

White Africans, a contradiction in terms?

To many people around the world the idea of a white African is a contradiction in terms. They imagine that Africans are black and that, therefore, the entire continent of Africa belongs rightfully to the black man.

This is, of course, a mistaken assumption. The whole of the north of Africa is populated by Arabs, not negroes. Just as this is the case in the north, in the south of Africa the land was originally inhabited by bushmen, the Khoisan, who are now largely extinct.

An empty land

When Jan van Riebeeck arrived in Cape Town in 1652 (roughly the time when the first European settlers arrived in America) to establish a fort and hospital, and a garden to grow vegetables for the crews of passing ships from the Dutch East India company, what is known as modern-day South Africa was virtually uninhabited.

Afrikaner footsteps

Written by Jon Phillips

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Over the years, in a desire to be free of Dutch East India Company rule, whites started to leave the enclave established at Cape Town and move into the interior of the country.

Black tribal migration

At roughly the same time as this was happening, there was a migratory movement of black tribes southwards from Central Africa. White and black colonisers met each other in 1770 at the Great Fish River, roughly on the border of what is now the Eastern and Western Cape provinces of today's South Africa. So, historically, no black had ever set foot in the Western Cape by the time it was already firmly settled by white farmers.

Conflicts of Dutch and English foreign policy led to the British occupying the Cape in 1795, which further increased the desire among many of the Dutch settlers to *trek* (move) into the interior in order to maintain their independence.

Peaceful co-existence

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During 1835-7, Boer (Dutch farmer) *voortrekkers* (pioneers/frontiersmen) took part in The Great Trek – an organised move away from British rule into the deep interior of the country. There were many groups of *trekkers*, heading off into different parts of the interior. They did not seek conquest, domination and extermination (unlike the American settlers), but peaceful co-existence with the black tribes that they encountered.

They bought and paid for the land that they came to own, by signing treaties with the local tribal chiefs. One of the most notable examples of this was the *voortrekker* leader Piet Retief, who bought land from the local chief, Dingaan, only to be treacherously murdered along with all his men, after they had stockpiled their weapons as a gesture of good faith. The treaty between the two men exists to this day, as it was found among Retief's belongings.

Bought and paid for

From this, two facts emerge. Firstly, that South Africa is not historically a black man's land; they were every bit as much settlers as were the whites. Secondly, that whites have lived in "South Africa" for as long as they have in America. The land that they owned was bought with goods and services, and often paid for by their blood. Thus, whites, are every bit as much Africans as other whites are Americans.

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How our land was turned into sovereign republics, *internationally recognised*, will be the subject of my next column.