

# Rites of passage within colour

Religion



## Introduction

In this essay I will be discoursing my personal experience of what Arnold Van Gennep ( 1909 ) has described as “ rites de passage” , concentrating on the liminal stage. This essay will detail my experience of traveling from an all ‘ coloured’ community to a bulk ‘ black’ suburb and my rites of transition experience of seeking to be ‘ black’ . I will besides be discoursing on why I agree and disagree with Van Genneps rites de transition.

## SEPARATION PHASE

Separation stage “ comprises symbolic behaviour meaning the withdrawal of the person either from an earlier fixed point in the societal construction, from a set of cultural traditions ( a “ state” ) , or from both ( Turner, 1969, p. 94 ) .

I was born on November 1, 1993 in East London, EC. I lived with my household in Buffalo Flats, EL for the first six old ages of my life, at the clip and today, it is still a predominately colored township. Turning up in that township for six old ages I, along with every other individual populating in that community is what South African society would depict and hold as ‘ coloured’ . I would speak ‘ coloured’ , walk ‘ coloured’ , act ‘ coloured’ , fight ‘ coloured’ and believe it or non, somehow I would even run ‘ coloured’ , or at least every bit ‘ coloured’ as the stereotypes myself and my community had been placed in. At the age of six I moved from my beloved Buffalo Flats, EL to what I at the clip considered the center of nowhere, Midrand, GP. This, as Turner put it, was my separation stage. Midrand was a assorted suburb, many Whites, many inkinesss, rather a few Indians and a smattering of coloureds, or at least that was what I saw. I was taken off from my place,

detached from it, separated from my household and friends and thrown into this whole new universe which led to my “ liminal phase” .

## LIMINAL PHASE

Liminal period is when “ the features of the ritual topic ( the “ passenger” ) are equivocal ; he passes through a cultural kingdom that has few or none of the properties of the past or coming state” ( Turner, 1969, p. 94 ) . This was the period in which I yearned to be ‘ black’ , I prayed to be ‘ black’ and after a subconscious and unstructured induction, I learnt how to be ‘ black’ . I attended a assorted school, bulk black, but still a assorted school where I was one of two ‘ pure’ coloured male childs in my class, the other named Michael Williams. The two of us along with a Chinese male child named Jacky Mo, made up my ‘ communitas’ ( Turner, 1969 ) . We were all in the same phase of our lives, we were detached from the society we one time knew, for myself it was Buffalo Flats, for Michael it was the Cape Flats and for Jacky it was China, and we were all thrown into Midrand, and all three of us were in an unstructured and subconscious induction to be ‘ black’ . We were all stripped of our race, were no longer coloured or Chinese, nor were we black, we were merely at that place. In between what we were and what we were endeavoring to be, being black wasn’t merely a race or civilization to us, it was a societal standing to be ‘ cool’ , and we knew being non-black yet black, would be the highest award amongst our black friends and couples.

During this unstructured induction phase our black friends became our somewhat “ ritual elders” ( McNeill, 2011, p. 74 ) . They were learning us how to be black, what to make, how to make it and when to make it. Myself

and Jacky lived in the same composite with a male child named Siyabonga Mlaba, who would subconsciously take up the function of being our ‘ ritual elder’ . Traveling through this liminal period populating so near to one another made us really competitive for the blessing and regard of our ‘ ritual elder’ . The same manner the ritual seniors punished the novices for singing about AIDS ( McNeill, 2011 ) , if we had disrespected or misunderstood any facet of ‘ black’ civilization, we were besides punished, non in the same physical mode but with verbal maltreatment and humiliation to a point of feeling disdained. These ‘ punishments’ were difficult to accept and understand, but it made me more hungry and eager to suit in the group I was being initiated into.

There were many symbols in my liminal period, one of the chief 1s being the manner I talked. The speech pattern, the words and the actions I used when I spoke were major symbols. I couldn’t merely talk with my normal ‘ coloured’ speech pattern, I had to try to talk with the same speech pattern of my ‘ black’ friends, use the same words and slang when I spoke. I couldn’t use the conversational ‘ coloured’ recognizing “ Awe my Broe! ” , I had to utilize the ‘ black’ township recognizing “ Sho Mfede” . Around this clip as I easy incorporated African linguistic communications in my address, I began floating from my roots of speech production Afrikaans, easy I bit by bit stopped utilizing it until finally I ne'er spoke Afrikaans, unless in Afrikaans category. Other symbols were dress codification. For some uneven ground the ‘ Tsotsi’ or ‘ gangster’ image was one the young person would gravitate to, and that’s the expression I wore proudly as a minor. All stars, faded denim and ever a beany worn half off or a popular cap called a “ sportie”

worn with a joust. This was all of import. The manner I ate was of import, I had to eat pablum and vleis with my manus, no spoon or fork was of all time required, and I felt more 'black' than of all time.

As this induction took topographic point, the more it dragged on and the closer I got to my end as adjustment in as 'black', the more I drifted off from my ain civilization and heritage, subconsciously I was denying who my community raised me to be. The more 'black' I was, the less 'coloured' I was. I looked at being 'black' or being a portion of 'black' civilization as a societal standing and non as something sacred and to be proud of. The sarcasm was that I viewed my 'coloured' civilization and people to be violent, yet I used force to seek and be 'black'. Contending was a symbol or portion of the ritual as anything else. 'Black' people were strong, and the manner we proved our strength was through these battles, the conflict of the better adult male. A circle would organize and one of the older 'black' childs would take one of us younger novices to contend each other or another member of the group. If the battle was won, the embracing would be like winning a war, or a football lucifer. But the also-ran will be made merriment of and humiliated, but after every battle a compulsory handshaking would take topographic point as a mark of regard and that it was non personal. I was grade three when my liminal period ended, a battle with a male child named Tebogo, a much bigger male child. He beat me down infinite times in that battle, but I won regard and my rubric of being black by ne'er giving up. So after three long old ages of subconscious induction I eventually made my manner out of the liminal period and was reincorporated to my societal group as longer a 'coloured' or novice, but as 'black'.

But this is where I do not to the full agree with the theory of rites of transition. In the reincorporation stage does not really round up rites of transition, but really starts a new rhythm, do although now I'm 'black', I have to once once more go through a liminal period and induction to turn out that I am worthy being a 'Hip Hop Head'. The group in which I spent as an novice for three old ages and eventually got accepted as one of their ain had another societal construction I had to be initiated into, taken back to a liminal stage whereby I was not what I was and not what I was going, but in between that. Take for illustration the school calling of a person. One gets separated from place, sent to school for 12 old ages ( liminal period ) and so reincorporated to the universe one time graduated high school. Yet the reincorporation of graduation is the separation stage for university, so the old ages analyzing at university is the liminal period and graduating university is one time once more reincorporation. But that one time once more can be the separation stage in happening a occupation, where being unemployed is the liminal stage and acquiring a occupation is the reincorporation stage yet the separation stage for 1s calling and so on and so forth.

### Decision

I agree and disagree on rites of transition, the separation stage and liminal period seem really solid, but the reaggregation/reincorporation stage can besides be seen as the separation stage for the new rhythm of rites of transition.