



## CONCLUDING REMARKS

At this point a brief summary of the findings will be presented. This will then be followed by suggestions for possible intervention strategies. Although some clear directions for the future will be provided, the conclusions cannot be “final”. The following statement by Mama reflects the writer of this report’s sentiments as regards this final section.

*How does one end the beginning of something ...? At the very heart of the approach advocated here is a feeling of perpetual change and movement ... . This in itself makes the idea of closure somewhat inappropriate. This is not a neat story ending with all capillaries cauterised and stitched with surgical precision, but one which makes a small opening through which, it is hoped, many new ideas and arguments may flow (Mama, 1995, p.159).*

Wendy Luhabe (2002) in her recent publication on the experiences of black executives in the workplace says that the publication is a process of reflection, which is an essential precursor to action. By (black executives) discussing their experiences of the corporate world the culture of silence is challenged and hopefully leads to action.

The above points made by Luhabe are relevant to this report. By capturing the voices of this group of black academics it could be argued that the culture of silence has been challenged. Culture of silence is used in the sense that what has emerged from the report has for many been an “open secret”. The majority of black academics are aware of most of the issues but it has not previously been captured in a formal document. Their voices have now “officially been given a hearing”.

When certain black academics were recently asked to comment on a draft of the final report, the following (not unexpected) comments were made:

*This is the kind of thing happening in all sectors, for example sport (recently highlighted by the Chester Williams biography) and in the corporate world (Luhabe, 2002), so what could be done to address/redress the situation?*

A discussion ensued as to the differences and similarities faced by black persons in sports and the world of academia. The following points were made:

The sporting world is far more of a public space than academia is. There is a national drive for sporting codes to be representative in terms of colour. The public are aware of the debates and also aware of how things have changed or not changed. If you are a good sportsperson and you are picked for a national side (e.g. rugby) there is very little chance that you could be prevented from exhibiting your talents on the field, no matter what the racial issues are. The public and other watchdog bodies (including the sports ministry) would raise questions if one who has shown talent disappears from the public eye. However, academia is an isolating, individualistic endeavour, which happens outside of the eye of the general public. The general public are not aware of the issues and no matter how “good” you are as an intellectual, it is very easy to be marginalised. At this point in time there is no watchdog body and, in addition, there is the assumption outside of academia that all is well.

The above digression was necessary to indicate, albeit on a very simplistic level that creating an enabling environment for black academics is a huge challenge and is not going to happen overnight. Secondly, interventions, which suggest a 12-step type programme or reports such as this one, are not immediate solutions to the problem.

Luhabe, using the discourse of the corporate world, suggests building emotional capital, which effectively means that levels of trust be built between black and white persons and that both personal and institutional relationships be built.

The above are necessary and would assist in addressing the problem. Many of the interventions have been implemented at various universities some with more success than others.

The above interventions are, however, happening outside of an organised structure for academics. A Forum similar to the Black Management Forum, which operates in the corporate world, should be initiated by black academics. It could be a body that welcomes academics of all colours to address issues and is relevant to them as academics. It should be a broad front that could address current issues. In the 1980s and early 1990, certain bodies, like UDUSA, had an important function. An organisation similar to this may be necessary at this point in time. However, this needs to be an initiative that comes from academics themselves. The findings of this paper should be presented and responded to at a national conference and a programme of action worked out.

The above suggestions would all fall into the macro-level of intervention. However, at the micro-level, black academics could take the initiative, as suggested by Luhabe, which is to “act as responsible subjects and opposed to objects that are acted upon”. The last sentence is not intended to “blame the victim” but to encourage black academics to devise a strategy to act collectively in an attempt to change the current situation.