"Ethnicity challenges in African communities, the ghost of the past." What shall we say to this? – A theological- ethical approach"

R.Z. Rashe
University of Fort Hare
Department of Theology
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
rrashe@ufh.ac.za

Abstract

All over the world, a lot has been written and said about violent acts and incidents related to conflicts between ethnic groups. These incidents, from time to time, drew a lot of publicity and at the same time, shocked the public. This is becoming more prevalent where there are different groups of people from different racial backgrounds, people speaking different languages, cultures and different religious backgrounds. In South Africa, this type of violence has occurred several times and can be traced from different periods. A number of incidents can be mentioned where attacks on foreign African nationals by other African people - to be specific - Black South Africans, have been reported. These attacks sometimes have been referred to as xenophobic attacks. The paper looks deeper into the origins and definition of ethnicity using a literature review methodology. It also deals with the structural causes and consequences of ethnicity. Lastly, the paper seeks to find some concrete responses and solutions to this challenge from a theological approach.

Keywords: ethnicity, culture, racism

Origins of ethnicity

A pertinent question needs to be asked concerning ethnicity, namely: 'where does this originate? 'There is a general claim that Black South Africans never took notice of ethnicity practices; black people never discriminated against one another according to their cultural background and the language they speak. Growing up as children at home, my parents used to narrate stories and their experiences of unity and the way they embraced each other. They told us that if their parents saw someone passing their home, the person will be invited for a drink, and while having something to drink, an enquiry pertaining his or her background and the purpose of the journey will commence. As this person is busy telling his or her story, a full meal would be prepared and sometimes, that person would be offered accommodation. The purpose of the invitation was to milk information about the person's background and what is happening in their community. In the olden days, it was not easy for the people in the villages to get news about what was happening in other communities. Therefore, it is clear that ethnicity was never an African challenge, and it foreign to the African way of life. A quick mention can be made here, as an example, African people from different backgrounds working in the mines not understanding each other's language, developed their own language. This language was called "*Fanakalo*"

and was a common language for that specific context. It made them to accept one another and appreciate their diversity.

Definition of ethnicity

Scholars all over the world agree that there is no single definition of ethnicity; there are various definitions that define and describe the concept 'ethnicity'. A popular international sociologist, Giddens (1990), describes "ethnicity as referring to cultural practices and outlooks that distinguish a given community of people. He further argues that members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groupings in a society and are seen by those to be so."[1] From this definition, it is clear that there are many characteristics that distinguish ethnic groups from one another. A particular ethnic group can be differentiated from the other by the language, history, religion and style of dress. On the other hand, ethnicity for Hastings, provides the decisive criteria of belonging.[2] Bekker (2001), writing from a South African perspective, posits that ethnic identities are constructed and manipulated, not given.[3] Once more, Bekker finds it difficult to understand the argument of Horowitz (1985) explaining the concept of ethnicity; he writes: "Ethnicity is one of those forces that are community-building in moderation and community-destroying in excess" He remarks that this explanation is offensive in Africa. He further comments, reflecting on the statement, by making two observations. Firstly, ethnicity is associated with backwardness, with the remnants of pre-modernity and tribalism.

Secondly, Bekker concludes that if the meanings attached to ethnic and racial labels of the old South Africa persist, the implication appears to be that South Africans are able to make choices only to belong together in building a new nation and a new identity, or to remain divided by offensive cleavages inherited from an unjust past. Lentz expounds on Bekker's definition of ethnicity, that it has become common practice to distinguish between constructionist (formalists) and primordia list (essentialist) approaches. Lentz remarks that constructionists emphasize that ethnicity is not suprahistorical and quasi-natural membership in a group, but rather, a social identity is constructed under specific historical-political circumstances[4] Lentz alleges that some scholars like Banton (1983) apply rational theories to ethnicity or otherwise look for objective interest upon which identity is based. Lentz maintains that there are still those studies of cultural identities that often ignore the question of power (Sollors, 1989). He summarizes his second approach of essentialist thought by stating that they take a less problematic metaphor-laden definition of ethnicity as a basic group identity which all members inherit at birth and which satisfies the human need for belongingness and self-esteem much better than the secondary group identities acquired later in life.

Ethnicity and racism can be considered as basic to several conflicts which are tearing up societies and the African continent. This has affected different people in different ways. Studies have been conducted to investigate how ethnicity has affected people in Africa, and different responses have been received. The researcher is of the opinion that a

---

[1] See Giddens, A. Sociology, Textbook of the Nineties, Polity Press, Cambridge (1989:243-244)

[2] See Hastings, A. The Construction of Nationhood, Ethnicity , Religion and Nationalism, Cambridge University Press 1997:173

[3] See Bekker, S. 2001, Identities and ethnicity. In shifting African identities. www.hsrcpress.ac.za. Bekker Simon is the Professor Emaritus of Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch.

[4] See Lentz Carola 1995:306, Cah.Sci.hum 31(2).

second question on what the causes and consequences of ethnicity are and how they have affected communities, would be apt. Therefore, this leads us to our next argument on the causes and effects of ethnicity in our communities.

Addressing structural causes and effects of ethnicity

Here, I want to focus on the role played by ethnicity in South Africa looking at the causes and the effects of ethnicity. For the purpose of this paper, the author limits himself to two structural causes of ethnicity i.e. political and economic causes.

Political causes

Mostly, scholars do agree that the issue of ethnicity is associated with politics. The purpose of the system was to gain power to control over all the nations. This can be traced from different political eras in history, from the times of Industrialization, Colonization and Apartheid. During the era of Industrialization, not much was being said in relation to ethnicity, but during the two periods, i.e. Colonization and apartheid, much has been recorded. Kotzé notes that colonization has played an important role in the strengthening of the formation of ethnic groups to be used for political gain. He writes: "Ethnicity may have been the product of the colonial era, as Bayart and others have asserted, but its major stimulus is derived from the introduction of competitive politics.[5]

This issue of political influence on ethnicity has left a bad legacy in South Africa, if not in the continent - the legacy of politically motivated conflicts amongst ethnic groups. For instance, reference can be made to Rwanda's civil war and conflicts in Nigeria. As a result of these conflicts, serious divisions within the black communities have occurred. Ethnic identity does exist with its own challenges. In order for us to understand the complexity of ethnicity better, the challenges that come with it must be addressed. Kotzé also agrees with the fact that challenges of ethnicity must be addressed, particularly given the growing incidents of ethnic conflict and increase in ethnic politics that have taken place since the 1994 elections.[6] He further argues that a report in the *Sunday Times* states that a new brand of ethnic politics is evident and that instead of vanquishing tribalism, there are signs that the new South Africa may have been caught unaware by the rebirth of ethnic loyalty.[7] Having discussed the political causes, the next step will be to discuss the economic causes reflecting on poverty and unemployment.

Economic causes – Poverty and unemployment

The intention here is not to discuss poverty but rather to expose its contribution to ethnicity and conflicts around ethnicity. Moving forward with the argument, it is important to begin to think of the following questions: how does poverty link to ethnicity? How do we understand poverty in relation to ethnicity? How can it be eradicated? What does it do to the individual? Poverty simply means being poor and unable to meet your financial obligations. Poverty makes one financially disabled, and nobody wants to be poor.

---

[5] See Kotzé H, 1997, Culture, Ethnicity and Religion: South African perceptions of Social Identity. In Occasional Paper, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa, ed. Stiftung, K.A. April Issue 1997:1
[6] Kotzé 1997:2
[7] Ibid, and also see Hartley, R. "Tribalism Steps Out of the Closet" Sunday Times, 22 December 1996, see also discussion by Mtshelwane, Z. (1995) Mine Violence, S.A Labour Bulletin, Vol. 19(2), pp 55-56.

Circumstances make one to be poor. In this case, ethnicity contributes to poverty because those who belong in the same ethnic group but happen to have maybe a relative in an influential position can enjoy the privileges of being part of that particular group as they always get first preference. Such relatives can easily access resources and in terms of employment, can easily secure jobs. The danger of poverty is that unlike apartheid, which took away the rights and privileges of Black people, it takes away a person's human dignity.

In South Africa, we still have an enormous level of poverty caused by the high rate of unemployment. Poverty is also caused by unfair distribution of wealth and resources. Due to frustration, people can find themselves in conflict with others, especially if they are not from the same ethnic group or nationality. What is worse is that these kinds of conflicts are always amongst African people - Blacks to be specific! This usually leads to what is known in South Africa as Black on Black violence or sometimes xenophobia. Isaak (2000) argues that poverty is not a condition but a process; the poorest people are not passive victims but leading actors against and process of impoverishment.[8] What Isaak is saying is that the emphasis should not be on the poor, the focus should be on the potential strengths of the poor. In other words, dealing with what makes them poor. Eradication of poverty is a normal imperative and it can be achieved.

What shall we say to this? An ecclesiological response

The politicians have attempted to respond to the challenge of ethnicity through the establishment of organizations such OAU- (organization of African Unity) as early as 1950's and 1960's. Does the church have any role to play in addressing social challenges? This reminds me of the words of Beyers Naudé when he was asked to address the conference organized by Ecumenical Foundation of South Africa (EFSA). The theme of the conference was 'The church, transition and transformation. In his attempt to address himself on the theme he asked lots of questions about the church such as "What do we mean by the term *Church*? Who is the church? What is the Church? How do we understand the Church?"[9] In his mind, he reckons that the problem is that there are many answers given on these questions. For him, some of these answers are not only controversial but sometimes even contradictory, and this creates very serious problems for the community outside when they hear the term *church.* What is their understanding when they hear the term *church* on the radio or television w?

In response to the questions and concerns raised by Beyers Naudé as mentioned above, Koopman suggests that in investigating the role of the church, Smit's identification of six forms of the church might be helpful.[10] Therefore, the whole section on the response of the church will follow Smit's meaning of the church in an attempt to understand what the

---

[8] See Isaak P.J. The story of the Rich Christians and Poor Lazrus, poverty and wealth in the 21st Century, In Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia Vol. 2, 2000:80.

[9] Beyers Naudé, *The Church, transition and transformation in South Africa*, Studies and reports by the Ecumenical Foundation of South Africa, Institute for Theological & Interdisciplinary Research 1996:3

[10] See Nico Koopman, 'Theology and the fulfillment of social and economic rights. Some theoretical consideration' In '*Theories of Social and Economic Justice'* (ed.) Sun Press, Stellenbosch. South Africa (2005:9). In this article Koopman refers us to the work of Smit where he identifies these different forms of the church as congregation, worship service, denomination, ecumenical church, Christian believers and volunteers, see Smit 'Oor die kerk as unieke samemewingsverband' in *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe 36* Junie 1996:119-129.

church can do about the challenge of addressing ethnicity and its structural causes as well as its effects. Ecclesiology, according to Smit, can mean different things to different people and can refer to different realities.[11] This means that what one understands to be the meaning of the church may mean something different for someone else. Therefore, proposals forwarded on this paper can be applicable to the framework and model of the church as suggested by Smit i.e. the congregation, worship, Christian believers, volunteers, denomination and the ecumenical church. In simple terms, this pertains to the church, as a congregation, as worship, as Christian believers, as volunteers, as denomination, and the ecumenical church can respond individually according to the recommendations of the paper.

This section investigates the response to the question, and De Villiers' notion of the responsibility of the church becomes helpful in guiding us to find some concrete proposals. De Villiers cautions the church that even before it jumps to respond to the issue of human rights and human dignity, "the first responsibility of the churches in South Africa is to get clarity on their Christian ethical view on human rights, moral responsibility and the relationship between them."[12] As churches, together with other stakeholders in our societies, we need to develop a consciousness of human rights because they are important in that they are strong factors in peace-making. Most conflicts arise from a violation of human rights, and the acceptance of these rights is not sufficient. There is a need to take a pre-determined action to make human rights a reality in our homes and societies. It should not be the government's and the civil organization's responsibility to ensure them, but rather, a responsibility for every citizen. Etienne de Villiers emphasizes that churches have a responsibility to educate their members on this positive correlation and be proponents of both moral responsibility and human rights in the ecumenical fellowship of churches and society at large[13]. Education on human rights should be one of the weapons that can be used to restore human dignity. Schools and churches have the responsibility to educate the next generation on human rights. It will not be enough to do only this, but it will also require an indication of the basic values embedded in them. Although curricula have it as a unit, generally, it is taught only at the cognitive level. Such academic learning has little impact on actual behavior as it is merely about memorizing the content and that does not help the learners and readers. What is necessary is to learn these in such a way that respect for human dignity is internalized and becomes a part of one's character. We need to search for effective methods of teaching human rights at schools and in our homes.

One critique of the current approach to teaching basic human rights is that it ignores the responsibility side. It over-stresses the rights, and this has led to an imbalance of civic consciousness and human relationships. The message that is always put across to people is "fight for your rights, neglect your responsibilities." As much as we are saying that people must observe human rights, what is more important is that they must be responsible and

---

[11] See Dirkie Smit 'On the Impact of the Church in South Africa after the collapse of Apartheid Regime' in *A new day dawning African Christians living the gospel Essays in honor of Dr. J.J.(Hans) Visser* (eds.) Kwame Bediako, Mechteld Jansen, Jan van Butselaar, Aart Verburg, uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer. 2004:135

[12] See Etienne de Villiers, *Human Rights and Moral responsibility: their relationship in the present South African society* D1. 41. 2000:220.

[13] See Etienne de Villiers *Human Rights and Moral responsibility: their relationship in the present South Africa* D1. 41. 2000: 220.

know their duties. Etienne de Villiers raise what he calls the second comprehensive responsibility of the church, that is, the responsibility to promote respect for human rights and exercise moral responsibility in both church and society by addressing these prohibiting factors.[14] He does not agree with Stanley Hauerwas that churches should rather refrain from any direct social involvement in society because such involvement in modern liberal democracies would be counter-productive (Hauerwas, 1991:45-68). Etienne de Villiers believes that both the priestly and prophetic tasks of the church inevitably lead to such involvement.[15] To promote moral responsibility and human rights in society, church involvement in combating factors like poverty, unemployment and the disruption of family life is essential.

For the moral formation of church members and the community, Etienne de Villiers makes a number of suggestions for consideration to make a great impact on people's lives.[16] He raises extremely important issues that the church can use in its ministry towards moral formation. As we move to the next aspect of what the church could contribute, we need to develop sensitivity to the deep suffering experienced by human beings, especially those who suffer through ethnicity in situations where their natural rights are violated. As we have discussed in this paper, it has become clear that doing harmful things to others because they do not belong to a particular ethnic group is a violation of human rights, the natural rights of being loved, taken care of and treated with dignity that one deserves. A person who is deprived of these natural human rights feels socially rejected. All violations of human rights are violent acts because they involve depriving a person from fulfilling his or her needs. The churches can play an important role in strengthening human rights as well as the culture of moral responsibility in our communities. It is also the church's responsibility to express approval towards both moral responsibilities and human rights.

Going back to the future: *Turning to our values*

Here, the paper looks into the concept of the church as bearer of moral values. What moral values can the church incarcerate? The author will limit his discussion on the moral values

---

[14] See de Villiers. E, *Human Rights and Moral responsibility: their relationship in the present South African society*. D1. 41:2000:220.

[15] Ibid. D1.41: 2000:221.

[16] See Etienne de Villiers D1.41. 2000: 221-223. The points that he raises are as follows: Firstly**,** he argues that, Stanley Hauerwas, as well as other theologians who stress the importance of virtue ethics, have taught that normal practices like worship, prayer, religious education, Bible study and charity have a very strong influence on moral formation of church members. These practices for him must not be taken for granted as they will lead to a positive moral formation. He encourages churches to strive to utilize the potential of worship and other church practices creatively to strengthen their members' capacity to check moral responsibly. Secondly, he emphasizes the fact that South African churches should have the courage to confront openly immoral behaviour by their members, including negative attitudes, beliefs and values they adhere to that contribute to lack of moral responsibility. He finds it extremely important that these negative attitudes, beliefs and values should not only be criticized, but that members should also be given pastoral guidance to repentance to more constructive attitudes, beliefs and values and to a morally responsible life-style. Thirdly, he raises the fact that attention to the formation of moral virtues does not suffice. Rather, it is important to equip church members with the skills of moral discernment that would enable them to take morally right decisions on their own. Lastly, he argues that people who have no hope for the future are much more exposed to the temptation to act in a morally irresponsible way. Once more, according to him, it is of pivotal importance that South African churches convey effectively the Christian message of hope and its meaning in the South African society.

that can assist in terms of addressing the structural causes of ethnicity as a challenge and a threat to our communities to three values i.e. the significance of *ubuntu* acceptance and respect. These three values will be discussed briefly in line with the topic.

This final section endeavors to demonstrate the ethical response to conflict as a result of ethnicity learning from indigenous African moral values. A need for moral regeneration alone is not enough. The next step is something deeper that we can learn from, and that is what is called African ethics. Like any other community, Africans have been wrestling with moral issues related to every aspect of their lives for a long time. A well-known South African advocate for African theology, Bonganjalo, argues that African concepts of morality are reflected in idioms and special sayings and rituals which seek to generate moral integrity.[17] African ethics are believed to be part of moral formation and from that we can identify, a few possible and popular convictions and beliefs for Africans that constitute part of moral formation, as well as transformation and reconstruction in the context of ethnicity. In demonstrating that, this section focuses on the significance of *ubuntu,* embracing the value of acceptance and restoring *ukuhlonipha-respect.* These are discussed in the context of combating ethnicity and trying to find out how they can be of help in transforming our communities.

The significance of *Ubuntu*

This section attempts to consider how the concept of *ubuntu* can help us in terms of reshaping our communities. According to Ramose, *ubuntu*, as a concept and experience, is linked epistemologically to *umntu,* 'the person'*.* He further argues that on the basis of this link, *umuntu* posits *ubuntu* as its basic normative category of ethics.[18] One of the great popular philosophers in South Africa, Augustine Shutte, has done a thorough study of the concept of *ubuntu.* He tried to link two different traditions of ethical thinking, that of the European and the African. For him, *ubuntu* is the name for the acquired quality of humanity, that is, the characteristic of a fully developed person and the community with others. He further argues that it comprises values, attitudes, feelings, relationships and activities.[19]

Bonganjalo Goba contends that "*ubuntu* provides character-centred judgements that a person is or a character that is good or bad."[20] Therefore, this means that one's morality is categorized and judged according to his or her behaviour. Desmond Tutu's definition of the concept of *ubuntu* is derived from the expression: *'Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu,* 'A person is a person because of others'*.'*[21] What does this say to us as a nation? It means that irrespective of our cultural backgrounds and ethnic groups, we still need one another.

---

[17] See Goba B 'The Norms of *Ubuntu* and *Ukuhlonipha* in African ethics', in *Perspectives on Ubuntu A Tribute to Fedsem*, (eds.) M. Khabela and Z.C. Mzoneli 1998:82. Fedsem is the abbreviation of Federal Theological Seminary that used to be at the University of Fort Hare and later moved to Pietermaritzburg. It is where ministers of different denominations of the mainline churches were trained and prepared for ministry. Black students dominated the institution and the teaching staff was multi-racial.

[18] See Ramose B.M. 'The Ethics of ubuntu' in *Philosophy from Africa*, 2nd edition, (eds.) by Coetzee P.H. and Roux A.P.J. 2002:325.

[19] See Shutte, *Ubuntu An Ethic for a New South Africa*. 2001:31

[20] See Bonganjalo Goba 'The norms of ubuntu and ukuhlonipha in African Ethics' in *A Tribute to Fedsem*, 1998:86

[21] See Michael Battle's 'The Ubuntu theology of Desmond Tutu' in *Archbishop Tutu: Prophetic Witness in South Africa.* 1229:2003

There is no man that can live in isolation. We must learn from one another, we must share our resources and we must also understand that our development depends upon others. Our success in life is determined by how we relate to others. In his presidential address, a popular church leader of the Methodist church and a theologian, Khoza Mgojo, uses the concept of *ubuntu.* In his understanding of the concept he is convinced that there are two ways of living i.e. the way of *ubuntu* and the behaviour, which is not *ubuntu.* In his definition of the concept, he asserts that:

> "It is *Ubuntu* to love and care for others. It is *ubuntu* to act kindly towards others. It is *ubuntu* to be hospitable. It is *ubuntu* to be just and fair. It is *ubuntu* to be compassionate and to help those in distress. It is *ubuntu* to be truthful and honest so that people know that one's word is his/her honour. It is *ubuntu* to have good morals"[22]

Botman, writing in a post-apartheid context and having reflected on Mgojo's address, suggests that we should recapture this concept of *ubuntu* as an ethical concept that serves as a guiding star on our journey.[23] We must also take this concept of *ubuntu* as an ethical concept that can guide us as we travel the road towards transforming communities.

Without any doubt, the concept of *ubuntu* has a tremendous impact in shaping our moral consciousness. It is not perceived to be embracing *ubuntu* to act violently towards others, especially in conflicts caused by ethnicity. Those who are involved in such acts have obviously lost the sense of *ubuntu.* The character of a person is shaped by the community, specifically by one's family. What you do in an African community reflects on the family as well as your background. For instance, if a person does something bad, people will always ask a question *ngumntwana kabani lo?* Meaning, 'whose child is this?' Or they will say *"waze walihlazisa igama lakowethu"*, which can literally be translated as: you have insulted the integrity of your family.

When a person is doing well, is behaving well or in other words, is virtuous, people will say *unobuntu* meaning that he/she demonstrates *ubuntu* qualities or as the opposite for that, people will say *sisilwanyana* meaning his/her behaviour is sub-human. *Ubuntu* can be associated with being and doing. This can refer to one's behaviour, character and actions. In order to change the situation, we must instil and revive *ubuntu* in our people.

The value of Acceptance

The church needs to assist people to make a shift in their worldview of individualism to the world of acceptance in order to live a communal life. Stop judging and marginalizing people based on their backgrounds, the language they speak and cultural backgrounds. Assist them to remove all the hindrances that block them from accepting one another. The value of acceptance can play a vital role in uniting the nations. That alone will create a strong and viable society, society that can be able to change its own circumstances because they are able to learn from the others. The value of acceptance creates some sense of belonging. Belonging does not have any limitations, it means that you have a proper place; you become a part of that particular society and have full membership. If

---

[22] See Mgojo, Presidential address, 1993:1
[23] See Botman H.R. 1993:35.

you belong, that alone grants you access to resources of that particular society. Ethnicity can be dangerous because of its exclusivity.

Mutunga writes in support of this notion of acceptance that if someone is accepted in a particular community, he/she finds social identity, economic security, political stability and religious fulfillment. He further says in traditional Africa, life either holds together or falls apart[24]. As much as we acknowledge the existence of selfishness amongst Africans, but in traditional African settings, there is no place for individualism.

As we conclude this argument on the value of acceptance, I want to conclude it by challenging the religious communities to encourage their affiliates to embrace this value. Family, clan tribes or nationalities are understood to be the criteria for acceptance; therefore, they should be used likewise - not for rejection and undermining others. Mutunga argues that if these institutions are not used as criteria for acceptance, therefore consequences will be nepotism, tribalism, regionalism and racism, respectively[25]. In other words, those who do not belong will be marginalized because they do not belong to the circles of the privileged group. As the churches in Africa and elsewhere, there is a need to face up to the reality of acceptance.

The value of *Ukuhlonipha* Respect

This is the second value that the church and other religious bodies will have to inculcate in our communities as one form of combating the practices of ethnicity. The practices is always marginalizing those who do not belong to the opposite ethnic group, victimizing those who do not subscribed to the opposite culture. This will also break down the demon of nepotism. Nepotism is the demon that is prevalent in all the institutions. It also contributes to the level of high rate of unemployment that exacerbates poverty. Those who qualify in terms of skills are not considered and preference is given to those who belong.

Ukuhlonipha means respect as a form of moral obligation. *Ukuhlonipha* is still within the tradition of ethics of virtue that is typical of the African approach to ethics and it is an important moral category. For Africans respect is not limited. One respects the living and the dead, the elderly and the young. A widely known African ethicist, Bujo, concurs with the claim that as Africans we respect the living and the dead.[26] His starting point for respect for the elderly, the living and the dead is from the origin of life from God Himself. It flows in a hierarchical order. At the peak are the ancestors, who are followed by the elders of the community. Lesiba Teffo, addressing the question of respect for elders in his article 'Moral Renewal and African Experience(s)' says: "the notion of respect for the elders in typical African society is not uncommon and is another sound foundation for a healthy relation amongst people."[27] This is fast losing its significance because of the collapse of traditional values within our families and communities.

---

[24] See Mutunga S.M. "Towards A Wa Kwethu without Strangers" *In Tribalism and Ethnicity* (ed.)
Bucanyori E. A. The AEA Theological and Christian Training Educational Commission Monishi Kenya 1979:9
[25] See Mutunga S.M. 1989:18
[26] See Bujo B. *The ethical dimension of community, The African model and the dialogue between North and South,* 1997:197.
[27] See Lesbian Tiff in *African Renaissance* (ed.)by Makgoba, WM 1999: 158.

In most relationships, marriages and homes, there is no more *ukuhloniphana* meaning respect for one another. Men these days do not respect their wives, yet the bible teaches us that men should respect their wives. Such lack of respect leads to bad behaviour such as the violation of other people's rights. In an African context *ukuhlonipha* is more on the basis of a relationship with others. This is why it is always associated with respect first and foremost, to one's elders. As Africans' we are obligated to respect *abantu abadala* (the elderly people)*.* All that is taking place today means that we do not have respect for our elderly people anymore, because if we had respect for them we would not hear of such acts of violence.

Among other things we need today is what Goba suggests, namely "to find new relevance in our contemporary society, the moral values."[28] If we want to transform our communities it is obvious that there will be a need to revive the deeper meaning of *ukuhlonipha* and that is respect for life in its totality. The moral values of *ukuhlonipha* in African ethics can provide us with some insights in our attempt to address some of our current problems in our communities. For Bujo, respect is not restricted to the elderly but affects all people, every human being, including the stranger who does not belong to the clan.[29] In the light of the above statement the question is how can the value of respect assist on challenge of ethnicity that face and confronts us?

Conclusion

The paper has shown the impact of ethnicity in our community. It has demonstrated the origins of ethnicity and how politics have played part in constructing ethnic groups. The paper also outlined the causes and consequences of ethnicity. Throughout the last section of the discussions the paper clearly emphasized that the church still has the role to play in our communities. Some proposals are being made that the church use as a model in its attempt to eradicate ethnicity. Three values are discussed in the paper as way-forward, the significance of *ubuntu*, the value of acceptance and the value of *ukuhlonipha*-respect. Therefore, this paper proposes that on a religious perspective we can inculcate values and be firm on our religious teachings especially Christian principles in our attempt to remedy the social ills of our societies.

References

Anderson, G. H. J.J. & Bonk, R.T. (1999). Coote Dictionary of African Christian Biography. This article is reproduced from the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Jan. 99, Vol. 23, Issue 1, 26-32, eds. Available at: www.dacb.org/stories/southafrica/legacy

Battle, M. (1996). '*The ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu in Archbishop Tutu: Prophetic witness in South Africa (eds)*. Johannesburg: Davis Philips Publishers.

Bekker, S. (2001), Identities and ethnicity. In shifting African identities. Human Science Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa.

---

[28] See Goba. B, 'The Norms of *ubuntu* and *ukuhlonipha* in African Ethics,' in *Perspectives on Ubuntu, A tribute to Fedsem,* 1998:91.
[29] See Bujo E. 1997: 99.

Beyers N, (1996). *The Church, transition and transformation in South Africa*. Studies and reports by the Ecumenical Foundation of South Africa, Institute for Theological & Interdisciplinary Research

Botman H.R. (1993)*. Discipleship as Transformation? Towards a Theology of transformation.* University of the Western Cape doctoral thesis. South Africa: University of the Western Cape.

Bujo, B. (1997). *The ethical Dimension of Community, the African model and the dialogue between North and South.* Pauline publications Africa Kenya.

Bujo, B. (2003). *Foundations of an African Ethics: Beyond the universal claim of Western Morality*. Kenya: Pauline publications Africa.

Giddens, A. (1989). *Sociology The textbook in the nineties*. United Kingdom: Polity press.

De Villiers, E. (2003). In Scripture*. Theoretical framework from dealing with issues of Public Morality,* Vol. No.82. University of Stellenbosch. South Africa.

Goba, B. (1998). 'The Norms of *Ubuntu* and *Ukuhlonipha* in African ethics', in *Perspectives on Ubuntu a Tribute to Fedsem*, (eds.) M. Khabela and Z.C. Mzoneli, 82.

Hastings, A. (1997), *The Construction of Nationhood, Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge University Press, USA.

Isaack, F.J. (2002). 'Justice and healing in families' in the *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* (eds). Vol 4.

Koopman, N. (2003). 'Some comments on Public Theology today' in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* Vol no.117 November (ed). School of Theology University of Natal.

Koopman, N.(2005a). 'Theology and the fulfilment of Social and Economic rights. Some theoretical considerations'. in *Theories of Social & economic justice*, Van der Walt A (ed.), Stellenbosch: Sunmedia Publication.

Koopman, N. (2005b). 'After ten years. Public theology in post-apartheid South Africa'. *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif*, Deel 46 Nommers 1&2 Maart & Junie.

Kotzé H. (1997). Culture, Ethnicity and Religion: South African perceptions of Social Identity. In Occasional Paper, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa.

Mbiti, J. (1977). 'Christianity and African culture' in *Journal of theology for South Africa*. Issue of September (ed.) de Gruchy J. Cape Town: University of Cape Town printing.

Mgojo, K. (1993). SACC 'Presidential address' unpublished paper.

Mnyandu, M, (1998). *In perspectives on ubuntu, a tribute for Fedsem*. Mayibuye I-Africa series, (eds). Khabela G.M. and Mzoneleli C.Z. Publishers.

Pharos Journal of Theology ISSN 2414-3324 online Volume 98 - (2017) Copyright: ©2017
Open Access- Online @ http//: www.pharosjot.com

Mutunga, S.M. (1979). "Towards A Wa Kwethu without Strangers" *In Tribalism and Ethnicity* (ed.) Bucanyori E. A. The AEA Theological and Christian Training Educational Commission Monishi Kenya.

Ramose, B.M. (2002). *The Ethics of ubuntu in Philosophy from Africa*. (eds) Coetzee P.H. and Roux, A.P.J. Cape Town: David Philips Publishers.

Shutte, A. (2001). *Ubuntu: An ethic for a new South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

Smit, D.J. (2004). 'The impact of the church in South Africa after the collapse of the apartheid Regime' In *A new day dawning*, *African Christian living the gospel, Essays in honour of DR. J.J. (Hans) Visser* (eds) Kwame Bediako, Mechteld Jansen, Jan Van Butselaar and Aart Verburg. Vetgevery Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer.

Teffo, L. (1999). 'Moral Renewal and African experience(s)' *in African Renaissance* (ed). Makgoba, W.M. Johannesburg: David Philis Publishers.