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## ***Experiencing de facto Racial Residential Segregation in Urban South Africa: An African Refugee's Auto-ethnography<sup>1</sup>***

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Residential racial segregation globally and in South Africa is an extensively studied subject; however, little is known about how Apartheid-era legacies of spatial racial segregation in post-Apartheid South Africa are experienced by non-White refugees in urban areas. I address this lacuna by reflecting on my own lived experiences of residing and interacting within segregated all-Black neighbourhood in inner-city Pretoria. Drawing on my daily experiences as a 'Black' African refugee with *de facto* racial segregation, I argue that historical racial residential segregation in South Africa not only affects the South African population but non-White African refugees are also impacted by the structures and residues of Apartheid urban racial segregation geographies.

**Keywords:** Auto-ethnography, racial segregation, South Africa, refugees, colonialism, apartheid, neighbourhoods.

### **Introduction**

This article presents an autoethnographic narrative of my own lived experience<sup>2</sup> with *de facto* racial segregation as a 'Black'<sup>3</sup> African refugee<sup>4</sup> in a predominantly Black urban neighbourhood in post-Apartheid South Africa. I recount the ways in which past Apartheid-era legacies of racial residential segregation<sup>5</sup> affect and colour my day-to-day experiences and social interactions. I argue that historical patterns of residential racial segregation not only structure the experiences of the South African population but newly arrived Black African refugees are also affected by Apartheid-era legacies of spatial and social segregation.

During Apartheid, immigration to South Africa from the African continent was largely labour related, linked largely to the mining industry and it was characterised by temporariness, as African migrants were impermanently settled there. Low-skilled African migrants from Lesotho, Mozambique and other neighbouring countries were imported to work in the mines and other sectors in various parts of South Africa (Neocosmos 2006). As the Apartheid government had instituted a system of racial classification and race-based racial residential segregation, most African labour migrants resided in racially designated areas for Black Africans (Neocosmos 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> I am a recognised refugee in South Africa. For the purpose of this paper, the word 'refugees' is used as a generic term encompassing asylum seekers, recognised refugees and economic migrants in Sunnyside, Pretoria.

<sup>3</sup> In the present discussion, the categories 'Black', 'White', 'Coloured' & 'Indian', and the concept of 'race' are understood as socio-political constructions and do not refer to biological or objective classifications. Except at first mention, the racial categories are not placed within quotation marks.

<sup>4</sup>When I refer to my racial identity as 'Black', I refer to the race-consciousness that I developed in South Africa while living amongst fellow Africans in a racially segregated neighbourhood.

<sup>5</sup> Within the context of this paper, 'residential segregation', or 'segregation', is defined as 'the separation of racial groups in urban space' (Boustan 2013: 4). Regarding the post-apartheid era, I refer to *de facto* segregation rather than *de jure* segregation.

After the formal onset of democracy in 1994, the nature of African immigration changed. Thousands of African migrants arrived in South Africa in search of protection or to better their lives. Today, a large number of African refugees and migrants tend to reside among Black South Africans in inner cities or smaller towns (Simone 2004).

Much of the literature on refugees in post-Apartheid South Africa is focused on topics such as xenophobia (Gordon 2016, Landau 2010, Langa and Kiguwa 2016, Madue 2015, Matsinhe 2011, Ndinda and Ndhlovu 2016, Neocosmos 2006), citizenship (Amisi and Ballard 2005), migratory journey (Araia 2005), human rights (Landau 2005, 2006), well-being (Greyling 2016) and racialisation (Vandeyar 2012). Migration scholars in South Africa have studied urban refugees in South Africa with a focus on their protection (Landau 2006), wellbeing (Greyling and Campus 2008), integration strategies (Smit 2015) and entrepreneurship (Crush et al. 2017). The predominant focus of scholarship on racial segregation in South Africa is centred on the experience of South Africans with historical residues of racial residential segregation. This body of work addresses *de facto* racial segregation in the post-Apartheid era (Christopher 2001, Schensul and Heller 2010), school segregation (Hunter 2010), social segregation (Durrheim and Dixon 2010) and occupation-related segregation (Gradin 2018). Other scholars have examined the effects of historical Apartheid-era structural racial segregation on South African society in the post-Apartheid period (Christopher 2001, Seekings 2010). There is little discussion on the experiences of non-South African and non-White foreign communities with racial segregation in the country. Drawing on my everyday lived experiences as an African refugee, I build on this scholarship by recounting my everyday encounters with *de facto* segregation in urban South Africa and addressing the influence that the legacies of racial residential segregation have had on my experiences as a non-White refugee.

The article is organised as follows. The next section defines the concept of racial residential segregation. This is followed by a discussion on patterns of racial residential segregation in South Africa. A literature study on immigration and racial residential segregation is presented. Then, I outline key elements in racial residential theory. I discuss autoethnography, which is the research approach in the present discussion, and follow that with a narrative of my first-hand lived experience with racial residential segregation in South Africa. The last section concludes the article.

### **Conceptualising Racial Residential Segregation**

The concept of 'racial residential segregation' refers to the ways in which metropolitan/urban neighbourhoods or areas exhibit racially-delineated demographic characteristics (Boustan 2013). The phenomenon of racial residential segregation is present in countries where society is stratified racially, such as the United States of America and South Africa. Racial residential segregation may be imposed by the State in the form of laws and policies or it can manifest as a result of individual actions (Boustan 2013). Racially segregated urban areas do not host multi-

racial or multi-ethnic communities; they are characterised by mono-racial social groups such as all-Black or all-White areas (Freeman 2002).

In the case of contemporary South Africa, the concept of ‘racial residential segregation’ refers to a *de facto* segregation in which historical residues of Apartheid-era residential segregation gave rise to metropolitan areas that are still racially segregated three decades after the abolishment of *de jure* segregation. At present, residential areas or neighbourhoods in South Africa are still racially segregated: there are still Coloured areas, Black areas, White areas or Indian areas (Christopher 2001, Seekings 2010). Therefore, by using the expression ‘racial residential segregation’ in the post-Apartheid South African context, I do not refer to state-sanctioned segregation (*de jure* segregation) but to the historical legacies of *de facto* (informal segregation) population settlement.

### **Patterns of Racial Residential Segregation in South Africa**

Racial residential segregation in South Africa was historically imposed by White European settlers to isolate themselves socially and spatially from other non-White groups and to create and maintain accessible and controllable cheap African labour outside city centres, on the verges of cities and towns (Christopher 1990, Maylam 1990). Before the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the independent states in the region — namely, the Cape Colony, Natal Colony, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State — instituted racial segregation. The Transvaal and the Orange Free State Republics legally allocated citizenship and land ownership exclusively to Whites, while excluding non-Whites (Christopher 1990: 421). In the Natal Colony, Blacks and indentured Indians were residentially segregated and were allowed to enter urban areas only for work (Christopher 1990: 426).

In the Cape Colony, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the number of Africans increased in Cape Town, White Europeans campaigned for the city council to remove Africans from the city and establish ‘locations’ or ghetto-like residential sites around the city. The government eventually developed residential areas for Blacks outside the city such as the establishment of Ndabeni settlement (Maylam 1990: 61). The inhabitants of Ndabeni were later removed to the Langa and Nyanga ‘locations’ and Ndabeni became an industrial zone amidst White suburbs.

With the discovery of diamond in Kimberley and gold around Johannesburg in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, racial residential segregation was implemented in the form of compounds that were built to house and control African labourers working on the mines (Maylam 1990).

After the different states were consolidated under a central state, the Union of South Africa in 1910, the central government started passing laws that would residentially and socially segregate Africans from White Europeans. In 1923, the central government passed legislation called ‘The Natives Urban Areas Act No 21 of 1923’, which was to become the blueprint for Apartheid segregation. It authorised the provincial states to create residential settlements outside cities for Africans and limit their presence in cities (Christopher 1990, Maylam 1990).

The major cities in South Africa became predominantly White, while Black South Africans were forced to live either in informal settlements on the periphery of cities or in Africans-only residential spaces called ‘locations’. For example, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban were officially proclaimed racially segregated areas respectively in 1924, in 1926 and in the 1930s (Maylam 1990: 66). As Maylam noted, during this period:

‘Segregation was gradually introduced as certain sections of municipal areas were proclaimed as “white”, compelling all non-exempted Africans and those not living on their employers’ premises to move into a municipal location or hostel’ (1990: 66).

The period between the emergence of the Union of South Africa (1910) and the onset of Apartheid (1948) is referred to as ‘segregation’, where various laws of racial residential segregation were passed by the White-only government (Christopher 2001).

After the start of Apartheid in 1948, the government institutionalised and policed racial residential segregation by passing segregation laws and forcibly removing Africans to designated areas away from urban settings. For example, in 1954, the Apartheid government passed the Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950, thereby starting the construction outside cities of numerous townships designated for Africans (Christopher 1990, Maylam 1990). Towns and cities were designated for Whites while Black Africans and other racial groups such as Coloured and Indians were forcibly relocated to the peripheries of towns and cities (Christopher 1990). Following the Group Areas Act, in the 1950s, Blacks residing in Sophia Town, Johannesburg, were removed and resettled to the margins of the city; Coloured communities were forced out of District Six — an inner-city residential area in Cape Town — and resettled in the Cape Flats, further away from the city centre. Africans living in the cities and towns had to carry a pass when they wanted to stay there. Even though legal segregation and pass laws were formally abandoned in the late 1980s, residential areas became largely mono-racial formations in the post-Apartheid era (Maylam 1990).

As Goldberg (2002) notes, it was the Apartheid state’s preoccupation with maintaining and protecting a ‘homogenous’ and ‘pure’ White racial group that prompted it to resort to residential racial segregation thereby managing ethnic and racial heterogeneity in South Africa (Goldberg 2002). This segregationist policy created the formation of formal and informal segregation of South African society along racial lines. Formally, we know, South Africa became a democracy in 1994 and White minority rule ended in the country. However, *de facto* racial segregation still writs large across the country’s residential landscape (Seekings 2010). The formerly Whites-only city centres are now predominantly Black. For example, there is a negligible, if any, presence of Whites in the centres of cities like Johannesburg and Pretoria. This is because as Africans increasingly settled in city centres, ‘the White population, conditioned by decades of segregationist thinking’ moved out of city centres to self-segregate into gated communities and suburbs (Christopher 1990: 438).

Pretoria, the geographical focus of this article, was a formerly White-only Apartheid city. In the post-Apartheid period, its composition has drastically changed; most of the

neighbourhoods in the Pretoria CBD are now predominantly inhabited by Black South Africans and refugees from various African countries. In neighbourhoods such as Sunnyside and Pretoria Central, where I have resided for over ten years, the presence of Whites, Coloured and Indians is indeed negligible.

### **Immigration and Racial Residential Segregation**

Scholars of race and racial segregation in South Africa (Christopher 2001, Maylam 1990, Seekings 2010) have extensively studied historical and contemporary patterns of racial residential segregation, but have paid little attention to how Black African refugees experience the legacies of residential segregation in the post-Apartheid setting. Immigration and racialised settlement patterns are intimately interlinked phenomena in racially stratified host societies with histories of racial residential segregation. Settlement patterns of immigrant groups in racially structured receiving countries have been examined. Many studies and theories on the interface between immigrants and their racialised residential settlement patterns have focused largely on the American context (Freeman 2002, Kyle 1999, Massey and Denton 1989, Scopilliti and Iceland 2008, Waters 1999). Researchers argue that immigrants' racial identity and socioeconomic status largely shape where they settle and with which racial group they interact (Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993).

Many scholars note that African immigrants in the USA tend to reside and interact among Black Americans. For instance, in an earlier study, Massey and Denton (1989) examined residential assimilation patterns of dark-skinned and light-skinned immigrants from Latin America in the USA. They found that immigrants of African-descent tend to settle in all-Black residential areas while those of European-descent reside in White neighbourhoods. Latinos of African ancestry avoid all-White residential spaces in order to stay away from White prejudice and racism. In a similar line, immigration scholars such as Portes and Zhou (1993) found that African immigrants of low socioeconomic status resided among their African American counterparts in urban areas. An empirical study by Kyle (1999) found that Black immigrants of West Indies origin in New York City resided in racially segregated ethnic enclaves and Black neighbourhoods and, like their African American counterparts, were socially distanced from White Americans due to their racial background. Freeman's work (2002) produced similar findings, as did Waters' (1999) on Caribbean immigrants of African descent in New York City, and Kasinitz and Vickerman's (2001) study of Jamaican immigrants in New York City found that Black immigrants lived in close proximity to Black Americans segregated from White Americans. Scopilliti and Iceland (2008) further corroborated these findings on Afro-Latin Americans and many other immigrants of African descent in America.

In most cases, immigrants tend to create ethnic enclaves in urban areas to aid them in their adjustment endeavours and to protect themselves from discrimination or racism by members of the host communities that are hostile towards immigrants. To put it briefly, in countries with long histories of racial segregation, prejudice and discrimination, such as the USA and South Africa, immigrants of African-descent tend to reside and interact largely among

nationals of African-descent. The social class position of African immigrants also shapes their residential settlement patterns; due to their low socioeconomic position, many immigrants of African-descent are residentially concentrated in ghetto-like urban environments (Freeman 2002, Kyle 1999, Portes and Zhou 1993, Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001).

### **Residential Segregation Theory**

Scholars of race and racial segregation have formulated models to explain the ways in which racial residential segregation plays out in racially stratified societies. Such models attempt to explain the differential spatial settlement patterns of racially defined social groups in societies where race is a dominant form of social stratification (Boustan, 2013, Christopher 2001, Maylam 1990, Seekings 2010).

Boustan (2013) proposes five types and causes of racial residential segregation; namely, state-imposed segregation, collective White mobilisation, individual White decisions, Black self-segregation and socioeconomic factors. In state-sanctioned racial residential segregation, the state passes and implements laws that establish separate residential areas and amenities for members of different racial groups. Historical South Africa and the USA exemplify this type. In the case of collective White mobilisation, whites designate Whites-only residential neighbourhoods through racially restrictive covenants, by refusing to rent or sell property to non-Whites in their areas. Racial residential segregation also occurs due to individual actions of Whites, who decide to move out of neighbourhoods when there is an increase in the rate of Black settlement in previously White-only residential areas. Racial residential segregation may also occur as a result of Blacks preferring to reside among members of their own race to avoid prejudice and discrimination. Residential segregation can also be driven by the socioeconomic status of a racial group. Due to a long history of discriminatory policies, disadvantaged Blacks in the USA and South Africa tend to reside in poorly resourced areas isolated from Whites.

The analytical concept of racial residential segregation and its various strands conceptualised by Boustan (2013) are useful in making sense of my lived experiences as a non-White African refugee with racial residential segregation in a racially segregated all-Black urban neighbourhood.

### **The Autoethnographic Approach**

An author employing autoethnography reflects on his or her own lived experience (Ellis et al. 2010, Méndez 2013). Autoethnography ‘allows researchers to draw on their own experiences to understand a particular phenomenon’ (Méndez 2013: 280). It is a strand of the interpretive paradigm that in recent years has been used extensively by researchers from various disciplines to understand and analyse the workings of culture, society and politics in shaping their everyday experiences (Bochner 2001, Ellis et al. 2010). As Ellis and Bochner (2000: 739) note, autoethnography connects the ‘personal to the cultural’, which is achieved when researchers make sense of their own lived experiences in light of the broader socio-cultural contexts that frame their everyday lived world (Ellis et al. 2010, Méndez 2013). Reed-Danahay describes

autoethnography ‘as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context’ (1997: 9).

When referring to their own lived experiences, auto-ethnographers use singular first-person pronouns as a style of writing, such as ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘my’, and the focus of their writing is on recalled past and current experiences of a social phenomenon (Ellis et al. 2010). As Ellis et al. (2010: 12) note, auto-ethnographers ‘may use first-person to tell a story typically when they personally observed or lived through an interaction’. Further, Ellis et al. (2010: 5) suggest that in conducting an autoethnographic narrative, ‘an author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences’. In engaging with autoethnographic research, one does not merely describe one’s lived experiences but relates them to existing research and theory on the social phenomena they are experiencing. As Ellis et al. (2010: 9) note, researchers give meaning to their lived experiences by ‘[...] comparing and contrasting [the researcher’s] personal experience against existing research’.

I employ a qualitative autoethnographic approach to reflect on my own everyday experience with racial residential segregation in post-Apartheid South Africa. I link my everyday lived experiences with racial residential segregation to broader historical, cultural and social factors that inform and shape my lived reality. And I connect my everyday experiences to the relevant literature on migration and racial segregation.

The subjective (autoethnographic) experiences of racialisation and racial segregation are well documented in the literature. For example, notable non-White race scholars such as W.E.B. du Bois (1903), who lived through the Jim Crow era in the USA, and Patricia Williams (1991), who experienced various forms of racial exclusion in the post-Civil Rights era, have documented the ways in which structural racism and segregation affected their lived experiences. Fanon (1967), another prominent race scholar of African descent, also chronicled his lived experiences with racism and racial exclusion in a White majority France.

Scholars have used autoethnography to reflect on their experiences with racial exclusion and segregation. For example, Johnson (2013) recounts his experiences as an African American with racial exclusion in a school setting in the USA. He notes that in the USA, a country with a long history of racial segregation, racial exclusion continues to today despite the repeal of *de jure* spatial segregation. Jennings (2014), a Black American, also describes his lived experiences with residential and school racial segregation in contemporary USA society. Scholars of immigration have employed autoethnography to narrate their experiences of racialised exclusion in the host societies. For example, using autoethnography, Run (2012), a Sudanese refugee, shares his lived experience with racism and marginalisation in Australia driven by negative media portrayal of Africans as violent. Alatrash (2018) reports on experiencing racialised stigmatisation and exclusion from the Canadian White society, due to her Syrian origin, even though she was formally a Canadian citizen. Vidal-Ortiz (2004), a light-skinned Puerto Rican immigrant in the USA used autoethnography to narrate his encounters with racialisation in the USA, as his accent and origin marked him as ‘other’.

### **My Initial Encounters with Residential Segregation**

I originate from Eritrea, a country where social differentiation is based on ethno-linguistic membership rather than racial groups (Woldemikael 2005). There are nine officially recognised ethnic groups in the country; namely, Afar, Bilen, Hedareb, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre and Tigrinya. Social distinction between these groups is based on culture, not on phenotype or skin colour. I belong to the Tigrinya group, whose members exhibit a wide range of variation in skin colour and physical appearance (Woldemikael 2005). The Eritrean state does not collect data on race, as there are no racial groups in the country. Back in Eritrea, I never defined my identity by skin colour or physical appearance; I never had racial self-consciousness nor experienced racial residential segregation. My notion of group identity and membership was based on neighbourhood belonging, nationality and as Habesha.<sup>6</sup> When I arrived in South Africa as a refugee, I encountered the fact that it is a racially differentiated society where one's physical appearance means something. For example, the first thing I noticed about the big cities was how racially segregated residential areas were. I observed that the inner cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, which I frequented, were predominantly Black; I hardly saw other racial groups residing or socially interacting with Africans in those urban residential areas. For the first time, I became conscious of the fact that I was now a racialised subject and that my social networks and residence would be shaped by my racial identity.

Upon arrival in South Africa, I moved to Sunnyside, Pretoria, an urban area characterised by African refugees' ethnic (multi-ethnic) enclaves, where some of my friends and acquaintances from Eritrea were staying. I immediately came into contact with Eritrean and Ethiopian communities (the 'Habesha') in the neighbourhood. I also started interacting with other local African foreigners and some Black South Africans. As a Black African foreigner, the first thing I observed was that I found myself in an urban area that was predominantly Black. In those initial years, my everyday encounters with other non-Black racial groups were almost non-existent, as my daily life was situated within the all-Black neighbourhood of Sunnyside.

Before Sunnyside became an all-Black residential area, it was largely inhabited by White Afrikaners. When residential segregation was outlawed in the 1980s and White-minority rule ended in 1994, Black South Africans started settling in the neighbourhood. White residents then moved out, gradually giving rise to the transformation of the neighbourhood from an all-White into an all-Black urban residential setting. Today, only few elderly Whites are seen in the area and many are residents of the local nursing homes. Apart from that, I only saw Whites driving through Sunnyside.

Even though I had read and heard about racism and racial segregation in South Africa before I arrived, once there, I started experiencing racial segregation in my everyday life. I started developing race-consciousness as 'Black', due to my daily interactions with other fellow Africans in Sunnyside and gradually became accustomed to my new reality of living in a residentially and socially segregated urban neighbourhood.

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<sup>6</sup> Habesha is a pan-ethnic cultural identity claimed by mostly Tigrinya-speaking Eritreans and Tigrinya-Amharic- and Gurage-speaking Ethiopians.



## Living with Residential Segregation

The Sunnyside neighbourhood is largely residential but there are also businesses lining the busy Robert Sobukwe Street (formerly known as Esselen Street). There are predominantly multi-storey blocks of flats and the occupants are Black South Africans and African refugees. There are also few resident immigrants from India, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh running cell phone shops in the area. Along the Robert Sobukwe Street, there are ethnic restaurants, restaurant chains, butcheries, laundries, clothing stores, internet cafes, mobile phone shops, banks, private clinics, hair salons, convenience stores, liquor stores, pawn shops, sports betting sites and night clubs. There are also street vendors; Black South Africans and African refugees sell their merchandise side by side on the sidewalks, dealing in vegetables, cell phone covers, sweets, beads, second-hand wares such as shoes, electronics, clothes and beds. Some African refugees (mostly Malawians) are shoemakers and tailors.

Churches and mosques in Sunnyside are sites of social cohesion among Black South Africans and African foreigners. The mosque on Robert Sobukwe Street is located inside an office building; there, Black South Africans, Malawians, Senegalese, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Ethiopians, Somalis and South Asians come together to pray. African foreigners and Black South Africans account for the membership of multi-ethnic Christian churches, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission Church, the Sunnyside Seventh Day Adventist Church, the New Life City Church, the Prophecy, Healing and Deliverance Ministries, the Assemblies of God, and various other churches. I occasionally attend services at Apostolic Faith Mission Church, where the membership is almost entirely Black. There are also many ethnic churches in the area, such as those attended by Ethiopians where services are conducted in ethnic languages. It is common to see African evangelicals preaching the gospel on street corners and in the Jubilee Park, a small public park in the neighbourhood.

Sunnyside can be described as a melting pot of diverse African cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Black South Africans of various linguistic groups — isiZulu, IsiXhosa, isiNdebele, Tshivenda, Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho and SiSwati — live in the neighbourhood. African refugees from Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe also live there, alongside Black South Africans.

Most of us share apartments, as it is affordable to do so. It is indeed common in Sunnyside for people to advertise on street corners bedrooms for rent. The average monthly rent for a bedroom is 2,500 South African Rand (R),<sup>7</sup> while half-rooms are about R2,000 (about 116 USD). Black South Africans and African refugees often share a flat. I have shared both with Black South Africans and with African refugees of various nationalities.

The main shopping mall in Sunnyside, Sunny Park, is located in the midst of the neighbourhood and it is predominantly attended by local Black Africans. The fancy restaurants

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Rand is about 0.058 USD.

and pubs in Sunny Park, such as Cappello, Spur, Rhapsody and Wimpy are often visited by us Africans. Some Black South Africans refer to Sunnyside as ‘Lagos’ because of the large number of African refugees in the neighbourhood.

It is rare to see Whites, Coloured or Indian South Africans living or interacting with us Africans in the neighbourhood. This could be explained by the fact that they tend to concentrate in other areas around Pretoria. For instance, there is a large Coloured community in a township called Eersterus, about 15 Kms east of Pretoria, which was designated by the Apartheid government for Coloured people. There is also a large presence of Indian South Africans in a township southwest of Pretoria called Laudium, which was designated by the Apartheid state for Indians. White South Africans are largely concentrated in the nearby wealthy suburbs such as Lynwood, Waterkloof, Groenkloof and Brooklyn.

My lived experience with *de facto* racial residential segregation in Sunnyside testifies to the social reality in urban South Africa. This is still a racially divided society experiencing the historical residues of Apartheid-era social and residential segregation of social groups. Even though I come into contact with members of other population groups in the University where I work, these encounters are largely work-related and formal. Much of my personal life is spent around Black Africans in the spatially segregated urban neighbourhood where I reside and interact socially.

## **Discussion**

My experience with racial residential segregation did not occur as a result of state-sanctioned segregation or of collective White mobilisation (Boustan 2013), as such forms of segregation have been outlawed in South Africa. It appears to be due to individual White actions, Black self-segregation and socioeconomic factors. Individual White flight (Boustan 2013) from the Sunnyside neighbourhood occurred decades ago, and even after the formal repeal of Apartheid over twenty years ago, White South Africans still tend to avoid Black areas and self-segregate. The phenomenon of post-Apartheid *de-facto* racial residential segregation in urban Pretoria and particularly in Sunnyside can also be viewed through Goldberg’s concept of ‘racialised discourse’ (Goldberg 1993), whereby South African Whites tend to avoid Black areas as unsafe and undesirable due to a popular ‘racialised discourse’ long established among Whites about Black people.

Black self-segregation (Boustan 2013) also explains my experience of racial residential segregation. Like many middle-class Black South Africans and African refugees, I have chosen to live and interact among fellow Africans in the Sunnyside neighbourhood. My socio-economic status (Boustan 2013) has also shaped my experience with residential segregation, because it is affordable for me to rent an apartment in Sunnyside rather than move to suburbs where rents are higher. For me, as for the majority of Black Africans residing in Sunnyside, it is our relatively low socioeconomic status that has made us to inhabit affordable urban ghettos like Sunnyside. As Christopher noted, ‘[t]he lack of economic empowerment on the part of the vast majority of the African population is a major impediment to the process of desegregation’

(2001: 463). This resonates with the findings of AbdouMaliq Simone (2004) in inner-city Johannesburg, where African refugees, like the inner-city neighbourhoods in Pretoria and in other major South African cities, also tend to reside and interact with other fellow African refugees and Black South Africans. With the abolishment of Apartheid, many Whites fled inner cities and relocated to the outer suburbs as Black Africans increasingly settled in city centres, which are currently all-Black (Seekings 2010).

Scholars of racial segregation in South Africa also note that residential patterns in towns and cities in post-Apartheid South Africa continue to show past imprints of spatial and social segregation (Christopher 2001, Seekings 2010). With reference to the link between ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ processes, Prato and Pardo (2013: 100) argue that we need to be mindful of ‘the micro-level in its broader context and the effects that global processes have on the life of the single individual and of whole communities’. The phenomenon of racially segregated spaces in urban settings such as Sunnyside is not isolated; it is shaped by and linked to broader historical, economic and social factors. Meeting the point made by Prato and Pardo that urban anthropology ‘while based in a specific urban area, offer[s] an empirical understanding of the broader context’ (2013: 96; see also Pardo and Prato 2018), the lived reality of *de-facto* racial residential segregation in Sunnyside is linked to larger historical processes of formal and informal racial segregation.

My experience, as a Black African refugee resonates with patterns of *de facto* residential racial segregation in the USA. As I have noted earlier, empirical research in the USA show that immigrants of African-descent tend to reside and interact in residential areas that are largely inhabited by Black Africans, who are socially and spatially isolated from White Americans due to racism and their relatively low socioeconomic status (Crowder 1999, Freeman 2002, Kyle 1999, Massey and Denton 1989, Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001, Portes and Zhou 1993, Scopilliti and Iceland 2008, Waters 1999). Even though the USA and South Africa exhibit different histories and social demographics, they appear to converge on patterns of racial residential segregation in that Whites tend to live in affluent outer-city suburbs while Black Africans of low socioeconomic status inhabit inner city ghettos.

My own experience with racialisation also echoes with the experiences recounted by non-White scholars in racially stratified societies, such as the works mentioned earlier by W.E.B. du Bois (1903) — who reports on living in racially segregated USA society when White Americans segregated themselves from Black Americans whom they viewed as undesirable — and by Patricia Williams (1991) on her experience of racial exclusion in American society where White Americans tend to segregate themselves from African Americans. Similarly, other Black scholars such as Johnson (2013) and Jennings (2014) have documented living in racially segregated mono-racial spaces isolated from White America due to their racial background.

In the South African context, the interface between immigration and racial residential segregation is an overlooked phenomenon, even though Black African refugees in post-Apartheid South Africa experience *de facto* residential segregation.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have used an autoethnographic approach, sharing my everyday lived experience, as a Black African refugee, of residential segregation in an inner-city all-Black urban neighbourhood of Pretoria, South Africa. My daily experience of social and spatial segregation in post-Apartheid South Africa illustrates the durable effects of historical Apartheid-era laws and policies of social and residential segregation of various racial groups. Even though at present *de jure* segregation does not exist in South Africa, as anyone can reside anywhere in the country, *de facto* racial residential segregation writs large across cities and towns in the country. The majority of low-income Black African refugees reside in urban centres that are predominantly Black and socially and residentially isolated from other South African racial groups such as Whites, Indians and Coloured. Residential segregation for Black African refugees in South Africa is an everyday lived reality. Future studies may investigate further the everyday lived experiences of racial residential segregation for non-Black refugees in South Africa. It is also worth exploring the lived experiences of second-generation Black African refugees in South Africa with racial segregation.

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