

New Afrikaners are making the trek to inclusivity

Can anyone show post-apartheid's verkrampptes the light? Our feminist volksmoeders may be the answer, writes **Christi van der Westhuizen**

APARTHEID has officially come to an end, but white power persists. Whiteness derives its power from operating invisibly. It is an unspoken regime of oppressive norms and so it is absolutely necessary to disturb whiteness by making it seen. Whiteness is not skin pigmentation, but the meaning attached to pinkish, whiteish skin. People with such skin are seen as "naturally" belonging to the top, while darker-skinned people are racialised as black, to be placed as "naturally" at the bottom. This has a wide-ranging effect on the distribution of resources, resulting in white privilege and black deprivation.

Democracy has been good to white people in South Africa. The average annual income in white households was R125 495 in 1996 — in contrast to R29 827 for black households. White households' average annual income rose to R530 880 in 2013, in contrast to R88 327 in black households. Out of 4.5 million whites, only 35 000 live in poverty, according to Stats SA. The poor white problem has been all but eradicated. Apartheid was an affirmative action scheme for Afrikaans whites, also in building wealth: companies controlled by Afrikaners on the JSE increased from zero in 1948 to 35% in 2000, according to McGregor's Who Owns Whom.

What are Afrikaans white people doing with our new-found democracy and renewed prosperity? Fortunately, the picture

is varied. I identify three groupings: the Afrikaans African nationalists, the neo-Afrikaner enclave nationalists, and the Afrikaans South Africans.

The most clearly identifiable Afrikaner nationalists, the former National Party rulers, have merged with the currently ruling African nationalists. They make their talents felt in ANC entities such as the Progressive Business Forum. They are the Afrikaans African nationalists.

The second grouping, the neo-Afrikaner enclave nationalists, is the most vocal, and therefore frequently positioned by other

Apartheid was an affirmative action scheme for Afrikaans whites, also in building wealth

South Africans as "the Afrikaners", as if they are wholly representative. We are seeing the worst elements that marked the beginnings of Afrikaner identity in the first half of the 20th century being dug up like an old cow from a ditch, to adapt an Afrikaans expression.

The enclave nationalists include organised neo-Afrikaner nationalist remnants to the far-right. These are the so-called *verkrampptes*, who have redoubled their efforts at maintaining inequalities.

But these remnants avail

themselves of the reconnection of South Africa into global circuits of knowledge to draw on neoliberalism, neo-racism, neo-sexism and the postmodern "return to the local" to legitimise their enclave nationalism.

Unexpectedly, *verligtes* (progressives) have converged with *verkrampptes*. *Verligtes* harvest neoliberal affluence but increasingly turn to the *verkrampptes*' vision of enclave nationalism for anchors amid post-apartheid tumult. Enclave nationalists look to the Global North for guidance, and global Anglo-American neoliberalism provides remnants of Afrikaner nationalism with a new lease of life.

Enclave nationalism hinges on the basic precept of capitalism — private property.

Individuals become Afrikaners by becoming consumers of Afrikaner culture, spaces and anti-politics. Afrikaner identity is enacted through consumption. In this regard, Solidariteit and AfriForum have stepped forward as the masters of the trade in Afrikaner identity, the 21st-century versions of the cultural entrepreneurs who first clobbered together "the Afrikaner" a century ago. In the contemporary context, politics is stigmatised as pursued by "backward" people. Afrikaner politics is recast as an anti-politics channelled through consumption of products ranging from financial services to security and labour.

Verligtes and *verkrampptes* meet up under consumption. As



WE'RE NOT ALL LIKE THAT: Afrikaans South Africans, one of three groupings identified by the author, reject the notion of separating themselves in enclaves such as Orania in the Northern Cape, where these residents are seen playing jukse, a traditional sport

Picture: JAMES OATWAY

was the case with Afrikaner nationalism, *die taal* (the language) is central to enclave nationalism. You make your retreat into your world through the plethora of Afrikaner cultural products spawned by reinvented neoliberal Afrikaner organisations, from media to cultural industries to trade unions.

From the north this version of Afrikaans whiteness also draws lessons of reinventing racism as "culture" and heterosexism as "family values". Enclave nationalists make cultural claims with which they set themselves apart from the dominant Anglo whiteness. This emphasis historically included the division of black others into multiple ethnic oth-

ers, hence the bantustans.

The Afrikaner claim on an unchanging Afrikaner ethnic essence, transmitted through "culture", is projected onto multiple ethnic black others to validate that very claim. Its effect is separateness, which actualises racial separation and aids the maintenance of this group's ill-gotten privilege.

The family values trope, used across the globe to attempt to roll back the gains of feminism and queer movements, has been analysed as a centrepiece of new racism. But it has also been pointed out that the family was centrally placed in colonial racism. The Afrikaner nationalist version serves as an ex-

ample. While we dismantle the racial organisation of apartheid, we must also dismantle the internal repressions of gendered and sexualised others. The internal division is as highly hierarchical as the external division, and plays out in spaces of family, commerce and religion.

Lastly, like Afrikaner nationalism, its enclave version switches between race and ethnicity to safeguard its position of supremacy.

When it suits, it submerges itself in dominant Anglo whiteness to demand the latter's privileges, for example, in defending Cecil John Rhodes as a symbol of white masculine (not homosexual) achievement. It claims

colour-blindness. But when it suits, it claims its status as a "minority".

In contrast, my research on Afrikaans white women shows individuals who refuse attempts to be regimented into Afrikaner enclave nationalism. They belong to the third group, the Afrikaans South Africans. They pursue the expansive and imaginative kind of identity expression that this historic moment demands.

The best of their cultural legacy — the hard-working, tenacious *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) — is reworked through critical self-reflection to shed its patriarchal racism. They are feminist *volksmoeders*

creating new ways of being to unlock their own and others' potential for an inclusive humanity based on social justice.

Christi van der Westhuizen, the author of "White Power and the Rise and Fall of the National Party", is an associate professor at the University of Pretoria. This is an edited version of her address at the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection's recent round table on "Whiteness, Afrikaners, Afrikaners" held in Johannesburg

Comment on this: write to tellus@sundaytimes.co.za or SMS us at 33971

www.sundaytimes.co.za

RESET your historic e-toll debt

60% Discount from 2 November 2015

Call our call centre: 087 353 1490.

Sms ID*VLN to 43360 for your balance.

Sms callback to 43360 for an agent to call you back.

Log onto www.less60.co.za to reset your historic debt.

I want to pay my e-toll debt. What do I do?

Follow the easy steps at any advance FNB ATM even if you are not a FNB client.

Send an e-mail with your ID number to info@less60.co.za

Go to any FNB branch and pay it over the counter.

REMEMBER: Always use your ID number as reference

For more details on the 60% discount please visit www.less60.co.za, phone us on 087 353 1490 or sms "callback" to 43360. T&Cs apply.



ELUSIVE: Health workers wearing protective suits assist a patient suspected of having Ebola on their way to a treatment centre at Patrice near Macenta in southeast Guinea. Seven new cases have been reported in the country

Picture: AFP

Ebola makes last stand in headstrong village

SIRENS blared as the convoy of government vehicles made its way down a narrow dirt road nearly encased by tall weeds. The prime minister had arrived, and he was there to give this rural community a serious scolding.

"I demand the co-operation of the population," Prime Minister Mohamed Said Fofana hollered from his makeshift bamboo stage. "Ebola is gone everywhere — except here," Fofana told the 300 people or so gathered around him. "The eyes of the world are on Tana village."

After nearly 22 months and more than 11 300 deaths, the deadliest Ebola epidemic in history has come down to a handful of cases in a cluster of villages in rural Guinea, the country where the outbreak began.

Liberia, where more than 4 800 people died, has gone about two months since its last Ebola patient was discharged. Sierra Leone, where nearly 4 000 died, was declared officially free of Ebola last Saturday, a milestone defined as 42 days without a new infection.

And while the virus once raged in Guinea, now it is merely smouldering, with seven new cases reported in recent weeks. Yet it is proving frustratingly difficult to stamp out altogether.

"Getting to zero" has bedevilled governments and international health experts for months. Workers from aid groups have descended on the villages where the virus is still spreading, a promising experimental vaccine is being given to adults who have been in contact with a victim, and government officials, once reluctant to acknowledge the dangerous outbreak, are helping to wipe it out.

But even with hundreds of mil-

lions of dollars spent to fight this outbreak, the approach to stamping out the disease remains uneven, at best. Workers are still making rookie mistakes. Guards at Ebola checkpoints skip some passengers for fever checks. Health workers use bare hands to touch people who might have the virus. Isolated communities experiencing Ebola for the first time are reluctant to take detailed precautions and do not trust aid workers.

The risk of a flare-up is still very real. Nearly 150 people were in close contact with the new victims, so they are at risk of infection. Beyond that, more than 200 people who had brief contact with one victim, maybe sharing a taxi,

We never had this apocalyptic transmission; we never had bodies in the streets

cannot be traced at all. "We are all holding our breath, frankly," said Christopher Dye, director of strategy at the World Health Organisation who heads the Ebola epidemiology response.

Officials in Sierra Leone are particularly on edge. Their border is less than 30km from the new cases in Guinea, and the flow of people across porous national boundaries is a chief reason the virus was able to spread throughout the region so easily.

Fofana came to Tana himself on a search mission. "A woman is missing and I can't understand why," he shouted, castigating residents to monitor the sick.

The woman, Aminata Camara, had cared for a friend who died of

Ebola, making her a likely next victim. Then Camara vanished. No one offered any clues, so the authorities jailed her husband, meaning to convey the seriousness of the problem. Fofana declared that if she did not turn up soon, he would fire the village chief.

But while the unco-operative witness here in Forécariah prefecture was jailed, others who have been in close contact with highly contagious patients roam freely.

There are other mysteries to solve. Victims have turned up out of nowhere, exposing either flaws in the plan to contain the disease or, just as troubling, the possibility that the virus is spreading through survivors, most likely through semen, a transmission path suspected in a case here.

"The aftermath coming out of Ebola disease is something unknown to just about everybody," said Jean-Vivien Mombouli, a top Ebola adviser to the government.

The gravity of the situation is evident in the tiny village of Tana, where more than 100 international health workers, community volunteers and even anthropologists have moved into giant white tents close to the doorsteps of recent victims, with a task that has eluded some of the world's top medical minds. So far, their strategy has not worked.

That Guinea was never hit as hard as Sierra Leone or Liberia may also explain why Ebola has been so difficult to wipe out here.

"In Guinea, we never had this apocalyptic transmission like in Liberia and Sierra Leone; we never had bodies in the streets," said Ranu Dhillon, a public health expert at the president's office. "We never had that same kind of critical moment in terms of national response." — NYTimes.com