South Africa has undergone drastic political and civil changes in the last 20 years as a result of the end of Apartheid. People of color in South Africa, formerly suppressed, are now freed from the restrictions placed upon them through Apartheid and white South Africans live within this new political structure. This makes the perspectives of individuals living in this country unique. Although South Africa no longer has an Apartheid government, the effects are not erased, and this project explores the perspectives of individuals as to the current status of race relations in South Africa and how it may release itself from its past history.

South Africa was termed the “rainbow nation” by Desmond Tutu because of its diversity. It is a country made up predominantly of Black Africans but also has Whites, Coloureds (mixed ethnic origins), and Indians/Asians. The aim of this project was to portray how people living in these different racial and socioeconomic groups understand their own lives within the context of South Africa’s political and social landscape. There were a total of 13 participants: seven blacks, three coloureds, and three whites. Their ages ranged from teenagers to adults in their early 60s. There were 5 female participants, and 8 males. Two of the black male participants were immigrants from Zimbabwe, the remainder were of South African descent. Participants were given a disposable camera for a period of one to two weeks to capture images which they felt represented their lives and daily routines. After these photos were developed, the individuals were interviewed about their photo choices, as well as their personal thoughts regarding the social and political future of South Africa. They were also asked to reflect on their own lives; their aspirations, fears, and hopes. It became apparent that racism, born of the Apartheid years, is still prevalent and detrimental to the improvement of South African society. Reviewing the personal
goals and opinions of the individuals interviewed made it clear that actions on a small scale could be a uniting force that might push their nation forward. While the final project will be in the form of a book detailing the interviews held and pairing them with the photographs individuals captured, this paper will discuss the multilayered and enmeshed nature of racism in South Africa, as noted in Cape Town, and the potential of eliminating racism through communication and entrepreneurship.

Racism is a global problem, but because Apartheid ended so recently in South Africa, it is a particularly sensitive and relevant topic for all South Africans. The great majority of the individuals who participated in this project had no question that racism is prevalent in South Africa; many of them having experienced it first hand. Participants of color often described physical realms in which they had experienced racism. For example, the V&A Waterfront, an upscale restaurant and shopping area located on Cape Town’s harbor, was mentioned by a young black participant. He described that on one occasion when he was there with members of his own family as well as a white family friend, he felt those around him take note of their mixed-race group. “White people just look at you, like they’re amazed, why are you here? They don’t talk to you like that. [It’s just] that look.” Other public areas, like buses, were also mentioned. A coloured woman described that “If you maybe sit in a bus and you sit next to a white- then they look at you, give you dirty looks. Some are still so, so high. You can’t even touch on them, or sit by them.” In a country where Apartheid was so recently dismantled, one might assume there would be greater restraint in acting in a racist manner, but these experiences suggest this is not the case. While these personal anecdotes may come across as isolated events, they are indicators of a larger problem. If such racism is felt in public areas, it may be considerably higher in more private arenas.
Racism in the workplace was mentioned by several participants. One black individual who worked at a coffee shop in a wealthy, predominantly white neighborhood described that white customers tended to refer their complaints to him rather than to the white wait staff; “…because I’m black and they think they can give me the cheap blows and stuff.” This individual had worked in the coffee shop for five years, far longer than other employees who tended to come and go. He noted that he still has not been offered a promotion to be manager, while white employees less competent than himself, have. A white staff member told him their boss had said he would not allow a black man to be manager, for fear that he would lose white customers. “So I was really offended about that….he won’t say it in my face, but he’ll say it to that other white dude. I experience racism every single time.”

Another black individual who had immigrated to Cape Town from Zimbabwe, felt a similar discrimination at his workplace. He works on a small street off of Long Street, a main artery in Cape Town with two story balcony buildings on either side of the street which is bustling area with shops, restaurants, and clubs. This man has a stand where he sells personalized name bracelets or hair wraps. On the same side of the street are other stands, owned by white sellers who sell various odds and ends ranging from antique vases and mirrors to fur coats. The participant explained that the whites sell at the top of this side street, while he and the other black marketers sell on its lower end. “It is only after they go that I can put my table where they are. But during the day, I can’t… they don’t want us to mix…so if you complain too much, if you start to what to know why they will chase you away from the market. They are the ones who are controlling the market, you see?”

While racism is public realms such as the Waterfront or public transportation are unquestionably pernicious, racism in the workplace can be even more detrimental because it
affects an individual’s financial circumstances and deters them from achieving their full potential. Along with developing skills through one’s work and being given the chance to demonstrate one’s achievements, the workplace also serves as an avenue in which individual can network. The workplace could promote collaboration and partnership of individuals from different backgrounds. If businesses remain segregated in terms of location or management, this kind of interaction does not occur, resulting in rigid work stratifications and imbalanced opportunities.

It may be assumed that racism in South Africa is a white versus black issue as the whites were the oppressors during Apartheid and people of color, the oppressed, however, South Africa racism is more complex than this. From the interviews conducted it became clear that racism exists across many ethnic groups and is prevalent between blacks and coloureds, Xhulus and Xhosas (tribes), and even between individuals of the same race. The interviews revealed that many of the problems South Africans are confronted with, ranging from drug use to unemployment, are often pegged by one group onto another.

An older colored woman expressed her frustration about blacks and crime. “There is racism. A lot of this crap happened because of them. Because they are the ones who go into people’s houses. Because they must get first preference wherever they go, they think they can do whatever they want to.” In her opinion, regardless of their education or experience level, the blacks have a sense of entitlement, the result of getting first preference with regards to jobs and other related opportunities. She says she is frightened of black crime and always makes sure to put her phone in her boot on her way home. Another colored individual also expressed that there is a difference between the coloureds and the blacks. He explained that during Apartheid, the coloureds were viewed as being “in the middle,” between the blacks and the whites in terms of
status. He feels their position in this hierarchy has not changed post-Apartheid. “Now the black people they controlling, and we’re still in the middle. For instance, we can’t go and work in the black areas, they will bugger us out.. but they come into our areas. We can’t even go to their schools. If you put your kid in the black area school, you will have some problems. But they put our children in our schools.” He goes on to say that he respects black people, and they respect him, but realizes that this is not true of everyone. He recounted a particular incident that struck him. “I were in the shop and the cashier was a black girl and she was sitting behind the till. And the guy in front of me asked what are you doing here, in our area? Why don’t you work in your area? Just like that, in front of everyone. No one said anything.. she was just doing her job, and they also struggle to get work, and they come in our area.”

A black individual on the other hand described that it is the colored people that are always fighting. “They don’t usually kill black people, but they kill each other.” Usually, they are fighting because of drugs.” Another black participant made a similar comment, “black people we like to have fun, colored people they like to kill each other.” He explained that when you hear about drug usage and gangs, the incidents normally occur in predominantly coloured neighborhoods.

Within racial communities there is also discrimination if a member deviates from the “norm”. One individual interviewed moved from Gugulethu, a township, into Cape Town’s city center, a predominantly white area, but then moved back to Gugulethu to save on housing costs and put that money towards buying a car. He explained why he does not enjoy walking around his neighborhood. “People there are different you know. so if you dress a certain type of way and you talk a certain type of way then you don’t belong and they see you as as someone who doesn’t really belong in the neighborhood and then they just like put you aside and they don’t even talk
to you and stuff like that. If you look good and you speak proper English, then you’re different all of a sudden. But it's still one of the things I’d like to change in the hood as well, in the townships. You know that keeping clean and speaking proper English doesn’t mean that you—they call you a snob, or a coconut type of thing.” If the black community views this individual as belonging to their community only racially, but not socially, it shows that both the community and the individual associate certain characteristics and external qualities with the race. Rather than separating the two, the individual and the color of their skin become tied. Not only is this detrimental in developing an identity independent of skin color, but if receiving a good education or speaking with proper grammar is viewed as ‘white,’ and therefor as negative, these attributes, which benefit any human being, are not pursued by members of that community.

Another racial divide that exists in South Africa is between the Xhosa and the Zulu, two black tribes. A young woman participant who does not describe herself as having any racist sentiments laughs and admits that “I’m Xhosa, but when I’m talking about the Zulu, I’m going to tell you there’s Zulu things. It's not I don’t like it, but there is something you never click, because they is Zulu.” This woman insisted that she does not dislike Zulus, she just happens not to “click” with them. This statement illustrates how complex racial relationships within the black community are.

While the majority of the black and coloured individuals who participated had directly been the recipients of racism, the white participants, while recognizing racism was present, had not personally felt its effects and it appeared to be a distant reality. A white female college student attending Stellenbosch University, a university further outside of Cape Town, described that one of the reasons she chose Stellenbosch over the University of Cape Town was because it is “less political than UCT,” something she views as a positive. When asked whether
Stellenbosch is racially diverse, she responded that she thinks so, but admitted that she’s not “involved at all.” When asked specifically about racism, she explained that while she is aware that it exists, she had “never been in a situation where someone couldn’t partake because of the color of their skin.” Thus, she “[hasn’t] seen [racism] [her]self firsthand, but [has] heard of it all the time.” Another college aged-female had similar experiences. “I think we’ve moved on from Apartheid, but segregation in society still exists. I think that's just how it is. It's just kind of everywhere.” For her, this segregation relates more to class as opposed to race. She felt that had she gone to school with people of all different races, she would likely be friends with a more diverse group of people. When she spends time going out however, she admits that most of the people she associates with are white. “I mean you’ll see some black and colored people there, but it's more of a white party to be honest.”

Although some of these comments are general and do not relate to racist incidents, they illustrate that in Cape Town individuals have a strong awareness of their own race. It should be noted however, that these examples are not meant to illustrate that all members of a racial group fall into certain socioeconomic groups. For example, a middle-aged, middle-class black man described that he is particularly content in the neighborhood in which he lives. “Parklands is a country on its own. Why? You get whites, you get blacks, you get Indians… people that are staying together.”

Work ethic and entrepreneurship were two interesting themes which emerged through the discussions. Several participants indicated a frustration with regards to the work ethic in own their communities. However, most of those who participated were themselves highly motivated and had strong personal aspirations, often taking the form of entrepreneurship.
A colored woman in her 60s, frustrated by foreigners emigrating to South Africa, admitted that they will work hard for money while South Africans do not want to do the jobs they are.

“[Foreigners] [are] standing on that parade selling caps, selling shoes where our people don’t want to do it. They rather prefer to go and steal…they rather prefer to steal or to hijack or to rob the banks…if our people did what [foreigners] are doing now, then there would have been jobs. But they don’t want to do it, they don’t want to do it. They say there’s no work, there’s no work. But there is work if you want to work. You can even sell lollipops along the road. You can sell fruit, that’s a living.” A Zimbabwean immigrant in his 30s who has an outdoor stand selling his own handicrafts experienced this first-hand. For him, xenophobia is an important issue as he says many foreigners in South Africa live in fear. South Africans accuse foreigners of taking their jobs and their women. “They don’t take us as people…[but] they don’t want to go to work. [They] take drugs, [stay] in the houses, taking drugs, robbing people. But us foreigners are hard workers.”

A young black woman was also frustrated by a lack of motivation she noticed in the township she lives in. She expressed that life in the township is not always as grim as people make it out to be, and that at times individuals who live there exaggerate the difficulty of their circumstance. “Not everyone in the township is poor. They’ve got a car, they’ve got everything… I have a tablet, a computer. So they use the white people most of the times because when you see, if you see the white one then they say ‘oh, I don’t have money to go to the transport, but they’ve got.” This participant suggested that seemingly disadvantaged individuals exacerbate their situation in the presence of those they may benefit from monetarily.

It is clearly difficult to be motivated when access to basic resources is limited. When asked about the things each individual would change if they were in government, improved
education and housing as well as reducing crime were issues raised. The current lack of
government or structural support affects the formation of the South African identity. If an
individual feels locked into a situation without the means for basic stability or to advance
themselves, the motivation to achieve one’s full potential, and the hope for this can be lost.

Most of the individuals who participated in the project, however, were highly motivated.
Their aspirations ranged from starting their own businesses, working on political change, or
exploring various professional interests. Their personal plans often reflected a desire to benefit
others in their community. Two of the black males who participated were interested in fashion
and in developing their own clothing labels. One of these individuals collected materials and
sewed the fabric together using an old sewing machine that used to belong to his grandmother.
When he developed an interest in fashion he took a fashion design course at a local university
and started making clothing for some of his friends. His label is ‘Bread’, which stands for
‘Believe, Respect, Enjoy, and Always dream.’ “I want to see Bread become big so I can employ a
lot of people because I can see there are a lot of people who need jobs out there.” The other
participant describes that he has many projects in the works, ranging from starting an interior
design enterprise, to making music, to starting his own clothing label.

Another participant, a young black woman, also described several projects she is working
on, ranging from teaching yoga to younger children in her community, to educating individuals
about HIV/AIDS. She wanted to teach young people about the importance of exercise by being a
yoga teacher. “In Xhosa people it's not important to exercise,” but she believes she can educate
them about this. AIDS is another area she that this woman hopes to educate people about. She
has several anecdotes relating to helping individuals understand that treatment can in fact make
HIV/AIDS livable. “To change my people, to change them to know about everything you can
do. It doesn't matter you white or black as long as you got a passion.” By reaching out to individuals in her community and trying to shift the way in which they think, she is introducing them to lifestyle choices that may benefit them.

A white, middle-aged representative counselor within the Democratic Alliance (DA) political party described his work on several projects in Cape Town ranging from finance to energy and climate change. A project he was particularly passionate about involved the improvement of community services, from schools to cemeteries. One of their projects is to implement more parks in the city of Cape Town. Parks “have a massive way of connecting people from all walks of life...We learn from each other in a more relaxed environment, and I think parks have that place to play from a city point of view.” This provides another example of how innovative plans have the potential to facilitate relationships between individuals of different backgrounds.

Entrepreneurship could be key in creating support networks within communities, but also in creating connections between them. A young black male who lives in Gugulethu, a township outside of Cape Town explains why he would like to move to Cape Town. “When you walk out of your house in Cape Town, there’s like a whole field, whole sea of opportunities. And when you step out of your house in Gugulethu where as soon as you leave your house you're in danger.” The same participant further describes this physical separation in Cape Town: “[There’s] the white side, colored side, black side. I feel like I don’t fit in in any place sometimes. I would like to see that change… [I want to] see a whole lot of black people that own business in the city, that's what I want to see… You don’t find a lot of black owned restaurants.” This comment indicates that entrepreneurship could help dissolve spatial and perceptual
boundaries by opening “black” or “colored” businesses in areas typically “white” areas and vice versa. Perhaps it could begin softening the stark difference between these communities.

Entrepreneurship is an inherently communicative process. For entrepreneurship to truly be successful across communities, a deeper sense of mutual understanding must take place. Many individuals who participated in this project suggested that the Apartheid is not often talked about amongst families or within communities. While it is regularly taught in schools and everyone is aware of its general history, there does seem to be a certain degree of silence when it comes to discussing Apartheid’s effects in the present, as opposed to a piece of history.

During Apartheid, it was not easy to discuss the injustices happening politically and socially. A white male who grew up during Apartheid described this; “…we lived in a police state. You weren't allowed to have blacks living in your home, date a black person, go to same restaurants.. cinemas, restaurants. And buses, black people had to go upstairs... an old black man would get up to offer a little boy a seat...those were the rules and we were having a wonderful life and I supposed we didn’t speak too much about it as kids.” It could be dangerous however to discuss politics, and while there were many whites who got involved in the struggle against Apartheid, “you were watched by police if you showed any liberal feelings at all.” The participant describes how his parents cautioned him from going to demonstrations, for fear he would be arrested.

A white, female, college-aged participant said that Apartheid is a core part of her curriculum in school. It was “drilled into us.” But when asked about whether her parents discuss this history with her, as they truly lived through it, she responded “it wasn’t targeted at my parents. [I’m not] saying they weren’t involved, but a person of colour would give you a much better description because it happened to them firsthand.” This quote suggests that
Apartheid was only truly experienced by people of colour, that whites not directly involved in discrimination can continue to be removed from it.

A middle-aged black man, now a police officer, was posed the question whether he finds it unfortunate that the youth in South Africa may not have a true understanding of Apartheid. “No, everything comes and goes. If you were not there, how would you remember it, if you were [only] told? You won’t remember. I can’t blame the youth to uphold something that they don’t know, that they didn’t see, that they hear. Its us that were there, that saw it, that experienced it, that should actually ensure that we don’t forget where we are coming from and make sure our children and their children will always remember they are there because of the sacrifices of the majority.”

One of the black male participants had a grandfather who was a political exile, his cell only a few down from Nelson Mandela’s in Robben Island. When asked whether he and his grandfather discuss this time, he said no. “Because he had some harsh experiences there. So some stuff actually hurts him…he’s a bit traumatized about the whole prison thing. But there’s some stuff he does talk about. Like he does talk about the fun side of prison. It was messed up, but they did have fun in between all that.”

A middle aged white politician who participated in the project described that he is working on a campaign which would try to eliminate racism by creating a more open dialogue. In his opinion, “a lot of people in South Africa, when 1994 came, [thought] let’s just sweep the slate clean. The reality is unless you have these hard discussions and start engaging in them, nothing changes. Nothing changes.” He recalled that at a street meeting regarding a project he was running to open a soccer field in a predominantly white neighborhood, one of the neighbors who attended expressed concern about the potential of lights being set up around the soccer field.
The neighbor was concerned that “those people will bring crime.” “Now he didn’t say blacks or whites, but in his statement ‘those people’ we all knew what he was referring to…so it's a blurred racism.” This individual felt that South Africans must be more direct with one another in catching racism. “‘If you’re at the dinner table and someone passes a racist comment, you actually have to be brave enough to say so. I think a lot of people just accept it and they don’t say anything.’”

It certainly is not easy to relive events that were traumatic, or evoke guilt. However, learning facts and dates in school is not enough to truly understand and overcome the damage which was done by Apartheid. It is easy to teach anti-racist practices in theory, but making a conscious effort to effect change is far more difficult. Increased communication and entrepreneurship go hand in hand and are both methods by which individuals can begin reaching beyond their communities.

Although Apartheid ended over 20 years ago, its effects are remain indelible in South African society. The racial divides on many levels, as well as the concomitant socioeconomic divides continue to prevent a fully integrated society. The individual stories and opinions that surfaced as a result of speaking to these individuals illustrated that the right balance between the various racial groups has not yet been achieved in South Africa. However, many of the comments from the participants interviewed revealed a motivation and hopefulness for improvement in the future through individual self awareness and better communication between groups.