

Source: THIS DAY

Date: 15-Oct-2003

Topic: 01

Ref No: 5455



1

ID: 03028077-01

Source Page: 15

# Revisit the Afrikaner quota

*Ordinary black and white South Africans  
need a common occupational space to work and  
laugh together — an integrated civil service  
could provide the foundation*

**A** group of high-school boys in Pretoria East stand accused of kicking and stabbing a black man to death. Another group admits to shooting pellets at women walking past their residence at the University of Stellenbosch. And now, several University of Pretoria students are charged with taking a white high-school student into one of the university residences and raping her in turns while taking photos.

What all these protagonists have in common is that they are young, white, Afrikaner and male.

These alleged acts are deeply repugnant and among the most horrific crimes that can be committed. The criminal process must take its course, and if found guilty, the severest penalties must be applied. (In the Tukies case, particularly disturbing is the widespread public suggestion, from both men and women, painting

this school girl as *die hoer in die verhaal* — the whore in the story.)

Such demeaning violence suggests that there may be something more complex and troubling about the behaviour of these young men.

There has always been a culture of bullying among white Afrikaner youth, and a distorted sense of masculine identity among Afrikaner men in general. But the Pretoria and Stellenbosch events go beyond bullying, for two reasons.

First, such events are increasingly articulated in relation to the future, not so much to the present or the past.

I have interviewed more than 35 young white Afrikaner men — mainly students — as well as principals of Afrikaans high schools and prominent Afrikaans families.

What struck me was the spontaneous line they drew from these individual acts to the Afrikaner's sense of the future.

Second, these events are more complex than past acts of violence. They are more widespread, more random in terms of targets, and more intense in their manifestation.

It would be a terrible mistake to reduce such wanton acts of violence to cases of individual pathology. That would be denying crucial shifts taking place in Afrikaner culture as a whole, and expressed most vividly among young white Afrikaner men.

I have come to the conclusion that this behaviour is best explained as an extreme form of "acting out" a deep frustration among young white Afri-

**MANY YOUNG  
AFRIKANER MALES  
FEEL TRAPPED AND  
SOME ACT OUT  
THEIR FEAR AND  
FRUSTRATION IN  
THE EXCESSES BEING  
WITNESSED TODAY**



**JONATHAN  
JANSEN**

DEAN OF  
EDUCATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF  
PRETORIA

Source: THIS DAY

Date: 15-Oct-2003

Topic: 01

Ref No: 5455



1

ID: 03028077-02 Source Page: 15

kaner men. It is a frustration rooted in a sense of personal and group emasculation, of having no sense of power in determining the future and, worse, of having no meaningful place in the future South Africa.

It is worth remembering in this context that national reconciliation happened "upwards" among African nationalists and Afrikaner nationalists. It was a reconciliation of elites, which explains why the older generation of Afrikaner men remain in positions of power throughout civil society.

This will soon change. While the young black South African with a reasonable level of education can for the first time look forward to the future with a degree of hope and anticipation, the young white Afrikaner male has no such expectation.

Under the more than five decades of Afrikaner power, the only two prominent areas of employment for the majority of Afrikaners were farming and the civil service.

We are dealing with five or six generations of families for whom the public sector has become a site of devotion as well as occupation. Therefore it makes no sense to instruct these youth, as some liberal Afrikaans commentators might do, to "*skud julle reg*" ie, get used to the new South Africa and get on with it.

Two examples illustrate this point. Firstly, despite the sharp downturn in the number of young people

enrolling in pre-service teacher education, the only group of South Africans still showing up in large numbers are Afrikaners.

Secondly, young white Afrikaner males still seek to serve in the South African National Defence Force. I asked such a group why they would continue to work in the SANDF under, for all intents and purposes, a black government. Their answers stunned me: it was because their great-grandfathers served in the military, and because they love their country.

There is, in the position of the young Afrikaner male, a very different sense of place and ambition compared to their white English-speaking counterparts. The Afrikaners are deeply connected to the soil.

Many young Afrikaner males feel trapped and some act out their fear and frustration in the excesses being witnessed today.

The Afrikaner male has been far more thoroughly socialised than other groups to believe in his role as the sole provider, as the head of the family accountable to God, as the defender of the family name and honour.

It is this combination of Afrikaner male socialisation and the perception of no future that creates distress that may explode inwardly (family) and outwardly (society) to the detriment of all South Africans.

It is worth recalling that this emasculation of the male is exactly what happened in the 1950s onwards when black men were publicly humiliated under the combination of apartheid policies and practices including the pass laws, the migrant labour system, forced removals and the job reservation acts.

The consequences of such abhorrent practices are with us today as we lead the planet in several forms of extreme violence. Can our society afford to repeat this?

The spat between the two Springbok lock-forwards — the black Quinton Davids and the white Geo Cronjé — was not about racism, even though it would be foolish to deny that bigotry exists in the muscular and long-segregated culture of South African rugby. It seems to me that this was about the closing down of space for Geo Cronjé. His claims to a position normally guaranteed for good, young white Afrikaner lock-forwards were being challenged by a black player.

Race was a convenient explanation for rugby management and a sensational event for the media who failed to provide alternative explanations.

How is the white Afrikaner male's space to be reconstituted? The secret is the public sector.

I propose that 15 percent of the entry-level jobs in the civil service be reserved for young white Afrikaner men, for two reasons.

Resolving the problem of black disadvantage need not happen by recreating the problem of white disadvantage; I am convinced that the single most important fear amongst Afrikaners is a return to the "poor white problem" of the 1920s.

To be sure, the problem of black disadvantage should remain the national priority for many years to come as systematic and institutionalised discrimination against black people will not be eradicated for many decades. But I do not believe that the struggle for human dignity has ever meant displacing white people with black people.

There is another reason to do this. The only way to break social segregation is to create common occupational spaces in which ordinary black and white South Africans work and laugh together. The prime candidate for such a space is the civil service.

It will take an enormous generosity on the part of black people to recognise this imperative to affirm young white Afrikaner males on compassionate grounds.

Ahead of an election year, this kind of argument offers cannon fodder to ethnic nationalists and racial retributionists.

But such generosity is not uncommon at all to continental Africans in general, and black South Africans in particular.

This proposal, if accepted, will begin to lay the foundation for social integration that will otherwise continue to elude South Africans for many generations to come.

■ This is an edited version of the original