

'I describe myself with adjectives – not demographic classifications.'

spects and values diversity, we have to be honest about the reality of this situation.

We have to talk about the accents, interests, and mannerisms black people have to affect and adopt to fit in with their white colleagues. We have to talk about why whiteness is normative and blackness has to mould and adapt itself to fit in.

We have to analyse the true status of transformation in our economy.

We all have work to do. White people cannot afford to be oblivious to what their black counterparts experience. Black people need to drop their guard sometimes. We all have to acknowledge that the prisms through which we make sense of the world around us are shaped by our experiences, beliefs and baggage.

Perhaps the question is not whether there is anything new to say about racism, but rather whether we have really heard one another?

Gareth Cliff

President and founder
CliffCentral.com

You know what? I'm bored with race.

There it is – the most controversial thing I have ever said, ever. Not the fat people stuff, the Zuma stuff, the cripple children stuff or the Down Syndrome stuff. Do you want to know why?

Everything in South Africa is racial. The hairdresser – 'Can she do black hair?'; getting your licence – 'If I weren't white I'd have been helped before that man!'; a sports game – 'Well, you know football is mostly for blacks...'; shopping – 'rich whites shop there, they don't stock much for blacks'. Even 95% of our best comedians tell jokes about race. We can't even get away from this stuff in our spare time. Shut up already, it's enough.

Try a little experiment. Count, just for a day, the number of times your or someone else's race comes up in private or public. Keep a race log. Don't just log the things that offend you or are overtly racial (not to mention racist) – but every time a throwaway witticism is parlayed around the lunch table at one of those awkward corporate functions. 'This is our side of the table, ha ha ha!', 'Oh, you're from Sowet-OH?', 'You speak so well, were your parents in exile?' and just about everything to do with politics – all of those count. You'll have to pay attention if you want to be accurate. My guess is that by 6pm you'll have run out of memory to store the log on your 3TB hard drive.

I don't want to have these conversations in my leisure time anymore. Fellow white people, please don't assume I hate the ANC, or that I feel like complaining about Eskom or crime. Here and now, I'll state it plainly: I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT HOW YOU'RE GOING TO EMIGRATE. Just go, chances are most of us will be over the moon that we can talk about things we really like and enjoy – like drinks, odd-looking people, a great song or the Rinderpest of 1895. Fellow black people, my default position isn't to hate or fear you. My colleagues are black, my neighbour is black and for all I know I'll have black relatives in no more than a generation. I understand just enough Setswana and Zulu to know when you're talking about me – and you don't have to hide the fact that you think I'm a spoiled, patronising ass of a man – the ladies at the party last week didn't, and we argued happily into the night.

Being white isn't the most important thing about me. It isn't even in my top 10. I describe myself with adjectives – not demographic classifications. I like to think I'm funny, curious, emotionally complicated and sometimes wrong. I don't like being called white, male, straight



or in LSM 10. Those things tell you nothing about me. Spend three minutes reading someone's Twitter feed and you know more about him or her than the census could ever tell you. Try this: Ask someone to describe themselves in a few words. If one of those words is their race or gender, you've got a problem on your hands – they're probably going to need some therapy and a hug.

The apartheid government classified us and told us that was the most important thing about us. Many are still traumatised. Politicians want to keep doing that – fear and insecurity gets them votes. We have to stop and remind them that we're individuals.

Can we talk about this clip I watched on YouPorn last week...

Teresa Oakley-Smith

Diversity Trainer: founder
and CEO of Diversi-T



Though 21 years have passed since 1994, black South Africans, especially Africans,

continue to experience prejudice and bigotry every day, and as white South Africans many of us continue to live in a bubble of 'whiteness'

where our friends, acquaintances, our children's teachers and our doctors, priests, and other kinds of adult role models are all white. In our homes, the people who work for us in menial jobs continue to be black, so we are fooling ourselves if we believe that our children don't see colour.

In fact, children discern colour differences at around six months of age, and begin to articulate these differences at about three. The challenge in building non-racialism is not that our children see colour, it is what they ascribe to different colours in terms of superiority and inferiority that matters, because this is where prejudice and discrimination develop. So how can we as parents raise our children to be sensitive to race?

Firstly, we need to talk about race, openly and thoughtfully. There are many opportunities to talk about race with young children and to do so effectively it is essential that we don't resort to platitudes like 'God made all of us the same'. Instead, be more specific. When children talk about classmates being brown or white, say something like 'Yes, you see that in your class children have skin of different colours but they usually like doing the same things and they enjoy playing with each other. They can all be your friends.'

How you as an adult relate to people of other races will, more than anything else, determine how your children relate to people of other races. Children will pick up whether you have friends of other races. They will note also how you relate to the helper in your home and, if this is disrespectful, it will send a strong message that this is the way to treat black people. Do you allow your child to call the helper by her first name? This is regarded as disrespectful in an African community, so encourage your child to call the helper Aunt (and then her name). Our very young children want to be like us so they pay attention to how we live our

lives and treat the people around us.

Parents who lead multicultural lives connecting with people from different race groups are more likely to raise children who do the same. It is impossible to shield our children from discrimination and bigotry but when we avoid talking about race, we run the risk of strengthening prejudice when our children encounter it. We need to model the behaviour we want, we need to discuss race openly and be brave enough to address discrimination when we see it. In this way we might raise the following generation free from racial prejudice and able to play their part in building a strong, united South Africa.

Patricia de Lille Executive Mayor of the City of Cape Town



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Racism is a problem for South Africa. We come from

a place of bitter division and oppression, where the idea of human rights was foreign to most. We had to wait until the Constitution was passed in 1996 for human rights to become the ultimate source of law in South Africa.

We may have formal consensus on this point now, but that doesn't always translate into a lived reality. It is one thing to formally adopt a respect for human rights, and quite another to live that respect. And it's in the space between these disparities that acts of racism, homophobia, sexism, and other discriminations occur. People who've always enjoyed formal rights fail to see the rights of others and don't understand their role in activating a culture of respect.

Our history was structured along racial segregation for centuries, so

it's not surprising that that history lives with us today. History doesn't disappear into some forgotten place. It shows itself in how we relate to each other, understand each other, and interpret the world. Over centuries, the shared experience of history set different races against each other. And the apartheid system institutionalised that racial tension. Its imprint cannot be eradicated in two decades.

Racism has proven a particular barrier to an inclusive, rights-based culture for everyone. While the decent majority aren't racist, the minority's extreme views seem to have the power to create very dangerous perceptions. For me, the key to addressing the lack of respect for human rights is in united action under firm leadership. As a City government, we will not tolerate racists, sexists, or homophobes. And difficult as it might be to talk about racism, it is the responsibility of leaders to demonstrate courage and initiate these difficult conversations.

That is why I have proposed a race dialogue under the banner of the Inclusive City campaign. The City leadership wants to lead a programme with industry bodies to address individuals within the property, hospitality, university, religious, media, and retail sectors who cannot get past their prejudice. We want this accompanied by an interaction with all those who want to take a stand against racism. Together we will look at how people can activate those rights for themselves, and how we can activate the rights of others.

However, civil society, business, academia and religious organisations should also lead their own campaigns to fight racism and promote reconciliation. To give human rights meaning and substance in society, we must do all we can to reject what goes against them. We need to build a future that remembers and understands our past but is not trapped by it. ❖