



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

20 July 2021

‘Coloured’ men are more than a violent stereotype



Simone Peters

[Download image](#)

Photo: Je'nine May

People come to identify with where they live and are in turn are shaped by these places and spaces and shape those places and spaces too.

In her recently completed doctoral thesis “Researching Race, Space and Masculinities in Bishop Lavis: A Critical Ethnographic Study”, University of Cape Town (UCT) PhD graduate Simone Peters aimed to showcase more holistic and alternative narratives on Bishop Lavis, its community and ‘coloured’ identities and opens up a conversation about the complexities of race and place in post-apartheid South Africa, the legacy of the colonial and apartheid history on these communities and the resilience of these men and communities to persevere despite the massive challenges they face.

Her research encourages readers and scholars to think carefully about how they talk and write about race and the consequences of their work on these communities.

"My granny was forcibly displaced by the apartheid government from Goodwood Akkers to Bishop Lavis. Her whole life was disrupted but despite that, she raised her four children in the community. They all still reside there except for my mother. I wanted to share the story of my granny and many others like her that often go unheard. A story of pain, of loss, of resilience, community and hope. I wanted to show how colourful this community is, to show that crime is but one story. There are so many more that go ignored. I wanted to share the stories of 'coloured' men, who I often interacted with, who were not the stereotypes. I wanted to write alternative narratives about my people," shared Simone.

The pervasiveness of existing stereotypes about 'colouredness' continues to segregate the Cape Flats spaces where many 'coloureds' reside from more affluent spaces. Simone argued that more holistic narratives must be made available in academia, narratives that take seriously how participants talk about their communities, subjectivities and lived experiences.

Research involving 'coloured' men and communities has always painted these men as negative stereotypes: at risk, dangerous, gangsters, criminals and the list goes on. And yet 'coloured' communities and the men that navigate these spaces are much more than that.

During her research she found that the men of Bishop Lavis are aware that they are characterised as a homogeneous group and perceived in a negative way by other racial groups. "They shared how other races viewed 'coloured' men as thieves, murderers, and kidnappers. This evokes feelings of shame and regret and caused some of the men to experience ambivalence about being 'coloured'."

In their collective narrative, the men constructed a good and bad 'coloured', and on that spectrum, they stated that they were good 'coloured' men and gave stories of how they did not do those things others accuse them of doing. The men therefore positioned themselves as respectable 'coloureds' by distancing themselves from the bad 'coloureds' who do all those negative things.

Simone's research was intergenerational: she interviewed young and middle-aged men, as well as those over 65. She found that all three generations found being a provider to one's family an important trait of being a man. Not being able to provide made one less than a man.

Her research findings also contradicted other research done with young 'coloured' men, where gangsterism was glorified. The participants in her research all constructed gangsterism and violence as cowardly, and men who did either were constructed as bad men.

Speaking on her PhD journey Simone shared: "It has been great. Getting to work in this community, having their support, incorporating my family into academia was a really wonderful experience. I think that is why I finished my PhD in two years and six months because of the immense support and love showed to me by the community."

Simone has led a "colourful" life. Her parents divorced when she was just five years-old because her father drank a lot and was extremely abusive.

"My mother ended up raising four children on her own, on a police salary. So, our lives were anything but easy. At times we went to bed hungry, we were evicted from homes, we were homeless, we lived in homes without water and electricity. At times I was mocked because of my race, and the way I spoke."

Through her schooling journey she continued to be discriminated against and while at high school and later UCT she had her academic capabilities questioned. Being the only student of colour in a majority white class throughout her postgraduate studies was also a challenge.

“It was not an easy journey but I share this with people as an inspiration that we are not our circumstances. We owe it to ourselves to dream bigger. In my family I defied the odds by getting a degree and now my PhD. I am thankful to my extremely supportive supervisors Professor Floretta Boonzaier and Associate Professor Shose Kessi, who have been beyond amazing. My supportive family, partner and friends and God Almighty who carried me through this process.”

Simone’s research has contributed to providing ways of doing research that opens up possibilities for different narratives to emerge instead of using our questions to steer the research.

“If we are to progress into an Antiracist world, we need to change the narratives we tell. As researchers, we need to create platforms for multiple narratives to surface.”

Simone graduated with a PhD in Psychology on 15 July 2021.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Aamirah Sondag

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5427

Email: aamirah.sondag@uct.ac.za

Website: www.uct.ac.za