# 'Emerging' Communities and New Understandings of the Self: Talk Radio in Post-apartheid South Africa

*Jendele Hungbo*
*University of the Witwatersrand*
*South Africa*

**Abstract**
*The intricacies of communities (real or imagined) are quite poignant in postcolonial contexts. In Africa, there have been series of attempts to define or represent the continent, its individual political units or in some cases nationalities as constituting unified communities where the interests and aspirations of the members tilt towards unanimity of purpose. In the case of South Africa, the historical verities that define the policy of racial segregation and the social stratification inherent in contemporary life have continued to make a questioning of the 'emerging' communities a more urgent obligation. This paper seeks to understand the nature and character of communities in post-apartheid South Africa as epitomised by public debates on two radio talk shows (SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' and Talk Radio 702's 'The Redi Direko Show'). Drawing on qualitative data obtained from episodes of the two programmes around important media moments in recent South African history, the paper hopes to bring to the fore the dynamics of membership of such emerging communities which are products of the interactivity of the medium of radio as well as the reinforcement of identities through conscious representations on radio talk shows. The paper concludes that the persistence of markers of difference in different forms questions the idea of 'shared interests' and continues to threaten social relations that form the basis for emerging communities or 'new' communities in present-day South Africa.*

## Introduction

The use of the term community has become variously conflated in recent times such that it has become imperative that anyone having anything to do with the term needs to set the records straight in order to give a clear sense of what community really means, or more precisely what sense of the expression is intended for focus in the particular instance. There is therefore no unified or easy way to approach the use of community as it signifies different things for different scholars depending on the purpose for which the term is deployed. As a construct, community has been traditionally referred to as 'an empirical entity to be discovered and described by ethnographers, a natural territorial unit of human organisation linking culture and society' (Knapp, 2003: 566). In this regard communities:

> are usually characterized as sharing residence or space, and bearing a collective consciousness, knowledge, and experiences. Typically the community is reckoned to be a fundamental social institution, internally homogeneous and externally bounded, in which all cultural, biological, and social reproduction took place (Ibid: 566).

In looking at the concept of community from this kind of perspective, Bernard Knapp attempts an all-inclusive definition in which the basic considerations for the existence of any form of community could be said to be present. This is however a very difficult task to achieve as it

would be extremely difficult to pin down community to specific physical and ideological boundaries like we encounter in the above definition. As a form of social group, a community may display some of the characteristics that Knapp talks about like 'sharing residence or space' or external boundedness. These characteristics may however not be enough to take care of the numerous complexities that attend the composition of different kinds of communities in the modern world. While some communities are defined by the occupation of similar space or cohabitation, others are not as clearly defined or visible. This kind of understanding of community approaches the idea from a sociological perspective as it is more concerned with the institutional dimension of community as a term. However, it is also possible to approach the understanding of community from a psychological perspective where the idea of a sense of community which is a major component in the appreciation of the interactions which people have with other individuals on a daily basis. This way, our understanding of community extends beyond a geographical definition of the term to include more profound elements which contribute largely to the composition of the individual self. In other words, there is a way in which community transcends the mere understanding of it as place, where place is viewed ordinarily as space or a demographical entity. Community involves different forms of ethical and aesthetic orientation to both place and location. The idea of community can therefore be looked at from both sociological and psychological perspectives.

Scholarship dealing with community has become more amplified since Benedict Anderson emerged with his theorising of community as 'imagined' (Anderson, 1991). Anderson's idea of 'imagined communities' appears to have built upon Melvin Webbers' (1963) concept of community which seeks to counter the exaggeration of the impact which modernity and the forages of cosmopolitanism could possibly have on the various bonds or relationships existing in modern society. Webber's argument makes it clear that relationships could be maintained at a distance while it is also possible for communities to emerge in spite of spatial dispersion. In other words, communities can still exist even when there is what Craig Calhoun describes as 'time-space distanciation' (1998: 374). This argument therefore reveals 'a sound appreciation of the growing choice, flexibility and multiplicity of relational groupings' (Ibid). Like Webber, Anderson makes it clear that community goes beyond the physical presence of the members involved as common interests and feelings may also be shared in virtual spaces. Community is thus a mode of social integration which allows us to have a better sense of interactions and social practices in which people engage as a group. Anderson's work, like those of many others, brought a lot of dynamism into the way in which the concept was theorised and used in the description of social relations among people in society. While it clearly advances the frontiers of the study of community beyond merely looking at the physical entity which occupies space, it has also generated reactions which point to the difficulty in theory which is likely to emerge from a complete transposition of the understanding of community in its orthodox sense into the new sense that discards the reality of the existence of any form of it.

For some people the idea of community evokes images of a small group of people where the terrain and characters are well known and understood. It is in the words of Bess *et al* 'an idealization in place and time of feeling a part of a place, with those around knowing us and caring about us' (2002: 3). In many ways, it shows the extent to which people strive to do away with individuality and adopt a more inclusive approach to relations which gives preference to group activities. This choice of doing things in a group rather than individually, when closely

examined, appears to be a response to a psychological need in the individual to have a feeling of being considered important to others and at the same time being able to partake in what goes on in the lives of others and the larger community. In other words, it caters for the need for a sense of community in the everyday lives of people who either occupy a physical space or are connected by other means. In this way, community is better understood as 'practices of social interaction' (Calhoun, 1998: 373) which seek to link lives and relationships in specific circumstances. So, community is best understood as 'the life people live in dense, multiplex, relatively autonomous networks of social relationships. Community, thus, is not a place or simply a small-scale population aggregate, but a mode of relating variable in extent' (Calhoun, 1998: 391).

**Community Life in South Africa**
Conflicting representations of Africans and their 'imagined' communities abound in literature across different disciplines. The colonisation of the continent, by mainly Europeans, can also be said to be a major factor in the negative representations that Africa and its people got from European writers and scholars. Such disparaging portrayals were in most cases meant to specifically justify the colonisation of the continent and imposition of new forms of 'civilisations' which tend to serve foreign interests. In South Africa, white supremacist views which eventually culminated in the imposition of the state policy of apartheid created divergent 'imagined' communities which separated different categories of people based on skin pigmentation. With a peculiar history that sets it apart from other postcolonial African states, South Africa has always had its own impediments to the cultivation or nurturing of communities. During the apartheid days, community life in South Africa was highly regulated. This regulation was a weapon for keeping the 'natives' in check and preventing the possibility of mobilization for resistance. The strictures of apartheid laws and regulations made the mixing of the races a serious crime. This official prohibition was effected through the Immorality Act of 1927, the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality (Amendment) Act of 1950 all of which sought to prohibit amorous relationships between the different races especially between so called 'natives' and people of European descent. A provincial amendment to the 1927 Immorality Act in the Transvaal even made matters worse by disenfranchising any white person who violated the legislation. The Transvaal legislature's Ordinance No.4 of 1927 had a provision to the effect that 'white persons cohabiting with native or coloured persons shall not be entitled to be enrolled on the Voters' roll for any municipality, nor qualified to vote at any elections' (Martens, 2007: 224). Apart from the overt legislations keeping the different races apart, intra-racial community was also limited in the apartheid days as individuals and families perceived to constitute 'threats' to the state were kept under security watch and contacts with them by other people could have grave consequences. In narrating the difficulty inherent in associating with 'marked' individuals and families during this period, Mamphele Ramphele in a memoir writes that the quality of communal life that people lived under apartheid depended on factors like 'the temperament of the local security police' (Ramphele, 1999: 92). During this period, a good number of the people involved in the liberation struggle lived isolated lives in fear of arrest. As Ramphele puts it, 'many South Africans spent miserable years imprisoned in their own homes' (Ibid: 93). Ramphele's ordeals which symbolize the kind of strictures under which many people lived during the apartheid days stem from her relationship with Bantu Steve Biko, a strong figure in

the anti-apartheid liberation struggle[1]. The politics of space going on at this period obviously favoured a particular race over others. The national space became segregated in such a way that the pleasures of community were denied the majority black population whose identity has much to do with communality. The philosophy of *ubuntu* which defines relations among native South Africans 'has descriptive senses to the effect that one's identity as a human being causally and even metaphysically depends on a community. It also has prescriptive senses to the effect that one ought to be a *mensch*, in other words, morally one should support the community in certain ways' (Metz, 2007: 323). The difficulty imposed by the manipulation of space by the apartheid authorities made the practice of community difficult and dangerous for the people leading to a life of individualism with its implications for the structuring of relationships. As a result, the people occupied multiple imaginary communities defined by highly contested and politicised understandings of community.

There is no gainsaying the fact that apartheid was greatly divisive, necessitating the idea of a 'new' nation after the emergence of democratic governance in 1994. As Muiu puts it, 'the first encounter between Dutch colonizers and the indigenous community resulted in master/slave relations. Progressively, these relations became competitive and hostile, as Dutch colonizers encroached on indigenous land' (2008: 22). This shows that tensions had existed between Dutch settlers and 'native' South Africans before the arrival of the British. The implication of this is the absence of any cohesive community prior to colonisation. The later appearance on the scene by British imperial authority did not help matters either. For the British, the land in Africa which technically included the indigenous population was lacking in 'civilization' and the Dutch who were presumed by the British and other Europeans to have lost their 'Europeaness' and the 'sophisticated' civilization that goes with it had not really been of any good help to this local population as they themselves had 'degenerated' as a result of contact with the rugged African environment. The important thing to note here is that in the history of colonialism the interest of the colonized and that of the colonizer are often at variance with each other.

The absence of a common interest therefore triggers mutual suspicion and a vicious struggle for space, domination and myriad forms of resistance which tend to make the idea of a unified conceptual community impossible. The reprieve which self-determination, or the demise of apartheid in the case of South Africa, is expected to bring appears to be long in materializing, creating further anxieties about the possibility of community. It is important to note that the anti-social policies of the state which are meant in many instances to provide shields for private corporations erode social cohesion and threaten human well being and potential. In other words, 'new regimes of accumulation of different forms of capital' (Isin and Turner, 2002: 1) has led to less emphasis on the communal values of *ubuntu* which places higher premium on caring for the less privileged. The emphasis on the market and the embrace of the lure of the new industrial state throws up what Chatterjee sees as 'the underside of modern individualism—the callous impersonality and massification of market-driven societies that destroy age-old institutions of sociability and community living without putting anything in their place' (1998: 278). The noticeable practice of exclusion of the less privileged in policies by the state is also the trigger for upheavals in community such as are exemplified by service delivery protests and charged debates on media platforms in contemporary South Africa.

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[1] Mamphele Ramphele was a co-founder of the Black Consciousness Movement and Steve Biko's lover, a relationship that exposed her to constant brushes with the state.

**Nationalism(S) in Post-Apartheid South Africa**
Closely linked to the idea of community is the issue of nationalism. As Geoff Eley and Ronald Sunny argue, 'ordinary people need to see themselves as the bearers of an identity centered elsewhere, imagine themselves as an abstract community' (1996: 22) for nationalism to work. In this way, nationalism becomes an invention of sorts just the same way Anderson sees communities as 'imagined'. Discourses on nationalism are not new to Africa. The various struggles against colonialism and different other forms of oppression in the past have made the African continent a place of the expression of sentiments which tend to place the love of place at the centre of academic and political discourses. Beyond the expression of this love, however, is the viciousness of nationalism as history is replete with instances across the world where individuals and groups have committed heinous crimes against the 'other', in whatever form construed, as a result of sentiments bordering on difference. Relating this negative kind of nationalism to experience in Africa and Asia in the 1970s, a period less than a decade after the attainment of independence in some African countries, Partha Chatterjee argues that:

> nationalism had become a matter of ethnic politics, the reason why people in the Third World killed each other—sometimes in wars between regular armies, sometimes, more distressingly, in cruel and often protracted civil wars, and increasingly it seemed, by technologically sophisticated and virtually unstoppable acts of terrorism (Chatterjee, 1996: 214-215).

What Chartterjee construes as terrorism is often given expression in different forms in different places and at different times. While it rears its head as civil wars in certain instances, it manifests as inter-tribal hostilities, racial tensions, ethno-religious crises or xenophobia in other climes. The beauty of Chatterjee's thesis also lies in the fact that it sensitizes us to the realization that African nationalism, and by extension South African nationalism is not defined solely by the struggles for independence. As Ivor Chipkin argues there is the need to rise above the understanding of African nationalism 'simply as resistance to colonial authority, irrespective of its form' (2007: 11). Chatterjee's theorizing of the concept seems to have met this need even before Chipkin raises the question and concludes that nationalism especially in Africa is being 'viewed as a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly calm of civilized life' (Chatterjee, 1996: 215). Chatterjee's argument clearly extends the conceptual boundaries of Anderson's 'imagined communities' and opens up the discursive space with new possibilities which offer scholars of the postcolony a multidimensional prism with which to view the concept of nationalism.

In classifying the kind of insufferable deployment of nationalism, which Chatterjee and Chipkin separately engage with, Arjun Appadurai identifies such practices as 'the politics of affect' (1996: 144). For Appadurai, 'there is always a real substrate of primordialist affect that is perpetual tinder waiting to be exploited by specific political interests at a given moment in the history of any given nation-state' (Ibid: 144). In a manner of connecting back to Frantz Fanon, Appadurai lays the blame for the nourishment of this harmful tendency at the doorsteps of a class of elites who grow on the wings on neocolonialist or neoliberal ideologies that have little or no

regard for the interest of the constituents of the national community. Fanon's theorizing of what he classifies as 'the pitfalls of national consciousness' (1963: 119) identifies the culpability of 'the national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime' (Ibid: 119-120), in concert with the national bourgeoisie, in creating difficult conditions which further strain relations in the post-colonial state. Appadurai, like Fanon also attributes constant crises in the national community to the 'new elites and new gaps between castes and classes, which may not have arisen except for various neocolonialist projects in the new states' (Appadurai: 1996: 144). The overbearing narcissism of the elite groups coupled with the contestations among different other groups in society often makes the attainment of a national community difficult. This often leads to a proliferation of narrow nationalisms based on the philosophies of different categories of difference. The defining characteristic of this kind of situation in most cases is the spectre of imagination which places the individual or one's group and its interest far and above the larger humanistic ideal.

In the new South Africa, the different conditions outlined by the scholars whose works were examined above seem to be playing out in numerous ways as a new group of political leadership has taken charge of the country after the demise of apartheid. As Mueni wa Muiu argues:

> …the achievement of equal political rights in the new democracy was premised on the acceptance of unequal economic relations among different classes, genders, and races. Furthermore, the middle-class in all its multiracial and multiethnic diversity constantly faces threats from above and below. Popular demands from below sometimes lead the middle-class to partially satisfy the majority's economic and social demands. Pressures from various economic interests (particularly the business community) limit its room for maneuvre. These pressures force the middle class to make compromises that are detrimental to the economic interests of the majority of the population. (Muiu, 2008: 1)

In addition to making compromises, members of the middle class, some of whom also have access to institutional employment, engage in subversive practices which further impede progress and heighten the prospect of degeneracy which forms the basis for continuous agitation. In other words, bribery and corruption become options which the middle class adopts to make up for perceived losses arising from the various pressures it has to cope with from below and above. This problem of helping oneself to the till has also become quite evidently one of the major issues leading to apathy and despondency on the part of the larger population which seizes every little opportunity that avails itself to question the sincerity of the members of the ruling class and in the process putting their sense of nationalism or commitment to the common good to question. The deduction that can be made from this scenario is that there has been a form of 'multiracial nationalism in the wake of the transition from apartheid to liberal democracy, without a simultaneous transformation of economic relations' (Ibid: 1).

Embedded in the idea of nationalism is the understanding that individuals have of themselves as integral parts of the space they inhabit. In trying to figure out their stake in the national community, people grapple with different imaginings of the self as citizen or as entitled beings whose presence and agency become important in the constitution and sustenance of a national

community. The question of citizenship is therefore considered against the background of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, who should qualify as citizen of the national community and who should not? Again, what should be the obligations of the state towards such individuals and what are the expectations of the state or the responsibilities heaved on such citizens by the state which also retains the power of social control over its constituents? The notion of nationalism often invokes sentimental affections of belonging, communality and allegiance. In some cases however, this kind of feeling generates debates around the classifications of 'insider' and 'outside' especially in multicultural or diverse communities where the competition for scarce resources is heightened by a new world order that seeks to advocate globalization and the need to protect boundaries and local privileges at the same time. The next section of this paper, therefore, tries to point to instances in the 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' where participants as well as the show hosts are involved in creating a discourse community as they take on different issues of common interest in the polity. The material drawn from the actual programmes is also complemented by interviews conducted with listeners who call in to these shows and some invited guests.

**Practices of Community in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show'**
European settlers, both Dutch and British, saw indigenous South Africa as emblematically bounded, timeless and static. This could be said to be as a result of a lack of proper understanding of the prevailing ways of life of the African population that the colonisers met at inception. The structure of every community is often influenced by the different categories of people that can be found within it. In the case of South Africa, the population is composed of different classes, races, ethnicities and genders, dimming the prospects of a unified community as the interests and aspirations of each of the component groups differ extensively. This also leads to different forms of nationalism as people become loyal not just to the nation construed as a unified entity but also to cleavages based on several other interests and categorizations of affinity. In mediatised discourses like we have in radio talk shows, there is a way in which presenters or anchors may also become part of the discourse community. This is achieved by their not just posturing as a part of the group that meets at regular intervals to take a look at issues of concern but also by showing concern for others within the particular frame of reference that defines association. For instance, the presenter of a show may express a sense of community by making reference to other members of the production team like we have in the following example:

> Let me welcome you to my controller, Thomas. I have got three bosses here. Nobuhle, Mpheni, they are my producers. And Thomas tells me when to speak, when to shut up, when to go to on break. He's been away and is nice to have him back, we love you Thomas. Anyway that's it the whole team is back together. These are the people who make the show happen. We keep it together and I wouldn't achieve a quarter of all I do without them. (Redi Direko Show, 19 January 2009)

The above statement apart from showing deference to the individuals mentioned by the show host also creates an ambience and feeling of community that attempts to legitimize the show itself as a product of group work, leading to the assumption that it is neither arbitrary nor unilateral. In a similar vein, Tim Modise, the host of 'The After Eight Debate' on SAFM usually concludes the show by making reference to members of the production team who are all deemed

to have been part of the day's show. In signing off on one episode of the programme which featured the Secretary General of the ANC, for instance, Modise makes the following concluding remarks:

> Ok, Gwede Mantashe thanks very much for talking to us this morning. He is the ANC Secretary General and talking to us from East London. Misho Shandalala, Tshililo Tshivase, Harriet Nait, Marumo Kekana, Mark Pryler, Phuti Mosimane, Cleo Leshoro, Thandanani Dlamini, Nhlakanipho Zulu, thanks again for putting Am Live together. It has been a great week and I hope you have a great weekend. I'm Tim Modise. Wish you a great weekend. We'll be back with you again next Monday and bring you events from around the world. (After Eight Debate, 9 January 2009).

Although the voice of the show host usually dominates the airwaves during the course of the main programme, the reeling out of the names of members of the team at the end is to suggest to the listening public a sense community and communality. In the case of Modise, he mentions the names of nine other people who have been involved in the process that produces the day's progamme.

An important point to note in understanding the community of talk radio beyond relationships among professional colleagues in the studios is the fact that people involved in this programme genre are never complete strangers to one another. Since the issues raised on the shows are often drawn from things happening in particular places at a time, the people who respond to such issues through their participation are usually people in the same community under reference who might be affected in one way or the other by the subject being discussed. Even where contributors are not known in person, they may become familiar voices either because of where they call from or by being regular callers or participants on these shows. This kind of relationship is evident in the response of James, a teacher who has featured as guest contributor on many talk shows in South Africa, including 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show'. According to him, there are certain individuals in the public who become quite familiar as a result of either the frequency of their participation or the kind of views they express on these shows. Such people help the producers of the shows to keep them going. In his words:

> ... they also have people who are very much part of the talk show who sustain it. These are people who phone in on a regular basis and they literally know their opinions and whatever. There are many of them if you look at all these programmes. There is Prophet OJ, there is Pat from, you know, wherever, who used to be a former student here. (James Interview, 20 May 2010).

From the above statement, it is evident that James is familiar with some of the people with whom he participates on talk shows, though each of them may play different roles. It is also apparent that the show producers would have been familiar with certain individuals who they expect to hear from during their shows. The talk show then facilitates a form of social congregation which translates into a community made up of both familiar people as well as possible strangers.
On the same episode of her programme referred to earlier, Redi Direko dwells on the election victory of American president Barrack Obama:

> How many of you saw the concert last night on M-net? A host of stars on a special concert last night to welcome Barrack Obama to Washington. And it was very moving….what stood out for me was that this didn't feel like a democrat victory. You see where I am going with this; it didn't feel like the democrats' victory. It felt like the American nation victory because they kept quoting from past republican presidents, past democrat candidates and all of that….And I suppose that is the kind of democracy we want to get to. We want to get to a point where you agree with people on principle even if they come from a different party, even if they come from a different culture. You want to be able to say the DA's Hellen Zille says ABC even if you are in ANC and vice versa, DA giving praise and credit to ANC when it is due. That's the kind of unity that came through for me. Apart from that, the fact that the Americans can put together a blooming heart party. I mean they raise the bar…. Anyway give us a call with whatever is on your mind this morning. (Redi Direko Show, 19 January 2009)

The reference to Obama and the presidential elections in the United States of America seems to raise a major question about the boundaries of community. In short, it points to the expansiveness of community. The expression of a feeling of community may extend beyond physical territorial boundaries to include people and events which are of relevance to the identity of individuals or groups. The American event, in spite of its taking place in a distant clime, becomes a reference point on 'The Redi Direko Show' because of its relevance to contemporary South African politics in terms of racial equations and aspirations for a community defined by democratic tenets. In making a reference to relationship between the Democrats and the Republicans the host expresses aspirations about political contestations in South Africa by calling on the ruling ANC and opposition parties to emulate the culture of tolerance in political disputations. In addition to this, the fact that Obama is the first black president of the United States becomes a major trope in addressing the conditions of the black majority in South Africa who as a result of long years of oppression under apartheid still have to struggle to imbibe self-confidence and the will to rise above the challenges of life.

Community building practices are also noticeable in the ways in which these talk shows invite members of the public to participate in them. For instance, a subtle invitation is extended to listeners to call in and give information about their observation of particular events or phenomena. One of such occasions is seen during the hosting of the Minister of Safety and Security, Comrade Nathi Mutetwa on the programme shortly after the New Year holidays, a season when crime is believed to be palpable in major South African cities:

> We are probing affairs in the safety and security environment area and asking whether the claims made by the police are true that they have reduced criminal activities over the past holiday season and whether you have been able to confirm this for yourself or what your observations tell you and also talking about the various initiatives that the minister of safety and security Nathi Mthethwa embarked upon once he got appointed as

Safety and Security Minister and he joins us on the line. (After Eight
Debate, 5 January 2009)

The first feeling that is obvious here is that there is a great concern for the safety of the
community which constitutes the coverage area for this particular programme. In addition to this,
the show host attempts to compose a community of discourse by immediately inviting the
audience to join in the discussion, either by sharing their own personal experiences or by asking
the minister some questions. Another point to note here is the way in which security concerns
contribute to the formation of certain forms of community. The preservation of life and the
avoidance of harm of any form are very important elements in differentiating between the way
people relate with complete strangers and people they know. In other words, while people may
feel secure with acquaintances they may be scared or feel highly exposed when they deal with
people of whom they know little or nothing. Apart from the racial divides which determine the
realisation of communities, security concerns may therefore play crucial roles in the way people
associate with others or even the way access to communities is mapped. It is important to also
note however that the emergence and maintenance of stratified communities cannot be limited to
the racially determined, as secluded communities now form across racial lines and people are
unified by their security concerns to create impregnable abodes which give a sense of or a
semblance of safety to the inhabitants. In such instances class, more than anything else, appears
to unify more as a result of the values of materiality that determine vulnerability.

There is a noticeable transformation of the media itself brought about by the nature and structure
of talk shows generally. With these shows, audiences become a part of a professional media
community through the generation of content in the form of participation. Participants are given
some form of space in the professional community to give information about things happening in
their environment. This quasi-reportage of events, which has been generally designated as user-
generated content, creates a new relationship between media and their audiences as the audience
moves from the zone of passive consumption to that of active production. On this same episode
of the show a caller who identifies himself as Jason volunteers information about the activities of
criminals in Umkomasi where he claims to call from:

My question is the syndicates operating in South Africa. We had a case here
where Tanzanians were caught for housebreaking and then they were said to
be deported. They came back and tormented the people for the second time.
Now I know in fact that in Mozambique or Tanzania because we worked
there you daren't commit crime there because you won't even be deported
you'll be tried and imprisoned there and be treated like one of their own
people. (After Eight Debate, 5 January 2009)

The contribution by Jason is a direct reportage of crime linked to foreigners, specifically
Tanzanians, in his community. The question of crime and its 'foreign' colouration, it should be
noted, has been a major discourse in contemporary South African society. The belief is rife that
most crimes in the country are committed by mainly foreigners from neighbouring African
countries. So this reporting of crime committed by Tanzanians in Umkomasi speaks to the larger
national discourse in which the rise in criminal activities in the country is attributed to the post-
1994 increasing presence of foreign nationals from the rest of Africa. Though it is not clear in

Jason's contribution whether or not he had personally been a victim of crime, the sense one gets of his contribution is a concern to see a larger territorial space free of crime. The larger territory which goes beyond the boundaries of Jason's home or individual self is Umkomasi town where the caller is just a member of a large collectivity. In addition to this is the possibility that the criminals referred to by Jason are also a member of the community. If they do not live in Umkomasi, they most likely would live at least in the larger national community of South Africa, of which Jason and other listeners and participants are also members. This is indicative of the difference between membership and citizenship in community to which I will return later. The anxiety over crime therefore speaks to the interdependence of participants of community whereby the actions or even inactions of some members could impact on the lives of others. In conceptualizing this principle of interdependence in communities Tamotsu Shibutani argues that 'participants are interdependent; each person must do his share or the unit as a whole breaks down' (1987: 35).

On 'The Redi Direko Show' the host often invites listeners to call and 'tell us what is happening in your area' or 'what happened over the weekend.' These kinds of calls provide an opportunity to interact with listeners located in different places. In addition to this the host and other listeners at that particular time are also able to share in the experiences of such listeners who call in with a narrative of events around them. In playing this role of the 'eyewitness'[2] members share experiences and concerns and further build a community of people who interact more freely, radicalizing the concept of production and reception in radio broadcasting. As one of the respondent listeners, Mmathapelo observes in an interview, the main value of talk radio is in its ability to create a form of immediacy and intimate people with what goes on around them and in other places that may be of interest to the community:

> The listeners interact with the radio like directly. They give them time to talk about current things, current affairs, things as they arise, they don't wait for tomorrow. If something happens, like on Radio 702 they actually give listeners a chance to call. If you see an accident, if you see something happening, a newsworthy thing you call them and give them the information and as they report in their news they say so and so is on ground and so this is happening and here is an eyewitness who was there. I think it makes news more interesting (Mmathapelo Interview, 26 April 2010).

She goes forward to talk about how radio talk shows may further reinvigorate her interest in political issues as well as other contentious matters going on around her. In other words,11 these talk shows may make her share the interests of other people around her and in the course of this bring her into the fold of an imagined community of discourse. In her view:

> With me when there is a hot topic on politics like the Julius Malema thing I obviously look forward to him coming so if they announce that he's going to come I actually sit down to listen to him. If there is a war of words between AWB and the ANC Youth League and they say they are inviting one of them or both of them I look forward to those people. So, it's about what is happening there (Mmathapelo Interview, 26 April 2010).

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[2] Talk Radio 702 actually has a news slot called 'Eyewitness News' which features on-the-spot reportage of events.

Prophet O. J. is another participant on SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' who had featured as an invited guest:

> When one is on air you even, it's like you feel people who are listening, it's like you are seeing them, it's like you are with them. You know it comes to a point when you say a word knowing that somebody in Cape Town is listening, somebody in Johannesburg is listening, somebody maybe even in England is listening.  It comes to a point whereby it's like that person is with you….You are sort of driven to give the person who is listening the humbleness and the respect that that person deserves as if that person is looking straight into your eyes (Prophet O. J. Interview, 22 April 2010).

There is a sense of community evident in the above response by Prophet O. J. It also shows that people who participate as invited guests on 'The After Eight Debate' may do so with the awareness that they are part of a community made up of different kinds of individuals. In talking about giving people the kind of 'humbleness and respect' they deserve, this participant calls attention to the consciousness of a position of power in the community by having the privilege to speak on radio while at the same time hinting at the need to be mindful of the arrays of difference that may characterize membership of the community.

In this kind of environment the interactivity that comes into the work of media especially radio becomes important especially in societies undergoing transformation where the need for people to voice their concerns and anxieties is very important for the appreciation of progress and the planning of responses to outstanding areas of concern. The analysis so far positions radio talk shows as 'a community of characters' which 'depends on a core group of citizens to give it life and support' (Peters, 1999: 9). As members of this virtual community, each member acts based on different levels of consciousness. This raises a further question in relation to feelings of nationalism which is to some extent premised on the amount of interest that an individual has in the entity towards which the nationalistic affection is directed. The answer to this question can be made manifest in the unpacking of the idea of citizenship which in a sense draws in the politics of inclusion and exclusion in culturally diverse communities like we find in post-apartheid South Africa.

**Citizenship and New Imaginings of the Self**
Beyond the question of nationalism, the idea of citizenship may further illuminate the concept of community especially in relation to how the state relates with its subjects or those who inhabit its border space. In addition to this, an understanding of the concept of citizenship in the contemporary world will make people aware of the meanings of belonging which further defines the individual, his roles and obligations in society. This awareness is expected to throw more light on the crucial phenomenon of civic engagement. To begin with, it is important to observe that the concept of citizenship keeps mutating thus challenging traditional modes of belonging and creating new practices of membership of groups and territories. As Engin Isin and Bryan Turner argue:

> Major social issues such as the status of immigrants, aboriginal peoples, refuges, diasporic groups, environmental injustices, and homelessness have increasingly been expressed through the language of rights and obligations, and hence of citizenship. Moreover, not only are the rights and obligations of citizens being redefined, but also what it means to be a citizen and which individuals and groups are enabled to possess such rights have become issues of concern (2002: 1).

Isin and Turner further argue that in the new globalised world citizenship is being redefined and reconfigured along three important axis of '*extent* (rules and norms of inclusion and exclusion), *content* (rights and responsibilities) and *depth* (thickness or thinness)' (Ibid: 2). In this manner it is possible for some members of a particular community to claim to be 'more citizen' than others. This claim to superior citizenship could be based on different kinds of factors ranging from indigeneity to membership of a particular social class. In most cases such claims collide with other forms of agitation for inclusion which extend the contestation for membership of the particular community in question beyond passivity into an active demand for redistribution. Given this kind of scenario:

> …various struggles based upon identity and difference (whether sexual, 'racial', 'ethnic', diasporic, ecological, technological, or cosmopolitan) have found new ways of articulating their claims as claims of citizenship understood not simply as legal status but as political and social recognition and economic redistribution (Ibid: 2).

Citizenship in South Africa has been a highly contested concept because of the flawed racial conditions imposed by the apartheid government. This racialised citizenship falls short of expectations in the modern 'democratic' state. During apartheid, there were different ways of defining citizenship. Jeremy Martens (2007) identifies two of such definitions of citizenship. While the first stipulates that only 'civilized' men had the right to citizenship, the second gave citizenship to all white men by virtue of their race. This kind of imagining of citizenship resulted in frequent changes in the political landscape as well as constant altering of identities of people based on their different racial backgrounds (Hyslop, 1995[3]; Martens, 2007). The racialisation of citizenship and political participation implied the exclusion of the majority black population from taking part in civil society activities.   Since the demise of apartheid the South African state has tried to redefine the concept of citizenship through various means. The most obvious of these means however is the South African constitution, a heavily advertised document, persuasively paraded as the most liberal in the world and by implication the best that can be found in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa where South Africa is perceived to be a big player. Apart from the constitution, there have been several references to the concepts of African brotherhood and the spirit of *ubuntu* which creates the impression of South Africa as an inclusive state, receptive to people from other parts of the world especially those from other African countries. A good example of this kind of reference can be found in former president Thabo Mbeki's matrix of the

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[3] Although Hyslop's argument about anti-miscegenation, which is a response the J.M Coetzee's (1991) theorising of apartheid as a product of collective irrationality, provides a gendered reading of history, it clearly show's like the prevalent conferment of citizenship along racial lines which divided South African society and reinforced diverse nationalisms.

'African Renaissance' which he vigorously and constantly emphasised while in office. This form of African nationalism expressed by the former president, coupled with the provisions of the constitution which was based on the Freedom Charter of 1955 created the impression of South Africa as an all-inclusive cosmopolitan community ready to accommodate people from different backgrounds and from all parts of the world. In short, the transition to a new order in South Africa has seen several attempts to present to the world the picture of a new and more inclusive territory. This new disposition is, no doubt, without the attempt to create the impression, as Hein Marais puts it, that 'the exclusionary basis of South African society would be replaced with an inclusionary one' (2001: 94).

However, the realities in contemporary South Africa seem to provide a different picture as the country still battles with problems of abuse of women's rights, homophobia and xenophobic attacks against foreigners especially those from neighbouring African countries. While focusing on the aspect of violent attacks against foreign nationals as one of the conditions that make citizenship problematic in South Africa, Francis Nyamjoh argues that:

> With the exception of occasional intervention of the Human Rights Commission, the failure of the South African Constitution and authorities to protect the rights of non-citizens is clearly at variance with all claims that South Africa is building a 'culture of human rights'. By limiting entitlements only to national citizens, the South African state has shifted the emphasis to keep out those who do not belong and preventing anyone else from joining, especially those who have the "wrong citizenship", ….[or the] "wrong gender" (Nyamjoh, 2006: 41).

The implication of Nyamnjoh,s argument in clearly captured in Weintraub's caveat that 'membership in community does not necessarily constitute citizenship [as] citizenship entails participation in  a particular kind of community …one marked by, among other things, fundamental equality and the consideration and resolution of public issues through conscious collective decision making' (1997: 13).

There is also a marked difference between the attainment of citizenship and attempts to become what Chipkin calls 'an authentic national subject' (2007: 12). While the citizen tries to convince about his/her entitlement to belonging the national subject, 'authentic' or not, often seeks to defend mainstream ideologies which represent the position of the state in an attempt to conjure an imaginary national community or its semblance. The problem of citizenship is made more complex in the new South Africa by the social and economic exclusion evident in the public domain. While pockets of service delivery protests signpost the discontent of the masses and their frustration with the new leadership, more serious disruptive actions like xenophobia and other forms of subversive behaviour against individual 'others' and the state hint at a form of popular resistance borne out of frustration with a system that offers less than the expectations of the majority. In addition to these visible forms of expressing discontent, the media provide a platform for the expression of the feelings of the people on how they imagine themselves and others as citizens of the national community.

Radio offers this kind of expressive platform through talk shows like 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' which form the basic material for this study. In grappling with the different implications of being part of the national community the likelihood emerges for people to see their being part of that community beyond the modern conception of citizenship as 'merely a status held under the authority of a state' (Isin and Turner, 2002: 2). On the other hand they are persuaded more to see themselves as subjects existing in relation to various other realities which they have to cope with in an intricate process of negotiating their membership of different states of being which they need to inhabit at the different times. In other words, they see themselves as victims of a differentiated citizenship which 'accords dissimilar treatments to members of different social groups' (Young, 1989: 258). This new understanding of the self is often enacted in the public domain and through acts of agency which portend apathy and seek to protect individual or group interests above the collective. A practice antithetical to community and social cohesion, such defence mechanisms are seen, by victims of differentiated citizenship especially, as survival strategies with which they cope with official exclusion. These 'ways of belonging' (Baumeister, 2003) then become a scheme for the management of the deprived self in order to carry on with life.

The public domain is a veritable part of community. More than anything else, it is an imaginary space that offers the platform for the performance of the different roles which individuals either take upon themselves or are called upon to undertake in the community. Guided by normative codes and protocols of entering into it and engaging in discourse, the public domain or what Jurgen Habermas theorizes as the public sphere provides a normative open community where the exchange of ideas and the questioning of deeds or even misdeeds resonate for the enablement of the practice of democratic ideals which further enhance citizens' claim to membership of the national community and the benefits that go with such membership. In the imagining of this space that tries to validate the membership of citizens, the media are often called to action through the deployment of different technologies which create different levels of information exchange aimed at the provision of as much information as possible for citizens to engage in practices of belonging. Radio talk shows, in offering the kind of platform which provides for the expression of individual and group aspirations, make the move towards the achievement of community possible by bringing people from different backgrounds together in a discursive relationship.

In the South African context, this role of talk radio is very crucial especially when considered against the background of the difficulty of open expression which characterized the days of apartheid. Before the demise of apartheid and the return to democratic rule in 1994 there had been centres of community, albeit of a different character. Such discursive communities were found in subversive radio broadcasts and unofficial dissemination of information about the state in clandestine fashion. In the 1960s for example a few radio presenters, producers and scriptwriters working in the section of the state broadcaster SABC, known then as Radio Bantu, adopted strategies identified by Liz Gunner as 'the rhetoric of resistance' (2005: 163) to destabilize the apartheid order of complete control over the airwaves. Citing the particular example of a versatile radio presenter, Buthelezi, Gunner concludes that the traditional Zulu narrative forms used by some of the clever presenters at that time 'may have been potentially far more subversive than [their] surface innocence, or sheer eccentricity, suggested' (Ibid: 166). In other words, the local language presenters of this era, while constituting a unique kind of

deliberative community, have found in the traditional artistic forms 'a spoon long enough to sup with the devil' (Ibid: 163). In addition to this form of alternative sources of information for the community is the resort to what Stephen Ellis calls 'pavement radio' or '*radio trottoir*'. This refers to the thriving of rumours or 'the popular and unofficial discussion of current affairs in Africa, particularly in towns' (Ellis, 1989: 321). This kind of information peddling is often a product of a lack of trust between the people and institutions charged with the responsibility of keeping them informed (Shibutani, 1966; Obadare, 2005; Fine, 2007). In putting this in proper perspective, Gary Fine contends that:

> In one sense, rumor indicates a breakdown of institutional trust. The existence of rumor suggests that those who disseminate such claims argue— implicitly or explicitly—that information from authoritative sources is either incomplete or inaccurate. Either they are incomplete or immoral (2007: 7).

In the event of this loss of confidence in mainstream channels of information rumour becomes a form of 'improvised news' (Shibutani, 1966) which helps individuals and communities 'cope with the ambiguities and strains of an uncertain present [as it] reflects the future through the recent past (Ibid: 7).

**Conclusion**
Community in South Africa is still in the evolution phase where affiliational structures keep emerging with no certainty yet as to what the outcome might eventually be. This is as a result of the coalescing of different groups along different racial, class and even gender lines. With such different formations, the idea of a 'rainbow nation' which is central to the formation or shaping of identities in post-apartheid South Africa seems to still remain, at best, a distant possibility. There is ample evidence to believe that attempts to build a cohesive new South African nation are apparent in the two radio talk shows selected for this study. In seeking to do this, the shows try as much as possible to be as open as possible in order to give access to a wide range of participants. The various contestations in society as seen in the array of topics coming up for discussion on shows and the variety of the views and positions taken by people of different racial as well as socio-political backgrounds show that the different allegiances which people still hold especially to race or ethnic affiliations make the attainment of this cohesion a very difficult task. What becomes more visible therefore is the continuous building of new alliances or communities based on numerous other factors which keep coming into the picture as the reality of the new South Africa unfolds. It is indeed important to note that even the community that the participants on shows themselves constitute is as diverse as the different physical and social locations from which they come to be part of the shows. In a way, the representation of South African nationalism as multiracial is an attempt at forging a South African community which validates the post-apartheid slogan of the rainbow nation. The series of challenges which confront this effort as evidenced by altercations in public discourse tend to point in the direction of diverse emerging communities in the new nation. The expression of perverse nationalism(s) by participants on both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' is a public testimony to the precariousness of community in post-apartheid South Africa.

In any case, it suffices to say that it is from this kind of discordant communities which 'dramatize a series of questions around recognition and non-recognition' (Nuttall, 2001: 392)

that a new nation must emerge where there is mutual respect not just in acts of doing but also in perception of different racial groups and classes of people who make up the new rainbow nation. There seems therefore an attempt to forge a new kind of civilization that turns a blind eye to differences and seeks new ways of integrating the hitherto disparate people and groups. This attempt is more visible in official efforts to build a common nationalism which continues to give the impression of an imaginary unified community. The major predicament of such efforts though is inherent in the fact that authorities seek more to mould national subjects rather than citizens. In defiance of these efforts, therefore, participants on radio talk shows can be said to have found a public domain through which they engage themselves in emerging communities where issues of their everyday lives take centre stage. In this domain, even the socially disinherited may have voice or even the latitude to raise questions concerning their membership of the community or different kinds of community which they view as a common legacy not to be appropriated or assigned on the basis of privilege and disadvantage. In this manner, an existing social hierarchy of subordination which hinders the unification of different imagined communities may begin to give way to a new form of agency that derives inspiration from the margins of power in contemporary South Africa.

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