

Institutional and discursive change in a charismatic congregation.

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Religion and transformation in South Africa? Institutional and discursive change in a charismatic congregation

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A number of Christian churches in South Africa have proclaimed their commitment to reconciliation and the elimination of unjust inequalities. This study analyses how these commitments are being worked out at the micro-level of a congregation. Using an ethnographic approach, I explore how a charismatic congregation in Cape Town has changed from being nearly all-white to being more inclusive. I explore links between individual, cognitive identity change and institutional change; and consider the discourses which justify change, including their emphasis on 'unity in diversity' and 'restitution'. I outline the limitations of change, including the persistence of 'racialised' leadership structures and the discursive privileging of unity over

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A number of Christian churches in South Africa have proclaimed their commitment to reconciliation and the elimination of unjust inequalities. This study analyses how these commitments are being worked out at the micro-level of a congregation. Using an ethnographic approach, I explore how a charismatic congregation in Cape Town has changed from being nearly all-white to being more inclusive. I explore links between individual, cognitive identity change and institutional change; and consider the discourses which justify change, including their emphasis on 'unity in diversity' and 'restitution'. I outline the limitations of change, including the persistence of 'racialised' leadership structures and the discursive privileging of unity over restitution. This allows us to understand how micro-level changes take place, to explore their potentialities and limitations, and to apply these insights to other contexts.

Introduction: an African jubilee

The Africa that I am building is an Africa with a golden platter full of good things. There is a stream out of Africa to bless the nations of the world. The Africa that I am building has a golden platter in front of it that will never be empty and has the ability not only to feed its own people but to feed the nations of the world.

So proclaims a colourful tapestry draped on the wall behind the raised platform at the front of Jubilee Community Church in Cape Town. A map of Africa, superimposed with an image of a bowl overflowing with fruit, provides the visual accompaniment for these words. At the back of the auditorium, a number of national flags hang from the ceiling. On Sunday mornings, about 1,000 people of various racial,² national, and socio-economic



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