

NEWS YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW

# noseweek

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ISSUE 238 AUGUST 2019

**Cape Town's fish  
full of drugs  
and poisons**

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*Under spotlight:*  
**Speculator's  
mega-profits on  
land deals with  
Tshwane metro**

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*Why Lebashe  
has bought  
Tiso Blackstar's  
media jewels*

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*Hidden scandal:*

**Peter Gray, Investec's frontman stole R80m,  
lied under oath, has got off scot-free... so far**





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# noseweek

ISSUE 238 • AUGUST 2019



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# Letters

Letters to the editor should be sent by email to [editor@noseweek.co.za](mailto:editor@noseweek.co.za)

## To Helen gone

A LOVELY THOUGHT-PROVOKING INTERVIEW with Helen Zille (*nose237*). Many of us are scared of the path South Africa has taken and is continuing to take. So glad to have a magazine not scared of being politically incorrect, by publishing an article which shows her to be a strong leader.

**Liza May Collins**  
Johannesburg

## Van Loggerenberg's rant

I PREFER TO USE MY REAL NAME AS I DON'T have anything to hide. After all these years as a tax practitioner and accountant I don't really care if SARS is aware of my views or not.

First of all, Mr Johann van Loggerenberg is portrayed as a brilliant man. Maybe somebody more brilliant needs to show him how to sign even an email. I hope your reference to him (in *nose237*) as a "gentleman" was purely to confirm that he's not a female (he's clearly no gentleman). At one point the *Sunday Times* had the names of some senior officials plastered over the first page of the newspaper. I had unfortunate dealings with some of these guys. Does his denial now imply that I'm not truthful?

While SARS persists in treating friends differently than the rest of us, I will always question anything they do. Every time a new commissioner gets appointed, a new system gets installed or an old one gets an upgrade, we receive the good news that "Now things will change". Dream on...

Even my submission to the Nugent Commission was totally ignored. Surely the mere fact that I'm prepared to stand by my statements must mean something to somebody?

Believe me if I inform you, dear readers, that SARS was captured a long time ago. And the results are even more devastating than one may believe.

The fact that the people in power wrote the revenue laws, which includes the tax administration legislation, in such a manner that no normal person can touch them, is cause for even more damage.

**Corrie Cloete**  
by email

## Passing through

RE: MR BLOCH LEAVING OUR "SHITHOLE OF A country" (*Letters, nose236*). I presume that he was just passing through.

**Louis Meneses**  
Knysna

## A simple solution?

HAVING JUST READ THE ARTICLE ABOUT CAPE Town's desalination problem (*nose236*) I couldn't help wonder why an extended intake pipe (say, a kilometre long) could not be used to sort out the problem?

Maybe I have over-simplified the problem but then simple solutions are sometimes the answer, unless of course Cape Town doesn't feel threatened by water shortages and just wants to get out of the contract.

**Roger Chicken**  
Walkerville

*You might just end up right next to the sewage outlet.* – Ed.

## Vitality isn't

I'M NOT SURE IF OVER THE YEARS YOU HAVE written anything about the Vitality programme run by Discovery. If you haven't, please have a look at *Hello Peter*

and the volume of complaints by members, where nothing ever gets sorted out. Over 250 pages! They are a nightmare to deal with, especially when it is down to "computer error".

**Kathy Vadas**  
by email

## Getting legal-wise

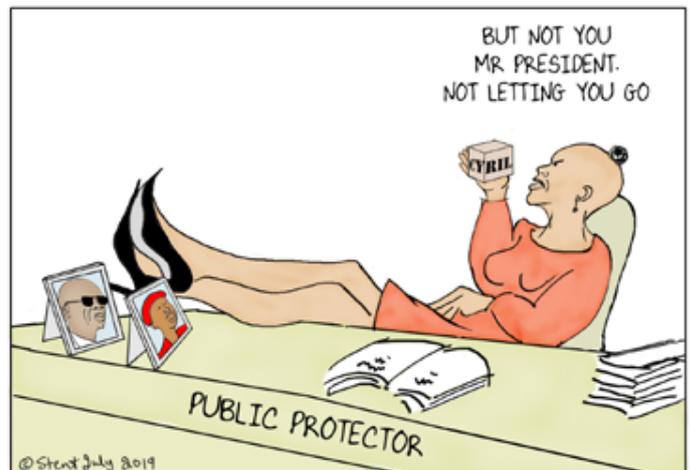
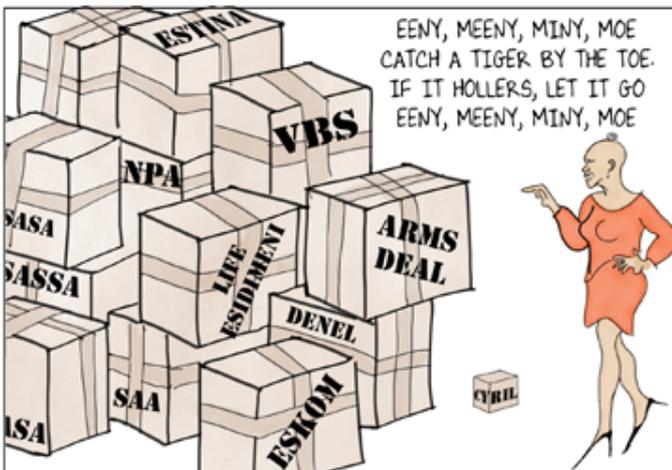
BEING LEGAL-WISE I ASSUME YOU MIGHT BE aware that this year the Legal Practice Council (LPC) started deducting 5% of the interest earned on attorney's client investments. These investments (mainly conveyancing deposits temporarily held in an interest-bearing bank account) are opened in the name of the client and the interest accrued is for the benefit of the client.

For some reason the LPC, with the assistance of the banks, thinks it's okay to take 5% of the interest earned on these investments for themselves each month. I cannot for the life of me understand why no one has commented or objected to this.

Why should Joe Public or anyone else who happens to purchase a property and who is contractually required to put down a deposit, give up 5% of the interest earned on their investment to the LPC?

**Anonymous (I work in the profession)**  
Cape Town

*I have always understood it is rationalised as a form of insurance premium to cover for clients who can claim reimbursement from the LPC for damages they might suffer as a result of their lawyers' recklessly negligent or criminal acts. My guess is, it is also a pretty profitable sideline for the LPC itself.* – Ed.



**Stent**

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# We get by with a little help from our friends...

**L**AST MONTH WE CELEBRATED OUR 26TH anniversary – a milestone we could never have reached without the generous support of our friends and loyal readers. It is to their credit that we could continue doing this serious job for so many years.

Two-and-a-half years have passed since we last ran a fundraising campaign. Your donations then have kept us running all this time, through the election period until today.

But now our kitty is once more exhausted. Help!

I'm often asked: "Are you, too, suffering from a sense of futility? Paralysed into inaction and moaning?" Well, forget that! It's times like these that call for effort and action by everyone.

One of the things you can do is once again make a contribution, large or small, to our fundraising appeal. In this day and age, serious independent news gathering – investigative journalism – is never going to be a profit-making business. Right now, which serious news organisations, worldwide, aren't running around appealing for funding?

So here I am, mournful eyes, hand outstretched.

I trust that scores, perhaps hundreds, of loyal readers will respond – as they did last time – by sending us anything from R100 to R10,000. (Three donors kindly contributed substantially more, bless'em.)

Please do it again – or for the first time if you didn't contribute then. The need is now.

*Noseweek* has built up a substantial reputation for exposing abuses of power by both government and business (and their lawyers and accountants) – naming and shaming often being the only effective way to hold them accountable.

As a result, *Noseweek* has become the go-to publication for their victims. Consequently we are generally way ahead of the media pack in exposing wrongdoing. (Check our online archive!)

We also care about the environment and promote an open debate between all sections of our community.

Currently our attention is focused on the collapse of local government and services. We also hope to be telling our readers a number of things about Steinhoff that other media have missed.

We have long had an online edition, but most of our readers still prefer our print edition for our longer, more reasoned, reports. (Many subscribers choose the online version for quick scanning and searching, and our print edition for more-leisured reading.)

We remain committed and eager to do our bit in saving our country from those determined to ruin and plunder it, by exposing who they are and what they're up to.

Without your support, this important brand and the public service it has provided will have to close up shop – at a time the country can least afford to lose another truly independent news outlet. I'm relying on you.

Don't delay. Send us your contributions, large or small, by EFT.

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Or, even quicker: Call Nicci on 021-6860570 with your credit card details to hand and she'll have your contribution sorted in two minutes.

Should you have a more substantial donation in mind, a special trust has been registered – The Open Media Trust – to fund our bigger, more costly investigations.

The trust has been recognised by the South African Revenue Service as a Public Benefit Organisation, entitling

donors to certain tax benefits. If you would prefer to contribute to the trust, please give me a call.

Time is critical, so please do respond right away!

If you have already made a contribution in response to our email drive, thank you!

Sincerely

**Martin Welz**

Editor

Tel: 021-6860570



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# They lied!

## What Investec and Peter Gray knew and lied about in South Africa's second-biggest corporate fraud on record

**Y**ET AGAIN, WE RETURN TO THE subject: the strategies employed by Investec and its auditors KPMG with the help of Peter Gray to avoid being held accountable for Investec's role in – and as a major beneficiary of – Brett Kebble's theft of shares worth billions from Randgold, a company that Kebble directed.

Most of the stolen share sales were processed by a stock brokerage specially set up for the purpose in 2002 by Kebble and his close associate, ex-Société Générale (SocGen) CEO Peter Gray, in order to prevent these transactions from being scrutinised by outsiders (more below).

The proceeds of the sales of shares stolen from Randgold & Exploration Company (Randgold) were largely channelled through JCI, a company controlled by Kebble, but also through Investec Bank UK and various other illicit channels associated with Kebble.

To protect themselves, Investec and KPMG have jointly contrived to ensure that JCI never produced legally compliant audited annual accounts, as these would have to reflect a massive contingent liability to Randgold, and expose Investec and its appointed directors to huge damages claims, liquidation and possible criminal prosecution.



Peter Gray

KPMG have throughout the saga also been the auditors of Investec which, as bankers, had been intimately involved in the affairs of both Kebble and JCI since 1997.

For the years 2006 through to 2012, KPMG racked up auditing and forensic fees from JCI to the tune of R93 million.

Despite an undertaking given by JCI in May 2016 that they would produce audited annual statements for JCI, no compliant audited accounts have been produced since then. None. So what's the apparently insurmountable problem?

By mid-2006 JLMC, forensic auditors appointed by Randgold & Exploration – Kebble's key victim – had produced eight reports in a row, detailing pretty well all that anyone, including KPMG, needed but did not wish to know about Kebble and his henchmen's pillaging of Randgold. The Investec-controlled JCI board did not share this information with their shareholders for another two years. No reference was made to it in the annual accounts endorsed by KPMG, although KPMG was on each occasion careful to note that the accounts did not comply with recognised audit standards.

Randgold, the theft victim, controlled by an Investec-appointed board, only revealed the forensic report for the first time in July 2008.

On 24 September 2018 an inspector appointed by the Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission (CIPC) – the state agency charged with enforcing the provisions of the Companies Act – delivered a damning report dealing with the failure of the directors of JCI, a public company, to file the annual audited accounts required by law – since 2010. The inspector delivered a final ultimatum to JCI and its directors to deliver these accounts within six weeks, or face a fine of up to R1 million.

After securing various delays with promises to deliver these accounts if given some extra time, JCI's directors

finally undertook to produce compliant audited annual financial statements for the years 2013 to 2016 by 31 May 2019, and the years 2017 and 2018 by 30 June 2019.

They reneged on both, this time claiming that, despite their best efforts, it was impossible to meet the auditors' requirements. They declared they were unable to establish and verify anything about the company's affairs in the years when Kebble had perpetrated his spectacular frauds. And that this made it impossible for them to produce verifiable accounts, since the starting balances for each subsequent year were inevitably affected by the uncertain closing balances produced in the Kebble years.

In the High Court in Pretoria case no: 4976/19, Investec's appointed JCI CEO, Peter Gray, declared under oath that he and the other directors knew nothing about what had happened at JCI in the Kebble era. (Curiously, KPMG refused to file a supporting affidavit.)

Gray's plea of ignorance and innocence is most improbable, given the fact that Gray was a close Kebble confidant for many years and CEO of the stock-brokerage, set up by Kebble to handle his crooked share and forex dealings. In fact, it amounts to perjury.

He was hands-on CEO of T-Sec, the brokerage that handled the sales of the most shares stolen from Randgold and was in constant contact with Kebble. (More about that anon.)

We at *Noseweek* have asked ourselves: Why would Investec have wanted to appoint Peter Gray to their newly constituted JCI board, unless they saw him as having a shared interest in ensuring that their dealings with Kebble never got to court?

The main issue driving Kebble to the wholesale theft of shares that were then worth close on R2 billion from Randgold, another company that he controlled, was the predicament that Investec and two partner banks had got him into, by creating a so-called

Western Areas hedge book to secure a hurriedly required cash injection. (See *nose181*: “How Investec scammed US-listed company” for an explanation of how the hedge book scheme worked.)

Bossie Boshoff a senior T-Sec employee and broker of 30-years’ experience relates in a statement to the police how, on one of Peter Gray’s regular visits to the dealing room at T-Sec (JCI/Kebble’s brokerage) in 2002, he had told Gray how shocked he was by what he had found on studying the hedge book deal: “I told him that it was my view that the three banks that set up the ‘syndicated’ gold hedge, had acted extremely recklessly and acted only in their own interest. This was the worst advice/action I had ever seen.”

Kebble was also CEO of Western Areas. JCI was a major shareholder, as was asset manager Allan Gray. Western Areas’ only asset was a 50% interest in South Deep, the ultra-deep gold mine then already known as the financial “black hole” of the gold mining industry because of its constant demand for additional capital – and failure to meet promised production estimates, year after year.

Most of the shares subsequently stolen from Randgold by Kebble were sold to fund, through JCI, Western Areas’ huge continuing losses on that hedge book created by Investec and its banker partners.

But what was to JCI and Western Areas’ serious disadvantage was hugely advantageous to the banks. They shamelessly creamed billions off their end of the deal, for as long as Kebble could keep it afloat.

Shortly before his death on 27 September 2005, Investec had leveraged a panic-stricken Brett Kebble into signing over to the bank most of JCI’s assets and the right to appoint all the directors of all three major companies he had controlled: JCI, Randgold and Western Areas, as a precondition to their granting JCI an emergency (and very costly) loan.

In this way Investec took control of the boards of companies in which it owned no shares and, in the case of Randgold, had had no prior business relationship. This entailed numerous obviously outrageous conflicts of interest. Investec’s long-standing auditors KPMG went along with the scheme, accepting appointment as auditors of both JCI (the thief) and Randgold (the theft victim). They were already audi-

tors of Western Areas, one of the major beneficiaries of the frauds. KPMG had of course been Investec’s auditors since the 1980s. (KPMG would later also accept appointment as forensic investigators for both JCI and the Scorpions investigating the Kebble frauds.)

**‘Peter said he had  
got to know very  
dangerous people  
through Brett..!’**

Particularly distressing to Randgold’s minority shareholders was that in 2010 Investec contrived a settlement deal between JCI and Randgold (The bank controlled both sides of the deal, remember.)

The supposed settlement deal purported to settle, inter alia, the R19bn damages claim that Randgold had against JCI resulting from the theft by JCI/Kebble of Randgold shares. In terms of the deal, JCI paid Randgold just R600 million and handed over 1.5 billion JCI shares.

The bundles of JCI shares were claimed in a JCI company circular to have a net asset value (NAV) of 19.68 cents per share and thus were worth R300m. (By implication the directors and their auditors had established enough about JCI’s affairs to be able to arrive at the net asset value of the company.)

The following year, no properly audited accounts were produced for JCI, but in a statement issued to shareholders it was said those shares by then had a NAV of only 5.38 cents per share. By July 2014 the NAV was down to 0.0087 cents per share – and still no annual audited accounts had been produced.

In effect, Investec had pulled off yet another fraud on Randgold’s shareholders.

So much, for now, about Investec’s involvement. What about JCI CEO Peter Gray’s knowledge of, and involvement in Kebble’s affairs prior to the latter’s death in September 2005?

Early in 2002 Bossau Boshoff received a call from his friend Peter Gray, then on a visit to Europe. At the time Boshoff was Head of Corporate Sales, Foreign Exchange at Société Générale in Johannesburg. Gray was a senior advisor to SocGen, his contract as CEO of the bank having come to an end.

Gray wanted to know whether Boshoff would join him at a stock brokerage, where he would be required to set up an international treasury. Gray confided that he was in Europe working on a deal to set up such an operation for a major mining house.



**Brett Kebble and his father Roger**

What it was all about would emerge when Gray got back to Johannesburg. The “major mining house” was Brett Kebble’s JCI. It would provide the financing to secure control of stock-brokerage Tradek (it later became T-Sec) to handle the business generated by Kebble’s mining interests that included JCI, Randgold and Western Areas.

Boshoff was surprised to hear this, as he knew that Kebble’s finances were in a sorry state. Kebble’s private company, BNC Investments, was already in default of millions of rands owed to SocGen, and was constantly the subject of discussion at the bank’s weekly management meetings.

Gray told him not to worry as Kebble had an art collection worth R100 million and, more significantly for our story, he also had “plans and arrangements in place to repay SocGen soon”.

First off, recalled Boshoff, Gray said Kebble needed his own independently controlled brokerage company where he could conduct his trades without the scrutiny of third parties. Its international treasury department would act as agent for JCI and would trade in the name of JCI/Western Areas.

Later in his statement, Boshoff reveals: “One day in the first half of 2003, Peter (Gray) came to me in the dealing room and informed me that he was employed on a contract basis by JCI for a couple of years. He told me that they are working on plans and that he will spend a lot of his time going down to Cape Town to meet with Brett Kebble. Peter instructed me not to reveal this information to anyone.”

Still further on he declares: “Peter (Gray) arranged with JCI for the

release of all the shares that had to be sold. The relevant Randgold Resources shares were handed to T-Sec and one of its employees took them overseas... to be used as collateral before each transaction was done.”

Some time in 2006, Boshoff recalled, another T-Sec executive, Leonard Steenkamp informed him that he had been interviewed by forensic investigators.

## Gray revealed himself a true Kebble disciple: he stole a final R80m from Randgold

“He (Leonard) said Peter had a shredding machine in his office and that no, or very few, documents were available at T-Sec with his signature on them.

“I informed him that Peter went to meetings at JCI on a daily basis and that he always told us ‘I am always busy looking for money for Brett Kebble.’”

Finally Boshoff states that when his marriage broke up in 2004, he had told Peter about a third party involved. “He told me I must give him this third party’s address. He said he had got to

know very dangerous people through Brett. All they needed was the address. They would follow him and he wouldn’t even be aware of it. They would then ‘sort him out’.

“I told Peter he must forget about that.”

When, in 2006, SocGen demanded payment by JCI of an R80m outstanding debt, Peter Gray revealed himself as a true Kebble disciple. Like Kebble, he was now CEO of both Randgold and JCI. Without informing his fellow directors or shareholders, he stole (“misappropriated”) a final R80m from Randgold to settle JCI’s debt and save JCI from the risk of liquidation and the exposure so dreaded by Investec.

This was only discovered by Randgold’s independent directors in June 2008, when they received confidential advice from their attorneys Webber Wentzel of the damages claims they could validly issue summons for against the brokers T-Sec – and against their own CEO, Gray!

Adding fat to the fire, they learned soon afterwards that this confidential opinion had been leaked to T-Sec, presumably by Gray, warning them in advance of what was to come.

Outraged Randgold board members called a directors meeting on 25 June to vote on a resolution calling on Gray to resign from the board. Three of the five directors who attended voted for Gray to resign. One of those who opposed the resolution was the chairman, Dave Nurek (who happens to be Investec’s Global Head: Legal Risk). Nurek felt so strongly about the matter that he said he would be resigning – which he did on 9 July. Gray was forced to resign as CEO two days later. (He remains CEO of JCI.)

Gray’s misdeed only became public knowledge a month later when summons was issued in August by Randgold against T-Sec for R640m for share sales proceeds paid to third parties, and against Gray for the stolen R80m.

Randgold’s claim against T-Sec was settled for just R14m, and in a later supplementary settlement deal, the claim against Gray was waived as a condition of the overall settlement. He is, it appears, royal game.

That, dear reader, is the man Investec chose to be the CEO of both JCI and Randgold. You judge what he is likely to have known, and why he found such favour with Investec. – **Martin Welz** ■

## The directors Investec appointed

**A**FTER THE KEBBLE ERA ENDED, DURING the third quarter of 2005, JCI (the thief) and Randgold (the victim) had four common directors:

- Investec’s David Nurek, chairman of both;
- Peter Gray, former CEO of T-Sec, Kebble’s money-laundering stock-broker, the common CEO;
- Chris Lamprecht, Kebble’s finance man, the common financial director; and
- Chris Nissen, a non-executive

director of both entities.

Randgold had one more director, Brenda Madumise. With the exception of Nurek, all Randgold’s initial post-Kebble directors were tainted by having in the past participated in frauds on Randgold. JCI had two further directors, both also directors of Investec: Peter Thomas and Donn Jowell.

Crucially, a few months later, on 17 November 2005, Investec’s Nurek joined the board of Western Areas. ■

# Cape Town's waste ends up in its fish

Scientists find that fish caught by small scale commercial fishers in Kalk Bay are contaminated.

**T**HE OCEAN AROUND CAPE TOWN IS so polluted that pharmaceutical and industrial chemical compounds are accumulating in the flesh of fish caught off the coast.

Scientists from the University of the Western Cape's chemistry department have found that fish caught by small scale commercial fishers in Kalk Bay are contaminated with antibiotics, painkillers, antiretrovirals, disinfectants, and industrial chemicals.

Species tested include snoek, bonita, hottentot (Cape bream), and panga, obtained from random commercial catches in late 2017.

Senior Professor Leslie Petrik at the University of Western Cape's chemistry department and Cecilia Ojemaye tested for 15 different chemical compounds in the fish fillets, gills, liver, and intestines. These include the analgesic/anti-inflammatories Diclofenac and Acetaminophen, the antiepileptic drug Carbamazepine, the antibiotic Sulfamethoxazole, the disinfectant Triclosan, as well as industrial chemicals found in pesticides, flame retardants and personal care products.

"Overall, diclofenac had the highest concentration out of all the pharmaceutical compounds," notes the report, while the antibiotic Sulfamethoxazole was detected in at least one part of all the fish. The industrial chemicals, or perfluoroalkyl compounds all "showed a high risk, both acute and chronic, in the fillet parts of the fish which is the part humans consume", state Petrik and Ojemaye.

The presence of pharmaceutical compounds in fish is due to untreated or poorly treated sewage flowing into our ocean. This is because drugs are not wholly metabolised in the body.

Stormwater is a probable source of pesticide and industrial chemical pollution. These chemical compounds accumulate, not only in fish but also in our

bodies, and in other marine organisms.

Cape Town pumps about 37 million litres of sewage out to sea per day, from marine outfalls in Green Point, Camps Bay, and Hout Bay. The only treatment at these pump stations – confirmed by city authorities – is that the raw sewage is pumped through a grid to remove solids such as tampons and grit. The sewage pumped out at Green Point includes waste from the Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital, as well as all medical and light industrial facilities between Salt River and Bantry Bay.

While there are no marine outfalls in False Bay, both the Strandfontein and Zandvliet wastewater treatment works discharge into the bay. The treated water is supposed to meet minimum standards for the presence of microbial bacteria such as E.coli and Enterococcus.

Historically, coastal water quality tests – the results of which used to be presented, along with inland water quality data, at sub-council meetings twice a year until 2013 – taken near these outlets sometimes failed the minimum guidelines. This indicates these sewage works have not always treated the effluent to the necessary standards, or that stormwater containing high levels of sewage is running out to sea.

The city has said that no testing or treatment for chemical compounds such as those indicated in Ojemaye and Petrik's study, is undertaken.

Water channelled from roads and gutters into stormwater drains, which then flow either directly to the sea, or into streams and rivers which discharge to the ocean, are also heavily polluted.

The city's water and waste services department, headed by Mayco member Xanthea Limberg, has regularly blamed stormwater run-off

following periods of rainfall, rather than discharge from marine outfalls and sewage treatment works, when coastal water quality tests failed minimum guidelines. This is despite the national Department of Environmental Affairs regulations that stormwater pollution must be treated at the source.

The most recent sewage spill into the Zandvlei Estuary at Muizenberg, was reported by Zandvlei reserve manager Kyran Wright to have occurred on May 9, resulting in the entire water body being closed for recreational purposes on 15 May until 31. A sewage spill into the Sand River canal, which flows into Zandvlei, was also reported on April 24. These are but the latest reported incidents of sewage pollution into the estuary – a nursery for fish in False Bay.

It is not clear how often coastal water quality at Muizenberg, Fish Hoek, Strandfontein and other local testing sites fail the minimum guidelines for the presence of indicator organisms.

Repeated requests by *GroundUp* to the city over the past 18 months to provide the results of the inland and coastal water-quality tests conducted on a monthly and twice-weekly basis respectively have yielded no results.

Limberg has said the results of the city's water quality monitoring "are presented at various public opportunities such as catchment management meetings, Protected Area Advisory Committees and, monthly, to the water and sanitation department director".

But Zandvlei Trust chairperson Peter Kruger, who is present at such meetings, said no water quality reports were received by the Trust.

Fish Hoek Valley Ratepayers and Residents Association received water quality data from the city – only after submitting a Public Access to Information Act request, and signing a non-disclosure agreement. Thus the information cannot be shared.

– by Steve Kretzmann, *GroundUp* ■





# Tshwane deals to die for

**Metro under the microscope for paying huge amounts for land in transactions that generate massive profits for speculators**

**T**HE MONTHS BEFORE THE 2016 LOCAL ELECTION WERE BUSY times for the City of Tshwane Metro Municipality. It acquired huge swathes of land that saw a few people smiling all the way to the bank. One lucky guy pocketed more than R94 million.

The property deals were all done back-to-back, meaning there were original owners as well as an intermediate owner or middleman who had only acquired the land for a few minutes on paper before transferring it at a much higher price to a third party; the City of Tshwane. The metro used taxpayers' money to finance the sequence of deals right from the start.

The land that was purchased in one of the deals consisted of 20 portions of the farms Strydfontein 306 and 307 on the north-western outskirts of the capital, near the Rosslyn Hub industrial development. Deed searches show that Tshwane bought the 20 agriculture smallholdings, covering 226 hectares on 16 March 2016 for around R211m. The properties were transferred and registered into the metro's name on various dates later that year.

Significantly, on registration, each of the 20 title deeds received consecutive deed numbers for Proco Management (Pty) Ltd (the owner and seller) and Tshwane (the buyer and new owner). This indicates that the registration into Tshwane's name happened directly after the property was registered into Proco's name. For example, portion 6 of Strydfontein 307 was registered to Proco with deed number T63281/2016 and to Tshwane with deed number T63282/2016 on 15 August 2016. Another example is

portion 37 of Strydfontein 306, which was registered with deed number T56393/2016 to Proco and to Tshwane with deed number T56394/2016 on 21 July 2016. And so it went on: all 20 registrations followed the same pattern at the Deeds Office in Pretoria.

Pretoria lawyer, Hannelie van Tonder of Fuchs Roux Inc, told *Noseweek* she had been the conveyancing attorney for the back-to-back deals. Upon receipt of the money from Tshwane Metro's lawyers, Kunene Ramapala Inc, Van Tonder paid out the original owners as well as the intermediate owner, Proco. She also paid out Nungu Trading 691(Pty) Ltd who was Proco's silent partner.

Van Tonder assured *Noseweek* that the original owners had known all along they were part of back-to-back deals, which are apparently legal and are transacted quite often.

The mind-boggling question is: why did Tshwane willingly pay R94m more to Proco than Proco had paid the original owners? Why not buy directly from them? It appears this was all part of a plan that began to take shape long before the back-to-back registrations occurred in 2016.

Some years ago Nungu Trading (Pty) Ltd became interested in developing parts of Strydfontein as a future megacity. During a recent conference call with attorney Van Tonder and Nungu's sole director Izak de Villiers, she told *Noseweek* that the owners of the smallholdings had signed so-called land-availability agreements with Nungu. These agreements enabled Nungu to go ahead and obtain the necessary authorisations to support its application to establish a town on part of the Strydfontein smallholdings. If

Nungu later decided to buy the smallholdings, she said, the agreements would automatically become Nungu's offers-to-purchase. But Nungu was nowhere to be seen when those properties reached the Deeds Office. The buyer was suddenly a new player, Proco Management, which had never been part of the negotiations with the original owners.

*Noseweek* was able to track down one of the original owners, Louise Honiball, who has since emigrated and now lives in Australia. She signed a land availability agreement with Nungu's representative at the end of May 2015. It was valid for six months and stated that the developer was obliged to obtain approval from the Department of Human Settlements for their housing project. It did not specify whether this was the national, provincial or municipal Department of Human Settlements.

Six weeks later Honiball received an email informing her and the other owners who were ready to sell that the proposed Mamapo development had been submitted to the national Housing Development Agency. The correspondence came from Pieter Smith who told *Noseweek* recently that he had worked for Nungu at the time. Smith sent another email in October 2015 telling the owners that the biggest challenge for the planned megacity was to obtain external municipal and other services before they could start developing the town.

All the owners held on for another five months, and on 23 March 2016 Smith informed them that Tshwane council had approved the megacity development and the funds. But he mentioned that the deal was "sensitive" and the owners should be patient until the guarantees were received.

It seems however that the sensitivity factor was soon discarded because the title deeds of all 20 smallholdings show that Tshwane purchased them on 16 March 2016, a week

before Smith's email. According to the title deed, Proco bought Honiball's property for R4.165m and sold it to Tshwane in a back-to-back transaction for R6,479,190m. But Honiball is adamant that she first heard of the existence of Proco when *Noseweek* recently contacted her in Australia. She also did not know that the price had increased by more than R2m when her land was sold to Tshwane Metro.

first with Tshwane. He approached Proco after its owner, Tshepo Dibe, told him he was able to act as a go-between with Tshwane.

*Noseweek* has established that Dibe is a previous chairman of the Gauteng branch of the Black Management Forum and a member of the Black Business Council of South Africa. Apart from Proco, which was registered in 2013, Dibe is the director of another 11 private companies. He also seems to have had some connection with National Treasury because he used a Treasury email address in 2014. National Treasury's communications officer Jabulane Mulambo was unable to confirm whether Dibe previously worked there and said his name was currently not in its database.

Dibe told *Noseweek* that the Strydfontein deal was a joint venture between Proco and Nungu and that he completed the negotiations with Tshwane because his company was BEE and VAT-compliant and had tax clearance. It was therefore agreed between him and De Villiers that Proco would do the final transactions. "But it was always our team together," he said.

He explained the R94m difference in price as follows: "Now, we could have made a profit of R10, we could have made a profit of R7, we could have made R1,000 but at the end of the day, I mean, you negotiate what the need is until... once the value is clear. As such I don't think there should be any problem."

But just how much of Strydfontein was indeed an established township that supposedly added value to the individual properties and made Tshwane pay exorbitant prices for the land? And just how was the added value calculated?

De Villiers admitted that out of the 20 smallholdings sold to Tshwane, only five, consisting of 48ha, formed part of the application to establish a township. Tshwane's Planning and Development department approved an application back in 2010 but by 2016 the proposed town was still not proclaimed in the Government Gazette.



**national treasury**

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Ref: 43/12/5/1

Mr J. Ngobeni  
City Manager  
Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality  
P O Box 440  
PRETORIA  
0001

Dear Mr Ngobeni

**ACQUISITION OF LAND – REMAINING PORTION 2 OF THE FARM STERKWATER 106-JR.**

The Office of the Chief Procurement Officer received allegations that the municipality intends acquiring a remaining portion 2 of the farm Sterkwater 106 – JR at an inflated price.

There is a big difference between internal and external valuations. Internal valuation indicates that the land is worth R25 million whereas external valuation indicates that the land is worth R135 million. The municipality agreed to pay R100 million for this property.

In order to verify if treasury norms and standards were complied with during the acquisition process, the municipality is requested to submit the following:

- Internal and external valuation reports;
- Report on municipal rates and taxes or municipal service charges ;
- Details of previous owners; and
- Minutes of meetings held to discuss the acquisition.

These documents (and any other documents that may be required and be requested as we conduct the verification) will assist National Treasury to fulfill its responsibilities.

Kindly put the acquisition process on halt until the verification is completed. It will be appreciated if you could submit the required documents to National Treasury by not later than the end of business on 15 December 2014.

Kind regards,

KENNETH BROWN  
CHIEF PROCUREMENT OFFICER  
DATE: 9/12/2014.

CC: NHLAHLA NENE  
MINISTER OF FINANCE

KGOSIENTSO RAMOKGOPA  
EXECUTIVE MAYOR

Tshwane paid Proco around R211m for the 20 portions of Strydfontein, while Proco paid the original owners around R117m. De Villiers said this was because Nungu had established a town on the land, which added value to the properties and the company also spent about R3m on town planning in an effort to obtain the necessary authorisations. He admitted that the original owners were not told about the price differences.

According to De Villiers Nungu and Proco have completed previous transactions together, although this was their

**MOKETE RAKGOGO**, FOUNDER AND CEO of Linked Thoughts Consulting, told disability magazine *Rise 'n Shine* how the Amavulandlela Funding Scheme for entrepreneurs with disability had helped him.

Rakgogo said that, in 2015 when his firm, Linked Thoughts, needed funding to conclude a construction project, he applied to Amavulandlela and his company received a R5m loan.

He told *Rise 'n Shine* that he was destined to become an entrepreneur, as he started buying and selling goods from an early age.

Rakgogo has a B.Com and an Honours degree in Accounting. He worked for PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as an accountant for two years and later joined Safcon Housing Solutions as the executive finance manager.

Linked Thoughts Consulting is a construction company which offers a range of services including building RDP houses and schools, office renovations and civil works. ■



**Mokete Michael Rakgogo**

This is confirmed in a report compiled for Tshwane's Mayoral Committee by Makgorometje Augustine Makgata, the metro's head of Planning and Development. It outlined the need for the purchase and gave a highly inflated breakdown of the prices to be offered for each of the Strydfontein smallholdings. The report also referred to the "comprehensive valuations per property" that had been finalised and attached to the report.

The truth is that Tshwane's own internal valuers were blatantly bypassed even though it is their job to specifically value municipal property acquisitions. Makgata told *Noseweek* that an external company had done the valuations. But despite numerous requests, he was unable to supply these "comprehensive valuations" mentioned in his report. If an external company did indeed value the land, they valued it at almost double its worth according to experts.

In the Makgata report Tshwane's Chief Financial Officer recommended that the city manager negotiate and sign the offers-to-purchase the properties with Strydfontein's owner and partner, incorrectly stated as Nungu Trading and Proco Management. No mention was made that the land actually belonged to private individuals or that Tshwane would fund the 20 back-to-back deals.

The head of Tshwane Metro's Housing and Human Settlements department supported the acquisition provided that bulk infrastructure was made available by the Water and Sanitation Department, which did not give its recommendations or comments in the report.

Without raising any concerns, the mayoral committee rubber-stamped the proposed acquisition of the portions of the Strydfontein farms on 20 January 2016. The committee also approved a second acquisition, the remainder of portion 164 of the Farm Klipfontein 268, which was recommended in the same Makgata report. The deal was almost a mirror-image of the Sterkfontein back-to-back registrations, just with different players.

In his report Makgata referred to the 118ha pocket of farmland as Soshanguve Extention 20 – which was factually wrong because Klipfontein is, even today, still farmland and as far as *Noseweek* was able to ascertain, has not been reserved



**Amolemo Mothoagae**



**Makgorometje Augustine Makgata**

to establish a township. Closer inspection also shows that almost a third of the property consists of wetlands that cannot be developed.

Golden Tau Developments (Pty) Ltd was stated as the owner of Klipfontein, which was in line with the historical information of ownership on the title deed. However, on registration in July 2016, there was suddenly a new owner, Linked Thoughts Consulting CC. On the title deed it looks as though yet another quick, back-to-back deal was done, as indicated by the consecutive title deed numbers, T43143/2016 and T43144/2016.

Tshwane bought the farm for R85.5m from Linked Thoughts Consulting, which then paid the original owner, Golden Tau Developments, just over R53m, making a profit of more than R32m in just a few minutes without having laid out a cent. Needless to say the source of the profit was taxpayers' money.

*Noseweek's* investigation revealed that Golden Tau Developments was in liquidation at the time, and the sale of its assets was handled by liquidator Zaheer Cassim.

According to Linked Thoughts' sole director Mokete Michael Rakgogo (see box on previous page) he paid a R2m deposit to Cassim when he bought Klipfontein and was given three months to find a partner or investor to come on board for his planned development. But it soon became clear that Tshwane would be unable to supply bulk services like water, sewage and other infrastructure in the next three years.

"In the end I lost, because Tshwane did not want to commit," says Rakgogo. "They preferred to buy the land. They got themselves a bargain because that land will be worth billions in years to come." And that brings us back to the question of the missing valuations. While Rakgogo says the price Tshwane paid was not too high for what they got, expert valuers *Noseweek* spoke to agree that Klipfontein is worth about R20m.

Rakgogo negotiated the sale with Tshwane's then head of Housing, Amolemo Mothoagae, who certified the invoice for payment on 31 May 2016. She has since left Tshwane to become the executive director of Johannesburg's Development Planning department.

Tracked down attending a conference in Cape Town, Mothoagae said it would be inappropriate for her to

comment since she no longer worked for Tshwane. What she did do, however, was to immediately contact Rakgogo and various Tshwane officials to tell them that we were on to the story.

Since 2016 Rakgogo has continued to buy up farmland in Tshwane, despite knowing that the metro will be unable to supply bulk services for town development. In both his private capacity and through Linked Thoughts he owns 12 properties worth more than R22m and none are bonded.

Zaheer Cassim did not respond to several phone calls or questions sent to him via email.

Months before Tshwane purchased the portions of Strydfontein and Klipfontein, national Treasury's then chief procurement officer Kenneth Brown sent a letter to Jason Ngobeni, Tshwane's city manager at the time. Dated 9 December 2014, Brown said his office had received allegations that the municipality intended to acquire parts of the farm Sterkwater 106 at an inflated price.

The letter referred to the big difference between the internal and external valuations. "Internal valuation indicates that the land is worth R25m whereas external valuation indicates that the land is worth R135m. The municipality agreed to pay R100m for this property," he wrote.

The then Minister of Finance, Nhlanhla Nene was copied in the letter and Tshwane was requested to submit the valuations, the municipal rates and



**Tshepo Dibe**

tax that had been paid as well as the minutes of the meetings held to discuss the acquisition. Tshwane submitted the documents and its internal valuation showed that the land was indeed valued at 25m. The proposed acquisition was then cancelled.

Rakgogo's last-minute response, after he was told by Mothoagae, who signed off on the deal, that *Noseweek* was asking questions: "Please note that I'm prepared and willing to buy this land back; this land is gold I can grab at any moment, given the opportunity.

"Please talk to the City Manager and the Mayor to sell this land back to me. For the record, please note that I will be making a formal offer to the City between today and tomorrow."

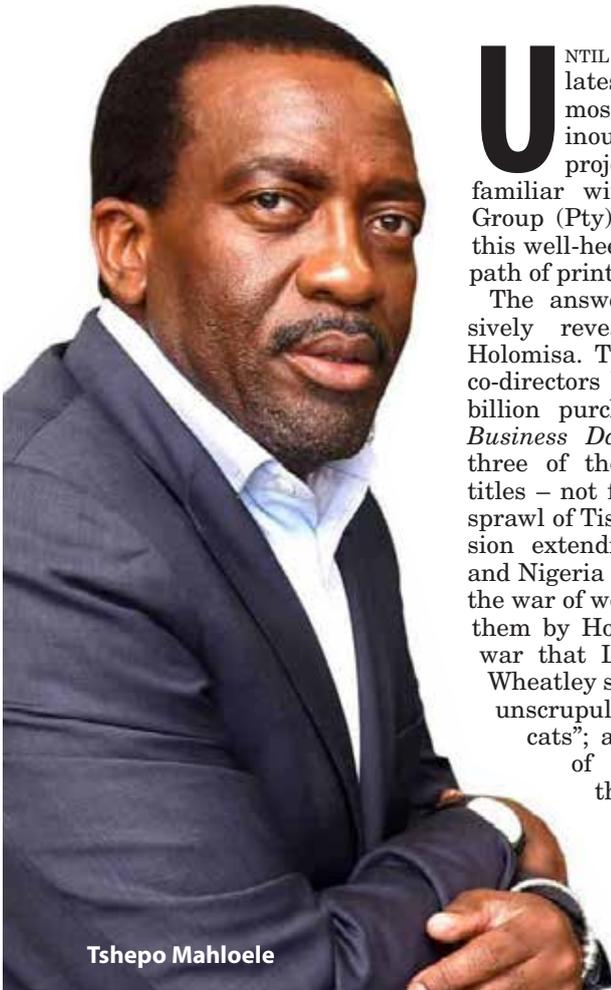
– Susan Puren ■



**Gus Ferguson**

# Le Big Bash

Why Tshepo Mahloele's Lebashe has bought Tiso Blackstar's media jewels



Tshepo Mahloele

**U**NTIL IT BECAME SOUTH AFRICA'S latest media mogul in June, most people outside the fuliginous world of infrastructure project funding weren't too familiar with Lebashe Investment Group (Pty). So what has propelled this well-heeled "unknown" down the path of print?

The answer, *Noseweek* can exclusively reveal, is General Bantu Holomisa. Tshepo Mahloele and his co-directors believe that their R1.05-billion purchase of *Sunday Times*, *Business Day* and *Financial Mail*, three of the country's most iconic titles – not forgetting the rest of the sprawl of Tiso Blackstar's media division extending into Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria – is their best shot to kill the war of words being waged against them by Holomisa and his UDM. A war that Lebashe director Warren Wheatley says "depicts us as greedy, unscrupulous and uncaring fat cats"; a never-ending campaign of "unfounded allegations" that, he claims, has caused incalculable damage to their reputations in their arena of financial services.

If buying a media empire seems an extreme way of

combating an irritant like Bantu Holomisa, well, after its chairman raised \$1bn (around R15bn) for trans-Africa infrastructure, what's a mere billion rand for a few ailing publications?

Holomisa has been on the warpath. In May and June last year he and his United Democratic Movement dispatched three letters to President Cyril Ramaphosa claiming to unmask the fleecing of the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) by Lebashe and its fund-managing company Harith by "double or triple-dipping into the PIC's funds" in more than a decade's worth of alleged pillaging. The general repeated his charges to the Public Protector.

Thirteen months ago Judge Vivian Tlhabi in the North Gauteng High Court ordered Holomisa to cease and desist from making or repeating his defamatory allegations. But despite this, says Lebashe's Warren Wheatley, "the witch-hunt continues. Holomisa is relentless, he won't stop."

What has particularly upset Lebashe is the space the media has given to what they describe as Holomisa's unsubstantiated accusations, without bothering to check the facts. "We were at the butt end of poor reporting."

Wheatley, who is Lebashe's 40-year-



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old chief investment officer, confirms that it was the Holomisa experience that was the catalyst for his company's June 27 purchase of Tiso Blackstar's demoralised and retrenchment-hit media division. "Our experience definitely played a role in us making the decision to buy, it was a factor," says Wheatley.

Of course, there's a financial angle to it. Any situation, these smart money okes believe, can be turned to a profit. Wheatley explains: "What it made us realise is that the quality of reporting in South Africa has left such a gap that there's money to be made if we can ensure the reintroduction of proper investigative reporting.

"You know, where editors are held to account, where people fact-check, where people read supporting documents, where they take their time and not try to be first to break the story. The reintroduction of quality into this industry we think is of significant value. That's why we like these particular brands: *Sunday Times*, *Business Day*."

Wheatley tells *Noseweek* that negotiations with Tiso Blackstar head Andrew Bonamour started in March. It's no coincidence that it was on March 20 that Holomisa began his testimony to the PIC Commission, naming Lebashe and its chairman Tshepo Mahloele among key players allegedly at the centre of a web of multi-billion-rand self-enrichment and looting from the Public Investment Corporation.

Holomisa struggled to substantiate his charges, admitting they were based on media reports. But for the Lebashe directors, to be hauled before the commission and forced to explain themselves was the final straw.

Lebashe is an extraordinary little company. Very discreet, very shy.

Its chairman, and owner of 27% of its shares, is the extremely wealthy Tshepo Mahloele. His and Lebashe's dosh lies principally in the company's 7% stake in Capitec Bank, which stems from the fortuitous 2007 purchase of 10 million Capitec shares at R30-a-share by a company called Coral Lagoon.

Mahloele was a director of Coral and the R300m BEE Capitec transaction was funded entirely by the state-owned Industrial Development Corporation.

In 2012 the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) bought 5.3 million of Coral's Capitec shares at R156/share. And three years later Mahloele established Lebashe and offered to buy those Capitec shares from the PIC, at R325/share.

By the time all the conditions were met, Capitec's share price had soared to R461, and although the PIC had agreed on the deal at R325/share, it now insisted the sale go through on the higher share price. PIC lent Lebashe R720m to cover the difference, and Investec coughed up R1.7 billion for the rest. All this left the PIC with a profit of more than R1.6bn.

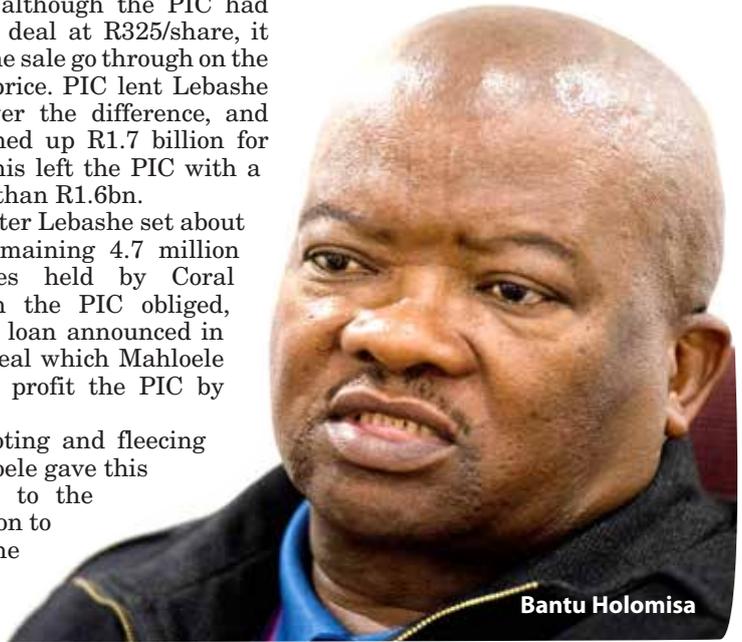
Two years later Lebashe set about buying the remaining 4.7 million Capitec shares held by Coral Lagoon. Again the PIC obliged, with a R1.2bn loan announced in July 2017, a deal which Mahloele estimates will profit the PIC by R700m.

Far from looting and fleecing the PIC, Mahloele gave this history lesson to the PIC Commission to show it was the PIC that profited by their association.

On the day of his April 16 testimony Lebashe held 8.4 million Capitec shares – priced that day at R1,387 – to give a value to the Lebashe stake of R11.6bn. Not exactly chump change, and a gold-plated security when it came to raising a billion to snap up Tiso Blackstar's debt-ridden media empire. There has been much media speculation that the R1.05bn funding for the purchase came from the PIC. In fact, *Noseweek* can reveal, the funder is Absa Capital.

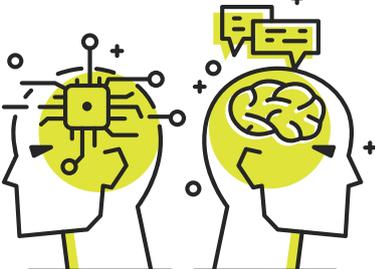
Lebashe's chief investment officer Warren Wheatley confirms we've got that right, although when we spoke, the legal arrangements had yet to be completed. "Absa Capital is doing the bulk of the funding," said Wheatley.

As a private company, Lebashe's finances are not for public consumption. But Wheatley says the media



Bantu Holomisa

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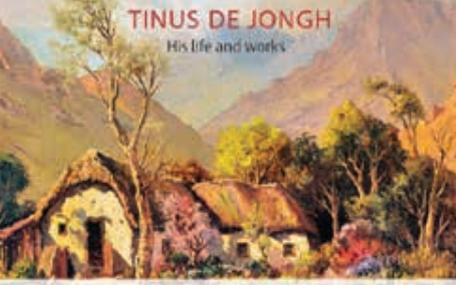
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buy-out will leave them with some R13bn of assets on the balance sheet, and total debt of around R7.7bn.

Although Holomisa was unable to present hard evidence of wrongdoing by Lebashe and its directors to the PIC Commission, the Lebashe/PIC/Government Employees Pension Fund relationships do appear a trifle incestuous.

Lebashe's 52-year-old chairman Tshepo Mahloele, who cut his teeth in corporate finance in a Rand Merchant Bank management programme in the early 1990s, was employed by the Public Investment Corporation (R2 trillion under management) for three years from 2003 as head of corporate finance running the Isibaya Fund.

Isibaya was a sub-fund of the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), managed by the PIC, which allocated funds for the support of infrastructure and BEE investments. Mahloele was tasked to implement the PIC's BEE policy and between 2003 and 2006 concluded R13bn worth of transactions, achieving annual returns of 40% and 45%.

In 2005 he prepared a memo, signed by then PIC head Brian Molefe, requesting a mandate from the GEPF to invest \$250m (R1.65bn) of pensioners' money in a shelf company he had acquired for the PIC called the Pan African Infrastructure Development Fund (PAIDF). This, as Mahloele explained to the PIC Commission, was envisaged as part of the implementation of then President Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance dream to attract private sector investment to fund infrastructure and wealth creation across Africa.

PIC's own mandate at the time precluded it from investing outside South Africa.

Mahloele resigned from the PIC to get his Pan African Fund going. The PIC assisted with a seed capital loan of R17m to raise \$1bn in private sector investments. Mahloele set up a managing company, Harith Fund Managers, to administer investors' funds. The GEPF came to the party with a commitment of \$250m.

Harith's shares were held by the Public Investment Corporation (46%), Old Mutual and Absa (12% each) and a substantial 30% by an entity named HSIST, a trust

enabling Harith's employees – including Mahloele – to hold an equity share in the management company as an incentive on top of their salaries.

To further counter Holomisa's "accusations and speculations" of milking the PIC, Mahloele pointed out to the Commission that although the PIC's exposure was limited to its (repaid) seed capital, it had secured a stake of 46% in Harith for nothing, a stake which by May 2018 had paid the corporation almost R96m in dividends.

"Mr Holomisa's conjectures and suspicions that Harith Fund Managers is underhandedly engaged in illicitly or frivolously investing the funds of the PIC for the benefit of an elite cartel within the management team is entirely nonsensical," he told the Commission.

"If anything, the PIC has greatly

**'The Commission  
must investigate my  
testimony as well  
as the questions  
that I have raised in  
order to verify the  
allegations'**

benefited from its stakes in Harith Fund and [its succeeding] Harith General Partners."

What excited Holomisa was the fact that then deputy finance minister Jabu Moleketi, who served as chairman of the PIC, also chaired Harith Fund Managers and later Harith General Partners. And in January 2017 he became a director of Lebashe. Holomisa has accused Moleketi of improperly using his position at the PIC to advance his private commercial interests. Accusations, Moleketi told the Commissioners, that are based on a series of suspicions, speculations and suppositions.

When the first Harith-managed Pan African Infrastructure Development Fund (PAIDF) closed in July 2009 it had raised capital commitments of \$630m, making it the first 15-year infrastructure fund of its size and scope in Africa. The investors were GEPF (\$250m), Absa (\$125m), the Development Bank of South Africa (\$100m), African Development Bank, Abidjan (\$50m), Old Mutual (\$50m), Stanlib (\$30m), Ghanaian pension fund SSNIT (\$10m), Momentum (\$10m), Eskom Pension and Provident Fund (\$5m).

Subsequent fund manager Harith General Partners raised commitments of \$435m for PAIDF 2, which closed in June 2016. Its investors included the Government Employees Pension Fund, which committed a further \$350m.

The ten-or-so infrastructure projects launched across the continent include the flagship Lake Turkana wind farm in Kenya, whose 365 wind turbines provide 17% of the power to Kenya's national grid; Amandi, a 192 MW dual-fuel power plant in Ghana; the

Henri Konan Bédié Bridge in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; a new SADC head office in Gaborone, Botswana; and MainOne, a communications services company providing international connectivity and broadband capacity to West Africa via a 7,000km submarine cable running along the West African coast to Portugal.

Meanwhile, Bantu Holomisa refuses to stay silent. "The proximity of your clients to the PIC is worrisome," he told Lebashe's lawyers after giving his evidence to the PIC Commission. "The Commission must investigate my testimony as well as the questions that I have raised in order to verify the allegations." To which Lebashe has responded by taking the general and his UDM to court again, this time with a R4m damages claim.

As for its newly-acquired media empire, Tshepo Mahloele and his Lebashe co-directors must wait until their deal with Tiso Blackstar becomes commercially effective before they can launch their drive to right the wrongs and reintroduce "proper investigative reporting" in South Africa.

"We don't have the keys to the business yet, so we can't say anything about what's happening to the pensions or the retrenchments," says its investments chief Warren Wheatley. "We've got to be hands-off until the Competition Commission gives their approval."

Every journalist in the land, however, must have delighted in Lebashe chairman Mahloele's assurance to *Sunday Times's* Chris Barron on July 7: "We're not going to be pumping this thing with a lot of debt. Getting in there like a private equity player looking at how do you gear this thing up to the hilt, get as much free cash-flow out as you can and after five years, run for the hills."

A dig at Andrew Bonamour, the asset-stripping chief executive of debt-laden Tiso Blackstar, whose purchase of Times Media was completed in June 2015? "I couldn't say," was Warren Wheatley's poker-faced reply.

Wheatley adds: "We know media is not an easy space. We don't want ever to be accused of treating people as poorly as he has." — **Jack Lundin** ■



Tiso Blackstar employees picket for better wages outside the company's offices

# Deep reconciliation

## Wilhelm Verwoerd and his calling to ‘transform apartheid’

**H**IS BIGGEST CALLING THESE DAYS is to work towards bringing about “deep reconciliation” and “transforming apartheid” in South Africa, but there was a time when Wilhelm Verwoerd’s ambition was to become an elite soldier in the South African Defence Force and to then go on to become a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church.

“My older brother Dirk was a parabat. It was such an elite thing to do. I wanted to be there too. There was no questioning of the system, no question about going to the army.”

Now 55, the grandson of apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd, has taken it upon himself, following an epiphany as a student, to atone for his grandfather’s legacy and to dedicate his life to doing what he calls “white work” with a view to achieving “deep reconciliation” among South Africans.

Wilhelm’s recently released memoir *Verwoerd – My Journey through Family Betrayals* tells the story.

The mission of this third-generation Verwoerd has led to a virtual estrangement from his father – also Wilhelm, a retired geologist and the eldest of Hendrik Verwoerd’s seven children – who has accused him of being a traitor to the Afrikaner people and to his grandfather.

Other renowned family members include his cousin, Dr Wynand Boshoff, son of Orania founder Professor Carel Boshoff, who has just become an MP for the Freedom Front Plus.

Interviewed in the Green Café at Stellenbosch University’s Sustainability Institute, Wilhelm Verwoerd opened up to *Noseweek* about how he tried to make sense of his grandfather’s legacy; how he re-educated himself about South Africa’s history and how he is now determined

to do what he can to reconcile black and white South Africans.

White work, he said, means doing the sort of work that his role models, fellow Afrikaners Beyers Naudé and Bram Fischer did.

“It involves cultivating a humble, self-critical historical awareness which can then lead to restitutorial responsibility without the expectation of gratitude. It changes the way you engage.”

One move he’s made is to choose to live in a diverse neighbourhood.

Verwoerd and his Australian wife Sharon live in the diverse Lynedoch Eco Village attached to the Sustainability Institute and their neighbours are the black Mabeba family – with whom he has a close friendship and who he interviewed for his book.

“The village works together to reduce our ecological footprint by recycling water, using

solar energy and less intensive building materials; we have regular social gatherings, trustees’ meetings and working groups to

handle security, communication and conflicts.

“We’re trying to really live a different kind of vision to apartheid.”

The Sustainability Institute, in partnership with the School of Public Leadership, offers renowned master’s and doctorate programmes in Sustainable Development.

The community incorporates a primary school and youth programmes.

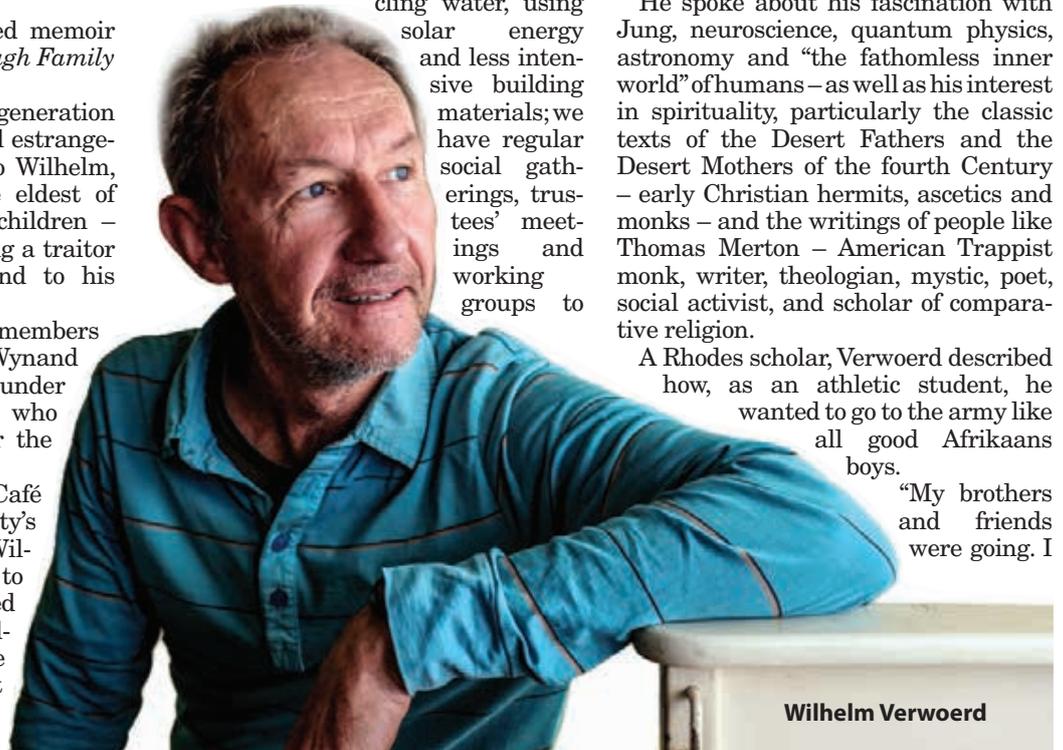
As we sat talking in the Green Café, children could be heard playing in the playground, while sustainability students chatted over their lattes.

Verwoerd, an intense, softly-spoken man – one journalist described him as tortured – spoke about his feelings of deep loneliness within his broader family. He said his mother, torn between him and his father, has been exceptionally supportive.

He spoke about his fascination with Jung, neuroscience, quantum physics, astronomy and “the fathomless inner world” of humans – as well as his interest in spirituality, particularly the classic texts of the Desert Fathers and the Desert Mothers of the fourth Century – early Christian hermits, ascetics and monks – and the writings of people like Thomas Merton – American Trappist monk, writer, theologian, mystic, poet, social activist, and scholar of comparative religion.

A Rhodes scholar, Verwoerd described how, as an athletic student, he wanted to go to the army like all good Afrikaans boys.

“My brothers and friends were going. I



Wilhelm Verwoerd

believed we were fighting the communists, that it was a total onslaught, a holy war. There was no questioning of it.

"I would have gone to the army if I could. I get very competitive and I would have been full-on involved. But, looking back, I know it would have damaged me deeply as I'm a very sensitive person.

"I most probably would have ended up with severe post-traumatic stress syndrome. If you have a basic moral sensitivity and get involved in violence or war, it messes you up ...it's like a soul death."

Nevertheless, in the eighties, the young Verwoerd was still cheering for the South African Defence Force attacks on ANC bases.

"In 1985, when I was at Stellenbosch University and about 21 years old, I remember hearing the news about one of the Botswana attacks on the ANC. There must have been 200 men in the Wilgenhof Men's residence ...standing and cheering together over the news that these 'terrorist' bases had been successfully attacked."

Fate intervened and, because of a back injury, Verwoerd did not become a parabat nor even join the army.

"I would have ended up in administration ... so I decided to get postponement and study."

After graduating from Stellenbosch at the end of 1985, Verwoerd took up the opportunity to study in the Netherlands for three months on his way to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. It was while living in a digs in Holland, that he had his "watershed" moment.

"I landed up in this house in Utrecht, where I met a group of white Afrikaans-speaking ex-Dutch Reformed Church people who had already travelled the journey away from all that ...who challenged me to my core. Through talking to them, day in and day out, I had an intense confrontation with where I came from."

In Holland he started reading Steve Biko for the first time... and decided he wanted to meet people from the then-banned ANC.

"My path had been clearly laid when I left Stellenbosch. I was going to study philosophy and theology and return to South Africa to be a Dutch Reformed Church minister."

Verwoerd's soul-searching experience in Holland led to his switching studies. "I thought, 'what's the point?' I was angry and disillusioned with the church and switched to a Politics,

Philosophy and Economics degree. I also chose political sociology as a subject. I immersed myself in studying South African history and development economics and basically understanding the South African dynamics."

Verwoerd married his university sweetheart Melanie Fourie in 1987 and the pair returned to South Africa. Not long afterwards, he met the banned ANC in Zambia in 1988. He and his wife met Nelson Mandela in 1990. In 1992, the couple joined the ANC – "the enemy" of his volk. In 1994 Melanie became an MP for the ANC and was posted to Ireland as South African Ambassador. The couple have since divorced and Wilhelm is married to an Australian, Sharon, who teaches maths at a high school in Mitchells Plain.

He has two children with Melanie: their daughter Wilmé, who is based in Cape Town and works for Airbnb and son Wian, who lives in Dublin and works for LinkedIn.

Verwoerd worked as a researcher for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and went on to do reconciliation work among warring factions in Ireland and in other countries.

A few months ago he started work as a senior researcher and facilitator with the Historical Trauma and Transformation Unit at Stellenbosch University under the leadership of Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. Her work focuses on reconciliation, forgiveness and apology and she has written numerous articles on the subject.

"I'm surrounded by a beautifully diverse, challenging group of young master's, doctoral and post-doctoral South African students, as well as some from Tanzania, Rwanda, Congo and other countries.

"It's such a different experience of Stellenbosch University too in terms of what you associate with Stellenbosch."

Verwoerd took about two years of unpaid leave to write his "emotionally demanding" memoir, which came out in May. The book was written partly at home in the eco village and partly in Betty's Bay where his grandfather had a holiday home.

Recently, Verwoerd has been spending time with younger people, including doing "white work" with younger ministers from the Dutch Reformed Church, who are trying to deepen their reconciliation work.

"Yesterday I was speaking to a group of Voortrekker leaders (the Afrikaner equivalent of Boy Scouts) at the Wemmershoek campsite outside Franschhoek. They were an all-white Afrikaans-speaking group of about 50 grade 12s. The theme that came through most strongly was their struggle to make sense of their role in South Africa today. They are frustrated with the legacies they have to deal with and are not sure if there's a place for them here.

"I told them we have to deal with these things. Even though these youngsters weren't part of the system, they still have opportunities and should use these in a way so as not to run away from what it means to be white."

Born into a loving family of four brothers, Verwoerd was "a conscientious, religious young person and a bit of a nerd".

"I was, fortunately, also good at sport. I was passionate about cross-country and long-distance running. I would run in the Stellenbosch mountains before school. I was competitive on a provincial level and wanted to be a Springbok athlete."

He was also very involved in the Voortrekkers. "On week-

ends we'd go camping, like a little gang, and climb mountains. It was idyllic. Sundays were spent at church and doing mission work like distribution of Bibles."

His father, a "stereotypical scientist", was "hard working, intellectual and introverted". He travelled the world as a geologist and was a respected scientist in his field.

"He had very strong political views but didn't force them on us. Our grandfather and his culture were all around us and on the walls of our home... but it wasn't part of family culture to have long political discussions.

"If people criticised my grandfather he'd react, and when I started to ask questions, he gave his strong point



of view. He was very big on Afrikaner culture.”

Wilhelm’s eldest brother Hendrik is a well-known motorsports commentator and professional translator. Next in line is Dirk, a vet in Heidelberg, near Johannesburg. Wilhelm was born three years after Dirk and their youngest brother, Gideon, who was born five years after Wilhelm, now works as a fertility specialist in China.

“My older brothers weren’t as religious as I was. They listened to rock music, had their own bands, and played rugby – while I was probably studying. They were far more typically Afrikaans boys than I was.”

Despite competing at Western Province level in the 3,000 metres distance while at high school, he picked up injuries in his final year at school and could not run competitively anymore. The injuries were also the reason he didn’t go to the army.

Verwoerd matriculated from Paul Roos Gimnasium, Stellenbosch, and then completed a BA in Philosophy, Psychology and Theology (*cum laude*) at the University of Stellenbosch in 1984, followed by Honours in Philosophy (*cum laude*) in 1985 and an MA in Philosophy (*cum laude*) from Stellenbosch in 1989. He completed his Master’s in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford in 1990 and gained a doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Johannesburg in 2003.

Besides having worked as a lecturer in philosophy at Stellenbosch University, Verwoerd was a TRC researcher from 1996 to 1998.

From 2002 until 2012, he facilitated programmes aimed at reconciliation among former combatants in Ireland and he facilitated dialogue among people from Israel and Palestine.

He lectures a module on Conflict Transformation Practice within the M.Phil on Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, at Trinity College in Dublin.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu once told the young Wilhelm Verwoerd not to “run away from who you are” and “rather use the power of your surname for good”. But Tutu also warned him not to carry an unbearable burden on his shoulders.

Interviewing Verwoerd, one had the sense he has, indeed, taken a lot on his shoulders.

“I call myself ‘a reflective facilitator of deep reconciliation’ or ‘trying to transform apartheid’... By apartheid, I don’t only mean the political system but also the consciousness, the values, the spirituality, the psychology... I ask many questions, including: Is it practically possible to really change some of these pervasive – almost geographical things – like separate neighbourhoods and unequal schooling systems? As a white South African is it possible to live more simply, more consistently with the vision of transforming apartheid – and with ecological awareness too?”

“Is it possible to encourage relational transformation that includes the relationship with myself, my community, people from different communities, with the environment and with God... because the very ethnocentric white god I grew up with was so destructive in terms of what really is needed?”

In a context of the Zuma years and rampant corruption and ANC mismanagement, I asked him if his idealism was not flagging.

“I prefer the language of hope. There’s a kind of a realistic hopefulness that inspires me. When I look at the many other places in the world

where I have worked, South Africa has actually made a lot of progress against the odds.

“If you go to places like Northern Ireland, and see the segregated communities and see the almost intergenerational cycles of violence intensifying in places like Israel/Palestine – and when you think back to what people predicted for South Africa in the late eighties, then I do think the glass is half full and that there’s a lot we should be grateful for. Having said that, I’m grateful we have new political leadership. I shared

in the deep disillusionment at how the ANC grew into a very different kind of organisation to the one I joined.

“When you listen to the news, see the dysfunction of our education system and drive through places like Khayelitsha, it’s difficult not to be overwhelmed.”

Verwoerd said his committed daily spiritual practice – based on mindfulness, meditation, yoga and contemplative Christian prayer – are an indispensable practice to centre himself and keep him hopeful.

“Also, I work with people at community level, I live in a local community and when you’re in these spaces and see how it’s possible for people from different backgrounds to engage, to talk about difficult issues, to develop relationships, it does give me some hope.”

Since Verwoerd joined the ANC, his relationship with his family, particularly with his father, has been fractious.

“The worst was in the early ’90s shortly after Melanie and I joined the ANC. We were dropping off the children with my mother, who was helping to look after them because we were busy with the campaign. My father got very unhappy about us dropping the kids there while we went to do ANC work. We had a shouting match, to the point where I lost my voice for two or three days afterwards. That was the worst it got...”

Verwoerd’s parents still live in their Stellenbosch home. “My mother, Elise, turned 90 a few weeks ago and my father turns 90 soon. They are still relatively mobile, and my dad still mows the lawn and climbs on the roof to fix it.”

Although Wilhelm’s relationship with his father thawed for a few years, the recent publication of his book has led to “another phase of distancing”.

“The shutters have come down again. He really doesn’t want to be seen in public with me again. Really, we simply can’t engage. He feels I have again said outrageous things about his father. He cannot make sense of this strong criticism of his father and the evil of the system. For him, when I say apartheid was evil, I am saying that his father was evil and he cannot accept that. I think he is just too old and too loyal to his father. I have empathy for that – but at the same time I need to be true to my sense of vocation.”

When he frames his work as “faith work” or as part of his vocation as a Christian committed to reconciliation, then his mother is proud of him.



**Hendrik Verwoerd**

“She as well as my brother Hendrik who helped me a great deal with translating the book into English, have supported me in this work.

“My Mom is just a wonderful, warm human being. Obviously she’s politically quite limited in terms of her conservative political views but at a human level, she has encouraged me with the book and prayed for it to be blessed. On a spiritual level she’s very supportive... even though she’s caught between my father and me.”

Does he think he ever pleased his father? “He’s not a very expressive person, but I do think he was proud of my academic, cultural and sport achievements at school.”

His brother Hendrik “is open-minded, but his focus is on sport and he avoids politics”. His two other brothers went through the army and became very politically conservative. “They would still disagree with my political commitment and would be on the right end of the Afrikaner political spectrum so we can’t talk politics. So, it’s lonely, except for my mom and Hendrik. My mother and I can’t talk at a political level but she understands my spiritual journey and this commitment to reconciliation.

“Having said that, when I meet my cousins from Orania, we get along on a human level – even when we have political conversations...”

Western Cape’s head of detectives and former activist Major General Jeremy Vearey describes Verwoerd’s book as: “A virtuosic odyssey into one man’s purgatory for redemption from the political sins of his grandfather.”

Asked whether he feels angry that he’s the only Verwoerd doing “white work”, Wilhelm responded: “Yes, I do get angry. I want to say, ‘can’t you see, can’t you realise what happened in this country and what this name of ours still means to people?’

“Writing the book has deepened my understanding that reconciliation is an inherently very uncomfortable process... It’s almost like coming to terms with things that cannot be reconciled; like sitting in that tension between trying to love my family and in a sense being open to them, accepting of them, acknowledging that this is where I come from – and at the same time to take a counter public position. I do struggle with it sometimes.”

Does he resent having to do all the redemption work on behalf of the family?



**Wilhelm Verwoerd speaks at a University of Stellenbosch ceremony**

“I don’t have that storyline in my head because I’ve had so many liberating experiences of engagement across the racial divide. It’s been deeply healing for me to have my hunger for connection satisfied at a deep-soul level. It’s a sense of becoming whole, coming home, coming alive.

“When I speak to younger white people or my contemporaries, I try not to get angry with them. I say we’re missing out on an opportunity to really come home in our skin, culture, country and humanity. We have to do this work... we cannot avoid it.”

To what extent does he believe “the sins of the fathers will be visited on the son”? “It’s something I’ve started to embrace. The young Afrikaners I spoke to recently asked ‘why should we struggle with affirmative action because of a system we had nothing to do with?’

“You can very quickly believe that storyline and become resentful. My work internationally has shown that somebody has to step into that space and break the cycle – and not just repeat that storyline. If you take that storyline, you just add to the alienation, anger and intergenerational tensions. We need to break these intergenerational cycles of violence.

“There’s something about being willing to step into the space. It’s liberating and helps to break the cycle.”

Verwoerd’s two children are supportive of his work – “even though

they’re not always comfortable with attention being drawn to their surname”.

When he’s not working, Verwoerd loves spending time in nature – swimming, walking, mountain biking and camping or watching cricket and rugby. “Sharon and I can’t watch the Proteas play the Australians in cricket or the Springboks play the Wallabies as I become too upset when South Africa loses (again)!”

Does he believe there is a long-term future for white Afrikaners in South Africa?

“If we’re willing to really become involved in restitutorial processes of sharing our resources, getting involved, not withdrawing into our laagers – like living in our separate neighbourhoods –and preparing to leave the country. If we get involved across some of those boundaries and share who we are, I think we do have a place. I don’t think we have a long-term future if we stay in our separate worlds. It’s very seductive to stay in your comfort zone, but it is not sustainable at a human level.”

What does Wilhelm think his grandfather would have made of his yoga-loving, Jung-following grandson living in an eco village?

“Good question! I often wish we could get a chance to have a serious conversation or three. I suspect it would be quite a struggle for him to understand me, though apparently he did have a sense of humour!” – **By Sue Segar** ■

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# From another country



## Tech's online exploitative relationship with children is a health risk

**A report submitted to the UK Parliament outlines the damaging effects on children of 'persuasive design' on the internet**

**T**HE DISRUPTED CHILDHOOD REPORT co-authored by the 5Rights Foundation, the British charity advocating for children's rights online, and [reputation and privacy consultancy] Schillings, sets out how "persuasive design" practices employed on the internet deliberately keep children online to collect their data for commercial gain. [For some examples of persuasive design, see box.]

The report sets out how these strategies exploit human instincts, how they are deployed, why they are habit-forming and what emotional, physical and educational development impacts they are having on a generation of children.

Baroness Beeban Kidron, founder and Chair of 5Rights Foundation, and report co-author says: "The tech industry needs to look at their stratospheric share prices, then our children, and decide which is more important. Children need a new deal."

The 24 recommendations contained in the report call on the tech sector to make seismic changes to the design of products and services in order to meet

the needs of children. They also call on government to add "compulsive use" to its current list of harms in all policies and to set up a centre of expertise for policy and research, in instances where it intersects with childhood.

Said Baroness Kidron, when introducing a Code of Conduct as part of Britain's Data Protection Act 2018: "The draft Code represents the beginning of a new deal between children and the tech sector. For too long we have failed to recognise children's rights and needs online, with tragic outcomes. I firmly believe in the power of technology to transform lives and be a force for good. But in order to fulfil that role it must consider the best interests of children, not simply its own commercial interests. That is what the Code will require online services to do."

In addition to consolidating research from academics (including EU Kids Online, Oxford, Harvard, Stanford and LSE, American Psychological Association, and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers) and a roll call of dismayed tech insiders (Tim Berners-Lee, Tristan Harris, Jaron

Lanier, Nir Eyal, Sean Parker), importantly the report also features the voices of children, who themselves are asking for fairer treatment.

Jenny Afia, partner at Schillings and co-author of the report, comments: "Struggles between parents and children over screens are the result of a far deeper conflict between a system designed to be compulsive, worth billions of pounds to shareholders, and the needs and legal rights of children."

The report points out that designing services to be compulsive, and then asking kids to put their phones down, is not the answer. Access to digital services for entertainment, socialising, learning and citizenship is crucially important to children, young people and the future of society as a whole. What is required is access – but on terms that meet the needs and rights of children.

Some examples of what the Code aims to prohibit or control:

- Nudge techniques: The Code will prevent online service providers using "nudge techniques" to lead or encourage children to provide unnecessary personal data, weaken or turn

# From another country

off privacy protections, or as a tactic to extend their use. For example, it will stop the insidious practice of timed notifications being used as a method to punish a child's absence online.

- **Detrimental use of data:** The Code will ensure that online services are not promoting behaviour that is detrimental to a child's health or wellbeing. It points to established and evidence-based guidance to identify what might be considered "detrimental", and makes clear that if there is any doubt, a precautionary approach should be taken.

- **Profiling:** A contributing factor to the tragic case of Molly Russell was the graphic content promoting self-harm and suicide that she had been accessing on Instagram. Importantly, rather than Molly having to seek this content out herself, it was being recommended to her based on data drawn from her viewing and browsing history (i.e. data that was used to profile her). The Code will require online services to switch off profiling by default, and profiling will be prohibited altogether if appropriate measures aren't put in place "to protect children from harmful effects".

- **Location services:** Under the Code, geolocation tracking must be off by default for children, and "options which make a child's location visible to others must default back to off at the end of each session". The ease with which the real time and predicted location of a child can be tracked using data from the apps they use is alarming and open to abuse. The National Crime Agency and several police forces have issued warnings that services collecting geolocation data could be used to groom, stalk, sexually exploit or abduct children. Children report that these services even manipulate children into going to particular locations (e.g. the well-publicised deal between Pokémon Go and McDonald's, which saw thousands of children driven to fast-food outlets by the game).

To download the "Disrupted Childhood" Report and view its recommendations for industry, government, parents and investors, visit: <https://15rightsframework.com/> ■

## What is persuasive design?

**P**ERSUASIVE DESIGN PRACTICES manipulate innate human behaviour. The Disrupted Childhood Report highlights how digital services routinely deploy persuasive techniques with the specific intent to collect personal data for commercial use. A third of all users globally are under 18. Examples of persuasive design include:

- **The rush:** design features built around rewards and anticipations, such as likes, hearts and comments, which create expectations, elicit dopamine hits and fuel the need for the next response – all to extend the time spent on digital services.

- **The popularity contest:** design features which exploit the fear of not appearing popular, such as public counts of friends, followers, likes and retweets. Measuring friendship numerically creates an arms race for more interaction, more friends – and as the research shows – denudes the quality of relationships.

- **The summons:** alerts that play into our innate response to movement, noise and light, such as the buzzes, pings, vibrations and notifications coloured red.

- **Losing time:** design features built to remove the need to make a conscious decision to keep using a digital service, such as auto play, auto suggestions, infinite scrolling and games with no save option. In the name of "personalisation" these techniques pull children into a bubble of suggestion and activity with no end.

- **The social obligation:** design features built to exploit the human need to be social, such as SnapChat, streaks that can trap young people in multiple relationships that they find time-consuming to maintain, and hard to get out of.

And "online now" status, typing bubbles, read receipts... scores of tiny obligations that build into an overwhelming struggle for a child's attention. ■

## New Zealand calls in guns



**D**URING JULY IN NEW ZEALAND A national campaign to rid the country of lethal semi-automatic firearms was launched in Christchurch, where a gunman murdered 51 people at two mosques in March.

Police reported paying \$134,000 (R1.25 million) to 68 gun owners in the first hours of the buyback — the first of more than 250 such events planned.

After the attacks, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern emotionally urged the legislation's passage, describing victims who will "carry disabilities for a lifetime" because of the nature of the weapon fired at them. "I could not fathom how (such weapons) could be obtained legally." — **Ozy**.

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# Food for thought

## Clear bright future – *an extract*

**B**Y THE END OF READING THIS BOOK I want you to make a choice. Will you accept the machine control of human beings, or resist? And if the answer is resist, on what basis will you defend the rights of humans against the logic of machines?

In the twenty-first century, the human race faces a new problem. Thanks to information technology, vast asymmetries of knowledge have opened up – creating vast asymmetries of power. Through the screens of our smart devices, both corporations and governments are becoming adept at exerting control over us via algorithms: they know what we're doing, what we're thinking, can predict our next moves and influence our behaviour. We, meanwhile, don't even have the right to know that any of this is going on.

And that's just the nightmare of the present. In the future, as artificial intelligence develops, it will become very easy for us to lose control of the information machines altogether.

An algorithm is simply the instructions for solving a problem, devised by a human and written down. For example: when I present my passport, border

control knows that if my fingerprints match the ones stored on file, they should let me through; if they don't, I get detained for further questioning.

A computer program is an algorithm running without human intervention. In one sense it is just the latest achievement in a long process of automation. For the past 200 years one of our most successful strategies has been to move workers "to the side" of an industrial process; to make them observers rather than controllers, giving machines temporary and limited autonomy. What we do with computers and information networks is only an extension of what we did with windmills, cotton-spinning machines and the combustion engine. But once machines can give themselves instructions, the risk is that humanity steps "to the side" permanently, surrendering control.

Millions of people have become alert to the dangers of algorithmic control. But they assume it is a problem for an ethics committee, a tech conference, a science magazine – or for the next generation to solve. In fact, it is intimately connected to the urgent economic, political and moral crises we

are living through now.

Here's why...

Suppose I told you there was a machine that could run the country better than the government, think more logically than any single human and run autonomously? Suppose I asked you to hand control of all the important decisions in your life to that machine? Suppose I said you would be happier if you changed your behaviour to anticipate what the machine decides? I hope you would scorn the whole idea.

But try substituting the word "market" for the machine. For three decades, millions of people have allowed market forces to run their lives, shape their behaviour and overrule their democratic rights. There is even a religion dedicated to worshipping this machine's power and control: it's called economics.

Be elevating the market to the status of an autonomous, super-human spirit guide during the past thirty years we have, potentially, prepared ourselves to accept machine control sometime during the next hundred years.

During the free-market era we learned to celebrate the subjection of human beings to market forces. We treated concepts like citizenship, morality and "agency" (the power to act) as if they were irrelevant to the workings of the world, which was now run only by consumer choice and financial engineering.

Now, however, the free-market system has imploded. The logic of selfishness, hierarchy and consumerism no longer works. As a result, the religion of the market has given way to older gods: racism, nationalism, misogyny and the idolisation of powerful thieves.

As we approach the 2020s, an alliance of ethnic nationalists, woman-haters and authoritarian political leaders are tearing the world to shreds. What unites them is their disdain for universal human rights and their fear of freedom. They love the idea of machine control and, if we let them,



Paul Mason

# Food for thought

they will deploy it aggressively to keep themselves rich, powerful and unaccountable.

It is not too late to stem the chaos and disorder, to stop the attempt to impose new biological hierarchies based on race, gender and nationality, and to refuse machine control. But the arguments for surrendering to them are all around us.

The idea that “humanity is already over” is deeply embedded in modern thought, from the alt-right to the academic left. No matter how much you, personally, are trying to live by “human values”, the consensus is – from Silicon Valley to the HQ of the Chinese Communist Party – that human values have no foundation; that there is no such thing as human nature, no logical basis to privilege humans over all machines, no rationale for universal human rights.

With hindsight, free-market ideology looks like the gateway drug for a more pervasive anti-humanism. And we’re about to find out just how damaging this harder drug can be.

“Compete and acquire” was the first

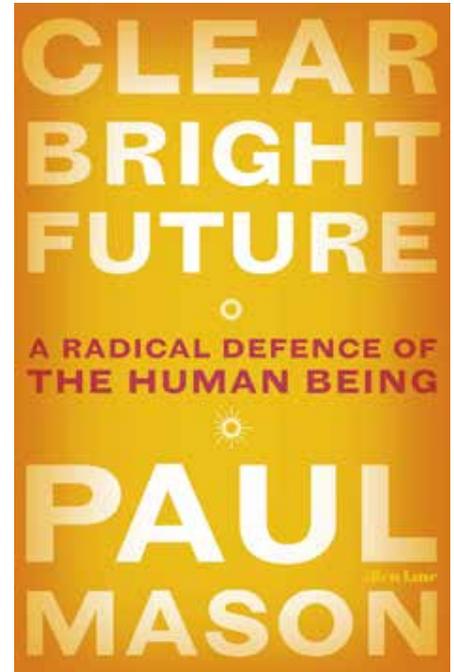
commandment of the free-market religion. In the era of de-globalisation and right-wing nationalism it will become: compete, acquire, lie, control and kill. If we don’t place the new technology of intelligent machines under human control, and programme them to achieve human values, the values they will be designed around are those of Putin, Trump and Xi Jinping.

So I have written this book as an act of defiance. When you’ve read it, I hope you will begin to make acts of defiance yourself. They can range from bringing down dictators, to setting up human-centred projects in your neighbourhood, to simply defying machine logic in your daily life.

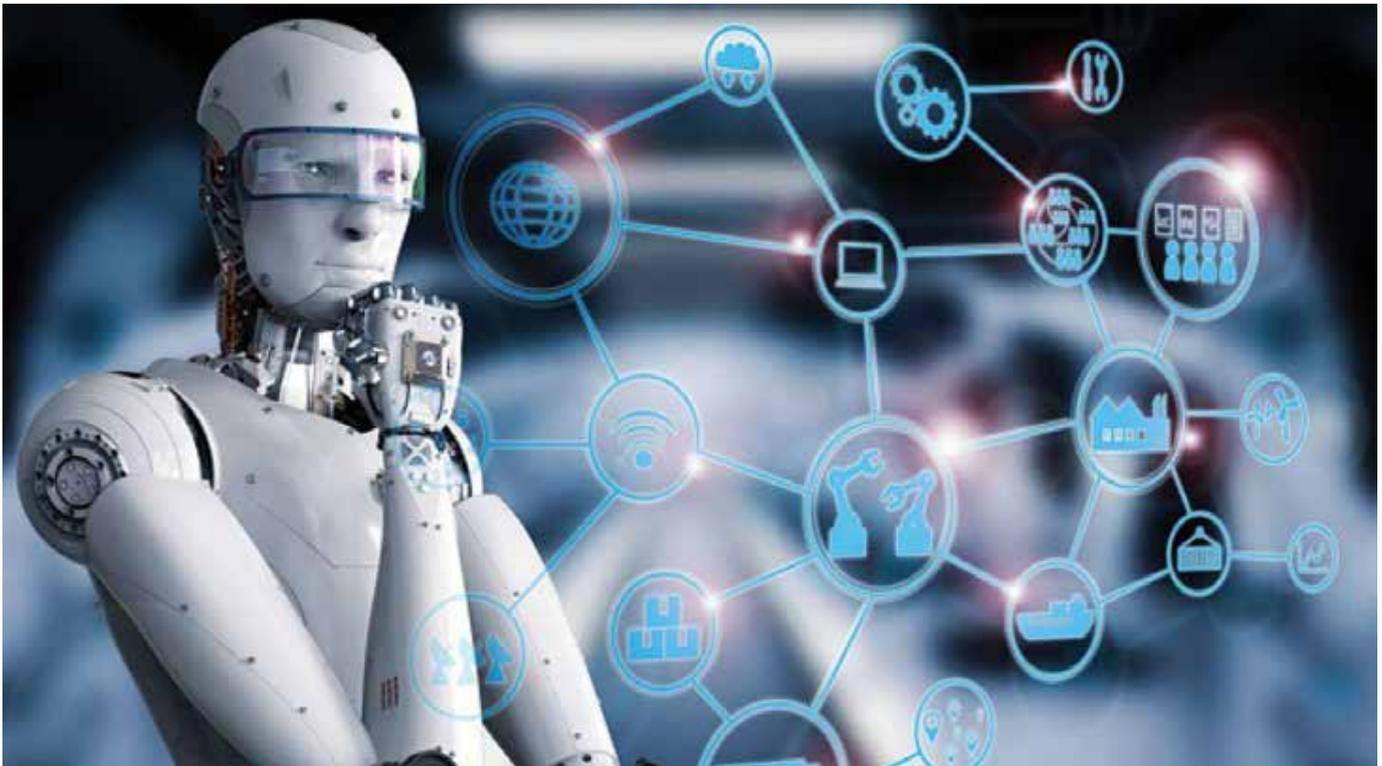
To resist effectively we need a theory of human nature that can survive in conflict with free-market economics, machine worship and the anti-humanism of the academic theft.

We need, in short, a radical defence of the human being.

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**CLEAR BRIGHT FUTURE**  
by Paul Mason  
(Allen Lane)





## Fighting for the dream

**A**S I SIT DOWN AT MY COMPUTER to write this review, today's *Daily Maverick* bounces on to my screen to announce: "The Presidency is rapidly losing momentum". "Ramaphosa," Ferial Haffajee declares, "is losing an ANC factional war to the party's Secretary-General, Ace Magashule".

Following within minutes of my putting down RW Johnson's latest book, this assertion is dispiriting, to say the least. His book-length-analysis is, of course, more nuanced than a one-page op-ed could be, but Haffajee's one-paragraph characterisation of the state of the nation could stand as a summary of his book:

"South Africa is again tenuously balanced between the imperative to become a capable state versus the needs of the patronage state to keep systems malleable and institutions weak; [...] between a growth-focused economy versus an economy characterised by radical and populist posturing which is a veneer for continued looting."

Johnson's analysis of the South African political scene is an extended weighing-up of that balance, which he, as much as Haffajee, sees as a conflict between populist irresponsibility and mature, even austere economic discipline. His analysis aims to flesh out these abstractions with concrete instances, and also to locate the sources of the present dysfunctionality in the recent history of the ANC. He does not commit the all-too-easy simplification of blaming it all on Zuma: he shows that, disastrously corrupt as the Zuma regime was, the decline from democracy to kleptocracy started much earlier, as early, in fact as the golden years of Mandela. Though Mandela was not himself corrupt, it was on his watch, for instance, that the infamous arms deal was hatched and executed. And, perhaps more crippling, "Mandela's most damaging legacy [was] an over-large and massively overpaid and underskilled bureaucracy."

This "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" is, in Johnson's reading, the engine and benefactor of the corruption that Zuma did so much to perpetuate: "Because it does not itself generate wealth, it is inevitably parasitic and can achieve its goals only through patronage and corruption."

Johnson's market-based analysis is particularly severe on what he calls "the dysfunctional and largely incapable group", the civil service, under-skilled and over-paid: "by 2018 there were well over 2.2 million civil servants, earning average salaries of R338,000 per year. ...The salaries of this group absorbed over 14% of South Africa's GDP."

One of the more contentious aspects of Johnson's analysis is his unfavourable comparison, in this respect, of the present dispensation with the apartheid regime: "That old ruling class had many sins to its name

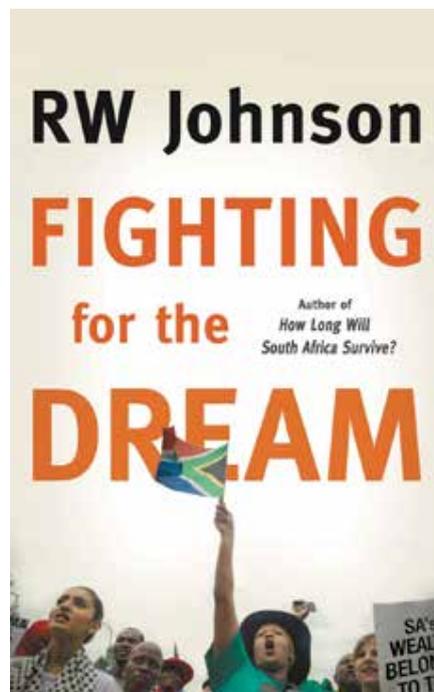
but over the 84 years since Union in 1910 it built a formidable infrastructure, a developed economy and a series of powerful and efficient institutions". This is not too far from Helen Zille's hysteria-inducing tweet that colonialism was "not only negative", and no doubt Johnson's comment will evoke comparable outrage – except that such outrage would serve nobody's political purpose, as Zille's did for the ANC and EFF.

But if the bureaucratic bourgeoisie is the long-term structural threat to "the dream", the more immediate menace is, as *Daily Maverick* has it, "the State Capture ghouls circling around Ramaphosa's wagon" – more specifically the super-ghoul Ace Magashule.

Johnson, writing in the aftermath of the 2017 leadership election, in which Magashule won a wafer-thin and probably rigged majority as secretary general, argues that in not taking a stronger line against Magashule's "victory", Ramaphosa had queered his pitch in perpetuity: "Accepting Magashule was far too high a price; it could well mean that Ramaphosa would never be able to achieve control of the ANC..." This dire prediction is now being fulfilled, with even the Public Protector circling the wagon.

Johnson offers an interesting and perhaps encouraging perspective on the apparent ascendancy of the ghouls: before the 2017 election, he, along with the *eNCA* television network, did an extensive survey of attitudes among the ANC electorate. It transpired that in every region apart from KwaZulu-Natal, Ramaphosa had a clear lead over Zuma's proxy candidate, who was of course his ex-wife: Ramaphosa's "support among the various African language groups was everywhere substantial and widely spread".

This suggests that, for all the posturing of the Zuma-Magashule faction, Ramaphosa has the over-



**FIGHTING FOR THE DREAM**  
by RW Johnson  
(Jonathan Ball)



whelming support of the electorate. This, though, is not as cheering as it should be, since Johnson has also shown that ANC elections are decided not by the will of the people but by the machinations of the likes of the Premier League: “the Free State, North West and Mpumalanga were all de facto fiefdoms where the premier’s will was enforced by every kind of administrative stratagem, rigging or by main force if necessary.”

Johnson brightens his dark analysis with some suggestions as to how South Africa could be dragged, if need be, kicking and screaming, out of its quagmire of inefficiency and corruption. I summarise his main recommendations by quotations in point form:

- “liberalisation of the labour laws”;
- “Probably all the SOEs should be privatised, and preferably split up so as to create competition”;
- “to make South Africa as internationally competitive as possible... all taxes on investment would have to go”;

- “All Australia’s main cities lie on the coast, and so should South Africa’s”;

- “...granting individual freehold property rights to residents of the former Bantustans ...cutting back the power of the chiefs to grant land”;

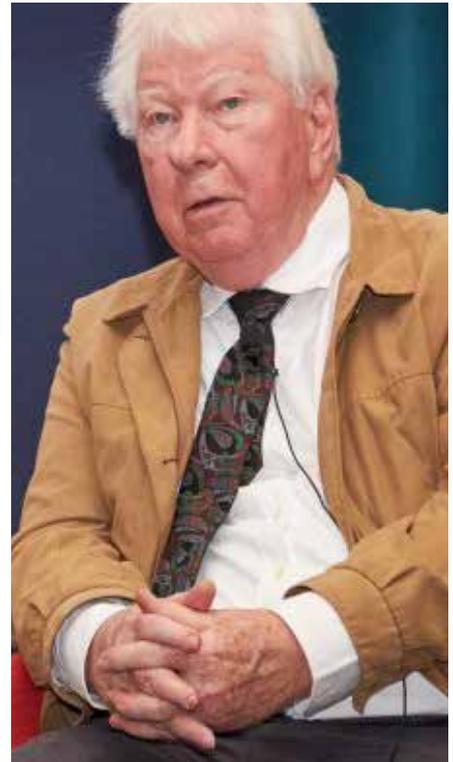
- “What is needed is a comprehensive programme to develop the eastern seaboard”;

- “...higher standards of admission to tertiary institutions”;

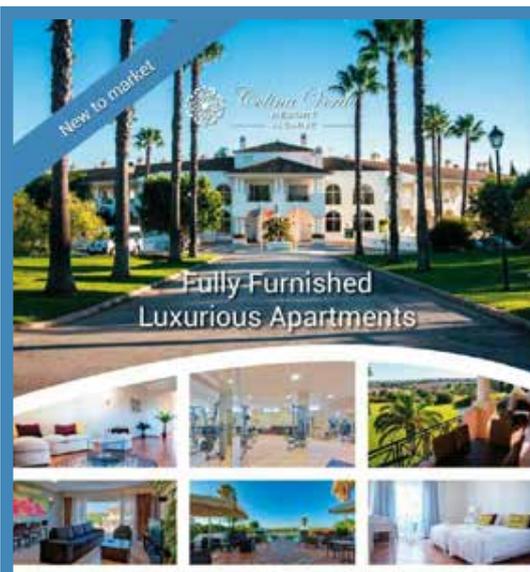
- “the time to request a bail-out from the IMF has already arrived”.

It is beyond the scope and competence of this review to pronounce on the practicability or otherwise of this agenda, other than to note that it is breathtakingly ambitious. Indeed Johnson concedes, with massive understatement, that “to write as I have above is to break a very large taboo, and I would not expect what I say to be popular, or even acceptable.”

But if “fighting for the dream” is to be taken seriously, we must start with a dream. Or live with the nightmare. ■



RW Johnson



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## The colour of bad science

SCIENCE IS THE ANTIDOTE TO OUR common sense interpretations of the world. It has shown us how our “of course that’s true” impulses will lead us down the wrong path. Common sense tells us that the earth is flat, vaccines do more harm than good, and that black people are intellectually inferior to all other ‘races’.

In my work as a science communicator, I find that a lot of researchers are averse to making matter-of-fact statements about most concepts, as that’s part of their training because nothing in science is 100% certain.

While science shows that there is no biological basis for race, what they are not allowed to say is that race is bullshit; a flawed human concept used for centuries to treat others with physical and psychological violence. This leaves room for a savvy misinformer to claim that race is a thing because they can see it with their eyes, as common sense tells them.

This kind of thinking should never be part of the scientific agenda seeking to understand the world, but as with other human institutions, our worst impulses infect even the reasonable world of science. That’s how I can best make sense of the bad science making headlines recently in the form of a now-retracted paper that studied the “cognitive abilities” of coloured women in the Western Cape.

The paper, titled “Age- and education-related effects on cognitive functioning in coloured [sic] South African women”, was subsequently retracted by the journal *Aging, Neuropsychology, and Cognition*, citing “serious flaws” in the way the research was done.

Admitting that the research was peer reviewed, the journal editors say the assertions that coloured women in South Africa “have an increased risk for low cognitive functioning,” were not based on data the scientists collected.

This is a round-about way to say that the Stellenbosch

University scientists sucked it out of their thumbs. While the results of the paper upset a lot of people on the internet, I was personally concerned about how such research was even conceived. UCT professor Barbara Boswell led a campaign speaking out against the paper after it was released, citing the many issues it had including the idea of coloured women as a homogeneous group.

She spoke to *Cape Talk* radio relaying how her jaw had dropped reading the paper. “I find it really difficult... that some people could construct this using colonial and apartheid science,” she said.

Of concern to me is the what-if scenario of what would have happened if the results were positive, claiming that this group of women were intellectually superior in some way. This makes me wonder if the campaign for scientific integrity would have gained as much traction online.

The identity politics of the internet do not give me confidence that that would have been the case, which is why I believe that a lot of people were offended by the unflattering results first more than the bad science picked apart by the experts.

There is a lot of bad science out there that does not have the benefit of having to wade through the political quagmire of the internet these days. It is for this reason that I advocate for the scientific process to be part of everyday discussions, for the general public to be aware of what scientists are doing all the time, for everyone to have some of the reasoning

skills scientists use to get to the best approximation of the truth.

I believe that with such skills being part of our daily lives, fewer of us could be duped by “fake news” and that bad science would be so obvious to a lot of us that it would be restricted to the domain of the fringe and the quacks.

*As is customary with scientific papers tendered for publication, Noseweek referred Biyela’s column to Dr David Klatzow for peer review. Here follows his response. – Ed:*

● “The article is perfectly sensible. “Science is or should be colour-blind. It is perfectly in order to examine the epidemiology of different diseases in different racial groups. Any comparison is valid so long as the science is good and valid and so long as the political use of the research is restrained.

“Nobody would quibble with the notion that athletes from East Africa have a significant edge over others in long distance events. Is it genetic? Nobody would quibble with the finding that certain genetically caused diseases are common in Ashkenazi Jews.

“It is vital that any such findings are seen against the statistical backdrop used to interpret the results. They should never be used to determine individual outcomes. To do so is a feature of the worst of postmodern identity politics and, as we have seen, this has resulted in tragic consequences throughout the 20th century, both from the left and the right.

“The piles of corpses left by Hitler, Stalin, Mao and others seem to have taught us nothing. The use of identity politics by both the ANC and their left wing friends (EFF and BLF) is every bit as bad as the Neo-Nazi politics raising its ugly head again in Europe and in South African far-right politics. – Dr David Klatzow, Consulting Forensic Scientist. Email: [david-klatzow48@gmail.com](mailto:david-klatzow48@gmail.com) ■





# Letter from Umjindi

## 55 And loving it

HAVE NEVER BEEN ONE TO CARE ABOUT birthdays; to me this annual celebration was always something that should be left to kids, and should certainly not be celebrated after the age of thirty. After that, it's just silly. You're now beginning the count-down to old age, hardly cause for celebration.

But nosey ones I had a change of heart when I reached the big five-0 and actually appreciated reaching that milestone. Now I'm even more excited at the thought that, in August I reach 55. Yes, I plan to celebrate.

Oh yeah, I am over the moon about this birthday. And why shouldn't I feel good? After all, I walk a lot (well, too often I am forced to walk, since the bakkie always has one problem or another and always at times when I don't have the moola to fix it immediately). I also exercise regularly, follow a good diet, etc. Alright, I am not perfect: I really must dig deep and fight this smoking thing, quit.

But, nosey ones, truth be said my happiness at reaching 55 has more to do with having been spared some of the pitfalls of life that have seen many 50-plussers, even the odd 40-plusser, smacked by what is commonly described as a midlife crisis.

But that's nothing compared to the biggest crisis our generation has faced, the HIV/Aids pandemic. Many a friend and acquaintance who should have been celebrating their 55th birthday with me were sent knocking on heaven's door by Aids.

I have also been fortunate to be spared some of the other typical midlife events: finding yourself stuck in a job you hate (does not matter how much the job paid), divorce (well that can be attributed to not having been married), no maintenance headaches (well that can be attributed to not having any children due to responsible and very – and I mean very – safe sexual behaviour). But hey, all is not lost with marriage and a child. Those are still on the cards. Some might say it's a bit late – yeah, right,

try telling that to Mick Jagger who recently fathered another child at the age of 70. So in the words of Mick, all I can say to my better half is:

*If you start me up  
If you start me up  
I'll never stop...  
You make a grown man cry  
You make a grown man cry  
You make a grown man cry...*

Man oh man perfect lyrics for this diatribe of mine.

The bottom line: I am now very comfortable in my own skin, I am content with where my life is. And as such I will make my partner happy and our child will enjoy at least 15 years (God willing) of active time with his/her papa before I begin to feel as if I am "old". Before the critics crucify me: my lovey-dovey is 23 years my junior, but I am not a blesser, I am just, as a good friend use to describe me, a young old man.

I am one of the lucky ones, I seem to be defying the traditional ageing process. On the other hand many things in our lives are influenced by state of mind. Heck, if you want to tell yourself you are too old to go for a jog or just a lovely long walk while listening to Led Zeppelin or Michael J then you deserve to succumb to the ageing process. Get up and move Baba, Mama and get your groove back or better said, keep your groove.

Now then, speaking of reflections, I recently found myself

looking back on my writing for this here *Noseweek* and realised one thing, I need to get my groove. After all, throughout the 10 years-or-so I have spewed my diatribe about everything I can think of, politics, annoying security guards, shady debt collectors argh! the list goes on and on. Now this has smacked me with what I will call a "mid-commentator's crisis".

What is the solution here? Simple: my column will now treat the reader to excerpts of a book I've been anxious to put to paper and after much deliberation I finally came up with a title: *55 And loving it* – a reflection of my life thus far and my South African-ness. It should be a fun read.

For example you will read about how I was bewitched and found myself running and running, while throughout this ordeal a song by American hard-rock band Van Halen was running through my head. The song? *Running From The Devil*.

Obvious. No joke. ■





## What's to be learned from bribing traffic cops

**D**ON'T PANIC, SHE SAID, GENTLY putting her hand on my shoulder, "We're human". That's the nicest thing a traffic cop has ever said to me while taking my bribe.

Sometimes they are sterner, which is understandable because they are teaching you something: "No, Madam, you don't offer bribes like that! Never show the money where other people can see it. Do it again, like this!" There was one traffic cop in Germiston who stopped me so regularly that we negotiated a price for bulk discount. Eventually, I just renewed my licence and fixed my indicator. It worked out cheaper.

I always travel with *spietkop* money. I keep a R100 tucked under my driver's licence, in case. It pays to be prepared.

Calm down, please. I can sense some of you are experiencing cognitive dissonance on this matter.

Maybe you think you can't possibly bribe a cop, but you can. It's easy if you try. Just believe in yourself, keep an open wallet and soon you'll be like me; able to pass money for a "cold drink" on the N3, while talking on your cell phone without switching the car off – for the heinous crime of talking on a cell phone.

Breathe. Your biggest obstacle is likely not physical but mental, as are most adventure activities. Once you cross that psychological barrier, you're home free – or at least home cheaper.

Be assured that my decision to financially deal with traffic cops face-to-face was carefully measured. It was informed by the wisdom of Hippocrates, the honourable moral code of the Libertarian consent axiom, the strategic inscrutability of Game Theory and the opportunity costs of common sense. Simply put: Nobody gets hurt, the transaction is consensual, and, while it might not be both parties' idea of a first prize, it is a mutually beneficial arrangement that saves you time and money. Plus, it serves a greater good.

Think of it as privatising a government service. Willing buyer, willing

seller. He's done his job, I've learned my lesson, and dues were paid at market price. Let that be the end of it.

Let us not confuse traffic offences like an expired licence or not wearing a seat belt, with a hit-and-run accident or killing someone because you drove drunk. The former are victimless crimes while the latter amounts to manslaughter or murder.

There is no victim involved when I decide to wear my seat belt or not. Nor when I drink too much at home, for instance. It becomes an issue when I infringe on the security of others, physically or financially. That is where governments should step in. There is a prudent element of preventative and pre-emptive action in traffic legislation, which is commendable. However, it does not logically follow that R50 for a broken indicator paid at the Gillooly's interchange becomes a political butterfly that leads to State Capture.

"Am I causing harm to anyone?" is the important question we should ask ourselves – in and out of traffic.

You should be feeling a lot more comfortable with this now. No? Maybe

it will help if you consider it to be wealth redistribution with a purpose. No? Well, there's only so much I can do.

I am not going to lecture you on technique. I don't want to cramp your style. Personally, I like the "backhanded backhander" where I hold the R50 behind the driver's licence in such a way that I can drop either into my sleeve when I find I've misread the situation. Sort of like those card tricks magicians do, but with more swearing. Or, to show respect, I pull a move I call the "Hi Dear" in the headlights. That's when I pretend to be so *verskrik* that I admit to all my wrongdoings before they can point them out.

You must find your own way. Take it one R20 at a time. Do it with a smile, showing appreciation for a poorly paid job under difficult circumstances in a robust country with problems far more pressing than traffic fines. That's some nation-building right there.

Most importantly, like the lady cop said: "Don't panic."

P.S. Only joking! – Viv Vermaak

● And, btw, talking on your cellphone while driving does endanger others on the road. – Ed. ■

## Transparency International on bribery in Africa

**T**HE TENTH EDITION OF GLOBAL Corruption Barometer (GCB) – Africa, released on African Anti-Corruption Day by Transparency International in partnership with Afrobarometer, reveals that more than half of all citizens surveyed in 35 African countries think corruption is getting worse in their country.

Forty-seven thousand citizens in 35 countries were asked about their perceptions of corruption and direct experiences of bribery.

The results show that more than one in four people who accessed public services such as health care and education paid a bribe in the previous year. This is equivalent to approximately 130 million people.

The report says the poorest pay bribes twice as often as the richest and young people pay more bribes than those over 55 years old.

"Corruption... is a major barrier to economic growth, good governance and basic freedoms, like freedom of speech or citizens' right to hold governments to account," said Patricia Moreira, MD of Transparency International.

"The police is considered the most corrupt institution, with 47% believing that most or all police are corrupt. Many citizens also think government officials and parliamentarians are highly corrupt, at 39% and 36% respectively."

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