

## APARTHEID—IN PETTY STYLE



Johannesburg—the White man's city, built on gold and paved with petty apartheid. Samson and Siphon must walk the streets

**A** PARTHEID has become an unpretty label. Coined in 1948, it has become part of our vocabulary despite attempts to scratch it out with the euphemism "separate development." Alongside, the tag "petty apartheid" has also become common usage. The term distinguishes between "big," or ideological apartheid, with its superduper plans for Utopian-type Bantustans, and the many everyday regulations — statutory and customary — that are designed to keep Black and White apart. In post offices, parks, eating-spots, sports arenas and all manner of public places. For many "petty" implies a niggling and unnecessary extension of separate development. They say that in practice the discrimination is a contradiction of the Verwoerdian "separate but equal" idea, that it amounts to a continual reminder of the Black man's inferiority, his second-class status, his exploitation for the White man's comfort. In this context, petty is anything but. Here, say those who abhor our "traditional way of life," petty becomes horrendous. An immense insult.

# A euphemism and its tag can't obscure an immense



Sipho is not looking forward to the day he must get a pass. There are always policemen asking to see it.



The South African way of life—an African nanny with her White charges on a bench in a park playground "exclusively for the use of European children."

ALLEN DRURY, the American author who shakes with his right hand and hits with his left, writes in his painstaking report on South Africa, "A Very Strange Society," that petty apartheid cannot be justified.

But some will justify it by saying that it is essential in the wide scheme of things. They tell South Africans that they should not have guilty consciences. Many don't, and many wear blinkers.

## Worry

But non-Whites cannot afford to miss the signs, nor wear blinkers. They work and live picketed by an ever-increasing number of notices.

These, and numerous restric-

tions, make the experience of African living a wearisome business, saturated with considerable inconvenience. And worry. And humiliation.

Take any day, any ordinary African. Take Samson. I don't know his surname. Who does? But he is a good "boy." Good enough to earn a day off from his firm where he works as a messenger. He has been with the same firm for 15 years in spite of the conviction of his employer that, "like them all," he has a propensity, not yet exercised, to up and leave at a moment's notice.

Anyway, on this day off, a Tuesday, he decides to take Sipho, his 10-year-old son, to the big White city for a look-see. Sipho is lucky; he does not have to go to school every day.

Because Sipho dawdles over his putu—he's a bit tired of it actually — they miss the 8 o'clock Putco bus. It wouldn't have mattered a couple of weeks ago, but the National Transport Commission has decreed that the Soweto-Johannesburg service must be cut, that buses must run only from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and from midnight to 8 a.m.

No bother, it is only 3,923 yards to the railway station. They walk it.

## The baas

It is a good fast train — which is more than the baas from Bryanston can boast. Soon the two are shuffling out of the great Johannesburg Station.

Sipho, who is learning to read — he practises on street names and car number plates — is delighted by the many signs around him. What he likes especially, is that they are all in big printing. They are so clear and reading them is easy. Like the first he sees on the station:

NET NIE-BLANKES  
NON-WHITES ONLY

The sign gives him an exclusive feeling. The next he has difficulty reading over his shoulder. Samson is suddenly hurrying him along.

S.A. RAILWAYS POLICE  
CHARGE OFFICE  
NON-WHITES

Into the street — he needs a thousand eyes to take in the notices. Vast billboards exhorting him to drink more beer, little boxes warning him to keep his city clean, shop signs, street names, TJs by the score, and a clump of magazines on the corner saying: BONA. A sort of rough and tumble old American car pulls up in front of them:

RANK FOR 2ND CLASS TAXIS  
Again that exclusive feeling. Even the White man can't use this taxi. Besides, the sign

speaks to him. After all he is in Class 2 at school. And that makes Sipho feel quite superior.

In the park, things are swinging. In the playground little White tots and lots of little White laughs. Sipho thinks he would like to go as high as that boy on the swing. He might if he had the opportunity. But what did the sign say?

CITY OF JOHANNESBURG  
PARKS AND RECREATION  
DEPARTMENT

"... The playgrounds and playground equipment in this park is for the use of European children only."

BY ORDER.  
And underneath it in beautiful big letters:

NO DOGS ALLOWED

That's right. Sipho would never allow dogs. You couldn't trust them. Little Black boys know all about a dog's inborn colour prejudice. No, it wouldn't be safe to have dogs around. And certainly not those police dogs which protect people. Sipho had seen them in action before.

## Nannies

Sipho tugs his father's sleeve. A Black nanny sits with her charge on a bench marked SLEGS BLANKES. Whatever that might mean. The little boy is wearing a funny mask. And look there is a young nanny going up and down on a see-saw. And over there, why there's a little golden head nuzzling into her nanny's neck.

Nannies, of course, Sipho knows, are the really privileged. They can go almost anywhere. To White beaches, White benches, and in White buses and trams. Something like waiters. Sometimes there are more Black men in White restaurants than people. And then there is Sipho's uncle. He is actually a lift boy in a WHITES ONLY lift. But he doesn't like the job when it gets too full.

Out of the park to Yeoville. Without thinking they enter the block of flats through the back, past the rubbish bins, It's

shorter than having to go all the head.Sipho way round to the front.

Inside, Samson scratches his head. Sipho's a little bewildered. The lift signs say:

THIS LIFT FOR DOMESTICS  
ONLY  
AND  
THIS LIFT FOR TENANTS  
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So they walk to the top floor to see Margaret. Samson tells the madam that she is his sister. But Sipho knows she is a girl-friend. His father has several now his mother has gone back home because she didn't have a dampus or a permit or something. Sipho has been with his aunty ever since.

He is not really looking forward to the day he must get his pass . . . even though he thinks his photograph will be rather handsome. He has seen how policemen are always asking to see your pass.

## Dangerous

So Sipho is learning to avoid policemen. You must disappear almost at the smell, before they see you because it is dangerous for them to see you running. Still, some things cannot be avoided. Like the rough imperative on a wall:

HAWKERS . . . TRADESMEN  
. . . NATIVES!

To make it clearer an arrow points to a barred gate. It is padlocked. Sipho wonders if they have to climb through the bars. The gate reminds him of the zoo. That one time. All those bobbejsans. And pony rides — for his White brothers only.

No, they wouldn't go there today. Samson has a better plan. He would take his son to the Hertzog Tower to see the wonder of the city that the White man built. They catch a bus — when it comes.

Some of the bus stops say: BUS STOP 2ND CLASS  
Quite a lot have the 2nd class painted out.

Sipho is sorry that some thoughtless person has painted



This rough and humiliating imperative of flats has an arrow that points man's pettiness

out the second class hits. He is even more upset at the Tower. Bantu on Thursdays, said the man. It is the same at the Planetarium. And at the Indian bioscope a handwritten sign says:  
AFRICANS AND CHILDREN  
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Sipho knows his father likes the bioscope. Especially cowboy films. Ah, well, missing one film is not much.  
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RODNEY  
BASTION

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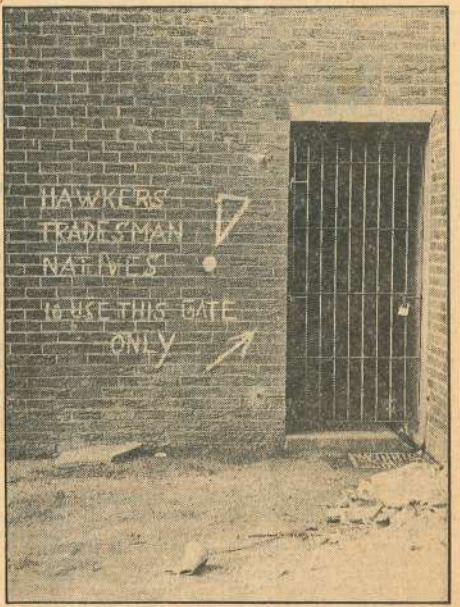
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On the way back to the station . . . it has been a long day —

Siph wees against a wall. On the wall, at Siph's eye level there is one word. It says:



The train back to Soweto is crowded and fast.



an African nanny with her White charges on a bench in a park playground "exclusively for the use of European children."