

Racial segregation in a

RAINBOW Nation

A nation of races

South Africa currently has a population of about 52 million people. Of this number, 79.6% is classified as 'black', 9.0% as 'coloureds', 8.9% as 'whites' and 2.5% as 'Asians'. However, the white population remains to possess over 80% of South Africa's wealth.

This year we remember that South Africa's apartheid regime ended twenty years ago. Winning the elections of 1994, Nelson Mandela cheerfully proclaimed that "Each of us is intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world". But with racial segregation deeply rooted in South Africa's soil for centuries, did Mandela's words truly put an end to racial segregation?

We grew up in a neighbourhood where we did not have any white or Indian friends", say Anele and Paki (Paki is used as a pseudonym), "So the only friends we could make were mostly black friends". Alene and Paki are black South African students and should be living the dream of post-apartheid South Africa.

But they say that their country today remains a country divided by race, visible by the clearly segregated neighbourhoods. "Everything in South-Africa is created to suit racial segregation, and the nation was never created for purposes that had to do with integra-

tion, it is created for tribal purposes", says Paki.

Indeed, the long history of South Africa has been dominated by the conflicts of diverse ethnic groups such as the Xhosa and Zulu. But the first traces of racial segregation are found to be an European invention. Separation based on ethnicity was introduced during the 17th century when the Dutch arrived in the Cape, using the city as a strategic port along their shipping route.

Dutch rule was taken over by the British in the beginning of the 19th century. The presence of colonial powers gave birth to a new white class that was mostly composed of Dutch and British settlers who decided to stay permanently in South Africa.

The arrival of this small but dominant class quickly started dictating life on the streets in South Africa. Problems the country was facing, such as poor public health, living conditions and crime, were ascribed to ethnic differences using the metaphor of an epidemic disease: From their point of view it was mostly the black population that was spreading the diseases and crime and therefore this group



needed to be contained and separated.

In the aftermath of the Second World war, racial segregation was given a more formal character when the National Party came into power by winning the elections of 1948, an election where only whites were allowed to vote. In the same year apartheid was introduced as an official policy meaning that all inhabitants were now classified into four racial groups: 'black', 'white', 'coloured', and 'Indian'.

As the newly installed government intended to establish a fully-fledged apartheid state, segregation occurred on both local and national scales. Various planning instruments, motivated by racialized visions of population control resulted in what has become known as the 'Apartheid city model'.

The model presented clearly delineated urban areas and totally segregated districts with the white population often at the centre of the city, and the population classified as non-whites moved far away with buffer strips in between. Vibrant multi-racial communities were destroyed by government bulldozers and their inhabitants were forced to move when these areas were

stamped as 'white'.

"Black people, white people, Indians, they all lived together. They destroyed it", tells Paki as he refers to District 6, the name of a former inner-city area in Cape Town that witnessed the removal of over 60.000 inhabitants during the 1970s. "People were forcefully moved and are still

» ALL INHABITANTS WERE NOW CLASSIFIED INTO FOUR RACIAL GROUPS

complaining today. Like what the heck? You removed us from the place where we had our relationships and bonds, and all of a sudden now we have posh areas".

Similar to stories from District 6, South Africa witnessed one of the largest mass evictions in modern history. In almost two decades a total 3.5 million non-white South Africans were removed from their homes and

A 'united' South-Africa during the World Cup in 2012. But how really united is this country?

placed into segregated neighbourhoods, the townships.

The black population was most severely affected by the Apartheid regime. Blacks were prohibited from living in cities unless they were employed there and could be sent away whenever their contracts expired.

They were then deported to one of twenty Bantustans, special territories set aside for black inhabitants and located in the least fertile regions of South-Africa. Without neither services nor jobs in the surroundings, these Bantustans were declared as independent so the white regime would have no financial responsibility for the welfare of people there.

Even though the colonizers left South Africa a long time ago and Apartheid was abolished over twenty years ago, the legacy of ethnic segregation during these periods persists to live actively on South Africa's soil today. All inhabitants are now allowed to settle wherever they want, but cities maintain high levels of ethnic segregation today.

"I can move into posh neighbourhoods, and stay there, but at the moment when I will practice my religion or cultural beliefs, it will all be a big taboo", Paki explains. "If I walk around as a black guy I will be questioned by the security guards, so you are not actually free". Anele agrees, acknowledging all of his friends are of the same race, and says "there is still a huge stigma attached to race, it is like, you are black, so you cannot move in here".

They feel that social constructions, stereotypes and stigmas are the main mechanisms that keep racial segregation at work in the post-Apartheid era. Reflecting on Desmond Tutu's famous notion of a 'rainbow nation', Paki comments "there is nothing such as a rainbow nation in South Africa, it is a

» APARTHEID IS AS FRESH AS IT WAS EVER CREATED

tribal society with a tribalistic mentality. Apartheid is as fresh as it was ever created and continues in a modernized form".

But will the rainbow nation ever turn into a country blind to colour, where different races can all live together? "It is everyone's hope that it will change one day", tells Anele, "I hope that we will see beyond the white and black coloured race, and will see more like a united human race".

Text: Kees Krul



Photo: Wiros

Elections 2014

In May this year elections were held in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) is the ruling party since 1994, and by many South Africans still accredited for the establishment of a multi-racial democracy since then. But the party has declined in popularity over the past year because of evictions in regard to corruption.

Segregation signs were apparent everywhere in South-Africa during the Apartheid era