

Getting an early start

At one train station we pick up a large number of school children — boys and girls in their late teens. I wondered about these white children and their world-view. They live in white suburbs, socialize with white families only, board a train with “Whites only” coaches to school, attend exclusively white schools, play with white friends, attend church with white congregations and their only contact with a black African is with their gardener or cook at home or the nanny who brought them up! The Whites do not only want to maintain their exclusivity but also their social superiority. Yet they want to be known as Africans. They have, however, never lived as though they belong to Africa. The school children could have been coming out of any British public school. They are Africans of convenience. The color of their skin assures them a secure job after graduation.

The same pattern of separate waiting room for “Whites” is repeated at Pretoria railway station. I walk down to see the acquaintance at the Government’s Bureau of Information. It is a 7-storey building in downtown Pretoria. From the time I enter and the time I leave I do not see a single non-White in the building. My acquaintance talks about the universities being open to all races. He mentions

universal citizenship being extended to all South Africans. It is merely an attempt to cover up the failure of the policy of establishing “independent” homelands with respective citizenships. The Blacks are now being restored their right to citizenship of South Africa. The homelands of Transkei, Bophutatawans, Venda and Ciskei were merely labor pools for South Africa and not economically viable entities.

The Immorality Act forbidding interracial marriages has been scrapped. The question arises: if an interracial couple were to get married and want to settle down, where would they live? In a black area? A white area? While my acquaintance rattles off the government record, I casually mention my dilemma earlier in the afternoon when I stood facing a coach marked “Whites only” and having the option of either hopping the train or missing it altogether — in which case I would not have seen him at the appointed time. He shyly informs me that the railway system is still segregated along racial lines.

On my way back to the bus station I walked into a government building to inquire for directions to the bus terminal. I see one black man among hordes of Whites leaving the building. I encounter a young soldier at the front desk who, having also finished the day, volunteers to walk with me for a few blocks towards the bus terminal. He



“Our country today is a symbol of the expansion of freedom . . . sustained by equal rights before an independent judiciary We accept one citizenship for all South Africans, implying equal treatment and opportunities.” State President P.W. Botha in the South African Parliament, January 31, 1986.