

# Giant new strides for racism



**Robert Kirby**

**LOOSE  
CANNON**

If you've kept your finger on the pulse, you will have been as delighted as I was to see that torturous old South African racism has at last taken a refreshing turn for the worse.

Like many pernicious things in our history, racism has always had a tendency to flourish only in the prejudices of a highly select host species. Now, after many years of mutating into really vile proportions, racism has started to move out of its traditional ecospace.

It is now appearing in alarming dimensions among so-called Asians, or at least those Asians who work in the South African Police Service. I think it was National Commissioner George Fivaz, in one of his three-volume epigrams, who revealed that black South African policemen are being discriminated against, favoured less and, in some appalling instances, even bribed less than their Asian fellow law-enforcement officers.

This is, of course, disgraceful. Happily, it was also to be expected. Speaking as a previously advantaged white South African, I cannot express what a relief it is to see that good old-fashioned racism is

now capable of surviving without any further help from us honkies.

True, we'll stand at the fence and encourage our Asian neighbours in their fumbling endeavours as hybrid supremacists. What we won't have to do is to keep racism all to ourselves and not let anyone else sip of its illicit delights.

A study, published in London last year by the Baroness Blackstone's Institute For Public Policy Research, has revealed that this new South African trend is already old news over there. The study showed that so-called Asian Britons were three times more racist than so-called white Britons when it came to being bigoted about so-called Afro-Caribbean Britons.

When it came to sanctioning mixed marriages, the study revealed that redneck whites were the most tolerant. When asked whether they would "mind a lot" if a close relative were to marry an Afro-Caribbean, 32% of Asians and 29% of Jewish Britons said they would. Whites came in a poor third at only 11%.

When it came to close relatives marrying a Jew, Whitey did even worse. Only 5% of his number would object, whereas Asians offered 30% disapproval and Afro-Caribbeans 10%.

It would appear that the ethnic substance of the target of the racism bears strongly on the specific gravity of the projector of the racism. It is now being argued that it's far easier to detest an Indian less than to hate a black man, unless you are a white presently despising Arabs.

Of course, if you are the Arab involved, you have to make some changes

to this formula. For instance, you can only call your victim "blacker" since you are partially black, and so on.

Which is a long way of saying, isn't it nice to see that we white South African racist pigs have at last been given the chance to extend our sty? Those who have to live downwind of our expanded pork palace will now be able to blame the smell on a lot more shit.

That all-points racism is on a roll is evident. Even Mr Mandela is trying out some of Thabo Mbeki's spray-on "Blame-The-Palefaces-For-Everything" underbrain deodorant. In his recent five-hour polemic, the "Mafikeng Comrades", Nellie-Wellie set his moral guns strongly 'gainst white South Africans. He hardly let a pejorative escape him which wasn't in some way incriminating of white people.

There's only one bluebottle in Mr M's healing racist ointment. It's something which future social historians might call the acquired victim syndrome (AVS), a condition of reduced self-respect in humans. One of its most prominent symptoms is the tendency in sufferers to cavil endlessly about how others are being nasty to them. Eventually they start to believe what their tormentors are saying, and their self-respect undergoes morbid erosion.

If someone persists in calling you ugly, you'll eventually believe that, to at least that person, you are ugly. Everything metastasises naturally from there.

In any event, people in Mr Mandela's position should know better than to emulate the proudest sins of apartheid.



# The moral imperative

**S**outh Africa has suffered a number of government scandals since liberation: *Sarafina II*, the Mpumalanga housing scam, Baleka Kgositsile's driving licence, the Central Energy Fund (CEF) and Emanuel Shaw II ... Few of them, however, point to failure of government in quite as stark a fashion as the scandal we break in this edition of the *Mail & Guardian* relating to the activities of Mathole Motshekga, the man who will next week take over the premiership of our richest province.

The nub of the scandal where the public interest is concerned lies not with the activities of Motshekga himself, disgraceful though they appear to be, but with the extraordinary behaviour of the national leadership of the African National Congress which failed to stop him taking the leadership of Gauteng.

As we detail elsewhere in this edition, it is clear that members of the ANC's national executive, including President Nelson Mandela, were aware of allegations which were being made against Motshekga when he stood for the premiership.

Typically, an attempt was made to deal with the problem by behind-the-scenes manipulation, instead of discharging their duty to the electorate by laying the facts of Motshekga's background on public record.

The rank-and-file, resentful of interference from on high, sent a defiant message of provincial independence to Shell House by electing Motshekga to the post.

It is notable that, since the ANC came to power in South Africa, only two national officials have been sacked as a result of corruption scandals, and both were innocent of any wrongdoing. One was Terror Lekota. The other was the national director of housing, Billy Cobbett. Both were seemingly found guilty by the ANC of the same "offence": breaches of loyalty for trying to uncover scandal in party ranks.

There is a possibility, as we go to print, that heads are about to roll at the CEF, but only because of the almost comic-opera dimensions of that scandal and the sustained publicity given to it by this newspaper. If the Minister of Minerals and Energy, Penuell Maduna, does fail to act against Shaw and the CEF chair, Don Mkhwanazi, this country will unquestionably qualify for inclusion among the world's banana republics.

The failure of the ANC to act decisively against corruption is difficult to understand. Rumours are flying, suggesting that certain individuals are being protected because of past liaisons with persons in high places. Whether or not this is true, it needs to be said that failure to act is inexcusable.

Mandela had it right when he said at Mafikeng last month that the "moral renewal" of South Africa is a matter of critical importance and desperate urgency. We trust that he will now give us the lead with regard to the Gauteng premiership.

## All in good order

**O**ur congratulations go to Erwan Fouéré, the out-going ambassador of the European Union who this week received the Order of Good Hope Award, South Africa's highest honour for foreign citizens, presented to him by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad. We have no doubt that the honour was richly deserved.

At the same time, with all due respect to Pahad, we must confess to some puzzlement that a junior minister should be responsible for dishing out the gong. Awards, after all, are all about symbolism. If we are so grateful to Fouéré for his heroic efforts in strengthening ties between Europe and South Africa, could we not have made the point by mustering someone a little more senior? Could the president not be found? Was Thabo Mbeki too busy renaissancing Africa? Could the minister not be awakened?

Is it not, anyway, time to overhaul the honours system? The Good Hope medal is a trifle tarnished by the president's use of it in an attempt to buy a settlement of the Timor issue from President Suharto. Perhaps it is time for an overhaul.

The award of honours to foreigners would seem to us to be a "good thing" (domestic honours are more risky; the temptation for the president to try to buy peace in KwaZulu-Natal might prove overwhelming, with the result that we will have the minister of home affairs clanking around the corridors of the Union Buildings). But it should at least be renamed. "Good Hope" smacks of colonialism.

Surely we can come up with something a bit more evocative of Africa. It is somewhat ironic that the president should have been the recipient, rather than the donor, of the Order of the Elephant — and that from the queen of Denmark *nogal* (not half as ironic as the detail that the award was for "chastity and purity", but that is a by-the-way). Could we not have the Order of the Lion (preferably not "canned"), or of the Rhino (de-tusked, if it has to be)?

No, a far better idea: it shall be the Nelson Mandela Medal. Anyone would be proud to win that ... and it might make the president more protective of the honours system.