Albinism: An Erasable Childhood

by

Devi Dee Mucina, Ph.D.
dmucina@gmail.com
Assistant Professor
Department of Child and Youth Study
Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Devi Dee Mucina holds a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education. His academic interests are indigenous Ubuntu orality, African indigenous philosophies, African indigenous histories, indigenous Masculinity, the anthropology of social memory, the sociology of decolonization, and anticolonial engagements.

Abstract

As indigenous Ubuntu, how do we bring voices to a childhood that is marked for death? How do we stop the killing and commodification of children with albinism? How do we make children with albinism matter to us? How do we collectively see the humanity / Ubuntu of children with albinism? As we think about these questions let us remember that love and respect must guide our actions. Let us not shy away from the problem of how Albinism has become a marker that allows us to erase childhood because to allow this to happen is to lose power. I have no formulated answers but I want us to make the childhood of children with albinism matter to us. I want us to question the social political interactions and interpretations that allow us to voice violence, which lead us to murder children with albinism, while we who profess to be Ubuntu remain silent. In our silence, we are complicit in the erasure of children with albinism. I promise you, I do not speak about uncivilized actions. I do not speak about savage behavior and I do not speak about primitive ways. I do not want the colonial language and gaze to silence us. Instead, let us dialogue about the problem and the actions we can take collectively together to address this problem of marking our children for death. As we think about how to take action, I wonder if remembering that the tension and the contradiction, which embody the marking of albinism, make it clear that the body marked with albinism is no-one thing. This means we have had to create stories which justify the killing of children with albinism. If this is true, we can create other stories, which stop the killing of children with albinism? Can we create stories that help us love and respect the children with albinism?

Key words: albinism, killing, silence, indigenous, Ubuntu

Ubuntu Greeting

Allow me to extend an indigenous African Ubuntu greeting, "Sanibona," meaning "We see you" but also implying that at a deep spiritual level, I am never alone as my ancestors are always with me. Subsequently we see you. The response to this is "Yebo Sanibona," meaning "Yes we see you too." Again, the implication is that you, the reader, and your ancestors, agrees about your observation of us. So, to our ancestors, to our elders, to our parents, to our sisters and brothers, to those yet unborn and to all of creation, "Sanibona." But, let me also request that we exercise caution, because we know that the act of speaking can also be used to deny, refuse and ignore our relatedness.

Introduction to How We are Silent

Ubuntu means humanity but it is a term that has also been used to collectively identify people who live south of the Sahara in Africa. Yet, there are some exceptions as there are some people who do not identify as Ubuntu. A more comprehensive definition of the meaning and implication of Ubuntu will be highlighted later. But, I acknowledge that I am silent on the issue of indigenous Ubuntu with albinism, and could my silence implicate our silence? The report *People with Albinism not Ghosts but Human Beings* by the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights reports that: "Violence against people with albinism is largely met by social silence and indifference, and is seldom followed by investigations or the prosecution of perpetrators (2015)." Do we question each other about why we are silent about albinism? How does this silence about albinism affect all of us? What is it about albinism that allows us to silently marginalize, oppress and ultimately erase our Ubuntu children? Could our breaking of this silence be the giving of voice, which begins the process of creating a new social relationship with our Ubuntu children with albinism? Our treatment of our indigenous Ubuntu children with albinism reflects our social interaction, which allows us to voice violence in our killing of the body with albinism. In light of my preceding statement it would seem that our silence is strategically positioned so that we (I) do not have to address the following questions: "Where does albinism end and where do we begin? Is it possible to distinguish where albinism ends and I begin?"

Our indigenous interpretive actions highlight our values within our culture, but I would argue that culture is reflective of shared collective and individualistic values as determined by our own vulnerability in relation to our fears and our aspirations. But it would also be naive of us not to point out that the total maintenance of collective or individual values creates tension between the two positions. We should therefore, in this case, problemitize seeing disability (albinism) from any binary positions as this undermines the complexities of the directional lines which point to albinism as a reflection of inadequacy, flawed character and queer appearance (individual traits) while on the other hand albinism is evidence of possessing supernatural powers, the manifestation of a family's curse, and the presence of a threatening undesirable lesser god-like being (ghost).

The report *People with Albinism not Ghosts but Human Beings* by the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights states that:

> The physical appearance of people with albinism is often the object of erroneous beliefs and myths influenced by superstition, which foster marginalization and even violent attacks against them (2015).

I believe Sara Ahmed would convey this phenomenon of albinism as an orientation that: "….takes the subject towards what it 'is not' and what it 'is not' then confirms what it 'is' (2006 p. 71)." The disability scholar, Hunt (1966) would say that albinism reflects to the community to their own vulnerability and I would argue it is this interaction which elicits condemnation and fear within the Ubuntu community. Yet, my intent is not to tell you about disability, rather, it is my aim to enter this phenomenon of disability as one affected by it and engage you so that you think about how it affects you before you make any judgment about who embodies albinism, because if you critically engage this question, you will find that we cannot distinguish where albinism ends and we begin.

The Basis of the Ubuntu Philosophy

We can only speak the truth about that which we know, and even here, we are limited by what we can give voice. Some things can never be given voice while other things take a long time to gain voice. I therefore ask you to remember that behind this story exists a world, which I am not able to adequately capture and give voice to, but what I have given voice to is now ours because we share it between us (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The story of albinism among the indigenous Ubuntu highlights the existence of conflict within Ubuntu ontology, which holds that we exist because you exist and this has also been expressed as, "without you there is no me." Thus, for us to assert that we are Ubuntu we must acknowledge that our Ubuntuness is our relational interconnectedness with each other. Without our relationship to each other and with each other, we would not be able to reflect our sameness and our difference. The embodiment of this indigenous Ubuntu world-sense (beyond privileging sight as a way of knowledge) has been conveyed through the imperfection of the goddess Ma (mother). This historical fact was illustrated by the Ubuntu storytelling of the creation of the world, which was conveyed by the Zulu high priest Mutwa:

At the command of the Eternal Spirit, Unkulunkulu, she created herself in human form, and then she created the stars, the sun and the earth... Although she was immortal, the goddess Ma was cursed with strange desires and feelings, which afterwards she passed on to man and beast—anger, hunger, jealousy, misery, and love. Because of this, the wise men of the tribes, the story-tellers, call her the Imperfect One, and woodcarvings throughout Africa give her a deformed leg, one breast much bigger than the other, or hands of unequal size, to depict her imperfection (Mutwa, 1969 pp. 1-2).

Her imperfection means there is no one way of being Ubuntu. As Ma is an imperfect being, she could not make perfect beings. Hence, our diversity and difference are our perfectness as imperfect Ubuntu. No perfect Ubuntu ideal exists as a measurable standard for achieving the ideal personhood within an Ubuntu worldview. Arguably we could say our Ubuntu imperfections and diversity are our only reflection and confirmation of our Ubuntuism. Our elders tell us that regardless of their positive or negative functions, even lesser gods then Ma exhibit imperfection in their function and form (Mutwa, 1969). This indigenous Ubuntu story about Ma cannot be taken lightly because it is central to understanding our relationship to differentiation and sameness. To illustrate this point, I will momentarily create a false hierarchical order, although no such order or border exists in the Ubuntu worldview because we cannot distinguish where one ends and the other begins and this law is applied to everything including Unkulunkulu (the very great/high one; the supreme creator). In classical, pre-colonial Zulu myth, to make the point of differentiation and sameness let us start with Unkulunkulu. The phenomenon known as Unkulunkulu has been best described as the energy that is in all things at all times and in all places. Thus, everything embodies Unkulunkulu which is sameness or in this case sameness can be defined as energy.

On the other hand, if Unkulunkulu is sameness then time, space, and form are clear markers of individuation or we could say differentiation. This means that our critical indigenous understanding of relational connection is interpreted through our shared relational paradigm of Ubuntu, where relational engagement may be based on visual form, while in other contexts relational engagement may not be based on visual form. For example, we know that our ancestors exist, but there is no form of them in our reality beyond our relational connections. Yet, we all understand that our forms govern our individual relations as beings. I share all this with you because disability and in this specific case albinism is being viewed as the symbolic body which transgresses the spatial and time dimensions between the world of gods and the world of human beings (p'Bitek, 1984; Mutwa, 1969). How and when the whiteness of an Ubuntu body with albinism came to represent the possession of supernatural powers from the ancestral spatial dimension is not known, but we know that this reading of the body with albinism as supernatural has been with us prior to colonial contact. This being said, in our current context, it would be naïve and foolish to ignore the impact of colonialism and white supremacy, which imbues whiteness through its governing structures with power and purity.

This means the fallacies of our past were taken up by the colonial governance structures to support white supremacy uncritically in contemporary Africa; we have started to justify deadly exploitative methods of acquiring capitalist accumulation while declaring to be Ubuntu. It would seem we do not want to give up the exploitive violent power structures of white supremacy because its rewards and feed our greed. The killing of Ubuntu children with albinism is only evidence of an extreme version of Ubuntu utilizing the techniques of white supremacy to acquire capitalistic power.

Lesko (2001) defines white supremacy as the Great Chain of Being, where the hierarchy of "sociological ranking extending from European middle-class males and their republican government on the top, through women to savage tribes, with the lower animals at the bottom" (p. 22). This structure of colonial white supremacy, in colonized and neo-colonized spaces, calls all men, and judges them against its own intersecting colonial power of heteropatriarchy, which in its attainment, justifies deadly violence against their nonwhite bodies and at the same time, offers access to an approximation of white supremacy because of their maleness, their able-bodiedness, and their active pursuit of colonial capitalistic accumulation. In this colonial matrix, the ability of a person to utilize multiple white supremacy pillars (Smith, 2010) increases their potential to receive tangible colonial rewards, and the rewards of such exploitative trickery keep all of us invested in the existence of colonial white supremacy (Alfred, 2009; Anderson, 2013).

I am therefore stating that these indigenous Ubuntu behaviors of killing Ubuntu children with albinism must be seen as expressions of colonial power within systemic structures that impose and incite all Ubuntu to enact colonial oppression, genocide, enslavement, assimilation, exploitation, geopolitical destabilization, and orientalism (purposefully creating binary difference about other peoples as a way to insight fear based on our perceived difference and then using our fears to justify war) (Smith, 2010). Clearly, if we are to decolonize we will need to clearly understand all the ways we are complacent in the colonial project of exploitation as justified by capitalistic accumulation. We cannot speak out about one form of killing Ubuntu children while being silent about the other ways we kill Ubuntu children. If we want change then we need to stop being hypocritical. I do not think we can be okay with killing our Ubuntu children through polluting our waters for the gain of a few, patenting our food seeds for the gain of a few, and undermining food security by growing commercial flowers. If this all contributes to the killing of Ubuntu children just like the killing of children with albinism, we must fight all these forms of violence against our children. This is why we must critically regenerate relational indigenous governance using our indigenous Ubuntu paradigm to create sustainable change.

If we are to use our relational Ubuntu theories to create change then we must understand our relational selves in the context of relationship. To understand the Ubuntu self, one must accept that there exists a tension, which we express by saying that the self can only be known through social interaction with the other. We, therefore, say that the survival of the other is important for the preservation of the self and in order to maintain this balance of Ubuntu life, our ancestors decreed that we should preserve life above all.

In the act of preserving life, we have come to value all Ubuntu distinctness and difference as being critical to all our survival. It would now seem that the above statement is true provided you are not deemed a person with albinism. Yet, the idea of valuing difference has been at the center of Ubuntu ontology since the beginning of Ubuntu time. Our Ubuntu ontology has been expressed in the Nguni languages through the maxim of "Umuntu ungumuntu ngubuntu," which very loosely and very poorly translated means: "A person is a person among other persons or a person is a person only through their relationships with others." In this, there is also a sense that humanity is bound up in one. Thus, it is with this understanding that to be Ubuntu is to find one's reflection in the other, which creates sameness, but invariably in our finding of sameness, we then seek to establish and affirm our uniqueness through our ability to reflect and distinguish our individuality within the collective.

Engaging the Issue of Albinism

Karl Deutsch has hit a nerve when he, in *Nationalism and its Alternatives,* states that: "A nation is a group of persons united by a common error about their ancestry and a common dislike of their neighbours (1969 p. 3)". Could it be what we attribute to albinism is only the work of our imagination as guided by our own vulnerability? I hold that our shared truth is that disability is our collective truth, which affects all of us in different degrees, at different times, but nonetheless is a part of all our lives. We have chosen to highlight certain disabilities in order to take the focus off ourselves. None of us wants to be marginalized for our disabilities, yet we are willing to highlight those of others in order to avoid self-reflection by believing that we are just like everyone else. Yet, this standard of being just like everybody else is not measurable and is an imaginary concept, which we use to create inclusion, which is connected to exclusion. This is an important paradox that we need to pay attention to because our societies are built on these imaginary categories of inclusion and exclusion, which are especially evident in concepts of nation building, citizenship and racism (Anderson, 1983 and Smith, 1979).

This is the problem which I see with indigenous Ubuntuism in relation to albinism within contemporary society. Let us for a minute consider one of the traits that have been attributed to albinism and consider it against our belief in the Ubuntu eternal spirit, Unkulunkulu. What could we learn, what questions could I raise for us, and what tensions could be discovered? One of the fallacies that have been presented is that the body with albinism represents supernatural powers and is therefore a threat to other Ubuntu. I find that when I put this position under intense scrutiny no base can be found to merit its argument. In fact, this position only creates evidence which highlights how its existence undermines the belief we have in the eternal spirit, Unkulunkulu. Consider these questions in relation to this position. If the eternal spirit, Unkulunkulu, is in everything and everything is connected then how do we explain our fear for the unknown? Could it be we are unsure of our connection to Unkulunkulu? Yet, if we are unsure of our connection to Unkulunkulu within the Ubuntu worldview, could we have hope beyond this life?

281

Now being in this place of fear, what would it mean to speculate that someone has the marks, which convey that s/he is eternal? Could we live with such a person, especially if there is no evidence that we ourselves are eternal? Could our Ubuntu vulnerability about not being eternal lead us to exploit our differences and disabilities as evidence of having eternal life or the lack of it? Either way our differences have become the evidence of a threat and albinism has become a common visual marker of showing that people with albinism are eternal and therefore luckier than the rest of us and at the same time albinism conveys a less than Ubuntu (human) quality, which makes this body fearsome, because it could reduce us to its level.

Interestingly, Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* has captured what we call Ubuntu when she states:

> Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of the equality and distinction…. In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, becomes uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings (1958 p. 175).

With these statements she makes the same point that Ubuntu philosophy makes which is our sameness and our difference are our reflections of our relational bonds with each other, yet, we are silent. We (I) have to be silent in order to deny our differences which is our varying levels of disability and ability. To undermine differences is to hold up sameness as the only viable ideal, but this is a violation of Ubuntu principles, yet, we are silent. Could our desire for uniformity be a reflection of our fear of being inadequate? Could it be our inadequacy that makes us want some assurance that someone else is worse off than ourselves, and if we cannot find this assurance then we create it at the expense of others? Nevertheless, could Ubuntu theory and philosophy help us realize and actualize disability as a part of our familial relational reality, because the basis of Ubuntu is that we are imperfect beings who are dependent on each other?

The Reality of the Present

So what do we do when we are faced with real accounts that convey that certain bodies are disposable or that these same bodies are more valuable dead than alive? As tragic as this encounter is, it is also our opportunity to engage personally and politically, while recognizing that it can also be the reason we choose to be disengaged. I must admit I was a little surprised to find contemporary African media being silent for the most part about albinism killings as compared to Western media. Interestingly, the best media accounts that I could access were mostly from the BBC news. Is this the colonial white gaze on the savagery of the barbaric other (us)?

Although our affairs are reported as news on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), I wonder if we are news worthy or if we are reported as strange entertaining happenings in distant colonial lands, whose affairs captured the imagination of the BBC's audience? Could this colonial BBC news report be in fact saying something like this: "British citizens, consider yourself lucky, you are British and not some primitive Ubuntu because you would be marked for death." Implicit in this report is also a message about how the Ubuntu have regressed back into savagery and primitive ways, without the firm guiding hand of the British Empire. This is not to deny the materiality or the heinousness of this crime; I am just highlighting that there is a directional gaze through which this report materializes, and I am arguing that that gaze is an empire white colonial gaze. You may find my rumblings unmerited, because you believe, "if the shoe fits, let us wear it," but what if we both fit the shoe? Will we share it equally? I highly doubt this because the colonizers always highlighting their successes while contrasting these with the failings of the colonized. In so doing, the colonizers' failings are never scrutinized while the colonized successes are never validated or legitimized. Here is the BBC report:

Tanzania's Albino Society Has Accused the Government of Turning a Blind Eye to the Killing of Albinos, After Four Deaths in the Past Three Months

An albino spokesman said there was a belief that the condition was the result of a curse put on the family. Some witch-doctors also say they can use albino body parts in a potion to make people rich. A teacher in the northern town of Arusha has been arrested for killing his own child, who was albino. As well as the four killings, the body of an albino has also been exhumed. It was found with its limbs cut off. The BBC's Vicky Ntetma in Dar es Salaam says there is now fear in the albino community there. Christopher Dadenekeye from the TAS said the witch-doctors must also be arrested. Some people in Tanzania think albinos are a kind of ghost-like creature. "We need to clear out all these beliefs," Mr Dadenekeye said. There are some 270,000 albinos among Tanzania's population of some 35 million. Old women with red eyes have been killed in parts of Tanzania in the past, after being accused of witchcraft but our correspondent says this is the first time that albinos have been targeted in ritual killings. TAS also wants more help for albinos and says the condition should be treated as a disability (BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/7148673.stm [Accessed on 17/12/07]).

In this media account, I would like to interpret some of the moves that have made Ubuntu with albinism erasable, commodifable in death while allowing all this to be say-able and doable. The term "witchdoctor" has negative connotations as it describes an evildoer, but it would seem some people have claimed this position of evildoer in order to provide a service, which is wanted within our communities.

The media accounts convey that we have been able to exclude and justify the exclusion of the body with albinism by associating it with witchcraft, ghost-like creature and interpretations of being cursed. It would seem we are desperate to get rid of the body with albinism because witchcraft, which is normally associated with witchdoctors, is being associated with the body with albinism, which generates fear, and dread against the body with albinism. Therefore, the witchdoctors have become valuable Ubuntu members whereas before they were despised and feared as evildoers. Hence, the witchdoctor switches from villain to hero as s/he fulfills our desire. This is evidence of the false dichotomies that we create to "other" our brothers and sisters with labels such as "us" which inevitably creates a category for "them." The "them" are the nobodies, yet could be anybody with the exception of me, because it is never me, and it is only a problem when I cannot hide the label of them, aimed at me.

As a child growing up, I was always taught to be afraid of people who practice medicine because it seemed possible for "them" to also practice witchcraft, but I also heard stories of people who were afraid to practice medicine because they could be mistaken for witchdoctors and be killed as "them." Medicine people and those accused of being witchdoctors were afraid of the larger Ubuntu community and vice versa. The point is that we all have a role in making the body with albinism undesirable and erasable. In the news article, the witchdoctors legitimize the commodification of the body with albinism by saying that this body can be used in portions to make people rich. Between the BBC news and us, we have managed to negate the one important factor: We are talking about life, about Ubuntu and if we are believers, we are talking about Unkulunkulu. How have we forgotten such important facts or have we chosen to omit this important reality? The media accounts give the impression that this gruesome killing of bodies with albinism is so rampant when they report that good upstanding, well-educated (even by Western standards) citizens like the teacher who orchestrated and participated in the killing of his own child with albinism is the norm. Yet, BBC news is silent about the governance structures of colonial white supremacy, which justifies deadly violence against our nonwhite bodies while at the same time, offering us access to an approximation of white supremacy through our participation in colonial capitalist accumulation (Smith, 2010).

Interestingly, I interrogate and analyze our existence as Ubuntu, but I wonder if the BBC interrogates and analyzes its existence in relation to us? I am unconvinced they would do this because I doubt if they see us as the targeted audience. Even if we were to become the greatest consumer of their news, we would not be their target audience, because we do not reflect their white colonial empire gaze. This means they would welcome us to be a part of their colonial white empire gaze, but they on the other hand are not willing to be a part of the Ubuntu gaze. So how will we ever see each other? Again, we see the dichotomous position between "them" and "us" within the BBC news reports. We are all implicated in the killing of the body with albinism, some of us out of fear, some of us out of personal gain, some of us through our silence, some of us through the white colonial empire gaze, and some of us due to ignorance.

How the Past Speaks to the Present and How the Present Speaks Back

But where are all of us that profess indigenous Ubuntu principles and philosophies? Where are our voices of outrage? Is the BBC media the only voice? If not, we should ask: "Is it true that certain Ubuntu bodies are more Ubuntu than others?" When I first read the BBC account about albinism killings, I concluded unabashedly that colonialism, capitalism and Western economics were behind BBC's use of false reading of the Ubuntu teachings as a way to justify the heinous erasure of bodies with albinism. Yes, there is more to it than this; the truth I am learning is queer and seldom has any straight lines (Ahmed, 2006). It would seem the large array of distinguishing directional lines that mark albinism for death have an Ubuntu history which predates colonial contact. We have a history of sacrificing certain people for the perceived benefit of the community. At least that is how it has been presented by the work of Bessie Head (1977) in *Looking for A Rain God* and in *Fixions* by Taban Io Liyong (1969). However, these two authors convey that the selection of the sacrifice victim was not based on any perceived traits of the victim. In other words, these victims were not marked for death by any visual cue or trait, whereas in our case, the people that were being killed were marked for death by virtue of embodying albinism.

Again, I highlight these killings to convey the history of what has been doable and sayable while being in direct violation of the indigenous Ubuntu principle, which holds, "above all preserve life." The body with albinism we erase and justify its erasure with fallacies of embedded historical rhetoric of self-preservation, or as others have argued, community preservation (Mutwa, 1969; Head, 1977 and Achebe, 1971). Mutwa (1964) gives us a story from the olden days, which communicates that disability was marked for death through visual perception, as demonstrated by the story of Zarallei:

> The name of this very unpleasant monstrosity—
> Tribal Narrators tell today—
> Was Zaralleli or Zah-Ha-Rrellel, The Wicked!
> This was the man - no, rather the Thing
> That introduced all evil to this earth.
>
> Whenever a child was born to these First Men
> The mother would take it straight for a blessing
> To the two-headed talking Kaa-U-La birds,
> And also to ask them to give it a name.
> Thus it came about that when Nelesi
> (Let us rather abide by Kei-Lei-Si, for this is Her proper and uncorrupted name)
> Took her terrible offspring to the big old Kaa-U-La bird,
> Which nested not far from her cave,

It gave one glance at her
And shuddered at what she carried!
In the half-dead deformed thing that the girl held aloft
The Kaa-U-La bird could see Evil so great
And so utterly monstrous that if unchecked
There and then it would def'nitely overrun
The Universe outright with its bad influence.
And what it saw beyond the veil of tomorrow
Made it screech with unrestrained horror and pain:
'Kaaaaaaukl Oh woman, what have you there!
Destroy it, kill it, without delay!'
'What, but this is my baby, my child!'
Cried the mother in utter despair.
But the bird's voice rang like metal
And echoed o'er valleys and mountains;
'Female of the human race - I appeal to thee,
Destroy thy offspring before it's too late! (1964 pp. 23-24).

Zarallei's level of deformity is equated with reflecting the deformity of his character, but the reasoning for this position in the story is never given. Yet, implicitly and explicitly, the story communicates to us that certain disabled bodies, like Zarallei, are marked for compulsory death, and interference in this process redirects death towards all of us. This story also shows us how we as Ubuntu have developed structures that allow us to imagine the erasure of disability as being beneficial for all of us. With such a long history of making disabled bodies erasable, communities of people with albinism report fearing for their lives while accusing the governments of inaction with reference to their plight. The United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, in a report titled *People with Albinism not Ghosts but Human Beings* reports that:

> In 2000-2013, the UN Human Rights Office received over 200 reports of killings and dismembering of people with albinism for ritual purposes in 15 countries. Figures could be much higher (2015).

Communities of people with albinism have challenged their governments to use their many structural tools, to educate their citizens (Lewis, 2005). I think the following questions would be conducive to creating dialectic engagement about the killings of people with albinism. What determines the markers that qualify someone as being disabled? Where is the line that determines that someone is disabled and someone else is not? Is it a social marker that is open to our interpretation or is it an objective measurable trait?

Is disability determined by history, and if so, then we should ask which history? Sara Ahmed conveys that history can inform the present, but the present can also inform the future by regenerating the past. She says: "What you have behind you does not always "decide" the lines you follow, even when it shapes what you do (Ahmed, 2005 p.138)." So how do we make each one of us matter to the other? How do we see value in and among ourselves? How do we make new paths to follow so that all bodies are marked for love and respect?

Conclusion

No perfect Ubuntu ideal exists as a measurable standard for achieving the ideal personhood within the Ubuntu worldview, but the story and the labels that we have attached to the creation of albinism have destabilized the Ubuntu ontology, which holds that we exist because you exist. The tension of this conflict in contemporary society has been sensationalized and exoticized through the colonial white empire gaze as produced by the BBC. These news accounts highlight the erasure of the body with albinism as exotic savagery, happening in distant primitive lands. These media accounts have no interest in exploring the complexity of these human lives and feel no obligation to the people that they report on. After all, we are not their target audience. I wonder if we see ourselves in these BBC media presentations. Or do we say, "thankfully I am not a body with albinism" and in so doing, we negate ourselves from the situation. What will it take for us to learn to see our true Ubuntu which is our humanity? Could the people from the BBC learn to value us as they value themselves? How do we help the BBC achieve this goal? Even more importantly, what is say-able and doable reflects in how we interpret our social appearance, which is to say, we appear in a world through our interactions with each other (Titchkosky, 2007). Thus, our sense of self is understood and mediated by our interpretation of our interactions, and when we appear, we appear to each other (Ahmed, 2006). I would encourage us to ask all these questions for one purpose, how do we make all our Ubuntu lives matter to each other? And even more important than asking questions, is the process of listening. We do not need more research or reports of inquiry, because people with albinism have communicated their interest, which in fact is our collective, when they (we) say, we do not want to be seen as some divine punishment, magical potion or a commodified body which is more valuable in death than in life. In response to the call for help by people with albinism, the United Nations' Human Rights Council passed a historic resolution aimed at addressing discrimination and attacks against people with albinism on 13 June 2013. The vote on Draft Resolution A/HRC/22/L.25 - "Attacks and discrimination against persons with albinism" was submitted by Gabon (on behalf of the African Group) and was adopted without a vote (A/HRC/23/L.25 Vote Item: 3 - 38th Meeting 23rd Regular Session Human Rights Council). I cannot be silent anymore about the killing of our indigenous children, and I am ashamed that I have been this silent for so long, but no more. After all, who can distinguish definitively where I end, and where albinism begins?

Reference

Ahmed, Sara. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: orientations, objects, others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Alfred, T. (2009) Peace, Power, Righteousness: an Indigenous manifesto. 2nd Ed., Ont.: Don Mills; New York: Oxford University Press

Alfred, Taiaiake. (2005). *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*: Broadview Press.

Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (1983). *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anderson, Kim. (2013). Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities. www.indigenousmasculinities.com

Arendt, Hannah. (1958). *The human condition, Charles R. Walgreen Foundation lectures*. [Chicago]: University of Chicago Press.

BBC. *Tanzania fear over albino killing* 2007/12/17. Available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/7148673.stm. [Accessed on 17/12/07].

Davis, Lennard J. (2002). *Bending over backwards : disability, dismodernism, and other difficult positions*. New York: New York University Press.

Deutsch, Karl Wolfgang. (1969). *Nationalism and its Alternatives*. New York, Knopf.

Fanon, Frantz. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Head, Bessie. (1977). *The collector of treasures, and other Botswana village tales*. London: Heinemann Educational.

Hunt, Paul, and Louis Neville Battye. (1966). *Stigma, the experience of disability: by Louis Battye et al.* London: Chapman.

King, Thomas. (2003). *The truth about stories: a native narrative*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press.

Lewis, Stephen. (2005). *Race against time*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press.

Lesko, Nancy. (2001). *Act Your Age! A Cultural Construction Of Adolescence.* New York: Routledge Falmer.

Liyong, Taban lo. (1969). *Fixions, & other stories*. London: Heinemann Educational.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. (2002). *Phenomenology of perception*, *Routledge classics*. London: Routledge.

Mutwa, Credo Vusa'mazulu. (1966). *Indaba, My Children*. London: Kahn & Averill Stanmore P.

———. (1969). *My People, My Africa*. 1st American ed. New York,: John Day Co.

p'Bitek, Okot. (1984). *Song of Lawino ; &, Song of Ocol*, *African writers series ; 266*. London: Heinemann.

Ricoeur, Paul, and Don Ihde. (1974). *The conflict of interpretations: essays in hermeneutics*, *Northwestern University studies in phenomenology & existential philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Smith, Andrea. (2010). Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy. *Global Dialogue, Volume 12, Number 2, Summer/Autumn, Race and Racisms* http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=488

Smith, Anthony D. (1979). *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.

Somâe, Malidoma Patrice. (1994). *Of water and the spirit: ritual, magic, and initiation in the life of an African shaman*. New York: Putnam.

Titchkosky, Tanya. (2007). *Reading and writing disability differently : the textured life of embodiment*. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

United Nations, Human Rights Council, 23rd Regular Session, Resolution A/HRC/23/L.25 Vote Item:3 - 38th Meeting, UN Web TV, accessed June 18, 2013, http://webtv.un.org/watch/ahrc23l.25-vote-item3-38th-meeting-23rd-regular-session-human-rights-council/2475447878001

United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. (2015). People with Albinism: Not Ghosts But Humans Beings. http://albinism.ohchr.org/