Rainbow Nationalism as a Philosophy of National Unity in South Africa

Interpellation and Disillusionment

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Abstract

Rainbow Nationalism is a Post-Apartheid South African philosophy of national unity. The South African state, and its emergent national elites, sought to mend divisions of a racially oppressive past to successfully construct a nation unified in its diversity, and beyond its previous adversities. As a philosophy of national unity, Rainbow Nationalism is premised on a country unified behind a narrative of *triumph over adversity* through a principled commitment to reconciliation, non-racialism, liberal democracy, and respect for universal human rights. The South African state's commitment to building national unity, from a divisive and oppressive Apartheid past, can be located more broadly in the plight of countries in the Global South to also build their respective unified national consciousnesses, after battling a colonial and contentious history. Interestingly, as a normative orientation and shared political philosophy for states in the Global South, the *Bandung Spirit* can be seen to encapsulate some of the key values manifest in Rainbow Nationalism. Worryingly, attempts to encourage the South African public into assuming Rainbow Nationalism as a normative orientation have been met with continued disillusionment. I contend that the disillusionment that philosophies of national unity like Rainbow Nationalism face results from their inability to maintain a clear distinction between treating the philosophy as a *present ontological state* and as a *teleology*. I argue that the ability to make the teleology of the philosophy of national unity compatible with and in service to the social reality of nations is what may make a principled commitment to the Bandung Spirit exempt from the challenge of self-effacement.

Introduction

Rainbow Nationalism is a Post-Apartheid South African philosophy of national unity. The South African state, and its emergent national elites, sought to mend divisions of a racially oppressive past to successfully construct a nation unified in its diversity, and beyond its previous adversities. As a philosophy of national unity, Rainbow Nationalism is premised on a country unified behind a narrative of *triumph over adversity* through a principled commitment to reconciliation, non-racialism, liberal democracy, and respect for universal human rights. In order to shape the national consciousness and get South African citizens to embrace Rainbow Nationalism as a normative political orientation, the South African state undertook a process of state interpellation, where interpellation is a process of shaping and giving content to individuals' subjecthood. The South African state's attempt to inculcate a Rainbow Nationalist subjecthood, as will be shown in this chapter, has largely been facilitated by a confluence of state-mandated rhetoric and narratives which aim to convey the existence of a new national identity predicated on an entrancing message of triumph over past adversity and unity in diversity (Riouful, 2000).

The South African state's commitment to building national unity, from a divisive and oppressive Apartheid past, can be located more broadly in the plight of countries in the Global South to also build their respective unified national consciousnesses, after battling a colonial and contentious history. Interestingly, as a normative orientation and shared political philosophy for states in the Global South, the *Bandung Spirit* can be seen to encapsulate some of the key values manifest in Rainbow Nationalism. These shared values include, but are not limited to, a principled stance in support of universal human rights as well as advocacy for peace and harmony amongst people. Worryingly, attempts to encourage the South African public into assuming Rainbow Nationalism as a normative orientation have been met with continued disillusionment. A growing number of South Africans have come to experience what Pumla Gqola (2015) termed as "waking up from the Rainbow Nation nightmare," becoming agitated and increasingly opting out of Rainbow Nationalism, while the state continues to attempt to inculcate it. What may be going wrong here? What is it in the interpellation process, and Rainbow Nationalism itself, that may be resulting in citizens becoming further disillusioned

by it, as well as delegitimizing it in their consciousness as Post-Apartheid national subjects?

In this chapter, I contend that the disillusionment that philosophies of national unity like Rainbow Nationalism face results from their inability to maintain a clear distinction between treating the philosophy as a *present ontological state* and as a *teleology.* I argue that, in the process of interpellation, the South African state has sought to present South Africa as a country that is presently a Rainbow Nation, which has overcome the nature of Apartheid; a situation that has come to undermine the actual social reality of living in contemporary South Africa, where the lingering effects and legacy of Apartheid remain. I argue that the failure to restrict Rainbow Nationalism to a teleology *simpliciter,* and the promotion of it as an ontological state, creates conditions where it appears to obfuscate and marginalize the social reality, to the detriment of the philosophy of national unity. Disillusionment occurs because citizens engaging and, reflexively, relating to the interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism with its effect of obfuscating social reality, perceive it as either being deceptive, obstructing focus on addressing the perpetuation of oppression and conflict legacies, or serving as a bitter reminder of a vision for the nation that remains unrealized.

The *Bandung Spirit,* while having an orientation which can be rendered similar to that of Rainbow Nationalism, carries with it a crucial aspect that allows it not to have the fate I see Rainbow Nationalism to have. The Bandung Spirit, so construed in the literature, remains largely aspirational – meaning that it is employed by and large differently on a global scale from how Rainbow Nationalism is employed by the South African state. Crucially, I observe the Bandung Principles and the talk of the Bandung Spirit as a "movement" to cast a particular image of the Bandung Spirit as being a normative orientation, which seeks not to speak of itself as a kind of complete ontology. The Bandung Spirit is often cast in the literature as something we (and all states in the Global South) should commit ourselves to as people who have faced adversity, *knowing our past and still present circumstances of coloniality, imperialism, racism, and poverty in the Global South* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). What we see here is a clear distinction between a teleology and a social reality – a crucial aspect of the Bandung Spirit which I believe saves the Bandung Spirit from threats of disillusionment. Furthermore, it is the ability to make this distinction which I argue could be helpful in rescuing Rainbow Nationalism from this disillusionment it is currently facing.

To make my argument, I will appeal to Louis Althusser's (2001) theory of state interpellation. The theory allows one to account for the interpellative process on which I consider the South African state to be embarking, while instilling Rainbow

Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity. As Althusser (2001) asserts, inter-pellation occurs through the Ideological State Apparatus, which can take some implicit and explicit forms that culminate into the state's rhetoric and narratives to 'construct' a citizen with a particular ideological consciousness. I isolate the Robben Island Museum, its rhetoric and narrative construction as an instance of the Ideological State Apparatus. This is because it serves as a good representa-tion of the state's interpellation programme. I look to Charles Mills' (2005) critique of idealization in political philosophy to illustrate the problems of interpellating a philosophy of national unity which is, in fact, a *teleology,* as a present ontological state instead.

I hope my evaluations of the threat of disillusionment will invite critical reflec-tion about how the interpellation of a philosophy of national unity can influence the overall success of the nation building enterprise in South Africa and unification movements of the Global South. This being so, it is taken into consideration that Rainbow Nationalism shares tenets with other philosophies of national and inter-national unity, like those sharing in the Bandung Spirit.

Rainbow Nationalism as a Philosophy of National Unity in the Global South

The national unity philosophy of Rainbow Nationalism is difficult to encapsulate whilst successfully resisting the pejorative associations implied by its opponents and the beguiling affect towards it on the part of its proponents. Nonetheless, to think of a working definition of Rainbow Nationalism that remains neutral on its merits and limitations would be to think of Rainbow Nationalism as a post-Apartheid Southern African political subjectivity which is norm-laden by a prin-cipled commitment in universal human rights, non-racialism, liberal democracy, and post-conflict harmony. The emergence of Rainbow Nationalism as a dominant ideology of national unity can be traced from the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931-2021), a prominent South African Apartheid struggle activist. He coined the term and had a significant influence in shaping Rainbow Nationalism through his role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of 1996. He stated that:

> *The past, it has been said, is another country. However painful the experience, the wound of the past must not be allowed to fester. They must be opened. They must be cleansed, and balm must be poured on them so they can heal. My appeal is unlimited directly to us all, black and white together, so we can close the chapter*

on our past and strive together for this beautiful and blessed land at the Rainbow people of God (Witz, Rassool & Minkley 2017, *p. 1*).

Archbishop Tutu's remarks provide crucial insight into the premises of Rainbow Nationalism. The democratic South African state and its national struggle elites introduced Rainbow Nationalism, as a way to provide a 'break with history' between the contentious Apartheid past and the new democratic South African present (Riouful, 2000). Rainbow Nationalism aimed to create a *tabula rasa* – an opportunity to become a unified nation against the backdrop of the negative, oppressive apartheid past. Apartheid would be considered a period in South Africa where the notion of racial diversity was perverted, where systemic racism was pervasive, oppressing 'non-white' South Africans, and culminating in an untenable, violent, and racialized conflict. The *new* South Africa, coming from this tumultuous past, would require a new consciousness that would serve as the antithesis of the racial discord of Apartheid South Africa. After Apartheid, racial difference was co-opted under the new South Africa, where claims of the power of racial differences were deflated to unite South Africans under one identity: as members of the Rainbow Nation. By this, I mean to say that South Africans were now to be South African *first* and have their racial and cultural differences 'ornamentalised' as something that can be celebrated culturally but also 'overcome' socio-politically in understanding socio-political subjectivity in South Africa. This underpinned the stressing of non-racialism as a means of going beyond an atrocious past that was marked by racial divisions.

As a philosophy of national unity premised on moving on from the Apartheid past, Rainbow Nationalism assumed the values of universal human rights and the notion of the inherent equality of moral personhood, aiming towards making racial differences irrelevant to the enjoyment of a full life. The ability and willingness of the South African citizenry to go *beyond* race and take on 'unity in diversity' as the primary principle of being South African became crucial to the realization of Rainbow Nationalism. As a philosophy of national unity, Rainbow Nationalism sought to foster a reality where South Africans were to take themselves to *now* belong to and live in an entirely different reality, reflective of the principles of Rainbow Nationalism, and were encouraged, through state interpellation, to take this reality as definitive of who they are as South Africans today.

Rainbow Nationalism as a Philosophy of National Unity is best encapsulated in the following: First, there is a strong emphasis on a divisive and oppressive past being left behind and forming a new national identity that can serve as the direct antithesis of a colonial, imperial and racist past. The national identity which is

thus formed comes about from a need to *not return* to the oppressive, divisive past, and aims to create a *tabula rasa* in the national consciousness, upon which new principled ways of being can be introduced as the bedrock of what it is to belong to a post-Apartheid state like South Africa. These principled ways of being, which culminate into the key tenets of Rainbow Nationalism, are non-racialism, reconciliation, unity in diversity, and a principled commitment to universal human rights. This manifests in a philosophy of national unity that seeks to de-emphasize and superficialize the importance of racial difference to achieve non-racialism. This state emphasizes the need to mend past differences and rise above conflict in the name of reconciliation.

Furthermore, Rainbow Nationalism manifests in a commitment to the formal equality of persons enshrined in a commitment to human rights, and calls for all to be unified *as South Africans* first, and disregard what makes people different insofar as it is divisive and sets back the collective national goal of unity. Its ultimate goal is undoubtedly the continual attainment of freedom for all, which it premises on maintaining peaceful and reconciliatory relations between all South Africans who share a painful and conflict-ridden past. Rainbow Nationalism is a teleological philosophy aimed at restoring human dignity to all South Africans through unity, rising above past differences, and escaping the past.

Locating Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity, within the broader political context of being a nation in the Global South, yields interesting observations. This is the case for many countries in the Global South coming to terms with their colonial, imperialist, and racially repressive pasts. Countries had to think critically about how to relate to one another as nations in the new global order and the kind of national consciousness they needed to foster in their new nations. Interestingly, there is a way in which Rainbow Nationalism emulates the Bandung Spirit in its own circumstantial way. The Bandung Spirit can be understood primarily as a socio-political ideal for the intra- and inter-relation of countries shared amongst nations of the Global South, emerging from the Africa-Asia Bandung Conference of 1955. Here, the countries that attended the Bandung Conference imagined a new reality for themselves, seeking to form a new identity for themselves and *between* themselves as post-colonial states in entering a new global order. It is this ideal of the Bandung Spirit which I argue to have entailed a teleology, a state aspirationalism, or normative orientation similar to that which we see in Rainbow Nationalism, encapsulated in Bandung Principles.

Essentially, the Bandung Spirit was a philosophy of peace and mutual prosperity, aimed at instilling a new imagery of how states in the Global South, emerging from an adversely colonial situation, and finding themselves amidst

internal conflicts with their oppressors. The Bandung Spirit can be found summarized in the following statement by Ruslan Abdulgani:

> *The spirit of Bandung is the spirit of love for peace, anti-violence, anti-discrimination, and development for all without trying to intervene for one another wrongly, but to pay a great respect to one another (Abdulgani, 1981, p. 89).*

While this understanding of the Bandung Spirit may seem relevant only to the relations between nations, I believe that a commitment to it would also call for consistency in the internal affairs of the state. Such consistency would call for a normative orientation governing relations between nations of the Global South to follow organically from a national consciousness committed to the same values of peace, anti-violence, and anti-discrimination encapsulated in the international Bandung Spirit. Simply put, it is reasonable to believe that here, significant affinities between Rainbow Nationalism and the Spirit of Bandung are apparent. The Bandung Spirit emphasizes non-violence and non-discrimination, which can be demonstrated in calls for reconciliation, and avoidance of the conflicts of the past at all costs. There is also an emergence of a commitment to peace and respect for all persons, irrespective of difference, which is intimately tied to the reverence for reconciliation and unity in diversity in Rainbow Nationalism.

As Maake Masango (2002) observed, South Africa's struggle for freedom would be informed by a very similar ideological and normative orientation to the Spirit of Bandung. Such an orientation shares significant affinities with the motivations behind the struggle against Apartheid, and helps to understand better the commitment to Rainbow Nationalism that emerged in post-Apartheid South Africa. The normative nature of the Spirit of Bandung is portrayed in the Bandung Principles, some of which are directly assumed in Rainbow Nationalism. Amongst these principles, there is a commitment to the "promotion of a just, democratic… and harmonious society" and the "promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedom" (Khudori, 2018, p. 2). There are obvious correlations between the Bandung Spirit and Rainbow Nationalism, judging by the Bandung Message of 2015, conveyed on the 60th anniversary of the 1955 Bandung Conference. For instance, both philosophies show a continued commitment to the "building of harmony among cultures, religions, faiths", in addition to a collective commitment to fighting against racism and racial discrimination, whilst "recognizing moderation as an important value in countering all forms of extremism, and to promoting dialogue, mutual respects, understanding and acceptance" (Khudori, 2018, p. 4). The aspirations of Rainbow Nationalism are outlined in the Spirit of Bandung.

Like in the spirit of Bandung, Rainbow Nationalism appears as a philosophy of unity, premised on overcoming racism and social injustice, by building harmony between people. As with the Spirit of Bandung, the attainment of harmony is premised on moderation, a significant principle manifest in the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, where Rainbow Nationalism would first come to be institutionalized.

A comparative analysis of Rainbow Nationalism and the Spirit of Bandung aims to make a simple point. I evaluate the challenges that the state might face in interpellating Rainbow Nationalism in the South African citizenry, because it helps with elucidating how countries that endorse the Bandung Spirit can avoid befalling by the same challenges. By establishing the affinities between the central tenets of Rainbow Nationalism and the Bandung Spirit, I hope to show what can be avoided by states who are proponents of the Bandung Spirit from challenges of interpellating Rainbow Nationalism. My intention is to demonstrate that the challenges of Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity may be accompanied with significant lessons for the prospects of actualizing philosophies of national unity *like* Rainbow Nationalism in the Global South.

How Rainbow Nationalism has Been Interpellated in South Africa

Having provided an outline of the tenets of Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity in the Global South, it is necessary to outline how it has been enshrined by the state, in order to better understand the barriers to its realization. Since the interest is in relation to the challenges facing a philosophy of national unity being entirely accepted and adopted by the citizens who are its target, Althusser's theory of state interpellation gives a theoretical account for this process of inculcating a philosophy of national unity, specifically for Rainbow Nationalism in a country with a history like South Africa's. In his theory of state interpellation, Althusser (1971) seeks to account for how the subjects of the state become the embodiment of state ideology, through interaction with various ideological state apparatuses. By apparatuses, Althusser refers to the various institutions such as state media, state rhetoric, state heritage sites, and government institutions which all serve as the key mechanisms through which the state attempts to shape a national identity or citizen subjecthood (Althusser, 1971).

Put differently, Althusser (1971, p. 79) claims that the "Ideological State Apparatus" comprises various institutions under the state, whose role is to collectively

disseminate, maintain, assert, and support a particular ideology into its dominance and its acceptance by a state's subjects. The Ideological State Apparatus permeates all spheres of citizens' political and social life where, if successful, it comes to inform the very consciousness of each citizen, and their relation to the state, as well as each other as members of that particular nation (Althusser, 1971). Althusser asserts that "the [successfully interpellated] individual behaves in such a way, adopts such and such a practice attitude, participates in regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which depends the ideas he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject" (Althusser, 1971, p. 82). Here, through interacting with the Ideological State Apparatus, individuals in the state practically and materially live out the dominant state ideology, consciously believing in the ideology as well as willingly taking it on as their own. It is essential to understand the outcome of the Ideological State Apparatus as turning all individuals into subjects who, materially, live the dominant state ideology such that they are the ideology. As such, questioning whether a project of interpellation was successful is the same as considering the extent to which the ideology, or philosophy being inculcated, is fully adopted by those it is targeted at. This question lies at the centre of the present chapter's analysis.

To answer the question, the following steps are undertaken: the first discussion concerns the rhetorisation and narrativisation of Rainbow Nationalism to lay bare the nature and extent of the South African state's project to engender Rainbow Nationalism into South Africans. Points of contradiction are identified to underscore the disillusionment with Rainbow Nationalism increasingly present in South Africa today. The second step in discussion refers to heritage as one key Ideological State Apparatus that offers the most precise lens into how the South African state carries out its interpellation process in its rhetoric and narrativization. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, p. 7) notes, heritage is a "mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past, as a specific way of interpreting and utilizing bygone times that links individuals with a larger collective". For Lowenthal, "heritage … is both the creative art and an act of faith. By means of [heritage], we tell ourselves who we are, where we are from, and to what we belong" (Lowenthal, 1996, p. xvii). Heritage is often taken as a space of myth-making for present-day national identity formation, especially when deployed by the state, where aspects of a collective past are incorporated or jettisoned according to how they may serve the identity formation and consolidation agenda in the present (Rassool, 2000).

How exactly does the state mobilize heritage to guide citizens into embracing Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity? What can the interpellation

project further reveal about the nature of Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity? It may be fruitful to focus on heritage sites, like Robben Island, as a mechanism for the broader state interpellative project, to answer these questions. Its use as narrative and rhetoric serves as a microcosm of the South African state's more pervasive promotion and acculturation of Rainbow Nationalism. Rassool (2000) explores how heritage sites, like the Robben Island Museum, have been "given the responsibility of constructing, packaging and transmitting images and representations of the new society and its past" for South Africans (p. 5). As Rassool (2000, p. 21) suggests, "having endured and survived the conflict and violence of Apartheid", the government manages heritage in South Africa as a tool "placed on a path of achieving reconciliation as the basis of the new Rainbow Nation". This tool has become a tool of the ideology that the state's ideological apparatus applies, such as through the commemorative museums in this instance, to inculcate it in the individual engaging with the heritage site. What this highlights, in particular, is how a subject as a spectator and target of heritage has its subjecthood shaped to comply with and take on the state's philosophy of national unity.

One of the most explicit sites in which citizens directly engage with the government's attempt to inculcate a Rainbow Nationalist subjectivity is through state-mandated/affirmed institutions like the Robben Island Museum, Apartheid Museum, and Freedom Park. As such, through the Robben Island Museum, one can come to understand how the South African government's attempts to ingrain Rainbow Nationalism and the limitations interpellating a philosophy of national unity like Rainbow Nationalism can face. The Robben Island Museum, declared a World Heritage Site in 1999 as well as a South African National Heritage Site in 2006, is a previous prison island in Cape Town where the Apartheid regime imprisoned Nelson Mandela and other key political figures of the Apartheid Struggle between 1961 and 1991. Even today, as Veronique Rioufol (2000) claims, the heritage site at Robben Island was created "to preserve its significance in the new South Africa, the new government has made Robben Island the first and foremost heritage site of the new dispensation and institutionalised its public commemoration through the creation of Robben Island Museum in January 1997" (p. 24).

To understand how the Robben Island Museum, as an institution in the South African Ideological State Apparatus, undertakes the project of interpellating South Africans into Rainbow Nationalism, an analysis of the rhetoric and narrative of this heritage site is needed. Examining the rhetoric and narrative provides an understanding of how the state goes about the inculturation of South Africans into the Rainbow Nationalism and how they frame it as a philosophy of national unity. The rhetoric of the Robben Island Museum, as a representation of the broader inter-

pellative project of the state, consists of the interplay between a *triumph narrative* and a *hardship narrative*. The hardship narrative captures the struggles and treatment endured by the Robben Island prisoners. It can be reported in prison stories highlighting the prison conditions, the treatment of prisoners by the guards and warden, and the day-to-day difficulties of life whilst being imprisoned. In this way, it becomes a representation of the afflictions of the Apartheid past.

On the other hand, the triumph narrative depicts prison conditions, and by extension, the hardships associated with the Apartheid system more generally, with a deliberate emphasis on the perseverance and the overcoming of such hardships through a display of a set of values, akin to a wholesome commitment to Rainbow Nationalist ideals. The triumph narrative is set to give a telos (i.e., goal or aim) to the hardship narrative, such that triumph becomes the *fait accompli* of an overarching constant above the oppression endured.

The triumph narrative serves as an allegory for the triumph of the human spirit and the essential prevailing of the tenets of Rainbow Nationalism in the face of extreme adversity. The hardship narrative consists of those oppressive conditions that the tenacity of the human spirit has overcome. Found in the Robben Island's strategic plan for 2020-2025 are the following words by Ahmed Kathrada, an ex-Robben Islander, which the museum considers to guide its curation as a heritage site:

> *While we will not forget the brutality of Apartheid, we will not want Robben Island to be a monument of our hardship and suffering. We would want it to be a triumph of the human spirit against the forces of evil, a triumph of wisdom and largeness of spirit against small minds and pettiness, a triumph of courage and determination over human frailty and weakness (Robben Island, 2020, p. v).*

Such a statement reveals to us that this heritage site primarily tells a story of disastrous misfortune, with the aim of showing the extent to which hardship is something that has been overcome and conquered by a commitment to Rainbow Nationalism. Kathrada's words of how he believed Robben Island should be represented were vital in shaping the orientation of the museum's narrative in telling a story of the triumph of the human spirit. There is a significant emphasis on the triumph narrative within the history of systemic resistance in Robben Island, where commitments to universal human rights and comradery are primarily highlighted, whilst de-emphasizing the severity of abuses, divisions, and conflicts in prison during Apartheid. The aspects of struggle and strife in the prisoners' experiences are mollified by the rhetorical appeal of the triumphant spirit of reconciliation.

Richard Marback (2004, p. 21), in his analysis of the rhetoric of the Robben Island Museum, speaks of how the tour guides, who were ex-prisoners, were continuously conscious of balancing the truth of what happened during their imprisonment with the need to foster reconciliation. In particular, Marback (2004, p. 21) notes how they did this in retelling their experiences of depravity while being imprisoned, by stating that "they make the point of wanting their accounts to contribute to a transcendence of past brutalities". The emphasis is placed on transcending the divisions and adversities of the past, which is the premise of the broader South African reconciliation agenda.

There is a clear assumption that, if the prisoners themselves were not bitter about Apartheid, the foreign and South African visitors should not be bitter about it either. What emerges here is the second moral goal of the "New" South Africa story, starting from a *tabula rasa* or a clean break from the Apartheid. The reference to not being bitter suggests that the past was left behind with the political toppling of Apartheid. The way in which the museum stresses forgiveness and building a new South Africa encourages visitors to leave the past behind. South Africans are encouraged to embody unity, reconciliation, forgiveness, non-racialism, and solidarity, almost as a post-Apartheid reality embodied by the ex-prisoners and political activists. Framing the past as conquered suggests the inevitability and ease at which unity can be made possible if we choose not to remain bitter about the past.

From the above discussion, several observations can be made about the rhetorisation of Robben Island that can enlighten us on South Africa's approach to the interpellating Rainbow Nationalism, as well as the very nature of Rainbow Nationalism as a normative orientation. The interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism is pursued by calling for South Africans to go *beyond* their past, to *transcend* the past hardships, and be united in this transcendence. A crucial component of Rainbow Nationalism and its attraction, as a philosophy of national unity, can be significantly linked to the dimension of the triumph narrative. Part of the success of Rainbow Nationalism is dependent upon the extent to which individuals buy into the triumph narrative, since triumph over adversity is positioned as a direct consequence of a commitment to Rainbow Nationalism. Interestingly, in a call to never return to the oppressive past, South Africans are called upon to commit fully to the project of conquering the past, where embodying Rainbow Nationalism and uniting under it is taken as a condition for maintaining this triumph. The rhetoric calls for all South Africans to *choose* reconciliation, start afresh, and be non-racial, to be unified despite differences for building a *Rainbow Nation* together. We also get a sense that a principled commitment to the tenets of Rainbow Nationalism is

required from all South Africans to ensure that the triumph over the past is maintained.

Challenges Facing Rainbow Nationalism as a Result of its Interpellation

What may appear to be a positive and hopeful philosophy of national unity has, instead, been met with increasing disillusionment, particularly from the South African youth. In this section, the nature of the disillusionment is explained. Such explanation is likely to provide an account of what it is about the Rainbow Nationalism and its interpellation as a philosophy of national unity that results in the challenge of disillusionment. In 2021, anthropological research was conducted with a focus on South African youth, and their responses to Rainbow Nationalism, as a way to understand better whether the state interpellation project has been successful (Mogomotsi, 2021). Commenting on their experiences of Robben Island as an example, one of the critical insights revealed from the reflections of the South African youth was that the triumph narrative is ineffective in tempering the anger and discontent which follows from the hardship narrative.

One study participant, a 25-year-old mixed-race South African woman, stated that:

> Someone living in the country is to be left much more pessimistic after hearing about the injustices that occurred in the prison. It highlights how we didn't achieve what we set to achieve as a country, and Robben Island is a reminder of that in its message of hope (Participant C, Interview, April 2021).

Further, another participant stated that:

> It was weird to go from an angry and sad position, where you have just seen injustices and get to hear about the "silver lining", that is the end of suffering under Apartheid. I remember being like: "I hear you, but I am still mad". It did not feel like a resolve to the feelings. Being Black influenced my experience. I cannot escape from being Black. Already when going to the museum, my emotions and expectations were already seasoned. When I got there, it was Black people being mistreated by whites. It felt like a confirmation of my anger towards the unfair treatment of Blacks today (Participant S, Interview, June 2021).

For some South Africans, the triumph narrative inherent in making the Rainbow Nationalism compelling did not have the intended consequences of persuading them to buy into the rhetoric. Instead, the prevalence of a triumph narrative, in the context of the Rainbow Nationalism, may have produced the unintended effect of making some South Africans less invested in the philosophy. Of particular note is Participant C's claim that the message of hope, paradoxically, produces more pessimism, in that the triumph narrative serves as a reminder of how much South Africa has *not* achieved, nor triumphed over as a country since the advent of democracy in 1994. The triumph narrative, in this context, is considered to be more representative of an *unrealized* dream than capturing the reality of present-day South Africa. The triumph narrative, in its message of hope, inadvertently becomes agitating because it shows how much of what was hoped for, regarding the end of racial injustice and inequities, remains wishful thinking. An awareness of this can only create a sense of disappointment at the unrealized hope, with pessimism only compounding the existing negative affect associated with the degenerating socio-economic conditions of South Africa. At best, the triumph narrative's intervention is seen as significantly insensitive, perturbing, and heedless of the gravity and pervasiveness of injustice, *as a continued lived reality,* for many Black people. Even if one acknowledges that there is some truth to the triumph narrative, an acknowledgement of that truth is still insufficient regarding the abolition of the adverse effect entailed in the hardship narrative.

An examination of the work of Meja Mwangi by Ayo Kehinde (2004, p. 228) establishes how African literature, capturing the social realities and plights of post-colonial societies, speaks of a post-liberation disillusionment that is endemic in many African countries. Mwangi uses Kenya as a case study. Kehinde investigates Meja's work titled *Kill Me Quick,* reflecting on how post-colonial societies have all been mired in "frustration or betrayal of trust", marking the "recurrence of undisguised bitterness against the black African rulers who have betrayed their nations" (Kehinde, 2004, p. 238). According to Kehinde, the bitterness is a result of the lack of fulfilment of post-independent aspirations for the nation. Societies were promised that tragedies of the past would be behind them, only to find themselves living in socio-economic conditions that are continually desperate and poor (Kehinde, 2004, p. 231). This is perhaps a disillusionment brought about by a lack of material means, a bitterness endemic in post-independence African societies that seems to rear its head in the sentiments of young South Africans. What emerges is that the triumph narrative ends up being perceived by young South Africans as a dubious multi-layered mixture of bamboozlement and beguilement. An awareness of this can only serve to upset young South Africans further, causing them to

further divert from the Rainbow Nationalism that the triumph narrative compels them to adopt.

Why would such disillusionment emerge in the first place? Witz et al. (2017) assert that we should reject the understanding that the public's engagements with heritage and nation-building projects are an uncritical consumption of state narratives for nation-building purposes. Instead, they argue that we should "see institutions of public culture as critical social locations where knowledge and perceptions are shaped, debated, imposed, challenged and disseminated" (Witz et al., 2008, p. 12). As such, heritage presentations through institutions like the Robben Island Museum come to compete and negotiate social meanings of identity with the complex subjectivities its visitors may come to it with. Witz et al.'s insight shows that propelling the state-authorized heritage may not necessarily guarantee citizens' self-identification with the nation-building project because of the very contestable nature of heritage in the public sphere. As such, the rejection of the state interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism, contained in its disillusionment, is a possibility precisely because citizens respond critically to the state's attempt to interpellate them.

A Philosophical Account of the Limits of Interpellating Rainbow Nationalism

As we have seen in the previous section, the interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism has been met with disillusionment. In this section, I want to take a novel approach to understanding why this is the case. Perhaps political philosophy can help with better understanding what may be going wrong with Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity and its interpellation, such that it is being met with increasing disillusionment. I contend that Rainbow Nationalism is an instance of idealism and, as a result, was self-effacing, which can be said to be one of the things responsible for its disillusionment. To understand what I mean here, it may be helpful to look to Charles Mill's (2005) critique of what he terms *ideal-theory-as-ideology* and his subsequent defence of the non-ideal theory. To best understand the contention here, we should start with the kind of question that would be of interest in motivating the emergence of Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity. At the advent of democracy in South Africa, the question was primarily "What kind of society is South Africa *after* apartheid?". Coming at the advent of a *new* South Africa, such a question comes about where a new national identity is to be imagined. It is here where the appeal of 'ideal-theory-as-idealized' may become

apparent. As Mills (2005) defines it, ideal-theory-as-idealized involves thinking about a particular representation and conception of the social world produced as an exemplar of what the social world *should be like.*

The interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism uses the 'ideal-theory-as-idealized' approach in fostering national consciousness and reality in many ways. It employed several principles like reconciliation, non-racialism, and universal human rights, projecting them as values that everyone who wanted to be a part of the new South Africa *should emulate.* Rainbow Nationalism, in many ways, propelled a rhetoric that was significantly prescriptive of how South Africans *should be* post-Apartheid: individuals who *already embody* a principled way of living according to the tenets of Rainbow Nationalism. However, in current South Africa, this conception of how South Africans *should be* had to compete with the *reality* of what it is to be South African after Apartheid. As Mills (2005, p. 167) observed, there is an inevitable lacuna between how social reality should be and how it is. Post-Apartheid South Africa has continued to grapple with the lingering legacy of Apartheid in a myriad of ways, where an apt description of its present reality would reveal that South Africa, in reality, is still far from the Rainbow Nation that it should be.

As Achille Mbembe notes (2015), a lot remains relatively the same since the advent of democracy in South Africa, further buttressing the idea that today's South Africa is a significant marker of an unrealized struggle for complete emancipation; political, socio-economic, and otherwise. Even after Apartheid, White people still command approximately 90% of the nation's economy, whilst most Black people continue to live in poverty with vastly different lives from their counterparts (Mbembe, 2015). Gqola also suggests a resurgence of White Supremacist violence in recent times, as covered by the South African media. In 2017, a White farmer forced his Black worker to eat faeces and attempted to drown him in a septic tank, calling him a "useless K*ffir" (IOL, 2018). Additionally, racist incidents have continued to take place in public. Penny Sparrow and Adam Catzavelos have publicly proclaimed Black people to be 'monkeys'. While these may seem to be only discrete incidents, they can be appealed to in illustrating that Apartheid's legacy still lingers quite notably and persistently in present-day South Africa. In many ways, if we are to describe the current picture of South African society post-Apartheid aptly, it reveals a country distant from the Rainbow Nationalism picture of non-racial reconciliatory triumphalism.

Having established cause to believe that there is a disjuncture between the ideal that is Rainbow Nationalism and the social reality in post-Apartheid South Africa, it is now possible demonstrate what went wrong with the interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism, such that it is being met with noticeable disillusionment

and agitation. What went wrong, as I contend, is that the actualization of Rainbow Nationalism, pursued via interpellation, started from an ideal-as-idealized model of South African society, and not from a non-ideal model in its attempt to realize Rainbow Nationalism as a vision for national unity effectively. To see the theoretical appeal of my contention, consider the following passage from Charles Mills' (2005) *Ideal Theory as Ideology*:

> *How useful will it be to start from an ideal-as-idealized-model of P? Obviously, this question cannot be answered a priori: it's going to depend on how closely the actual P in question approximates the behaviour of an ideal P. And if one wants to change the actual P so it conforms more closely in its behaviour to the ideal P, one will need to work and theories not merely with the ideal, ideal-as-idealized-model, but with the non-ideal, ideal-as-descriptive-model, so as to identify and understand the peculiar features that explain P's dynamic and prevent it from attaining ideality (Mills, 2005, p. 166).*

What is considered to be the case in the interpellation of Rainbow Nationalism is that the South African government may have departed from the ideal, consequently obfuscating the social reality of what it is to belong to post-Apartheid South Africa. As has already been shown, the Rainbow Nationalism departed only from its principles in shaping what it was to be South African after Apartheid. The past, and the messiness lingering, was simply treated, narratively and rhetorically, as something to be left behind so as to make way of the new reconciled country, unified despite diversity. Fixation on the past, and taking an approach to address the past in a manner contrary to or in tension with the prescriptions of the Rainbow Nationalism, was considered tantamount to betraying the vision of unity in diversity that Rainbow Nationalism sought to bring about. The fixation on making South Africans the embodiment of the vision of Rainbow Nationalism through interpellation could have arguably created rose-tinted glasses where its attainment was seen as sufficiently possible through its own appeal.

An *emphasis* on the ideal can obfuscate and marginalize the actual. Arguably, focus on the ideal, when the actual is considered far from it, is perceived by some citizens to be a state of pacification and inculcation of docility. In a series of interviews I conducted with young South Africans who had visited Robben Island, a number of the interview lamented how the Rainbow Nationalism rhetoric was continually used to subdue their anger regarding the lingering effects of apartheid in the new South Africa – which led to them being more skeptical of the role that Rainbow Nationalism has to play in actualizing positive post-Apartheid

conditions in South Africa (Mogomotsi, 2021). Here, the continuous rhetorical emphasis on the ideal effaced the ideal primarily because it made citizens feel that they were "drinking the government brewed Kool-Aid". It is this which I believe, upon citizens being conscious of it, further delegitimized Rainbow Nationalism as an ideal worth emulating. Simply put, an ideal like Rainbow Nationalism is promoted, but the social reality upon which it is being promoted lags behind. The situation raises questions about the prudence of living according to the ideal and not dealing, hands-on, with the hindrances to this achieving the ideal – even in the case where dealing with the hindrances to the ideals lies contrary to the ideal itself. In speaking of South Africa as a Rainbow Nation after Apartheid, I argue that the South African sought to *ontologise* what should have otherwise remained an ideal. That is, in speaking of South Africa as a Rainbow Nation, the government took tenets of Rainbow Nationalism and attempted to make them a current ontological state of the South African body politic. Here, using Rainbow Nationalism, instead of being something to aspirational for a country still needing to *become* a Rainbow Nation the government opted to inculcate the Rainbow Nation *as who we are* now that Apartheid has ended.

In dubbing the post-Apartheid South Africa as the Rainbow Nation, what should have remained a teleological aspiration for the nation became convoluted, with the understanding of it as the *actual* state of the country. By buttressing national identity as constituted in unity in diversity and a commitment to recon-ciliation, the philosophy constructed a picture of South Africa as a country which *had* reconciled post-TRC and not one *in an ever continuous and contentious process* of reconciling. The political and ideological commitments to liberal values and universal human rights through South African constitutionalism created the illu-sion that racial differences, which were markers of power, conflict, and privilege, were *no longer relevant* to or in the "New" South Africa as a consequence of Apart-heid ending. These political and ideological commitments seemed to undermine the importance of admitting to racial differences, as markers of power and priv-ilege, to the substantive actualization of the liberal values and universal human rights in South Africa. As Gqola (2001, p. 99) puts it, "[Rainbow Nationalism] is a fantasy, yet [it] remains symbolic and constitutive of the new "truths" in a demo-cratic South Africa."

This demonstrates the importance of using rhetoric of a philosophy of national unity as a teleology, as something a nation should aspire to become, as opposed to rhetorising it as a present ontological reality. It is essential for a philosophy of unity not to obfuscate the social reality onto which it is being projected. If there is not enough intent in the rhetoric to treat it as an *aspiration*, it is bound to crumble

under the pressure of reality. Instead of speaking of South Africa *as* a Rainbow Nation, it is essential to have explicitly projected South Africa as a country on a *journey toward becoming* a Rainbow Nation, by confronting Apartheid and its legacies. Such a nuanced approach would have been more consistent with the current social reality. This is because it would give room for acknowledgement of the current social reality as far from the ideal without abandoning the appeal of the ideal. Instead, the Rainbow Nationalist ideal of a reality antithetical to Apartheid being continually rhetorised as a current ontological reality served to silence the social reality, which in the case of South Africa is still significantly continuous with the legacy of Apartheid. The better approach would be to do the following. First, having a philosophy of national unity that acknowledges that the ontological reality in its non-ideal state may have avoided the resultant conditions of its effacement. Thereafter, the Rainbow Nationalist government could have rhetorised the philosophy of national unity more explicitly as a collective goal which is compatible with dealing with the lingering impacts of being a post-Apartheid post-colonial country. Unfortunately, in the case of Rainbow Nationalism, the interpellative rhetoric encouraged a view of a *tabula rasa* in the national consciousness. This is at the heart of the reasons behind the disillusionment Rainbow Nationalism faces today.

Is the Bandung Spirit any better than Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national *and* international unity? I believe so. A commitment to the Bandung Spirit need not fall to the same challenges as Rainbow Nationalism because it is conceived of as an ideal and normative ideology with the ontological-teleological distinction in mind. As Darwis Khudori (2006) observed, the invocation of the Bandung Spirit is largely "associated with the struggle against the domination by the powerful over the weak" (p. 123). As such, the Bandung Spirit as a movement is geared towards a commitment to resolve the injustices and inequalities evident in the global order. What we see here is the Bandung Spirit positioning itself as a philosophy of international unity in the Global South, with a principled teleology whose primary purpose is to secure better ontological conditions for states in the Global South. Elsewhere, Khudori (2006) speaks of the Bandung Spirit as a "bold and sweeping effort to reorder the world as was attempted with such success starting in Bandung in April 1955" (p. 124). What we see is that, unlike the Rainbow Nationalism trajectory, the commitment to the Bandung Spirit starts with a cognizance of having to continually address the challenges of the Global social reality and then devises a principled way to best address these challenges. As such, a principled commitment to universal human rights, non-racialism, cooperation, and peace functions in a fundamentally different way from how it functions

in the Rainbow Nationalism discourse. Whereas Rainbow Nationalism uses these principled commitments to obfuscate social reality by ontologising them, the kind of principled commitment seen in the Bandung Spirit makes use of these principles to transform social reality. It is this crucial difference – that is, the ability to make the teleological help in resolving the ontological state of being a Global South nation – that makes the Bandung Spirit exempt from the challenges faced by Rainbow Nationalism as a philosophy of national unity in South Africa.

However, this is not to say that the Bandung Spirit is *immune* from the Challenges faced by Rainbow Nationalism. Insofar as there are limitations to how the Bandung Spirit as a teleological enterprise can address the challenges of the social reality, the threat of disillusionment may creep into view. Here, I want to focus on one of the principles of the Bandung Spirit which I think may open it up to contradiction, which may also undermine it. Assie-Lumumba (2015) observes a number of abstention clauses in the fundamental principles of the Bandung Conference. First, the Bandung committed itself to "abstention from intervention or interference in the affairs of another country" as well as "abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries (Assie-Lumumba, 2015, p. 6). While I understand how this may serve the goals of "living together in peace with one another as neighbors" and "goodwill' between nations on the international stage who are seeking global equity, these abstentions may often come at the price of intra-national conditions that undermine the importance of the teleology in the first place. If we were to imagine a country, amongst those who are signatories to the Bandung fundamental principles, who may have questionable human rights and equity practices in their own countries, the principle of abstention threatens to undermine the extent to which the proponents of Bandung Spirit seek to uphold that which they strive for in the social reality of their own nations. Should a contradiction emerge where countries of the Global South commit themselves to the principles of Bandung *between* each other as nations, but not in their own nations, it is likely that the Bandung Spirit may also efface itself as being mere rhetoric whose norms do not go far enough to reshape the reality of living in the Global South.

Conclusion

From this, perhaps there may be a lesson in the philosophies of national unity in the Global South. It is vital for the interpellation of a philosophy of unity in the Global South to be cognizant of the continuances of racial oppression and coloniality that linger in post-independent and newly democratic states. However,

such interpellation should not necessarily seek to subdue a focus on the past and divert the citizenry's attention only to the ideal. Instead, the state interpellation process should also seek to actively acknowledge and address the barriers and social reality, which may be far from ideal, in order for the ideal to be attained. For philosophies of national unity that emerge from the Bandung Spirit, it is worth settling on a principled commitment and embodiment of certain values by the state in shaping a national consciousness, which will need to take place in tandem with ensuring that the social reality reflects the promotion of those values. Luckily for the Bandung Spirit, it has within it already in place a teleology that is geared towards resolving the challenges of being a state and part of a nation in the Global South – whatever the challenges may be, old or new. As I illustrated in my analysis of Ayo Kehinde's observation of the post-colonial reality, many post-colonial societies have been mired in bitterness from their general public because of the failure to fulfil their aspiration for the nations and to live up to the promise that the travesties of the past would truly be in the past. A continuous effort to interpellate people into this aspiration that is a philosophy of national unity like Rainbow Nationalism can only have the effect of showing citizens that their government is oblivious to or aims to undermine their frustrations and disappointment at the pace of having the promise of post-colonial (post-Apartheid) independence fulfilled. The insistence by the state that South Africa is a Rainbow Nation, while the social reality lags in reflecting it as such, can only serve to delegitimize the usefulness of its citizenry continuing to see itself as a Rainbow Nation.

For the principled belief in the Bandung Spirit, I have shown that it need not fall to the same fate as a commitment to Rainbow Nationalism in South Africa – despite their affinities both in social reality and teleology. The "subalternation and peripherization", as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019, p. 213) calls it, is the social reality that the nations of the Global South with a commitment to the Bandung Spirit have to continually fight against both domestically and internationally. What I have shown, that would make a state's commitment to the Bandung Spirit different and largely immune to the challenges of to a commitment to Rainbow Nationalism in South Africa is how the Bandung Spirit, as a philosophy of national and international unity, is premised on the continual resolution of challenges faced in the social reality of being part of the Global South. I have shown how a commitment to the Bandung Spirit shows the potential of a philosophy of national and international unity whose teleology is consistent with the prevailing social conditions – simultaneously being aware of the challenges continually faced by the Global South and preserving the teleology as something which aspires to resolve the challenges in the current ontological state of Global South countries.

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