

I am a racist. I apologise. I will do everything I can (and more) to make up for it. ~~I mean it, N~~ no conditions, no excuses ~~—~~, just a simple ~~plain~~: I ~~am~~ sorry, please forgive me.

A year ago, I wasn't a racist ~~—~~. I had all the necessary credentials. My best man (and very good friend) was a black guy (he still is); ~~This white boy~~ was once thrown out of a shebeen and the ~~very same~~ forementioned best man saved my butt as I tried to tackle the owner. What other whitey can put that in ~~their~~ his pipe and smoke it? I coach (as in chief bottle-washer and "dDad") a black high school's rugby team; I address my domestic worker and gardener by ~~their~~ her/his Xhosa names; I know where you can buy "smileys" in Kwazakhele; Madiba and Bishop Tutu are my all-time heroes; I think Siya Kholisi rocks, and I desperately wanted ed Barack Obama to be my president. I never, ever use the "K" word, or any other substitute. I tick all the PC boxes.

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Penny Sparrow and Matthew Theunnissen changed all that. Two ordinary white South Africans who ~~—~~ in a moment of social media (un)glory ~~—~~ blew my comfortable rainbow mirage apart. It wasn't the terms they used that changed me ~~—~~; it was their utter conviction, post-event, that "I am not racist" ~~they weren't racist!~~ This that gave me pause: h. How do you call someone a monkey, how do you call someone or a "kK..." and still maintain your innocence? How do you not put two and two together?

And then, ~~—~~ in an innocent conversation with a friend recently, I referred to my garden "boy". Argh! There's more! Just as recently, ~~W~~ when looking at a picture-photo of a black SAAF pilot on Facebook, my instinctive reaction (having served at Magnus Malan's pleasure in the SAAF myself) was "Nnah, this (black) guy can't be flying those planes!"? I could no longer put Penny and Matthew in a box separate from myself. ~~That defence no longer worked.~~ I was ~~—~~ in reality ~~—~~ no different to them.

I ~~am~~ a white, middle-aged, man born into a middle class family. I ~~am~~ also liberal in my views ~~—~~. I vacillate between blue and green (yellow?) at the ballot box. Eusebius McKaiser is unlikely to select me as his first choice with whom to share a life raft; Steve Hofmeyr would rather sink the life raft than share it with this veraaier (jy's mos 'n Koekemoer?).

I could mount the usual defences ~~—~~: everyone is racist, not just whites. Check out the pPresident ~~—~~ he's just using race to take the attention off his non-performance and profiteering. I could argue that the #mustfall youngsters haven't got a clue ~~—~~; they don't know the real world; they don't know how bad it was in the real trenches way back twhen. I can summon up virtuous anger and claim the moral high ground - my (South African) parent's farm in Zimbabwe was donated to Uncle Bob's cause. I can tell you about the jobs I apply for, that I can't won't allow me ~~get~~ through the door because I have to apply sun lotion in summer. I can tell you about the tax I've paid. I can counter the "black tax" issue with stories about how, at every parking space and every traffic light, I pay my umlungu tax. I can dismiss the give-us-back-our-land claims with the impracticality thereof, and remind you everyone that the Khoisan actually had first claim. But Penny and Matthew introduced me to

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a mirror; they opened the door on “whiteness” and that has made all the difference.

I used to think racism was an either/or thing. I used to believe I was separate from my “tribe” —, that I wasn’t tainted; that I had outfoxed my DNA. I now see racism as *being something of* a continuum; *it’s isn’t’s* whether you *are* or not; it’s a case of how much. I ~~now~~ no longer put the likes of Penny and Matthew into a box marked “other”. *T*; they are my people and it’s time I owned it, *w*. ~~Which~~ means no matter how nice a guy I think I am, I have some work to do ~~of my own~~.

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Part of *theis* work, is dealing with the way things are. I’m betting that race will always be an issue in South Africa. We’re a rainbow nation, whether we like it or not — ~~its just that~~ there *just* isn’t a pot of gold at its end. No matter where I go, I’m an African *and*, this is my place; ~~this is where~~ my heart always brings me back *here*. I’m undoubtedly privileged; my “whiteness” has put me ahead in the *race*. I’m all of these things and more. *Thatis* is my reality.

Comment [T1]: Perhaps ‘game’ instead; otherwise confusion re race being about colour or about winning.

To me, the current conversations about race, whiteness and privilege lurch between ~~the~~ extremes and do us no favours. It’s just; same old, same old. *So* I want to change the conversation *and my*. ~~My journey~~ starts *sing point begins* with an apology.

Comment [T2]: Would omit.

So here it is: I’m a straight, white, male South African *and*; I’ve benefited from patriarchy, whiteness and sexual orientation. I’m sorry for what my ancestors have done in our name; I’m sorry for my blindness in not seeing both my privilege and my prejudice; I’m sorry that my rainbow dream has lulled me into a comfort zone. I ask that you forgive me. I ask that you allow me space to be who I am as I ~~work try~~ to give you the same. *I ask t* That you allow me to help build a place that celebrates our differences. I am a South African, and my real privilege would be to call this *our* home.