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2 Through a Decolonial Lens

Homonationalism in South Africa and the Cape Town Gay Pride Parade

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Introduction

After four hundred years of colonisation and fifty years of apartheid, post-colonial/apartheid South Africa is a country full of contradictions and tangible reminders of these histories, notably, racial capitalism that is imbricated within modernity/coloniality. Sylvia Tamale (2020) reminds us that coloniality as a notion is related to “colonialism but goes beyond the mere acquisition and political control of another country” (ibid., xiii). She adds that it has to be seen as an ideological system that “explains the long-standing patterns of power that resulted from European colonialism, including knowledge production and the establishment of social orders” (ibid., xiii). In South Africa, it is therefore the “invisible power structure that sustains colonial relations of exploitation and domination long after the end of direct colonialism” (ibid., xiii). These continuities, which can be interpreted as a colonial archive (Wekker 2016), manifest and proliferate in various spheres of life. For the South African context, the capitalism order has revolved around race and social inequality, both of which constitute racial capitalism.¹ Racial capitalism was theorised in South Africa by anti-apartheid Marxist and liberal scholars in the 1970s who saw apartheid as a direct consequence of capitalism. South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose, who unpacks racial capitalism as capitalist formalisation through land dis-possession, posits that:

The close connection between land and life [has] meant that by losing land to the conqueror, the African thereby lost a vital resource to life. This loss was aggravated by the fact that, by virtue of the so-called right of conquest, the African was compelled to enter into the money economy. Thus the so-called right of conquest introduced an abrupt and radical change in the life of the African. From the condition of relative peace and reasonable certainty to satisfy the basic necessities of life, the African was suddenly plunged into poverty. There was no longer the reasonable certainty to meet the basic necessities of life unless money was available [...] In this way, the African’s right to life ... was violated.

(Ramosé 2002, 2)

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The colonial archive has therefore meant dispossession through land and livelihoods of the formally colonised, which has fostered social inequalities. Therefore, in Ramose’s argument, we can read the mutual dependency between capitalism and racism as part of the colonial archive and dispossession, all imbricated and playing out along the grammars of gender, sexuality and ableism when intersectionality is applied. What is being discussed here, then, forms the basis of coloniality in South Africa, which I go on to interrogate in this chapter. Even though the manifestations of coloniality in South Africa are vast, I will focus on three interconnected examples that filter into homonationalism in South Africa, namely: spatial apartheid, socio-economic inequality and the inaccessible liberties of the constitution for African same-sex intimacies.²

First of all, physical geography is a persistent reminder of apartheid’s continuing archive in South Africa. These stark reminders and symptoms of apartheid endure, from impoverished townships, the poor condition of schools, and high levels of violence, to the fact that 80% of the economy and two-thirds of the land mass are still held in the hands of the white minority (The Economist 2010). Referred to by some as spatial apartheid, this is a tangible colonial archive of the legacy of the Group Areas Act in 1950 that saw the enforcement of segregationist laws and development of land in urban areas that was exclusively reserved for “white” ownership (Turok 1994; Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009; Berrisford 2011). Non-white South Africans were forcibly removed from their urban land and were pushed into camp/slum-like areas with limited socio-economic resources and access to social services – these are the persistent townships of today:

To varying degrees, each town or city in South Africa reflects not only an unequal distribution of infrastructure, amenities and accessibility, but the distances between the places in which the poor and the well-off live exacerbate that inequality.

(Berrisford 2011, 249)

This divide is especially evident in Cape Town, which is often referred to as a “tale of two cities” with stark spatial, economic and racial divides. This divide glaringly plays out in the Cape Town gay parade, the main focus of this chapter, which I will detail below.

Secondly, coloniality manifests through many black South Africans finding themselves at the margins of neoliberal economic institutions that have created an uneven economic terrain in which young people bear the brunt of this inequality. One notable paradox is the fact that South Africa is a member of the G20 group of nations and possesses the second-largest economy on the continent (International Monetary Fund 2017).³ However, it also has the highest degree of inequality in the world. This complicates the (socio)economic terrain in contemporary South Africa and exposes large divisions. For example, South African youth experience the highest levels of unemployment, increasing from 33% in 2001 to 40% in 2011 (Statistics South Africa 2011) and possibly even

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higher due to Covid-19. The problem of unemployment is compounded by the fact that it is inherently gendered in nature. Furthermore, there is a racial dynamic to unemployment across the four defined racial groups in South Africa (another throw-back to apartheid), reflecting the country's unequal educational background and its historical legacy.⁴ Indeed, unemployment disproportionately affects “Black Africans” (29%) in contrast to “White” South Africans (7%) (Republic of South Africa 2016). The anticipated social and economic revolution following the demise of apartheid, especially for the black population, still remains very much “aspirational”, as the gap between expectations and possibilities remains substantial in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa. This crucial point of contestation is, as I will reveal, largely ignored by the Cape Town gay parade under consideration here.

Thirdly, the colonial archive falls at the crux of the paradox that sees South Africa as purportedly having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, the first of its kind to offer protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, disability and religion. However, these legal freedoms remain largely inaccessible, especially for African same-sex intimacies. Cultural anthropologist Graeme Reid (2010) highlights this paradox when he contends that

for post-apartheid politics in South Africa, homosexuality inhabits a transitional space, serving as a “litmus test” for the success of constitutional democracy – emblematic of a human right based social order, [whilst being] cast as untraditional, as un- African, and as unchristian – a dangerous threat to the social fabric.

(*ibid.*, 38)

Reid analyses this paradox, firstly, as a failed democracy, secondly, as a moral discourse that facilitates the notion that homosexuality is un-African (a western import) and unchristian and, thirdly, through the visibility of globalised yet localised gay and lesbian identities in South Africa. In this way, Reid frames homosexuality firmly within human rights discourse. The contestation relating to the limits of rights for African same-sex intimacies also plays out in queer politics of the Cape Town pride parade.

The above landscape forms some of the liberties that serve to promote Cape Town as the “gay capital” of Africa, albeit for mostly those who are marked as white. Yet, in the same context, we see black same-sex subjectivities being subject to policing and violence, as evidenced by the many cases of violence, “corrective” rape, and murders of black township lesbians, especially of those who present as masculine (Mbasalaki 2018). These factors also exacerbate a struggle for visibility of African same-sex intimacies in specifically black cultural and political contexts. This schizophrenic dynamic exists alongside a vibrant gay tourism industry and thriving white (affluent) gay culture, who become the main beneficiaries of the constitution. Such views are extolled within the media, both locally and globally, and in travel guides singing of

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progressivism enshrined in the South African constitution. It is within these contestations that I engage homonationalism in the post-colony of South Africa, fraught with inequalities and contradictions as imbricated within coloniality/modernity. Andrew Tucker notes that “we can consider further what homonationalism can help elucidate in post-colonial contexts, and how it can be adapted and reconfigured to speak to different localised political and social post-colonial histories” (2020, 88). I am primarily interested in narratives of progress on the grounds of sexuality as they relate to the so-called progressive constitution in South Africa and nationalist representations of it. We see this kind of representation entrenched in the promotion of a “gay-friendly” Cape Town and South Africa that sees thriving gay tourism, commercialised gay prides and hosting of events like Mr Gay World.

Noting that coloniality heavily seeps into the contemporary lived realities in South Africa, this chapter engages with homonationalism through decolonial prisms. By focusing on the Cape Town Gay pride parades of 2014, 2015 and 2016, I pose the following questions: What kind of hierarchies do queer politics at the Cape Town gay pride produce while claiming to contest sexual rights? What role do homonationalism and capitalism as imbricated in modernity and coloniality play in queer organising? In what ways do black African same-sex intimacies contest these hegemonies? To begin with, I offer context through a brief history of how pride marches started in Johannesburg and Cape Town. I then zoom in on the Cape Town pride parade, focusing on the period of 2014–2016, and highlight the queer politics eruption that featured in various media outlets ~~and that forms~~ the basis on which homonationalism is analysed through decolonial prisms. This decolonial reading of homonationalism is two-tiered: firstly, I interrogate how histories of colonisation, through racial capitalism, come alive in the Cape Town gay pride. A racial analysis that draws on Fanon’s zone of being and non-being is deployed, which frames what it means to be human or non-human in the queer politics of the Cape Town pride. Secondly, I call for a re-building to re-exist, which draws on how African same-sex intimacies resisted politics of exclusion through the formation of the Alternative Inclusive Pride Network. This re-existence becomes an antithesis to coloniality and therefore humanises, becoming a promise for decolonial joy.

The Cape Town Gay Pride Parade

The first gay march in South Africa (and on the African continent) took place on October 13, 1990 in Johannesburg. It was unique in that it acted both as a pride march to increase visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community in South Africa and as an anti-apartheid march (South African History Online 2017). The march was organised by the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand (GLOW), an NGO that was pivotal in lobbying for the inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the South African constitution. Although the broader struggle of the march was to decriminalise homosexuality and to end apartheid, it also provided a platform for voicing political concerns. The speakers who

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were also part of the organising team included, among others, Beverly Ditsie, Simon Nkoli and Justice Edwin Cameron. Beverly Ditsie and Simon Nkoli, who are both from townships and working-class backgrounds in Johannesburg, are people of colour who are queer and have championed the rights of African same-sex intimacies in South Africa. The march attracted a crowd of 800 people, most of whom wore brown paper bag masks (with holes in them) both as symbol of criminalisation and for safety concerns.

Meanwhile, Cape Town's first pride took place in 1993, after which it became an annual event. According to sociologist and activist Zethu Matebeni (2018), like Johannesburg, the first Cape Town pride marches were organised by a group of grass-roots activists, who were people of colour and from working class backgrounds. She further notes that the inaugural Cape Town pride march was themed "Forward to a Queer South Africa" where the term queer, although unpopular at that time, was useful in pushing for a political agenda. Indeed, during the "first ten years of its cycle, Cape Town Pride was an activist-led initiative, with a strong focus on access to rights for the purposes of including gay and lesbian citizens in the democratic South Africa" (ibid., 321). There was a clear sense of community and a joint political agenda that drove the first pride marches, foregrounding sexual rights and anti-racism.

However, by the late 1990s there was widespread divide within the community, as the pride march increasingly lost its political legacy of highlighting some of the issues that the LGBTIQIA+ community faces while becoming a big commercialised celebratory party that ignored the plight of most members within the community. Specifically for Cape Town, Matebeni highlights that:

by 2004, the focus turned towards tourism, with pride attracting majority of tourists during the summer months of February and March, colouring the streets with drag queens, topless muscular men and a gay carnivalesque experience unparalleled in the continent.

(ibid., 322)

It is not surprising that this shift, especially with regards to the white queer community increasingly taking the lead in organising pride marches, took shape after the inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the South African 1996 constitution and bill of rights (Government of South Africa 1996). Perhaps the coalitions with African same-sex intimacies were mostly centred around sexual rights for the white queer community and once this was achieved, the "political" fell off their agenda. Put differently, the gay pride parade has completely shifted from its inaugural days, where the focus was on a liberatory politics and agenda, towards a celebration that centres a "money-making" agenda through promoting tourism over liberatory politics.

Moreover, allyship and coalitions, which were cognisant of oppressions and challenges brought on lived realities through the grammars of race, class, gender and ability, seem to have waned. This shift is gravely noticeable in the Cape Town pride parade, which is currently a "predominantly white gay men's

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capitalist venture that claims to be a non-profit organisation” (Matebeni 2018, 322). Indeed, the Cape Town gay pride is referred to as the largest LGBTQIA+ festival. Moreover, the gay pride festival activities take place in a neighbourhood called Greenpoint, which is one of the affluent, predominantly “white” suburbs of De Waterkant in Cape Town and caters mostly to wealthy white gay men. This is an area that is historically white in ownership as a result of the apartheid era Group Areas Act of 1950 and hence largely inaccessible to African same-sex intimacies that reside in townships. As geographer Gustav Visser articulates, “underneath this ‘liberated gay space’ of gay expression lies a far more complex and ‘un-liberated’ socio-economic system” (2007, 21). This is a glaring depiction of spatial apartheid in Cape Town and racial capitalism that has produced white (state) wealth and geo-spaces and a black deprived working class.

The shifts in political motivations and allyship have resulted in controversies around the Cape Town gay parade, including being marked as too “white” and non-inclusive of the lived realities of African same-sex intimacies. The controversies have been there for a long time but picked up public momentum through social media and news outlets around 2014. The 2014 Cape Town pride, whose slogan was “Uniting Cultures of Cape Town”, was boycotted by the Khayelitsha’s Free Gender Organization.⁵ According to journalist Nashira Davids (2014), Funeka Soldaat, chairman of the Free Gender Organization, stated that “Cape Town Pride is run by white men and they are excluding women and black community”. In 2015, the slogan became “Return to the rainbow”. Prior to the 2015 pride, an open letter written by Nyx Mclean was published in the *Mail & Guardian* (and then a queer news-space called *mambaoline*), which addressed the Cape Town pride as “too white”.⁶ Their letter is long and elaborate, presenting a number of issues around Cape Town pride being an exclusionary space that “was not fully aware of the lived realities of most LGBTIAQ people living, working and studying in Cape Town” (Igual 2015a). They elucidate that “too white” implies that pride is “working from a position of whiteness and are maintaining this position through the events put forward” (ibid.). The organisers responded in a detailed open letter offering an explanation, which is encapsulated by the statement:

[I]f people want an event, they need to champion it. Pride has always worked this way. Let African queer women, the transmen, the non-binary individual, or intersex come forward and plan the events they would like to participate in.

(ibid.)

Following these contestations, the slogan for pride in 2016 was “**Gay/Proud/Colourblind**”. In response, the Alternative Inclusive Pride Network (AIPN), on December 8, 2015, wrote a letter to the Mayor of Cape Town questioning the insensitivity of yet again, the Cape Town Pride’s insulting slogan.⁷ The AIPN signalled in their letter to the mayor they found a:

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lack of political engagement with social issues such as violence; access to space; pride blamed for focusing on commercial ventures benefiting only a few; pride turning into a party; and lack of interest or investment in racial divisions within the lgbt community, and not taking seriously some of the issues affecting black lesbians in the townships, particularly violent crimes committed on the basis of hatred towards black lesbians.

(Matebeni 2017, 3)

The AIPN further notes that the slogan for the 2016 festival entrenches “separation along race, gender, class and sexual orientation” (ibid., 4). Indeed, Matebeni notes how the pride’s exclusionary approaches along the lines of race and class, which I locate within homonationalism tendencies, were repeatedly contested. The contestations led to the formation of an AIPN as well as alternative prides in marginal geo-spaces, in particular the townships that speak to the lived realities of African same-sex intimacies. In the following two sections, I unpack these homonationalist tendencies witnessed in the Cape Town gay parade through decolonial prisms as well as the resistances deployed by African same-sex intimacies by drawing from the work of the AIPN.

Cape Town Gay Pride Parade: A Decolonial Reading through the Lens of Homonationalism

Jasbir Puar’s conceptualisation of homonationalism gained currency in her seminal book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007). Puar deploys this concept in relation to United States engagements with the Middle East as an articulation of how sexuality becomes imbricated in wider nationalist renderings of subjectification and difference. Puar builds on Lisa Duggan’s work on homonormativity as a “theorisation of the imbrication of privatisation of neoliberal economies and the growth of domestic acceptance of queer communities” (Puar 2013, 24–25) to posit that:

homonationalism is fundamentally a critique of how lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to cultural and legal forms of citizenship at the expense of the partial and full expulsion from those rights of other populations.

(ibid., 25)

It is through this conceptualisation that we can read South African exceptionalism as “gay friendly”. More specifically, because of the so-called progressive constitution, South Africa is often represented as “gay-friendly”. Cape Town is positioned at the centre of this “gay-friendliness” and is often represented as the gay capital in Africa, visited by tens of thousands of gay tourists annually (cf. Visser 2002 and 2007). The city of Cape Town has embraced this role, welcoming mainly European tourists and thus marking itself as an international

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destination of choice (Visser 2007), with the annual gay parade in Cape Town becoming one of the biggest attractions. However, against this backdrop, Tucker cautions that “its focus on celebration and tourism highlight how the local needs of queers have become increasingly invisible” (2009, 171), implying that the politics governing the city have advanced the global gay project while undermining challenges presented by race, class and gender during Pride (Matebeni 2018).

The narrative of progress introduced above conjures up practices of homonationalism that are “built on the backs of racialised and sexualised others, for whom such progress was either once achieved but is now backsliding or has yet to arrive” (Puar 2013, 25). Puar adds that this “process relies on the shoring up of the respectability of homosexual subjects in relation to the performative reiteration of the pathologized perverse (homo- and hetero-) sexuality of racial others” (ibid., 25). In the South African case, African same-sex intimacies are cast as other in an orientalist sense. This is reminiscent of what African scholar Xavier Livermon denotes as:

[the] racialization of the queer body as white and the sexualization of the black body as straight [...] Adding a racial analysis to a queer analysis reveals how the white body is emblematic of human rights protections used to position South Africa as a progressive queer-friendly tourist destination (for white queer tourists), while the black body remains the threat to African culture and tradition.

(Livermon 2012, 302)

These processes are, on the one hand, entrenched in the promotion of progressiveness of South Africa and “gay-friendly” Cape Town for those marked as white, while on the other hand, re-affirm Africans as heterosexual and homophobic. This narrative therefore alienates homosexuality from Africanness, evoking the colonial imagination of a singular sexuality and the prevailing myth that placed Africans “closer to nature” and hence presumed heterosexual (Lewis 2011).

By now, it has been well documented that sexuality was central to the colonial project in Africa (McClintock 1995; Tamale 2011), with the control of sexuality, for native communities (and studies), as an extension of internalisations of colonisation (Finley 2011). Thus, in a context like South Africa, a post-colony with several hundreds of years of colonisation and coloniality, a decolonial reading of homonationalism becomes necessary. Decoloniality engages with historical processes that are centred around race and capitalism as structural modalities. In their entanglement with grammars of gender, class, sexuality and ableism, they continue to shape and influence lived realities in the present. These historical processes hinge on colonisation as imbricated with capitalism. A decolonial approach therefore takes on two fronts: deconstructing the underlying assumptions that alienate African lived realities from the Cape Town gay pride, and adopting a strategy of rebuilding to re-exist, as made

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intelligible by African same-sex intimacies (Smith 1999; Mignolo 2016). Following on, I address the former – deconstructing of underlying assumptions – while the latter – rebuilding to re-exist – will be addressed in the next section on decolonial joy.

Given that decoloniality engages with race as a structural modality, Fanon’s conceptualisation of the zone of being and non-being is a useful way of showing the underlying assumptions to the chasms of progressiveness imbricated in homonationalism in South Africa as it colludes with race and capitalism or modernity/coloniality. Indeed, Puar cautions that homonationalism is “not simply a synonym for gay racism or another way to critique the ‘conservatisation’ of gay and lesbian identities, but instead an analytic for apprehending the consequences of the successes of LGBT liberal rights movements” (2013, 25). However, for the case of a post-colony like South Africa, following 400 years of colonisation and 50 years of apartheid, I argue that race, in its imbrication with modernity and coloniality, remains at the centre of this consequence of the success of the LGBTQIA+ liberal rights for some and not others. Race also carves out what it means to be human/non-human. That is, with race as the organising order along the line of the human, this perverted logic has “been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the ‘capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system’” (Grosfoguel 2016, 10), i.e., through colonisation and coloniality.

Grosfoguel, who examines Fanon’s work on the zone of being and non-being through intersectional prisms, posits that those who occupy the zone of being are considered human and are:

recognized socially in their humanity as human beings and, thus, enjoy access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women rights and/or labour rights), material resources, and social recognition to their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spiritualities.

(Grosfoguel 2016, 10)

Sylvia Wynter (2003) offers us a clear framing of this logic of modernity emblematic of man (patriarchy and masculinity) as human. He is the one who classifies as white racially and sexually (usually as heterosexual). To put it differently, those classified above the line of human – for instance, white gay men – are socially recognised with rights, civil liberties and high probabilities of life. The gay white male in the realm of human can marry, adopt children, have health insurance, usually has a good job (to mention but a few) and therefore typically has full citizenry in South Africa.

It is in this context that we see the framing of the human within whiteness – both as the main beneficiary of legal liberties in South Africa and whose representation frames inclusion – while obscuring the lived realities of African same-sex intimacies. This is the inclusive and “gay friendly” framing that we see Cape Town’s gay pride promoting through slogans like “Gay/

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Proud/Colourblind” in one of the world’s most socio-economically unequal countries, where black lesbians whose gender expression is masculine bear the brunt of violence and death. The human who occupies the zone of being and can afford to be **“colour indifferent”** perhaps has post-apartheid amnesia and has to be reminded of the deep inequalities that African same-sex intimacies experience. This narrative hinges on assumptions that economic inequality, corrective rape and murder of black lesbians in the townships is their (the other’s) problem to deal with, “what has it got to do with the white wealthy gay community?”⁸ implying that homophobia and inequality are an “African problem” and therefore need to be addressed by Africans. One may ask, where are coalitions and solidarity? The illusion of solidarity only serves to endorse the rhetoric of “shifting the blame of all problems to the white man”. This rhetoric is common in South Africa, alluding to apartheid having ended over 20 years ago and currently a democratic state with black leadership who should be dealing with these especially “black issues”. This rhetoric gravely fails to recognise and connect histories of apartheid, colonisation and disposition that shape and frame contemporary inequalities along the grammars of race, class, gender and ableism. This kind of short-sightedness, rooted in post-apartheid and post-colonial amnesia, possibly prompted the organisers of Cape Town gay pride’s response, pointing to a lack of African volunteers to champion events that include them in the pride. Such an attitude completely ignores the fact that a number of African same-sex intimacies who reside in townships are unemployed and cannot even afford money for transport to travel from the townships to the city to volunteer and champion events. This is also reflected in the unemployment statistics referenced in the introduction to this chapter. In addition, in my earlier research, I found a 51% unemployment rate amongst black women in same-sex intimacies (Mbasalaki 2018). Moreover, having earlier noted that Greenpoint is a predominantly white space and economically inaccessible for many African same-sex intimacies that reside in townships, further plays within the spatial apartheid divide along grammars of race and class. This is a kind of perverted logic deployed by the Cape Town pride as being **“colour indifferent”** that fails to pay attention to histories that ooze into the contemporary in the making of the human/non-human, and therefore do not interrogate whiteness and privilege (Mbasalaki 2020).

Yet, for the non-human in Fanon’s zone of non-being, Grosfoguel (2016) who examines these zones intersectionally, posits that it is:

where people are dehumanised in the sense of being considered below the line of the human as non-humans/sub-humans, the methods used by the imperial/capitalist/masculine/heterosexual “I” and its institutional system [...] is by means of violence and by overt appropriation/dispossession [...] managed through perpetual violence, with only exceptional moments where methods of emancipation and regulation are used.

(ibid., 13)

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Grosfoguel adds that, in the zone of non-being, multiple oppressions are *aggravated* by racial oppression. Those classified below are considered sub-human or non-human with minimal rights and are often relegated to violence and death. African same-sex intimacies and female masculinities are imbricated in the zone of non-being, who constitute “the poor black gay and lesbian” who is pitted as the main beneficiary of the sexual orientation clause within the constitution, yet these rights remain aspirational, becoming a perverted strategy that made use of and abused the “poor black gay and lesbian” – as *proxy* for buy in, for the inclusion of the sexual orientation in the constitution. Forming another representation of inclusion that covers over the lived realities of the non-human – African same-sex intimacies. The non-human is implicated in the project of violence and death. For instance, an OUT LGBT Well-being (2016) report sheds some grim light on levels of discrimination and hate crimes faced by the same-sex community in South Africa. They reported that 44% of participants (n=2130) had experienced general discrimination in the previous 24 months, and 41% knew of someone who had been murdered on the grounds of sexual orientation, the majority of whom were black. It is in this context that we see heinous hate crimes – corrective rape and murders targeted towards black lesbian women, especially those whose gender expression is masculine, such as Eudy Simelane and many others.⁹

Therefore, in the quest for celebration of sexual rights and freedom of white queers during the Cape Town gay pride, exclusionary processes play out along the grammars of race, class, gender and ableism. These processes can be connected to historical privilege of whiteness in South Africa that alienates African same-sex intimacies from (geo)spaces like the Cape Town gay pride that are otherwise meant to offer a space for solidarity engagements on grounds of sexuality. Although Pride in South Africa has historically taken on political issues like segregatory apartheid policies and issues relating to HIV treatment and prevention, this history of “militancy” around inequality has been erased from the Cape Town pride in favour of a certain “colour indifference”. It is in this context that we see African same-sex intimacies challenging these exclusive spaces, like the Cape Town pride, which I address at length in the next section.

Countering Homonationalism through Decolonial Joy

Having laid out in the previous section how modernity/coloniality are imbricated in homonationalism, by focusing on the Cape Town gay pride, here I discuss how African same-sex intimacies resist such processes of exclusion that play out at (geo)spaces like the Cape Town gay pride. This forms part of rebuilding to re-exist as made intelligible for the lived realities of African same-sex intimacies. I locate this kind of resistance as a manifestation of decolonial joy by drawing on Frances Negrón-Muntaner’s (2020) conceptualisation of decolonial joy in her anti-colonial work in Puerto Rico. Negrón-Muntaner sophisticatedly unpacks both the decolonial and joy, showing how they coalesce. Starting with the decolonial, she posits that

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decolonial is often defined as the antithesis to the concept of coloniality, which, refers to the cultural and epistemological frameworks – including the ontological (for example, gender and racial), theological, and social imaginaries – generated during the political process of colonialism, which have *yet to disappear* after political decolonization.

(ibid., 180; emphasis in original)

Whereas she connects joy to the “feeling of a possibility of a different now, one where neither colonialism nor coloniality ruled over marginal lives” as decolonial joy (ibid.), in the South African context, I read decolonial joy as moments of humanising. Decolonial joy is about restoring human dignity to those who have historically been dehumanised through colonisation and coloniality, especially because at the centre of the “coloniality of being” is the consistent and systematic denial of humanity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). The denial of humanity of others was a major technology of domination that enabled them to be pushed out of the human family into a subhuman category and a zone of non-being (Fanon 1968). Therefore, the possibility of a different now – noting this different now is embedded in the zone of non-being – brings forth moments of humanisation. These moments of humanisation surface through a de-linking from coloniality in order to re-exist (Mignolo 2016). Mignolo locates:

[the] growing decolonial Spirit of delinking to re-exist (a basic decolonial move), [entails] accepting that Eurocentric fictions in all spheres of life, but above all, racial and sexual fictions embedded in the economy (capitalism), politics (the State), epistemology (the university, museums, schools, the church) ... manage and control emotions and sensing the world.

(2016, xii)

Delinking, therefore, works “towards rebuilding the communal, engaging decolonial love, and turning our backs (delinking) from the radiations of [modernity/coloniality]” (ibid., xviii). In this way, decolonial joy in the context of homonationalism in South Africa firmly engages with delinking from processes within the Cape Town gay pride that are only tailored to the white gay middle-class cis-gendered man. Decolonial joy offers moments, both individual and collective, that puncture the overwhelming zone of non-being for the formally colonised. I will engage with such moments of humanising that occurred through the formation of the Alternative Inclusive Pride Network (AIPN) and other events that ensued.

The AIPN was formed in 2015 as a direct contestation to Cape Town pride politics that engaged in exclusion along the grammars of race, class, gender and ableism. In 2015, the AIPN was made up of a number of community-based organisations, such as Free Gender in Khayelitsha, individuals and allies.¹⁰ In speaking back, one of the activities the AIPN engaged with was the silent protest held on February 28, 2015 during the Cape Town pride parade (DeBarros 2015). The silent protest was repeated in 2016. As Sandile Ndelu, one of the

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organisers of the AIPN explains, the silent protest held in Greenpoint was to “speak back to white supremacist, capitalist, homonormative, exclusionary type of Cape Town pride in which we do not see ourselves as black queer, trans women and lesbians in South Africa” (as quoted in Herbert 2016). Their slogan was “Kwanele: Nothing about us without us”, with events organised in the framing of a “pride for the people”. Events included seminars, parties, talks and a movie night, which took place in township spaces like Guguletu and Khayelitsha (Maregele 2015). These events were imbricated within a community-driven movement that addressed issues pertaining to lived realities, such as hate crimes and economic inequalities.

The community-driven movement and events deployed by the AIPN form a strategy of rebuilding to re-exist of African same-sex intimacies. Having noted that coloniality is consistent with denial of humanity, the processes that unfolded around the Cape Town pride, with slogans such as “Gay/Proud/Colour-blind”, denied the humanity of the lived realities of African same-sex intimacies who occupy the zone of non-being. This humanity was denied when organisers failed to connect histories of colonisation as very much present in the contemporary through racial capitalism that keeps black people in dispossession materially, spiritually and structurally. To be “colour indifferent” is to be positionally privileged and ignore the existence of the “other”. Hence activities such as the silent protest speaking back at the Cape Town pride parade served to centre these histories of dispossessions so as to be recognised, seen and therefore humanised. In considering moments that humanise, I am reminded of in an interview conversation on queer politics in South Africa with Nadia Davids and Zethu Matebeni, where Matebeni points this out with specific reference to the Cape Town pride politics:

I mean, for example, this thing I was talking about, the way in which the city [of Cape Town] is zoned land, that is, remnants of apartheid spatial planning. For me, if you want to talk about Pride, you want to talk about people’s access to land. And if you’re going to parade on the streets and those people have no access to that space, you should problematise that. And not parade for the sake of being seen, so that people know that you are gay.

(Davids and Matebeni 2017, 164)

Therefore, to humanise is to consider and interrogate access to land, particularly in light of the fact that black South Africans were forcibly removed from urban areas when the Group Areas Act was implemented in the 1950s during apartheid. Additionally, access to an economically affluent space by someone from a working-class space needs to be interrogated and addressed. The white, gay, middle-class cis-gendered man has a crucial role to play in dismantling and disrupting these historically raced and classed hegemonies that continue to exclude African same-sex intimacies in Cape Town. This is why pride and community events arranged by the AIPN directly spoke to the lived realities of

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African same-sex intimacies, as an antithesis to the post-apartheid amnesia and therefore offering a “different now” for those who occupy the zone of non-being, one that momentarily breaks away from the governance or rules of coloniality and therefore offers moments of decolonial joy.

Conclusion

Returning to the questions I posed in the introduction, it is clear that the Cape Town gay pride parade during the period of 2014, 2015 and 2016 reproduced hierarchies of race and class while claiming to context hierarchies of sexuality. In part, this hinges on post-apartheid amnesia with the prevailing discourse of “stop blaming white people” for contemporary social injustices. Yet decoloniality is not about blame; rather, it is about a recognition that histories of colonisation and dispossession are still alive in the present and must be dismantled collectively. Otherwise, the burden or responsibility solely falls on the formally colonised to puncture and dislocate privileges of racial capitalism. The solidarity of interrogating race and other inequalities seems to have waned from the inaugural march in the early 1990s – perhaps brought on by the fallacy of the so-called progressive constitution as imbricated in democracy and full citizenship for all, which is minimal and mostly non-existent for most who occupy the zone of non-being. The pride priorities have rather shifted the focus to tourism. Moreover, homonationalistic representations of a “gay friendly South Africa” or “Cape Town as the gay capital of Africa” only serve to promote white gay tourism while masking over the lived realities of African same-sex intimacies. In this way, the Cape Town pride has illustrated and exacerbated homonationalism and capitalism in its organising. However, African same-sex intimacies are “doing” the work of challenging these exclusive processes by disrupting racial capitalism as it plays out with gay pride in Cape Town. This disruption involves addressing socio-economic inequalities and therefore brings with it strategies of rebuilding to re-exist that take the form of decolonial joy.

Notes

- 1 Racial capitalism is imbricated in modernity and coloniality. Modernity is here understood as the ideology that blends capitalist interests with colonialism and coloniality, under the incorrect assumption that there is only one global way to pursue development (Tamale 2020).
- 2 In this chapter, I mostly work with the term “African same-sex intimacies” due to its all-encompassing nature. This is especially so because same-sex practices are understood differently across different historical and cultural contexts and are thus not necessarily labelled and contextualised as “homosexual” or “gay” or “lesbian”. Therefore, to focus upon intimacies brings the historical (dis)continuities of same-sex sexual cultures to the fore. Moreover, the term “intimacy” opens up horizons for the intimate sexual encounters beyond relationships, which taps into same-sex sexual desire and pleasure. I locate people of colour who self-identify as lesbian, queer,

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trans*, gender binary, gender non-conforming, intersex, asexual and pansexual within this framing.

- 3 The Group of Twenty (also known as the G20) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies. The members include 19 individual countries – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States – along with the European Union (EU). Together members account for roughly 85% of the world economy (Hutt 2016).
- 4 The apartheid government created four official racial categories: black African, coloured, white and Asian/Indian. This represents one of the many continuities of apartheid that has laid its claim in contemporary South Africa, where these racial groupings abide. Moreover, black Africans are the majority of the population in South Africa, with white South Africans comprising about 13% of the population.
- 5 Free Gender is a LGBTQIA+ advocacy group based in the township of Khayelitsha in Cape Town. It was founded by a black lesbian activist – Funeka Soldaat.
- 6 Dr Nyx Mclean is a transgender non-binary queer academic and researcher specialising in gender, sexuality, digital counter/publics and communities.
- 7 Cape Town pride parade usually takes place during the summer months of February and March, and the slogans usually come out a few months prior. Hence this letter was sent out in December after the slogan for 2016 was officially released.
- 8 Some comments made by (anonymous) individuals allude to the points being made here. For instance, the comment below was made after an article was written by Roberto Igual (2015b) on March 2 2015, entitled “Cape Town Pride Parade Goes Ahead Despite Protests”, a reader under a pseudonym stated:

I think Funeka should first take this problem to her Traditional leaders, and then to her Parliamentary Representative, as the problem here is not the Celebration of Gay Rights, but the violation of her HUMAN Rights, BY HER OWN PEOPLE. It is not gay white men going into the townships and raping and murdering Black Lesbians, it is the people living there with her. And it is also not the GAY WHITE man who has denied her an education or safety, IT IS HER OWN BLACK GOVERNMENT. Poor Living Conditions, Cultural Prejudice, and the General LAWLESSNESS in SA, still not caused by the Middle-Class Gay White man, but her OWN Culture, and her OWN people... Stop this ‘blame the white boy’ mentality, and take responsibility for your OWN situation... You should be ashamed of yourself.

(NieuwoudtB, comment to Igual, March 2, 2015)
- 9 Eudy Simelane was a South African footballer who played for Banyana Banyana, the South African national women’s football team. She was also a renowned LGBTQIA+ activist. She was brutally raped and murdered as a hate crime in her home township of KwaThema in Johannesburg on April 28, 2008.
- 10 As stipulated in a YouTube video posted by Odette Herbert (2016), the group was comprised of “lesbian, gay bisexual, trans*, intersex, pansexual, queer+ (LGBTIAPQ+), non-binary & non-conforming persons, friends, family, allies, activists, organisations and general public”.

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