

# "European Blood, African Heart": The position of 'white' identity in Africa today

An Historical Analysis, Film Proposal and Accompanying Documentary  
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## *Preface*

I was first drawn to the topic of white identity in South Africa during one of the courses I was taking towards the completion of my Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I was the only white South African in the class and we were presenting to each other ideas for a short documentary we each had to produce. What struck me were two very clearly defined things: first, my experience of South Africa was vastly different from that of my classmates. In a vague way I had always been aware of this fact, but never to the degree of the realization that I had at that moment. I had led an incredibly sheltered existence. At an academic level I understood what had happened during apartheid and why the system had been wrong and rightly abolished. However, on a personal level I did not actually remember apartheid. I belong to the generation of South Africans who grew up during the transition from apartheid to a democratic South Africa. I was not yet thirteen when South Africa's first democratic elections were held. As an educated young woman with not only her matric but a university degree as well, I actually had only a very small awareness of what had occurred pre-1994. It was quite a shock to realise how disinterested I had been up until that point in South Africa's past. I was calling myself a South African without fully realizing what it meant to be a South African, and how much the term had changed in the last decade, despite such grand rhetoric about the rainbow nation. The second realization I had while listening to my classmates was that they each had a very clearly defined notion of what it meant to be black in South Africa. Not only that, but what it meant to be a black person. The sense of identity I perceived from them was inextricably bound to their race. I recognised this as a product of South Africa and over a century's preoccupation with race and the 'other'. When every law - social, political and economic - is inextricably bound with race, it is almost impossible to not think of oneself in terms of race. However, the meaning of race and being a black person in South Africa has changed with the ending of Apartheid. With Apartheid South Africans of all cultures and colours have been working towards a new conception of people and races. Black consciousness has been freed from the shackles of

Apartheid oppression, and for the first time in South African history there is a drive to shape, understand and analyse the black psyche free of white domination. In other words, black identity is being fully explored. And yet, even as I understood this, I could not conceive of a clear definition within myself of what it meant to be white. I could not link my sense of self, my identity to 'whiteness'. What did it actually mean to be white? And more importantly, what did it mean to be white in South Africa – the descendants of a minority who maintained power through the constant invocation of the 'other', who granted themselves superiority over others based on whiteness – a superiority and power now lost. It dawned on me that while I was obviously and naturally white, I had never actually thought about what it meant to be white. Whiteness and blackness are far more than simple skin colours, window dressings for bodies; they are in fact concepts in themselves, and a strong source of identity. In South Africa this is even clearer than elsewhere in the world. Within South Africa exists the unique situation of European domination after the colonisation of the country came to an end. Throughout Africa (and the same can be said of Asia) the European settlers returned to their ancestral homes after European power and control were withdrawn, leaving only a few behind. In South Africa the Europeans stayed, determined to make South Africa their own. The attempt lasted for almost half a century, but the end result is not only that South Africa has finally been returned to the Africans, but rather a growing confusion as to who the Africans actually are. In a country so divided by race, in which everything was based on race, race is not, and cannot, be so easy to forget. And yet we call ourselves the rainbow nation, acknowledging race but pretending it does not matter. We are all South Africans. Within such an analogy however, are we also all Africans? I have been specifically speaking of blacks and whites without mentioning the term 'African' for this very reason: I, myself, am not entirely sure who qualifies as an African. Is it a question of race? Or perhaps culture? Or is it simply a question of geography and place of birth? This was further confused by my introduction to the term 'white African' by Gerald D'Lange in his work, "The White Africans", a term that I then frequently came across in other articles, written by a variety of academics, including historians, sociologists and anthropologists, yet at no point did I come across an analysis of the concept of a white African. To my mind, whatever an African is, and as a concept this has not yet been clearly defined, it should

not need an extra classification. Does the new South Africa now consist of black Africans and white Africans? Are there also separate classifications for Indian Africans and coloured Africans? And if so, why does the greatest focus fall upon the so-called white African? Is it because historically, the Coloured and Indian communities within South Africa were also oppressed by the white ruling class, and therefore deserve to be classified as Africans for the hardships they have endured upon this soil; or simply that the Indian and Coloured communities are secure in their own senses of identity, and do not need to forge an identity within the context of the continent upon which they live, as it already exists and does not need to be questioned? It appears that even now, a decade after apartheid ended and we officially became the 'rainbow nation', race cannot be forgotten, but must, instead, always be pointed out – at the very least with regard to the white community. What makes the strangely undefined term of the 'white African' even more controversial is that many white South Africans do not consider themselves to be white Africans. The term 'white South African' is clearly the more commonly used phrase, and so the very people of whom the term 'white African' denotes do not consider the classification to apply to them.

With this in mind I have set out to ask the deceptively simple question: what is a white African? Through my historical training and historical research I hope to address a contemporary South African problem. To aid in my research, I also interviewed 17 white South Africans. Of the 17 interview subjects, seven were not born here but are instead immigrants to this country; all however have lived in South Africa for the majority of their lives. I chose my interviewees based on three separate categories: immigrants to this country; first generation South Africans and second generation South Africans. Of the subjects who participated, three came to South Africa in the early 1950s when South Africa did not yet welcome European immigrants, three came during the 1960s when the National Party would do anything to entice immigrants to the country, and one arrived in 1983 when she was just four years old. I wanted to see how South Africa had affected these immigrants based on how old they were when they arrived in the country, at what stage in apartheid history they had arrived, and whether or not they considered themselves to be first, South Africans, and second, Africans. With the interviewees who

were born in South Africa I was more concerned with determining what ties to Europe might exist, albeit that they all considered themselves firmly South African; and whether South African-born whites could consider themselves African. If they did consider themselves to be African, I was then interested in how their race affected their sense of identity with regard to such classifications. I specifically chose relatively 'new' South Africans because although I cannot and will not ignore the role of the Afrikaans community in this project, I was more interested in that section of white South African society that still has strong cultural and familial links to Europe. In addition to this, all the interview subjects are German or of German descent. The reason for this is simple. I myself am of German descent and wanted a case study that I could personally relate to beyond the obviousness of my white skin. I felt this was particularly important because I consider myself to be German based on blood and familial ties, but have in fact only been to Germany once, and cannot even speak German. I have no connection to that land, and yet I make constant reference to my German descent. In this way I distance myself from Africa, but whether it is Africa the continent, or the burden of guilt of white South African history that I am distancing myself from, even I cannot honestly answer.

The white English speaking community in South Africa is not drawn exclusively from England. As South Africa was a British colony, the majority of the English speaking community can of course trace their ancestry back to the United Kingdom, some far more recently than others, but the so-called 'white English' South Africans are in fact a mixture of Eastern Europeans, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Greek, Jewish and Italians to name but a few. This lack of cultural homogeneity makes it difficult to define a white South African, and I was interested in choosing a marginal group of Europeans in South Africa in comparison to the Britons so that I might discern whether this would increase or decrease an affinity towards Africa beyond the scope of 'whiteness'. However, although this project is a search for identity and the impact of the combination of race, place and culture on identity, and because the setting of this search is South Africa, a country historically obsessed with race, I feel it is important to point out that although I cannot avoid the issue of race - indeed, I am focusing on what I believe to be a curious mixture of race and place in a classification -this is not an exercise on racism. Let us rather take it

as point of fact that racism still exists in South Africa, that deeply ingrained racial prejudices have not yet been resolved and that the issue of race is still a major point of contention in the country. Many white South Africans have begun to address the issue of whiteness in South Africa, to dissect and analyse the human products of apartheid. It is an ever increasing body of work by people trying to come to terms with not only their own sense of guilt, but that of the community in which they grew up. Although I will at times refer to some of this worthy work, I myself am not necessarily trying to unravel racism or the deeply ingrained effects of racism on the white South African psyche. Instead, I want to discover whether immigrants can take another country and even continent as their own, and whether both ancestral heritage and race can be removed from this shift in national identity. I do not believe that there is a more perfect example of this dilemma than the white African.

The realization of this project is two-fold. It consists of a written text and a film text. The written text is an historical documentation of the white community in South Africa leading up to our present day white community. It is an analysis of the position that white people held in this country during Apartheid, and how much this position has changed today, if at all. Through my interviews I have attempted to reveal how European-descended white South Africans identify themselves with both South Africa and Africa as a whole. The film text is less of an historical analysis than a glimpse into immigrants in Africa and their descendants. It reveals their attitudes without actively commentating on them, allowing the viewer to draw his own conclusions about white South Africans in general, as well as his own sense of identity within this country. Ultimately, the aim of any project that deals with a contemporary issue is to force the audience of that project to confront their own place within the issue.

*Nadine von Moltke  
Johannesburg 2006*

# The Written Text



## Introduction

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“Looking back the strangest thing about my African childhood is that it wasn’t really African at all. It was a more or less generically western childhood, unfolding in generic white suburbs...Our heads turned to the north like flowers to the sun, towards where the great white mother culture lay. Our imaginary lives were rooted there, not in this strange place, where Zionists danced on Thursdays and rain washed the red earth of Africa into the streets.”

*Rian Malan*

“The colonial and settler intrusion of the Europeans ran for close on four centuries, peaking in the Scramble. Then the wave receded almost as precipitately as it had rushed in, leaving a generic sediment, the white people who could not, or would not leave Africa, the millions who either by choice or by compulsion of circumstance have become Africans, white Africans.”

*Gerald L’ange*

“...the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African.”

*J.M. Coetzee, 1998*

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South Africa is in the process of ‘nation building’. After 84 years of staunch white supremacist rule built on fear and racism, South Africans are attempting to shed their divided and racist past, and in the process hopefully build a new equitable and multiracial state. However, this is not without its own, often uniquely South African difficulties. Although ‘nationalism’ is used in a variety of ways, strictly speaking the term refers to feelings of national identity within the context of a political doctrine about the organization of political authority within a given state. This can take two forms: people who are united under a single government; and people who ought to be liberated from foreign domination so that they can govern themselves. Ideally, a nation is a society that has a distinctive civilization and also possesses its own state.<sup>1</sup> The problems within this simple definition are immediately obvious when we compare the model to the South African experience. For almost a century only a small minority of the South African population held political power. While it could be said that this minority was united under a single government, within its own ranks it was deeply divided, and the majority of the population was disenfranchised. The notion of this disenfranchised group seeking

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<sup>1</sup> Birch, A, Nationalism and National Integration, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.4/5

liberation from foreign domination is problematic too however, since according to the disenfranchised their dominators were foreign, while the politically enfranchised claimed to be South African. Post-Apartheid South Africa is no less problematic. South Africa's recent claim to being the 'Rainbow Nation' is simply a way of acknowledging the fact that although we are a society who possesses its own state, we are not a nation with a single distinctive civilization. Academically speaking, a nation will work if there is one common culture and one common language, essentially allowing for a common 'imagination' to hold a bond in place. The multicultural aspects of the society then take a secondary position.<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson has constructed a theory of the imagined community based on the idea that the majority of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion.<sup>3</sup> South Africa is so historically and racially divided that it is difficult to conceive of one encompassing culture upon which our community can be based. Even in the aftermath of Apartheid we are not yet simply South Africans, but products of the 'rainbow nation', in other words clearly distinguished as being drawn from various cultural and racial groups.

When Europeans first arrived in Africa they were vastly outnumbered. According to immigration theories, the main obstacle to national integration is the existence of ethnic and cultural minorities within a state who resist integrative tendencies.<sup>4</sup> Within the African context, particularly with regard to South Africa, the dominant state culture actually became that of the newly arriving minority. Although arriving Europeans were vastly outnumbered, they transplanted the west in Africa, and then managed to keep their society very westernised. This in itself would not have had a huge impact on the African majority if it were not for the fact that the European settlers held political autonomy as well. Thus, during the apartheid years white South Africans thought of their country as Americans, Canadians and Australians thought of theirs: as a white society dedicated to the values of western civilization. The fact that four-fifths of the people who lived in

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<sup>2</sup> Grunwald, H, *How to become an American*, in Holbling, W and Wagnleitner, R (eds.) European Emigrant Experience in the USA, Gunter Narr Verlag Tubingen, 1992, p.19

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, B, Imagined Communities, London: Verso, 1983, p.6

<sup>4</sup> Birch, A, Nationalism and National Integration, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.10

South Africa were neither white nor westernised simply created problems for which the politically autonomous whites had to find solutions.<sup>5</sup> However, these solutions did not involve an attempt to forsake their European ways and assumptions in favour of integrating into African culture; they did not involve a relinquishing of political power in favour of the majority; and they did not involve an attempt at finding a balance between African and European ideals. South Africa became a 'white man's country', the only independent state in Africa that was the home of people of European ancestry.

What is interesting about these 'white South Africans' however were the great divisions that existed, and still exist today, within their own ranks. Within the white South African community are two distinct groups: the Afrikaans, or the *Boerevolk*, and the 'white English speaking South Africans' or 'WESSAs'. The term 'white African' refers to both, and yet they are vastly different. WESSAs themselves are not a homogenous group, but drawn from the descendants of a number of European countries. They are distinguished more by the fact that they are *not* black and *not* Afrikaans than by what they actually *are*. Throughout the history of apartheid, and still today, this was the group that maintained its ties with Europe.<sup>6</sup> The Afrikaans on the other hand maintain that they are purely South African. The basis of this assertion is the fact that South Africans are not colonialists who carry other passports, or have a European home that they can turn to. Instead South Africa is where they belong.<sup>7</sup> While this is not necessarily true of WESSAs, it does explain the Afrikaans insistence that they hold an historical claim to the land, and have a right to be white in South Africa.<sup>8</sup> For the Afrikaans nation, there is no question of being African. Descended from the original *trekboers*, they belong to a nation of men and women who wanted a land of their own, free of British or even Dutch influence. This land they found in Africa, and the name they took, Afrikaans, reflects this. A language and culture developed to support this newly independent people, and it was they who were destined to rule South Africa and lead it to independence from the British. This brief

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<sup>5</sup> Carter, G. M, *The Politics of Inequality: South Africa Since 1948*, New York: Octagon Books, 1977, p.13

<sup>6</sup> Salusbury, T and Foster, D, *Rewriting WESSA Identity*, in Distiller, N and Steyn, M, (eds.), *Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today*, Sandton: Heinemann Publishers, 2004, p.93

<sup>7</sup> Steyn, M, *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa*, New York: State University Press of New York, 2001, p.xi

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84

account is no more than a summary of events that occurred, and pays no mention to the Boer Republics, the Boer War or even the formation of the South African Union in 1910 in which the British and Boer colonies finally came to an uneasy truce. My main concern is not regarding the history of the Afrikaans peoples in South Africa so much as their status as white Africans, for unlike their European counterparts in South Africa, the Afrikaans have long embraced their 'Africanisation' – although it is still relevant to note that the religious and cultural heritage of Afrikanerdom is drawn from a powerful affiliation to Europe, not 'savage' African cultural influences. Nevertheless, through their own coining of the term Afrikaans, as a community they have allied themselves to Africa, and so who am I to question their status as white Africans? Perhaps it is best if I use an example of defining a true Afrikaner to explain my point more clearly. In 1990 forty people, together a wealthy group of volkstaters, headed by the surviving family of Hendrik Verwoed, bought the abandoned Karoo town of Orania. Their aim: to protect Afrikaner self-determination. Founded on a 'whites-only' policy, the town became the new Promised Land that would save Africa's white tribe from cultural extinction. With the end of apartheid fast approaching, the founders of Orania believed that this was the Afrikaners last chance at a land of their own. Expecting their fellow brethren to arrive in the tens of thousands, the town has in fact fewer than a thousand residents. Nevertheless, in 1995 Nelson Mandela visited Orania. During the visit he gave a speech in which he recognized the Afrikaans nation as just that – a nation, with its own cultural identity, history and language. The residents of Orania have a 'whites-only' policy, their own currency and they are requesting full independence from South Africa. For them, the purpose of Orania is all about separation. The threat that they are trying to separate themselves from is not black people per se, but rather the threat of the majority, of being swamped by Africa and losing their identity. In their own words, Africa is Africanising, and this is a threat. In his subtle, democratic way, Mandela offered Orania the independence they requested, provided that they could offer a clear definition of what it meant to be an Afrikaner. Was it based on race? Or language? For there are hundreds of thousands of people of colour in South Africa whose first language is Afrikaans. Is it based on religion, or a culture that is in many ways divorced from those who simply speak the language? In other words, he requested a clearly articulated sense of identity.

What could Orania say? Their entire manifesto was founded on the fear of being swamped by an 'Africanising Africa'.<sup>9</sup> While this sheds light on the Afrikaans sense of identity, on which I will not elaborate further, it does raise a pertinent question for me: how can a people who shun the thought of being Africanised call themselves Africans? And yet if there is any white group within Africa as a whole who completely embraces their status as Africans it is the Afrikaans. A paradox? Perhaps, and yet I am compelled to look to recent African history, fraught with cases of genocide and tribal civil wars amongst people who are unquestionably African and yet still divided by race and culture. I return then to my original dilemma of what it actually means to be an African, and whether or not at this stage in history there can be such a thing as a white African.

An integral and indeed unavoidable first step when dealing with the concept of a white African is to question why it is a concept in the first place. In centuries past to be European, Asian, African or from the Americas was simply a state of being. Such labels implied racial and cultural differences, but they were not concepts in themselves. Colonialists did not think of themselves as white Asians or white Africans. They remained Europeans living on foreign continents, within the closest approximation of western living spaces that they could achieve in such non-European conditions. It is the most recent wave of colonialism in which Europe colonized 'the New World', including Africa and the East, which has left us with the white African. Interestingly, the same wave has not left us with *white* Australians, *white* New Zealanders or *white* Americans – there are simply New Zealanders, Australians and Americans who happen to be predominantly white based on the almost complete extermination of the natives of these continents following the arrival of Europeans. In all three of the above mentioned countries the white settlers were soon the majority, and as such there has never been any real need to supply them with an added classification. Europe's greatest period of emigration was the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1815 and 1930 over 50 million people left Europe in search of a new life. 33 million of these emigrants found their way to the United States of America (after the United States was already an established white

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<sup>9</sup> Rehad Dasai, Producer, Writer and Director of SABC Documentary, screened February 2006; and *Place of the White Struggle*, article in Sawubona Magazine, September 2002.

settlement); 6 million settled in Argentina and a further 12 million in Canada, Brazil and Australia respectively.<sup>10</sup> Emigration to Africa during this period however, only numbered in the tens of thousands, of which the majority sought the temperate climate of the Southern parts of the continent.<sup>11</sup> While the majority of these immigrants came to South Africa, at no point did the white settlers come remotely close to being anything other than a minority group within South Africa. So while in America it is the non-white races who receive extra classification in the form of the terms African-American and Native American, in South Africa racial distinctions have historically existed for everyone. The Verwoerdian blueprint for Apartheid was that all Africans were to remain ‘temporary sojourners’ in South Africa and as such were denied permanent residential status, let alone citizenship, allowing for the term ‘South African’ to refer purely to people of European descent, or plainly speaking, whites.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, racial distinctions and thus classifications were daily fare in South Africa, from state laws to public transport, urban parks to beaches. At no point was it possible to forget your race.

The ‘white African’ on the other hand is a concept, an idea – and a relatively new one at that. It is the product of South Africa’s unique situation, a mingling of a traditionally held racial term, ‘African’, with an added classification that denies the racial connotations of the term, using African to simply denote a place instead. It is such a simple classification, and highly descriptive in its simple way. The native races of Africa are of course black, and so the white African describes someone of Africa yet not originally from Africa. Simple. Or is it? What has drawn me to this simple classification is the undeniable fact that no classifications are simple, particularly when race, culture and nationalism are involved. To speak of a white African goes beyond race to the heart of what it means to be an African, or of any land or culture. Within South Africa grew a racial group that was not aboriginal, but still sociologically indigenous.<sup>13</sup> Their reign of power might have

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<sup>10</sup> Baines, D, *Emigration from Europe 1815 – 1930*, London: MacMillan, 1991, p.7/8

<sup>11</sup> L’ange, G, *The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation*, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.161

<sup>12</sup> Posel, D, *The Language of Domination, 1978 – 1983*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.424

<sup>13</sup> Steyn, M, *Whiteness Just Isn’t What It Used To Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa*, New York: State University Press of New York, 2001, p.xxiv

ended, but the white population was here to stay. To be white was no longer good enough; we had to be African as well. How else, after all of the atrocities, could we continue living here, sustain the roots we had planted and nurtured unless in our very title we laid claim to this continent? Through appropriating the term African as our own it is expected that ties with Europe must inevitably be severed, yet the very qualification of 'white' places us as other, as European. Race has not yet ceased to matter, the land has not yet become all encompassing, and it is at the heart of this realization that the term white African troubles me. What does it mean? That the descendants of white settlers in Africa have embraced African cultures, traditions and languages? Or simply that by virtue of our own history here we have a right to call this land our own?

During apartheid white identity within South Africa was shaped through whiteness. The end of apartheid not only brought about the loss of political and economic supremacy of white South Africans, but a shift in definitions as well. Gerald L'ange describes this as a process whereby of all the descendants of white settlers around the world, "only those in Africa still face the possibility of cultural extinction, of an obliteration of custom and identity."<sup>14</sup> White South Africans found themselves in a country that was redefining itself as African within a greater African context through a new linking of South Africa with the continent as a whole. South Africa was no longer a European island at the tip of Africa. Instead it was the forerunner of the African Renaissance. A sense of identity that had before simply been taken for granted now came under question and with it the burning question of whether whites belonged in South Africa at all. In response to this dilemma the classification of 'white African' has emerged. Understanding why the term has arisen is a far cry from accepting its validity though. Can an individual cling to his European heritage and his 'whiteness' and still consider himself to be an African? Does being an African require one to embrace traditional African culture, forsaking western culture? Do westernised white South Africans even believe that Africa has something of value to offer them? And finally, can South Africa and Africa be placed in the same category – does being a South African in any way mean that one is an African? These are

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<sup>14</sup> L'ange, G, The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.xxvii

just a few of the questions that should be answered before we blithely accept such a paradoxical term as a 'white African'.



# **PART I: The Apartheid Years**

## *Building a Nation*

The world is divided in a number of ways. There is the East and the West, often associated with Western knowledge and Eastern mysticism, modernity versus ancient wisdom. The East and the West are then further divided into continents, each of which has its own weather patterns, geography and peoples associated with them. The different races of the world are also attributed to the various continents, at the very least in terms of origins. Each continent is then further divided into countries, or nation-states. South Africa is a State within the continent of Africa. The problem in trying to explain the parameters and character of a specific state however lies in the inevitable truth that nations are artificial. They are essentially manufactured categories with invisible lines drawn around them.<sup>15</sup> Another important point with regard to this discussion is that the number of communities and cultural groups in existence in the world today far exceeds the number of states that either do exist, or could even be reasonably established.<sup>16</sup> Nowhere is this truer than in Africa. Colonialism resulted in the division of Africa into states, by five European powers that held little to no regard for the existing divisions of tribal lands. South Africa was no different. However, what was different in the creation of South Africa as a state was that it became far more than simply a colonial state – the European settlers of South Africa shaped a ‘European’ nation far away from Europe. Forming a new nation however, is a complicated affair, as it requires a shift from ‘being’ to ‘becoming’. Western Europe was a place of ‘being’. Each nation was secure in its cultural heritage and did not need to question who it was or who its members were. However, when some of these same members found themselves in new, unformed states, they were suddenly faced with the challenge of redefining themselves, of ‘becoming’ members of a new state.<sup>17</sup> These people of pure European descent now found themselves on new soil, in a new community, shaping a new national identity, and wanting independence from their ‘mother-state’ in the process.<sup>18</sup> However, while this process was

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<sup>15</sup> Hofmeyr, I, *Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity: 1902 – 1924*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.95

<sup>16</sup> Barbar, J, *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.7

<sup>17</sup> Grunwald, H, *How to become an American*, in Holbling, W and Wagnleitner, R (eds.) *European Emigrant Experience in the USA*, Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen, 1992, p.17

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, B, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, 1983, p.50

relatively straight forward in North America, Australia and New Zealand, the nation-builders in South Africa were both divided amongst themselves, and - even as a unified front – they were a minority in the land they wished to rule and make their own. This was the dilemma that the settlers of South Africa faced, and so they found a solution to their problem: they founded a nation based on multinationalism.

Jordan Ngubane, a commentator of what he termed ‘South Africa’s race crisis’, wrote in the early 1970s that it could be justly said that the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and the white man amongst the native inhabitants of the Cape in 1652 started a chain of reactions that continues to this day to influence the relations between black and white in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> He was referring to race relations during apartheid, but I would argue that the same comments hold true today. What is culturally and ideologically occurring in South Africa today is a product of South Africa’s past – and South Africa’s past was the direct result of white settlers arriving in Southern Africa from Europe. South Africa did not instantly come into being from the moment the first European settlers set foot on African soil however. Nations cannot be built overnight, and this country was no different – in fact, South Africa is still in the process of nation building. However, what is happening in South Africa at present cannot be understood without understanding the past, and the first conceptions of what kind of state South Africa would be.

Unlike North America, New Zealand and Australia, whose climates were considered to be similar to that of Europe and therefore conducive to the European constitution, Africa would never receive waves of immigrants numbering in the millions. The continent was an unknown land of extremes; only a rare few dared brave it. In 1814 however the Cape formally became a British colony when the Dutch East Indian Company ceded it to Britain and the numbers of European settlers arriving on the shores of Southern Africa began to swell. By 1870 the name South Africa was still no more than a geographical

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<sup>19</sup> Ngubane, J, *South Africa’s Race Crisis: A Conflict of Minds*, in Adam, H, (ed.), South Africa: Sociological Perspectives, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.2

expression,<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless two distinct groups of settlers had emerged: the English settlers, who were still firmly citizens of the crown; and the Afrikaans, descendants of the *trekboers* - Dutch, German and French settlers who had left the Cape in search of a land that they could call their own, in the process separating themselves from 'European' identity. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the animosity between the two groups had escalated into war. The British wanted all European settlers to fall under their domain, while the Afrikaans wanted no masters other than themselves. The very name by which they referred to themselves – Afrikaans – spoke of severed ties with Europe and a new cultural bond to Africa. They no longer considered themselves to be Europeans, but an indigenous people of Africa.<sup>21</sup> They were the *Boerevolk*, a conservative and hardworking people who lived off the land and answered to no man. In 1902 a shaky truce was established between the Boers and the British whereby the Crown would maintain its hold over the British colonies of the Cape and Natal, and the Afrikaans would govern themselves in the more northern *Boer* Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. South Africa was not yet a State, let alone anything that could be considered a nation. Only the Afrikaans had any sense of a developing culture or nationhood, but not yet within a greater ideal of South Africa. Yet despite their political hegemony over the four geographical areas that South Africa had been divided into, the white inhabitants of both the colonies and the Republics were a racial minority. With both groups feeling an intense vulnerability in the 'Black Sea' of Africans surrounding them, the Afrikaans and the British joined forces to form the Union of South Africa in 1910.<sup>22</sup> This was the first articulation of South Africa as a country and the beginnings of a creation of nationhood based firmly on the concept of South Africa as a white state.

Within the concept of a white state, it must be understood that the Europeans arriving on South Africa's shores brought with them a host of preconceived notions about Africa and Africans: Africa was the 'Dark Continent', a land devoid of Christian enlightenment or

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<sup>20</sup> Marks, S and Trapido, S, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.7

<sup>21</sup> L'ange, G, *The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation*, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.138

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p.150

civilized values; it was a continent home to savages and pagans; it was not worthy of being placed on an equal footing with Europe and European values. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century racist discourse in Europe had experienced a marked increase, while settler descendants in Africa had developed racist assumptions of their own in response to a culture they neither understood, nor made any attempt to understand. In Europe, the fields of science had set themselves the task of classifying the world's races according to a natural hierarchy, in which the Caucasian was at the top of the list, and the African at the bottom. This racial thought drew heavily on the metaphor of the family, likening the peoples of Africa to children in need of guidance – a task delegated by the Europeans settling on the continent for themselves. In the imperial context this would later transform itself into conceptions of separate development and trusteeship,<sup>23</sup> but as I have already pointed out, in South Africa it would be taken much further – it would become the basis upon which a new nation was formed.

In 1903 Lord Milner, High Commissioner of South Africa on behalf of the Crown, addressed the municipal congress in Johannesburg on why it was imperative that authority over Southern Africa remain in the hands of white settlers. According to Milner:

“The white man must rule because he is elevated by many, many steps above the black man....which it will take the latter centuries to climb and which it is quite possible that the vast bulk of the black population may never be able to climb at all...one of the strongest arguments why the white man must rule is because that is the only possible means of gradually raising the black man, not to our level of civilization – which it is doubtful he would ever attain – but up to a much higher level than that which he at present occupies.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dubow, S, *Race, Civilisation and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.71/72

<sup>24</sup> Marks, S and Trapido, S, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.7

It was this kind of thought upon which the nation of South Africa would be built. There were too many cultural and linguistic differences between the English and the Afrikaans for the two groups to find any other point of commonality. All they had in common was that they were white; they held racial prejudices against the native peoples of the land they now ruled; and they did not, under any circumstances, wish to relinquish this power. The notion of a multiracial state was thus two-fold: it allowed for a concept of white supremacy upon which to build a nation, and it provided a means through which to maintain and legitimize political power in the hands of a minority. What exactly did the notion of a multi-racial state entail though? Simply put, it was the foundation of segregation. The key to apartheid ideology was the ideal of racial-national groups and the 'Black National States'. Through such an ideology, national groups only achieved realization when fully associated with their own states.<sup>25</sup> By separating 'native' Africans from the white population, and giving them their own 'states', South Africa became a purely white state, unifying the white population into a nation simply by virtue of all belonging to the same nation-state. Although apartheid ideology only really became entrenched after South Africa became a Republic, the basis for the ideology was in place long before the Union was even formed. The 'paternal' implications of racial-familial ideology that most Europeans adhered to not only provided for the almost childlike nature of the black race, or 'Bantus', but also advocated that although the white race should attempt to educate and uplift the black man, it should also respect the Bantu culture. Through such ideals it was possible to advocate that the Bantu should remain Bantu, and instead of becoming nothing more than a western imitation, he should be left to develop along his own traditional lines.<sup>26</sup> Jan Smuts himself advocated this view, warning that allowing the African a semblance of equality with whites would be to expose him to white westernised culture, a situation that could only lead to the ruthless destruction of "the basis of his African system which was his highest good."<sup>27</sup> The only

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<sup>25</sup> Greenberg, S, *Ideological Struggles Within the South African State*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.389

<sup>26</sup> Adam, H, *The South African Power Elite: A Survey of Ideological Commitment*, in Adam, H, (ed.), South Africa: Sociological Perspectives, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.77

<sup>27</sup> Dubow, S, *Race, Civilisation and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.84

solution therefore was segregation: a policy of differential development that would protect the native cultures of South Africa, but more importantly would allow South African politics to remain free of 'native' involvement, keeping the power firmly in the hands of the whites, and the whites in the westernised culture and environment which they had transplanted from Europe.

However, there would be an inherent paradox within this formation of the new South African nation, a paradox that would lead to the instigation and application of almost contradictory laws, terms and definitions relating to South Africa and South Africans. An excerpt from "A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races", published in 1913, serves to reveal the attitude of the white population that was shaping South Africa at that time. The author, Sir Harry Johnston, writes of "parts of Africa lying outside the tropics, or else at great altitudes inside the tropics, where the climate is salubrious and Europeans can support existence under much the same conditions as their native lands. Here they can freely rear children to form in time a native European race." He then goes on however to point out the one difficulty in this idyllic situation, the fact that "only in South Africa is there a dense native population to dispute by force or by appeal to common fairness the possession of the soil."<sup>28</sup> Basically, the white rulers of South Africa fiercely rejected the implication that they were colonialists, or alien rulers, insisting instead that they were Africans. Their homeland was South Africa, even though they happened to be white.<sup>29</sup> The paradox in white South African thinking arises however when despite this kind of reasoning, South African law officially divided the country's inhabitants into Europeans and non-Europeans. South Africa's link to Europe was beyond question. There were of course degrees to this link. Many British – South Africans still regarded themselves as subjects of the Crown, or at the very least had a well-known dual allegiance to Britain as well as South Africa; the recent immigrants from other European countries would naturally still have strong links to the 'old' country; while the Afrikaans had long since separated themselves from European identity, so much so that the English community believed them to consider all non-Afrikaans members of the white

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<sup>28</sup> Johnston, *White Man's Country*, in Collins, R, Problems in the History of Colonial Africa: 1860 – 1960, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1970, p.225

<sup>29</sup> Barbar, J, South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.33

community as actually non-South African.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, South African they were, although how South Africa related to Europe was never quite clear. Within any rhetoric that dealt with the white man's political, economic and social power in South Africa, he was unquestionably African, and therefore in his full rights to occupy such a position of power. And yet, in order to maintain the segregationist policies upon which this power was built, and maintain a cohesive nation founded on a shared white identity, he also had to be more than simply white in appearance, his ideology needed to be white. In other words, the white South African also had to be European: the pinnacle of civilization in Africa. This was not without its problems. Officially South Africa might be divided into Europeans and non-Europeans, but in reality while D.F. Malan insisted that a true South African would always place South Africa first and foremost,<sup>31</sup> Smuts saw himself as a westerner rather than as an African.<sup>32</sup> He firmly believed that although South Africa was geographically a part of Africa, and for this reason most white South Africans identified themselves as Africans, they still carried with them a civilization whose roots lay in Western Europe, and continued to draw many of their cultural norms from Europe, viewing themselves as a 'western' society transplanted in Africa.<sup>33</sup> Malan's response to this attitude of Smuts' was that if a monument was erected to Smuts next to that of van Riebeeck, while van Riebeeck would face South Africa with his back to the sea, Smuts would stand with his back to South Africa, facing overseas.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, these differences within the white community of South Africa would persist for the duration of apartheid, despite the fact that the white population of South Africa voted overwhelmingly in favour of the republic in the referendum of 1961, resulting in South Africa being forced out of the commonwealth once she was a Republic. Not only was South Africa now officially independent, but the withdrawal from the commonwealth brought with it a greater loyalty on behalf of the English speaking community towards the new Republic.<sup>35</sup> This was not achieved overnight. Indeed, many WESSAs were

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<sup>30</sup> Bond, J, *They Were South Africans*, Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.2

<sup>31</sup> Barbar, J, *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.41

<sup>32</sup> L'ange, G, *The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation*, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.222

<sup>33</sup> Barbar, J, *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.16

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.11

<sup>35</sup> Olivier, G, *South African Foreign Policy*, in Worrall, D, (ed.), *South Africa: Government and Politics*, Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1971, p.292 - 294



initially frightened by their sudden separation from the crown, however, despite such reservations, within the Republic of South Africa a nation had finally begun to be shaped.

### *South Africa as an Immigrant State*

It is impossible to analyse South Africa's political, racial and social structure during the apartheid years without taking into consideration immigration into the country. South Africa was an immigrant state. It had been founded on settlers from Europe, and it continued to be built through an influx of new immigrants from Europe over the years. To understand just how important immigration was to South Africa consider this: between 1960 and 1970, 180 000 white immigrants arrived in South Africa, compared to 145 000 births.<sup>36</sup> For a nation that was built around its whiteness – something that was in the minority - it was important for that community to grow. Since the ruling South Africans were white, the only way to do this was through births and more immigrants who in turn would have their own descendants. However, as I have already outlined, there was a strange mixture of tensions between the two halves of the white South African community within a larger fear of losing political and economic control to the black majority. This meant that although a degree of unity and 'nationhood' amongst the whites was maintained, the Afrikaans community was always wary of too many new arrivals from Europe that might tip the balance of white domination in favour of the English speaking South Africans. Smuts and the United Party were from the first in favour of large scale immigration. Smuts declared, "let them come, the good and the bad, let them come in their thousands, their tens of thousands, their hundreds of thousands, we shall absorb them all." He understood that an increasing number of whites were needed to help South Africa's expanding economy and to strengthen the white population.<sup>37</sup> This rationale was not lost on the National Party, but they faced the dilemma of wanting to strengthen the white population and help economic development, but still retain the exclusiveness of the Afrikaans and defend Afrikaner values.<sup>38</sup> Immediately following the National Party's ascension to power this became even worse. After their 1948 victory Malan declared that "in the past we felt like strangers in our own country, but today

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<sup>36</sup> Barber, J, *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.219

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.50

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.50

South Africa belongs to us once more.”<sup>39</sup> The response of the National Party winning their first election was not to open their arms to European immigrants, but rather to implement a highly restrictionist immigration policy that went hand in hand with the new government’s articulation of their vision of national identity and the defining of racial and cultural boundaries of belonging and exclusion.<sup>40</sup> This new attitude can clearly be seen in the immigration figures of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1947, 28,839 immigrants arrived in South Africa. 1948 saw this figure rise to 35,631. By 1949 the National Party’s new immigration policy had brought this down to 14,780 and by 1950 it had dropped even further to 12,803 – almost a third of the immigrants that had arrived in 1948.<sup>41</sup> I found a similar pattern in my own interview subjects. Of the three interviewees who wanted to get into South Africa following the end of the Second World War, all three had to wait to be accepted. Two of the interviewees waited two full years to be granted admission to South Africa, one of whom’s mother was even born here. In 1950 they received permission to come to South Africa, but only after proving that their profession was needed by the country, that they were in perfect health, and that they were religious churchgoers (in this case members of the Lutheran - Protestant - Church). They arrived on one of the first boats to come to South Africa during this period. My third interviewee only arrived in South Africa in 1952, after it was ‘no longer closed’. All three spoke of the large numbers of Germans who would have liked to come to South Africa after the war, but were denied entry. Most went instead to Argentina, a fact that one of the interviewees argued South Africa came to later regret.<sup>42</sup> This immigration policy of the National Party resulted in an escalating argument within the white South African community. While J.G.N. Strauss, the leader of the United Party, called for balanced and selective immigration – but above all immigration – *Die Transvaaler* frequently responded that this would threaten to “plough the Afrikaans community under”. By 1953 however, even the nationalist newspapers had taken up the call for the need for immigration. The National Party soon realised that both the economic development they

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<sup>39</sup> L’ange, G, The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.225

<sup>40</sup> Crush, J, and McDonald, D, *Evaluating South African Immigration Policy after Apartheid*, in Africa Today, Volume 48, no. 3, 2001, p.9

<sup>41</sup> Barbar, J, South Africa’s Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.51

<sup>42</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tapes 1 and 4

endorsed and their apartheid policy demanded a larger white population. However, issues of political supremacy and cultural distinctiveness of the nationalist Afrikaaner were just as important,<sup>43</sup> and so while South Africa was increasingly opened up to immigrants, the National Party did not want anyone who did not understand or sympathise with existing racial policies, and they favoured immigrants with Calvinist or at least Protestant traditions. Ideal immigrants were thus Protestant Dutch and German arrivals, the people from whom the Afrikaaner community had largely been originally built.<sup>44</sup> From this point the total numbers of immigrants to South Africa rose ever so slightly again, although at no point during the 1950s did more than 16,500 new immigrants arrive in the course of a year,<sup>45</sup> largely because up until 1959 Verwoerd had continued to insist that large scale immigration would swamp Afrikanerdom. By 1960 this would change. Afrikaner values were now entrenched in the Republic, the government's racial policies had been given a firm foundation, and it was clear to all that if white supremacy was to be maintained in South Africa, an increase in white immigration to the country was vital. Thus, during the 1960s National Party policy shifted from an emphasis on Afrikanerdom to white nationalism instead.<sup>46</sup> Although immigration to South Africa would never compare to that of the Americas, or even New Zealand and Australia, the 1960s saw a boom period in immigration, with yearly figures exceeding 40,000 new immigrants each year.<sup>47</sup> Within my own interviews I saw this clear shift as well. While the immigrants who arrived in the early 1950s had to wait to receive permission to come to South Africa, and were indeed fortunate that they were granted entry into the country when so many thousands were not, the immigrants who arrived in the 1960s had a very different experience. Arriving in 1962, 1967 and 1970 respectively all three interviewees found it incredibly easy to get into South Africa. Not only was it easy to get into the country, but the South African government actually paid for their visas and flights. Only the family that arrived in 1970 had to pay anything towards their trip to South Africa, and even this amounted to the

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<sup>43</sup> Carter, G. M., The Politics of Inequality: South Africa Since 1948, New York: Octagon Books, 1977, p.58/59

<sup>44</sup> Barbar, J, South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.52

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p.51

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p.137

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.138

small sum of DM180 for all three travelers.<sup>48</sup> What is most revealing however is the issue of citizenship versus permanent residence. All six of the interviewees who immigrated to South Africa – both those who arrived in the 1950s as well as those who arrived in the following decade – were granted permanent residency immediately. The South African Citizenship Act of 1949 extended the period it took for a British subject to acquire full South African citizenship from two years residence to five, while all non-British immigrants continued to have a six year residency period before being granted citizenship. Even then, citizenship was not automatic, but needed to be applied for and would only be granted at the discretion of the Minister of the Interior.<sup>49</sup> These measures were of course to maintain the balance of voting and thus political rights in favour of the Afrikaans community. However, the National Party took this a step further. Of the seven immigrants that I interviewed, only one held dual citizenship. This interviewee arrived in South Africa in 1983 at the age of four and was subsequently naturalised by the South African government, but allowed to retain her Austrian passport as well. Similarly, the four year old daughter of one of the other immigrant couples who arrived in South Africa in 1970 was also naturalized during the 1980s, although she too kept her German citizenship. The other six immigrants (and their partners) have all to this day remained German citizens and only permanent residents of South Africa. When asked why they have never taken South African citizenship the answer was unanimous: not one was willing to give up their German passport in favour of South African citizenship. What made this decision even easier was that the South African government did not expect them to do so.<sup>50</sup> In this way the National Party received the best of both worlds: an influx of immigrants whose children would be South African and thus educated in the South African way, who nevertheless could not vote, thereby maintaining the Afrikaans political hegemony.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tapes 1 - 6

<sup>49</sup> Barbar, J, *South Africa's Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.51

<sup>50</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tapes 1 - 6

### *Germans in South Africa*

The interesting thing about German interests in Africa is that although it would ultimately be Bismarck who initiated the 'Scramble for Africa', up until that point official German interests in the continent were non-existent. By 1884 Germany was the strongest military power in continental Europe, and yet, as a landlocked state, she had no navy capable of challenging France or Italy, let alone the naval might of Britain. She appeared ill-equipped for colonial competition,<sup>51</sup> and indeed Bismarck repeatedly made it clear that he was "not a colonial man", and that Germany harboured no interest in establishing a colonial empire. It was thus a bit of a mystery why he suddenly changed his mind, and remains a heated topic amongst historians today,<sup>52</sup> for not only did Germany join the colonial race, she initiated the final fervent stages of it. Up until this point Portugal, Britain and France were displaying a keen interest in Africa, each possessing relatively entrenched colonies on the continent while King Leopold of Belgium had also begun to stake his claim. Famous British explorers such as Livingstone, Brazza and Stanley had been filling in the map of Africa, shedding light on the interior of the Dark Continent, and although there were certainly German missionaries, traders and explorers present on the continent, Bismarck tended to distance himself from them. Since the years of van Riebeeck, Germans had steadily been arriving in Africa. The first European eyes to be laid upon Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya were those of two German missionaries, Johann Krapf and Johann Rebmann.<sup>53</sup> Yet despite this there was no official German interest in Africa. In early 1884 a private explorer, Dr. Carl Peters landed in East Africa on an expedition to sign colonial treaties, despite warnings that they would not be recognized in Berlin.<sup>54</sup> By July of the same year however, something had changed. Shocking the world, German gunboats arrived on the shore of West Africa to back up a Dr. Gustav Nachtigal who informed the astounded British traders of the region that he was taking possession of

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<sup>51</sup> L'ange, G, The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.106

<sup>52</sup> Collins, R, The Partition of Africa: Illusion or Necessity, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 1969, p.87/88

<sup>53</sup> L'ange, G, The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.59

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.107

Cameroon in the name of Germany.<sup>55</sup> This one move on the part of Germany triggered what is now known as the 'Scramble for Africa', a feverish period of land grabbing that ended with the Berlin conference, chaired by Bismarck, in which Africa, with the sole exception of Ethiopia, was neatly partitioned between the five European powers and a network of alliances was created that made the idea of war in Africa implausible.<sup>56</sup> Every corner of Africa now belonged to a foreign power. However, unlike France, Britain, Portugal and the Netherlands, whose links to Africa stretched back centuries, Germany's colonial empire was the work of a single year. She acquired the Cameroons in July 1884, South West Africa (Namibia) in August, New Guinea in December and German East Africa in May the following year.<sup>57</sup> What is interesting to note is that South West Africa and Togoland were in fact two barren tracts of land, and although they bordered on British territories,<sup>58</sup> and up until this point had unofficially been considered British, they were not actually wanted by anyone.

Many historians believe that Bismarck, despite his rejection of the ideas of colonies, finally accepted the idea due to public pressure. In other words, the German public was not only ready for German colonies, they demanded them. Prior to the scramble there had even been talk in Germany of protection for German merchants and explorers in Africa.<sup>59</sup> Bismarck's first official colonial policy in 1884 actually supported these earlier ideas. The territories that Germany took did not become colonies, but Protectorates (*Schutzgebiet*). Bismarck intended for private enterprise to be at the base of German colonisation.<sup>60</sup> Prior to his change of heart, German traders in West Africa had begun to urge Bismarck to acquire territory before it was all gone, while a small Bremen merchant and adventurer by the name of Lüderitz settled at Angra Pequena off the coast of South West Africa, and persistently requested the protection of the German government.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Pakenham, T, The Scramble for Africa, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991, p.200

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.204

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, A, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies*, in Collins, R, The Partition of Africa: Illusion or Necessity, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 1969, p.95/96

<sup>58</sup> Pakenham, T, The Scramble for Africa, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991, p.204

<sup>59</sup> Walker, M, Germany and the Emigration: 1816 – 1885, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964, p.199

<sup>60</sup> Ramm, A, Germany 1789 – 1919: A Political History, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1967, p.361

<sup>61</sup> Walker, M, Germany and the Emigration: 1816 – 1885, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964, p.229

Another possible contributing factor to Bismarck's shift in policy was the fact that he was gradually becoming aware that he might be forced to adopt a colonial policy. German explorers were second only to Britain in opening up the interior of Africa from the east and the west between 1850 and 1880, a fact of which the German public was well aware, while by the mid-1880s German missionary societies had hundreds of stations throughout Africa, and trading stations had begun to appear too.<sup>62</sup> Basically, throughout Germany there was a growing support for colonisation, based largely on the fact that the other great European powers already had great colonial empires, and on the belief that the possession of colonies was in itself a profitable thing.<sup>63</sup> In all probability Bismarck himself did not believe that colonies were profitable. After the scramble Bismarck stated that he was forced to consider taking the plunge into colonial affairs because he had to keep in mind "whether after twenty, after thirty years, people will charge that faint hearted Chancellor back then with not having the courage to ensure for us a share of what later became such valuable property",<sup>64</sup> and yet the properties that Germany did acquire were all largely barren and inhospitable.

Putting aside Bismarck's own political reasons for embarking upon a new colonial policy, even after Germany finally responded to so-called public pressure and acquired colonies of her own, this appears to be where her interest in Africa largely ended. At no point was there a serious German interest vested in Africa, unlike for example the interests that the British held. Cecil John Rhodes captured British intentions with regard to colonialism in two simple sentences. He stated that "we (Britain) are the first race in the world...the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race."<sup>65</sup> In very basic terms, British colonialism was focused on administration and turning the world British. German colonialism on the other hand was focused on how best to realise the economic potential of her newly acquired colonies.<sup>66</sup> There was never any intention of

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<sup>62</sup> Ramm, A, *Germany 1789 – 1919: A Political History*, London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1967, p.356

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, A, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies*, in Collins, R, *The Partition of Africa: Illusion or Necessity*, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 1969, p.96

<sup>64</sup> Turner, H, *Bismarck Changes his Mind*, in Collins, R, *The Partition of Africa: Illusion or Necessity*, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 1969, p.102/3

<sup>65</sup> Fage, J. D, *British and German Colonial Rule: A Synthesis and Summary* in Gifford, P and Louis, R (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Africa*, New York: Yale University Press, 1967, p.696

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p.695

making the German colonies in Africa ‘little Germanys’. If we look once more to the British example it is clear that Britain had been colonialists for over a century. They had established a recognized class of colonial rulers. Germany however was new to the game and determined to make it worthwhile. This led to the introduction of a direct class of rulers who made no attempt at integration. The venture was to be profitable and no social factors were considered.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps if the system had survived for a few decades things would have changed, but as it was it had hardly begun before the two World Wars saw it ended. Germany never really got a foothold in Africa, and she certainly did not have the numbers. Despite so-called public interest in colonisation, by 1891 there were only 310 Germans in the whole of South West Africa. Twelve years later this had risen to 3 000,<sup>68</sup> a small number when we consider that the three African territories of Cameroon, Togoland and South West Africa together gave Germany a colonial empire five times the size of the Reich.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, this pattern can be seen throughout the history of German emigration. During the great European emigration of the nineteenth century, 10% of the total emigrants were from Germany.<sup>70</sup> German emigration itself peaked between 1871 and 1885 – just when German interest was supposedly focusing on Africa and colonisation - and yet of the million and a half Germans who emigrated during this period less than 1% immigrated to Asia, Africa and Canada combined. In fact, the majority of emigrants went to the United States - 95% to be exact.<sup>71</sup> Between 1830 and 1930 Germany sent six million people to the USA – more than any other nation.<sup>72</sup> By the time that Germany finally entered the colonial race, not only was her great peak in emigration coming to an end, but those who were leaving the Fatherland had little interest in Africa.

German immigration to South Africa was in no way comparable to British arrivals. However, it was German stock as well as Dutch and Huguenot settlers that formed the origins of the Afrikaans community. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there were small German

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.699

<sup>68</sup> L’ange, G, The White Africans: From Colonialism to Liberation, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, p.148

<sup>69</sup> Pakenham, T, The Scramble for Africa, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1991, p.201

<sup>70</sup> Baines, D, Emigration from Europe 1815 – 1930, London: MacMillan, 1991, p.7

<sup>71</sup> Walker, M, Germany and the Emigration: 1816 – 1885, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964, p.181

<sup>72</sup> Kennedy, J, A Nation of Immigrants, New York: Harper and Row, 1964, p.51



communities throughout South Africa, most notably in King Williams Town in the Cape, where by 1885 a German-English school had even been established, with teachers from both South Africa and Germany teaching the children,<sup>73</sup> attesting to the numbers of Germans that had been arriving in South Africa. This school has grown over the course of the last century, and there are now various *Deutsche Schulen* throughout South Africa. However, South Africa, or Africa for that matter, would never become a destination to which large amounts of German immigrants left Germany for, and in the period following the Second World War, when many thousands of Germans would have arrived in South Africa, the borders were closed to them. Nevertheless, a German community did develop in South Africa. Of this community some would go on to integrate into the Afrikaans community, in time having only their family names to show for a German heritage. Others would maintain a strong German community, learning English so as to be able to integrate into white European society in South Africa, but maintaining a German heritage as well, registering subsequent descendants born in South Africa in Germany, thus bringing their children up as dual citizens.

Of the three interviewees who immigrated to South Africa during the 1960s two sent their children to the German School, while the immigrant who arrived in South Africa in 1983 also attended the German School until she was fifteen years old. Of the five first-generation South Africans that I interviewed, only one was sent to the German school, however, all are dual citizens and all of their children – second generation South Africans – also hold dual South African-German citizenship. Of the five first generation South Africans, the interviewee who attended the German school would have sent her children there too if her English husband had agreed, while a second interviewee who did not attend the German school sent her youngest daughter to the *kindergarten* of the German School, largely on the wishes of her immigrant mother. A third interviewee, who also attended an English school herself, still plans to send her children to the German school. Only one of the five people interviewed said that he would never consider sending his

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<sup>73</sup> Malcomess letters, 17 April 1885

children to the German school because he considered them to be English-speaking South Africans, yet even they hold dual citizenship.<sup>74</sup>

The German community is indicative of all European-origin communities in South Africa: some sections of it integrated into the Afrikaans community; others integrated into the English community. Of those who integrated into the English community, it is safe to say that many have maintained strong ties to their German heritage and language, often for no other reason than family who still live in Germany, or grandparents and parents who have immigrated to South Africa but have still maintained their homeland language, and wish their descendants to do so as well, while a large majority of first, second and even third generation South African-born 'Germans' still hold dual citizenship. It is communities like these within the white South African community along with the Afrikaans whose community did sever ties with Europe generations ago, that are the so-called 'white Africans'.

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with the Author, February 2006, tapes 1, 3 and 6

## **PART II: South Africa Today**

### The Rainbow Nation

Ernest Gellner, a theorist on nationalism, wrote that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness – it invents nations where they do not exist.”<sup>75</sup> The preamble to South Africa’s new post-1994 democratic constitution is that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.” (Republic of South Africa, 1996, a:1) This is the basis of South Africa’s attempt at creating a new nation from the ashes of apartheid. Where apartheid ideology argued that it was impossible to develop a sense of common identity amongst such a diversity of people,<sup>76</sup> the emphasis of the new constitution is on the inclusion of all South Africans, irrespective of colour, culture, religion, class and sexual orientation. Whereas apartheid ideologues focused on “multinationalism” as a basis for ethnic, political and social segregation, today’s government is constructing a national identity that embraces the differences between South Africans, their shared but divided history, and their loyalty to the state and the nation.<sup>77</sup> This is the basis of the term now used to describe South Africa: the Rainbow Nation. Archbishop Desmond Tutu captures these ideals in a beautiful and moving way, openly declaring that:

“Ours is a remarkable country. Let us celebrate our diversity, our differences...South Africa wants and needs the Afrikaaner, the English, the Coloured, the Indian, the black...Let us move into the glorious future of a new kind of society where people count, not because of biological irrelevancies or other extraneous attributes, but because they are persons of infinite worth, created in the image of God.”<sup>78</sup>

This is a perfect conception of the ideals upon which post-apartheid is attempting to move forward and leave the past behind. It is also reasonable for continued attention to be drawn to South Africa’s multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. After all, such distinctions were the foundations of the previous regime - they permeated South African life in every sphere. Today we are citizens of a specific nation-state that has chosen to

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<sup>75</sup> Anderson, B, *Imagined Communities*, London: Verso, 1983, p.6

<sup>76</sup> Barbar, J, *South Africa’s Foreign Policy 1945 – 1970*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, p.139

<sup>77</sup> Peberdy, S, *Imagining Immigration: Inclusive Identities and Exclusive Policies in Post-1994 South Africa*, in *Africa Today*, Volume 48, no. 3, 2001, p.28

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p.26

base its nationhood on citizenship rather than on a specific ethnic or cultural base for this very reason. In his “I am an African” speech, South African President Thabo Mbeki (then Deputy President) encapsulated the idea of a multiracial South Africa through the following words:

“I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls  
haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape...  
I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new  
home on our native land. Whatever their actions, they remain  
still, part of me...  
In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came  
from the East...  
I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsa  
and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu  
took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshe and Ngungunyane  
taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom...  
I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves  
at St Helena and the Bahamas...  
I come of those who were transported of India and China...  
Being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none  
dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that *I am an African*.”<sup>79</sup>

Through this speech Mbeki clearly encapsulates that the foundations of South Africa are now diversity, inclusivity and ‘Afritude’.<sup>80</sup> However, within all of this new rhetoric, at no point is any attempt made to actually define an African. Does being a South African citizen automatically make one African, regardless of race or cultural heritage?

Part of the difficulty in answering this question is that apartheid has led to a confusion of terms and classifications. For example, the Afrikaans community says that it has long embraced its ‘Africanisation’. In terms of apartheid classifications this meant that they no longer had ties with Europe but were instead firmly rooted in South Africa. However, the residents of Orania give their reason for wanting to form a separate state outside of South Africa, the fact that Africa is Africanising. The Oxford dictionary states that to ‘Africanise’ is to ‘make African in character’, or otherwise ‘restructure (an organization)

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<sup>79</sup> Address to the South African Constitutional Assembly by Thabo Mbeki, 1996.

<sup>80</sup> Peberdy, S, *Imagining Immigration: Inclusive Identities and Exclusive Policies in Post-1994 South Africa*, in *Africa Today*, Volume 48, no. 3, 2001, p.16

by replacing white employees with black Africans'.<sup>81</sup> This definition appears to coincide nicely with what the Afrikaans community of Orania is objecting to, but is jarring when compared to apartheid ideology. The term 'Africanism' causes as much confusion. Africanism was another term used by the white community during apartheid to defend their positions within South Africa. According to the Oxford dictionary however, 'Africanism' is 'the belief that black Africans and their culture should predominate in Africa'.<sup>82</sup> Not only is this at the opposite extremes of how apartheid ideologues used the term, but it calls into question the position of the white community in South Africa. South Africa is at the fore-front of the African Renaissance, a movement founded on the ideal of Africanism: an ideal that is clearly geared towards the black communities of Africa. While this movement is the natural and important consequence of centuries of social, economic and political oppression of black people by white people within Africa, it does blur the position of the white community within Africa today. That the white community of South Africa still maintains its social and economic privilege within South Africa has already been pointed out. What is less clear is how the identity of the community as a whole can now be related to Africa. Turning once again to the Oxford dictionary, I found that the term 'African' was described as 'a person from Africa, especially a black person, or a person of black African descent' as in for example the African-Americans.<sup>83</sup> Thus, while the term African is still predominantly associated with race, it is not exclusively about race. In the classification African-American it does denote race, but the inclusion of the word 'black' in the definition allows for the assumption that although African is traditionally associated with black people, there are also other people in Africa who are not so. The Arabs of Northern Africa are an obvious example, but allowance is also made for any other race as well. Race remains too much of an issue for there to be simply Africans - instead there appear to be 'white' Africans and 'black' Africans, although at least in this day and age to be African no longer means that you are necessarily black. This opens the way for the classification of the white African, not necessarily in the way that white Africans were thought of in the past, but rather as a term denoting to a group of people who are firmly from Africa. Once again however, this is not without its share of

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<sup>81</sup> Oxford Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.23

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p.23

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p.23

problems. Based on the idea that Africanism is the domination of traditional *black* African culture on the continent, is it possible for a white South African to be considered African while still leading a largely westernised life based on European principles? Secondly, although a shift has been made within the term 'African' to include those of white racial origins, does the white community in South Africa necessarily agree with this shift. In other words, can they even conceive of themselves as African?

### *A Question of Race*

During Apartheid black Africans were considered to be 'naturally' a part of the land. One of the premises upon which segregation was based was the idea that cities were an alien environment for which Africans were supposedly not yet ready.<sup>84</sup> This had two direct consequences. It separated blacks from whites not only within the cities but into categories of 'urban' and 'rural' as well. Since urbanization had become the bulwark of modern civilisation, 'ruralised' Africans were seen as having nothing to offer the white community of South Africa. Secondly, through segregation and the idea that the city was not the natural environment of black Africans, blacks entering the cities did so under strictly controlled conditions, and were made to leave when they were no longer useful to the white community. This meant that contact between the races was minimized.<sup>85</sup> The result of this is that despite centuries of living in an African country, the white community actually knows very little about African languages and culture. Indeed, any anthropological studies that were undertaken during and following the colonial period were done for the purposes of justifying colonialism and subsequent minority rule, and were based on the basic premise of an innate white superiority. Such studies were thus unable to forge the groundings for cross-cultural understanding and subsequent interaction. Richard Ballard takes this idea even further. He maintains that as humans we attempt to find places that do not challenge our self-conceptions. These places are our comfort zones, and are more often than not our homes. Thus for a person to freely say

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<sup>84</sup> Dubow, S, *Race, Civilisation and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years*, in Marks, S and Trapido, S, (eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, New York: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1987, p.75

<sup>85</sup> Ballard, R, *Assimilation, Emigration, Semigration, and Integration: 'White' peoples' strategies for finding a comfort zone in post-apartheid South Africa* in Distiller, N and Steyn, M, (eds.), *Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today*, Sandton: Heinemann Publishers, 2004, p.53

that South Africa is his 'home', requires him to be sufficiently comfortable with the values, practices and words spoken within its boundaries.<sup>86</sup> If we relate this idea to the white community in South Africa, how can the white community think of South Africa as their home if they do not sufficiently know the values, practices or words of the predominant cultures of the country to be able to understand it, let alone be sufficiently comfortable with it? Within the South African context the answer to this question would be that white South Africans continue to live in their old 'Europeanised' environments, only interacting with the 'unknown' in a marginal way. Take for example Ballard's argument of semigration and emigration. The arrival of squatters and street traders in urban environments has led many white South Africans to the conclusion that the living environment no longer functions to affirm a western, modern sense of self. It is no longer a source of safety and security. The extreme response to this dislocation is emigration to another country which accords better with the identity to which the individual aspires. A less extreme response and altogether more common one is something that Ballard terms as 'semigration'. Semigration is the withdrawal of many South Africans into enclosed communities with high walls and state-of-the-art security systems. It is the creation of small, 'safe' islands within, yet separate from, the 'unknown'.<sup>87</sup> If these 'islands' serve to separate much of the urban white community in South Africa from their own country, how can these same people be expected to identify with Africa at all? While doing research for their article 'Rewriting WESSA Identity', Theresa Salusbury and Don Foster interviewed 26 people on what it meant to be a white South African. One of the respondents stated that he felt as if "I'm not automatically viewed as South African to a sense, overseas or wherever. You're still kind of seen as a *white* South African. You're not automatically a South African, which is kind of what you're saying. And I don't think it, the belonging doesn't have to be bestowed by the black community, but it has to be, you know, a sense of yourself."<sup>88</sup> This gentleman's response in particular gave me the sense that his conception of identity within South Africa was firmly rooted in his own culture, and completely removed from black African culture. He seems confident about

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p.51

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p.51

<sup>88</sup> Salusbury, T and Foster, D, *Rewriting WESSA Identity*, in Distiller, N and Steyn, M, (eds.), Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today, Sandton: Heinemann Publishers, 2004, p.104



his own position, but keeps the black community in the realm of 'other'. Based on this, I would be interested to know if this same gentleman considers himself to be more than just a South African, but an African. And yet I will never know the answer to this question for the simple reason that *that* question was not asked of this interviewee. His *African-ness* is not under debate because for most white South Africans this not questioned – either because they already do consider themselves to be naturally African, or because it would not even occur to them to equate themselves with the traditionally racial term.

### The Interviews

White South African identity is clearly in the process of reshaping itself, and not without encountering significant difficulties. How closely is this new identity aligning itself with Africa though? I interviewed fifteen people in an attempt to answer the question of whether or not a white South African can also feel African. I researched what other anthropologists and historians had concluded about white identity in South Africa, but my key interest was whether these same people associated themselves with the continent as a whole. In other words, does Mbeki's "I am an African" speech hold true? Are we all really Africans?

#### *On being South African:*

This question was relatively simple to answer. All of the interview subjects who were born in South Africa felt that they were completely South African, despite the fact that five of the seven subjects spoke German at home while growing up, and one even attended the German school. Of the immigrant group only the immigrant who had arrived in this country at the age of four felt genuinely South African, and related her sense of identity to this country far more than to Austria, despite attending the German School from the age of six to fifteen. The next immigrant who felt a strong bond to South Africa immigrated with her family when she fifteen years old. Although she retains a strong German accent, married a German man, always remained within a strong German community and has retained her German citizenship, at the age of 72 she admits that she really does feel South African. The reason for this appears to be that she arrived in South

Africa while she was still a teenager. In addition to this, as an artist she has formed a strong bond to the African soil. The remaining immigrants whom I interviewed all arrived from Germany between their late teens and their late thirties. Their bond to Germany is simply too strong to consider themselves as South Africans. Ranging from their mid-sixties to early nineties, they remain German.

*Does being a South African mean that you are also an African?*

Despite a firm connection to South Africa only two of the interviewees believed themselves to be African as well as South African. All the other respondents had difficulty thinking of themselves in terms of Africa. One even went so far as to say that “South Africa isn’t Africa”<sup>89</sup> Another interviewee responded that when one thinks of Africa the third world comes to mind, whereas South Africa is not only partly first world, but part of the western world as well. The response to this question was thus split between a difficulty in associating themselves with the term African, but also in a firm belief that South Africa differs from the rest of Africa as a country, allowing one to be firmly South African without having any ties to Africa as a whole.

*Is it a question of race?*

Most of the interview subjects still associated the term ‘African’ with people of black racial origins. A common example used to explain this was the term African-American, a classification that clearly denotes race. However, one of the respondents felt irritation at African-Americans who persisted in calling Africa their ‘home’ despite never having set foot on the continent, while the two youngest interviewees believed that they had more of a right to call themselves African than the African-Americans based on the fact that they were born on the continent and actually knew something about what it meant to live on African soil. There was some confusion here however as one of these same respondents admitted to having no real tie or even an interest in Africa as a whole, while the other respondent focused on the more white South African aspects of ‘African’ culture when pressed to explain what her ‘knowledge’ of Africa pertained to. She had no real

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 6

knowledge or understanding of traditional, or as she put it “African, African culture”,<sup>90</sup> although she did point out that living for a year in Austria has taught her that South Africa’s so-called westernised culture is in fact very different from true European culture, which is a highly bureaucratic system in which everything functions in a specific way that is incredibly time orientated. She believed that “here we are very laid back, we certainly have the whole African time thing, and we are more open-minded too.”<sup>91</sup> Another interviewee in her early forties responded to this question by saying that South Africa is “the world’s best and biggest melting point”, and while she realised that she was from a generation that still held racial prejudices, she hoped that her children would one day live in a multiracial equality based society.<sup>92</sup> Although she could not actually call herself an African, a similar response came from another female respondent in her early forties, and she was able to call herself African. She felt “proud to be a South African as well as an African”, adding that although she has many black friends who say that she was not a true South African, and instead belongs to a white European race whose roots are not in Africa, she considers herself as African as they are.<sup>93</sup> What predominated throughout these discussions was a belief that being born in a country gave a person the entitlement to call that country their own. There was some difficulty in stretching this entitlement to a connection with Africa, but once again amongst those who did not freely associate South Africa with Africa. Similarly, the immigrant who only moved to South Africa when she was four years old, but still considers herself to be South African, does not consider herself to be African because she was not born here.<sup>94</sup> She clearly differentiates between South Africa as a nation, and the African continent. She is a South Africa because she has grown up in a South African society. To be African, however, she would have to be in some way ‘of’ the continent. The response of one of the immigrants to this question was interesting however. She too believes that there is a part in Africa where she lives, although this is not the same as being African. Similarly, she associates the term ‘African’ with black people. However, she then goes on to say that she feels a strong connection to the African soil, and in those moments she forgets the colour of her

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 6

<sup>91</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 6

<sup>92</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 1

<sup>93</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 1.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 4

skin because a love of the soil has nothing to do with culture. In other words, the question of race and of being 'African' was intimately tied up with culture in the mind of this interviewee. She was not alone. A predominant undercurrent in the responses of the interviewees when discussing the term African was that although race was a significant factor in defining an 'African', it was difficult for most to separate race from culture.

*How does culture and geography relate to being African?*

This was one subject upon which the various interviewees did not agree. For those who did not consider themselves to be in any way African it was relatively simple to answer, but for those who were not sure whether or not they were African as well as South African it was slightly more complicated. One of the interviewees believes that she could only consider herself to be truly African if she had some kind of connection to the continent as a whole. For her, knowing South Africa is not enough. She lacks knowledge of both the cultures and the geography of Africa as a whole, and as such she cannot consider herself to be African.<sup>95</sup> In terms of geography all but one of the respondents admitted a connection to the African soil. This ranged from a love of South Africa's weather and open spaces to a deep connection with the bushveld. This connection was interpreted in different ways however. For those who felt this deep connection, race and culture were considered unimportant in terms of this one specific link to Africa, however, only one of the respondents then went on to equate this with being African. His explanation for being African is based on the fact that he "feels for Africa...I love Africa". This love however, is limited purely to the soil. When questioned about the role of culture in being African his response was "why do I need to be black, or understand a black culture to be African? I can sit under any Leopard Tree and still be an African."<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, this same respondent's immigrant mother believes that her son cannot be considered an African because he has no real knowledge of African people or their culture. As an immigrant living in Apartheid South Africa she believed that she could not truly understand Africa unless she made some kind of connection to black people. As an artist this proved to be relatively easy. She started teaching at FUBA, the Federation for

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 5.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 6.

Black Artists during the apartheid years and forged relationships with black artists that she has maintained to this day. However, despite these connections, she admits that even she is not in fact African, mainly because she is simply too westernised. For example, when an artist friend tried to teach her to eat mieliepap in the traditional African way she hated it, unable to forsake a knife and a fork for her hands. Another example that she offered was her response to witnessing the initiation of a sangoma. While she found the experience deeply moving, it did not touch her spirituality in an African way, but rather it touched her Christianity as she associated the proceedings with her knowledge of the sacrificial lamb. Ultimately, she remains a product of the European society in which she grew up, and while she feels in touch with both the people of Africa and the soil, she cannot truthfully regard herself as African.<sup>97</sup> If we use this as the basis for being an African then not one of the interviewees can truly be considered African, having very little knowledge of traditional African culture. One response to this lack of cultural integration was that “we live in a little bubble of society. We don’t need to know about African culture, we’re happy in our bubble.”<sup>98</sup> The conclusion that can be drawn from the general lack of interest on behalf of the majority of the interviewees towards African culture is that they are content with belonging to one community within a multiracial South Africa, but do not necessarily need to feel a connection to Africa as a whole to achieve this sense of belonging. A female immigrant respondent voiced the opinion that until white South Africans believe that their own culture is not infallible, and that other cultures of both South Africa and Africa can in fact offer them something of worth, they will never feel a true connection to Africa.<sup>99</sup> Based on the responses of these fifteen interview subjects, ranging from 20 years of age to 93 years of age, this has not yet occurred.

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 3

<sup>98</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 6.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with the author, February 2006, tape 3.

## *Conclusion*

Embarking upon this project I believed the classification of a 'white African' to be problematic. Through research and interviewing white South Africans personally I have since discovered that it is indeed problematic on a number of levels. The first of these is the simple fact that while we have begun to speak of 'Africans' beyond a classification of race, referring instead to peoples of various cultures and racial origins who think of Africa as their home, race cannot yet be removed from the classification entirely, resulting in the added qualifications of 'white' and 'black' African. This essentially negates the de-racialisation of the term African, drawing attention to race where race should no longer be an issue. Thus through the very term alone, white South Africans are reminded of their race, instantly making it problematic for them to associate themselves with Africa on a racial basis. Beyond the question of race is an equally important question of culture. Africa is in the process of Africanising itself, a situation which draws more attention to African cultural traditions and languages than has ever occurred before. However, the same historical processes that have resulted in the 'African Renaissance' have also brought forth the term 'white African'. During a period of intensive focus on traditional African values, white people who historically have only a limited knowledge of these values and cultures are expected to freely associate themselves with Africa. Instead, they find it much easier and safer to associate their senses of identity with those aspects of South Africa that they know and understand, distancing themselves from the more formidable specter of Africa. Nevertheless, that there can be such a term as a 'white African' that is not directly associated with political autonomy or colonial ideologies, but is instead a term that refers to a social group of equal ideological standing to those traditionally thought of as African, is the first step for members of communities of white racial origins to truly becoming African.

# The Film Text

### *A Note on the Film:*

The documentary that accompanies this written dissertation is not of production quality. Due to course constraints producing a production quality documentary was unfortunately not possible. Instead, the final product should be viewed as a conceptualization of what a production quality film would look like. It is filmed on a home video camera, without audio or lighting control. It is also filmed in the natural environment of each interviewee, resulting in unfortunate background noise. While in some ways this adds to the authenticity of the documentary, it does also give the film an unpolished feel, as some of the camera work is slightly shaky, and the editing cuts are not always perfect. However, I hope to be able to convey the intention of the documentary, and to still achieve an impact on my audience. With regard to the music choices I have made, I included two well known classical tracks by Strauss and Handel, and two short pieces from Johnny Clegg tracks. In a production quality film this would require obtaining rights to the music; however I chose to use them to add a degree of ambience to the film, so that a greater appreciation could be made of what the documentary would look like if it was production quality. I would also like to take this opportunity to give special thanks to Inge Meredith, Jochen von Moltke, Monika von Moltke, Annelise Rotthaus, Gisela Krause, Renate Faltermeier, Hubertus von Moltke, Angelika von Mellenthin, Caroline Bauthier, Brigitta Faltermeier, Andrea Bull, Saskia von Moltke and Natalie Sharp, all whom answered my questions – even the difficult ones.

### *Theory behind the Choice of Documentary Style:*

The documentary is interview driven. As the filmmaker I relied upon the words of my interviewees to get the point of the film across to the audience. Through the screen, biological individuals become social subjects, thereby appropriating positions of knowledge in relation to the representation of specific ideological discourses,<sup>100</sup> in this case the relation between white Africans to Africa. Through using my interviewees as social subjects, the film becomes a classic realist text. This in turn places the viewer of the documentary in a position of transparent and unproblematic knowledge in relation to

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<sup>100</sup> Hall, S, *Recent Developments in Theories of Language and Ideology: A Critical Note*, in Hall, S (ed.) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, London: Hutchinson and Co, 1980, p.159



the interview subjects' representations of the 'real'. This 'real' is actually produced by the filmmaker and the interviewees. Even though it is real people talking about real issues, it is still a construction through editing and choice of questions and opinions, yet it appears as nothing more than a natural reflection of life.<sup>101</sup> It is here that the power of documentary lies. In a discussion on film theory, Chambers advocated that he "would suggest it to be extremely naïve to understand ideology as something imposed from above. Ideology has to negotiate a path through the differential social totality in order to win consensus, and it arises within social relationships and particular practices."<sup>102</sup> This really is the point of any documentary on contemporary issues: to represent the interviewees as people with something worthwhile to say. In this way the message of the film is not imposed from above, but rather through the negotiation of the various subjects with the particular issue at hand. This in turn allows the viewer of the film to negotiate a path with those who are on the film, thereby taking an ideological journey of his own, and hopefully reaching a greater understanding of his own position with regard to the subject presented by the documentary.

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.159

<sup>102</sup> Weedon, Tolson, Mort, *Introduction to Language Studies at The Centre*, in Hall, S (ed.) Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, London: Hutchinson and Co, 1980, p.182

## Treatment for the Short Documentary "European Blood, African Heart"

### Title of Project: "European Blood, African Heart"

#### Rationale:

As the title of the documentary suggests, this film is an exploration of those whose ancestral roots can be traced firmly to Europe, but whose home now resides in Africa. That white South Africans are, despite a European heritage, unquestionably South African is not the central theme of the documentary. Instead, the working hypothesis of the film is to resolve how closely a white South African sense of identity is associated with the African continent as a whole. Within the space of a decade the position of white South Africans has shifted from a politically elite 'European' island in the southern most tip of Africa - a continent that was portrayed as a place of "otherness", of danger and threat by Apartheid ideologues - to a no longer politically autonomous group that is now instead a cultural minority in a country that is spearheading the 'African Renaissance'.

For well over a century South Africa was depicted as a westernised, Europeanised state that happened to be within the African continent. South Africans referred to themselves as African because they did in fact live in Africa. There were no ideological connotations to the word 'African' when a white person referred to themselves as such because their position of authority within South Africa was beyond contestation. The term 'African' was a geographical one, no more. Michelle Booth, a South African artist who addresses the issue of whiteness in the new South Africa describes the basis of her artistic exploration of this issue as the realization that white people in South Africa do not share the burden of race equally with the other races of this country. She admits that given our past we are all aware of race, but qualifies this with the assertion that race for white people is not a burden in the same way that blackness is, mostly because the experience of being white is still largely that of privilege.<sup>103</sup> Based on this idea that white people in

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<sup>103</sup> Booth, M, *Seeing White – Sharing the Burden of Race*, in Distiller, N and Steyn, M, (eds.), Under Construction: 'Race' and Identity in South Africa Today, Sandton: Heinemann Publishers, 2004, p.116

South Africa have not experienced a burden of race, I would also propose that white identity has never fully been explored. As the privileged and 'westernised' group in South Africa during the Apartheid regime, whites tended to set their own identity as the standard by which everyone else was measured. According to Melissa Steyn this had the effect of making white identity invisible.<sup>104</sup> I would argue that it did more than simply prevent white South Africans from evaluating their own sense of identity, but actively encouraged black South Africans to do exactly the opposite. In a world where a man is constantly and actively reminded of his race within a highly oppressive environment, it is only natural that a sense of solidarity emerges based on shared blackness and that this in turn leads to an awakening of black consciousness. There are two broad categories of African nationalism that developed in South Africa during the Apartheid years: 'South Africanism' which upheld the goal of common citizenship and made its primary appeal to the white community to promote the changes necessary to achieve this goal; and 'Africanism', the more purely Africanist efforts to stimulate a sense of African self-confidence and self-reliance in seeking both an end to colour discrimination and a positive role in the moulding of South African society.<sup>105</sup> Both categories clearly fall under the broader context of Pan-Africanism, an ideology based on solidarity between Africans and those of African descent<sup>106</sup> in response to European oppression. Once Apartheid came to an end Black Consciousness took on a new force and vigour. Freed from the shackles of oppression it was now possible for the black community of South Africa to not only fully explore a sense of black identity, but to do so with no restrictions.

White identity on the other hand has become problematic. During Apartheid white identity was divided into those who were Afrikaans and those who were English-speakers, although from a broad base of European descent. They were South African, and without actually having to contemplate what such a term meant, African. With the loss of political autonomy and the rise of black consciousness within South Africa however,

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<sup>104</sup> Steyn, M, Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used To Be: White Identity in a Changing South Africa, New York: State University Press of New York, 2001, p.xxvii

<sup>105</sup> Carter, G. M, *African Concepts of Nationalism in South Africa*, in Adam, H, (ed.), South Africa: Sociological Perspectives, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.105

<sup>106</sup> Holdstock, T.L, Re-examining Psychology: Critical Perspectives and African Insights, London: Routledge, 2000, p.133

these terms have now been called into question. The new South Africa is founded on inclusivity, regardless of race. There is no question of white South Africans remaining South Africans, and despite Black Economic Empowerment they are also still the country's privileged economic group, however, their position within the broader context of Africa is less definite. Take for example African Nationalism. This is an ideology that is firmly geared towards those of *African* descent, in other words, despite Thabo Mbeki's assertion that *all* South Africans - regardless of race or cultural heritage - are African, a distinction is being drawn between those who are black and those who are not with regard to the term. Pan-Africanism is no different. As an ideology it firmly rejects racism, yet without discrimination between the races no basis for Pan-Africanism exists.<sup>107</sup> This has led to the emergence of the term 'white African' to differentiate between those of African descent, and those who were born or live on the continent but are not of an African racial origin.

This in itself would appear to be straightforward and simple enough, and yet, upon closer examination I discovered that it was anything but. The term 'white African' led me to consider my own sense of identity within South Africa and to compare this with my German heritage. It had never been a problem for white South Africans to be both South African and European, since South African politics were founded on white 'European' exclusivity. Did the same rule apply to being African I wondered? As I began to discuss this idea with friends and family it soon became clear to me that most white South Africans whom I spoke to barely considered South Africa to be a truly 'African' country, let alone themselves as African. The term was immediately problematic for them. This has led me to not only question white identity within South Africa, but Africa as a whole. That so many people could not even conceive of South Africa as a truly African country has made me realise that as white South Africans we still lead lives that are sheltered and isolated from the realities and diverse cultures of our country. Thus the rationale behind this filmic exploration of the classification 'white African' is simple: is there such thing as a 'white African' in present South African society, and if so what is a white African?

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p.133

### *What Do I Want to Evoke?*

As a project this film is more than just a glimpse into the white community of South Africa and how this community relates its own sense of identity to both this country and Africa as a whole. I do not wish to address the issue of white identity in this country as a purely academic exercise. By producing a film that allows a glimpse into a specific community I hope to hold a mirror up to other members of that same community, so that without actually being personally questioned they reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs with regard to South Africa, Africa and their identity as Africans.

### *Who is My Audience?*

Target audience: the white community of South Africa, English and Afrikaans speaking, immigrants and South African born. The film focuses on immigrants to South Africa in the last 60 years; and first and second generation South Africans, in other words the 'English-speaking' community. However, although the Afrikaans community has historically distanced itself from Europe far more than the English speaking community they still belong to a largely westernised white community, and as such the issue of white identity in Africa is as pertinent to them if not more so than the descendants of more recent immigrants.

Secondary audience: South Africans in general, regardless of race and culture. Although the new South Africa is all inclusive, race has not yet ceased to be an issue. Racism is still prevalent throughout the country, and despite Black Economic Empowerment policies the white community still largely maintains its previous position of privilege. It is important for the future of a truly equitable South Africa for the white community to look beyond its own cultural borders in order to gain a better understanding of the country of which they are now simply one of many racial and social groups. However, the same can be said of these groups towards the white community. Within discussions of this nature not all responses will necessarily be liked or appreciated by other racial groups, particularly since so many deeply engrained prejudices are still evident in South Africa today. Nevertheless, understanding is the first step towards real change, and since the white community is a social group within South Africa, an understanding of their

attempts to shape their own identities since 1994 is as important in the construction of a new nation as that of any other group in South Africa.

### *The Voice of the Documentary:*

The voice of the film will be predominantly that of the fifteen people interviewed. Aside from the concluding sequence, there is no voice-over narration or front-of-camera narration to detract from the personal narratives offered by the various interviewees. Instead, a written text introduces the themes of the documentary, and throughout the film questions appear as text, guiding the audience through the filmic discussions taking place without actively commenting on what those on film have to say about their lives in South Africa. This allows for a more subtle shaping of the concerns of the film in which the voice is less that of the filmmaker, keeping the filmic text personal rather than broad, and thus more accessible to the viewer. The words of the interviewees are only subtly critiqued, allowing the audience to be gently drawn into the issues themselves so that they might contemplate their own positions within South Africa.

### *The Mode:*

The mode of the documentary is predominantly **Observational**. The interviews are obviously staged; this is unavoidable as the film is not an observation of the interview subjects in their normal and daily lives but rather a revelation of their opinions on specific subjects. That they are being interviewed is clear, thus adding an **Interactive** element to the film. However, there is no physical narrator, the filmmaker is not seen to interact with the interviewees, and the subject does not appear to be in any way self-reflexive for the film-maker. It is presented as a purely observational exercise, a glimpse into the opinions and senses of identity of a small sample group of white South Africans within their own natural environments. Eleven of the interview subjects were interviewed in their own homes, two were interviewed in their office environment, and two were interviewed in a pub environment. The two interviewees who were interviewed in the pub environment are the youngest of the group and I wanted to draw attention to this through not only their obvious youth in comparison to the other subjects, but in a complete and almost jarring change in environment as well. With the exception of the introductory

sequence, the film will be driven by what are termed 'talking heads'. In other words, although many photographic images will support what the characters of the film have to say, the filmic text will be dominated by the words of the interviewees.

### *The Music:*

Music in the film is used to differentiate between the European roots of white South Africans and the degree of 'Africanisation' that has taken place amongst the white community since then. The symphonies of Handel and Strauss draw attention to the European roots of white settlers to South Africa in the opening sequences, and it introduces the first characters of the film as immigrants to South Africa. As the film text moves from European immigrants to South Africa to the interviewees who were born here however, the music shifts to Johnny Clegg's interpretation of African music, a synthesis of traditional African beats with western overtones; a musical metaphor for the interview subjects. The choice of music is designed to differentiate between those who were born in this country and those who were not, ultimately to draw attention at the end of the film to whether these two groups view South Africa and their positions in Africa in a similar or altogether dissimilar way.

### *The Characters:*

There are two distinct groups of characters interviewed for the film: immigrants to South Africa and first and second generation South Africans. The reason for these two distinct groups is that I wanted to explore how Europeans who have spent the majority of their lives in South Africa differ in their opinions and senses of identity from those born in this country. In addition to this, all of the interview subjects that I chose were either German or of German descent. The reason behind this choice is simple. The white English-speaking community in South Africa is drawn from a far broader base than British immigrants alone. I chose to limit myself to one immigration group and their descendants to allow a greater degree of continuity between the interviews. Since I am from German descent myself I chose German immigrants and their descendants as my case study.

### The Immigrants

**Inge Meredith:** 93 years old, immigrated to South Africa from Germany in 1950 when she was 37 years old with her husband and five children, the eldest of which was 17 years old and the youngest nine. Inge is a permanent resident of South Africa and has lived here for 56 years.

**Jochen von Moltke:** 83 years old, immigrated to South Africa in 1952 when he was 29 years old. Moved back to Germany with his wife and children in 1972, but returned to South Africa six years later. Jochen is a permanent resident of South Africa.

**Monika von Moltke:** The daughter of Inge Meredith. Immigrated to South Africa in 1950 with her family when she was fifteen years old. Moved back to Germany with her husband Jochen, and their children, in 1972, but returned to South Africa in 1976. Monika is a permanent resident of South Africa.

**Annelise Rotthaus:** Immigrated to South Africa in 1962 when she was 18 years old. She has lived in South Africa for 44 years, but remains a permanent resident.

**Renate Faltermeier:** Immigrated to South Africa in 1967 at the age of 23. Renate has never returned to live in Germany, but she has kept her German citizenship and is only a permanent resident in South Africa.

**Gisela Krause:** Immigrated to South Africa in 1970 with her husband and their four year old daughter. Both Gisela and her husband have maintained their German citizenship and are only permanent residents in South Africa. Neither believes that they will ever return to live in Germany again, although their daughter immigrated back to Germany with her own family three years ago.

**Tanja Konighofer:** Immigrated to South Africa from Austria in 1983 with her parents. She was four years old. Although her parents are permanent residents in South Africa, Tanja has dual citizenship.

### The South Africans:

#### First Generation:

**Hubertus von Moltke:** 51 years old. The son of Jochen and Monika von Moltke. Hubertus has dual German and South African citizenship. He moved to Germany when he was 18 in 1972, but returned to South Africa three years later.



**Caroline Bauthier:** 42 years old. Caroline has dual German and South African citizenship through her German mother. She has lived in South Africa for her entire life.

**Angelika von Mellenthin:** 40 years old. Both of Angelika's parents immigrated to South Africa from Germany, and she lived with her mother in Germany from between the ages of 9 and 15. When she turned 15 she moved back to South Africa to live with her father. She has dual citizenship.

**Andrea Bull:** 41 years old. The daughter of Annelise Rotthaus. Andrea has dual citizenship. She has never lived in Germany.

**Brigitta Faltermeier:** 31 years old. The daughter of Renate Faltameier. Brigitta has dual citizenship. She has never lived in Germany.

**Natalie Sharp:** 20 years old. Natalie has dual Austrian-South African citizenship through her Austrian born mother. She lived in Austria for one year after she finished High School and then returned to South Africa.

#### Second Generation:

**Saskia von Moltke:** 20 years old. The daughter of Hubertus von Moltke. Saskia has dual citizenship. She has never been to Germany.

**Samantha Bull:** 9 years old. Samantha is the daughter of Andrea Bull. She has dual citizenship and attended the *Deutsche Schule Kindergarten* for two years before moving to an English school.

#### *Visual Introduction of the Characters:*

Each character is essentially introduced in their own words, with captions detailing their names and when they immigrated to South Africa if they are immigrants. The immigrants are introduced first, followed by the South Africans. The third section of the film is then a visual interaction between the various opinions of all the interviewees.

#### *The Final Product:*

Opening Credits

Opening sequence: An introduction of white settlers to South Africa leading up to the present day phenomenon of the 'white African'. The sequence includes seven textual clips with related images to the 'Blue Danube' by Strauss. With the introduction of the idea of the 'white African' the music shifts from European classical music to the more 'Africanised' music of Johnny Clegg. Duration of sequence: 1 minute 30 seconds.

The next sequence begins with Handel's Opus 6. It is an introduction of the immigrants.

Each sequence change is introduced through a textual caption. Following this introduction each immigrant tells of when they immigrated to South Africa and why.

They are introduced in sequential order, beginning with the interviewees who immigrated in the 1950s, followed by those who arrived in the 1960s, in 1970 and in 1983. The sequence is also anecdotal. Duration of sequence: 8 minutes.

The following sequence is once again introduced through a textual caption asking if an immigrant can become South African, followed by the various personal responses of the immigrants. Duration of sequence: 2 minutes 30 seconds.

The South Africans are introduced in the next sequence. As in the introduction of the immigrants, this is accompanied by music; however instead of classical music I have once again used a Johnny Clegg track. Duration of sequence: 40 seconds.

The next sequence combines the immigrants and the South African born interviewees in answering whether they feel more South African or German and why. Duration of sequence: 5 minutes 30 seconds.

The previous sequence prepares all of the interviewees for this final sequence of whether or not they consider themselves to be 'white Africans'. This is the longest sequence in the film and the culmination of the introductions of both groups and how they relate to South Africa. Duration of sequence: 11 minutes 30 seconds

The concluding sequence of the film is the first and last time that the filmmaker/ interviewer is seen in front of the camera. In this brief conclusion to the documentary the

filmmaker offers her views on the subject, ending the film on a more personal note than a textual clip would do, allowing the audience to see that she too is a 'white' African.

Duration of sequence: 1 minute 20 seconds

Closing credits.

Duration of Documentary: 30 minutes

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Tape Two: Inge Meredith; Monika von Moltke.

Tape Three: Monika von Moltke; Annelise Rotthaus; Andrea Bull.

Tape Four: Tanja Konighofer; Jochen von Moltke.

Tape Five: Gisela Krause; Renate Faltermeier; Brigitta Faltermeier.

Tape Six: Saskia von Moltke; Natalie Sharp; Hubertus von Moltke.

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