
How our Students Face the Future

5 questions put to 300
Fort Hare and Natal Students

LEONARD BLOOM

A RECENT SURVEY carried out at Michaelhouse, private-school in Natal, revealed that a very high proportion of the Matric class favoured *apartheid* policies, but that the students were not as optimistic about the future of South Africa as they *should* have been had they believed in the justice, wisdom and effectiveness of these policies. At intervals since 1959, the author has been carrying out enquiries into the attitudes of students at the University of Natal and at (the former) Fort Hare University College, about their own futures and that of South Africa, and has found even university students showing a frightening lack of understanding of the problems facing the country. This lack of understanding can surely only be the result of the sealing of South Africa's cultural and intellectual frontiers, and will probably become worse.

The students were asked to write on five topics, and there was strict secrecy so that they need not fear victimisation nor hope to curry favour by their answers. In all, about 300 students have co-operated in the enquiries.

The questions, and answers run as follows:—

1. *If you could change yourself in any way you liked, in what way would you like to change?* The answers to this question set the tone that was found throughout the enquiries of sharp differences between the "brown" and the "pink" students that could be directly related to the differing social, economic and political pressures on their group. The "pinks" tended to describe conventional, uninspired wishes for prosperity, a happy family life, a nicer personality, and rarely suggested that there could be little change in their personal qualities without some change in their society. On the other hand, the "browns" were overwhelmingly concerned with social and economic change, in response to the inexorable and intolerable pressures of a social-economic-political system in which they are forbidden to join as full citizens; how *can* they change themselves unless the society makes it possible for them to change? Typical answers by the "browns" were: "I want to live, not exist", others wanted "to belong to an unsuppressed group". One African wanted to become a great poet, but for unconventional reasons. He wrote: "If I could

suddenly be endowed with the ability to express in poetic language the disgust and distress the S. African problems arouse in me, I would be pleased. The poetic ability is to be used to arouse other people's consciousness to the seriousness of the present situation, and to urge them to do something about it".

2. *What sort of person do you most despise?* The "pinks" despised people with conventionally unpleasant qualities such as weakness, dishonesty and priggishness, but the "browns" strongly tended to despise those who held (to them) repugnant political or social beliefs, such as those who believed in "racial superiority", or who are "reactionary", "exploiters" or "Nationalists". Clear parallels were drawn between the "racial situation in Nazi Germany and similar attitudes held in South Africa, and this was made pointed by reference to the D.R.C., the S.A. Police and the present Prime Minister of South Africa. But even the apparently conventional answers were often elaborated to reveal latent social-political pre-occupations.

3. *What sort of person do you most admire?* Here there were similar trends: the "pinks" admired strength, intelligence, being moral and similar conventional qualities, the "browns" admired social-political qualities such as being "racially unprejudiced" and being "fighters for freedom". Even conventional terms such as "intelligence" were related to the overall plea for "racial" tolerance. A sinister reflection of the quality and the isolation of "brown" education, and the inevitable narrowing of cultural life, is that only the "pinks" mentioned by name any artistic, literary, cultural or humanitarian figure. The "browns" mentioned only South African political leaders, such as Chief Luthuli and Bishop Huddleston.

4. *What is your highest secret ambition or goal?* The "pinks" appear to be reasonably satisfied with their lives and feel tolerably secure; their ambitions are modest and unexciting: to have a happy home, professional success, enough money and to be able to travel. But the "browns" ambitions and goals were overwhelmingly concerned with the disabilities that *apartheid* and white domination make them suffer: underprivilege, social-economic-political discrimination, low social status, insecurity—all the humiliations of living in an unjust society. Even social and professional ambitions were often subordinated to the aim of bringing about a more just society: thus a man wished to be a successful lawyer so that he might "raise the common people" by his skills. The "pinks" displayed almost no interest in social and political aims—they demonstrated little desire to battle with the poverty and indignity that flourish in their very back-yards, and they seemed strangely unmoved by any sense of urgency or disquiet at the uneasy state of their country.

5. *Give a rough sketch of what sort of person you expect to be in ten years' time.* Here were seen most sharply and poignantly the differences between the pictures of the future of the "pinks" and the "browns". The "pinks" wrote placidly about conventional success in marriage, profession and personal life, predicting

LEONARD BLOOM is a lecturer in Psychology at the University of Cape Town.

their future with a calm confidence, that utterly ignored that they were living in a continent in which rapid, even violent change, can overnight alter the whole pattern of their lives. Not one "pink" qualified his answers by referring to social and political uncertainty in South Africa, unlike a high proportion of "browns" who explicitly referred to it. The "browns" expressed sharply and without restraint their feelings of disability, insecurity and sometimes despair in their present plight, and expressed hopes for political and economic freedom in ten years' time. "The future seems so dark"—is a theme that runs throughout the answers of many "browns", but they also have a robust realistic faith in the future triumph of justice.

The most damaging, cynical and malevolent folly of the governments of South Africa during the past fourteen years, is the systematic and shameless way in which freedom has been destroyed in education, by such totalitarian techniques as the naked indoctrination of "Christian National Education" and "Bantu Education."

A direct result of this educational distortion is that the "browns" have been thrust into a state of resentment and discouragement, and the "pinks" have been encouraged to live their lives in an atmosphere which deliberately plays-down any attempt to solve the problems of the future. Both "pinks" and "browns" are educated to fill roles in distinct societies within a future that they are taught they cannot have. This enquiry, and others similar to it, suggest that unless this *apartheid* society be overthrown there will *never* be one state of South Africa, united, prosperous, influential and honest but the fragmentation, the suspicions, the coarse lack of sympathy and understanding will make South Africa increasingly mean, callous and petty. ●

27 MARCH

CHIEF SABATA

Randolph Vigne

THAT TIME I JOLLED IN FORDSBURG

Vic Swanepoel

FREEDOM FOR NAMIB

Mburumba Kerina

ZULU TRANSFORMATION

a review by
Anthony Barker

The Two Moralties

This second portion of a monograph inquires into the circumstances which produced the attitude of rejection in South Africa

JORDAN K. NGUBANE

THE EUROPE FROM WHICH Jan van Riebeeck's passionately Protestant settlers came associated government with absolutism. This was the political fashion almost all over the continent. The smell of the blood shed by the Inquisition was still in the air. In the long and bitter struggle with Papism the Protestants had relied heavily on the Old Testament to justify their stand. God, the Word and the Chosen People were the central trinity which gave content to this part of the bible. The God of the Old Testament was harsh and jealous in his judgments and absolute in his rule. To fear him was the highest virtue. The Word was the unchanging law by which he guided human destinies. The Chosen People were its custodians. This marked them out as a group singled for permanently privileged treatment. Blood purity, race consciousness and adherence to the Word were the inseparable conditions for successful custodianship.

In the Cape environment, where colour was the most obvious dividing line between one racio-cultural group and the other, the Old Testament's glorification of race could have only one effect: to project the settlers to the fore as the elect of the Lord; the keepers of the faith who were surrounded and often threatened by hordes of Black barbarians.

These factors combined with the settlers' relative isolation from the main streams of European thought and their numerical weakness to place a premium on group solidarity as a condition of survival. A mode of conduct emerged from all this which we shall call the morality of survival. The group exclusiveness which developed rejected the African's right to equal citizenship in a mixed community. Today it finds political expression in *apartheid*.

JORDAN K. NGUBANE, *journalist, former editor of the Ilanga laseNatal and Indian Opinion, vice-president of the Liberal Party of South Africa, attended the All African Peoples' Congress at Accra in 1958, and was chairman of the continuation committee of the African Leaders Conference held at Orlando in 1961. This article is Part II of a series.*