, pp. 9–84, WordAlive Publishers, Nairobi.

Balia, D.M. & Kim, K. (eds.), 2010, *Edinburgh 2010 (Volume II): Witnessing to Christ today*, Regnum Books, OCMS, Oxford.

Bezuidenhout, R.M., 2007, *Re-imagining life: A reflection on 'public theology' in the work of Linell Cady, Denise Ackermann, and Etienne de Villiers*, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth.

Bosch, D., 1992, *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in the theology of mission*, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, NY.

Cronje, F., 2020, *The rise or fall of South Africa: Latest scenarios*, NB Publishers, Cape Town.

Cuncic, A., 2024, *The psychology of racism*, viewed 16 November 2024, from https://www.verywellmind.com/the-psychology-of-racism-5070459.

Currid, J.D., 2015, *Genesis*, EP Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

De Lannoy, A., Graham, L., Patel, L. & Leibbrandt, M., 2020, 'Why is youth unemployment so intractable in South Africa? A synthesis of evidence at micro-level', *Journal of Applied Youth Studies* 3(2), 115–131. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43151-020-00012-6

Dreyer, Y., 2004, 'A public practical theological theory for religious education of secularised youth', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 60(3), 919–945. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v60i3.615

Du Rand, J.A., Vorster, J.M. & Vorster, N. (eds.), 2017, *Togetherness in South Africa: Religious perspectives on racism, xenophobia and economic inequality*, AOSIS, Cape Town.

Eloff, T., 2017, 'The historical and recent socio-political context for considering racism and related concepts in South Africa', in J.A. Du Rand, J.M. Vorster & N. Vorster (eds.), *Togetherness in South Africa*, pp. 1–28, AOSIS, Cape Town.

Fensham, C.J., 2017, 'The conversation between public theology and missiology: A response to Sebastian Kim', *Missiology: An International Review* 45(4), 396–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829617730094

Forrester, D.B., 2004, 'The scope of public theology', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17(2), 5–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/095394680401700209

Forster, D., 2020, 'Towards an (im)possible politics of forgiveness? Considering the complexities of religion, race and politics in South Africa', in M.J. Nel, D.A. Forster & C.H. Thesnaar (eds.), *Reconciliation, forgiveness, and violence in Africa: Biblical, pastoral and ethical perspectives*, pp. 51–70, African SUN PReSS, Cape Town.

Garcia, J., 1996, 'The heart of racism', *Journal of Social Philosophy* 27(1), 5–45. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.1996.tb00225.x

Goheen, M.W., 2018, 'Pastoral theology in a missional mode', *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 3(1), 118–138.

Govender, R.L., 2023, 'Embracing ethnic diversity: A Missio Dei perspective founded in biblical and theological principles', PhD thesis, North-West University.

Harriman, N.W., Williams, D.R., Morgan, J.W., Sewpaul, R., Manyaapelo, T., Sifunda, S. et al., 2022, 'Racial disparities in psychological distress in post-apartheid South Africa: Results from the SANHANES-1 survey', *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 57, 843–857. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-021-02175-w

Heaney, R.S., 2020, 'Public theology and public missiology', *Anglican Theological Review* 102(2), 201–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/000332862010200204

Hermans, C. & Van ben Berg, J. (eds.), 2020, *Battle for the heart: How (not) to transform church and society*, LIT Verlag, Wien.

ILO, IOM & OHCHR, 2001, *International migration, racism, discrimination and xenophobia*, United Nations, Geneva.

IMF, 2020, *Six charts explaining South Africa's inequality*, viewed 15 November 2024, from https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/01/29/na012820six-charts-on-south-africas-persistent-and-multi-faceted-inequality?form=MG0AV3.

Jeffrey, A., 2023, *Countdown to socialism: The national democratic revolution in South Africa since 1994*, NB Publishers, Cape Town.

Jennings, W.J., 2010, *The Christian imagination: Theology and the origins of race*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

Jennings, W.J., 2017, *Acts: A theological commentary on the Bible*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY.

Juma, F., 2015, 'Public theology in the face of pain and suffering: A proletarian perspective', *Consensus* 36(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.51644/LXZC5116

Kganyago, L., 2018, *Inequality and monetary policy in South Africa. A public lecture*, South African Reserve Bank, Port Elizabeth.

Kim, S., 2017a, 'Mission's public engagement: The conversation of missiology and public theology', *Missiology: An International Review* 45(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829616680650

Kim, S., 2017b, 'Public theology in the history of Christianity', in S. Kim & K. Day (eds.), *A companion to public theology*, pp. 40–66, Brill Publishers, Leiden.

Kim, S., 2024, 'The public role of religion and the response of public theology', *Religions* 15(4), 449. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040449

Koopman, N., 2009, 'The reception of the Barmen Declaration in South Africa', *Ecumenical Review/Oekumenische Rundschau* 61(1), 60–71. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2009.00007.x

Kotzé, M., 2022, 'The scope and influence of public theology in Africa', *In die Skriflig* 56(1), a2904. https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v56i1.2904

Lewsley, J. & Slater, R., 2024, *What are the effects of racism on health and mental health?* viewed 16 November 2024, from https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/effects-of-racism?form=MG0AV3.

Makgetla, N., 2020, *Inequality in South Africa: An overview*, Working Paper, Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS), Pretoria.

Marshall, C., 2005, 'What language shall I borrow?: The bilingual dilemma of public theology', *Stimulus* 13(3), 11–18.

Masuku, T.M., 2014, 'Prophetic mission of faith communities during apartheid South Africa, 1948-1994: An agenda for a prophetic mission praxis in the democratic SA', *Missionalia* 42(3), 151–167.

Mbeki, T., 1998, *Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the Opening of the Debate in the National Assembly, on 'Reconciliation and Nation Building',* National Assembly Cape Town, 29 May 1998, viewed 15 November 2024, from https://www.anc1912.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Umrabulo-Issue-No.5-3rd-Quarter-1998.pdf.

Mulaudzi, M., 2022, *Racism, xenophobia, and misogynistic prejudice in South Africa: A case study of policy interventions since 1994*, Center on International Cooperation, New York, NY.

Mzwakali, S., 2015, 'Black people can't be racist', *Pambadzuka News Online*, 13 October, viewed 05 November 2024, from https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/black-people-can't-be-racist.

Nanthambwe, P., 2022, 'Community development and the Church: A public practical theology inquiry', PhD thesis, North West University.

Nanthambwe, P., 2023, 'A congregational view on church and community development in South Africa: An empirical study', *Theologia Viatorum* 47(1), a191. https://doi.org/10.4102/tv.v47i1.191

Nanthambwe, P., 2024a, 'Embodied grace: The implications of the incarnation to public practical theology in sub-Saharan Africa', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80(1), a9684. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9684

Nanthambwe, P., 2024b, 'Public theology as a theology of resilience in sub-Saharan Africa: A public pastoral care contribution', *Religions* 15(10), 1213. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101213

Nanthambwe, P. & Magezi, V., 2024, 'Bringing faith to the public: Positioning church communities for social good in sub-Saharan Africa', *Theologia Viatorum* 48(1), a272. https://doi.org/10.4102/tv.v48i1.272

Newbigin, L., 1995, *The open secret: An introduction to the theology of mission*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2024, 'South Africa', in *OECD economic outlook volume 2024 issue 1: An unfolding recovery*, pp. 192–194, OECD Publishing, Paris, viewed 15 November 2024, from https://doi.org/10.1787/69a0c310-en

Olson, M. & Zabel, K., 2016, 'Measures of prejudice', in D. Nelson (ed.), *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination*, pp. 175–211, Psychology Press, East Sussex.

Pillay, J., 2017, 'Racism and xenophobia: The role of the church in South Africa', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38(1), 3–17. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i3.1655

Rattansi, A., 2007, *Racism a very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Seekings, J. & Nattrass, N., 2005, *Class, race, and inequality in South Africa*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

Shelby, T., 2002, 'Is racism in the "heart"?', *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33(3), 412–420. https://doi.org/10.1111/0047-2786.00150

Smit, D.J., 2006, 'Barmen and Belhar in conversation-a South African perspective: Barmen en Belhar', *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal= Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 47(1, 2), 291–301.

Smit, D.J., 2017, 'Does it matter? On whether there is method in the madness', in S. Kim & K. Day (eds.), *A companion to public theology*, pp. 67–92, Brill Publishers, Leiden.

Smith, C. & Pitts, B., 2019, 'Inside the all-white "apartheid town" of Orania, South Africa', *abcNEWS online*, viewed 04 October 2024, from https://abcnews.go.com/International/inside-white-apartheid-town-orania-south-africa/story?id=62337338.

Solomons, D.J., 2020, 'Re-examining a theology of reconciliation: What we learn from the Kairos Document and its pedagogical implications', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76(1), a5843. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.5843

South African Government, 2019, *National action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance*, Government of South Africa, Pretoria, viewed 10 November 2024, from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201903/national-action-plan.pdf?form=MG0AV3.

South African Government, 2022, *Racism is still part of the daily South African experience*, viewed 05 November 2024, from https://www.stateofthenation.gov.za/newsletter/racism-is-still-part-of-the-daily-south-african-experience.

Stats SA, 2019, *Inequality trends in South Africa: A multidimensional diagnostic of inequality*, Stats SA, Pretoria.

Stats SA, 2022, *How unequal is South Africa?* viewed 24 December 2024, from https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=12930&utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Stats SA, 2024, *Socioeconomic indicators – South Africa*, viewed 15 November 2024, from https://www.statista.com/outlook/co/socioeconomic-indicators/south-africa.

Steyn, M., 2001, *'Whiteness just isn't what it used to be': White identity in a changing South Africa*, State University of New York Press, New York, NY.

Swartz, S., 2024, 'Social restitution: Tools and actions to rehumanise and transform injustice', *Acta Academica* 56(1), 80–102. https://doi.org/10.38140/aa.v56i1.7956

Tshaka, R., 2010, *Confessional theology? A critical analysis of the theology of Karl Barth and its significance for the Belhar Confession*, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Newcastle.

United Nations, 2024, *30 Years on, South Africa still dismantling racism and apartheid's legacy*, viewed 11 November 2024, from https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/04/30-years-south-africa-still-dismantling-racism-and-apartheids-legacy?form=MG0AV3.

Van der Watt, S., 2023, 'Mission-minded pastoral theology and the notion of God's power: Maturity through vulnerability', *In die Skriflig* 57(1), a2924. https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v57i1.2924

Van der Westhuizen, C., 2017, *Sitting pretty: White Afrikaans women in postapartheid South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Van Wyngaard, G.J., 2008, 'The public theology of David J. Bosch: The public role of the Christian community', Master's thesis, University of Pretoria.

Verwoerd, W.J., 2020, 'Black Christ and cross-roads Jesus for white South African Christians', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76(3), a5836. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i3.5836

Vorster, N., 2017, 'Distorted racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa: A reformed perspective on constructing authentic human identities', in J.A. Du Rand, J.M. Vorster & N. Vorster (eds.), *Togetherness in South Africa*, pp. 29–58, AOSIS, Cape Town.

Watkin, C., 2017, *Thinking through creation: Genesis 1 and 2 as tools of cultural critique*, P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ.

Webster, E., Valodia, I. & Francis, D., 2017, *South Africa needs a fresh approach to its stubbornly high levels of inequality*, viewed 15 November 2024, from https://theconversation.com/south-africa-needs-a-fresh-approach-to-its-stubbornly-high-levels-of-inequality-87215.

World Bank, 2022, *Inequality in Southern Africa: An assessment of the Southern African customs union*, viewed 24 December 2024, from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099125003072240961/pdf/P1649270b73f1f0b5093fb0e644d33bc6f1.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

World Bank, 2024, *Macro poverty outlook for South Africa: April 2024*, viewed 15 November 2024, from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099613104052410927/pdf/IDU1ffc84f731c8e91470018c4311f71d03092e1.pdf.