

Apartheid – the new version

It used to be simple in South Africa! The black population lived in townships. The white folks in big houses, and the coloured in between. But now 14 years after apartheid, the black townships have been invaded by immigrants – from Somalis to Chinese – and this has created a new kind of hatred: Blacks hate blacks – and the Chinese

By Helle Maj/Mayday Press, redaktionen@sl.dk
Photo: Nick Pierre Salling and Jørn Stjerneklar



Most children in Mandela Park are not badly off because their parents are on drugs or are alcoholics, but because they are poor, says Social Educator Pumla Madikezela.

Last May, the picture of a Mozambican man set on fire in a South African township hit media around the world. Almost as if on cue the country broke out in a spate of xenophobia that made people run in all directions. But it was not black against white - it was black against black and against all other neighbours.

"It is actually quite easy to understand xenophobia if you are poor," says Social Educator Pumla Madikezela.

"You live in a wooden shed and have no job. You see your neighbour go to work every day. He lives in a shed too – but he is not from your country. His salary is below the minimum pay. A scab. He is to blame for the misfortune of your family. You talk with the others and you agree that the foreigners must go."

In the township Mandela Park in Hout Bay near Cape Town they took it out on the owners of a Chinese supermarket. The Chinese managed to escape but their shop was ripped of products. It was the cheapest supermarket in town and people loved to shop there.

"We had a week in May when all foreigners fled the area. We prayed for them because they are our sisters and brothers. And most have returned. But I must admit that many South Africans hate the foreigners. They say they take our work, our women and our houses. But deep down, it is all about poverty and unemployment," says Pumla Madikezela who works for Cape Town Child Welfare.

Personally, she is a living example that still 14 years after apartheid it is still a struggle to be a black South African. After four years of university studies she is paid USD 465 per month as a social educator.

"I am almost embarrassed to say it out loud because that money cannot keep my family alive. But I like to help people and I am never short of work," she says with a smile.



The Chinese open shops in the South African townships on a large scale. But xenophobia affects them too.

Hout Bay is a charming tourist town with the apartheid heritage so obvious that it almost hurts. The Rainbow Nation only has three colours here: The 16,000 black people live in the Mandela Park township. Some in houses, but most in sheds made from carton boxes and corrugated iron. The poorer you are, the further up the mountain you live.

Children are the big losers

Near the top, 900 people live – most of them are refugees from other places in Africa; they share six toilets and one tap.

In contrast, there are 20,000 white people in houses and apartments around them. And behind the port the 8,000 coloured people live. All segregated and yet together!

But these three colours are not fighting each other at the moment.

“We go for our own in Mandela Park. It is mostly the Somalis who suffer. People really hate them. But the only thing they are doing is to cooperate in their shops so that they can buy in larger quantities and thus sell the products more cheaply than my people can,” Pumla Madikezela explains.

She lives in Mandela Park and sees the effects of the desperation every day.

“One day I went into my neighbour’s house and saw a man trying to rape their three-year old daughter. I don’t know what’s happening in the heads of people! But the children here in Mandela Park have a hard life,” says Pumla. She spends



most of her days helping children whose parents can no longer care for them.

“People are running away from their responsibility. There are good reasons for it, of course, but it is painful for the children. They are so innocent,” she says.