

The Colour Between – Poem by Milania Singh

There is a war where colours bleed,
Black and white, once banners bold,
Now run together in the rain,
A storm we never chose to hold.

Who draws the lines and why so firm?
Who names the right and wrong?
Is Gaza a wound or a warning?
Is Ukraine a shield or a song?

A genocide declared from two ends,
Each finger pointed in the mirror.
And in that cracked reflection,
We call justice by what we fear.

They say we are free, post-apartheid,
Yet whispers walk in shopping malls,
Where accents judge and glances weigh,
And silence builds invisible walls.

Some fled to chase a myth of murder,
A farmer's fear wrapped in a tweet.
While others stand in Hague's dark court,
Calling war crimes from a burning street.

But race - what is it? Skin or story?
A fiction etched into the bone?
Or just another tool for shepherds,
To keep the flock divided, alone.

They taught us labels: brown, black, white
But never taught us who we are.
And now the children born from ashes
Are told their soul must bear a scar.

There is no border to the soul,
No checkpoint in the human heart.
Yet we are papers, boxes, colours
Filed and numbered, torn apart.

I do not know if we can lose it
This name, this race, this ancient grief.
But if we dare to stand unlabelled,
Maybe then we find relief.

Not in black or white, not even grey,
But in the colour we've never seen
The colour between the wars and wounds,
The colour of peace that hides unseen.

EXPLANATION

As a 16-year-old girl growing up in South Africa and studying history, I've always been taught that apartheid ended in 1994. But when I look around in 2025, I still see how race shapes almost everything from where we live, how we speak, what schools we go to, and even how safe we feel in our own skin. Racism today is not as obvious as signs on benches or laws on paper but it still exists, in whispers, assumptions, news headlines, and silences. This is what inspired my poem, *The Colour Between*.

In history, I've learned about systems such as colonialism, apartheid and segregation which separated people by skin colour. But I've also learned that racism is not just about the past; it evolves. In 2025, racism feels both blatant and subtle, local and global. I see countries using race and identity as tools in war and politics. One nation accuses another of genocide, while others deny the same word even applies to them. In South Africa, some people still leave because of stories about a "genocide" even though we're the ones taking Israel to the ICJ for war crimes in Gaza. These contradictions made me wonder: who gets to decide what racism is?

My poem asks questions more than it gives answers. I use metaphors like colours bleeding, invisible walls, and a mirror cracked by fear to show how truth has become blurry and how identities are being used to control or divide. I believe racism today is not always about hate but it's often about power. If we are too busy fighting over colour, we don't notice how a small group of people still control the majority of our resources, our education and ultimately our futures.

I also wrote this poem to question the idea of race itself. Is race something we are, or something we're told we are? Can we exist beyond it? These are hard questions, especially in South Africa, where race is deeply tied to justice and memory. We can't pretend colour doesn't matter but I also wonder if holding too tightly to these labels keeps us from healing. Maybe the real danger is not black or white thinking but never imagining what's possible beyond it.

The title "*The Colour Between*" represents that idea - a space beyond the boxes we've been put in. A new way of seeing ourselves and each other. Maybe we haven't found that colour yet, but I believe we can. I chose to write in free verse with repetition and metaphor, to reflect the confusion and emotional weight of this topic. My poem moves between local and global; past and present because I feel racism today exists in all these spaces at once.

Ultimately, I wrote this poem because I'm tired of pretending we understand racism just by naming it. I think it's time we start questioning it and ourselves more honestly because deep introspective questioning is the only way we can begin to actually know who we are, what we want and why we are here...its not really about race or even colour...it's about humanity, empathy and love for all from all.