

Pedagogy of refuge: education in a time of dispossession

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Despite its chequered history in relation to human rights issues, South Africa has been playing host to peoples displaced and dispossessed by geographies of anger and war, poverty, economic meltdown and other human rights atrocities. Perceiving South Africa as a sanctuary, there has been a steady wave of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees coming to the country in search of better personal and professional prospects. Qualified teachers have been among the sizeable cohort of professionals seeking a new home in South Africa. This article reports on qualitative research, which comprised a sample of seven refugee teachers. It provides pen portraits of their bio/geographical pre-flight, flight and settlement experiences as they emerged from individual interview data. The article draws on theoretical insights from postcolonial theory, deconstructionist conceptions of hospitality and critical feminist notions of communities of practice to explore the personal and professional experiences of these teachers who hold part-time employment at a private school. Some of the participants also hold temporary posts at public schools in Johannesburg. Proceeding from the contention that teachers frame their identities in relation to how they feel about themselves politically, professionally, and emotionally the article explores the dialectic of refugee teacher as a guest and a host in classrooms in a foreign country. It argues that notwithstanding the non-negotiable imperative that the rights of refugee children remain high on the national redress educational agenda; of equal importance is the necessity to be cognisant of refugee teachers who are teaching in the South African education system.

Keywords: refugee teachers; teacher identity; teacher as guest and host; hospitality and post colonial and post structural theories

Introduction

Dear Teacher,

I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:

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Gas chambers built by LEARNED engineers

Children poisoned by EDUCATED physicians

Infants killed by TRAINED nurses

Women and babies shot and burned by HIGH SCHOOL and COLLEGE graduates.

So I am suspicious of education.

My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane. (Ginott 1976).

Ginott's (1976) *Letter to a Survivor*, is a sobering reminder of the crucial role teachers play in engendering a social consciousness predicated on justice and humaneness. It is consistent with the tendency to focus on the rights of the learner; and the roles and responsibilities that generally frame teacher identity. Without discounting the importance of learners' rights there have been calls to widen the lens via which we understand teacher identity – i.e. not to merely frame teachers' identity in terms of their functionality – i.e. in terms of their roles and responsibilities, but also in terms of their rights (Carrim 2001, 157). Teachers as citizens are also protected by the provisions of the South African Constitution. Understanding teacher identity in the context of developing countries; and countries that host refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers has implications for the limits and possibilities for policy reform and implementation and for understanding the complexities of teachers' personal and professional identities.

This article emanated from a larger South African Netherlands Partnership for Alternatives in Development (SANPAD) research project titled: *Women Leading in Disadvantaged School Communities*. The SANPAD Project aimed to investigate how women educational leaders navigate the challenges of leading in disadvantaged school contexts. While researching for this study, I encountered several refugee teachers in the South African education system. I thus decided to explore the experiences of female refugee teachers who assume leadership in their classroom in relation to the following objective of the SANPAD Project, namely: How does conceiving of school leadership as a conceptual narrative that is shaped by biographical, cultural, contextual, and temporal, complexities demythologise a priori conceptions about the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the school leader?

Background and historico-political context

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Africa has over 4.2 million refugees, second only to Asia (http://www.southafrica.info/travel/documents/refugees_asylum.htm). Motha (2005, 1) notes that at different times South Africa became home to peoples from different countries. When the Dutch colonised the Cape in the 1600s they returned with slaves from Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. The development of the South African mining industry in the 1800s and 1900s attracted workers from many Southern African countries. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa has experienced another wave of newcomers – people fleeing wars, drought and poverty from countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Angola, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Somalia and Ethiopia.

South Africa did not recognise refugees until 1993. It was only following the transition to democracy, in 1994, that the country became a signatory to the UN and Organization of African Unity Conventions on Refugees. Despite refugees lacking official recognition – they have remained a significant feature on the South Africa landscape and a concern in the country for decades. A Refugee Act No. 130 of 1998 governing the admission of asylum seekers was passed, and became effective in 2000. A refugee can now apply for permanent residence after five years of continuous residence since the date of asylum being granted. Only recognised refugees can apply for identity documents and an asylum application, including the appeal, should be adjudicated within 180 days (http://www.southafrica.info/travel/documents/refugees_asylum.htm).

Despite South African legislation making provision for refugees to seek shelter in the country, unlike other African countries, South Africa does not have any refugee camps. Asylum seekers and refugees survive largely without assistance. If they need support, they approach local government structures. According to the UNHCR, of the 23,000 refugees recognised in 2002, many arrived via several asylum or transit countries. They came expecting to improve their lives drastically, but many end up disappointed and demoralised when they fail to find jobs or access social services. Doctors, engineers and teachers have had to settle for menial jobs.

A 2008 survey conducted by the Institute for Race Relations showed that 22% of refugees in South Africa held postgraduate degrees compared to 14% of South Africans (see Fegan and Field 2009). Summerfield (2002, 5–6), writing about the epidemiology of war, points out that many refugees are in fact people who occupied significant roles and jobs in their home countries. They were community leaders, trade unionists, priests, teachers, and health workers. Their elimination has caused demoralisation in their countries. Since perpetrators of unrest target ways of life, a core strategy is to crush the economic, social, and cultural institutions and activities which

connect a particular people to their history, identity, and values. These refugees now seek education and employment in the host countries. Consistent with Ibrahim's (2005, 152) observations, under such volatile conditions, 'the guest becomes an undesirable foreigner and as host I risk becoming their hostage.' Such a turn of events renders the guest susceptible to hostile reception in the host country (Derrida 2000).

For the majority of local South Africans who themselves were disenfranchised for decades under the hostility of apartheid; who were denied full citizenship and were foreigners and sojourners in their own land; who were expected to produce official papers and permits (*dom pass* – translated to dumb pass) the presence of refugees is frowned upon. The restriction of movement imposed upon black South Africans by the Natives Act in 1952, commonly known as the Pass Laws Act, made it compulsory for all black South Africans over the age of 16 to carry a 'pass book.' This document served as an internal passport; referencing details on the bearer such as fingerprints, a photograph, the name of his/her employer, his/her address, how long the bearer had been employed, as well as other identification information. Employers often recorded a behavioural evaluation, on the conduct of the pass holder. The law stipulated where, when, and for how long a person could remain in a 'white' area (see Frederick 1976). Grippled by a survivalist anxiety that manifests simultaneously in a fear of difference, and a fear of sameness (these refugees who share the same fate as many disenfranchised South Africans), serves only to deepen the rift between host and guest. It is against this bitter historical and current canvas that the presence of refugees in South Africa is not accepted with the same enthusiasm and cordiality that the 2010 FIFA World Cup guests were received. Instead, they are regarded as 'outsiders' who steal potential marriage partners, steal jobs and intensify the strain on the country's budget. Exacerbating an already complex social-economic equation is the escalating poor white population. This complicates the arithmetic of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa and intensifies the scramble for limited economic and infrastructural resources (see *Mail* and *Guardian* 2004; blogs.reuters.com/.../ 26 March 2010).

Many refugees have tried to cope by plying petty trade, selling sundries such as sweets, cigarettes and matches by the roadside. A fortunate few have found casual employment as security guards and car washers. Their enterprising endeavours have not endeared them to the locals in a country where the current unemployment statistics hover at approximately 24.9%. These are people who compete for the limited resources that should be the legitimate and deferred birthright of the masses of economically invisible South Africans. In addition, many locals see the refugees as the main perpetrators of crime and violence.

A telling legacy of guest–host tensions, made international headlines in 2008 when a wave of brutal xenophobic attacks (which have subsequently

been coined Afro-phobic attacks) swept through the townships of Alexandra, Cleveland, Diepsloot, Hillbrow, Tembisa, Primrose, Ivory Park and Thokoza in Johannesburg. The attacks forced thousands of refugees to flee inhumane living conditions and to seek refuge in churches and police stations. Such episodes give substance to Bauman's (cited in Hattam and Every 2010, 419) lament about the 'impossibility of community' – which is not a greenhouse of community feelings. It is on the contrary a laboratory of social disintegration, atomization and anomie.'

It is against this traumatic psycho-social landscape that Ibrahim's (2005, 150) haunting questions activate a psychic-disequilibrium when confronted with the corporeality of the foreigner – the refugee teacher. Ibrahim writes:

The foreigner is the other, the guest, the immigrant...who 'turn up' at our front door and 'traumatize.' They traumatize, first, because we don't know what to do with them. Do we give them asylum, 'home' and welcome them? If so, how? Or do we...return them to the place from which they were expelled? Second, they traumatize us through their stories Whenever the question of the foreigner is posed, it has to be inverted into ethics. How can we go on living after witnessing trauma?

Postcolonial and deconstructionist conceptions of hospitality

In a preliminary attempt to rupture the silence about the narratives of refugee teachers in the South Africa education system, I extrapolate from postcolonial; and deconstructionist sensibilities to explore how discourses on hospitality can provide a lens via which to engage education as an economy of hospitality. I also recruit insights offered by critical feminism as they relate to notions of communities of practice.

Post-colonial theories that entertain the issue of hospitality, according to Morrison and O'Gorman (2008, 216) investigate the politics of hospitality by exploring issues related to democracy, citizenship, social exclusion, xenophobia, and racism to reveal the ethics and politics of hospitality and the status of the stranger, visitor, migrant, asylum seeker, and refugee. Deconstructionist theories, as popularised by Derrida (1998, 2000) conceive of hospitality as inviting and welcoming the 'stranger.' This invitation occurs on two levels: the personal level where the 'stranger' is welcomed into the home; and at the level of individual countries.

However, Derrida contends that the law of hospitality is a law of tension; a Janus-faced dialectic that contains two laws: conditional and unconditional. On the one hand, unconditional hospitality is a gracious act that is not performed out of duty. It expects nothing in return. It is a law without law, where the stranger turns into an awaited guest. (Derrida 2000). This gesture of unconditional invitation is impossible without sovereignty of oneself over one's home. The stranger is welcomed as non-enemy. Ironically, one can become xenophobic in order to protect one's sovereignty, one's

own right to unconditional hospitality, the very home that makes the latter possible. (Derrida 2000). However, unconditional hospitality becomes an impossible possibility under the Geneva Convention and international laws and Home Affairs Ministries where passports, visas, proof of medical and travel insurance, proof of vaccines, repatriation cover, proof of accommodation, proof of return ticket, a letter from one's employer indicating date of resumption of duty after travel and daily subsistence are but some of the prerequisite legal travel documentation one needs to produce for entry into most 'first world' nations. This is in addition to having one's fingerprints scanned, being body searched, posing for cameras and appearing for in-person interviews. The net result is that, under such circumstances, there can only be conditional hospitality offered. This renders the enterprise of unconditional hospitality conditional and contingent upon compliance with bureaucratic imperatives.

In an effort to capture the essence of hospitality studies (Morrison and O'Gorman 2008, 216) made a preliminary attempt to craft the following working definition:

...[hospitality] represents the cordial reception, welcome and entertainment of guests or strangers of diverse social backgrounds and cultures charitably, socially or commercially with kind and generous liberality, into one's home space to dine and/or lodge temporarily. Dependent on circumstance and context the degree to which the hospitality offered is conditional or unconditional may vary.

For the duration of the guests' sojourn in the host country, they develop communities and engage either legitimately or illegitimate; peripherally or centrally in the enterprise of social interactions and participation. Focusing specifically on the refugee teachers – they become part of the community of South African teachers and the terms and conditions of their employment as teachers determines their location and status within the teaching fraternity. In trying to explore their location and status within this professional community Griffith's (2005) invocation of critical feminism as it engages notions of a community of practice offers a useful analytical lens. Griffiths (2005, 4) postulates that: firstly, practices are marked by embodiment; which does not translate into merely being attentive to the fact that members of a community of practice are bodies and that these bodies may not be male. Attentiveness to embodiment entails understanding that practices, like the human beings who create them, are relational and formed in particular material circumstances. This necessitates taking cognisance of various identity markers – such as skin colour, sexuality, disability, age, sex, language – the grist which constructs a conceptual bio/geographical narrative of identity (6). Secondly, communities of practice are characterised by diversity. A community can comprise a community of learners, rather than a set of novices seeking a single model of expertise. Thus, not only does entering a

community of practice help define ‘who we are’ both as a group and as individuals, but also ‘who we are,’ our particular identity, helps define the community of practice through the models of expertise, which develop (7). Thirdly, it is important to recognise the systematic and structural issues that mediate power relationships within communities of practice. This crucial issue has been mapped on the blind spot in the discourse on communities of practice (8).

Pen- portraits of refugee teachers

An episode in the dark history of apartheid was the 1976 Soweto Student protest against divisive education laws. Against this political backdrop, Sacred Heart College (SHC), a private, privileged school in Johannesburg was among the first to facilitate access, in 1977, to all races as part of the Catholic churches resolution to defy apartheid education. SHC transformed its enrollment from an all-white, Catholic boys’ school into a racially mixed, religiously diverse, co-educational school. (Christie 1990). SHC subsequently faced harassment and hostile repercussions from the South African government. Continuing with its legacy to be socially responsive, currently, in an arrangement that juxtaposes privilege with destitution, SHC runs the Three2Six (3–6 p.m.) programme on its campus. The Three2Six programme was initiated by the head of Sacred Heart College, in 2007. Approximately 100 refugee children between five and 13 years of age from the surrounding suburbs of Yeoville, Berea, Hillbrow are enrolled in the bridging Three2Six programme which helps refugee children transition to mainstream South African public schools. In the heyday of apartheid, these downtown suburbs were affluent communities boasting the economic wealth of the ‘city of gold.’ Over the years they have fallen into squalor, with the attendant maladies of crime, sexual and gender violence, poverty, a housing scarcity and HIV/AIDS plaguing the community (see Perumal 2009).

Proceeding from the feminist axiom that the personal is political, I narrate the pedagogic journeys of teachers who have been granted refugee status in South Africa and who have been employed by SHC. While South Africa has education legislation that ensures the inclusion of refugee and immigrant students in its schooling system, in a country that is battling its way towards redress for the black South African majority, refugee children get short shrift because of their socio-economic vulnerability; linguistic variance; lack of official documentation; their arrival in the country at times that fall outside the calendar of the South African school year. In an attempt to offer a bridging programme that will accommodate the unique and tragic circumstances of the children, the SHC Three2Six programme is based on a modified version of the South African National Curriculum with a special focus on Basic Numeracy, Basic Literacy and Life Skills. It aims to prepare the children for entry into mainstream public schools. Furthermore, it

provides the children with a meal, school uniforms and free transportation to and from school. It also helps place the children – on average after a period of two to three years – at public schools. Furthermore, it provides the children’s parents; guardians, and custodians with medical clinics and helps them with their application for official documents.

The narratives in this study are drawn from approximately 90 minutes long individual interviews that were conducted with seven refugee teachers who had obtained their teacher qualifications in their countries of origin (namely, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and are employed in the Three2Six SHC bridging programme. Testifying once again to the continued feminisation of the teaching profession there are six female teachers who teach on the programme. They are Sophia, Grace, Lydia, Judith, Janice, and Celine. Milton is the only male teacher; and Hans is the 20-year-old German who was conducting his army replacement service administering the Three2Six bridging programme in 2011. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

Ager (2001, 4–5) delineates four phases of the refugee experience, namely: pre-flight, flight, temporary settlement and resettlement/repatriation. I have modified these phases as a useful trope to sketch the profile of the refugee teachers that participated in the study:

(i) Pre-flight: the refugee teachers are all married with children.

They were employed as teachers in their home countries and boast between 12 to 20 years of experience in the profession. They belonged to teachers’ unions. All hold teaching degrees. They taught maths, biology, business education and one taught at a special needs school. Many fled their countries because of the ongoing economic and political crises. Some were accused of belonging to opposition political parties. Many escaped with their lives leaving behind their children, family and legal documents. Some entered the country legally with temporary travel visas. Some of the circumstances that led to these teachers seeking refuge in South Africa are reflected in the following excerpts from the interviews with Sophia, Grace and Milton:

Sophia: In 2001 I arrived in South Africa. It wasn’t easy at all to integrate into a South Africa system. It was many things that brought me to South Africa...family things...marital things. I don’t want to go into that...because now, no one will believe me because now I’m having another man. [My husband in the DRC] used to be in Mobutu system. When Kabela came, it took him over; he went to the war and got killed. He told me he was going somewhere I went to find out where he is. When I went there everything started because he’s saying that I have no family around me, they’re all gone, so it was, that thing that brought me here in the fear of my life. A friend of him told me that he’s no more. He was killed – not in the war but they just shoot him because they did not believe that he had no family...they truly

thought maybe he's still with the children of Mobutu. I came alone. I left my two children with my mother in the village. They're still there.

Grace: I am from Zimbabwe. In South Africa, I'm in a foreign country...and I'm working as a refugee, in a refugee school. My family is still in Zimbabwe. I came alone here in South Africa. The little that I get, I send groceries and funds to keep them going at home. In South Africa most of my money goes to rent rather than using it to buy or pay for whatever I want The circumstances that brought me to South Africa in 2007 were the economic hardship; from my meek salary I was no longer able to support myself and my family. The money was just very, very little. There are not only political refugees. There are some economic refugees in South Africa, which was one of the contributory factors to economic hardships.

Milton: When we came here it was both economic and a political situation in Zimbabwe...teachers were being labelled as supporting the opposition...especially those teaching in the rural areas. We were chased from the rural area. They were saying, 'You are supporting the opposition. Get away.' They could beat you, you can even be killed. I moved out of the rural areas and went to town. It was for the safety of my children and my family to get out of that situation...

- (ii) **Flight:** Many fled with little or nothing and under constant fear of being caught and killed. Their flight period sometimes extended over two years (this was particularly the case with refugees who fled from the DRC or Rwanda). The scantiness of the participants' voices in this section of the paper is indicative of how painful the experiences were for the participants and I was sensitive not to delve into memories that were still raw with emotion. However, Hans, reflected on refugee flights as follows:

Hans: ...many teachers and students were traveling for years. Some were on the road from Rwanda to South Africa for two years, because everywhere they came they were not accepted so they had to move on, move on, move on so they settled here in South Africa where at least they have formal acceptance.

- (iii) **Transitioning settlement:** Many had to co-habit with people under difficult conditions and did not have money to contribute to the living expenses. Benevolence/unconditional hospitality can be short-lived as the pressure to contribute financially mounts. They walked long distances (on average 15 kilometres) trying to find any kind of employment or to distribute their résumés to refugee organisations that assisted in forwarding their documents to schools. Their qualifications had to be verified by the South African Qualifications Association (SAQA); and they had to be registered as teachers by the South African Council for Educators. Many were unemployed for over two to three years after their arrival in SA. Some were able to find jobs

outside of their expertise. Judith's and Sophia's excerpts capture, in shorthand, the prolonged trials of the teachers:

Judith: ...people would say in South Africa the chances of getting employment were a little bit higher; but I stayed for almost a year without working . . . I went to many refugee organisations and to the Methodist Church seeking help with finding employment; but at last I met Thembi...who said 'there's a refugee school which is about to open.' I went there with my CV and I gave it to Thembi who said: 'I need someone who is trustworthy who can take the two CVs to the Refugees' Ministries.' I volunteered because I was really desperate for work. Thembi said: 'Please don't go around collecting more CVs. You must be honest.' So I took them to the fourth floor in Braamfontein along Smit Street Thembi said the school was going to open in January; but January passed, there was nothing. Maybe it was early February when I received a call. I went there very early, Monday morning During those days life was tough because most of the time I used to walk around Jo'burg. I had no transport funds. I was kept by my cousin in Yeoville but then people were not all that kind...to keep supporting me for a long time. Life was really difficult. I then woke up in the morning residing here at Yeoville, and I walked to Braamfontein. This gentleman said: 'We've short listed your name for the refugee school. They want copies of your certificates as proof that you are really a teacher.' When I saw that the chances of getting a job were promising, I kept checking – almost every day I used to go there. One day I asked this gentleman when the interview's going to be held. He said: 'Actually the interviews will be held at Sacred Heart College.' One day when I went there he said: 'I think the interviews will be held today.' I walked from Braamfontein to Sacred Heart College I can't remember but it is a long walk. I was now used to walking. When I arrived at SHC they gave me a warm welcome but they said the person who has the information about the refugee school is in a meeting. I waited there for about an hour. They ended up giving me some muffins and a job at the Three2Six School.

Sophia: I did postgraduate studies in Forced Migrations at the University of the Witwatersrand. I graduated in 2004 I did not find the job. Whenever I was applying, they were saying: 'No sorry'...it wasn't easy because we need to pay rent, need to eat. I went in the studio for beading and sewing at Sun Goddess. There I was sitting, putting buttons and beads in the clothes; sitting with unqualified people. Now that was torture...they knew that I'm an educated person and seeing me sitting there and they could say that I will go nowhere...it's only people who do not have qualification who can get a job in South Africa. That was torture, I'm telling you even if you think they are your friend, they will beat up your family; they will just talk against you I used to work for 8 hours being paid R1200.00 a month. The rent was R2000.00. The other money we just have to do extra work so I used to plait hair. Sometimes I was not even sleeping so that I can have extra money by plaiting. If somebody needed an appointment I go and plait...during the night, and then in the next morning I go and work.

In 2007 I decided to drop Sun Goddess. I went to my new boyfriend's family in Pretoria. My friend called me from Sun Goddess. He said 'you told me that

you are a teacher. They are looking for teachers in Johannesburg. Go and drop your CV at Braamfontein.’ The same day I came to Braamfontein and dropped my CV at a teacher agency. I just went. I did not even ask many questions. They called me to bring my SAQA things. After one week they called me for the interview at Sacred Heart College.

Those teaching on the SHC Three2Six programme are very grateful for what they regard as divine intervention. SHC pays them a reasonable salary, provides bursaries for their children back in their countries; and pays for the teachers’ postgraduate studies. Many are enrolled at the open and distance education University of South Africa where they are studying for an Honours or Masters Degree. Being able to work from three to six p.m. enables some to take on temporary posts at government schools. There is a mixture of being very grateful for their employment coupled with a sense of ensuring that they comply with all the requirements so as not to risk losing their jobs. Milton alludes to this in the following extract:

Milton: ...that’s why they say home is always best. Whenever you are in a foreign land things are not your way. They are not on your side. You always do things with that phobia. ‘What will happen next?’ You won’t express yourself as you would, if you were in your home because if you say ‘I express myself to this’ what will be the impact, what will be the results? Won’t I put myself in a situation that will affect me? I should do my best so that they will be impressed by me...so that I remain in employment no matter how difficult or no matter how you are told, I will have to do. That’s why we don’t have a choice, that’s why you have to accept whatever you get so that it’s not for me only otherwise you think of what you left behind.

Some teachers on the Three2Six programme have also been successful at securing employment as substitute teachers at public schools. These teachers reflected on the harassment and victimisation they endured in their interactions with South African teachers and learners in the public schools, who treated them with disrespect, made fun of their countries of origin, called them derogatory names and generally made them feel unwelcome. This emerges in the following excerpts:

Lydia: I think the first term when I taught here it was a bit difficult. I lost weight. What made it worse was that you are a foreigner and your country is in the headlines, everyday You lose respect unlike if you are, say ‘Nigerian.’ South Africans think Nigerians are the best foreigners; they are strong, no one can do anything to them. But the moment someone says ‘Zimbabwean’ what comes in their mind is what they see on TV, at the border post in Beit Bridge someone getting in through the fence The first day, I told myself that I’ll never hide where I come from. I told them the first day I’m from Zimbabwe and they’ll ask you, ‘So do you go with your wheelbarrow to buy bread?’, ‘Why?’, ‘Oh because we heard that bread costs \$1000,000...so you can’t put the money in the handbag ma’am, so are you going to go with your wheelbarrow to go and buy bread?’ You would get such comments.

- (iv) **Tenant settlement:** Those who have been able to supplement their income from SHC with other part time jobs have been able to get their own tenant accommodation; but it is extremely difficult because they still have to send money home to their families. Many miss their families and yearn to return to their home countries.

Sophia: I have never gone to there [DRC] since 2001. [We can communicate now] because they've cell phones. My first born...now is going to the university. Now it's much easier...to communicate Maybe he [first born] can come, maybe I can go...through Zambia [to visit].

Janice: I came to South Africa looking for peace and safety. Once I arrived here it wasn't easy. I was attacked three times by tsotsis. Beaten there in Hillbrow and policemen were just watching; and tsotsi they took my handbag and everything. I saw it was not so safe then I thought about going back home, I decided to stay and hang on until everything gets better. In Hillbrow and Berea, you are very exposed to anything. Although the police or cameras are there anything can happen to you. Some places it is safe. Now depends... which life you are living...high or low one. When you are down there, you are exposed to anything.

Sophia: I dream of going home one day...one day. Although I have a new family, I miss my family at home in the DRC.

Teacher as guest-host

The pen portraits of the teachers have provided a sneak preview into their pre-flight, flight; and temporary settlement experiences. Their experiences have impacted on their personal and professional identities; and takes on added significance in light of the contention that the education enterprise is neither neutral nor apolitical. It is a highly contested terrain nuanced by who teaches what to whom, where, why and how. Emanating from diverse political, ideological, geographic and cultural backgrounds, the teachers in the Three2Six programme find themselves in a vaguely familiar community of practice. Knit together by the tenuous bonds of their tragic circumstances; and wearing the tag of 'refugee teachers' they were brought together by the hospitality extended to them by the Three2Six programme. These teachers constitute a unique community within the micro campus of SHC and the more expansive community of the South African teaching fraternity. Lave and Wenger's (1991, 98) formulation of a community of practice is an insightful point of entry into understanding this social configuration. Lave and Wenger define a community of practice as:

...individuals engaged in mutual endeavours, associated with a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire of history. The formation of a community of practice is synonymous with the negotiation of identities. Identity is a learning trajectory of who we are; by where we have been and where we are going.

Central to the formation of a community of practice is the negotiation of identities. Drake, Spillane and Hufferd-Ackles' (2001) contend that teachers define and negotiate their identities in relation to 'their sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work and change.' Jansen (2001, 242–243) posits that teachers' sense of self may be organised around how teachers conceive of themselves, professionally, emotionally and politically. I borrow from Drake et al. (2001) and Jansen's (2001) formulations of teacher identity to comment on how the teachers in the study reflect on their political, professional, and emotional lives within the community of practice of teaching.

Politically: Teachers' conceptions of their political identity coheres around their values; backgrounds; professional interests; their own education philosophies in relation to the philosophies in policy. The pen portraiture of the teachers in this study excavate important issues relating to the dynamics and politics of how they ply their trade in a foreign context; and how they frame their professional identities in relation to the images of teachers as defined in South African educational policies. Griffiths (2005, 4) succinctly captures a community of practice as, 'what we do' or 'the way we do things round here.' The way South African teachers are expected to do things 'around here' as enshrined in policy rhetoric have been informed by retrospective and prospective ideologies. The retrospective/historical image of South African teachers was shaped by apartheid precepts, principles and philosophies. Teachers were expected to be State functionaries who were obedient and compliant civil servants who acted as conduits to domesticate the nation into subservience. However, a plethora of post-apartheid educational policies recast the script and personae of teachers as transformative intellectuals who are expected to promote the Constitutional values of the rainbow nation. These policy documents agitate for a major overhaul of education and training in South Africa in order to restore a culture of learning and teaching. Central to the vision for the new education system is the promotion of the values of democracy; social justice and equity; non-racism and non-sexism; ubuntu (human dignity); an open society; accountability (responsibility); respect; the rule of law and reconciliation as enshrined in *The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education 2001). The *Norms and Standards for Educators of 2000* (Government Gazette No 20,844) envisage teachers as mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and learning area/phase specialists. Cumulatively, these policies are geared towards creating:

A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled

lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice. (National Curriculum Statement Overview, 8)

Notwithstanding the noble ideals that these policies espouse – much has been written about the policy-practice disjuncture; and the intensification of teacher labour that these good intentioned policies engender. However, the more salient point is that the refugee teachers share a common sense of psychic disequilibrium as do the vast majority of South African teachers. Both the guests and the host teachers are unaccustomed to the practical and material manifestations of democracy, liberation, emancipation and social justice having shared the common history of being beneficiaries of political, social and economic subjugation; apartheid, dictatorships and pseudo-democracies. Thus, they find themselves being tasked with promoting a social vision that has hitherto been foreign to their experiential realities. They are called upon to enact transformational identities that they have had no socialisation in. In the case of the refugee teachers – this is why they fled their countries in the first instance. Sophia hints about the situation in the DRC as follows:

It won't be easy to change the Constitution or the curriculum in the DRC. Eh! It's a big joke. Don't go there please. The Department of Education is there, but the way it functions is a little bit tricky. You can buy your qualifications. There's a lot of corruption. There are no computers. Everything is hand written – so anyone can do it – just change the marks, grades, anything.

Thus, guest and host at some point in their histories shared a collective political identity forged by memories of disenfranchisement. However, as the pen portraits have shown the similarities of the guest and the host does not eventuate in the extension of unconditional hospitality – instead their similarities engender a frustration that the dawn of a new South African political dispensation will not alter their fate because the structural power differentials are too calcified to dismantle.

Professionally: Teachers' professional identities refer to their capacity to teach by virtue of their subject matter competence; levels of training and preparation; and their formal qualifications. While highlighting the pluses, politics and dynamics that accrue from the casualisation of labour (the refugee teachers teach from three to six p.m.); which allows some of the teachers to hold down substitute teaching posts at public schools during the day; this casualisation of labour relegates them to peripheral membership status and shapes their temporary participation within their community of practice. Their temporary and peripheral participation means that there is job uncertainty and they do not qualify for employment benefits. Furthermore, the refugee teachers are not a homogeneous group of professionals. They do not share the same cultural and social history that mainstream discourses on communities of practice sketch. They belong to different nationalities, speak

different languages and have diverse social-cultural and political ideologies. They were trained as teachers in contexts that were informed by different pedagogic ideologies. Furthermore, they have to teach students who emanate from vastly diverse backgrounds and life worlds. For many of the teachers on the Three2Six programme, teaching Basic Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills is a departure from their subject matter competence, and from what their formal qualifications would have equipped them to teach. The Three2-Six curriculum offerings signify, on the one hand, a deskilling and erosion of their epistemological expertise since they are not engaging in the subject content that they have the expertise in; however, on the other hand, they expand their repertoire of knowledge into domains that are new while sharpening their pedagogic expertise as they respond creatively and courageous by employing teaching techniques that promote learning. For example, Judith reflects on her teaching experience as follows:

...most of the children who learn in Three2Six come from Congo and English is foreign to them. So initially I had the language problem with them because most of them could not understand English and I could not understand their languages well. Through patience and dedication I managed and by the end of the year most of the pupils could now read and communicate in English.

Celine who also works as a substitute teacher at a public school illustrates through her narrative, how her professionalism and pedagogic expertise help her negotiate the minoritising images that are associated with her embodiment – the colour of her skin; her race; her nationality and her command of the English language:

Celine: Honestly, I think some parents don't like their children to be taught by black teachers...especially English. You get that feeling...they don't trust you. With time yes, some begin to respect you. There was a day when we gave out reports, one of the parents said to me: 'Oh, you are the black teacher my child was talking about.' You don't even know what that means. It could be positive but I don't know...that is the thing, *black teacher*. They shouldn't see any colour. It's not that I'm not proud to be black but...because of all the connotations that get attached to it. ...the last term we had a comprehension exercise on Robert Mugabe. First of all it was Winston Churchill then the next one was Mugabe, then Nelson Mandela. You can actually see the contrast. When we read the exercise on Mugabe most of them will be shouting 'Yeah, Zimbabwe!' knowing so well...you are from Zimbabwe and I would join them in their jokes. Crack jokes with them so that it becomes nothing. If you get cross then you won't be able to handle it. I don't get cross. I have to remind them like there is a word they use – *makwerekwere* (foreigners) – I always tell them I'm here by choice. I'm here because I'm qualified and I'm proud to be a Zimbabwean. I would never lie to you that I'm South African. I don't regret what I am. I always tell them...not in a manner which is rude or showing that it hurt me. In fact it doesn't hurt me anymore. The problem is with learners when you are a foreigner...and especially when you are from

Zimbabwe they think you stay in a shack ... They think the worst because what they see on TV, those squatter camps...that's what they associate you with. During the first days, honestly, it would affect me. These people don't even know you also have a life. They are not thinking enough. I told myself I will never get angry. But when you really buckle down to dealing with those substantial sensitive issues when you have various opinions being shared I allow them to discuss as it is...like when we talked about Mugabe, I went on to elaborate, amplifying exactly what was happening in Zimbabwe...for their benefit for them to understand. So it's open for multiple discussion...and telling them even more Last week they wrote a poem about Indian children and there were questions which were so racial...we dealt them as they were... even going on to explain why there is need for people to understand, to appreciate differences, to appreciate different cultures You give examples in class because we have got Indians, coloureds, and blacks. They also ridicule your pronunciation I said: 'Anyone from England in this class? So it is a second language to all of us. We should appreciate the differences.' Simple. Now they joke about it. So it's no problem anymore.

In light of Celine's pedagogic encounter, Quinn's (2010, 102) questions bay for attention, when she asks:

How hospitable (or not) is the institution of education to its own mission, and to those who participate in it? Are classrooms places hospitable to learning? Are teacher-student relationships those that welcome the experience of the other-the unknown stranger-in our midst? Does the curriculum invite the child into a broader and deeper relationship with the world in all its wondrous mystery- its inexorable *otherness*?

Celine's response to the hostility leveled at her in the classroom is reminiscent of Hattam and Every's (2010, 422) articulation of a post-indignation pedagogy framed by (re)conciliation. In the face of the symbolic violence that is meted out to her because she embodies a teacher identity that is different from her students, instead of wielding her pedagogic and epistemological authority punitively, Celine enacts pedagogical practices that are laced with gestures of restorative justice, and conciliation rather than persecution, incrimination and confrontation. Like Ibrahim (2005) rather than succumb to the script that could render her a hostage at the hands of hostile students, Celine recruits her foreignness as a resource; as transformative pedagogic capital and a source for deliberative and critical dialogue. In addition to dealing with sensitive political issues that touch her at a personal level; she also educates her students that difference should not be misconstrued as deficit. Through a radical presence she establishes conditions in which dialogue is possible. In doing so she invents new modes of relationship through fearless speech (Foucault, cited in Hattam and Every 2010, 422). This transforms her from a guest in a foreign classroom into a gracious and forgiving hostess, and returns us to Quinn's (2010, 107–108) postulation that:

...perhaps, the call of hospitality in our curriculum labours, is the call to joy, a return to...heart of the life of the mind. We own the fact that the place we really want to dwell in is possibility, which is also a place of pleasure, promise, and play Laughter, putting us into our body, implicitly utters the wisdom of an embodied mind, body, and spirit. To describe hospitality is to describe the delightfulness of being human The question of hospitality may help us at least invite ways...to more fully dwell in this deliciousness, even and especially amid difficulty.

Celine's hospitable pedagogic response promotes the South African vision of the National Curriculum Statement (Overview, 8) which:

... imagine[s] a learner who will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice...confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen.

Celine also comments on her attempts to re-position herself from peripheral professional participation to becoming more centrally involved in the mainstream activities of the school:

...this coming holiday there is training...for Grade 10 teachers, I'm not teaching Grade 10s but I asked the principal if I could also join so that I could benefit. It's the first cluster meeting I'm going to. We discuss the syllabus... ask for more support...maybe for more workshops...

Emotionally: This refers to teachers' capacity to handle the emotional demands of the profession and those of their students and parents; in addition to managing their personal stresses. There is a mandate for South African teachers to assume pastoral roles as part of their job description. Critical feminist discourses have expanded on Marxist conceptions of labour to include the emotional labour that teachers carry (see Perumal 2007). In the absence of cooperation from parents, the refugee teachers have to work doubly hard to ensure that they create supportive and empowering learning environments for their learners. The following excerpts encapsulate the emotional demands placed on these teachers:

Sophia: They come from different parts of Africa. One of the children in Grade 1, the father is not there. The mother is all alone and she does not have any job so she provide herself by selling cigarettes and dagga (marijuana) in the street...when you come to South Africa you will try to do anything so you can have money...that is also affecting the learners. There is no follow up from the parents...when the parent is there for them to do their homework you can see they are progressing very well; but some, once they go home, even if you give the children homework parents don't even know. The child says 'my father just throw it in the dustbin' or 'my mother did tear it.' There is that problem the children are facing. While coming to school we need to

help them. I ask them next time if your mother don't want to do with you your homework, ask your brother or your neighbour. Maybe he can help...

Hans: I think main challenges are different backgrounds of the parents and children. We have a lot of complaints from younger children, 'this one is beating me, this one is violent, this one is swearing at me.' It's a lot of aggravation...especially between the boys. I'm sure it's the same way...in normal primary schools but, here, it's on another level because they are swearing: 'You are Rwandan' and especially in their own languages so nobody of us understands what they are saying. Some of the teachers maybe understand, and then they are solving the situations. It comes, also into the classroom but during the lessons they're silent, but when they're out of work, then it could start. Another problem I am struggling with...some parents are not too cooperative. Some parents are here for three years and they don't want to get their children into the mainstream school.

Sophia's and Hans' excerpts highlight the diversity that they have to navigate as it relates to divergent conceptions of parenting. Absent fathers and/or parents operating in survival mode often means that these children are bereft of 'emotionally present' parents. Refugee parents who themselves are assailed by circumstances too difficult to negotiate may tend to relegate their responsibilities to the teachers. This intensifies the teachers' emotional and invisible labour. In an attempt to forge stronger ties with the students' community, Sophia encourages her students to seek the help of siblings and neighbours.

While dealing with the stresses and strains of the children under their wings; these teachers have to also cope with their personal trauma. The teachers all reflected on the traumas that they endured during the pre-flight, flight and settlement in South Africa. None of the teachers alluded to receiving any psychological counseling for the trauma they experience(d). Western literature is vocal about therapy for post traumatic stress disorders, but there is an apparent silence about therapy for continued and sustained trauma that is engendered by the real and symbolic violence that the refugee teachers and their students endure. Furthermore, mainstream psycho-therapy tends towards individual psychological debriefing modeled on talk therapy which is regarded as a crucial ventilation mechanism. However, Summerfield (2001, 42) in writing about the nature of conflict and the refugee experience reminds us that:

...war is a collective experience and perhaps its primary impact on victims... is through their witnessing the destruction of a social world embodying their history, identity, and living values and roles. This is not a private injury, being carried by a private individual.

Raphael et al. (in Summerfield 2001, 43) noted that:

...many non-western cultures have little place for the revelation of intimate material outside a close family circle. Mozambiquan refugees described forgetting as their normative means of coping with past difficulties; while Ethiopians call this 'active forgetting.'

The teachers in this study did not dwell on their past and present traumas. Although many bitter tears careened down their faces during the interviews – especially when they spoke about their families – dead and alive – that they had left behind in unsafe places; their narratives foregrounded their professional lives and the postgraduate studies that they were pursuing. Janice reflected on her social acquaintances as follows:

I get together with my friends who are based in Yeoville. They are also refugee teachers. We discuss what our students did not master. We try to find some more material to reinforce the teaching. Sometimes we discuss general life issues and sometimes we discuss about our studies and our professional work.

The overwhelming impulse that emerged from the teachers' reflections seemed consistent with the strategy of active forgetting as they soldier on through their pain; masking their tears; wearing a brave professional front as they strive to create a better world for children in whose faces they see their own abandoned children – left behind in places that they thought were too unsafe to be in. The badge of pain and sadness that the refugee teachers and students wear is perhaps best captured by Sophia in the following excerpt:

My teaching style is I make it easy...not to be very hard...when I'm teaching I always have a smile...and to the children who are very sad I make jokes...and I do something to attract them to follow what I am saying so that no-one is behind. I think of my children. When I left they were so young, so I always have that image [sobbing]. When I see these children I take them like my own children and when I'm teaching them I want to do my best so that they can be good one day.

Embracing pedagogies of nurturance, and compassion, Sophia – like so many other dispossessed teachers – survive in a liminal third space, torn between the here and now and there and bitter sweet fractured memories, their 'carnivals of compassion' (Hattam and Every 2010, 422) emanating from a bodily and psychic dislocation that slides between being guests and hosts as they enact a pedagogy of refuge in a new home away from home. Perhaps, Westfield's (2010, 97–98) haunting poem *Body Parts* captures in small measure, the sum of so colossal an experience, when she writes:

Some parts I carry with me

In tattered drawstring bags

Draped 'cross my shoulders & waist
Some in boxes and baskets
Hoisted balanced upon my untended head
A few parts are
Clutter tucked & squeezed between my thighs
Others holstered tightly
At the small of my aching back
Still others I have lost track of
Left in bygone assaults & insipidness
Some few precious parts I have hidden
Buried in mother earth
Camouflaged in war-torn jungles
Concealed in rotting carcasses
No one dare venture there
So many parts are missing faded damaged
It is difficult
To re-member my whole
Danceable self

Conclusion

The article proceeded from the contention that there is a need to widen the research lens so as to explore the political, professional and emotional landscape of refugee teachers. As an entry point into mapping the personal and professional lives of refugee teachers, who practice their profession in foreign classrooms in foreign countries, the bio/geographical narratives of the refugee teachers was used to gain an understanding of their political, professional and emotional identities. The study showed that there is a dissonance between the policy images of teachers as transformative intellectuals charged with the mandate to educate for informed participation in democracies and

their material experiences as beneficiaries of political regimes of oppression and disenfranchisement. Professionally, the participants are grateful for being temporarily employed. However, the casualisation of labour that they experience has resulted in a deskilling and an erosion of their expert pedagogic content knowledge. This obtained from the arrangement that saw them teaching in learning areas outside of their repertoire of expertise. Furthermore, because they were not at the centre of their communities of practice they felt de-centred from mainstream professional activities and decision-making. Those participants who worked as substitute teachers in public schools had to negotiate the minoritising views local students and colleagues had of them. When faced with students who were skeptical of their pedagogic credibility and abilities, rather than respond punitively, they employed strategies of restorative justice and transformed potentially deleterious episodes into productive pedagogic moments. In doing so, one participant in particular was able to promote the un-learning of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

Discussion about the emotional landscape of the refugee teachers testified to the intensification of the emotional and invisible labour that these teachers had to carry as part of their pastoral roles. Perhaps, the exploration of the teachers' emotional identities, more than their other identities, reaffirmed the need to divest educational scholarship of a reductionist mindset that frames teacher identities in terms of functionalist roles and responsibilities and to instead appreciate teachers' rights as human beings. It also provoked recognition of the variance between Western-centric and ethnocentric/Afro-centric psycho-social therapeutic strategies to deal with continuing traumatic stress disorder.

The narratives of the refugee teachers are instructive in that they provoke the remembrance that many African countries were gracious hosts and safe havens to South Africans during the dark night of apartheid. However, the psycho-social tensions that emerge both for disenfranchised South Africans and the refugee teachers is symptomatic of a deeper anomaly that is tied to the status of the host's indivisible sovereignty. Derrida (2000) postulates that in welcoming the guest, the self is interrupted; this means that in order to be hospitable, the host must rid him/herself of security, authority and property and invite the new arrival, unconditionally. In order to exercise indivisible sovereignty, the host must possess indivisible sovereignty so that s/he can offer him/herself as hostage. The vast majority of South Africans have not been the benefactors of security, authority, citizenship and property, i.e. they have been held hostage in their homeland – thus, the presence of the guest is treated with suspicion, fear, and contempt. Extending unconditional hospitality to the guest may well be construed as willfully offering oneself as hostage for a second time. This has resulted in a psycho-social disequilibrium which has manifested itself in Afro-phobic attacks.

Finally, the fluctuating dialect of the refugee teachers being hosts at some times and guests at other times urges the acceptance that identifying ourselves as global citizens smudges territorial geographic and ideological boundaries and releases us to embrace our diversities and commonalities. The narratives gesture towards issues of structure and agency and demonstrate the resilience of the refugee teachers as they negotiate much unfamiliarity in the face of dispossession. Above all, their narratives teach that developing students' knowledge and skills are important pedagogic endeavours, however these are rendered hollow in the absence of a pedagogy of compassion and humanity.

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