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EYE-WITNESSING SPORTS UNDER 'APART-HATE'

by

Moeketsi Bodibe

A street and a patch of grass veldt, divided the town (where "white" people lived) and the location or township (where black people lived). I lived in the location of Alberton town. On the North-east of the location was a dam used by the Portuguese to irrigate their plantations. The stream from the Dam ran on the East-side of the location. Whenever we had heavy rains, the houses on the N.E. corner of the location were always flooded. The location was half the size of New York's Central Park and had thirteen streets. The last two streets were occupied by coloureds or people of mixed ancestry. The location was extremely congested. It was a mixture of corrugated iron, mud, sackling, zinc and plank houses. A shanty-town. Between the 4th and 5th Streets, was an open space the size of three Basket-ball grounds put together. That space was known as "The Square." It was our play-ground. I lived on 4th Street -- our house facing the square.

The area from the 1st to the 9th was known as "Madamini" (Dam-site). The one from the 9th to the 13th was known as "Sdakaneni" (Garbage-site) because of the garbage and all kinds of trash that was dumped on the end-tip of the location by the Sanitation department. Garbage from Alberton town was dumped there too. To the West of the garbage dump was a Soccer-field. The only way to recognise it as a soccer-field were the two goal-area posts on the opposite sides of the field. Otherwise it was open veldt with grass, stones and some patches of sand.

There were three water-taps to supply the entire location with fresh water. These water-taps were all erected on street corners along the main and central avenue. There were two avenues cutting across the entire location. Women had to queue from dawn until evening with five gallon drums and buckets to get water to use for cooking and washing. It took less than twenty minutes to walk across the location from one end to the other. There was no Hall or electricity in the township. About four miles further South-east of the location was the Portuguese plantation, East of which was the location cemetery. To the South of the Cemetery was a river known as "Blue waters" because its water was clearer and cleaner, as compared to the Dam water near the location.

Alberton town proper was immaculately clean. All the streets were macadamized and had street-lamps. Golf-courses and sometimes Parks were well taken care of by the African prisoners

who fell prey to a horde of "Pass laws." The town had a specially built Municipality Swimming-pool and some houses had built-in swimming pools in their yards. They also had water-taps inside their houses. It left every African going to town or walking about town with envy. I always looked with envy at all their beautiful houses, streets, and other luxuries.

SWIMMING WITH THE DEAD

The dam nearer to the North-eastern tip of the location was dirty and sometimes had bloated bodies of dead animals floating randomly on the water. But the urge for swimming was irresistible on hot summer days. So the dam would always be full of children splashing and swimming around. Some women would be doing their washing nearby. There was ample water at hand and they did not have to queue at the ever-crowded water taps in the location to get washing water. The dam was a good place for washing. "Blue waters" near the cemetery was a better place for expert swimmers.

SANDY GOLF-TIME

Further East of the Stream, was a rising open grass veldt that stretched for about one mile Eastwards and two miles Southwards. We took shovels and went about shovelling off grass at various points to make patches of 'Sandy-greens' (instead of grass, we spread sand); and using empty condensed milk tins, we made course holes. This open veldt became our Golf-course. We used heavy-wire, wound up at the bottom end to form a sort of a club. We used corn-cobs as golf-balls. Sometimes, whenever a player had a golf-club, it would be used by all of us playing with real golf-balls (old ones). The golf-club would then be used as a Driver, 2nd, 3rd, chipper and a putter. We allowed each player to scrape off sand once, on the sandy-green, to make way for putting his ball into the hole. We enjoyed our games.

SLOW MOTION BOUNCE

The first sport I got involved in was soccer. Like all the kids in the location, I used a tennis-ball to play. We also used a tennis-ball to play matches on the dirt streets or any patch of empty ground. If we had no tennis-ball, we always used a 'Horse-shoe tobacco bag' stuffed with rags. It was slightly larger than a tennis-ball but very slow in bounce or motion. There were two teams, "Madamini" and "Sdakaneni". The venue was either "The Square" or for a (return) match, the main foot-ball or soccer field. We played anytime, rain or sunshine. On rainy days, we would be playing on the muddy-ground. Sundays, after church services, it was time for big soccer games. Soccer teams from other locations would come over to play a

challenge match. Teams from within the township also played against each other. Our teams were mixed and we were not even aware of that fact until "Apartheid" pushed its racist laws down our throats. We knew the "whites" hated us. They did not want to play with us or even mix with us for that matter. Now, they made it an offence for Africans to play with "Coloureds" or "Indians" (Asiatics). There was to be no sporting events' engagements between Indians and Coloureds too. This was the situation from 1965. Whereas before 1965, there were sporting clubs and teams composed of Africans, Coloureds and Asians. Now, individuals could be imprisoned for playing with different race groups.

This situation, however, did not go unchallenged by Africans, Coloureds and Asians. The Black people of South Africa took their plight to International fora. This outcry led to the racist South African 'Apartheid' regime to be excluded in most major International Sporting events. South Africa was kicked out of the Olympic games because of her racist laws. The Federal International Football Association (FIFA) barred South Africa from its sporting events. This is still the situation today. 'Apartheid' South Africa has since tried to gain acceptance to these International bodies.

Because of this institutionalized racism, "Coloureds" and "Indians" had to quit playing completely. In Alberton like in most Townships, coloureds and Indians were not that many. They could not form their own teams. These were sad times indeed. We missed some of the best players.

POWER TO THE ORPHAN CALF*

Some houses in the location had little space in their yards. Those spaces were turned into gyms. Some had spaces in the backyard, others in front. Most yards had no space at all; their space was used up to build more shack-rooms for tenants. If there were trees in the backyard or in front of the yard, the tree would be used to hang the Punch-bag (Returned-Soldiers' kit bag stuffed with saw-dust and some sand to give it weight). There would also be old railway coach wheels and some from the mine-dumps; these wheels would be used as weights for Body-building or Weight-lifting. The remaining space which had to be swept everyday before training started, and sprinkled with water to avoid dust, would be used for skipping rope, shadow-boxing and sparring if there were any boxing-gloves. Training always started from about 6 PM, when all the men came

*Reference to an African saying: "Kasalu kakya niko keeny'eny'aa myoomo," meaning, a poor calf, i.e., one without a mother, has to learn how to lick its own lips. (Ed. K.M.)

back from work and ended at about 8 PM. Sometimes when the moon was out, training would continue until about 9 PM.

There were no competitions except in the authentic gym. There was no incentive for training except for the fun of it and that feeling of security from the knowledge of self defense.

In spite of all the backyard hardships of having to train under awkward conditions with inadequate and improper equipment, we produced world-class boxers like Jake 'Ntuli who rose to become the Commonwealth Fly-weight Champion and went further to fight for the Bantam weight World title.

We also had fantastic golfers like Papwa Sewgwolum whom the 'apart-hate' racists, awarded the "Honorary white" status and gave him a chance to play in the all "white" Natal Open Golf Tournament. He won the open, beating all the 'apart-hate' "Whites." At the end of the game, he was reclassified "Non White" and was not allowed to enter the Club House lest he "contaminate it" by being a "non white." He was awarded the prize outside the Club House.

We also had Mr. Basil DeOlivera, a crack Cricket-ball player who also rose from playing in the streets of Cape Town. He fell under the classification of "non white," thus the 'apart-hate' government did not want him; or rather, he was not good enough to be selected in the South African team. He went to England where he was chosen to play for England in a world series.

WHAT COLOUR, OLYMPICS?

All I knew then was that there were games known as Olympic games. To me that meant games played by "whites" around the world. Unknown to me then and most Africans, was that all along, the 'Apart-hate' government of "whites only" were telling a pack of lies to the Olympics Governing Body. The lie was that "Blacks" were not chosen because they were not up to the Olympic Standards yet. At the time they were telling this lie, the 'apart-hate' "whites" had decided to take the second best weight-lifter instead of the best man. The reason was that the best (in his division) was classified "non white." Thus their lie was revealed when it was discovered that Mr. Leslie Mackenzie, a so-called "non white" was the best weight-lifter in his division. The second best was to represent South Africa at the Olympics because he was "White."

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A street and a patch of open grass veldt divided the location from Alberton town. According to 'apart-hate', that

was too close a proximity for "blacks" to be next to a town. "Apart-hate" demanded that "non whites" be far away from the "White" towns. Thus Alberton location was moved about twelve miles away, Southward. The Shanty-town or shacks, were replaced by "Match-box" four-roomed houses. This new location was given a name -- Thokoza (rejoice). After several years in this new location, a Stadium was finally built. The first major soccer match in which Kaizer Chiefs, a crack team from Soweto, played against a crack team of Thokoza -- Benfica, the Stadium grandstand collapsed from the weight of the spectators. Several people were hospitalized and four or five people died in this debacle.

Several years later, after the Stadium was built, a Thokoza Hall was finally built. The location was still dark by night; there were no street lamps. This Hall was used by the 'apart-hate' "whites" for their own purpose. They turned the Hall into a Cinema, played movies and charged admission to everybody. The Apartheid Municipality did not even allow the Thokoza Boxing Boys' Club members to use the Hall for training purposes. The boys had to go and train in a privately owned garage where they had to pay rent to the owner. A day after the June 16th Soweto uprisings spilt over into the East-rand, the Thokoza Hall was fire-bombed. It collapsed.

On the West side of Thokoza, there is a long stretch of open veldt, not narrow but wide enough for Golfers to make yet another "Sandy-green" Golf-course. The 'apart-hate' "Whites" have now closed two of the less than nine golf-course holes because once again they are dumping garbage and toxic waste from Alberton town, Alrode (the Industrial Township), and from around the location in this open space.

The site where the old location used to be was declared "white" and is now called "Verwoed Park." Waste is no longer dumped there. The old location cemetery site was also declared "White" and new modern houses have been built on top of African graves. Africans can no longer go and swim at "Madamini" or "Blue waters." There is no river anywhere near the new township -- Thokoza. African swimmers and would-be swimmers, should forget about swimming. Children born in Thokoza will never know what it feels like to splash in the water or to swim, even if it is a dam or a river water. That is strictly a "White" 'apart-hate' sport in the Alberton area.

THE NAME OF THE GAME

Sports under apartheid only means the hardships under which "Blacks" should train. Hardships created by "Apart-hate" for "non whites" so it can confirm their lie; the lie that Africans are not ready for Olympic standard competitions.

Apartheid is a new name to Hitler's Nazism. Hitler harassed, and discriminated against the Jews. He felt that was not evil enough and started to build gas-chambers specifically to murder the Jews. He, like his South African counter-parts in regard to "non whites," did not want the Jews in the Olympics.

HUMAN HUMUS

Apartheid is now doing the same as Hitler used to do; viciously harassing and discriminating against the Blacks. At one time, apartheid had its equivalent of the German gas-chambers. Apartheid's Auschwitz was Bethal, a town on the East of the Transvaal province. Africans arrested under the infamous "Pass laws" were sent to be sold as slaves in Bethal. They worked on the Potato plantations. An African journalist had himself arrested and sent there. He later revealed in the press, how Africans were murdered and buried immediately in shallow graves on the plantations to serve as manure for the Potatoes. A nation-wide boycott of "French fries," potatoes, and potato chips followed as a result of that exposé. The boycott lasted for over a year. Apartheid is still murdering "blacks" in different forms and ways, just as Hitler did with the Jews before and during the second world war.

The pressure from the outside world or rather, the isolation of South African apartheid "whites" from all International Sport bodies has forced "Apart-hate" government to make some cosmetic changes in sport. There has been some sport integration of some sort to try and prove to the outside world that Apartheid has become good. Just as Nazism was evil, so is apartheid. A good evil still remains an evil. This latest ploy of sport integration was embarked upon since 1971 with the introduction of the so-called "Multi-racial Sports." Blacks who have been included in teams which tour overseas countries are the ones who are quick to defend the apartheid system. They are looked upon by Africans as collaborators. The ploy, however, has failed; it did not gain 'apart-hate' acceptance in International Sports.

FINAL SOLUTION

Whatever form apartheid takes, it will forever remain evil. The only remedy for apartheid is for it to follow on the same footsteps as its predecessor, Nazism, that is, it must be destroyed.

To placate the South African apartheid "whites" who grew up to believe that "whites" should oppress "blacks," apartheid is presently busy importing Internationally known "black" sportsmen, reclassifying them as "Honorary whites," and offering them exorbitant prices to perform in front of racist South

Africans. A recent example is Davey Moore, an American black boxer who recently went to South Africa, and was reclassified "Honorary white" to defend his WBA Junior Middle-weight World title there. The ordinary apartheid "whites" who had a brawl with him in the streets did not know that he was an "Honorary white." He was unfortunate because the second time he went over there, another apartheid "white" punched him on the mouth. He too did not know that poor Davey was classified "honorary white." I sometimes wonder what would happen if Olympic games were to be held in a country like that. How many "Blacks" would have to be reclassified "Honorary whites" and how much force would be needed to safeguard the reclassified "honorary whites" over there.

In conclusion, apart from the fact that Africans get to excel in their various chosen sports despite the limited facilities under which they train and perform, the South African government is systematically excluding them from sports activities, or at least accepting some token blacks. This is because they want to be acceptable to the Olympics Body which had boycotted this country because of its racist policies. We as South Africans, implore the International Community to continue to bar racist South Africa from participating in International sport until 'apart-hate' has been toppled.