

Seldom have I been more astonished than when reading the article 'Racism ingrained in our psyches' by Professor Amanda Gouws in The Star, Dec. 11. 'Don't go anywhere, lest you put a foot wrong' would be a good summary, and about as unhelpful as it can get. However it does beg the question: What is missing?

If you ask yourself how you define 'racism', the common answer will be: 'Action influenced by consideration of race'. Less frequent will be: 'Action influenced by a feeling of superiority based on race', which also happens to be the dictionary definition. The second dictionary definition: 'The theory that human abilities are determined by race' is likely to be only mentioned by professionals in the field. And to make it really interesting, I would like to add the definition 'Groupism': Action influenced by consideration of group.

I wish to elaborate a little about 'groupism'. It is possibly somewhat controversial in today's world, where 'The Common Good' can be harmed by 'Groups', where individuality, freedom of choice, out-with-the-old-outmoded, conflicts with the power of Nike, TV-advertisements and common aspirations. But recent research has confirmed the continued relevance of 'groupism'. People consistently changed an unreasoning negative view of another person (say based on ethnicity) to a positive view when that person joined their group (say in a sports team). I believe it is a deep-felt need for most people to 'belong', to feel accepted and to know where to turn in case of need. And 'group' may be defined by any or all of your Neighbourhood-Watch, sports club, hobby group, (greater) family, church, ethnic group, country, continent, or circle of friends.

In an 'Ideal Country', people who act out their belief of superiority based on race or ethnicity would be very strongly encouraged to huddle together including enough professional help to assist with their underlying neuroses and self-delusions, and a regulatory framework would ensure no group can be harmed by another group. Groupism would be encouraged as a source of energy and personal fulfillment. Citizens would 'belong' and be proud of their country and try and promote it in any way possible.

So what about the idea that racism is ingrained in our psyches? And that the benefactors of apartheid's crimes against humanity must pay for them now? Remembering that actions count, the first idea is obviously nonsense, although I would agree that groupism is a part of all of us. As for the second idea, yes, the entities that amassed riches must pay back, which is happening with BEE, maybe not effectively enough. However, the others should not become sacrificial lambs on the altar surrounded by the biggest sticks. In particular, the quota system should be revisited with a view to affirming the objective of eliminating remnant racism and bad groupism, but at the same time not disadvantaging certain designated groups. After all, it should never be policy to cut off your nose to spite your face.

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