I was about 4. I thought about it clearly last night, that it was about four. It was in 1961 about. We lived in a farm here in Koninghuiskraantz outside Pretoria, a big working farm. But we also had a farm about 20, 30 kilometers from our house, which belonged to us, that all the cattle that were on that farm, like we call it the dry cattle, either they were pregnant or they didn't produce milk, so they didn't have to be on the working farm. And we had a family - it was just a piece of land with a river going through it, um I can't remember actually whether it was fenced in, most probably it was a little-bit fenced in because the cattle had to stay within the thing – and there was um, a family that lived on this – a black family – that lived on this property, that looked after the cattle and if there were problems, would contact us of the reasons. And they then contact us and said, um, one of the cattle was stolen and and slaughtered on the property, for, for meat. Er, um, it was an enormous property so you know, you can… and it was down at the river. So when er - it belonged actually to my gran. So we kids went with my gran to drive out to this farm just for... I don't know, we just went with – I can't remember the reason. She just said we're going to the ... this farm's name was [farm name omitted]. So we drove to [farm name omitted]and we got there and I can remember, um, going down to, to the river where this meat was hanging. And my gran before, must have before we left our farm phoned the police, because cattle theft was a serious thing that you really wanted to deal with if you're a cattle farmer. So we arrived at the farm, and the family that lived there showed us where it was, and you know, where this meat was hanging and as we were standing there, the police arrived with dogs. And as they arrived, these people that worked for us ran away. And the police put the dogs on them! Just purely without asking questions or anything, put the dogs on them and said "Ja, they are the guilty ones, because they ran way. Why did they run away?"

But in those days you must realise that the police were an absolute threat to black people. You know, the instant if they saw police, they ran away, especially with big Alsatian dogs. And my gran was furious. I can remember it very clearly. You know I can throw a wobbly, but she threw one serious wobbly at this police that how dare they do that, do this to…. And I can remember it very, very vividly how furious she was . She didn't often in her life, that I can recall even knowing her later, often got mad. Or you know, she wasn't a woman that quickly would jump to…And she was furious at the police for doing, for sending the …, And so much so that she chased them out of the property and said if that is the way that they deal with justice; that's unacceptable. That she will deal with it herself and she chased them away. And I can't really remember how many police men they were, but there was definitely more, more than one. It must have been two or three, not more than that.

But it was white, young policemen – that I can clearly remember. Um, and then my … when….once they left, so they obviously um told my gran to get lost, and why did she waste their time if she doesn't want them to deal with the situation in their way, and I remember it was a serious argument. Um I was obviously petrified, because I was four years old and here my gran is fighting with the police, and telling them to get off her property. And ja, that I think was my first recollection of Apartheid. And when they left, then my gran just said to us all, you know, "One mustn't trust justice just because they think they're in a uniform". I can remember something like that that she said to us. And that was it. And I just think that to me, that was my first recollection really of whites being, ja, derogative, negative, ugly to black people purely because they were black. And they reacted in the way that all black people reacted in those days. It was you run away, because of the Pass Laws. And those Pass Laws - that I can also tell a story about. But that was I would say first my serious recollection of an Apartheid issue that happened in my life. And I think it definitely influenced the rest of my life.

Male

Here is the long and short of my first recollections of apartheid.

Let me set the scene.

1964, I was ten years old living in Ermelo, which was birth place of Albert Hertzog, who was at that stage was leader of a political party called the HNP. The Hirsute National Party was even more conservative than the Conservative Party which was formed many years later. Ermelo was the strong hold of this terribly conservative, narrow minded group of Afrikaners, who did not except anyone into their laager they believed were not part of their chosen race. English, Greek, Portuguese were lucky to be classified white. These creepy people filled with hatred, went to church on Sundays, in black suits and then disappeared into cracks on Sunday afternoon, only to reappear again in kaki clothes on Monday morning. The Afrikaners were hugely influenced by the Nazi storm troopers philosophy germinated in Germany a few years earlier. Verwoerd, the founder of apartheid, moulded his political policies while he was a university in German.

http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/images/verwoerd_big.jpg

“He was awarded a masters and a doctorate in philosophy, both cum laude, and turned down an Abe Bailey scholarship to Oxford University, England, opting to continue his studies in psychology in Germany. Verwoerd left for Germany in 1925, and stayed there during 1926, studying at the Universities of Hamburg, Berlin and Leipzig. His later critics have at times suggested that this coincided with the rise of German National Socialism in the 1930s;”

There was tremendous hatred for the English by the Afrikaners as their families had been treated harshly by the English during the Boer wars. They hated the blacks who had been a natural enemy since Jan arrived in the Cape on his ship. Any child growing up in this environment was totally brain washed and was not exposed to outside influences.

Here is my lucky break. My father was from and educated more liberal Afrikaans family who decided that they did not want their kids to grow up without speaking English. My aunt was sent to [school name omitted] and my father to [English school name omitted]. My grandfather told him if he returned as an Englishman he would 'donner' him. My father made friends with Hilton boys and went to fight against the German's with his mates when the Second World War broke out. Lucky for us the Afrikaner boy got outside exposure before returning to Ermelo after the war to work for his father.

We kids were born to another Anglicized Afrikaner, my mother, who was adopted by the convent in Ermelo at the age of six, after her father lost both his legs and died from gangrene, due to the harsh treatment received by the English in a concentration camp during the bore war. My mother never spoke Afrikaans.

So here our family was, in Ermelo, living as out casts because we spoke English and did not go to church on Sundays. We were treated a verryers.(Traitors or turn coats. A turn coat was the name given to Boers who turned their coats inside out when caught by the British to hide their badgers and their identity.)

Our family had good relationships with our servants, relative to those days. Petrus, our gardener became very close to my brother and I but never a social friend.

Late one night my brother and I were woken by my dad swearing in the garden. Anthony and I ran outside to witness my dad chasing young white policemen off our property. The police had somehow discovered that Petrus had a girl friend in his room and this was apparently forbidden if they did not have permission from their employers.

What really shocked me was the way the police had been banging on his bedroom door screaming at him to come out. He was told that a 'kaffir' did not have the right to do this and he was going to pay for this dearly.

It was horrible. According to the law, Pertus was allowed to have a women sleeping over if a white person wrote a letter, giving him permission to do so. From that day on Anthony and I found a use for our newly acquired writing skills. That was my first recollection of apartheid. Although, I knew something was not right, I had never really verbalized it until that day. Like an awakening. What if

my father never went to [school name omitted] and to war over seas, what if my mother's father never ended up in a British concentration camp? I would never have known something was wrong.

What I have learnt over the years is that history repeats itself. The English stuffed up the Boers, the Boers stuffed up the blacks, the blacks stuffed up the ……..????

SN29

Earliest experience of racism that I have not spoken about before

I don't have an alarmist or an exciting story to share. There isn't one experience. I have just started recalling experiences of racism as I saw them.

I was born in 1963 and grew up in an English speaking home in Sasolburg, in the Orange Free State, a predominately Afrikaans town. Being English speaking in an Afrikaans dominated culture resulted in me being considered an outsider. Both my parents grew up and went to university in Natal before relocating to Sasolburg.

The laws in the province didn't allow for Indians or Colored to stay in the province for more than 24hours so the only real exposure to other races was that of the Africans. The exposure I had was to African people doing manual labour jobs in the schools, the town, the factories, the shops and our home. From an early age I was aware that my parents treated the African people in our home differently to the manner in which I saw African people treated elsewhere. In the home, although they were treated with respect and fairly, they were still considered to be lesser equals. I lived in a neighbourhood were I only saw White people, I only went to school with White people, I saw White people with the houses, the cars and the wealth, I saw White people with the intellect, the ability and the jobs. I had very little exposure to Indians and Coloureds – only when going on holiday to Natal and the Cape respectively. Going on holiday re-affirmed how I interpreted the world. I only saw White people on the beaches, in the swimming pools, at the theatres and at the shops. On Boxing Day, we stayed away from the beaches, because too many non-Whites came down to their allocated beach and it became noisy, unruly and unclean. Black people were seen as the people who did the jobs that no-one else wanted to or as petty criminals. My male cousins and friends brothers were all being called to do military duty to fight the war to protect us against the Blacks. In the late 70's, this perception was re-inforced by the media and I then saw Black people as terrorists who wanted to destroy the country. With limited alternative input, I grew up believing that, in all aspects, Whites were the superior race.

In 1980, I was privileged enough to go on an overseas tour to the United Kingdom and parts of Europe. During this trip a couple of experiences left a lasting impression on me. I observed White

people doing jobs that were only considered for Black people in South Africa (i.e. sweeping the streets, cleaning hotel rooms, collecting garbage, etc) and visa-versa (i.e. Black people working in jobs reserved for White people in South Africa - working in banks, doctors, lawyers, etc). I also saw and interacted with mixed couples and their children – something that I had never been exposed to in South Africa nor would have been allowed to. I felt confused by the fact that these were people that were enjoying the same things that I was – I had somehow believed that they were different and enjoyed different things. I was also exposed to non-racial societies (no White and non-White signs dividing the population). At first I was extremely uncomfortable but by the end of the 6 week tour, it felt uncomfortable to be back in South Africa and have the society divided along racial lines.

In 1982, I started working for a bank in Johannesburg as an accounts clerk. I just expected that I would get a job – the idea of competing on skill and competency didn't even enter my thinking. An African lady worked with me in the department. She was employed because the CEO of the company felt compassion towards her as her mother had been his nanny during his childhood years. She joined the company a few years before me and took me under her wing and taught me everything there was to know about the job. A truly wonderful woman who really was the leader of the area in all aspects – she had the knowledge and the ability. In addition to the two of us, there was a white male in the team who didn't have the ability nor a good attitude. Unfortunately, when the position of supervisor was announced, the male was given the role. In my naivety, I questioned the decision as why neither of us had been considered and was advised that neither women nor black people could become supervisors. Selfishly, I made an issue of this and made the whole thing about woman and me. I didn't once stop to focus on the race issue nor the fact that the Black woman was the deserving individual.

Although there was still much segregation in the workplace, I started interacting more with people from other race groups and began appreciating the fact that they were people with dreams and hopes just like me. During the volatile 80's, I brought food and clothing to the non-White staff that stayed in the office overnight rather than go back to their homes. Whilst I still held the view that Black people were terrorists, I saw the human side of what was happening and tried to make a difference in a small way.

The influences of my youth certainly have allowed me to believe that Whites are better and that Blacks can't do as good a job as Whites can. I haven't told this to anyone as I am deeply embarrassed to confess that I thought these things. I would never admit these thoughts to anyone as they are

deeply offensive. In ‘talking’ about these thoughts, I am still deeply embarrassed and offended as some of my good friends are Black people. I work with amazingly gifted and capable Black people and no longer see people as being superior through race. As a result, I went through a period of over compensating for my guilt and embarrassment.

I certainly don’t believe this anymore and have worked hard at removing these experiences as reference points within my memory and replacing them with positive reinforcement messages.

Claire

I think it was in 1970, thereabouts. My mother and my aunt, they were working in the white neighbourhood. While they were working there, we used sometimes to go and visit there. I think I was about ten or so. I had a sister, I used to call her sister, but she was my Aunt's daughter, we grew up together. When we go to visit the aunt, the sister, she was somebody who was inquisitive. When we get into the house of these white people, she just get inside and she sits in the chair. And after sitting on the chair, she also just went to the sink, and take a cup and drink water. And the owners of the house were there and we were not allowed. As much as our parents were working there we were not allowed to get inside the house. Or do anything, you would rather just stand outside, if you were in the house you were not supposed to sit down. It was just forbidden. You were not supposed to do that but as children, she was a year younger than me, I think she was nine, I was ten. She sits on the chair and after she went to the sink and drink water. It was such a big issue, in such a way that that chair, same day, it was given to my aunt and the cup that she used, it was given back to my aunt. So I think that's an experience.

We were so shocked, as children we didn't know what's wrong, what happened "why, why this was happening". We couldn't understand but it was shocking because even our parents were angry at us, why we did that and as children we didn't know. If there was something wrong in doing that. She was angry at our aunt. The owners of the house were so angry. And my aunt was apologising. We were puzzled, because we didn't know what was happening. And we were given the chair and the cup.

Another experience around about the time, I think 1972, I was eleven. I had an elder sister, they'd just paid Lobola to her. And after they paid lobola as a family you were supposed to make a sort of a get together, to welcome the other family. When we were at the family get together we were supposed to make this African beer and slaughter a sheep or goat and make this African Beer, but at that time you were not supposed to make this African Beer. It was not accepted. Even if you want to make a celebration, you had to go to the office and report you were going to make a celebration, you were not supposed to do that, you couldn't you had to report, so my mother didn't report that, or my parents didn't report that we were doing something. I don't know what happened but even if

you didn't report they would know that something is happening. Then they came to our house they find this African beer they took it and splashed it all over then took my mother into the van they went with her to the police station where it was a case. I think they released her that evening but it was shocking to us and we were crying not knowing what we could do. That's how we grew up.

And another one, those years I had a brother he is still there, he is living in Pretoria, and I was living in the Eastern Transvaal Mpumalanga, that's where I grew up. When my brother visited home because he was not staying at home and when he visits, we have to report that we are having a visitor so one day he came with our uncle and they didn't report, because they came in the evening, they were travelling in a combi. Then whilst we were sleeping, the police knew that we had visitors and we didn't report. They came to our house and they took them to the police station where they were detained for hours. They had to pay bail and the like just for visiting. They took the visitors.

Those were the experiences of the Seventies.

Emily

In 1987, we were on holiday: our family together with our family friends. We decided to go to Lion's Park. We were having a great time, picnicking, the children enjoying the company of animals like for example lions, peacocks etc. There was also a swimming pool which was fascinating to us because we didn't have swimming pools from where we came from, the township. It was the highlight for us. Then came the caretaker, a white Afrikaner man. He told us we were not supposed to be there, it was for whites only. He managed to upset all of us, the humiliation in front of our children. This resulted in an altercation between the parents and this caretaker. We told him that "we are not going anywhere, we have paid to be here" and he can call the owner or the boss to resolve this matter. This incident was very disturbing and it was during the sensitive times of apartheid, especially as I was expecting a child. So we ended up staying because he never returned with the boss or owner. This was during the festive season, and a brought a damper to our holiday. To this day that incident makes me think of how it affected our self confidence and self worth that such a day will never be forgotten.

I was born in 1958 in Vrededorp now known as Pageview. I spent all my childhood years in Vrededorp until we were evicted in 1976 and had to be forcibly moved to Lenasia.

My earliest re-collections of apartheid were mainly regarding the physical separations that existed in structures such as post offices, banks, sporting fields and schools. The distribution of facilities was vastly inferior for "non white" citizens compared to white citizens. "Non White" was the term designated by the government to Indians, Coloured and Blacks. We found this term derogatory and preferred to be called Black. The post office on 11th street had a small facility that was understaffed for "non whites" and a large office, with many staffers to assist white clients. The Queens Park ground on 17th street was a dusty sandy ground with no seating facilities and was used throughout the year. It was packed with spectators on weekends. In winter league soccer matches were played and on summer weekends league cricket matches took place. During the week this sandy ground was used for training. Yet across the field was a large park and ground that had immaculate lawn and was maintained throughout the year. This was what we called the "Boere Veld" and was meant for the exclusive use of whites. It was always kept secure from "non whites" by security guards with vicious Alsatians patrolling the perimeter fencing regularly. The most remarkable thing, was that I do not recall ever having seen anyone using this well manicured facility.

From a very young age, my parents inculcated in me an understanding that despite the system being grossly unfair, it was not sensible to protest as the repercussions were harsh and it was commonly known that multiple community members were jailed without trial, subjected to torture and some even died in prison without any official explanation.

I had first hand experience of this. We lived on 13th street in Jassat Mansions. On a flat above there lived a family which included three sons who were studying at Wits University. As I was many years younger, they were very helpful in my young years as they taught me to read interesting books and taught me to play chess. In 1968 they gave me a chess board as a birthday present. I am sure their parents had great expectations of them.

One day, as I returned from school I noticed a large contingent of police officers outside our home. I soon realized that they had come to arrest two of the brothers for political activities. To this date I

do not know what the activities were, but people mentioned that this amounted to attending protest meetings at the university. The two brothers were detained without trial for a period of approximately two weeks. When they were released, they relayed horrifying accounts of torture at the hands of the security branch officials. The entire family was traumatized after this event and soon thereafter they emigrated to Canada. I have not seen them since, and often think of how a simple act of attending a protest meeting, can lead to such life altering repercussions. Due to circumstances such as these, I have always tried to maintain a low profile and avoid any involvement in political debates. Events such as these have had a negative impact on my personal development as they instilled in me a sense of fear and a lack of confidence.

Because of the Group areas act and the necessity to attend schools, I have spent a large portion of my life commuting. When I lived in Vrededorp, I had to attend school in Lenasia (about 36kms away) and had to travel by train from Braamfontein Station. At that time we had to walk from home to the station (3kms) at 06:30am, take a train to Lenasia Station and walk to the school (2kms). In the afternoon the sequence had to be repeated. Just when I thought that going to Wits University would be convenient, we were evicted from our home in 1976 and forced to move to Lenasia. I now had to travel daily to Wits University from Lenasia. One can only calculate the number of wasted endless hours commuting back and forth and the frustration of travel when it could have been spent fruitfully on studying, sporting activities or recreation.

I matriculated with good grades and got accepted at Wits University. I however had to apply for special ministerial consent to study at a “white” institution. Our class comprised of 208 students of which 11 students were of Indian, Coloured and Black origin. Being such a small minority had its problems. The small grouping of “non white” students usually interacted within the group and apart from studies there was little social interaction.

After qualifying as a medical doctor, I decided to pursue a career in Radiology. I applied for a position as a registrar and was invited to an interview. Soon after the interview, I was called by the Professor to inform me that I was short listed for a position, and would be able to start the following year. He informed me that as I was very keen, he would arrange a position for me with his colleague at Edendale Hospital in Pietermaritzburg while I waited to start the registrar ship in Johannesburg. I immediately accepted but two weeks before I was to go Pietermaritzburg, I received a telegram from Edendale Hospital informing me that the they were unable to offer this position to me due to “unfortunate circumstances”. I later found out that the unfortunate circumstance was that I was

Indian and my name was Makan and not “McCan” as was telephonically related to them by the Prof in the department of Radiology.

In conclusion, apartheid had many negative effects on my personal and professional development. It has been responsible for personality factors, loss of time, income, dignity and self esteem.

Nelly

In 1974 I was in Form 2 now grade 9 and attending boarding school in Pietersburg.

We had been home for the winter school break and on this July morning I was feeling very excited because later that evening I would be traveling back to school. The excitement was about meeting friends whom I missed terribly in the three weeks that I had been home. The journey itself was an event because the train left Park Station at 20:00 and only arrived in Pietersburg the following morning six.

As scholars we traveled second class and had to make bookings in advance.

Unfortunately for me the booking had to be made on the day I would be traveling and this was usually a problem. My mum who normally did this could due to unforeseen circumstances not accompany me. In those days we always had adults to accompany us as we were not considered mature enough to do things for ourselves especially money matters. My mum's aunt whom I will refer to as gran went with me to Park Station to make the booking.

All booking was done in a "Whites Only" section which at the time was very intimidating as one never knew what to expect. The surroundings were always clean and somehow different from the areas usually used by black people which were not properly maintained.

When we arrived at the offices there was a short queue, an indication that a lot of people had already made their bookings. We were third in the queue. As usual we all knew and understood that as black people we had to talk in hushed tones lest we were reminded that we were making noise.

When it was our turn I approached the counter with excitement mingled with confidence because my gran who was from Botswana had implied without necessarily saying so that as a "grown up" I would have to speak for myself and this really meant a lot.

The person behind the counter was a young white male whose face appeared friendly though too young to be working. He was drinking from a mug and took a sip of his drink as if to occupy himself whilst we approached the counter. He did not acknowledge nor ask questions. He just looked at us

enquiringly. I knew my place and understood that when dealing with white people you were expected to be respectful and address them as sir or madam. However on this moment my manners temporarily left me.

He turned his attention to my gran who looked at me to talk. I blurted the words that I had been reciting over and over in my head “I want to make a booking for Pietersburg for tonight”. There was a long pause whilst the young man glared at us. For some time there was an awkward silence and when he finally spoke he asked my gran what I was doing there.

My gran understood immediately what that meant and I heard her trying to explain that as a youngster I did not understand “these things”. Her explanation seemed to fall on deaf ears as the young man kept on and on about my lack of manners. At some stage I feared that he would never confirm my booking.

When I realized what was happening fear and confusion engulfed me. The young man had taken offence that I had not addressed him as sir and used the word ‘want” instead of “may I”. I heard my gran pleading and his response was in all instances was “what she is doing here if she does not understand”.

After what seemed like a life time and after rubbing it in painfully he confirmed the booking and issued a ticket. By this time the queue had grown longer and there was fear and concern on all the black faces because everybody did not know what to expect after the drama.

I could have given anything to disappear from that scene, what with my gran who hours earlier had shown so much trust and confidence in me that I was old enough to represent myself.

As we walked away from the scene and people were looking wondering what got the young man so angry I was experiencing a lot of emotions, surprise, fear, embarrassment and confusion. I felt very small and this did not do much for my self confidence.

As the whole incident was unfolding it was a shock to me that the person who at first posed no threat and appeared not intimidating could turn so aggressive and even disregard an elderly person’s pleas to let it all go. Before the explosion his young face was inviting and friendly. He made my gran an old lady to apologize many times whilst at the same time not accepting the apology.

There was something about the way he addressed us that said I am in charge, I am the boss and you are at my mercy.

After this incident I decided to shut the whole experience out of my life and that is exactly what I thought happened until…

Years later at the beginning of 2003 I started work at {…} which is part of Transnet that own the rail system in South Africa. As I was taken on a tour of the premises I went into an office block which was an exact replica of the place where almost thirty years earlier I had experienced the worst humiliation as a black person.

I never knew the impact the incident had on me until then. I also wonder what happened to the young man who at a young age had so much power and if he still has any of that. To date every time I go into this building which happens quite often I cannot help but think of the incident and how I would react if it happened now.

Penny

As a ten or twelve year old at the time, I vividly remember a total sense of confusion I experienced when my diabetic mum, - now late - whom I was very close to and who needed to use a public toilet, wasn't allowed to. We were sitting in a public park in central JHB and I pointed my mum to the toilet closest to us when she expressed the need to use one. My mum explained that she was not allowed to use the facility as it was for the sole use of "White women only". I could not comprehend this and felt that we were regarded as lesser beings. I was quite affected by it as I felt that my mother, my role model had to endure some inconvenience and discomfort over something I immediately regarded as unfair.

Today, some 40years later, I remember every detail – every emotion and felt the sense of powerlessness of my parents who both explained that there was nothing they could do about this.

Tom

There are many. There are many experiences but I've got one or maybe two that I can perhaps narrate which are still vividly in my mind. In fact, what happened is, my dad, I think around about 1967 or 1968, and then I was about 17 or 18. He gave me, I think R1, to take to the bank for saving purposes. My father was quite passionate about saving, saving money. He died a pauper, I'm sorry to say. But he was always attuned to saving and encouraged all of us at home to save. So he gave me money, I think R1, which was a lot of money at the time, and then he said, "Ok just go and open a savings account for yourself". So I went to Standard Bank. At first, I think I approached FNB first at the time, nothing turns on that, and then I don't know if they refused to accept my deposit or open an account for me, I don't quite recall they were at the corner of Bree and van Willig street but nothing happened. So I went over to Standard Bank, corner Small street and Jeppe street and it's still there and it's still my branch. I approached them and I opened the savings account, there was no problem and they gave me my savings book, the blue one. Each time you came to make a deposit they entered the deposit and when you withdrew they did the same and so on and the interest so and that was it. I opened the account. And then I went back home.

I would come at regular points to put in some money, some deposits, to increase my balance. What happened, this is my story now, I don't know whether it was for the second or third time, when I came there I realised that, and of course this has been happening, I realised that there were actually two queues toward the counter, for service irrespective of whether you were just making a deposit or deposits made by the merchants and so on. there were actually two entrances and two queues for black and white, so then knowing your colour you would choose which one, you would know, not choose, but you would know which one. So I think for the first time, for the second time, there was no problem but third time I think I came there sometime 1968 or so. It just struck me, maybe I just snapped. I said "but why should we", to the officials who were responsible for the line up and so on, I said why should we make use of these two queues, for blacks and for whites. I objected and then I don't quite recall what was their response but it was the usual, that it's in terms of the laws of the country and so on. And then I really snapped because I felt this was not called for, it was discrimination based on colour and so unnecessary. Because look, we have come here all of us to be served and yet we have got to follow two different queues based on colour. So I raised it with them and then there was quite an uproar in the bank. In fact I caused a scene and then I left. And I don't

think I ultimately made a deposit on that day. I don't know if I approached the manager and laid a complaint but I think something along those lines I must have done. I think after about two or three months they did away with the different sections. I was about seventeen or eighteen at the time.

Because we were not always coming to town, we kept to our townships, some of the times we never really experienced or one does not recall those kind of confrontations or coming face to face with apartheid, but that stood out.

Then there was another experience, it's almost similar. That one had happened in Breyton, in the then Eastern Transvaal, at a train station, a cafe where you found that there were two cafe's or two entrances but I think in fact two cafe's. The one was for the whites and it was prominent. It was in front of the station and prominent and with places to sit if you would like to have a drink or your meal. And that...it only catered for the white people. Now for the black people, and where the insult was to be found with the discrimination, you had to go right around to a small pigeon hole where you would be served by somebody behind the counter and a small window there. You give him the money and then they give you whatever you required and that's how they served people.

It was happening all over and I think even then I objected, and I must have been around about the same time. At that age one was becoming, your view was starting to open and I objected and so on but nothing happened. And I don't know if they called the police, they threatened to call the police if I continued with my protests and all that.

White
Female
Fifties

This is harder than I thought it would be! I think that perhaps a black child growing up in apartheid South Africa would have had more negative and maybe hurtful experiences of racism than a white child. I've ended up by writing mostly about the institutionalised racism in the society, more than specific instances of it.

In early childhood, what was there, was simply the status quo, the fact that we didn't live together or catch buses or go to school together, and that the black people we met were mostly domestic workers or garden workers. When I was about 8 or 9, I remember a friend telling me that her nanny had taken her on the bus with her, one of the old green Putco buses. I felt envious of her and wished that I could go on a ride on a Putco bus too. Our church was near to Louis Botha Avenue and on a Sunday night, I remember the Putco buses going down Louis Botha back to Alex, full of singing people. I longed to be part of those singing people.

In early high school one day, I went on a camp reunion. We caught the train to Germiston and spent the day at the lake, coming back late in the afternoon. The train stopped at a station. It was rush hour. Our compartment was almost empty but there was a multitude of people on the platform, trying to get on to a train. We were in a 'Whites Only' carriage and nobody got in. It felt very uncomfortable to be sitting in the almost empty compartment surrounded by people who couldn't get a place on the train.

In high school, we began to become aware of the gross disparities in the amount of money spent on black and white education, largely through reading newspaper articles. We saw photos of black children standing in queues, waiting for a place in school. If the school was full, a child might simply not attend school that year. At that stage, education was not compulsory for black children. Our school fees were almost zero and we got the use of free textbooks for the year. Our class questioned our headmistress about the morality of this. She said, 'We pay the taxes. Our taxes pay for our schools and those school books.' She did not mention the fact that the reason poor people did not pay taxes was because they were so terribly paid, nor the fact that company taxes – and profits - were high partly because of the availability of cheap labour.

It was taken for granted that black people had to learn English while we did not learn an African language. This did not feel right. I tried very hard to learn by listening (I could understand bits of German like this) but found it beyond me – the language I was hearing (sePedi) was too different from English and I couldn't work out the words or the rules.

I remember a terrible butcher's advertisement once, where dog's meat was advertised. It cost 1c per kilo less than (as they put it) 'boy's meat'.

While I knew adults who said, 'This is wrong,' many of the adults I knew, implicitly supported the government's policies. They might not have liked everything but life in our abnormal society somehow felt 'normal' and many did not appear too bothered by the injustices. Maybe they didn't read the uncomfortable parts in the newspapers. Apart from one woman I met, who spoke in very offensive terms about black people, most of the others did not seem to be extremists. But many political arguments with adults ended in a stalemate and our views were no doubt seen as coming from our immaturity. At school we were actively discouraged from discussing 'politics', i.e. the government policies, in class. I think teachers feared that they could get into trouble or lose their jobs if they were seen to be encouraging or permitting dissent at school. The authorities were, let's say, very authoritarian.

I did hear people talking about 'kaffirs' but generally this was disapproved of. Most people referred to Black adults as 'the boy' or 'the girl'.

At university (Wits) there was lots of information available and now there was no excuse for anyone to say that they didn't know what was happening. Notice boards publicised things like forced removals or unjust laws. For me, the time at university brought our South African realities into sharp focus. The other major thing was studying African languages, being taught by black lecturers and coming face to face with the complexities and beauties of Sotho and Zulu. Now the roles were reversed: I was the one who was stumbling along in a foreign language, making mistakes, being unable to express myself adequately. I developed a lot of sympathy for people who struggle with English!

During this time, I once walked through Braamfontein with a young black man, the brother of a girl I knew. None of the passers-by seemed to like this: a white girl with a black boy was not OK. We saw heads (of all complexions) turning to look at us. A group of workers shouted something not very complimentary. Kerwin was annoyed. He told me, 'Take no notice of them, they are Shangaans!'

White
Female
Forties

I was born in 1962 and grew up in Westville in KwaZulu Natal.

My earliest experiences with black people were characterised by relationships of subservience, in which white people were “masters” and black people were “servants”. This is what I considered to be normal, and the way in which life was ordered.

My apartheid consciousness was permeated by a mindset that people of other races were “other”, that we should be separated from one another, and that this represented a “harmonious” equilibrium. There was no point attached to mixing with one another, because we were too different.

In a manner of speaking, this was a sublime state of affairs. A state in which, in my abject and rather convenient ignorance, I did not have to agonise over why black people required passes to travel from one place to another, why they could not buy land in white areas, why they were not permitted to engage in sexual relations with white people, and why they were legally segregated from us.

The black people with whom I had any form of interaction were maids, gardeners, and, generally, people who occupied positions of subservience.

A black person never had a surname. Certainly not one that most whites could remember. My friends’ maids were introduced to me as “Beauty”, “Precious”, “Lydia” and the like.

Ample evidence of this unfortunate superiority complex, which was as ingrained in me as DNA, was the thinking that whites were omnipotent and omniscient. Our intellectual capacity was superior to the “others”, and they had to learn from us. We were the sophisticated “others”. We had so much wisdom to impart to them, and they had nothing to offer us other than to accept our commands.

I suffered from a serious dose of solipsism, believing that the white “superior” self was the only reality. And anyone who challenged this very comfortable status quo was a terrorist, not a freedom-fighter.

I got my wake-up call.

Both my parents worked for their entire working lives. During my formative years, I was brought up by a Zulu maid, Crezentia Zaca, who we called “Zaza”. She came to work for us when I was five years old, in about 1967.

My expectation that she would approach our relationship from a position of complete subservience was sorely misplaced. When Zaza told me to pick up my clothes from the floor, I did not feel the need to take her seriously. I uttered a few choice words to her, with racial connotations, and received in turn a few hard slaps to the bottom.

My first corporal reprimand from Zaza was met with unbridled indignation. When my parents came home from work, I told them of this “gratuitous” assault on me, and expected her to receive the appropriate sanction. My hopes were dashed when my mother asked her what had happened, and preferred her version to mine (Zaza did not lie). In my presence, Zaza was given full permission to use whatever force it took to discipline me. I have to commend my mother for her endorsement of Zaza’s authority.

There were several instances after this when she had cause to smack me. And smack me she did. If I may be permitted some colourful licence here, she beat the shit out of me. I soon stopped telling my parents about these interchanges, because the outcome was inevitable.

Zaza had full control of our household. She would decide what we ate for supper. She would decide how to feed and attend to my two baby brothers. She would decide what groceries needed to be bought, and she would look after us when my parents came home late from work.

Zaza became my authority figure and I had to answer to her. She was the one who gave instructions. She was the one who taught me to be honest, courteous, neat and clean. She was the one who corrected any undisciplined behaviour. She was the one who showed me that boundaries are essential.

Zaza was one tough cookie. There was only thing that would make her fall apart: frogs. My only pay-back was to put a frog outside her room and watch her go berserk. Frogs were “tokoloshes”, evil creatures associated with black magic.

I watched my mother’s relationship with Zaza develop to one of friendship and mutual respect. They would spend hours chatting with one another. My mother would frequently seek Zaza’s counsel. They had a lot in common: integrity, honesty, intelligence, an admirable work ethic, self-discipline. Because of absent parents, she was the only person I could turn to. And she was always there for me. And she stood for so much that is good.

My role model was a black woman.

And I came to emulate and not challenge her. And I am eternally grateful that I did. Because she made me the person that I am today. Because she inculcated in me a value system that showed me that “the other” is no different in matters that count.

Because from then onwards, I could approach my future relationships with black people from a position of respect.

It may seem strange to some that my experience with one black person could have changed my mindset in such dramatic terms. But it did.

I can say with absolute impunity that, consequent on the foundation laid for me, my subsequent interactions with people of other races have been an absolute pleasure. I have many black role models now. I conduct a legal practice at present in which close to 50% of my clientele are people from other races.

White
Male
Fifties

I recall my earliest awareness of apartheid vividly. It occurred when I was seven years' old in 1960. For my seventh birthday, I had been given a clockwork railway locomotive train set by my parents. It was what was known as a "Hornby". These are collector's pieces today. In those days it was quite common for white middleclass people to have fairly elaborate "model railway" sets, complete with model railway yards, stations, mountain scenery and so on. A cousin of mine and my best friend had very much finer train sets than I. Their sets were electric, not clockwork. They also had much more elaborate model settings with background scenery and so on. I decided to make up full railway station using cardboard shoe boxes with windows drawn on them and doorways cut open. I decided I would imitate as closely as possible the railway I knew best: the Rondebosch railway station.

I asked my mother to print in her excellent handwriting the words "slegs blankes", "slegs nie-blankes", "whites only" and "non-whites only" above my carefully cut ticket kiosks and doorways. My mother flatly refused and burst into tears. Alarmed, I asked my mother why. She replied "But it's apartheid!". I then said "But what is apartheid?". She answered "Keeping whites separate from everybody else". I retorted "But that is how it is!".

My mother, who was born in England and only came to South Africa in 1948, was on the ship sailing to this country when the National Party came to power. She and her parents very nearly returned to England on their arrival in this country because of their alarm at this turn of events. They were persuaded that the National Party in power would be a "flash in the pan" and that before too long "things would return to normal". My mother explained to me that South Africa was the only county in the world to have an apartheid policy and that in England there were no such signs at all.

This incident left a deep and abiding impression on me and from this early experience onwards I was opposed to apartheid. In my childhood I understood apartheid purely as a matter of racial segregation rather than political power. My father was a founder of the old Progressive party, was its Western Cape treasurer for 35 years and national treasurer for about 15 years. I grew up in a strongly anti-apartheid home. My father was a personal friend of many of the "big names" in the Progressive Party. These included Colin Eglin, Zach De Beer and Helen Suzman. I remember earnest discussions taking place at home between my father and Colin Eglin in particular. I was therefore immersed in politics from a very young age. My father always took the stance that apartheid was not only morally wrong but economically irrational. This was the strong line of all these "old Progressives".

Nevertheless, it was not until I went to university that I began to realise how culturally isolated the white experience was: white literature, white music, white social and cultural interests were, at the time of my leaving school, "normative"; science and discovery were "white". This utter dominance of all that was "white" was, right into the 1970's, inescapable.

The following transformed my thinking into an understanding that South Africans can all learn from each other and that we can enrich each other's lives:

- My involvement in student politics especially through NUSAS;
- My experience of living and working in Botswana;
- My work as a civil rights lawyer in the 1980's and early 1990's;

- My experience of the trade union movement and labour relations in the 15 years or so before I was appointed as a judge;
- My involvement with the Anglican church;
- My marriage to an Indian;
- My experience of serving on a multi-racial, multi-cultural bench.

Nevertheless, my early childhood understanding that apartheid is morally wrong and that we must pursue economic rationality in making social progress has remained with me throughout.

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