

# **Dennis Brutus: Activist for Non-racialism and Freedom of the Human Spirit**

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For the struggle for human rights, for justice, is one struggle (Dennis Brutus, 'Steve Biko: In Memoriam' [1978] 2006).

## **Abstract**

This article provides a detailed overview of Dennis Vincent Brutus's anti-apartheid sports activism. Focusing primarily on the period of 1948 – 1970, it traces Brutus's activism from his earliest critical consciousness of racism in the apartheid state's sport codes, positions it vis-à-vis apartheid as part of the struggle for freedom in 1950s South Africa, and follows him on his international travels in his quest for non-racialism in sport and the isolation of the apartheid sporting fraternity. Brutus's literary activism as an integral component of his sports activism is also addressed. This is done in the broader theoretical framework of the ideological hegemony of the racist apartheid state, and Brutus's advocacy for non-racial sports, as a conflict between apartheid and human rights in ideological terms. The main contention of the article is that it was Brutus's commitment to non-racialism and the 'freedom of the human spirit' that served as navigating mechanism through all the socio-political turmoil he has had to live and struggle as exile and activist.

**Keywords:** Activism, Non-racialism, human rights, ideology, apartheid, IOC, SANROC

## **Introduction**

Certainly one of the great political enigmas of the twentieth century is South Africa's white minority's decision to follow the road of apartheid while the rest of the enlightened and developing world took a firm decision for equality and human rights. While the National Party used the first decade of the 1950s to lay the foundations and do the groundwork for what would become the exclusionary oppressive and repressive racist apartheid state, the progressive forces in the country followed the road of defiance, peaceful protest and non-violent resistance. And whereas the apartheid machinery systematically put its ideological framework with all its laws, regulations and police brutality in place during its first decade, the pinnacle of the resistance was the launching of the *Freedom Charter* at Kliptown in 1955 following the defiance campaign of 1952. This tense and superficially peaceful decade came to a violent end during the approximately five years following the anti-pass campaign, Sharpeville and banning of the PAC and ANC in April 1960. As the international critical community strengthened its resolve to oppose apartheid South Africa, apartheid machinery equally strengthened its grip on the South African polity. Following the Sharpeville massacre (21 March 1960), the Rivonia trial (1963 - 1964) and exile, bannings and incarceration of South Africa's resistance and democratic leaders, all critical and enlightened forces in the country were faced with the bleak alternatives of silence or interminable imprisonment. As for many prominent leaders of South Africa, this and the following decade were also the world of Dennis Brutus's rise to prominence as arguably the singly most significant South African activist for non-racialism and human rights on the world stage<sup>1</sup>.

Born in Harare on November 28, 1924, Brutus grew up in Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela Metropolitan) and completed his tertiary education with a BA majoring in English and Psychology (1947) at Fort Hare University. In 1955 he participated in the founding of the Coordinating

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Vincent Brutus (b. November 24, 1924) passed away on 26 December 2009. He received a very large number of testimonials and obituaries in a wide variety of media. Patrick Bond has collected some of these from institutions, individuals and the media – cf. <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/obituary/61249>. For the *Dennis Brutus online Archive*, see <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp?4,79>.

Committee for International Relations in Sport. Its main objective was to persuade international sports organizations to only participate in interracial South African sports events (cf. Reddy n.d.). This strategy aimed at preventing South African sports bodies participating in international sports under the auspices of South Africa's racist ideology, and lead to the founding of the South African Sports Association (SASA) in October 1958<sup>2</sup>. SASA advocated non-racial sports on the sole basis of merit, with its main aim being 'to fight against racism in sport and press for international recognition of the non-racial sports bodies in South Africa' (cf. Reddy n.d.)<sup>3</sup>. Principally due to his anti-apartheid advocacy in sport as secretary of SASA, his anti-apartheid publications ranging from 'Sports Test for South Africa' (1959)<sup>4</sup> to his publications in *Fighting Talk*<sup>5</sup> and his founding of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) in 1963 (Odendaal 2003:180), Brutus was banned in October 1961 under the Suppression of Communism Act, shot and arrested in 1963, sentenced in 1964, and jailed and imprisoned on Robben Island (cf. Brutus 2006a:41). Released eighteen months later in July 1965 and served with three banning orders – banned from teaching,

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<sup>2</sup> Brutus found SASA with Alan Paton as patron, Chris de Broglie as first President, and himself as secretary (cf. <http://www.africansuccess.org/visuFiche.php?id=356&lang=en>). Initially, SASA comprised eight non-racial sporting bodies, viz. Athletics, Boxing, Cycling, Lawn Tennis, Netball, Softball, Baseball and Weightlifting (cf. Brutus 1959:36).

<sup>3</sup> Ironically this body's first major triumph was its stopping of the all-black 1959 West-Indies cricket tour to South Africa. For other major accomplishments of the anti-apartheid sports campaigns during the next decade, see point 6 below – 'Non-racial Sports Activism Achievements'.

<sup>4</sup> The entry under his name on the *African Success: People Changing the Face of Africa* website, describes the publication as 'an opening salvo in his campaign to eject apartheid South Africa from international sporting competition' (cf. <http://www.africansuccess.org/visuFiche.php?id=356&lang=en>).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Brutus 1959; 1960/1961; 1961; 1962; 1963. Whereas Sustar and Karim's *Poetry & Protest: A Dennis Brutus Reader* (2006) does not treat these publications in chronological order, this article will do so because of its time-historical approach.

writing and publishing – he went into exile and soon became internationally renowned as both anti-apartheid activist for non-racialism in sport, and human rights– not least in his capacity as President of SANROC<sup>6</sup> and through his involvement in African literature studies in his capacity as poet and African literary scholar. Focusing on this, the first part of Brutus’s life-long career as political activist, this article critically reflects on the nature of his activism for non-racialism in sport that had him make such a major impact on the politics of sports, and his human rights activism as present in his writings<sup>7</sup>.

In order to provide a theoretical framework for Brutus’s activism, I first briefly sketch the ideological conflict in which he advocated non-racial sports, as a conflict between apartheid and human rights in ideological terms. For the main argument I draw on extant sources in South Africa, and briefly

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<sup>6</sup> SANROC’s main objective was ‘to fight against racism in sport and press for international recognition of the non-racial sports bodies in South Africa’ (cf. Reddy n.d.; de Broglio & Brutus 2009). Since Africans did not participate in many of the sports on offer in South Africa yet, and because the different sports bodies were the result of the reification of ethnic colonial groupings (cf. Desai *et al.* 2002:5ff), this body initially mainly comprised of Indian and Coloured representatives (Brutus 2006a:39). Brutus relates how it was formed – as replacing SASA precisely because it would be possible to serve as vehicle to oppose apartheid South Africa’s racist policies in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) – and how he became its first president (cf. Brutus 2006a:36,40f).

<sup>7</sup> From South African perspective, I divide Brutus’s career into three parts, his pre-1980 anti-apartheid sports activism – with the two components of activism inside South Africa (pre-1965), and activism on the international stage (1966 - 1980) – his pre-1994 divestment and anti-apartheid cultural activism in which he advocated a cultural embargo of South Africa (1980 - 1994), and his post-1994 anti-globalisation activism. (Indicative of his personal hardship and constant struggles for recognition, he only won the right to stay in the United States as a political refugee after a protracted legal struggle in 1983 – which may allow for the demarcation of different time frames in his life, from biographical perspective. This is however not the focus of this article.)

cover the first phase of Brutus's life during which he became conscious of the challenges for non-racialism, his rise to prominence in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the nature and dynamics of his commitment to non-racialism and the 'human spirit', and his focus on sport activism in practice internationally (1946 - 1980). Needless to say, the wisdom of hindsight often obscures the dynamics and fury of the turbulence of current junctures and the ebb and flow of the complex hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in the global political ocean. As all who have met Dennis Brutus personally know, Dennis was a veteran in negotiating the clashing views and personalities in the midst of discursive turbulence and instability. It is at this, the highest level of abstraction that the main contention of this article is that it was Brutus's commitment to non-racialism and the 'freedom of the human spirit' that served as navigating mechanism through all such turmoil – turmoil epitomized in the nature of his poetry<sup>8</sup>.

## **1 Human Rights and the Apartheid Ideology**

### ***1.1 The Founding of International Human Rights***

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. On May 26 of the same year, the Reformed National Party, under its banner of 'apartheid', won the elections in South Africa. Yet, whereas the dominant white racist ideology of apartheid aimed at instituting and enforcing racial segregation at all levels in the polity – that would drive racial groups ever further apart while inevitably mainly benefiting whites – the international progressive enlightened forces opened a different space – that of the 'recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family'. Significantly this first segment continues.

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<sup>8</sup> The article does not address this matter in Brutus's *oeuvre*, except for referring to his views on political commitment in poetry and writing. Cf. the very comprehensive study edited by McLucky and Colbert (1995) though. It divides into five sections. Sections one, three, four and five comprise one, three, two and again one contribution each. Section two, however, which forms the central part of the book, comprise of ten chapters, each dealing with one of Brutus's poetry collections.

It assumes that since all human beings aim at freedom, justice and peace, these would only be achievable if ‘the inherent dignity’, and ‘equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family’ are recognised (cf. the ‘Preamble’ in UDHR). The achievement of freedom, justice and peace are hereby made conditional on the upholding and recognition of human rights. Alternatively: The universal upholding of human rights is made the means to the end of freedom, justice and peace for all. Freedom, justice and peace would therefore not be possible if human rights is not upheld and practiced.

In addition to this first conditional statement, the ‘Preamble’ states another six. Even so, their full import culminates in the conclusion – and this is worth quoting in full:

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction (UDHR).

No other international event had the socio-political repercussions this momentous event had on the South African politics of the next fifty years<sup>9</sup>. It fired the imagination – not least of Dennis Brutus – to campaign for

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<sup>9</sup> On his 2002 visit to Durban, Wole Soyinka, close friend and collaborator of Brutus, mentioned to me that Human Rights was the greatest ‘discovery’ of the twentieth century (cf. Smit 2003:287). I concur with this view. It was the propagation of human rights in all their multiform ways that resulted in the dissolution of the hold of colonization on the colonies, the East-West cold war divide as well as the apartheid state and other similarly rogue state systems of exclusion and oppression in the twentieth century. Focusing on Dennis Brutus, this article provides one sample of how this was achieved through his tireless activism in the case of the racist system of apartheid South Africa.

and advocate the dignity and equality of all in terms of the notion of the Fundamental Human Rights of all who partake in the ‘human family’. Not only in terms of the conditional statements but especially in terms of the conclusion of this ‘Preamble’, the racist apartheid ideology would not only dismally fail but also open the door wide for the rightful attacks by its detractors. It did not have the objective of the achieving of freedom, justice and peace for all of the human family and therefore did not assume that the upholding of fundamental human rights in terms of the ‘inherent dignity’, and ‘equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family’ would be needed to achieve this goal. Failing this, it was in addition in conflict with each of the other six conditionals. But, as stated, it ultimately opened the door for activists like Brutus. It was especially in terms of the conclusion that they could assert the human dignity of all as ‘common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations’. They could further propagate the requirement that ‘every individual and every organ of society[!]’ should conscientiously adhere to the Declaration, but especially ‘strive by teaching[!] and education[!] to promote respect for these rights and freedoms’. Moreover, they could propagate these rights ‘by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance’. Whereas apartheid did not recognise universal human rights, and whereas it progressively sought to curb such rights and obligations, Brutus, among others, would go in the opposite direction.

- Firstly, he would organize and found non-racial sports organizations and through his activism strive to have them rather than those of the apartheid state, internationally recognized, especially the IOC;
- Secondly, Brutus would throughout his career promote non-racialism, and ceaselessly propagate the recognition of the common humanity of all, not only in terms of the sports codes of his time, but also the progressive and enlightened bodies of the literary establishment.
- Thirdly, he would promote these values by teaching and education – starting in his home town – through his critical writing as well as his poetry – for which he received banning orders in 1963 – in the face of racist apartheid teachings, values and education.

Needless to say – it was not only through his critical and poetic exposés but especially through his proactive activism that he would become one of the prime non-racialism and human rights activists of the twentieth century. In this, he not only opposed apartheid but strove for human rights as a current and future objective for local, national and international practice. It was this future, Brutus dedicated his life's work to. For the moment, and to understand the context in which he started his lifelong career as activist, we need to however provide a brief overview of apartheid's 1950s ideological framework.

## *1.2 The Apartheid Ideological Framework*

Apartheid reasoning went a different route than that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>10</sup>. This ideology's reason was founded in racial superiority and not the equal recognition of 'the inherent dignity', and 'equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family' as declared in the UDHR. An important deduction that needs to be made here is that one major reason for not subscribing to these values has been that this ideology propagated racial superiority as a strategy to retain privilege and not commit to the project of seeking the ends of universal freedom, justice and peace for all. With this stance, it also committed to what the UDHR Preamble sought to dispel with its project of human rights recognition of all, viz. to use force (police and army if need be) to entrench racial privilege and advancement. Two additional points however need to be made in this connection – the one on the nature and role of the racist state's Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) in putting in place of the apartheid ideology, and secondly, how its Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) functioned as unifying umbrella practice for the entrenching of the racist state's laws and policies – as this for instance compares with the UDHR.

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<sup>10</sup> The main influences were the gathering ideological momentum of the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism (the National Party was founded in 1914/1915), links with the de jure racial segregationist Jim Crow laws (1876 - 1965), Nazism (1919-1945) and the resentment against Britain for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer wars around the turn of the century. There are numerous documents that cover expositions of this history. In the current context, one of the brief but better ones is that by Peter Hain (1971:15-90).



*Firstly*, we may acknowledge that apartheid's Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) were indeed disparate – those chosen by the state could have been different. Yet, as a brief overview of the state's legal framework shows, the racist state's ISAs as founded in state laws, formed a firm grid in terms of which the ruling racist elite and its Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) could function<sup>11</sup>. Drawing on an earlier paper (cf. Smit 2002), they can be briefly outlined in terms of 1) the legislation prior to 1948 which cultivated certain racial practices and social formations in society broadly speaking; and 2) the actual legal framework the racist state put in place – i.e. as it was supposed to not only structure society ideologically, but also use these systems and structures to enforce and inculcate racial superiority and conditions of existence under the racist ideology by both oppressor and oppressed. The legal framework mainly focused on the governance of sex, suppressing and prevention of political resistance and opposition, the governing of relations in local communities ('little apartheid'), as well as in education, the economy, and the establishment of the black homelands<sup>12</sup>. Against the background of the fully operationalising of the systems and institutions that inculcated the ideology, direct governance – akin to Althusser's RSAs (1971:138) – provided a unified coordinating and

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<sup>11</sup> In order to make a distinction between direct state governance of the ruling elite via its direct repressive systems and its indirect governance via its co-opting of systems and institutions in the state, Althusser's (1971) distinction between the RSAs and ISAs is helpful. In his context of 1950s France, the ISA's comprised of: 1) the religious ISA (the system of the different churches/ [religions]); 2) the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'schools'); 3) the family ISA; 4) the legal ISA; 5) the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties); 6) the trade-union ISA; 7) the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.); 8) the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.).

<sup>12</sup> I only provide a sample of these laws. For a full break-down with discussions of the different Acts impacting on or contributing to the establishing of apartheid South Africa, consult, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/chronology/special-chrono/governance/apartheid-legislation.html>. The different timeframes this website treats are: 1856 – 1913; 1920s; 1930s; 1940s; 1950s; 1960s; 1970s.

managerial ideological function. Starting from the head of state the racist apartheid ideology were made to permeate government and state administration, and where dissent was encountered, it was policed through the police, the courts, and prisons.

Legislation prior to 1948 provided the governance framework in which apartheid could develop its own legislated racist ideological hegemony. Amongst others, the most significant were:

- The Black Land Act (No 27 of 1913);
- The Black Urban Areas Act (No 21 of 1923 - preceded by [the British] Ordinance No 17 of 1905);
- The Native Administration Act (No 38 of 1927); and
- The Development Trust and Land Act (No 18 of 1936);

In order to entrench the racist ideology along racial grounds, the newly constituted racist government pushed legislation aimed at the eventual policing of sex, through parliament soon after the election.

- The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (No 55 of 1949);
- The Immorality Amendment Act (No 21 of 1950) which eventually developed into the Immorality Act (23 of 1957).

A sample of the Acts that were put in place to directly criminalise political opposition – which obviously included the opposition deriving from Brutus's organising and founding of non-racial bodies and his teaching, writing and publishing – were:

- The Suppression of Communism Act (No 44 of 1950);
- Public Safety Act of 1953 (in response to the civil disobedience campaigns of the ANC);
- The Criminal Law Amendment Act (No 8 of 1953);
- Riotous Assemblies and Suppression of Communism Amendment Act (No 15 of 1954);
- Criminal Procedure Act (No 56 of 1955) - later replaced by the Criminal Procedure Act (No 51 of 1977);

- Natives (Prohibition of Interdicts) Act (No 64 of 1956);
- Riotous Assemblies Act (No 17 of 1956) – prohibiting open-air gatherings if regarded as endangering public peace;
- Unlawful Organisations Act (No 34 of 1960) – under which the PAC and ANC were banned/ declared unlawful;
- General Law Amendment Act (No 39 of 1961) – provided for twelve day detention;
- Indemnity Act (No 61 of 1961) – absolving all government officials for acts committed or orders issued ‘in good faith for the prevention or suppression of internal disorder, the maintenance or restoration of good order, public safety or essential services, or the preservation of life or property in any part of the Republic’.
- General Law Amendment Act (Sabotage Act) (No 76 of 1962) – which gave the State President added powers for declaring organisations unlawful;
- Terrorism Act (No 83 of 1962) – following a broad definition of terrorism, the act that authorised indefinite detention without trial;
- General Law Amendment Act (No 37 of 1963) – which allowed for commissioned officers to detain any suspect of political crime, for up to ninety days (which could be extended for another twelve months);
- General Law Amendment Act (No 80 of 1964) – which allowed for even lengthier extensions of detention without trial, and which saw Robert Sobukwe only released in 1969 under this act;
- The Criminal Procedure Amendment Act No 96 (180-Day Detention Law) of 1965 – which provided for 180-day detention and re-detention thereafter without any trial.
- The General Law Amendment Act (No 62 of 1966) – in response to guerrilla events on the northern border to South West Africa, but aimed at detention of suspected terrorists – which would lead to the 1967 Terrorism Act which was introduced on 4 November 1966.
- Suppression of Communism Act (No 24 of 1967);
- The Prohibition of Political Interference Act (No 51 of 1968) – which legislated against the formation of non-racial political parties; and
- The Public Service Amendment Act No 86 of 1969 – which legis-

lated the formation of the much feared BOSS, the Bureau of State Security.

For formal and 'little' apartheid, for purposes of control and monitoring of people at local levels, the racist government promulgated:

- The Population Registration Act (No 30 of 1950);
- The Group Areas Act (No 41 of 1950);
- The Separate Representation of Voters Act (No 46 of 1951);
- The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (No 52 of 1951);
- The Bantu Authorities Act (No 68 of 1951);
- The Natives Laws Amendment Act of 1952;
- The Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (No 67 of 1952);
- The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (No 49 of 1953), so-called 'little apartheid'; and
- The Promotion of the Black Self-Government Act (No 46 of 1959).

Two of the most significant education acts which not only determined the racial separation of educational institutions but also put in place systems of unequal education, were:

- The Extension of University Education Act (No 45 of 1949); which eventually lead to
- The Black Education Act (No 47 of 1953).

For the economy, even though it was already determined by the acts referred to above to various degrees, we have the following:

- The Bantu/Native Building Workers Act, Act (No 27 of 1951);
- The Native Labour Settlement of Dispute Act (No 48 of 1953); which lead to
- The Mines and Works Act (No 27 of 1956); and
- The Industrial Conciliation Act (No 28 of 1956) – aimed at separating unions along racial lines.

- The Black Labour Act (No 67 of 1965) – which consolidated the all laws governing the recruitment, employment, accommodation, feeding and health conditions of Black labourers.

For the formalising of separate homelands development, in distinction to an equal and integrated development, at least four acts were important:

- The Urban Black Council Act (No 79 of 1961);
- The Prohibition of Political Interference Act (No 51 of 1968);
- The Black Homelands Citizenship Act (No 26 of 1970); and the
- The Black States Constitution Act (No 21 of 1971).

This is only a sample of the legal framework for the apartheid ideology – principally managed by the head of State, the government and the administration and monitored and regulated by the police, the courts, the prisons – that functioned through public violence. The real invidious criminality of this racist ideology is that it developed its parallel ISAs as these functioned to implement and naturalise the ideology in the private domains, e.g. some churches, parties, trade unions, families, schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc. were co-opted to become the ideology's instruments (cf. Althusser 1971:138,144).

*Secondly*, in comparison with the UDHR, we can draw on especially its 'Preamble' and summarise the general rationale of the racist ruling ideology. In this regard we need to note the racist apartheid state's 'contempt for human rights' and that this has indeed resulted in 'barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of humanity' prior to 1948 but especially in the next forty-odd years of apartheid's rule. With this it shunned the international commitment to a 'world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want' – the 'highest aspiration of the common people'. Given the fact that the racist state rejected the recognition of the 'freedom of speech and belief' and ignored 'freedom from fear and want' of all in South Africa equally – and this consequence was well recognised by the drafters of the UDHR – this state of affairs would inevitably lead to the oppressed peoples of South Africa, seeking recourse to first non-violent peaceful resistance and ultimately open rebellion and armed struggle against state tyranny. Whereas the entrenching of these freedoms in

the rule of law would have meant the cultivation of ‘friendly relations’ between the different groups in South Africa, as well as equality between men and women, ‘social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom’, this ideology’s commitment to force would lead in the opposite direction – escalating state violence, ever greater inequality, social stagnation, ever poorer standards of life, diminishing freedom and ever increasing breakdowns in common understanding.

Against the background of this very brief overview, it is clear that the racist state’s ideological route of conflict and forceful oppression and repression, would eventually fail. If the UDHR was not there, it would have been more difficult for progressive forces to find common ground in terms of which equality could be propagated and the racist state opposed. However, with it, and a growing international support of human rights nationally and internationally, the racist state would eventually collapse under the sheer pressure of the weight of its own unsupported violence. Among others, Dennis Brutus realised this very well at the dawn of the 1950s South Africa – it was inevitable that apartheid would fail. It was for this reason that he initially embarked on his role as opponent of apartheid sports inside South Africa, a role that would ultimately propel him into the international arena and place him on countless international fora. Yet, it was his stance on the universality of human rights and his advocacy of humanity of all internationally, that would not only withdraw international support or progressively diminish international support and relations with the racist state, but also brought about the racist state’s implosion. The direct strategy of Brutus’ activism was the advocating of non-racialism and the indirect strategy the deprivation and starving of apartheid racism of international veracity, relations, competitions and recognition.

## **2 Dennis Brutus and Human Rights in Sports: Awakenings**

In the context of apartheid’s formidable ideological state apparatuses, Brutus focused on apartheid South Africa’s most visible and vulnerable form – international sport. His coming to consciousness on this issue was in 1937. He recounts:

There was a seminal moment in my life connected to this school [a previously white school]. On Saturdays and Sundays, we had nowhere to go—there were no playgrounds. So we would go back to the school, even though it was in a white area, and kick a ball around. One Saturday afternoon, as we were kicking a ball around, it bounced out of the school yard, into one of the gardens of one of the white, middle-class houses around there. The husband and the wife and everybody else were sitting on the stoop in the sunny, warm Saturday afternoon, listening to a radio broadcast of a rugby match between South Africa and New Zealand, the two great rugby rivals. As the ball bounced in the garden, I went and got the ball.

And the man says to his wife ‘Ah, future Springboks’—meaning future members of the South African rugby team. But he’s saying it cynically because no non-white ever gets onto the team! I’m not sure, but his wife says to him, ‘You know, sarcasm is the lowest form of wit’. So I’m maybe twelve or thirteen, listening to this. And it strikes me, this guy’s saying that coloreds—blacks—won’t ever get onto the team. I think it stuck with me, until years later, when I began to challenge the whole barrier—questioning why blacks can’t be on the team. I remember both the cynicism with which the possibility was dismissed, and the woman alerting this man to the fact that maybe he’s not as smart as he thinks he is (Brutus 2006a:25).

Taking Brutus’s age into consideration, this event dates from around 1936/ 1937 and could refer to the 1937 springbok rugby team’s touring of New Zealand in that year<sup>13</sup>. The significance of this observation is that

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<sup>13</sup> Immediately prior to this date, there was only the 1928 New Zealand rugby tour to South Africa and following the springboks’ tour of New Zealand in 1937, the New Zealand tour to South Africa of 1939 (cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_rugby\\_union\\_matches\\_between\\_New\\_Zealand\\_and\\_South\\_Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_rugby_union_matches_between_New_Zealand_and_South_Africa)). It appears correct to surmise that the event in question that had such a profound impact on the twelve year-old Brutus, was the 1937 tour of the springboks to New Zealand. There were obviously no tours during the war period.

Brutus would only become more overtly politically aware a decade later while studying at Fort Hare. Yet, one can surmise that this early experience – as indicated in his observation – was a formative influence on his life, and could be regarded as a founding moment that would continue to impact on his eventual involvement in the propagation of non-racial sports and sports bodies, his opposition to the racist sport codes of the apartheid government, and his lifelong commitment to challenge the race barrier on the basis of human equality and equal access to all human systems. But, this human rights attitude especially impacted on his non-racial sports organizing in 1950s South Africa and his international anti-apartheid activism between 1965 – 1970. I provide two examples.

*Firstly*, on his return to his former school as teacher, he was soon reprimanded and received his first banning order.

After I graduated, I started teaching, from 1946 to 1948, at Paterson High School, the same school from which I had matriculated. When the apartheid government came into power in 1948, the differences that had existed before were suddenly exacerbated. You had a new system—virtually a Nazi system—imposed by people who supported Hitler during the Second World War. They were now running the country. So even had I chosen not to be in collision with the system, the system was in fact becoming so much worse that you could not avoid collision with it. *I began to challenge apartheid in education, because there was black education, white education, and brown education, and each one was different.* And the brown one was much worse than any white one, and slightly better than any black one. So again, you had this variation. Eventually of course, I was banned from teaching and the government decided that I was a dangerous person. Their own language was, ‘unfit to teach young minds’. Obviously because they wanted a different kind of teaching for young minds! (Brutus 2006a:27; e.a.).

The exploitation of diversity for sectional racist interests and oppressive measures could only challenge Brutus to collide with this system, not least because of the inequality(!) between these systems of education. Moreover, his challenging of the racist system would lead to ever more prohibitions – banning from teaching – and gagging orders that would follow



Brutus all his life (cf. below).

*Secondly*, and impacting more directly on racism in sport, Brutus relates how it happened that he connected his concerns with the Olympics.

One of my colleagues, Aldridge Adamson, had just come back from Europe, where he had been working. He had been in London at the time of the Empire and Olympic Games, the first Olympics after the war. This was 1948, and the Helsinki Olympics of 1952 were approaching. *I was beginning to be aware of the whole race and sports issue and its significance.* Also on the same staff was another teacher who was a Marxist, Harry Jeftha, who also was a strong influence on me. He pointed out the fact that *the Olympic charter makes it illegal for any participating country to discriminate on the grounds of race.*

I put the pieces together. The facts of apartheid in South Africa were in *contradiction* with the Olympic governing rules. That got me into the Olympic issue, for which many people know me chiefly, having pretty much spearheaded the expulsion of South Africa from the Olympic Games in 1970 (Brutus 2006a:38; e.a.).

As part of the international dynamics during the 1948 – 1952 period, and developing the 1938 Charter, the ‘Fundamental Principles’ of the *Charter of the Olympic Games* came into force. By 1949, the first statement after the war, this basic assertion on ‘equal competition’ and ‘perfect conditions’ is retained but a very significant element added – the one that Brutus refers to in his ‘Memoir’<sup>14</sup>:

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<sup>14</sup> The rules themselves have a history. In the 1933 Charter it reads: ‘The *moral virtue attached to sport* had hitherto been neglected. The revivor of the Olympic Games, as well as his first collaborators were convinced that *this power could be utilised if all sports were conducted on an equal footing and under conditions as perfect as possible.* They thought quite rightly that those gatherings of young men were one of the best ways to make the *different classes* in a country as well as the units of *different civilizations* well *acquainted with each other and to promote better understanding.* Those who followed did their utmost to improve that wonderful manifestation, which is the sporting criterion of the races of the world, and contributed worthily to bring together those who have taken part in the Games’.

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The Olympic Games are held every four years and assemble amateurs of all nations in fair and equal competition under conditions which are to be as perfect as possible.

*No discrimination is allowed against any country or person on grounds of colour<sup>15</sup>, religion or politics* (e.a.) (cf. [http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic\\_Charter/1949%20-%20Olympic%20Charter.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic_Charter/1949%20-%20Olympic%20Charter.pdf)).

Significantly, this statement is a new addition to the earlier principle used for the preceding two decades, which was stated in terms of the ‘moral virtue’ attached to sport. This would remain the same since, with only three changes – ‘colour’ would be replaced by ‘race’ in 1956<sup>16</sup>, ‘politics’ would

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<sup>15</sup> The notion of ‘races’ (cf. previous footnote) followed the nomenclature as developed since Darwin and which mostly had negative connotations attached to it, but positive here since it called for equality. Yet, important here, is that Olympic sports can harness this ‘moral virtue’ if it takes place ‘on an equal footing and under conditions as perfect as possible’. Furthermore, the moral virtue exist precisely in that sports conducted ‘on an equal footing’, will be able to ‘bring together’ the ‘races’ and more specifically, to make the ‘different classes in a country as well as the units of different civilizations well acquainted with each other and to promote better understanding’. Sports would thus be able to transcend both race and class.

This statement under the rubric of ‘moral virtue’ however changed from 1938. For the first time, the Olympic Committee states its charter beginning with ‘Fundamental Principles’. Here, before WWII, the statement on equality is retained from the 1933 statement: ‘The Olympic Games are celebrated every four years. They assemble the AMATEURS of all nations on an equal footing and under conditions as perfect as possible’.

<sup>16</sup> Brutus already places the use of ‘race’ in the 1949 declaration which is not correct. It only replaced ‘colour’ in 1956. Also: compare the 1955 charter with the 1956 one: [http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic\\_Charter/1955%20-%20Olympic%20Charter%20-%20The%20OG%20-%20charter,%20rules%20and%20regulations,%20general%20information.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic_Charter/1955%20-%20Olympic%20Charter%20-%20The%20OG%20-%20charter,%20rules%20and%20regulations,%20general%20information.pdf), and, [http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Resourses/Bibliotheque/Olympic\\_Charter/1956%20-olympic.Charter.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Resourses/Bibliotheque/Olympic_Charter/1956%20-olympic.Charter.pdf).

become ‘political affiliation’ by 1966<sup>17</sup> but revert back to ‘politics’ in 1971, and sexual orientation would be added under the rubric of ‘sex’ in 1991<sup>18</sup>, but ‘gender’, by 2004<sup>19</sup>.

By 1948, South Africa had in fact already violated the first principle of the Olympic Charter for more than twenty years, on two counts – it excluded equal participation in sports on the grounds of ‘colour’/ ‘race’ as well as ‘politics’. Apartheid South Africa entrenched this state of affairs in law, and by subscribing to and promoting discrimination in terms of its apartheid and racist policies and laws, not least in sport itself, apartheid South Africa had in fact prevented itself from ‘belonging to the Olympic Movement’<sup>20</sup>. They have in fact excluded themselves.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. [http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic\\_Charter/1966%20-%20Olympic%20Charter.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic_Charter/1966%20-%20Olympic%20Charter.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. [http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic\\_Charter/1991%20Olympic%20Charter.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/Documents/OSC/Ressources/Bibliotheque/Olympic_Charter/1991%20Olympic%20Charter.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> In the 2004 Charter, the fundamental principle number 5 is stated for the first time in the form we have it at present: ‘Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement’.

<sup>20</sup> In its modern form (2010), this violation is even more clearly stated – currently it would in fact violate two of the six ‘Fundamental Principles of Olympism’, namely principles 4 and 5. The modern statement starts off by pointing out in principle 4 that the practicing of sport is a human right(!), and that this principle bars all forms of discrimination: ‘4. The practice of sport is *a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind* and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play. The organisation, administration and management of sport must be controlled by independent sports organizations (e.a.)’. Building on principle 4, principle 5 specifies the point about discrimination even closer. It states: ‘5. Any form of *discrimination* with regard to a *country* or a *person* on grounds of *race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise* is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement’. This most recent statement of these principles is present in the IOC’s ‘Fundamental Principles of Olympism’ as adopted on February 11, 2010. Cf. the 2010 version of the *Olympic Charter* below.

### **3 Taking the Struggle for Non-racialism in Sport Nationally: 1950 - 1965**

‘SOUTH AFRICA, it is generally admitted, is sport mad’. Thus starts Brutus’s article ‘Sports Test for South Africa’ (1959:35) precisely ten years later. Departing from the assumption that South Africa is ‘sports mad’, it continues to show how the South Africa’s populace’s pre-occupation with sports in fact detracts from the more pressing issues – an attempt to escape ‘from the pressing problems of a multi-racial society’, the constructive ‘[role] the electorate can play’ and that it allows for ‘professional politicians [to] get on with the dirty work’. This, he argued was amply demonstrated in the daily press, radio, arguments about sports in bus and bar, and the thousands who attend sports events. ‘[C]ertainly, South Africa has succeeded very well in expelling the race-problem from sport’ (Brutus 1959:35). Not with some dry irony, Brutus set himself the task to bring it back to centre court – the issue of international recognition.

SOUTH AFRICA, it is generally admitted, is sport mad. The extensive daily press and radio coverage, the interminable arguments in bus and bar, and the thousands who flock to the sportsgrounds all testify to this. There are some who say that this is just an escape for the masses from the pressing problems of a multi-racial society that the electorate can play, because the professional politicians get on with the dirty work. Certainly, South Africa has succeeded very well in *expelling the race-problem from sport*—up to now. But there are ominous signs that all this is changing, and leading sports officials are suffering ‘big match jitters’. The news that the International Olympic Committee is to discuss *South Africa’s colourbar in sport* has only added to the unease they previously felt. For *sport in South Africa means ‘white sport’*, something peculiar to the country and vastly different to the meaning given to the term elsewhere. Selection on merit—the fundamental of sport—is meaningless in South Africa, except in relation to the 3 million *White South Africans*. *No one of the 12 million non-Whites is ever considered for a national team, no matter what his ability or how clearly he merits selection*. And so our sport is a fraud, and our international reputation for sportsmanship acquired by deceit (e.a.).

In the context of the popularity of sport, the problem is that ‘merit’ or selection on the basis of ‘ability’ and not ‘race’, is not taken into consideration in the selection of sports teams. Rather, it is only applicable to white South Africans. The ‘ability’ and ‘merit’ of ‘non-White’ South Africans are not considered because of the ‘colourbar’ in sport.

Brutus then continues and further develops his focus on recognition by the IOC, namely that it will address the issue of the ‘colourbar’ in South African sports and then goes to the heart of the matter: the racist apartheid state violates a central constitutional principle of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The rest of the world is not unaware of this [i.e. racism in sport], and the South African violation of the principles of the Olympic Games, as embodied in their fundamental article—‘No discrimination is permitted on grounds of race, religion or politics’<sup>21</sup>—has already been challenged. But the big test lies ahead.

Significant for official articulation with the IOC, Brutus continues to point out that there are indeed legitimate, non-racial sports bodies in South Africa – mostly due to his own work, which he does not add<sup>22</sup> – and which should be the official representatives of South African sports on the IOC.

For almost every South African national sporting body which admits only White South Africans, and which is recognized by the international bodies, there exists a parallel non-White body,

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<sup>21</sup> Brutus is correct here. ‘Colour’ was replaced by ‘race’ in the 1956 ‘Charter’ and was in force by 1959, the time of this publication.

<sup>22</sup> Prior to the founding and advancing of non-racial sports bodies, the situation was that sports clubs were established along racial lines. This was in keeping with the political domain where political parties or congresses were formed for the different ethnic groups. However, the 1950s push for collaboration above and beyond racial groupings in the political domain – as a response to apartheid’s legislation in terms of racial politics – opened the door to a similar approach in sports. Under Brutus’s leadership the result was the formation of SASA first and ultimately, SANROC.

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generally with a non-racial constitution, which is doomed to play its matches in the locations and denied all chance of ever providing national representatives. Some 200,000 non-Whites participate in sport every week, but not all of them are still content to be excluded from sport as they are excluded from other spheres of civilised living.

He then identifies the eight Olympic sports bodies that have parallel non-racial sports codes, that exist alongside the white sports bodies in South Africa, and that came into existence during the 1950s. These are Athletics, Boxing, Cycling, Lawn Tennis, Netball, Softball, Baseball and Weightlifting<sup>23</sup>. In the case of each of the sports, he provides examples of some events that lead to the questioning of the legitimacy of the white racist sports bodies and the affirmation of the non-racial ones, e.g. South Africans who outperform their white counter-parts nationally or internationally<sup>24</sup>. To this he also added examples from soccer, the Commonwealth Games, cricket, and table tennis, as well as international collaboration to exclude governments and their sports teams who interfere in sports, from international sports. The real test – and it is from this perspective that the article derives its topic – is that of the ‘test’ of both national and international recognition or rejection.

Nationally, the aim should be to convince the sportsman public that not race but merit should be the principle for the selection of sportsmen and sportswomen to represent the country, and internationally, countries who compete with South Africa must be made aware that they not only accept this most ‘distasteful form of racial prejudice’ but also ‘condone the export of apartheid to their own countries’. If this could be used to convince the

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<sup>23</sup> The year before, 1958, a coordinating body for all non-racial sports was set up, the South African Sports Association (SASA).

<sup>24</sup> Independent of merit, African, Coloured and Indian sportsmen and sportswomen could not represent South Africa because it did not allow non-racial or interracial teams to represent it in international sports competition. For this reason, there was also a strict policy of underdevelopment with regard to the development of sports infrastructure in ‘non-white’ areas (cf. Korr & Close 2008: 16f; Desai *et al.* 2002).

different publics, then this ‘fissure’ may grow and eventually lead to the collapse of the ‘entire indivisible structure of racial rule’. When the sports bodies meet – the white racist and the non-racial ones – the result is always ‘a resounding defeat for the practitioners of apartheid’. The same should be the case also internationally. There is no alternative for South Africa than conform to the principles of international sport, characterized by non-racialism, selection on merit and therefore human equality.

Reflecting on his work as well as that of others, this very significant document’s main thrust is to overview the achievements of the movement for non-racialism in sport up to this point. At the same time, and apart from numerous allusions, the argument from merit has at least two additional prominent examples, viz. the weightlifter and the prospective West-Indies tour to South Africa under a Black captain. For the first, Brutus recounts how a weightlifter, Precious McKenzie amongst many others has emigrated to England in order to participate in international competitions.

Precious McKenzie wears an English blazer as a member of the English weightlifting team in Jamaica.

Few people are aware of the fact that Precious McKenzie has been the best weightlifter in South Africa since 1960, but because Precious is a colored South African he was never able to compete in a South African championship and never represented his country—finally he was forced to emigrate to Great Britain in order to be able to compete in international sports.

Within a few months he was shattering the British records in his division and is now the British champion.

This sad state of affairs is the consequence of racialism in South African sports which has penalized many fine sportsmen (Brutus [1966] 2006:151).

The argument about merit and racism in sport on the West-Indies tour to South Africa, is curious in so far as the West Indies were to always have a white captain, independent of merit but as part of the British policy of trusteeship or ‘leadership’. The tour to South Africa would have had a black captain, and would allow the West Indies to assert their own merit to captain

their own sides. Yet Brutus opposed and organized against the tour because it would lend legitimacy to the apartheid regime. He explains:

In 1959, Frank Worrell, who was black, was a candidate to become captain of the West Indies team. He made the mistake of agreeing to tour South Africa as captain of the West Indies team and play ten matches—West Indies blacks vs. South African blacks—while the white South Africans were playing against England. This was a sop to the black players. Their argument was: ‘You can’t play against whites, but we’ll actually bring in a black team to play against you guys, while we’re playing against our guys’. I challenged this. I said, ‘This is being done to consolidate apartheid’. Here C.L.R. and I were on opposite sides, although I was not really aware of it at the time (Brutus 2006a:129).

While C.L.R. James was supporting the tour to prove their ability to captain themselves, Brutus and SASA opposed it because of the legitimacy it would give to the regime<sup>25</sup>. Even so, it was as secretary of SASA and later President of SANROC, that Brutus was refused a passport and served with stringent ‘banning orders’. He managed to escape to Mozambique in 1963 on his way to an IOC meeting, but the Portuguese authorities captured him and handed him over to South Africa. He was incarcerated on Robben Island and left for Britain on release eighteen months later. Banned from teaching for the first time in 1947, and suffering under various forms of investigation and persecution by the Special Branch of the police during the 1950s this article as well as those that would follow in *Fighting Talk* (1960 – 1963) were central to Brutus’s detention.

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<sup>25</sup> Brutus and other opponents to the tour argued that ‘the tour would have strengthened the apartheid state by consolidating a conception that Blacks should play cricket against Blacks, and Whites should play international cricket with Whites’ (cf. Desai *et al.* 2002:10f,221f). Cf. Desai *et al.* (2002: 222f) for a comparison of advantages and disadvantages, had the tour go ahead; and Hain (1971:53) on the significance of SASA on this issue.



## 4 The Human Rights Struggle: Perspectives from South Africa

Very closely related to his sentiments in ‘Sports Test for South Africa’ (1959), and Brutus’s related organising and activism for international human rights recognition, at least three developments in his thinking while still in South Africa, could be identified in his *oeuvre*, viz. his critical reflection on the so-called ‘gagging clause of the Sabotage Act – the General Law Amendment Act (No 76 of 1962) – in his ‘Silent Poets, Strangled Writers’ (1963); his critical problematisation of ‘Negritude’ in ‘Negritude, Literature and Nationalism: A Word from South Africa’ (1962); and his recognition in prison in his autobiographical notes in “‘You’ve come to Hell Island’: A political prisoner under apartheid”, of how the apartheid system produce criminals (1974).

4.1 In his reflections on the ‘gagging clause’ of the Sabotage Act – the General Law Amendment Act (No 76 of 1962) – Brutus ([1963] 2006) uses the reference to being human more than in any other of his published documents – nine times in fact. Vis-à-vis the ‘civilised world’ Brutus accuses the racist supremacist regime about its inhumanity by not giving people the freedom to ‘speak and write’ (!) against its inhumanity.

In 1962, a fresh *barbarism* was perpetrated in South Africa. While the civilized world has repeatedly been shocked by revelations of the *inhumanities* committed here in the name of racial supremacy, the ‘Gagging Clause’ of the Sabotage Act *should move all humans to the profoundest disgust*. It is a disgust which must find expression in action.

What does the Gagging Clause mean? And what can be done about it?

The General Laws Amendment Act—to give the Sabotage Act its official name—was aimed at those who seem in ANY WAY to change a state of society intolerable to the majority and portending destruction to all. A special clause in the Act enabled the Minister of Justice to gag those who might *speak* or *write* against the system of

oppression which the world knows as apartheid (Brutus [1963] 2006: 46; e.a.).

Apart from the ‘disgust’ this law generates, it is also a ‘sabotage’, ‘rape’ and ‘prostitution’ of the ‘human spirit’ (Brutus [1963] 2006: 47) and he therefore rightfully calls for appropriate action. He calls for those who ‘care for the human spirit’ to not remain silent – as happened in the time of Nazi Germany – but to write and speak out against it. Significantly, and referring again to the law, he points out:

Men and women are dammed to silence without a trial. They are forbidden to communicate their emotions, experiences and visions to their fellow men. Protest is strangled in the throat, The creative outpouring which could enrich the community is blasted.

True, in the context of the overall savagery and barbarism which ‘General Law’ means in South Africa, this is a trifle. But no one in the world who cares for freedom of thought, speech and the *human spirit* can permit this particular act of barbarism to pass in silence (Brutus [1963] 2006: 47; e.a.).

For his outline of writers’ action, he points out that they could 1) declare their opposition and contempt for this measure; 2) hold up this disgusting gallows to the contempt of the entire world; 3) collectively refuse to 3.1) have their books sold in South Africa; refuse to 3.2) grant performing rights for their works in South Africa’s apartheid theaters, cinemas and concert halls; 3.3) refuse to have any truck with apartheid in South Africa. Such action, rather than ‘turning South Africa into a cultural desert’, would mean that all writers and artists would resist becoming ‘compost for the dungheap where noxious and strangling weeds proliferate’. And referring to ‘humanism’, he says that many who crusade for bringing ‘humanism’ to the ‘new Neanderthals’ [through their relations with racist apartheid] are doing nothing than just continuing to feed their own greed, profits and prestige – which belies their ‘crusading [as] mere cant’. Rather, in order to make an impact, what should happen is to mobilise P.E.N. clubs, Writers’ and Artists’ Guilds, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the great international agency of UNESCO. He concludes:

It will not bring the ‘Baasskap’ barbarians to their senses. But it will establish the contempt and opposition of the world. And it will hearten those who are trying to keep alive the flicker of *human values* in South Africa as we go down into the Pit.

It is a small flicker. But if the *flame of freedom* is ever to burn again in South Africa, it will have to start with small beginnings. It will have to start in the *conscience* of a few individual writers in South Africa and all over the world.

It will have to start soon (Brutus [1963] 2006: 48).

4.2 If Brutus’s critique of the racism to the white side is needle sharp, his problematisation of the negritude movement, is equally telling. In his 1962 *Fighting Talk* article, ‘Negritude, Literature and Nationalism: A Word from South Africa’, he first comments on ‘negritude’ as coming especially from French Africa:

– an expression of a peculiar blackness or African-ness in literature which is related to matters like the development of an African personality and the cultivation of a recognizably African literature (Brutus [1962] 2006:49).

Yet, he muses:

... on this subject, South African writers are strangely silent. True, the trio of Lewis Nkosi, Zeke Mphahlele, and Bloke Modisane, effectively punctured the mystical aura which surrounds the concept—and in his ‘African Image’ Zeke drove a truck through it.

He nevertheless does not want to reject it out of hand – to ‘dismiss the subject by pungent criticism’ – but gives it its due, in that it:

- is typical of the ‘Gallic tendency to ratiocination and the abstraction of theory from a small number of observed facts’;
- can be partly understood as ‘a reaction against European-ness or whiteness’; and

- asserts ‘the black man’s pride in his ancestry and blackness in defiance of the superiority and disdain which he encountered in many white circles—including the literati’.

The problem, as he saw it, however, is how to more closely specify the problem of ‘expressing Africa in literature’ – in terms of:

- how does one express the atmosphere and customs of the people of Africa?
- how does one avoid slavish imitation of ‘European’ models?
- to what extent should one conform to the standards set by ‘European’ writers? and
- how does one achieve a literature which is genuinely and peculiarly expressive of thought, custom and ideals in Africa? (Brutus [1962] 2006:59) <sup>26</sup>.

In terms of these problematisations he then proffers some answers – at the risk of ‘sounding charlatan’. Assuming that the life of people on the African continent is indeed different from those of people on other continents, and that its literary expression is not only desirable but ‘laudable’, he points out that such literature should nevertheless not only be African, but also add to the already existing literature which should then be ‘a literature as great and *universally human* as that of any other continent’. The problem, however lies in the single notion of African, or in his terms, ‘African nations and African nationalism’. If these are not negotiated, such talk about African difference or negritude, is nothing but mere wishful

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<sup>26</sup> There is a very large discourse, with a wide number of positions on what has become known as the discourse on the ‘African difference’. The discourse on literature in indigenous languages is well-known – that between writing exclusively in indigenous languages or not, with Ngugi wa Thiong’o being the leader in this direction; the philosophical discourse has a number of positions which have been mapped by Tsenay Serequeberan (cf. also Smit 1996) with a quite definitive argument from ethnophilosophical perspective recently by Kebede (2004).

thinking. For his own proposal – and that is if African literature wishes to achieve the hights of being counted as a world literature that measures up to others which can be counted as ‘universally human’ – a two-step process needs to be undertaken. The first step is to foster an indigenious national literature; and the second step, to then cultivate its evolutionary development internationally. He says:

The first [step] is from the late Lionel Forman, writing in *Liberation* in 1959: ‘The best way to achieve a fusion of national cultures in the future into one culture, is to favor the blossoming of many cultures first’.

The second [step] is from a recent publication by the African National Bureau of Political and Social Studies: ‘African Nationalism is evolutionary, dynamic and progressive (because) we recognize that it is in itself restrictive and exclusive but as it evolves and progresses its dynamism makes it less restrictive and more inclusive and finally becomes all-embracing’.

This, it seems to me, is a good point to start from: that we must recognize and accept the existence of nationalism—and be prepared to use it and give expression to it—but that we must always be aware that it is evolving into something more all-embracing in which we can find the expression and ultimate fusion of many diverse cultures (Brutus [1962] 2006:50).

Practically, in terms of these approaches’ impact on real literary engagements he recommends,

that the writer makes use of the material at hand—material he (sic.) knows and understands and loves. It means that the West African, the Kenyan and the South African alike can depict in their writing the milieu they know—and make it available to the world. It means to write with understanding of the remnants of tribal culture where they exist, and the bustling life of the South African proletariat—a peculiar fusion of European culture and the vestiges of a tribal culture.

It means that we can speak freely and understandingly of what we know, and share our knowledge with the world. It means too that we must be sufficiently catholic to have a keen eye for and assimilate the diverse cultures which make up life on the African continent (Brutus [1962] 2006:50f).

Quite critical of Gordimer, Paton, Abrahams and Mphahlele, he nevertheless asks that writers learn from the existing African writers' literary endeavours – 'our own special world' – and then generate 'the literature which will be Africa's special contribution to world literature ('out of this rich and varied soil').

Little has been written or said on this subject: it is uncharted waters and one sets sail perilously: but it is time that we struck out and began to fix a course (Brutus [1962] 2006:51).

This perspective in which Brutus is not content to either side with a nebulous notion of 'negritude' nor with the platitudes of colloquialisms but pushes for being, or at least becoming fully part of the global 'human family' or in his terms, to be counted with the literatures of other continents as being 'universally human', does not stand on its own. Evidence of Brutus's unflinching stand on the equality of the human family appears throughout his writings and activism but is nowhere more evident than in his declining of his winning of the Mbari prize. Having had his poetry collection *Sirens, Knuckles and Boots* published in 1965 in Nigeria while still in jail, he was awarded this prize but declined it. His reason was that it was reserved for 'black poets of distinction' only and that 'poetry is not about ethnicity' (Brutus 2006c:154f,189). Such shying away from racial or more specifically, ethnic exclusivity and his demurring of any form of preferential treatment on the basis of race or ethnicity, not only characterized Brutus's pro-active racially inclusive sport activism but also formed the bedrock and non-negotiable value base of his international human rights activism (cf. <http://www.africansuccess.org/visuFiche.php?id=356&lang=en>).

4.3 There are two perspectives relevant to Brutus's assertion of humanity in the face of how the apartheid system produced criminals. The *first* is his account of the non-comprehension of regular criminals – murders

– of the political prisoners’ fighting for an ideal and not for immediate material gain and gratification. While he appreciates their ‘matter-of-factness’ – which signals a concern for human life in its brute data – they lack in their understanding of the broader concerns of humanity. He recounts:

One of the things that I learned from the non-political prisoners was their wonderful matter-of-factness, their understanding of the nature of the South African system as an oppressive system, and their rather contemptuous attitude towards us, particularly those of us who thought of change by nonviolent methods. And, of course, the folly of going to prison for an ideal rather than for a bank robbery was something that caused them endless amusement (Brutus [1974] 2006:90).

*Secondly*, it is precisely this appreciation of criminality that brought him to a further insight – if these bankrobbers and murderers have been produced by the racist apartheid system (which would not have happened if it was not for this system), then this datum must be negotiated as part of the liberation movement’s struggle. This is evident from his narrative in prison where he says:

But I learned for myself to work out how much those who were made criminals by the violations of the criminal code were themselves victims of injustice in another form, that the racism and oppression which we challenged and which denied us our *human freedom* was in other ways operating to destroy their *human dignity* and their *freedom*. They were outlaws and proud of it. They stood outside the law, and they had very few illusions about the *justice* of the system under which they lived. They spoke frequently about their exploits outside, many of them perhaps boasting, and they were extremely curious to know what the politicians would do about them when they came to power. The notion that they would be *excluded from justice* when we took over was one that appalled them. It antagonized them, of course, because they saw no reason why they should support us when we were liable to imprison them as well; that may simply be because they had a better understanding of the conditions which

produced their predicament than we had (Brutus [1974] 2006:90; e.a.).

Brutus states his idea thus:

This raises an interesting idea: I believe that if the liberation movement came out with a clear statement on this issue, it would be able to enlist a far greater measure of support from a section of the South African public which does not now support us. They include the criminals, the tsotsis, the riff-raff—the people compelled to live outside the law because no opportunity exists for them inside the law, or simply because they’ve lost their documents and there is no way of reestablishing their identity. This would entail an announcement directed at the reexamination of the South African legal system so that fewer people will be made criminals by the system, apart from those who become criminals by challenging the section of the law dealing with political activity and racial justice, but simply in terms of the *economic relations, opportunity, the right to function in a society, and work within it, and live comfortably within it* (Brutus [1974] 2006:91; e.a.).

Significantly for our argument in terms of the transformation from ISAs which served the apartheid regime, Brutus goes even further than calling for the mere dissolving and replacement of these ISAs. A more fundamental change is needed! He says:

It is not enough for us to think of our reforms simply in terms of *legislation which affects racism, equal opportunity, the right to vote, and the right to form trade unions and things like that*, some of which is necessary and some of it merely reformist. It is also necessary to attack, *to go to the heart of the South African system and define the degree to which the system creates criminals*, and to make the statements indicating that *we will reject and overthrow that system so that the present conditions will no longer obtain*. I think that one could make not only an important contribution to the *transformation* of the society and declaration of one’s objectives, but



one would also elicit an extremely significant measure of support of the kind that we need very badly .... This issue, I believe, deserves a special comment—a memorandum perhaps addressed to the ANC, with a copy to Albie Sachs, who I think would be responsive to this notion as a result of his study on justice in South Africa (Brutus [1974] 2006a:91f; e.a.).

If considerations of human rights and equality are central to Brutus's thought on the banning of speech, writing and teaching, his unpacking of the relevant issues in the 'negritude' movement and his critique of the apartheid system's production of criminals, it is even more so, in his activism for non-racialism on the international stage and in international fora.

## **5 The Human Rights Struggle: International Perspectives**

After Brutus left South Africa in 1965, he started to work for the humanitarian and United Nations paid South African Defense and Aid Fund to support political prisoners<sup>27</sup> in 1965 in London (Brutus 2006b:132) – which he always regarded as his main focus in his international activism of the 1960s to the 1980s. From this position as well as his appointment as Professor of literature first at Northwestern University and subsequently, the University of Pittsburgh, he would step up his human rights activism and grace international podiums with his presence and views. From these vantage points, he addresses at least six critical aspects of human rights. These perspectives often contain critical perspectives for not only South Africa but also further afield, wherever such issues manifest internationally.

5.1 Brutus often critically reflected on South African literati's critique or collaboration of apartheid. In 'Protest against Apartheid: Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard, Alfred Hutchinson, and Arthur Nortje' (1969) he for instance critically reflect on the banning of Nadine Gordimer's *The Late*

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<sup>27</sup> This organisation was founded in 1960 and banned in 1966 in South Africa.

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*Bourgeois World*. He is not only appreciative of her own exposé of apartheid's inhumanity but also critical of her own humanity! He wrote:

People have said that *The Late Bourgeois World* has been banned because Nadine Gordimer suggested the possibility of a sexual relationship. I don't think this is true myself. I think the whole novel is, by implication, *a criticism and a condemnation of white society in South Africa today: of its ruthlessness, of the lack of feeling, of the lack of communication not only between black and white, but also between white and white.*

I think that Nadine Gordimer has tried to say in *The Late Bourgeois World* that white South Africa is becoming *dehumanized*, that it is *afraid to live and feel as human beings do* because it has *agreed to live by a set of rules which are themselves inhuman*, and that once it has accepted that premise, it must *watch its own humanity withering away*. Some atrophy must set in. This, I think, is her criticism; this I think is her protest. There is this disadvantage, that I am afraid that Nadine Gordimer would find *the same lack of humanity in other societies*. This is because there is in her the kind of impersonality that you find in a microscope. She does not herself react to feeling. In her books even the emotional relationships are forced, are conjured up, are synthetic. Though Nadine Gordimer would say that she is condemning South African society for being *dehumanized*, I would say that Nadine Gordimer, who is one of our most sensitive writers, is also the standing, the living example of how *dehumanized* South African society has become—that an artist like *this lacks warmth, lacks feeling*, but can observe with a detachment, with the coldness of a machine. There is in her, herself, no warmth and feeling (Brutus [1969] 2006:187; e.a.).

Significantly he identifies the inhumanity of society as well as the author as lacking in 'warmth' and 'feeling'. He further reasons that this is in fact produced because society itself functions according to rules which are themselves, inhuman, which in turn generates the inhumanity – a downward spiral of dehumanization. The opposite would be the fostering of warmth and

feeling of the equality of all, which would mean the generation of an upward spiral of the always ever more cultivation of humanity.

5.2 In his critical reflection on the ‘human spirit’ in ‘African culture and liberation: Speech at the First Pan-African Cultural Festival, Algiers, July’ (1969) he posits African humanity vis-à-vis two related problems, Western affluence and its investment in technology and its related rising racialism vis-à-vis other peoples of the world. He says:

There are two further considerations, with implications which extend beyond the boundaries of our great continent, which I believe deserve the consideration of us all.

The first is that the *gap* between the *affluent world*, which derived so much of its *affluence* from others, and the ‘*developing world*’ grows rapidly greater. Those who have, will have more. Those who have little, will have less. This is a matter of declared and defined policy, evidenced in such studies as the recent one by Duncan of Rio Tinto in which the ‘Third World was discounted’ and certain areas selected ‘for the greater future concentration of efforts and resources’. The great expenditure on the exploration of the moon must also be seen in this context. While we salute, as a *triumph of Man’s intellect and of the human spirit*, this great achievement, we must also be conscious of this *turning towards mechanical and material concern as a turning away from the urgent and immediate human problems, which are crying out for solutions*. What might not the money spent on the moon probe, have done to relieve the agony of black Americans? What might it not have done in social engineering to alleviate the *agony* and *racialism* which disfigure the United States: they can boast about their achievements on the moon; they cannot boast about what they are doing in their own country. Nor about what they are doing in Africa.

The second consideration of global significance is *the increasing emergence of racialism in areas of the white world*. ...

There is evidence of unthinking and automatic lining up of people—sometimes even those who believe themselves to be “liberals”—on the side of their kith and kin, *a division of the world*

*on the line of color. It is this blind loyalty to race and color—this coalescence of the centuries of racial oppression by different white nations in different parts of the world into a single global lineup on the basis of pigmentation—which some of us see with great dread, looming in the future.*

It is here that Africa, particularly in this cultural festival, has a special role to play, a special gift to give to the world. It is for us to assert the singleness of the human race, and the primacy of human values. We are on the side of humanity. It is this assertion, this declaration, that we must send ringing round the world—to save not only Africa but all the peoples of the world, and to ward off this catastrophic conflict, which some, in their blindness, their folly, and their avariciousness, would thrust upon the world. I trust that of the many and important assertions that the festival—and all of African culture—will give to the world, this declaration will be paramount: *Africa declares itself for the full freedom of Man and the family of Man* (Brutus [1969] 2006:194).

5.3 In his ‘Somehow Tenderness Survives’ in which he talked about his life and poetry with Bernth Lindfors (1970) he provides a number of critical perspectives on commitment as part of his own existence. He talks about his notion of commitment to South Africa and the people of South Africa, and points out that he distinguishes commitment of a poet and as a human being. Whereas one can expect of all human beings to be committed to the furthering of humanity one cannot expect that of each and every poet. Moreover, one cannot prescribe to poets what they ought to address in their poetry – that is in the nature of art.

I should add that I make a very clear distinction between personal and poetic commitment, I believe that the poet—as poet—has no obligation to be committed, but the man—as a man—has an obligation to be committed. What I’m saying is that I think everybody ought to be committed and the poet is just one more of the many ‘everybodies’. His commitment may or may not come through in his work; I don’t think this means writing on specific political themes. I think it is immoral for an artist to import propaganda into

his work. It shows a lack of integrity. But I am convinced that we all have a role; we've all got a job to do in society, chiefly in the transforming or even in the destroying of a given society. This happens, not because we're poets, but because we're people living in the society.

... I would hate to go around the place telling people, 'You've got to be committed because you are a poet'. I'll say to them, *'We ought all to be committed, because we are people, we're all part of the same human environment'* (Brutus [1970] 2006:180).

He then reflects on the many forms his commitment took as social worker, teacher, but also as religious person and prisoner, living under house arrest and under bannings. As these were existential experiences, they would become part of his poetry.

... [T]he moment it began to hit me, I reacted to it—not because I imported it, but because it was now the stuff of my existence, it was part of the fabric of my existence. To reflect what I was [in my poetry], was to include it.

... I'm still asking certain questions about the nature of my existence and certain theological concepts, if you like, religious concepts. That is still there. I still write the kind of intimate, personal, lyrical poetry—generally love lyrics and things like that or for nature or for South Africa ... (Brutus 1970:181).

And, on his attachment to South Africa, his argument is similar. If it affects him existentially, yes, one can say that he is attached to South Africa, that he knows the people and their own struggles and that would then coerce him to remain committed to the country, its people and their cause. However, this does not mean one develops and fosters a 'ghettoized mentality'. One must struggle against that. He says:

... one of the ways I managed not to become ghettoized myself, so that I never became the typical subservient black man or for that matter, the typical rebellious and frustrated black man, but something in between, was because I said, "In fact, I am a citizen of the world. I

can go anywhere and I can meet anybody and I do not accept this kind of limitation on me, either the sub-man or the man confined in a particular locality or location defined for him by the state, with boundaries that he could not go beyond.” I felt I was not localized, I couldn’t be kept in my place. And this meant that one transcended a local patriotism.

... You must do what you can do where you are. Although it is fine to fight for humanity, one must always see “humanity” in terms of real persons. One’s reaction to good or evil is a reaction derived from real experience, so that the evil I must fight is the evil I know. The people I must fight for are the people I know. It’s fine to fight for blacks in Britain, and I do what I can, but the blacks I know best and the situation I know best are the blacks of South Africa and the situation in South Africa (Brutus [1970] 2006:182).

This, however means that one is not merely committed to one geographical area ... rather one’s commitment should be to the world. He says:

... there’s very little justification for being sentimentally and narrowly attached to a particular strip of the earth, because our concerns more and more are global. It’s one family; ‘one world’, in Wendell Willkie’s words, which I read long ago. I’ve always accepted it as one world. So we ought to be patriots of the world rather than of a country, but to get a focus, I think you need a place and you need people. So my greatest commitment—personal as well as poetic—is still to South Africa (Brutus [1970] 2006:182).

5.4 In ‘Certain Countries are Determined to Protect South Africa’ - United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid Hears Mr. Dennis Brutus, March 23, 1970, Brutus argues for the total exclusion of apartheid South Africa from international sports by 1971. He first points out that apartheid’s racism is built on the foundation of racial supremacy, and that it is impossible for people who are not white to participate in sports on the basis of equality. White supremacy excludes apartheid South Africa from the ‘international family of nations’.

... To allow a black man in to play, and perhaps beat, a white man would have been a contradiction of the concept of white supremacy. In fact, merely for a black man to play in terms of *equality* with a white man, whether he won or lost, is still not permissible because this too would undermine the doctrine of *racial supremacy*—*white supremacy*.

... South Africa wishes to be a part of the *international family of nations*, at least as far as sports are concerned, while at the same time violating the international code of sports which says ‘there will be no racial discrimination in sports’. They have this peculiar dilemma: on the one hand they wish to have *racial discrimination* and they enshrine it in their constitution, and, on the other hand, they wish to participate with the rest of the world on the basis of *equality* while they declare that they are committed to a policy of *inequality* (Brutus [1970] 2006:147; e.a.).

Having established this argument he then addresses the Western nations, especially the United States, Britain, France and Australia who continue to have sporting relations with apartheid South Africa. On the one hand, they continue these relations, he argues, for economic and political reasons. However, if they do continue these relations, they in fact function as ‘protectors’ of South Africa which is unacceptable. If they do not break sporting relations ‘then we will know that their concern for civil rights, for equality of citizens as far as sport are concerned, is hypocrisy’ (Brutus [1970] 2006:148). What is needed is international ‘unity’ in the total exclusion of South Africa from international participation in sports. And for this, the main argument derives from human rights.

I believe that the countries that have taken a stand against South Africa in sports must now go further, and they must make it clear that not only will they break off relations with South Africa but they will break off relations with the countries which continue to strengthen and support the South African racists. If this means no longer participating at White City, London, or at Madison Square Garden, New York, I believe that countries have to go to that point of saying, “If you will support racism, then we are no longer

prepared to associate with you.” It is a high price to ask sportsmen to pay, to ask them to sacrifice international competition and the opportunity to achieve their maximum development, but *in the name of the human rights we all believe in, and those human rights imply the highest development of the human personality, it is not too high a price to pay to ask a man to take a stand*. I am convinced that it will not be a stand taken in vain and that such coordinated action will, in fact, achieve its effect. It will compel those who at present are still associating with South Africa to choose between *the minority of racists in one corner of the world and the rest of the world which is combined in its opposition to racism* (Brutus [1970] 2006:149; e.a.).

The second aspect of his human rights argument for the total exclusion of South Africa from international sports is that of the way in which it treats its political prisoners. He says:

I would like to pass from that, Mr. Chairman, to the other and far more profound concern in the field of *human rights* which for a long time has been my concern, and I know is the concern of this committee, the subject of *political prisoners*, the *conditions under which they are kept*, and the *campaign for their release* (Brutus [1970] 2006:150; e.a.).

5.5 In his ‘Literature and Commitment in South Africa’, Speech at the African Literature Association meeting, University of Texas at Austin, March 1975, Brutus argues that committed black writers differ in their literature from both white liberal writers and professors only concerned with elite literature and literati. Departing from the assumptions that ‘there is no uncommitted writing’ (following Kgositsile) – he argues that even in cases where the liberation struggle does get some support – from liberal writers from within South Africa or ‘the West’ – this is not the same as experienced by committed black South African writers. Symptomatic of their experience of Western (literary) criticism when they are subjected to it, is not the criticism itself that they find irritating but their experience of it at a ‘much deeper’ level.



... It is not just the rejection of a set of literary values, it is a *questioning of a whole social order*, of the Western way of life and its values. So the criticism expressed by Africans which exists within the literary field must be seen in a very much larger context.

I think in Africa we are trying to discover painfully and often unsuccessfully, a way of recovering our humanity, and in that process we find that what the West has to offer is a deformation and a mutilation of humanity. Fortunately we are not alone. There are people in the West who themselves feel this profound dissatisfaction and are engaged in challenging the system; the people who demonstrated on this campus yesterday and a week ago on issues of racism (Sharpeville and discrimination against minorities) were the embodiment of that dissatisfaction (Brutus [1975] 2006:200).

The social order which committed African writers find distasteful is not only because of a lack of humanity, but that it is in fact a 'deformation and a mutilation of humanity'!

As he develops his argument further he does not include luminaries such as Nadine Gordimer, Guy Butler, or even Alan Paton or Athol Fugard in this category. From within South Africa, they are rather represented by Pascal Gwala, James Matthews, Joyce Sikakane, Oswald Mtshali and Wally Serote on the one hand and Samuel Mqhayi, Jolobe, Peter Abrahams, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Willy Kgositsile, counting himself into this group. The problem as he saw it between these groups is that the one supports and benefits from the system whereas the latter challenges the system. In this difference, there is no shared language – communication – nor a set of shared values that writers could agree on in their commitment vis-à-vis the apartheid system.

But even more fundamental than that failure in a shared language is the failure to share values. They really are talking about different societies, and therefore, even when they use the same words, what they are about is something so different as to be unintelligible to the other ....

It seems to me that one of the things we are doing is to engage ourselves in the struggle to *recover and rediscover our*

humanity, and in that struggle there are a great many people who can't understand what this is about. They fail to see the necessity; they ask, "What are you going on about?" .... On the subject of commitment, Chinua Achebe said long ago in an interview ... 'Commitment runs right through our work. In fact, I should say, all our writers, whether they are aware of it or not, are committed writers'. And he went on to say, 'I believe it's impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of message, some kind of protest' (Brutus [1975] 2006:201f.e.a.).

The main point of departure of this recovery of humanity in literature is the most basic point that 'literature is about life and about people' and not about the issues professors of literature continuously raise in very learned discourses in the *New York Review of Books* and *Times Literary Supplement* for example. The related questions are about 'who' these people are and 'who' the people are one is both 'writing about and writing for'. 'Critics and the elite' read one kind of writing. The general populace may however be reading something very degrading and negative – he mentions Xaviera Hollander's *The Happy Hooker* and then comments:

I suspect, I fear very much, that we are not troubled when people are fed that garbage. It doesn't trouble those of us who are involved in the business of literature. And yet if thirty million people or more read *The Happy Hooker*, that's where literature for people is happening. One ought to ask *questions about a society and a social order* in which that kind of thing occurs, because *that is a deformation and a mutilation of the human mind and the human personality in its commercialization and merchandizing of the human body* (Brutus [1975] 2006:204, e.a.).

The main argument is that the elite approach to literature opens a gap for a commercializing literature which merchandises and dehumanizes the human body and not cultivates humanity and the humanization of human life.

5.6 In line with his commitment to humanity, and his views that black committed African writers are committed to something much deeper than the

commercialising of literature, Brutus's input in the resolutions of the 'Meeting of African writers, Accra, Ghana, June 8 1975', make the same point. In the resolutions of the Accra meeting, points B5 and 6 emphasise that the system to be put in place should serve not only African but also 'world Humanities in general' and should include a journal of 'literature and criticism' on the humanities. It reads:

B. 5. We find that the establishing of an African cooperative publishing house is indispensable to the healthy development of African literature and educational texts; to the development of indigenous publishing houses; the protection of African writers from further exploitation and, the general promotion of an authentic literary culture. We consider also that the most favorable location for such an enterprise is Senegal ...; a strong continent-wide distribution system; a low-priced sale policy to remove the stigma of privilege in literacy and culture; a translation bureau .... insistence on an All-African copyright; collaboration with smaller indigenous publishers; full control over an integrated, modern printing press; assurance of royalties at all stages to its authors; reprint of African classics in translation, etc. It is our collective responsibility to persuade African governments, cultural and technical organizations, international organizations such as UNESCO, etc. to give vital assistance to *this project which is essential to the cultural progress of the continent and to the world Humanities in general.*

6. To undertake the publication of a regular journal of literature and criticism and the humanities (Brutus [1975] 2006: 206f).

Specifying the focus even more, point 8 reads:

8. The Union of African Writers, aware of nameless atrocities perpetrated on Africans in Africa by external forces as well as by African authorities hereby expresses its *vigorous condemnation of such atrocities* wherever they do occur. This union wishes to stress its profound indignation against all attempts at the denial of *human dignity, freedom, and security* as is currently the situation in Uganda

and South Africa, not to mention the other concentration camps on the continent (Brutus [1975] 2006: 207).

It concludes by referring to the ‘common humanity’ of all, which should be the value system in which collaborative action takes place.

5.7 In his ‘English and the Dynamics of South African Creative Writing’, from *Opening up the Canon*, Leslie Fiedler and Houston Baker (eds) (1979), Brutus makes three related points – South African writing vis-à-vis the laws that restrict it, prejudices of the academy and myths about Africa. For the *first*, Brutus mentions the laws which were being used to curb black writing. He says:

The government was literally legislating literature out of existence, ... it was becoming impossible for people to write. It might be worthwhile to mention some of the legislation. One of the blanket laws that permits much of control legislation dates back to 1927; it is called the Bantu Administration Act. Since then the South African government has passed the Entertainment Censorship Act of 1931, the Unlawful Organization Act (1960), and the Publications and Entertainment Act (1956). In 1969 a great kind of umbrella law that makes virtually everything illegal if the state *deems* it to be illegal, called the General Laws Amendment Act, was passed (Brutus [1979] 2006: 210).

It is obvious that these same acts were used to ban pornography. For this reason, Brutus is at pains – as elsewhere to point to the difference – to be banned for political and committed writing or for pornography. For his own and his fellow writers’ bannings – which include publishing, being read, quoted or even gathering – he reasons as follows:

... roughly 25,000 books have been banned in South Africa and declared illegal. Possession of these books, reading them, and quoting from them are all criminal acts. Some fairly obvious books, such as obscene publications, are banned on the grounds of pornography. But many of the banned books would be considered

harmless, if perhaps radical, elsewhere in the world. As of now 750 *persons in South Africa are banned from publishing* in South Africa or from having their work *read* or *quoted* in South Africa. They are also forbidden to attend any *gathering where more than two people are present*. (I myself fell into all of these categories when I was living in South Africa, and my work continues to be banned.) Most of the major writers, both white and black, are in exile at the present time. And perhaps a more dismaying statistic is that at least three major Afrikaner poets, and twice as many black writers according to some reports, committed suicide in South Africa in recent years. (Brutus [1979] 2006: 209).

Against this ideological point – Ideological State Apparatuses – Brutus responds by asserting the common humanity of all, despite what has been termed the ‘African difference’. This is his view on the matter of Africa’s ‘different world view and a different cosmology’.

I cannot see a great deal that is significantly new or inventive; if there were time, I could catalogue some of the minor variations, particularly in African perception of a creator, a universal force that tends generally to be female. I could tell you that the African sense of time is circular, and that the living and the dead coexist in the same kind of human fabric. I think these are incipient rather than developed features. They are implicit in some of the writings and, given an opportunity, may become more evident (Brutus [1979] 2006: 211).

The African difference is not a difference in humanity. It is for this reason that he continues to point out what the inhuman element of African existence in apartheid South Africa is.

We are dealing with a society where communication between people is illegal, a society that creates a battery of laws that makes communication between people from different cultures or from different groups a criminal act. It can be a crime in South Africa for two people of different races to drink tea together, or to be in the same restaurant together.

One example, my favorite, is drawn from the area in which I was most deeply involved in South Africa—that of sports. A black athlete running on the same track with a white athlete could be arrested, or a black tennis player on the same tennis court with a white tennis player could go to prison. There are very blatant forms of discrimination imposed by the legal system, for which there are sanctions. Those who attempt to communicate are punished. It may be that in such a society one can neither come up with insights and perceptions into another culture nor with new ways of expressing what already exists in that culture (Brutus [1979] 2006:211f).

Brutus's *second* point is that the African writers do not only suffer from the ISAs and RSAs, but also prejudice from literary critics.

The writer suffers, however, not only from the restraints and limitations imposed on him by the legal system, but by a whole new set of pressures that flow from convention and prejudice rather than from the law. These restraints, these pressures on black writers and writing are due to the arrogance of the literary critics and the contemptuous handling of black writers by established literary persons. It seems to me to be so pervasive that I am beginning to wonder whether arrogance is not an occupational hazard for all critics.

Central – and as he has already pointed out earlier in his career – the most significant is the prejudice that the South African writers are 'committed' writers. In this, some quote W.H. Auden. Yet, Brutus reasons, in Auden's poetry, one finds his own commitment to and 'concern for humanity'. Brutus explains:

Wyett goes on to criticize African poetry for another weakness: *the poet has become too committed, too much of an engaged poet*. Here Wyett can cite W. H. Auden's authority; Auden said (and I think that this has become, unfortunately, almost an article of faith), 'Let a poet if he wants to, write engaged poems. But let him remember this: the only person who will benefit from it is himself. The evil or injustice

will remain exactly as it would have been if he had kept his mouth shut'. I think Auden underestimates his impact on his own, and on future, generations. *I believe he has moved others through his sense of concern for humanity*. So, he may have judged his own work too meanly (Brutus [1979] 2006: 214).

*Thirdly*, Brutus picks up again on the problem of dialogue and communication across the racist divides in South Africa – which is also a divide in dialogue or communication between the West and Africa. This, however, he reasons, will remain 'until Europe is ready to *concede total African humanity*' (Brutus [1979] 2006: 216f). And here, Brutus articulates a very sensitive conundrum – he calls it a 'bind' – for the African writer.

There is a very special bind here, though, that I ought to explain. Because the apartheid government—the minority white government—has tried to revive the old tribal structures and to force the Africans back into those structures in order to prevent them from participating in the present political processes, the Africans tend to be suspicious even of their own languages and literary vehicles. They are fearful that these might be turned against them and used as one further pretext to force them back into a tribal mode within a broad policy of what are known as the Bantustans—a strategy that is aimed at forcing black Africans back into tribal structures. But nevertheless there is a great deal of literature being created (Brutus [1979] 2006: 217).

Since this is the case, and in the light of the restraint of laws, prejudices and myths, he ends his paper by calling on his hearers (and especially creative writers) of the time to oppose apartheid South Africa. Still holding that a massive disastrous conflict lies in the future of South Africa, his call is to mainly reduce all forms of aid to apartheid South Africa, and thereby making a 'humane contribution' (Brutus [1979] 2006: 219). Writers should therefore be committed, precisely to oppose and expose the inhumanity of the racist apartheid system, thereby not only 'conced[ing] total African humanity' but cultivating humanity.

## **6 Non-racial Sports Activism Achievements**

Brutus's central strategy throughout his life-long career as activist, was double-sided. On the one hand, his main approach was to frustrate, impede and ultimately obstruct any form of participation or interaction of national and international bodies with South African teams that subscribe to the racist sports code of the apartheid government and not to non-racialism in sport and measure up to such in practice. On the other hand – and to not only displace but ultimately replace such ideologically-founded codes and practices – he proactively founded non-racial bodies which actively fostered and advanced non- or interracial sports. In other words, he followed an indirect strategy. Rather than confronting the apartheid government head-on politically – which would be futile as his imprisonment and banning show – he confronted the international bodies who dared to compete with apartheid teams under the racist sports code. They were then persuaded to rather work through and compete with teams under the non-racial sports code. It was therefore not Brutus himself that won the battle for non-racialism in sport vis-à-vis the apartheid government's marrying of politics and sport<sup>28</sup>, but the international community that withdrew from competition with South Africa. Moreover, Brutus's arrival on the international scene in 1965 and his

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<sup>28</sup> Vinokur's *More than a Game: Sports and Politics* (1988) broke new ground when it systematically unpacked the articulation of sports and politics in functionlist terms. In the face of claims that it forms part of 'culture' and is not 'political', he showed how politics uses achievements of elite sports men and sports women in the international arena, as instruments of propaganda and international prestige, but also for consolidating national culture and education – for purposes of nation-building, to intensify nationalism, national identity, and a socializing force for national integration (cf. Vinokur 1988:15-19). Apartheid attempted to use its international sports competitions to bring about greater integration among whites both nationally and internationally while increasing the distance between people on the basis of class and race. Cf. especially Vinokur's (1988:33-58; 59-94) case studies on Romania and East Germany as samples for studying more specifically these countries' political use of sport. His study falls short however, because it does not consider racial injustice and its articulation with sport (cf. Vinokur 1988: 138).



subsequent international activist work would provide him with ever greater opportunities to put this strategy into practice. Under the auspices of SANROC, he would have achieved many more remarkable outcomes with his human rights-based sports activism by 1970. De Broglio and Brutus (2009), first President and secretary of SASA respectively, list the following.

- Table-Tennis – White body expelled and Non-racial body recognised 1956
- Fencing – South Africa suspended 1964
- Football – South Africa suspended 1964 and expelled 1976
- Boxing – South Africa expelled 1968
- Judo – South Africa refused membership 1969
- Pentathlon – South Africa barred from World Championships 1969
- Weightlifting – South Africa expelled 1969
- IOC – International Olympic Committee – South Africa expelled May 1970
- Basketball – South Africa barred from the World Championships
- Cycling – South Africa barred from World Championships April 1970
- Gymnastics – South Africa barred from World Championships 1970
- Netball – South Africa Excluded from 1970 World Netball Tournament
- Tennis – South Africa suspended from Davis Cup 1970
- Wrestling – South Africa expelled 1970
- Cricket – Tour of Britain 1970 - Cancelled
- Rugby – After 1970, Stop the Seventy Tour was responsible for stopping all further tours
- Athletics – Suspended 1972

Significantly, South Africa was the first country to be banned from participating in the Olympics in 1964 (cf. Korr & Close 2008:55).

By the mid 1970s the international community expelled South Africa with its racist sports codes from all sports, except one, rugby. Peter Hain (1971) provides a thorough overview of the dynamics involved, especially the Stop The Seventy Tour (STST) campaign, as well as the variety of

dynamics that involved the blocking and isolation of all the other sports codes. In one of his last interviews as part of the *Fair Play* documentary by filmmaker Connie Field, Brutus made two very significant statements<sup>29</sup>. The first is that South Africa was the ‘number one power in the world in rugby. They just crushed their opposition’. Given this fact and that an international sport like rugby was ‘out there, in the public eye’, and that it was extremely popular – ‘like a religion’ – the decision was to hit the rugby fraternity hard in order to get the message of non-racialism across, that South Africa was not welcome internationally as long as it practiced racism in sport. This led to the 1970s boycott and demonstrations against touring rugby teams in both England and in New Zealand. This was very effective. The demonstrations and the worldwide media coverage it received severely discredited rugby and especially the apartheid government. By bringing the apartheid government into disrepute so publically, and having had the media report on it worldwide, South Africa’s sports culture was severely damaged. In the same *Fair Play* documentary programme, former Minister Barend du Plessis says:

Watching before your very eyes the disintegration of your sports culture, internationally, was very effective in changing the attitude of white South Africans.

Peter Hein added: ‘We just had to say, guys, sorry, the game is up. That was what they understood ...’. In the second of his statements, Brutus concludes:

It was the first area [rugby] in which apartheid was successfully

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<sup>29</sup> Providing perspectives from a number of athletes and activists, Connie Field’s documentary *Fair Play* provides factual background to Clint Eastwood’s film *Invictus*. It is part of the new series called *Have You Heard From Johannesburg? A Global Engagement Campaign for Human Rights* and provides glimpses into the dynamics that brought international teams and athletes from around the world to refuse competition with the apartheid state’s teams, and sportsmen and sportswomen as well as their allies, and so forced apartheid South African sports out of international competition ([http://activevoice.net/haveyouheard\\_fairplay.html](http://activevoice.net/haveyouheard_fairplay.html)). For the dynamics leading to and the significance of winning the rugby world cup in 1995 after the end of apartheid, see Carlin (2008).

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challenged. And it sent an absolute earthquake through white South Africa. It said: You are in real trouble.

It was in this way that Brutus and NOCSA brought the human rights crisis in South Africa to the world's attention, but also had the disdain of the world impact most dispiritingly on South Africa's white racist sports and political culture. Sports boycotts and NOCSA's international lobbying for non-competition with South Africa's white teams, most forcefully brought the realities of this, the world's most brutal repressive system to the fall. One of the statements on the documentary reads:

Calling for fairness on and off the field, citizens around the world leveraged sports to bring the human rights crisis in South Africa to the forefront of global attention. Part of a powerful documentary, *Fair Play* shows how sports boycotts helped bring one of the world's most brutally repressive systems to its knees ([http://activevoice.net/haveyouheard\\_fairplay.html](http://activevoice.net/haveyouheard_fairplay.html)).

This phase of Brutus's career – his anti-apartheid and pro-integration human rights-based sports activism – was followed by his disinvestment activism in the 1980s, and his activism against globalization forces since the 1990s. As in his sports activism, also here, his activism would be centrally marked by his human rights convictions about human equality. In sports, this translated to selection for sports teams on the basis of only merit and not race.

## **7 Writing Freedom/ Humanity**

As literary figure, Brutus first rose to prominence as teacher in 1946 - 1948 but also received his first banning order (Brutus 2006a:27). In 1950, he joined the Teachers' League and became the editor of its mouthpiece in Port Elizabeth, the journal, *Education News*. It was 'a voice for the local radical position' (Brutus 2006a:31). Open to 'anything that would help the struggle', he collaborated with Govan Mbeki and Z.K. Matthews in collecting and forwarding the requested submissions from all over the country as preparation of the drafting of the Freedom Charter (Brutus 2006a:33).

Throughout the 1950s and his continued activities in the sporting bodies – he earned the reputation as ‘the most efficient secretary in any sport’ in the 1950s (Brutus 2006a:39) – he distinguished himself in playing the primary role in the founding and building of SASA and ultimately SANROC inside South Africa. In addition to his writings already mentioned, we also find him writing a sports column for the Communist Party (CP) newspaper until the time of its banning in 1961. The newspaper was published under various names. He explains:

Of course, it wasn’t known as the CP newspaper, and it had to change names each time it was banned: from the *Guardian* to the *Clarion* to *People’s World* to *Advance* to *New Age* to *Spark*. I wrote under the name of A. de Bruin—‘a brown’ in Afrikaans— over a three-year period before I was banned in 1961. The column, which appeared on the back page, was ostensibly about sports results, but also about *the politics of race and sports* as I was building the South African Sports Association (SASA) (Brutus 2006:34).

In South Africa, he also counted some of the most vociferous critics of apartheid among his scholarly and literary friends, e.g. Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer and his erstwhile student, Arthur Nortje.

Internationally, and, having arrived in the U.S., it was through his leadership that African Literature was established as a category in U.S. curricula, and the African Literature Association (ALA)<sup>30</sup> was founded in Chicago in 1975. It was as literary figure and poet-activist that he eventually started his career as professor in literature first at Northwestern university in Evanston and finally at Pittsburgh university (cf. Brutus 2006c:159ff). Yet, when one reads his memoirs, it becomes evident that his literary activism was just as significant as his political activism. And if his main critical pieces on apartheid South Africa appeared between 1959 and 1963 it is also in his

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<sup>30</sup> Significantly, Brutus (2006c:162) reflects: ‘At the ALA meeting, I was elected chair of the steering committee and eventually I became the first president, and wrote the constitution. For the first time for any academic organization, the constitution said in the opening clause that we were committed to the liberation of the African peoples. That phrase is still there’.

reflections on this period that brings to the fore his early critical perspectives on culture, resistance, imperialism, and the language of struggle. It were these perspectives that form the central component of the non-racial and non-partisan human rights map according to which Brutus chartered his activism from our own local situation.

Reflecting on *culture* two important deductions can be made from Brutus's writings, the *first* that for him, 'culture' is equivalent to (African) 'humanity' and secondly, that non-racial activism fly in the face of politicized race – culture cannot be seen as separate from politics by the mere fact that racial existence has been politicised. The first perspective is evident in his piece, 'Culture and Resistance' (2006c:156f) where he reflects on his experience of the articulation of culture and politics due to the severe white racism they experienced at Fort Hare University.

Black resistance to that overt white racism naturally drew from their own rich African cultural experience. This was a collision of cultures—the result of a long, ancient, rich culture now being derided and denigrated. I came out of the colored community—a segregated colored community that, while very humane, did not have the kind of cultural richness you had among Africans. They had the chieftainships—extended families, the marvelous values, and a way of recognizing other people's humanity, a whole rich culture. You don't have access to that if you're in an urbanized ghetto.

Significant for the topic of this paper is that the rich African culture is defined in terms of its rich heritage of 'recognising other people's humanity'. To be cultured means to be humane. This stands in stark contrast to the racist education he experienced at the time. Viewed in this way, then resistance is not merely political, but derives from the rich African culture's humaneness.

*Secondly*, even as culture could not be seen as separate from politics, it was nevertheless divided – that of the Trotskyists on the one side – which stood for non-racialism irrespective of racial background –and the ANC which recognized the diversity of ethnic groups in politics:

The Trotskyists had always called for a non-racial South Africa; the ANC perspective was for a non-racial South Africa that would

consist of the ANC for Africans, and separate congresses each for coloreds, Asians, and white democrats. Ironically SANROC, by being non-racial, was acting in opposition to official ANC policy. It was only later in the 1960s that the ANC became open to all. Of course, they've rewritten the history, so that one is no longer aware of that fact (Brutus 2006c:157).

Parallel to the resistance politics for national liberation ran the resistance to *imperialism*. In his position that he found himself and in his attendance of the first Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers in 1969, Brutus' non-partisan human rights position again, becomes evident. He explains:

I did not represent any particular group at the Algiers conference. At the time, I was working in London for the International Defense and Aid Fund, supported by the United Nations' Trust Fund for South Africa and accredited to the UN via UNESCO, the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. In that work, I could not distinguish between the ANC, the PAC, the Trotskyist groups in the Non-European Unity Movement (later the Unity Movement), or any other group. One had to be evenhanded. In fact, I preferred it that way. So in Algiers, I was part of the liberation struggle, but in an undifferentiated way. I was neither ANC nor PAC, but something in between. I was also, of course, supporting FRELIMO, the liberation movement coming out of Mozambique, and the MPLA in Angola (Brutus 2006c:158).

It was also, due to his non-partisan and non-racial human rights position, that he was asked to be the spokesperson for the liberation movements:

The Algiers conference was sponsored by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU, which was full of reactionaries, insisted that only one person was allowed to speak for all the liberation movements. The movements elected me to speak on behalf of all of them, which was a high compliment. It was also evidence

that they trusted me to be impartial, nonpartisan. I wasn't going to back any one of them while they were fighting each other. They could trust me to simply put the case for the liberation struggles straight .... Algiers ... was really a conference for the Cold War struggle. I came in initially as a poet, and then the liberation movements asked me to speak for them.

Finally, Brutus's reflection on the language of struggle is significant for our current discussions on this matter on at least two counts. The *first* is that of writing on Africa as if Africa's problems are generated inside Africa and the opposing view that it is mainly due to Africa's postcolonial – or as he prefers to name it – neocolonial – condition. The neocolonial position cannot ignore the negative impact policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have on Africa, and these must be negotiated in literature.

The *second* concerns the use of a European or an indigenous language.

Another key debate in African literature has been on the question of language—in fact between Chinua Achebe and Ngugi, who says, you are not an African if you don't write in an African language, which is as categorical as one can be. Of course he's supported by some very bright people, including someone like Chinweizu, who in my opinion is one of the best theoretical writers in Africa. A Nigerian, Chinweizu is author of *The West and the Rest of Us*, and contends you are only an African writer if you write in an African language. And that's it. Achebe says, 'Too bad. I write in English because I'm comfortable in English'. And so you have two very clear schools of thought.

Closely associated is that the language itself brings its culture with it – which calls for the 'decolonization of the mind'.

African languages were not part of the syllabus. For me, for one thing the choice was imposed. So when I am asked to take sides between Achebe and Ngugi, I say I am on the side of both. But I can see how the colonial language has an enormous influence in shaping

the colonial mentality. That's why Ngugi's great book is called *Decolonizing the Mind*. Because if you have enslaved the mind, you don't really need chains after that.

I am sympathetic to those who are opposed to the colonial language, but I don't condemn those who use the colonial language, particularly under the circumstances that gave it to them (Brutus 2006c:164,165).

For other scholar-writers, Brutus did not appreciate V.S. Naipaul's Afro-pessimism and appreciated Said's arguments on the expansion of the canon of literature studies. Yet, in his own criticism of postcolonial theory and his own preference for the critique of neocolonialism as the paradigm which determines our existence, this choice is especially relevant in terms of his statement on globalism.

I said, 'We're not in post-colonialism anymore. We're in post-postcolonialism. We are now dealing with a global agenda to create an empire'. I talked about Paul Wolfowitz, Iraq, the preemptive war strategy, and all that. Then I went on to discuss Africa and say, 'Here's NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development—the global agenda in its African manifestation. This is South African President Thabo Mbeki functioning on behalf of George W. Bush as his point man, carrying out a subimperial agenda in Africa'.

I was trying to move them past the stage they were at. I was saying, 'You've got to take a leap into the present, because you're still in the past' (Brutus 2006c:165,166).

This statement at the 2005 conference of the European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, characterized his work of the 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century – the struggle against neo-imperialist forces in the present.

## **8 Conclusion: Taking a Leap into the Present**

Ideology has no history – it perceives itself as eternal and without contradiction. It also has material existence (Althusser 1971: 159, 165) and perpetrates its material excesses on the bodies of its others. This is how the



racist state functioned, and how it put its own ISAs and RSAs in place, administered and managed it. In addition, 'Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser 1971:162). What constitutes ideology in reality is not only the imaginary representation of existence which is distorted in the imaginary – '[people] represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form' – but the fact that the relationship itself is an imaginary relationship. The distortion of the real conditions of existence in representation is such because it is present in the relationship that characterizes ideology and the imaginary nature of this relationship. In our current argument this means that the significance of Brutus's activism lies precisely in this: that he attacked the imaginary relationships that apartheid representations produced through its race-based ISAs and RSAs. His lifelong commitment to non-racialism – even when confronted with a prize exclusively for Africans, or the discourse of negritude – speaks about his rejection of all forms of race-based relationships in favour of the human<sup>31</sup>. As these found expression in apartheid laws, apartheid sports bodies and institutions, they sought to produce distorted relations to being-human – constituting primary and secondary humanities. Yet, by propagating non-racialism and organizing and founding non-racial bodies and institutions, Brutus created the conditions of possibility and laid the future groundwork for the production of human rights-based relations of production<sup>32</sup>. That he would have had to continuously seek to describe the real relations in which people lived is therefore a given fact of his activism and is present in his writings and in his poetry. His activism was therefore the knife that cut the imaginary relations of racist apartheid production at both the national and international

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<sup>31</sup> It is quite ironic that a book such as Luke Alfred's *Testing Times* (2003) about the period 1947 – 1963 in South African cricket mentions Brutus as only black South African. Cf. Odendaal and Desai *et al.* (2002) to set the record straight – also Odendaal's (2003:338f) stringent critique of this book in which he argues that it is quite wrong of Alfred to assume that it is these white men who 'severed the game from its imperial connections'.

<sup>32</sup> For the international human rights instruments South Africa is party to, see 'Post Apartheid South Africa' at: <http://www.racism.gov.za/host/pasa.htm>.

levels<sup>33</sup>. And, the cause he sought to posit for real relations of production, non-racialism and human rights, he aimed at producing the ‘freedom of the human spirit’.

Finally, one of the ironies of irony in Dennis Brutus’s life is that apartheid banned him from speaking (teaching), writing, and printing his views in the interests of non-racialism. On the one hand, both mouth and ear were to be silenced, and writing, printing and reading forbidden on the other. Yet, if not in the international anti-apartheid movement then in Brutus himself, and especially his move into the international arena, apartheid racism met its nemesis. In Brutus we have had a non-conformist and uncompromising activist for equality and humanity – someone who showed supreme ‘care[] for freedom of thought, speech and the human spirit’ (Brutus 1963:47) vis-à-vis the ‘barbarism’ of racism. From his early experience of racism in sport at the age of twelve, his voice for justice would be characterized by his quest for and recognition of human equality. Most significantly, it would eventually show Brutus as the ultimate organizer who founded anti-apartheid institutions and as someone who has worked together and rubbed shoulders with some of the twentieth century’s great humanists – not least Wole Soyinka. It would eventually be on the international stage that he would attract an international audience, given that his relations to his audience at home were shut down. All this was the irony – that it was by having been banned, that Brutus could accomplish his task even better (cf. Hain 1971:56 – 59). It is from this position that he would serve the liberation struggle and eventually achieve so much, not least the international isolation of the segregationist and racist state. That sport was the main tool through which he accomplished this is a *sine qua non* in so far as it is the main arena in which a ‘sportsman’ public could be brought to its senses – by attacking its competition through international relations. Moreover it was through his tireless activism that he could further his push for human equality, not least in sports. One crucial area, however remained, and that was the non-racial

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<sup>33</sup> If Brutus’s activism attacked these relations on the sporting front in the 1960s and 1970s, he attacked them in the more specific economic and labour relations in the 1980s divestment campaigns – with regard to apartheid South Africa – and in terms of globalization and neoimperialism since the 1990s.

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sports infrastructure inside South Africa. Sixteen years into democracy, this is still an area that needs the nation's urgent attention.

It's time for new confrontations – if it is not Brutus's international anti-globalisation and anti-neo-imperialist and -neo-liberal struggles that need to be continued, then it is his agitation for the local development of sports in schools and clubs, the requisite infrastructure, and for schools to become the feeders for a new non-racial human rights-based generation of athletes<sup>34</sup>. Amongst others this is a major area that South Africa suffers from in her more than fifty years of underdevelopment. If Brutus asked for our attention to our real conditions of existence – equal human beings that need to compete on the basis of equality and merit – then it is only the decades of racist underdevelopment in sport that stand in our way of becoming a non-racial nation of great sportsmen and sportswomen. In this we need to ask questions of the current relations of production. As is well-known, this 'explodes' the traditional answers of the question as to the nature of the imaginary relationship present in ideology<sup>35</sup>. And, if Dennis Brutus propagated non-racialism and the freedom of the human spirit throughout his life, the continuation of this legacy in the sports arena concerns the question of the radical exclusion of racism in sport in all its aspects. Have we progressed to a fully-fledged non-racial sports code yet? <sup>36</sup> And an equally important question – which we should ponder in the wake of the 2010 World Cup – concerns Brutus' ideal of non-racial sports in the context of mass

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<sup>34</sup> A helpful distinction is between physical education and sports we normally associate with schools, 'recreational or leisure sports' the general population engages in and 'elite' (professional) sports – sport activities and events that international-level sport stars normally compete in (cf. Vinokur 1988:7ff).

<sup>35</sup> Theoretical analogies are those of Lacan's (1977) psychoanalytical analysis of the impact of the symbolic on the imaginary, the philosophical between essence and appearance of Adorno's 'intellectual experience' (cf. esp. [1966] 2008:96ff) and Foucault's critique of the universal notion of man (cf. Deleuze 1988:90) – in the interest of some form of outside contingent struggle, recognition and for justice.

<sup>36</sup> This is a question that continues to haunt South African sport and needs to be addressed comprehensively and collectively (cf. Odendaal 2003:355, n. 37; also Keohane 2002).

culture. Is not sport one of the ultimate tools in the service of capitalism – even fair, non-racial sport? (cf. Adorno 1991:90ff).

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