

Afrikaner identity: Argument, discourse, and stigma

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What is an 'Afrikaner'?

“An Afrikaans-speaking white person in South Africa, especially one descended from the Dutch and Huguenot settlers of the 17th century.”

Oxford Dictionaries, 2013, online

But it's more complex than that

1. Not all Afrikaans-speaking people classify themselves as Afrikaners
2. Afrikaans has been stigmatised through its association with apartheid (Verwey & Quayle, 2012)

Afrikaans is “one of the genuinely multi-racial achievements of the new colony” (Giliomee, 2009, p.xiv)
3. External symbols of Afrikaner identity are purposefully and methodically being removed by the current South African government (Orman, 2008)

Published use of 'Afrikaner': 1800-2008

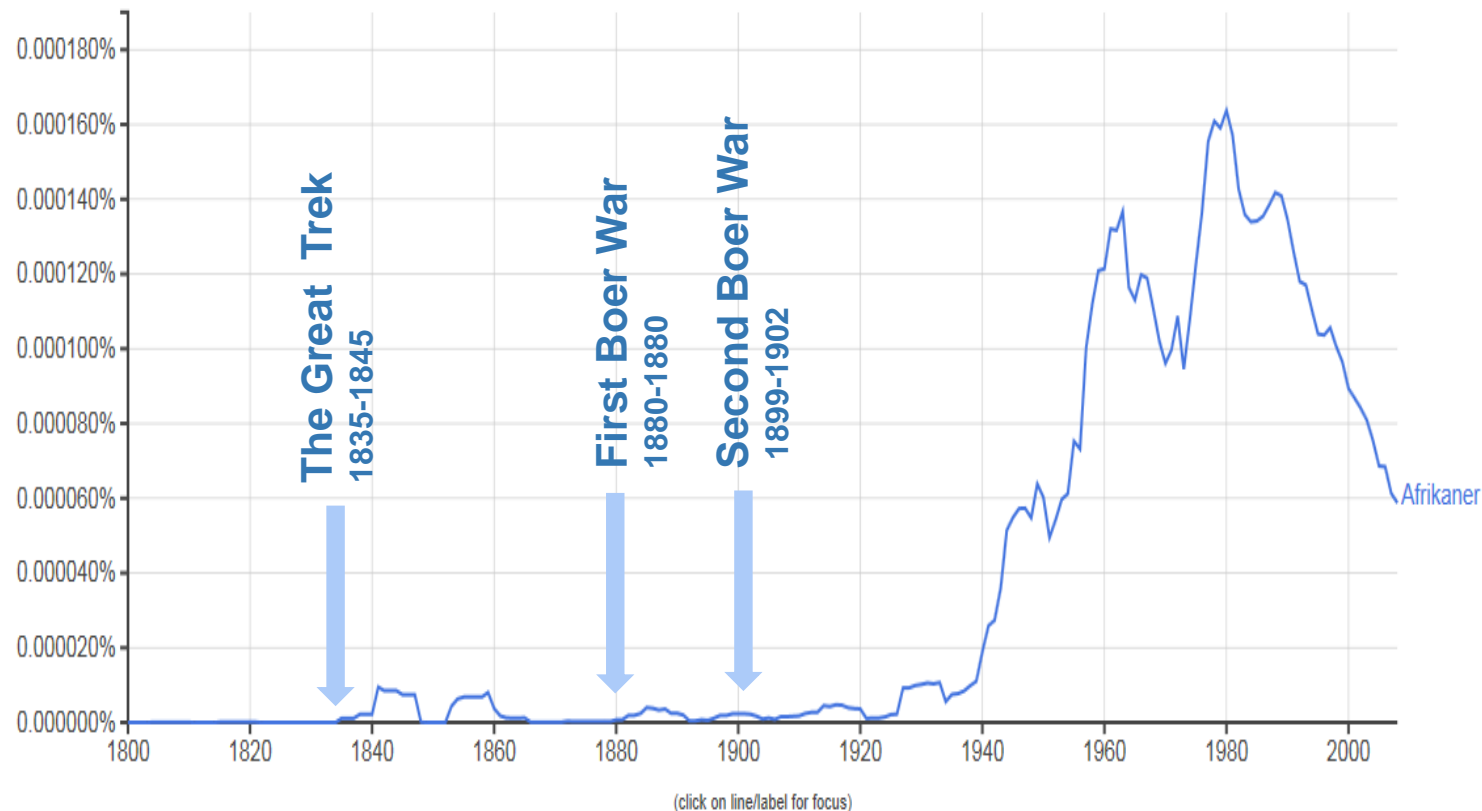
Graph these comma-separated phrases: Afrikaner X ☐ case-insensitive

between 1800 and 2008 from the corpus English with smoothing of 3 Search lots of books

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(Source: Ngram Viewer)

‘Afrikaner’ as an ideological construct

- Afrikaner Nationalism constructed and maintained Afrikaner identity (Verwey & Quale, 2012)
- Set of **master symbols** aided in construction of identity and a (false) sense of homogeneity (Cloete, 1992)
- Basic requirements: being **white** (‘whiteness’) & **Afrikaans-speaking** (Cloete, 1992)

Master symbols as promoted by Afrikaner Nationalism

- **Racial purity and superiority**
- Belief that Afrikaner has a special relation with God (religion) and a God-given task in Africa (calling)
- South Africa is an agricultural country and Afrikaner *volk* are famers
- Afrikaner is under threat
- South Africa belongs to the Afrikaner
- Struggle for autonomy against oppression (e.g. *taalstryd*)

(Cloete, 1992)

Research by Verwey & Quale (2012) showed that participants:

1. Made an effort to **discard certain visible aspects** of Afrikaner identity such as Afrikaner stereotypes, history and culture, rejecting overt racism and **downplaying the importance of Afrikaans**
2. **Maintained 'whiteness' as central** to Afrikaner identity
3. Recycled discourse underlying apartheid ideology, such as black incompetence and whites under threat

Material used for this presentation

- Reviews of *Jong Afrikaner* ('Young Afrikaner') exhibition by Rudolf Petrus van Wyk
 - "Afrikaner Others" by **Nadine Botha**, freelance Rhodes University-trained journalist (Mahala, 29 June 2012)
 - "Neo Fragility" by **Unathi Kondile**, lecturer in New Media & Journalism at University of Cape Town (Mahala, 9 July 2012)
- Responses to commentary published in Sunday newspaper, *Rapport*, written by *Pienk Vlooi* ('pink flee') *Afrikaner-identiteit, wat is dit?* ('Afrikaner identity, what is it?')

‘Jong Afrikaner’

“This project is a documentary archive, tracing the ongoing transformation and change of the ‘white tribe of Africa’ which has been occupying the South African geography, physically and psychologically, for nearly 350 years.

Both a provocation and a statement of artistic intent, the body of work **challenges preconceived ideas and beliefs about Afrikaners**. These individuals have come of age in a South Africa very different to that of their forebears. They are connected to each other through shared values, preferences and tastes and **express themselves in diverse cultural and creative activity**, rather than any supposed national identity.”

Roelof Petrus van Wyk, Artist (Facebook, 2013)

Stereotypes of 'Afrikaner'



Wikipedia image dating
back to Boer War

Cover shot of a video
published by The Telegraph,
UK, 2012



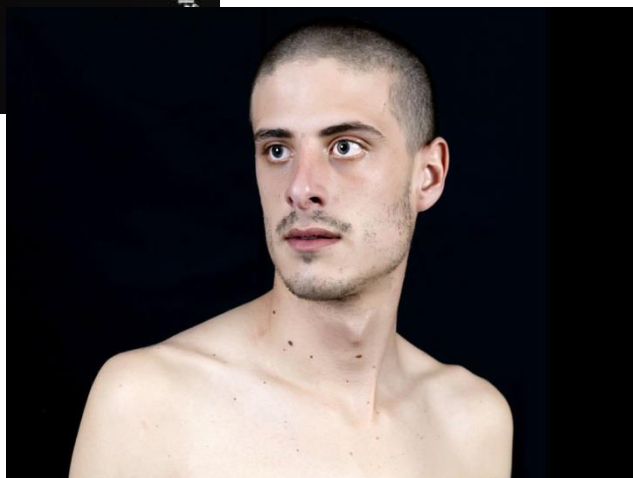
AWB



Front page of Time
Magazine, 1987



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Jong Afrikaner

Exhibition & Book Signing
JACK BELL GALLERY | LONDON, UK
 6 MARCH 2013

C

You are cordially invited to attend

Jong Afrikaner



A SELF PORTRAIT by
 ROELOF PETRUS VAN WYK

28 JUNE 2012 6:30
 EXHIBITION OPENING
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 64 WALE STREET, CAPE TOWN

FOURTHWALL BOOKS

Stereotypes are embedded

“Van Wyk is somehow attempting to break the Afrikaner stereotype – introducing the image of Afrikaner as cool and **not just some khaki-clad fanatic on a horse.**”

“as a black observer **I was taken aback by how taken aback I was** upon seeing this work.”

“She tells me **not all Afrikaners are right-wing nutcases.** In fact, right wing and Afrikaner extremists are just a small small part of the Afrikaner community – it’s just that the media gives them too much attention [...] she even takes a dig at English liberalism. **‘We can’t all be English!’** I smile. Keep quiet. Nod. Move along.”

– Unathi Kondile

Whiteness

“Seeing the theme is *Jong Afrikaners* **I didn’t much anticipate seeing any black Afrikaners.** That expectation was well managed.” – Unathi Kondile

“If the defining attribute of this project was meant to be the “Afrikaner”, then **it would have been very cool for the artist to include so-called coloured people in his group of subjects.**” – Sis Aryan by birth. [Received 26 likes vs. 2 dislikes](#)

“**I don’t think the term ‘Afrikaner’ can be uprooted from its white connotations** – no self-respecting black Afrikaans-speaking person (coloured, in old SA-speak) I know would want to label themselves Afrikaners, so I have no problem with the whiteness of the show.” – Peripheral [Received 2 likes vs. 2 dislikes.](#)

Whites are the most uncomfortable with “whiteness”

“So much **beautiful pinky-whiteness in a black background**, I can’t say **n-n-n-neo-Aryan** without stuttering. [...] That and the fact that **white-skinned head-and-shoulders shots floating on black nothingness** perpetuates the **easy-to-swallow concept of Afrikaners** – and **whiteys**, since who can tell the difference especially if you’re not as finely tuned to racial nuances as a South African is – being **completely decontextualized** and **not belonging to Africa**.” – Nadine Botha

“He told me the art was rubbish and **Van Wyk was race-obsessed**. ... ‘Can’t we all just get over race and move on!?’ Was the exasperated question that ended the conversation. [...] I noticed quite a number of people who walked in and walked out quickly; with **near disapproving looks** of ‘what a waste of time’.” – Unathi Kondile

Afrikaner identity, what is it?

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**Kop & Hart: Die verlore vulpen**
'n Klompie jare terug, toe ek nog 'n predikant in die NG Kerk was, het ek op 'n keer huisbesoek gedoen by 'n man wie se hele liggaam van die kanker deurtrek was.

**Fliekvlooi: Gediensige (Wit-)huiskneg**
Gediensige huiskneg, maar teen watter prys? *The Butler* vertel die verhaal van 'n goeie man in die Amerikaanse Withuis...

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Afrikaner-identiteit, wat is dit?

deur **Pienk vlooi, Johannesburg**
2012-10-19 11:57

Die laaste tyd duik die vraag oor wie (wat en hoe) die Afrikaner nou éintlik is. Politici, blogsrywers en kommentators (selfs sekere sangers) eien hulle die reg toe om 'n definisie aanmekaar te timmer en party beklemtoon alte graag: Ek is 'n Afrikaner en sal een bly tot ek doodgaan.

**Pienk vlooi, Johannesburg**
Rapport-gebruiker

[MEESTE GELEES](#) | [E-POS](#) | [KOMMENTAAR](#)

- 'Kán 'n kind so wreed wees?'
- Kalahari? Nee: Noordwes
- Kop & Hart: Die verlore vulpen
- Swart ekonomiese bemagtiging
- Fotogalery: Bobby: 'n gewone ou, onder konstruksie

Weer
Ksd: 18-23°C  Pta: 15-29°C 

lk%253Fsa%253DL%2526ai%253DB6VF8iEeZUuasD87nIAXRq4HAB6HII4cEAAAAEAEgADgA...

Afrikaans as a requirement

*Iemand wie se huistaal van geboorte af Afrikaans is. [...] Soos **Adam Small** [...] **Soli Philander**. – blip.noodlum*

*Blip, Adam Small and Soli Philander sal kapsie maak as jy hulle Afrikaners noem. **Afrikaans as moedertaal maak nie van mense Afrikaner nie.** – Cathy Kotzé*

*Omdat ek Afrikaans praat, gee dit my die identiteit van 'n “Afrikaner”? **Dis uiteindelik net 'n taal.** – Penelope Jones*

Someone whose home language has been Afrikaans since birth. [...] Such as **Adam Small** [...] **Soli Philander**. Received 27 likes vs. 39 dislikes

Blip, Adam Small and Soli Philander would object at you calling them Afrikaners. **Afrikaans as mother tongue doesn't make people Afrikaners.** Received 32 likes vs. 24 dislikes

Because I speak Afrikaans, it should give me the identity of an “Afrikaner”? **It's after all just a language.** Received 8 likes vs. 4 dislikes.

Afrikaans as a requirement

Soli Philander



Adam Small

Carike Keuzenkamp



If not Afrikaans then what?

So, wat maak Afrikaners dan? 'n **Bleekwit vel?** (En dan wil jy **vroom** voorgee jy's nie 'n **verkampte rassis** nie?) – blip.noodlum

'n Jakkals wat blaf soos 'n hond is nog steeds nie 'n hond nie. Hierdie diere word geklassifiseer op grond van hul genetiese herkoms. Net so word 'n Afrikaner gekenmerk deur sy **suiwer genetiese herkoms**. – Gramsci Antonio

So what makes an Afrikaner then? A **pale white skin?** (And then you want to pretend **piously** that you're not a **conservative racist?**). Received 31 likes vs. 20 dislikes.

A fox that barks like a dog is still not a dog. These animals are classified based on their genetic heritage. Just like that an Afrikaner is recognised by his **pure genetic heritage**. Received 20 likes vs. 11 dislikes.

Racial purity

[...] Ja, ons “Afrikaners” het sommer ‘n **hele klomp koffie met ons melk gemeng**. Ons kan amper as ‘n **latteinisie** beskou...hehe – blip.noodlum

Enigiemand wat ‘n bietjie navorsing doen kom gou agter ons het ons **sogenaamde suiwer blanke bloed** meer te danke aan **selektiewe voorvaderlike amnesie as aan genetiese werklikheid**... - Niki Wessels

Miskien vir jou – ek trek **my bloedlyn terug tot 1685 aan beide ouers se kante**. – Deon van Rensburg

[...]Yes, we “Afrikaners” **mixed a lot of coffee with our milk**. We can almost regard ourselves as a **latté nation** ...hehe. Received 13 likes vs. 5 dislikes.

Anyone who does a little research can ascertain quickly that our **so-called pure white blood** is more the result of **selective ancestral amnesia than genetic reality**... Received 40 likes vs. 33 dislikes

Maybe for you – I can trace back **my bloodline to 1685 on both parents’ sides**. Received 42 likes vs. 7 dislikes.

Heritage as a requirement

*Blip, **dis nie jou politiek** wat jou 'n Afrikaner maak nie. Dit is jou **geskiedenis**.* — Morné Els

*Elke dag word babas gebore. Sonder geskiedenis. [...] Sy kop word van kindsbeen af volgeprop met wat Pa en Ma as hul “geskiedenis” beskou. **Dis eintlik nie eers regte geskiedenis nie, maar net mitologie.*** — blip.noodlum

Blip, **it's not your politics** that makes you an Afrikaner. It is your **heritage**. Received 24 likes vs. 15 dislikes.

Every day babies are born. Without history. [...] His head is then propped full with what Dad and Mom regard as their “history”. **It's not even real history**, but just **myth**. Received 26 likes vs. 11 dislikes.

Homogeneity vs. diversity

Vir 'n minderheidsgroep is dit darem **alles behalwe homogeen**. – Pienk vlooi

As jy **nie aan een of ander kerk**, maar verkieslik 'n **Calvinistiese** een, behoort nie, dan is dit moeilik om as 'Afrikaans' aanvaar te word. [...] **in my ervaring word jy as 'volksvreemd' beskou as jy te divers is.** –
gideon.rossouw

For a minority group it is **anything but homogenous**.

If you **don't belong to a church**, but preferably a **Calvinistic** one, then it's difficult to be accepted as 'Afrikaans' [...] **in my experience you are regarded as 'volksvreemd' (enstranged from the nation) if you are too diverse.**
Received 17 likes and 4 dislikes.

Insults are commonplace as ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’ vie for a voice

*Niki, verseker. ‘n Vinnige toer na jou profiel en foto’s is ‘n bewys dat daar in vroeër jare **deur jou familie gepaar is met onnoembare gedoentes**. Staan sterk. – Feeble Gastro*

*Nee wat **Deon ou voeltjie**. [...] Jy is deel van ‘n luidrugtige ekstremistiese **splinterbendetjie** wat ‘n titel wil hijack wat aan die meerderheid behoort. Gebruik liever “**NeoNazi**”, of “**verkramp**te” of **gat-oor-die-vloer-sleper** of iets van die aard. Maar eksklusiewe aanspraak of “Afrikaanskap”? Jammer my ou. **Daarvoor is jou koppie te plat**. – Bruning*

Niki, for sure. A quick tour to your profile and photos is proof that in earlier years **your family mated with unmentionable things**. Stay strong. Received 18 likes vs. 24 dislikes.

No **Deon my old little bird**. [...] You are part of a loud extremist small **splinter gang** that wants to hijack a title that belongs to the majority. Rather use “**NeoNazi**”, or “**conservative**” or **arse-over-the-floor-puller** or something of that nature. But exclusive claim to “Afrikanerhood”? Sorry mate. **Your head is too flat for that**. Received 26 likes vs. 13 dislikes.

What does this all mean?

- The **fundamental criteria of 'whiteness' and Afrikaans** as mother tongue are under dispute, suggesting a **crisis of identity**.
- The **master symbol of racial purity** is under dispute
 - Knowledge of genealogical 'impurity' exists, but those who are traditionally 'coloured' or 'black' are not embraced as Afrikaners. It is argued that it is *their* choice. Yet those who fit the fundamental criteria of whiteness and Afrikaans are *automatically* included even if they prefer not to.
- Other master symbols are generally **not recycled** in public forums
- **Stigma theory** is developed in an effort to diminish validity of opposing views to gain legitimacy for their point of view
 - *Verkramp* vs. libtard ('English'): insulting the others' parentage, beliefs and in particular, their intelligence.

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