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Chapter 2

The Church of Mandela: Black Methodism and Queer Identity

The MCSA has successfully built an institutional identity as ‘the Church of Mandela’. Nelson Mandela, is perhaps the most prominent member of the Church, an affiliation which he claimed throughout his life (Forster 2014). However, the designation "Church of Mandela", as I use it here does not solely reference Mandela's membership; it also stems from the alignment of the MCSA's visions, doctrines, and mission statements with the ideals symbolized by Mandela. This is evident in the denomination’s historical involvement in opposing apartheid as well as in the commitments the Church has made to creating a more equal and just Church and country in a post-apartheid South Africa. More recently however, as I explore in this chapter, Mandela has also come to symbolise the failure of realising the vision of an equal, democratic and inclusive society. Similarly, in this chapter, queer clergy find themselves disillusioned and disappointed by the unfulfilled realization of those aspirations promised in the commitments of the MCSA. In this chapter I explore how LGBTQ clergy navigate both the promise held in the MCSA’s identity as a prophetic Church driven by social justice as well as their disenchantment through constructing, identifying and disidentifying with versions of black Methodism.

In my research, the clergy drew connections between the MCSA's commitments to social justice and equality and its characterization as a black church. In this chapter I discuss queer clergies’ investments in this institutional identity and the ways in which they frame belonging and ‘authenticity’ as Methodists through performativities of, and identifications with, blackness. In some ways then they were able to access the promises held in the Church of Mandela. Yet, the MCSA’s visions of inclusivity, unity, and social justice clearly has its limits, especially when considering the persistent racialised divisions in the Church and the continued marginalisation of women and queer clergy and members. I also explore how despite these commitments; their experiences often demonstrated the limitations of this rhetoric. In concluding this chapter, I engage in a discussion informed by José Muñoz's theory of disidentification and Orit Avishai's (2023) concepts of agency, to make sense of how LGBTQ clergy

navigate, survive, and assert their sense of belonging by forging an 'authentic' Methodist identity and establishing clerical authority.

In order to map the context for this discussion I first provide a brief background to Mandela's links to Methodism and how this connects to the broader institutional identity of the MCSA as the Church of Mandela. I also provide context for the ways in which I discuss race in this chapter, as well as how participants' talk about race in relation to being Methodist in Southern Africa.

Mandela and the Methodists[20]

On one hand, the figurehead of Nelson Mandela seems appropriate to signal a Church which has fostered an institutional identity linked to the anti-apartheid activism of prominent members. This list includes MCSA leaders and clerics such as Ernest Baartman, Stanley Mogoba, Seth Mokitimi, and Peter Storey, amongst others, who were all prominent anti-apartheid activists who fought for reform both inside and outside the Church. Most famously of course is Mandela himself who identified as a Methodist throughout his life, a link which has benefitted the MCSA as it has legitimised the Church's links to state power and propped up its moral authority. In Dion Forster's (2014) faith biography of Nelson Mandela, he notes his numerous links and identifications as Methodist. Mandela was baptised in a Methodist Church in Qunu and was schooled in Methodist Mission schools in Mqhekezweni (Forster 2014, 91-93). His affiliations with Methodism continued up until his imprisonment on Robben Island, where he was visited and pastored to by Methodist clergy such as Reverend Peter Storey and Reverend James Gribble (Forster 2014, 95-97). Later when Mandela married Graça Machel, he chose for it to be a "Methodist wedding" presided over by the Presiding Bishop of the MCSA at the time, Reverend Dr Mvume Dandala (Forster 2014, 99). Methodist clergy again offered pastoral care towards the end of Mandela's life and "featured prominently in the public and private events surrounding Mr Mandela's death, memorial service and funeral" (Forster 2014, 88).

Mandela is of course also symbolically linked with the anti-apartheid struggle. The MCSA had long since been co-opted in this fight. The mission statement "one and undivided" was adopted in 1958 and aimed to advocate for the representation of black

[20] I borrow here from Dion Forster's (2014) article "Mandela and the Methodists: Faith, Fallacy and Fact", which explores in more depth Mandela's connections to Methodism.

ministers in the predominantly white clerical body at that time (Dlamini 2019, 5).[21] These commitments stand in sharp contrast to the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, which was still firmly divided along racial lines and which sought to further entrench racialised ideologies. The MCSA's uniqueness as an anti-apartheid church was affirmed by Nelson Mandela who, in his speech at the Annual Conference of the MCSA in Umtata in September 1994, claimed that "The Methodist Church was the only Church to be declared an illegal organisation under apartheid." The denominations anti-racist stance was further bolstered by an influential church-based black consciousness movement, formalised in the 1970s as the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC), which responded to racist apartheid systems that excluded and marginalised black leadership and theology in the Church. In July 1981, Obedience '81 Conference was held where representatives gathered to "[listen] to the cries of those in [the Church's] body who endure[d] our land's apartheid laws and other discriminatory practices and attitudes" and to call for a rejection of apartheid.[22] In the message adopted by this conference they claimed, "We have experienced a healing which has lifted us from the very agony of division and despair to the joy of unity and praise."

Along with figures like Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela is also connected to ideas of non-racialism and racial diversity through the rhetoric of rainbow nationalism which advocates for "unity in diversity" (Sall 2018, 1). Rainbowism gained popularity as a discourse during the emergence of a democratic South Africa in the 1990s, marked by promises of racial equality and broader freedoms for citizens of colour who had been marginalized in the past. Mandela endeavoured to cultivate a commitment to the rainbow nation building project among South Africans, including those within his Church. As Mandela noted in the same 1994 speech to the MCSA Conference,

> The Church, like all other institutions of civil society, must help all South Africans to rise to the challenge of freedom. As South Africa moves from resistance to reconstruction and from confrontation to reconciliation, the energy that was once dedicated to breaking apartheid must be harnessed to the task of building the nation. (As quoted in Forster 2014, 99)

[21] The issue of gender seems to have not been deeply considered or acknowledged at the time.
[22] The full Obedience 81 statement is accessible via https://methodist.org.za/index.php/obedience-81/.

Inspired by a Conference debate in 1991, the MCSA had already adopted the “Journey to a New Land Programme” (1992 – 1997) before Mandela’s presidency. This programme aimed to consider how the Church would respond to a changing country which, in the eyes of many at the time, would need healing and reconstruction in its fledgling democracy (Kumalo 2006). As part of this shift, the MCSA’s internal structures were reworked to reflect a racially diverse and bottom-up leadership approach which was more aligned with the democratic governance envisioned for the country (Madise 2014, 123). Therefore, while societies (individual congregations) were previously divided into racial circuits (a grouping of congregations), they were changed to be organised geographically. This meant that white congregations, previously situated in the central areas of towns as per apartheid laws designating these regions for those classified as white, now functioned administratively alongside black congregations predominantly situated on the outskirts of urban districts (Madise 2014, 124). In 2000 the position of a Lay Leader was also created at Connexional level (the national structure of the MCSA comprised of all its districts) and later at district level (a grouping of a number of circuits within a geographic region) which made space for lay people to influence Church policy and doctrine. The “Journey to a New Land Programme” also eventually developed into four mission imperatives named in the 2004 Mission Charter which are meant to guide the MCSA. These are, 1) Evangelism and Church Growth, 2) Spirituality, 3) Justice and Service, 4) Human and Economic Development and Empowerment (Bentley 2014, 5). Later a fifth imperative, Education, was also included.

It is also important to note that the symbol of the rainbow has also been extended to encompass hopes for queer freedoms through embracing sexual diversity. This queer extension of the rainbow is more often linked to Archbishop Desmond Tutu who was vocal on issues of LGBTQIA+ rights. Mandela, is not recorded as speaking about LGBTQIA+ issues and is perhaps most often critiqued for his slow response to the HIV pandemic in South Africa during his presidency. Although this was also followed by his robust campaigning for combatting HIV and AIDS post-presidency. As Mark Gevisser is quoted as saying, “It’s not that Mandela ever took the mic and said, ‘I love gay people,' or, ‘Gay people have rights.’ He never did. He studiously never did. But he accepted it. He was the leader of the party that brought about this reform” (Signorile 2013). Similarly, up until the early 2000s, there was little official discussion or

investment from the MCSA in LGBTIQA+ freedoms. More urgent debate was certainly sparked in 2009 and 2010 after Ecclesia de Lange was fired from the MCSA. While the MCSA has also stated that it "seeks to be community of love rather than rejection", it has also not come so far as to fully realize in its doctrines that 'Gay people have rights'.

In recent years, the figure of Mandela has increasingly come to represent much of the failed promises of 'the new South Africa' after the end of legalised apartheid in 1994. The failure and/or limitations of rhetorics of 'rainbow nationalism', 'unity in diversity' and 'reconciliation', embodied in Mandela, has been a topic of interest for numerous scholars representing a variety of disciplines (see Habib 1997; Myambo 2010; Thoreson 2008; McLean 2019; Mailula 2020). The Fallist student protests and resulting movements which began to emerge in 2015, have especially highlighted the failure of the rainbow. The student movements represent the anger of a generation that was promised equality and unity almost 20 years before. In a country where the black majority remain in poverty, and continue to disproportionately experience racial discrimination, xenophobia, gender-based violence, higher HIV prevalence rates, insufficient access to appropriate services including healthcare and education, as well as queerphobic violence, the promises held in the symbol of Mandela as one of hope and nation building seems to drift further away. The student movements thus foregrounded the need for reparations (symbolic and material) and more urgent and practical measures for decolonising various social structures and systems, not least of all higher education.[23] In a country which continues to be materially shaped around ideas of race, it is clear that apartheid did not die. In the Church of Mandela enduring legacies were evident as I observed entrenched racial divisions in my fieldwork and in the ways participants' communicated their disenchantment with the MCSA.

Talking Race in a South African Church

One Sunday morning in late 2018, I sat in the top gallery of Sam's church, observing the routine of weekly worship as it unfolded below. The first service began at seven in

[23] For a deeper discussion of these issues and the role of the student movements see Francis Nymanjoh. 2016. *#Rhodes Must Fall: Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa*. Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing CIG and *Rhodes Must Fall: The Struggle to Decolonise the Racist Heart of Empire*. 2018. Written collectively by Rhodes Must Fall Oxford and edited by Roseanne Chantiluke, Brian Kwoba and Athinagamso Nkopo. Zed Books.

the morning and was attended by fifteen older white women and men. They sang hymns from blue Methodist hymn books accompanied by a pianist. The liturgy took the form of what I once heard described as a ‘hymn sandwich’, referring to the way in which each prayer or item in the service is sandwiched between two hymns.

The second service started at nine, was the largest of the day, and the most racially diverse, attended by a mixture of younger black and white families. The atmosphere was more relaxed, with a portion dedicated to a performance by the children of the congregation, in which Sam enthusiastically participated as a drummer and actor.

The third service began at eleven and was attended by black men wearing black suits and women wearing red and white uniforms, indicating their affiliation with Church organisations – the Young Men’s Guild (YMG) and the Women’s Manyano. This service was conducted almost entirely in Zulu, except for the sermon delivered by Sam in English. Hymns were sung in Xhosa and Zulu, and the pianist from the previous services was replaced by the sound of congregants beating foam pillows which provided a means of percussion.

This division and differentiation in worship styles was not unfamiliar to me as the congregation which I attended for most of my life also had distinct racialised congregations with different worship styles, who used the same building and formed part of the same church yet who rarely, if ever, met on a Sunday.

In the context of South Africa with its history of apartheid racial segregation and discrimination, it is hardly surprising that the vestiges of these systems continue to shape Sunday worship and a broader racial division in the MCSA. During my fieldwork I found that out of this segregation, distinct institutional cultures have formed, which emphasise different characteristics of Methodism and adopt differing worship styles. These differences have become naturalised in distinct forms of white Methodism and black Methodism. This is demonstrated not just through my observations of how race materially functions to differentiate congregations and worship practices but also by the pivotal role race played in shaping participants' experiences and their understanding of their identities as queer individuals, clergy, and Methodists.

While I distinguish in this chapter between a black Methodism and white Methodism, as participants did, I recognise the problematics surrounding using racial markers to describe or analyse the church in South Africa. Race is historically and contextually

constructed, and using colonial and apartheid race categories (i.e., white, black, coloured, and Indian) in ways which suggest any stability or naturalisation runs the risk of reifying essentialist understandings of race categories (Vally and Motala 2018). Yet, at the same time, race continues to have material and social consequences and provide critical frameworks for how people, including the clergy in my study, make meaning of their experiences and shape their identities.

In navigating my use of race, I have chosen not to capitalise race categories in this book to denote its constructed and unfixed nature. Neither black Methodism nor white Methodism is as essentialised as it may appear. Indeed, there were some contexts which were mixed (albeit few) or predominantly coloured congregations – with coloured referring to another constructed and contested race category in reference to people who are linked to mixed ancestry. This recognition of the constructed and fluid nature of race echoes the ways in which participants used categories. Significantly, I found that it was not the actual racial makeup of a congregation, or how members might identify in terms of race categories, which led participants' to locate members or groups in a camp of white Methodism or black Methodism. Rather, it is the ways in which congregations and individuals perform Methodism that attach them to a particular racialised description. Additionally, rather than essentialising race, they often nuanced and inconsistently used terms such as black, white, coloured, and Indian throughout our time together. Often, they added further descriptors such as 'English', 'African', or 'Western' to allude to a broader understanding of race attached to notions of culture, language and politics.

The use of race as descriptors was something I was also conscious of in the field. To prevent myself from encouraging participants to use essentialised ideas of race to make sense of certain phenomena, I avoided introducing racial descriptors in interviews or conversations. However, as Melanie Judge (2018, 10) did in her work with black lesbians and their experiences of violence in South Africa, I honoured when participants introduced various ideas or descriptors of race either for themselves or others. I would then prompt further to understand what they meant by these categories and how these were used to make sense of their experiences and contexts. It is the nuances, contradictions, and fluidity within their discursive and performative distinctions that forms the analysis in this chapter.

I now turn to a discussion of the ways in which LGBTQ clergy constructed their legitimacy as Methodists and as clergy (in the new land of the Church of Mandela). I explore how this legitimacy intertwines with black forms of Methodism attached to ideas of mission, denominationalism, and clerical authority.

Journeying to a New Land: Performing Race as Queer Homemaking

For the clergy in my research, black Methodism was often characterised in relation to an investment in the larger Church. Participants described this as "denominationalism" or being denomination centred. This denominational character was seen as reflected in the investments individuals and communities had in shared institutional values, forming the MCSA's institutional character, as I describe in relation to the Church of Mandela.

In my second interview with Lebo she reflected on a question I had asked her the previous day when we had sat down for our first interview. I had asked why she became a minister in the MCSA, which she initially responded to by saying it was an obvious choice because it is the denomination in which she was raised. This was not unique to Lebo, as all participants besides Ecclesia had grown up in the Church, and further all of them resonated with the idea of the MCSA as an institutional home, a place of comfort where they not only experienced a sense of belonging but where they are able to come to a place of acceptance which they did not find in secular spaces (Keenan 2008, 177). However, having thought about it for another day, Lebo returned to the question and suggested that there was yet another important reason:

> Lebo: I thought yesterday when we finished with our meeting, I ask my confirmation candidates [why they want to be Methodist]. And they say, "I grew up in the Methodist Church, I was born into it." And I always feel like that's not an adequate answer, but that's the answer I gave you yesterday and that was funny [Megan laughs]. But I believe in the healing and transformation of all God's people, I believe in the values and in the mission statements and in the visions, that the Methodist church stands for…

For all participants, like Lebo, the decision to become a cleric of the MCSA was driven, to varying degrees, by their resonance with the mission and vision of the Church which has consistently centred around healing, transformation, and a sense of social justice.

This includes that which is set out in Obedience 81 (1981), Journey to a New Land (1992), the Mission Charter (2004) and the current vision, “A Christ Healed Africa for the Healing of the Nations”, and mission statement, “"God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation." The idea of ‘mission’ for the MCSA is not confined narrowly to evangelism, but rather includes broader ideas of fostering social change, transformation, and healing (Madise 2014, 124). This was reflected in the various occasions when I asked participants for clarification regarding what they meant by ‘mission’. They would respond most commonly by providing examples and often showing me the most recent mission activity that their congregation was involved in. Lebo for example, took great pride in showing me the vegetable garden her congregation had begun on their local church grounds with the aim of feeding members of the community. Sam on the other hand took me to visit a preschool which was founded and governed by the congregation in which she worked. The value of mission, and the accompanying feeling of belonging within that mission work, is not something abstract for participants but rather something which they actively participated in constructing, in the everyday ways in which Methodism was lived by them in their local communities and in relationship with other Methodists and institutional bodies. Even Lebo’s inclination to elaborate on the value of the MCSA demonstrates her investment in the institution and its missional identity. This investment in journeying to a new land as promised in the various statements of the MCSA, affirmed clergies’ callings and provided them with a practical and discursive way to attach their claim to belonging in the Church directly to the values which define it.

This sense of belonging however, only makes sense in a Church where an institutional identity attached to mission, continues to be upheld. Therefore, rather than simply conforming to a top-down sponsored idea of mission, clergy were invested in (re)constructing boundaries which reinforced ‘authentic’ forms of Methodism as attached to mission. Many of them did so by associating mission, with a form of black Methodism. For example, in one conversation between Lebo and her partner they admonished another local white congregation for not being ‘proper’ Methodists because they “*didn’t even do mission*.”

During a discussion I had with Sam, she shared details of an exchange she had with a white Methodist woman. The woman expressed feeling excluded from the MCSA

due to the prevalent culture of blackness within the Church. When I asked Sam what she thought caused these feelings she explained,

> Sam: …there is a different spirituality in the Church [there's a] black spirituality and there's a Westernised spirituality and, the spirituality of the black church is the gathering of the large community, like the communal (uh) high mountain top moments. So that's why things like conventions are so important in the life of the Methodist church. So if you're in any organisation within the church, so any uniformed organisation, so Manyano members…
>
> Megan: Which is mostly black?
>
> Sam: Not mostly black, pretty much black ya. Those moments of communal gathering…And holding on to the theological (uh) liturgical work from like 1830, the *Umbhedesho wemini yeCawa*[24], the old books, the singing of the old hymns, *Siyakudumisa* and the *Ndiyakholwa*[25] …So all of that stuff. And it's very embodied and it's really important and incredibly creative but that has been celebrated a lot in our Church culture, like the worship culture. Our institutional culture…The Church still operates like that in its functionality [and] in its worship it holds onto what lots of the Manyano are producing…the songs that are sung, the hymns that are sung, the liturgies that are drawn, all connect to the stuff and then white people feel alienated in that space.

In the extract above Sam distinguishes white Methodism as adopting a Westernised spirituality which stands in contrast to black Methodism which is more steeped in Southern African Methodist tradition. Black Methodism was also framed as the dominant and most 'authentic' institutional culture characterising the denomination. Belonging to local organisations forming part of denominational structures, like the Young Men's Guild (YMG), Women's Manyano as well as the youth organisation, the Wesley Guild, was also linked by clergy to black Methodism. While other organisations exist for women such as the Women's Association and Women's Auxiliary, and other

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[24] This is the Xhosa term for the Apostles Creed.
[25] These are popular Xhosa hymns.

congregational men's and youth groups in other Methodist contexts, they are often not seen to be as strictly devoted to an investment in the larger identity of Southern African Methodism – or at least not in the ways that organisations affiliated with black Methodism are. Sam further emphasised the distinction between white and black Methodism in a separate interview saying, "…*then you have like these insular minority white societies that are affluent but…don't give a damn about anybody else around them*." This was contrasted with black Methodism, which participants described as having a deeper interest in the denomination, partly manifested through traditional worship expressions. Significantly, while Sam did not identify as black, she constructs a sense of belonging in the MCSA by embracing black performances of Methodism. For example, she was able to conduct the eleven o' clock, a predominantly Zulu service in her church and easily participated in the traditional Xhosa and Zulu liturgies and hymns. She also understands and navigates the everyday institutional cultures of the broader Church and serves on various decision-making and working committees at both district and Connexional levels.

Kagiso distinguished between a white and black Methodism in similar ways. He rationalized that if he caused discomfort among his white Methodist congregants, they could "*easily move*" from one church to another—a situation he had witnessed some congregants doing not long before we met. However, in his experience, this was less of an option for "*traditional*" black congregants who were invested in the denominationalism of the MCSA. He explained,

> Kagiso: In a white or English predominant context you find that denominationalism…is not a big thing.
>
> Megan: (Uhm) What do you mean by denominationalism?
>
> Kagiso: Denominationalism, I mean those who have a greater sense of owning their denomination.
>
> Megan: You mean belong to a bigger body?
>
> Kagiso: Yes…And you find within the predominantly white or English spaces, denominationalism is not a big thing. If a white person or a black person who comes into this church, which is a Methodist Church but

is a predominantly white or an English space, and they disagree with me, they can easily move from this church to [another].

The use of race as a constructed category is evident in the extract above where Kagiso adds "*English*" as a descriptor of white spaces. Kagiso tended to describe the congregation in which he worked as white and preferring *"modern*" forms of worship – his distinction aligns with Sam's description of black Methodism as associated, in contrast, with tradition. Although the congregation where Kagiso worked had a historically exclusive white membership, most church members at the time of my fieldwork spoke Sotho and identified as black. The whiteness or Englishness which Kagiso used to refer to his congregation therefore relates more to their style of worship as well as their lack of commitment (as he saw it) and knowledge of the broader denomination. White Methodism, then, was characterised for participants as more individualistic and congregation centred. This lack of denominational investment was reflected in white Methodist forms of worship. For example, participants noted that it is within white Methodism that you are more likely to encounter the singing of choruses more commonly found in Pentecostal churches versus the more traditional hymns and praise songs popular in Southern African Methodism.

Although identifying as white, Bradley also at times distanced himself from white forms of Methodism. For example, he critiqued his childhood church, a majority white congregation, for being "*Rhema*[26] *in disguise*", due to its "*evangelical*" reading of Scripture and charismatic forms of worship.

Bradley: It was one of those churches that was kind of, you know, you do find those Methodist churches that say Methodist on the outside but are like Rhema in disguise. As I say it was different to the Methodist Church I [came to know later] (uhm).

White Methodism for Bradley was also not as attached to a denominational form of Methodism and therefore adopted forms of worship and theologies which had no attachment to the culture formed from the denomination's missional history. In describing the "*different*" Church he later came to know, Bradley specifically referred to black forms of Methodism, which became more familiar to him through his clerical

[26] Rhema Bible Church is a popular independent charismatic, neo-Pentecostal church in South Africa.

training and experience as a clergy person in the MCSA. It was this form of Methodism which Bradley seemed to find more aligned with a Methodist identity, and where he and others constructed a sense of "*home*".

While black Methodism associated with mission and an investment in the denomination was celebrated in important institutional spaces, participants did not completely disregard white Methodism. Black participants such as Anele, Kagiso and Lebo often adapted their styles of worship and their demeanour to be less liturgically strict and more informal in order to access belonging and power in the local majority-white congregations in which they served. For example, while Anele described his history of involvement in the broader Church as more aligned with black Methodism, the local congregation in which he served at our time of meeting was largely made up of white congregants. On the Sunday which I observed Anele, he conducted the church service in a relaxed intimate fashion, often engaging in conversation with congregants who in turn made jokes and responded with comments from the pews even while he delivered his sermon. This relaxed service stood in stark contrast to the formality of liturgy and the distant position of the minister which often characterised the black Methodism I observed in my fieldwork. Anele's ability to perform both a black and white Methodism in different contexts enabled him not only to dwell within the MCSA but to claim legitimacy as a leader of his congregation.

This racialised distinction in forms of Methodism should not be glanced over as seemingly inconsequential or inherent racial or cultural differences. After all, these forms of Methodism are not only distinctive but that are hierarchically positioned. Sam explains that the performance of black Methodism is the more celebrated cultural expression of Methodism and one which pervades the broader institutional culture of the Church. This is evidenced by Sam's experience of black Methodism as the predominant frame for the expressions of worship and styles of decision-making in the Church (in the format of resolutions and notices of motion), and which holds power within prominent organisations such as the Women's Manyano. It is significant that the dominant form of black Methodism is the one which all clergy identified with and embraced as 'authentic'.

The fluid discourse and performance of black and white Methodism functioned as a means for queer clergy to engage in "homemaking". Thomas Tweed (2006, 59)

describes the primary concern of religion as, “finding a place and moving across space.” For Tweed (2006, 75) religions, “prescribe social locations: you are this and you belong here. You are in this clan, and you are an uncle. You are a member of this caste. You are a slave, and the gods approve. You are Tibetan, Israeli, or Cuban.” This means, as Tweed (2006, 75; 82) argues, that belonging is not a natural, sedentary process but an active politicised one which constructs both the ‘home’ and those who live there. The acts which allow for homemaking is what Tweed (2006, 82) calls “clusters of dwelling practices”, which “allow people to inhabit the worlds they construct.” Similarly, in her book, “The Politics of Belonging”, Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) argues that belonging is not an innately passive state of being but, rather, an active contestation of boundary making. The politics of belonging for Yuval-Davis (2011) is defined by the norms and power relations which govern who belongs, who struggles to belong and who is excluded from belonging based on social location, identity, and social values.

In clergies’ constructions of racialised forms of Methodism, they were not only celebrating the forms of worship and values of community attached to black Methodism, but they participated in creating clear boundaries which distinguished white performances of Methodism as less legitimate. The construction and affiliation with the more ‘authentic’ black Methodism was essential for claiming their belonging as well as their attachment to the collective history (as the Church of Mandela), culture and stories associated with it. Yet, when necessary, clergy could adapt to local contexts where white Methodism was the dominant culture in order to find relative safety and acceptance there as well. Similarly to the participants in Orit Avishai’s (2023) work, who lay claim to ‘authentic’ Orthodox Judaism by participating in the construction of belonging and membership, so too do LGBTQ clergy in the MCSA. By actively constructing the boundaries of ‘authentic’ Methodism as black Methodism and then aligning themselves with these expressions, practices and discourses, they make a home for themselves in the Church.

Clergy as Deputy Jesus: Claiming Clerical Authority

Maintaining a culture of denominationalism and an institutional identity invested in ideas of mission, did not only allow clergy to belong, but it also granted them a specific form of social power within black Methodism where, in participants’ experiences, they were revered as ministers.

Kagiso: In a predominantly white church, the minister is just one of us, set apart to minister, given the gifts and rights to minister. In the black church, you are the deputy Jesus. You know, actually every time after your sermon you go and have lunch with God. So, people want to be associated and be in your circle.

Megan: And being gay…that doesn't take away that honour?

Kagiso: No, let me talk from experience. I have [fewer] straight male friends in the church than I have outside church. Those that have remained either are refuting the fact that Kagiso is gay or those who are very comfortable in their skin and they respect your orientation regardless.

He went on to say in a separate conversation,

Kagiso: …because they trust in your leadership, they have seen your track record in terms of how you apply in the ministry, they understand the offices that you occupy and the privileges you are given by the church

Megan: Ya.

Kagiso: [They] are now all of a sudden willing to move and understand that oh, if Kagiso can be gay, then this thing is not a sin as we thought it would be… I have received … not that I want people's support, but, for lack of a better word, I have had a better following of people who are saying, we know Kagiso is gay and we don't dismiss his gifts and his privileges and power, whatever the case might be, simply because of his orientation.

This idea of ordained ministers being like "deputy Jesus", is undergirded by the MCSA's institutional theological understanding that clergy are "called" and set apart to be leaders of the Church and representatives of God. In the Book of Order (MCSA 2016, 20), the constitution of the Church, the MCSA provides a Biblical interpretation of the idea of being "called".

> From the beginning certain persons were called and appointed to particular forms of ministry, of various kinds and for various purposes, but all directed towards the up building of the Church (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 5:11-16). Though the New Testament provides evidence for several possible lines of development, it witnesses to the fact that appointment to office is due

> both to the call and gift of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Ephesians 4:11) and to the Church itself through its ministerial representatives (Acts 6:6; 14:23; 2; Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 1:6).

Being 'called' then, seems to imply that ministers have been both born with and divinely gifted the appropriate abilities to perform and embody that role. The idea of being called serves to grant clergy the status and legitimacy of being God-ordained and reinforces the idea that ministers are fundamentally set apart for their task. This institutional and theologically guided discourse was one which was appropriated and reproduced by participants in this study. For example, in one of our interviews Bradley spoke to me about his decision to be reinstated as a minister of the MCSA after he had left the Church to study social work for a few years. His decision to leave was motivated by homophobia which he had experienced from some of his lay leaders at the time.

> Bradley: There was a part of me that *is*[27] a minister, it is just who I am. And then I was able to join the dots and say well if God called me way back then knowing I was gay, I've tried to be straight, that didn't work, I've tried to be gay and not a minister and this isn't working for me so maybe the ultimate conclusion is that God actually wants me in the Church as me (laughs). So I've tried the two other ways and both didn't work out for me, so let's give it another try and I thought let me do it this way, in a new way.

In Bradley's narrative of returning to the MCSA, it seems as though his identity as a minister is as inherent to him as his sexuality – both of which he understands as shaping his calling. This example can be compared to the narratives found in Jodi O'Brien's (2004) study in which queer Christians concluded that, because they were born queer, they had a God directed calling to create more affirming understandings and expressions of Christianity. Discourses which naturalise sexuality by arguing that people are born queer, has been shown to be a politically beneficial vantage point from which to argue against religiously informed homophobia (Epstein 1994; van Klinken 2015, 957 - 958). Similarly, by naturalising his calling, Bradley bestows an authenticity and legitimacy on himself as a minister. Bradley's discursive strategy

[27] His emphasis.

demonstrates how participants were implicated in constructing specific versions of clericalism, enabling them access to social power in a church culture that venerates them.

In addition to these discursive strategies, I found that participants often relied on embodied performances to further construct and reconstruct versions of being a minister in ways which allow them to occupy a place of power as a divinely appointed leader. The ability to be able to preach and speak confidently, passionately and with charisma lent an added legitimacy to the performance of their clericalism. On the first Sunday I met Kagiso, he led his first service at what he would later describe to me as a white or English congregation located in the centre of the small town where he worked. Very few of the congregants who attended and participated in the church identified as white, but he associated the way in which they worship with white Methodism characterised, in part, by its liturgical brevity. This service lasted for about an hour, and Kagiso delivered a short fifteen-minute sermon in a conversational and calm tone. After the service we drove about 20 minutes to the black congregation located on the outskirts of the town where he was to lead the next service.

Once we arrived at the church where Kagiso was to conduct the next service, he hurried to his car boot and put on a cassock, a red belt, and a big wooden cross. This service was longer than the first and lasted approximately three hours. The service was conducted in Sotho and Xhosa which I can not speak, but from the few key words I could pick up in the sermon (and after checking with Kagiso later) it was clear he was preaching on the same topic as he had done in the previous service. However, his preaching style had changed dramatically. In this service Kagiso became extremely animated and increasingly impassioned as he preached his thirty-minute sermon. The cheering and affirmations from the congregation seemed to be in sync with the raising of Kagiso's voice. Kagiso's energy seemed heightened by the translator who was assigned to translate his Xhosa sermon into Sotho. The translator seemed not only to translate his words but his actions. When Kagiso moved from the podium to the front of the altar, the translator followed him down, copying his arm waves and body movements. As Kagiso's energy grew, items of regalia flew off, first the belt and later the cross was knocked off the chain as he slammed down on the altar. At one point even the glasses he was wearing were knocked off his face. The ability to be a dynamic orator was important for specific contexts and was indeed necessary to gain

legitimacy as a passionate minister, a good preacher, and as someone who allowed the Holy Spirit to work.

In my research I found that a legitimate Methodist clerical identity was also constructed around embodying the Church of Mandela. In particular, this meant living up to the ways in which clericalism represented anti-apartheid activism and nation building in previous years. These constructions were reified through the celebrated stories which were told and re-told in informal spaces in the Church.

> Megan: And the stories that you're talking about, like where, I mean you say it's not written, like how do you know [about it?]
>
> Sam: Because that's what you get told. So like if you sit around with some of the bishops or with some of the Superintendents…they'll tell you the story about James Gribble and this is what James Gribble did for me, or did to me, or Peter Storey or whatever and, you know, it's the stories that get told in…not formal spaces…like you know, the car rides to places…And I think those kinds of stories, because they're not written, they're lived stories so they don't get analysed as much because they're also quite romanticised stories about like what the Church was in its past and they talk about it in its golden age.

In this excerpt, Sam describes the non-institutionalised ways in which anecdotes and living legends are informally passed down between ministers. It is through celebrating recent historical clerical figures such as Reverend Peter Storey and Reverend James Gribble, both known for their apartheid activism credentials, that an identity of social justice is attached to Methodism and specifically to Methodist ministers. Ironically the examples Sam cites are both white Methodist ministers, yet when used in these representative ways, are more attached to black forms of Methodism as participants previously distinguished it. In discussing the transcript of this interview with Sam later on, she expanded and explained that, in her experience, very few of the informally told stories are about women and when they are about women leaders or clergy, they are often condemnatory rather than celebratory. The celebrated social justice heroes are characters that carry the institution's idealized versions of being. They personify values and characteristics which become embodied in human (male) form. They therefore serve as examples of how to be an ideal Methodist clergy person. Sam thus

emphasises Nancy Ammerman's (2003, 219) argument that it is through "telling the stories, practicing the rituals, and celebrating the heroes" that certain denominational and institutional identities are produced and sustained while others are rendered invisible and queer. Sam's analysis that these informal stories are never engaged in scholarship in the same ways as doctrines, theologies and biographies is exemplified in the lacuna in the literature on churches' informal institutional cultures. Yet, it is these informal and often romanticised stories that have influence in communicating the lived character of the institution and which, in many ways, excludes Sam from embodying the institutionally celebrated ideal of a social activist, male minister who comfortably dwells at home.

Gaining access to the social power afforded to ministers in black Methodism required the participants in my research to 'become' clergy through their rhetoric and performances of mission, preaching, and with regards to displaying an investment in the larger MCSA body. Of course, this is not a universal distinction as there are white churches which are explicitly affirming such as Central Methodist Mission in Cape Town, and there are black churches and communities where participants would not feel as comfortable revealing their queer identity. However, interestingly, when participants served in 'white' or even 'coloured' churches they had a harder time being 'out' in those communities precisely because their position of power did not protect them as much as it did in black church settings.

In the chapters that follow I discuss in more depth the ways in which norms around clerical bodies are also supported by assumptions around gender complementarianism and patriarchal ideas about sexuality. For example, it was clear that performances of Methodism and specifically clericalism were not only dependent on symbolic performativities on black Methodism, but also on norms surrounding gendered bodies. In this sense, participants like Kagiso and Anele who embodied normative understandings of black clerical masculinity, also seemed to experience the most safety in the MCSA. Therefore, while the power of being called and set apart because of one's spiritual giftedness, provided some participants with status, power, and belonging, it is also clear that this is fragile.

Disenchanted with the New Land

Scholars have shown repeatedly that religious traditions and institutions continue to exclude women, queer and gender non-conforming people through the systemic, and invisibilised, heteronormativities and patriarchies. Similarly, despite finding some ways in which to belong and claim authority in the MCSA, LGBTQ clergy in this study also often experienced covert forms of marginalisation and policing because of their sexuality within the institutionalised space of the MCSA. While I elaborate on these experiences in relation to the policing of their bodies and sexualities in the chapters to follow, it is important to note here that participants rarely perceived themselves as fully excluded or alienated by the MCSA.[28] In fact, I found that participants more commonly expressed feelings of disenchantment with the MCSA in relation to the perceived failure of the Church to live up to its own institutional identity. I borrow here from Lionel Thaver (2006, 19) who conceptualizes 'disenchantment' as something which happens when "home" is shown to capture competing ideals. On the one hand, while the "home" of the MCSA is associated with justice, unity, community as well as a sense of safety, status and social belonging, it is also the place where participants experienced and witnessed division, marginalisation, and (as I discuss in the chapters to follow) violence.

As much as there seems to be a growing disenchantment amongst South Africans at large, with the promise of a post-apartheid, rainbow nation, the ideals promised in a the Church of Mandela have similar limitations. Even those clergy, such as Kagiso, who seemed to be able to appropriate the social power within the performances of his calling, expressed in our conversations, a disappointment in the limitations of those promises.

> Kagiso: There are things I don't like about my Church. Things such as human prejudices, things such as processes of electing leadership, corruption. All of those things make me want to cry when I think about my Church. How it treats women ministers in this Church, how we have always been privileged as male ministers over female ministers. How the Church continues to this day to put white ministers, male or

[28] A notable exception to this was Sam whose experience I discuss this in relation to the Church of Purity and Ecclesia in the chapters to follow.

white, on a pedestal [rather] than your typical black minister.[29] Those are hurtful parts of our Church. A Church that proclaims to be one and undivided. We are still divided and racial, sometimes even on tribal lines. So, those are very painful things about the Church.

Kagiso's disenchantment with the MCSA in the above extract rests not so much on his own personal experiences of exclusion based on his sexuality but, rather, is informed by the betrayal of what the MCSA claims to be namely, "one and undivided." In fact, in this extract Kagiso names numerous factors which he attributes to causing division in the MCSA such as race, tribalism, corruption, and gender yet he makes no mention of sexuality or sexual orientation. Bradley on the other hand does mention the MCSA's policies on same-sex marriage as something which he dislikes about the institution, however, like Kagiso, Bradley does not communicate a personal disjuncture between his own sexuality and his place in the MCSA but, rather, he seems disenchanted by the fact that the MCSA does not live up to its statements of being a diverse Church.

Bradley: I'd love the Methodist Church to keep its diversity but I would love it to fully allow that diversity to be, if that makes sense. I think sometimes you know, in terms of the sexuality issue we've made a statement to say we're a diverse Church, we think differently but the reality is, that we allow one end of the spectrum to live out their beliefs and not the other. And I think fully embracing our diversity says we don't all have to think alike, which means we don't all have to be alike. (Uhm) I would like us to keep our diversity…and I think we have a trend more and more towards uniformity and I think that's a loss for us.

Megan: And for that change to happen what do you think needs to happen?

Bradley: I would love the leadership of our Church to take a more, caring active role on the LGBT issue, listening to us, taking us seriously and

[29] Interestingly, in contradiction to our other conversations here he alludes to the fact that, in his experience, white ministers are still elevated above black ministers. He may be alluding here to particular white ministers who continue to hold powerful positions in the MCSA and who have access to other forms of power outside of the Church, for example in academia or politics. He may also be referencing structural systems which often function to place white ministers in majority white and wealthy congregations where they often earn higher salaries and have access to other economic and social opportunities.

> advocating for us (uhm) …I think the Church has become politicised to the point where, I think we lose the essence of who we are and there's a disconnect between what's happening on the ground in the hearts and lives of average Methodist people in societies and the structures of our Church, I think more and more they're becoming disconnected from each other.

In the extract above Bradley laments that the MCSA, in which he includes himself through the use of "we", loses the essence of what it is as an institution. Thus far we have seen that Bradley as well as other participants experience the MCSA as a place of belonging and with a mission aimed at embracing unity in diversity. It is an ecclesiological community which claims to be a prophetic Church and it is the betrayal of this promise of Methodism that is so disenchanting for Kagiso and Bradley. Therefore, while the literature of queer religious belonging has thus far positioned religious institutions either as spaces of alienation or alternatively of (limited) belonging, I argue that these characterisations are constitutive of the other and it is precisely the intimacy of belonging and dwelling in the MCSA which shapes participants' disenchantment. It is also the safety attached to the experience of dwelling 'at home' that provides the space to express critique, anger and disappointment with home (Yuval-Davis 2016).

The contemporary MCSA reflected in the experiences of queer clergy, is perhaps further reflective of the superficiality of some of the racial diversity restructuring and rhetoric in earlier mission statements and charters. While circuits were reorganised geographically, this has by and large not resulted in less race polarisation. In fact, as materially evident in the structures of the congregations in which participants worked and the consistent rhetoric of black Methodism and white Methodism used by participants to make meaning of their experiences, the MCSA remains deeply divided. The ideals captured in 'new South Africa' and in the 'Church of Mandela' thus seems to be marked by a pervasive sense of disillusionment and detachment from once-held convictions.

Negotiating the New Land

While participants were disenchanted with the MCSA, rarely were they motivated to abandon the Church all together. Rather, I found that on these occasions, participants

used creative theologies to motivate themselves to stay and to maintain the image of a diverse and accepting Methodism which they had come to construct as a place of belonging. For example, Kagiso construed God as imperfect to make sense of the flaws within the MCSA, using this perspective as a foundation to advocate for justice.

> Kagiso: Just because the church has a few flaws… and I still believe in a God that has few flaws, I don't think God is perfect, but I still love him. I don't love God less because God is less perfect, so I can't love this Church any less just because it is less perfect. I cannot even love this Church less because it is still struggling with accepting issues around the theology of marriage…Because, for me, justice and its plight or its fight might mean I'd probably die with the Church still struggling with this issue of marriage amongst homosexuals and I am not closed to that, I am not blind to it.

Kagiso here draws on a Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection and holiness, foundational to Methodism, contending that perfection does not necessarily equate to flawlessness. He creatively extends this concept to both God and the Church. In fact, in Wesley's doctrine "mistakes and ignorances [are] part and parcel of humanity" and do not negate the possibility of perfection (Osinski 2021, 40). This is because perfection for Wesley is about a "complete orientation to love" rather than the complete absences of flaws (Osinski 2021, 40). Kagiso, in this instance demonstrates his own pursuit of perfection by aligning himself with love for the divine and the Church, despite the latter's ignorance and indecision regarding same-sex marriage and queer inclusivity. In some ways Kagiso also draws from the normative logic of 'love the sinner, hate the sin', often utilized in anti-queer Christian rhetoric to condemn homosexuality rather than individuals. However, Kagiso subverts this discourse, asserting that the institutional church is the sinner, and its rejection of homosexuality or struggle with same-sex marriage is the sin. In this way, he maintains his belonging to the Church and his faith in the divine.

Lebo's strategy was to compartmentalise her relationship with God, the institutional Church and God's people. This separation serves as the foundation for her argument that God was never the one to exclude her. Additionally, this strategy, exemplified in the following excerpt, enables her to disassociate institutional blame from her

experiences of marginalisation. In this way she can maintain her loyalty to the Church she calls home.

Lebo: I don't remember a time until last night[30] where I intentionally thought maybe I should leave the Church.

Megan: Never?

Lebo: And even last night, it was not a, "I want to leave the Church" but it was, "I am hurting because of the Church." Then it quickly came to me that I'm not hurting because of the institution at this point, I'm hurting because of the people. And so, I still feel called, deeply called to the Church and I feel I have not fulfilled that to completion.

Unlike other scholars who have argued that creative theologies are used by queer Christians in subversive, resistant ways in order to queer church, the theologies used by Kagiso and Lebo attempt to preserve and sustain particular iterations of Methodism. Hence, my argument does not negate the fact that participants were involved in transformative endeavors. Instead, I contend that, in these cases, their transformative actions manifested as active homemaking rather than overt resistance. These strategies could be read as "queer theologies" as found in Adriaan van Klinken's (2015) work or even "queer religiosities" as in Jodi O' Brien's study (2004). However, in van Klinken and O'Brien's work, 'queer' denoted participants' subversion of normative theologies and religiosities. In contrast, the LGBTQ Methodist clergy in my research were driven to uphold the 'authenticity' of Southern Methodism which framed their sense of belonging and religious authority.

Another strategy, that was employed by some participants, to preserve a missional framing of Methodism while maintaining their place within it, was through framing the Church in relation to other denominations such as the Anglican Church. Lebo did this in a conversation where she was further elaborating on some of the reasons she felt the MCSA was her spiritual home.

[30] Lebo had a meeting the previous night with her supervisor in which she was confronted with an accusation by one of her congregants who wanted to lay a disciplinary charge against Lebo for living with her partner.

Lebo: I don't know, we don't go 'gaga' over the Presiding Bishop. But have you seen how Anglican's go 'gaga' over their Archbishop.

Megan: As in like it's a…

Lebo: Ya, you are God's deputy.

Megan: So you don't feel like there's a hierarchy [in the Methodist Church]? Do you feel like there's a hierarchy?

Lebo: There is. There totally is. But, it doesn't take anything away from the discipling that is happening in the Methodist Church. Ya.

Lebo distances Methodism from hierarchical notions by asserting that Methodists don't hold their bishops and leaders in the same reverence as Anglicans do. Ironically, she employs language similar to Kagiso, who described Methodist clergies position as "Deputy Jesus" within black forms of Methodism. When I asked about whether Lebo means to say that, in comparison, there is no such hierarchy in the MCSA, she acknowledges that there is, thus aligning with Kagiso to some extent. However, she argues that this hierarchy does not impede on Methodist "discipling", a term she uses to refer to the Church's business of creating followers of Jesus. In this way Lebo maintains the MCSA's identity boundaries by distancing its form of hierarchy as one which obscures it from its 'authentic' identity as the Church of Mandela. She accomplishes this despite being a queer member of the clergy who consistently faced scrutiny due to her identity as a young, black, lesbian woman in the Church (further elaborated in the subsequent chapters). By concealing the MCSA's failure to fulfil its self-created ideal as a prophetic church for all people, Lebo can continue to locate her belonging in Methodism.

While particular performances of Methodism in different racial contexts allowed participants to legitimate their dwelling in various contexts, participants also negotiated their belonging in Methodism by distancing themselves from particular constructions of blackness associated with queerphobia.

Kagiso: It is my observation that within the white church there is more, if not all of the white ministers are pro or queer. And I use queer because queer would define those who are queer now, not as only those who are gay, but those who believe and stand and fight for the rights of the

gay and lesbian. I am [yet] to meet a white minister who has openly spoken against gay and lesbian rights.

Megan: Okay.

Kagiso: And I'm not saying that they don't exist. But the majority are very open minded. And are free to be part of the gay and lesbian world if ever there is such. And then within the black church. My observation is there are strong ministers who have strong masculinities. There are strong ministers who have very weak masculinity. And those ministers who have proven to have stronger masculinities and are bold in pronunciations and proclamations have loosely and openly stood up to say we are of the plight of the minority who is gay and lesbian ministers. We stand with them.

In this extract Kagiso on one hand, reinscribes essentialist discourses that African, black people are inherently more homophobic than white people. During my fieldwork, this narrative was frequently mentioned, often juxtaposed with conflicting accounts that implied openness to diverse expressions of sexuality within black Methodist communities. While Kagiso draws on this narrative to make a point here, he also employs a subversive concept of "*strong*" masculinity to distance himself, as well as other black allies, from the homophobic stereotype associated with blackness. Instead of equating strong masculinity to performances of hegemonic masculinity associated with, for example, physical strength, Kagiso associates strong masculinity with the term "queer", which he uses not to describe sexual identity but rather to refer to anyone who affirms the rights of gay and lesbian ministers. In doing do, he constructs a version of black masculinity in which strength is measured by one's affiliation with the Methodist value of social justice while weak masculinity is associated with those who speak against gay and lesbian rights. Thus, not only does Kagiso identify himself as a strong, black man but at the same time distances himself from equating that identity in stereotypical ways to queerphobia.

Conclusion: LGBTQ Clergy in the New Land

The MCSA has, for at least the past fifty years, strongly prioritised black liberation through its activism, doctrines and theologies. This is reflected in what has developed as dominant forms of black church institutional culture which is invested in constructing

and upholding the MCSA as the Church of Mandela. The Church of Mandela, as I employ it, is framed by commitments to social justice and promises of "new lands" where there is equality and inclusion. Through clergies' discursive and everyday practices of black Methodism associated with mission, denominationalism and African Methodist tradition, they actively participate in constructing the boundaries of authentic or legitimate belonging. This claim to belonging was most overtly expressed when I asked participants whether they would leave the MCSA because of its restrictive rules on same-sex marriage. Bradley, for example, replied, "…*the Methodist church is my home, I can't really explain it…it's my home. Why should I leave my home*?". The ecclesial community which has formed based on shared practices and rhetoric related to mission and justice is something which clergy consistently drew on to find and create a 'home' for themselves within the MCSA.. Further, clergy who could perform and embody the clerical identity which fulfilled the norms of black Methodism, were able to access the status afforded to ministers in the Church. This became, for some, a form of social power which enabled them to live "livable lives" (Butler 2004) in the MCSA. The New Land envisioned by the Church of Mandela appears to have granted black Methodism cultural power in the institution in ways that were helpful to LGBTQ clergy who could access it.

While this allows particular people to interpret ideas of justice and mission in ways which enable them to belong in MCSA, the normative discourse of social justice also allows the Church to maintain its public persona as a prophetic church. A persona which, as Dion Forster (2014) argues, allows the Church to gain credibility through its attachment to state power and moral authority. It is not unusual in South Africa for people to continue to gain power and prominence based on their struggle credentials which they garnered during the apartheid struggle and, so too, it seems the MCSA through its celebrated stories and traditions, continues to gain legitimacy and authority through members' investment in constructing its identity as an institutional struggle icon. This indicates a co-construction of a dominant black Methodist culture, rather than one which is merely subjected by an institution onto individuals and communities.

There are also interesting parallels to be drawn in this chapter between Mandela's vision for the new South Africa, and the contemporary disenchantment with his promises, with the Methodist vision and mission, and the disenchantment of LGBTQ clergy. The freedoms promised in the 'New Land' of the MCSA clearly has its

limitations. Ecclesia's experience of being fired from the Church, and participants' experiences of disenchantment demonstrates that 'home' is not always safe. However, unlike the Fallist movements which have responded to the failures of the 'new' post-apartheid South Africa by calling for the breaking of the symbolic rainbow (Chikane 2018). LGBTQ clergy continue to uphold the Church of Mandela, and despite its failings find creative ways not only to negotiate the new land of the MCSA, but to reconstruct it in ways which includes them and their experiences and hopes as queer Methodist clergy. José Muñoz's (1999) theory of disidentification is helpful in making sense of clergies' negotiations and constructions as forms of agency.

Mari Ramler (2022, 287) explains, "Disidentification differs from deconstruction in that it does not crack the code of the majority; rather, it understands this code that works for the majority reification and then uses it for minority representation. It uses the majority's material for empowering minority positionality and politics. This is the real trick of disidentification." Moving between essentialism and constructionism, in and out of clerical performativities, and playing with narratives of blackness and whiteness is the real 'trick' of queer clergy. Disidentification then is a form of resistance for queer clergy in the MCSA, but not in the sense that it has often been used in scholarship. As previously suggested creative grassroots queer theologies are often understood to be queer because they are primarily understood as subversive of dominant normative theologies. Here, in the MCSA, the theologies and identities produced by queer clergy in relation to the Church of Mandela were borrowed from dominant Wesleyan theologies or Southern Africa Methodism. Thus, "recycling or re-forming an object that has already been invested with powerful energy" (Muñoz 1999, 39).

These findings suggest a troubling of the ways in which "queer" has become synonymous with ideas of the Other or "alien". This synonymity is most notably reflected in one of the formative works on queer sexuality and Christian churches in South Africa, Paul Germond and Steve De Gruchy's (1997) "Aliens in the Household of God". The title reflects the narratives of queer clergy who have experienced exclusion from places they once held as their spiritual home. While I in no way wish to diminish queer experiences of marginalisation and exclusion in the church, ascribing the marker of "alien" to queer Christians seems to situate them firmly outside of the boundaries of belonging. This characterisation in literature of queer experiences has often been enough to assume rather than a point of necessary investigation. However,

participants' experiences of disidentification in this study demonstrate that their relationships with the boundaries of institutional belonging are more fluid than often depicted in scholarship.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that "disidentification is *not always* an adequate strategy of resistance or survival for all minority subjects. As José Muñoz (1999, 5) explains, "At times, resistance needs to be pronounced and direct; on other occasions, queers of color and other minority subjects need to follow a conformist path if they hope to survive a hostile public sphere." As we explore the Church of Purity and the Church of Ecclesia, we find further distinctions in how belonging, resistance, and oppression is negotiated.

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