

**COMMUNICATIVE-PHILOSOPHICAL CHALLENGES OF MANAGING  
A MALE RESIDENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Institutions of Higher Education have an important contribution to make towards the South African project, and residence life gives a university a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution towards nation building. In this article, the author will briefly discuss some of the challenges that he faced as head of a male residence at the University of the Free State (UFS) in the post-Reitz era. In the first part of the article the focus will be on the challenge of cultivating a post-apartheid citizenship amongst first-year students, as well as on the transformation process in the residences. Then the views of the university as a business and a residence as a house will be discussed. Throughout the article the influence of different ideologies will be critiqued, through the identification of specific “hyper-norms” that dominate other norms and values, and also lead to relations of domination between social groups. Some of the metaphors that are central in this whole process will be explored in terms of what each metaphor “highlights” and what it and its possible deconstruction “hides”.*

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## INTRODUCTION

South Africa belongs to all those who live in it. The realisation of this ideal, as described in the Freedom Charter and then accepted as the backbone of the Constitution of post-apartheid South Africa, has been a continuous struggle. The inability of many South Africans to embrace and promote this idea may rightly be viewed as the single biggest stumbling block in the way of creating a truly South African democracy.

The process of nation building, which started with the unbanning of the ANC and subsequent release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, gained momentum with the first democratic elections in 1994. Many South Africans put their faith in Mandela to unite the nation, and the extraordinary contribution he made in this regard is well documented. However, the passive posture that many of these expectant South Africans assumed resulted in what some have referred to as the “Mandelarisation” of South Africa. This culminated in him wearing the no. 6 rugby jersey at the 1995 Rugby World Cup Final, which was largely a symbolic gesture, albeit one of the most powerful symbolic gestures possible. Contrary to popular belief, the winning of the Rugby World Cup in 1995 (and again in 2007) did not “unite” the people of South Africa. Granted, winning the Cup ignited wide-spread celebrations and created a sense of goodwill amongst many South Africans. But once the euphoria had passed, the people simply returned to their everyday lives and South Africans remain divided.

The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was intended to stimulate the growth of our young democracy. However, this author agrees with prominent Afrikaans author Antjie Krog’s assessment that although the TRC was highly successful in creating a forum for victims and relatively successful in establishing “truth”, it failed, to a large extent, in the spheres of reparation, amnesty and reconciliation (Krog 2002: 289-290). This is by no means the fault of the Commission itself, but may rather be ascribed to a collective apathy of the citizens, especially amongst many white South Africans, towards the ultimate purpose of the TRC.

In the late 1990s, Thabo Mbeki’s famous “I am an African” speech (1998), accompanied by his African Renaissance initiative, were further attempts to not only unite the people of South Africa in their commitment to the country, but also to the continent. However, it seems as if the African Renaissance movement has lost most of its momentum, and in the first few years of the new millennium, South Africans have witnessed how Desmond Tutu’s Rainbow Nation has begun to fade into a black and white version of a once colourful symbol.

The establishment of The Native Club and the emergence of what may be called the Neo-Afrikaner Protest Movement (NAP) are cause for great concern regarding the possible resurgence of black and white nationalism. The purpose of the former is to unite the black *intelligentsia* under the umbrella of Africanist philosophies, while the latter attempts to mobilise white Afrikaners under the banner of the “fight for the survival of the Afrikaans language”.<sup>1</sup> If South Africans have learnt one thing from their painful past, it is that this kind of ideological grouping should be avoided at all costs.

Mbembe (2006: 5) affirms this when he argues that “[w]e have therefore entered a very dangerous moment. But South Africa is still a democracy. There is still room to manoeuvre and there are still choices to be made. What is alarming for many is that the scope for choice is gradually being eroded by those intent to re-segregate the public sphere and to constrict what it means to be South African and African in today’s world.”

During the second half of 2007, the University of the Free State (UFS) became aware of the “dangerous moment” Mbembe refers to, when the decision was taken that UFS residences could no longer be segregated along racial lines. This decision was met with fierce protest by many of the white students and their parents, as well as some staff members. Driven by the conviction that the transformation of residence life, more than a decade after the birth of the new South Africa, was a moral imperative, I accepted the post of a residence head in February 2008. Two weeks later the “dangerous moment” became a reality when two incidents shook the UFS community: the violent strike of the residence committees which resulted in millions of rands of damage to property, and the existence of the infamous Reitz video that came to light a few days later.

In this article I will briefly discuss some of the challenges that I face as head of a UFS male residence in the post-Reitz era. The theoretical framework of my discussion will be our departmental model of ideology theory as well as a more familiar model of metaphor theory (largely developed by George Lakoff and co-workers). Throughout the article the influence of different ideologies will be critiqued through the identification of specific “hyper-norms” that dominate other norms and values, and also lead to relations of domination between social groups.

Some of the metaphors that are central in this whole process will be explored in terms of what each metaphor “highlights” and what it and its possible deconstruction “hides” (Lakoff 2008). In the first part of the article the focus will be on the challenge of cultivating a post-apartheid citizenship amongst first-year students, as well as on the transformation process in the residences. Then the views of the university as a business and a residence as a house will be discussed.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF POST-APARTHEID CITIZENSHIP**

The events mentioned in the introduction of this article, are the events that shaped the first 18 years of the lives of the students entering residences on the campuses of the UFS.<sup>2</sup> These were indeed extraordinary years in more than one way – and few generations have experienced similar radical changes in such a relatively short time. First-year students are generally at an age where they are dealing with issues of identity – one of which is their identity as post-apartheid citizens. They were not actively involved in the struggle against apartheid, nor in the enforcement of the apartheid ideology; yet on entering the UFS they walk into an institution shaped by the apartheid ideology.

Jonathan Jansen (2009: 51) observes that the surprising factor is not that the post-apartheid students have knowledge of the past, but the fact that they hold this

knowledge “firmly, personally, and emotionally”. And he rightly asks “[h]ow does one explain the powerful knowledge held by post-Apartheid children about events they did not witness themselves and about experiences they never directly had?” (Jansen 2009: 53).

Many students argue that they had nothing to do with apartheid, and therefore should not be branded in this sense, yet it is as if they were all born with the birthmark of apartheid. This is what Jansen (2009: 114-144) refers to as “bitter knowledge”. To complicate these students’ transition from school to university even further, they are also exposed to various ideologies that dominate society. So while they are trying to understand their place in post-apartheid South Africa, students are also exposed to the influence of ideologies such as Neo-liberalism and the Neo-Afrikaner Protest Movement, to name but two.

The term “Neo-Afrikaner Protest Movement” was coined by Johann Visagie referring to mostly white Afrikaner intellectuals and performing artists still trapped, in spite of their denial, in the ideology of ethno-nationalism, thus opposing the necessary relativisation of a former dominant culture in a multi-ethnological state. In apartheid South Africa the ideology of ethno-nationalism (“volksideologie”) was characterised by the overriding goal (hyper-norm) of the preservation of the “volkskultuur” (also for the “benefit” of other cultures). Although the term Neo-Afrikaner Protest Movement itself is not entirely unproblematic, its main critical suggestion is that there are underlying ties between this discourse and that of the “volksideologie” of the former apartheid era.<sup>3</sup> The protest is mobilised under the banner of especially language activism, but to such an extent that language becomes merely a euphemism for race (in its strongest form) or the desire for a cultural “distance” (in a more subtle form). It is the latter that clearly has conceptual ties with the ethnic hyper-norm of “volkskultuur”.

On the other hand, students are also caught up in Neo-liberalism that has had a worldwide influence for some years. This ideology is driven by the goals of economic wealth and personal achievements. Brown (2003: 3) describes the neo-liberal citizen as follows:

The model neo-liberal citizen is one who strategizes for her/himself among various social, political and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options. A fully realized neo-liberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded, indeed it would barely exist as a public. The body politic ceases to be a body but is, rather, a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers.

Neo-liberalism is thus characterised by political complacency with historical ties going back to Classic Liberalism (hyper-normative possessive individualism) – something that the new South Africa project can ill afford. The way in which first-year students react towards the integration of residences is characterised by elements of both ideologies. While they demonstrate a political apathy towards nation building, they become extremely political when the Afrikaner culture of the residences comes under discussion.

What makes this generation's search for identity unique, is that those who are supposed to guide them "have had no experience of themselves as citizens of a modern, non-racial democracy on their home ground" (Ramphela 2008: 15). Most UFS staff members are themselves adapting to what it means to live in a democracy – since they have lived for most of their lives in a country that did not have a Human Rights Declaration in its Constitution. They too are influenced by the ideologies of our time and the influence of Neo-liberalism, for example, is not limited to students.

Before I became head of the residence, like many of my colleagues, I too was reluctant to get involved in issues outside of the classroom. As a department we have always been critical of the way in which institutional matters have been addressed, but were also guilty of easily brushing aside issues of conflict as a matter between management and students. This trend, where people retreat from the public domain into the private sphere, is typical of a society being dominated by Neo-liberalism.

In an article titled *Beyond the ivory tower: The public role of the intellectual today* Benda Hofmeyr argues that "Neo-liberalism radically attenuates the individual's capacity to enter the public sphere", which leads to "the inevitable depoliticisation of intellectual labour through the increasing individualization of the self, on the one hand, and the rampant privatization of the public, on the other hand" (Hofmeyr 2008: 74-75). Another complicating factor is that the UFS is currently grappling to come to terms with its identity as a post-apartheid institution of higher education. It is therefore understandable why the transformation of residences poses such a challenge for students and staff at the UFS.

The Reitz video forced the UFS to reconsider questions such as: Is the role of campus to produce citizens with a capacity to critically examine their own lives as well as traditions in a self-critical way? Can campus be seen as one of society's important public spaces wherein public communication on the common good is nurtured? (Boman, Gustavsson & Nussbaum 2002: 306). Ramphela (2008: 196) makes the point that "in any society, higher education is the platform for the practice of high-level human and intellectual work and the training of future generations of professionals, scientists and technological experts". It may therefore be argued that the cultivation of responsible citizenship amongst the youth is one of the responsibilities that the UFS should take on during the process of the transformation of the South African society.

The challenge that the UFS has to deal with is "how to foster a genuine commitment to the democratic premise that common men and woman have something valuable to contribute to the formation of public opinion" (Mbembe 2006: 5). In terms of philosophical analysis, we must distinguish between ethnicity, citizenship and political culture. The fact that we are dealing with the lifeworld of the university, means that it is primarily through academic education that students can be taught that they belong to a specific ethnic group, while simultaneously being a citizen of South Africa – which is a political concept and a political context.<sup>4</sup>

This citizenship ties in with the idea of the State and with the idea of a political culture. The latter clearly has nothing to do with ethnicity as such, and students must be taught that culture is not synonymous with the concept of “a people”. An advanced political culture centres in the idea of a fully developed democracy. Students must learn that they have to care deeply about both their ethnic culture (although this might entail them turning their backs on elements of this culture that, for whatever reason, they no longer wish to continue) and their political culture. And ultimately they must be taught that the political culture of the country (symbolically grounded in the Constitution) is to be conceptually separated from the majority ethnic culture. Indeed, the political culture must sometimes intervene in the free expression of majority ethnic culture(s) – when such expression is problematic regarding the general public interest. These are imperative distinctions for students and staff to learn, but it has to be in a non-politicised university context, marked by the typical academic culture of the university.

Part of the academic culture of the university is its communicative infrastructure: communication inside and outside of classrooms, between students, between students and lecturers, between management and faculties, etc. From the university in its metaphorical positioning outside society (not discounting its being part of society) this ultra-necessary debate must be protected beyond the university, in letters to newspapers, arranged discussion forums where the general public is welcome to attend, in televised and radio interviews. These are possible ways to connect a student’s room in a residence with the great public sphere “out there”.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSFORMATION**

Residence life gives the university a unique opportunity to play a facilitating role during the important transitional phase in the lives of students during their first few years on campus. The impact of the residence culture of a specific residence on an individual’s quest for identity, whether positive or negative, must therefore be critically examined. In order to open up such a discourse, the UFS community needs to reflect on the nature and purpose of residences.<sup>5</sup>

Any discussion on the nature of a residence should be informed by one’s definition of a university. There is general consensus that research, teaching and community service are the main characteristics of a university which distinguish it from other societal institutions.<sup>6</sup> However, in defining the UFS as a university, the fact that the UFS is situated on the African continent and that it practices research and teaching in the post-apartheid era, have to be taken into consideration.

Since these realities have a significant impact on the way in which the UFS functions as an institution, it follows logically then, that it should be reflected in the way in which residence life is organised.

Until 2008, residence life at the UFS did not reflect the above-mentioned realities. At that stage the UFS had been engaged in a process of transformation, although for various reasons residence life was not yet a priority. At the beginning of 2008, the

process of transforming the UFS into a truly South African university reached the stage where the re-imagining of what exactly residence life should constitute in a post-apartheid South Africa, became a priority. However, at that stage the UFS community was already suffering from “transformation fatigue” not as a result of continuous effort to transform, but rather as a result of continuous effort to resist transformation.

The integration of residences was framed in a very specific manner by the opponents of transformation. For instance, during the SRC election of 2007, the Freedom Front Plus campaigned against what they called “forced integration” and argued that it is equivalent to discrimination. The party argued that it was wrong to force people from different cultural backgrounds to share a residence. What was implied, but not said, was in fact that they favoured a policy of forced separation. Another argument put forward was that the UFS was trying to “verswart” (literally: blacken) the residences. Again, what was not said, was that they (the opponents of transformation) wanted to keep the residences white (to use their terminology). The debate was thus framed as if the UFS expected students to do something unnatural, while in fact the promotion of the segregation of residences in a post-apartheid South Africa was the unnatural thing to do.

Another popular argument against integration was that the UFS should not get involved in facilitating students in adapting to living in post-apartheid South Africa, since such a project does not form part of its core business. The premise was that the UFS should focus exclusively on the main characteristics of a university such as research and teaching. This is quite ironic, since those who were arguing along those lines were conveniently ignoring the fact that the UFS has had a long history of cultivating a specific brand of citizenship in service of the apartheid regime. The history of the UFS shows that the National Party regime used the UFS to advance its ideology. This is illustrated in the way in which residence life was organised in the pre-1990 period.

Residences are ideally suited for such endeavours, since “[i]t is a culture-specific model that assumes homogeneity and a shared value system, and customs that have been handed down from generation to generation” (Ramphela 2008: 217). The architecture of the residence, the traditions and symbols were all directed towards the establishment of a strong Afrikaner nationalist tradition. A specific brand of Afrikaner culture and conservative Christianity worked very effectively towards producing law-abiding, non-critical nationalists – to be employed in the State apparatus. So, in reality, the opponents of transformation were not opposed to the idea that the UFS cultivates citizenship, but they were against the kind of citizenship being cultivated, namely a citizenship based on constitutional values grounded in human dignity.

The main challenges that faced me as a residence head in this transformation process were three-fold: Firstly, since the UFS is a university, residence life should be characterised by a vigorous academic culture. Secondly, since we live in a post-apartheid South Africa, and given the fact that the UFS is a public (and not a private) institution, residences should be integrated. Thirdly, residences should be spaces where

respect for humanity and human dignity are cultivated. But, since the biggest challenge in terms of nation building is the fact that race is still an issue, the transformation of residences became exclusively an issue of race.

Most South Africans still struggle with the idea that there is only one race. The visible distinctions in terms of external appearances have conditioned us to ignore scientific evidence that there is but one race. We must find ways of de-conditioning ourselves from the deep-seated need for categories. We must de-link political patronage from racial categories as we succeed in our transformation process. We need to set ourselves a target date by when we will throw away the crutch of racial categories and become simply South Africans (Ramphele 2008: 309).

The transformation of residences into living/learning communities, which has obviously nothing to do with race, was opposed on the grounds that it was another attack on the Afrikaner and his/her culture. The same line of attack was followed with the transformation of residences where a human rights culture was to be nourished. Ramphele (2008: 137) rightly asks, “What kind of free society is it that gives permission to some to physically violate the rights of others in order to assert theirs?” This is exactly what happened in residences under the name of seniority and was defended as part of tradition. It is evident that students “seem to be torn between the values of our human-rights-based constitution and traditional practices that violate some of those rights” (Ramphele 2008: 75). So when illegal and inhumane practices (such as initiation) were banned by the UFS the motives behind the decision were questioned. Yet again it was perceived as an attack on the Afrikaner culture in the sense of “they are taking away another aspect of our culture” instead of seeing it for what it is, namely that residences should be living spaces wherein the dignity of every person is valued and respected.

One of the biggest challenges that the UFS has encountered in the process of transformation is how to move from formulating policies towards implementing them. Most of the policies were already in place, but little transformation took place. The UFS was in a position where the institutional framework was the most developed, but the values framework was the least developed. In July 2008 the Council of the UFS appointed the iGubu Agency to facilitate the transformation process in the residences. In the iGubu model, rhythm and rootedness are seen as the foundational characteristics of African communities, which find expression in the relational engagement of different life tasks of communities and individuals, namely establishing dialogue, engaging identity, creating community, finding meaning and activating movement” (iGubu Agency 2009)<sup>7</sup>.

The question of how to achieve change in an institutional culture can be addressed from different points of departure. One approach is to argue that one first needs to change the thinking and then the behaviour will change. Another approach would be to argue that one needs to first change the behaviour and then the thinking will change. The iGubu Agency favours the latter approach. First identify shared values, and while working



from within a shared value system one can then attempt the changes needed in behaviour which will eventually lead to a change in thinking. Both approaches are legitimate, but the choice of when the one should take precedence over the other depends on the specific situation and people involved. What should be avoided is a situation where the one is promoted at the cost of the other.<sup>8</sup>

We need to reframe the debate on transformation. Instead of making it a diversity issue, or a colour issue, we should view it in the broader spectrum of what Steve Biko called a process in which we as people living on the African continent give our country, continent and indeed the world, a more human face. Framing transformation in such a way will put the focus on our shared humanity and the high value we place on the dignity of all human beings.

### **CHALLENGING THE VIEW THAT THE UNIVERSITY IS A BUSINESS**

More and more students view themselves exclusively as clients of some sort of business, rather than as students of a university community. The implication is that students act as “clients” and not as shareholders and do not take interest in engaging in university issues, but rather sit back and demand. However, they apply the (unconscious) client metaphor selectively, so when it comes to issues of transformation, they demand to have a direct input in the process. The role of students in shaping policy becomes problematic. Ramphele (2008: 214-215) explains that while on the one hand universities have “the extraordinary responsibility to think beyond the needs of present generations”, students on the other hand “disregard the fact that they were short-term leaders of a transient student community within institutions that by their nature must have a long-term focus”. How to balance the long-term interests of the university with the short term interests of students has indeed become one of the biggest challenges for the UFS.

Being a client means that you do not have direct involvement in the products provided as well as the way in which the business is run. The business has the responsibility to ensure that the clients are satisfied with the product as well as the way they are being treated. But in the end it is the business that is in charge of decisions regarding the future direction of the business. This is something students have difficulty to grasp within the pervasive ideology of consumerism. For example, the university has the right and the responsibility to decide how they want their first-year students to be treated in residences. The students in turn may then decide for themselves whether they want to enrol at that specific institution or not.

Visagie (2005: 230) warns against the danger that the client metaphor holds for students: “The institutional structure of the university binds teachers and students into the social totality of a lifeworld – where both are members of the same social structure, which has an inherent and unique form of guidance coupled to institutional authority. In real client relationships this is of course totally lacking. Comically (or tragically) enough, the more students become ‘clients’, the more they will be deprived of what the university really has ‘to offer’ them”. In deconstructing the ideological misuse of the

client metaphor, one detects the fissures and fault lines that underlie its apparent unity and identity, which in turn shows how the metaphor is at odds with itself. The deep structure metaphor underlying “the university is a business” metaphor is thus in tension with itself.

### **CHALLENGING THE VIEW THAT THE RESIDENCE IS A HOUSE**

Many people think of the nature of a residence (*res*) in terms of that of a family. For example: Past and present students of a *res* often refer to the *house* as one big family. Each first-year student gets chosen by a senior to enter into a father/son relationship. Every *res* has a *house* committee who are elected by the *house*. Regular *house* meetings form an integral part of residence life. One of the greatest fears expressed by students is that the *res* will be changed from being a *house* into being a block of flats. But what kind of family does a *res* represent?

The traditional UFS Afrikaner men’s residence of the 1980s can be analysed according to the two ideal versions of the family, namely the strict father family and the nurturing parent family that George Lakoff (2008) identifies in his analysis of the Nation-as-Family metaphor. Some of the characteristics of a typical 80s residence were: an unconditional loyalty to the residence kept alive by a culture of seniority, characterised by absolute authority and intolerance for non-conformity; a place of safety; a strong sense of belonging; and a shared identity. These are all characteristics of the strict father model. This should come as no surprise, since for example, the average Afrikaner family, the Dutch Reformed church, the National Party and indeed the UFS itself were all lifeworlds functioning on the foundation of this very model in the 1980s.

Nowadays students are rebelling against the ideological forcing of a strict father model upon them (the “student as client” metaphor obviously contributes to this). An analysis of the complaints listed by the house committees when they went on strike in 2008, clearly shows that the underlying issue was that they felt that the UFS management acted as a strict father and they were being treated as children; not being acknowledged in the decision-making process. But despite this development, it may be argued that the strict father model is still the dominant one within many of the men’s residences.

Given the challenges we are facing, it is necessary to consider incorporating both models in a complementary relationship in our understanding of residence life. For instance, students might be more easily convinced to adopt a mentorship programme in the residence when it is explained against the backdrop of a nurturing parent model. By arguing against an ideological positioning of the strict father model at the expense of the nurturing parent model, one should be careful not to make the mistake of advocating the nurturing model at all cost. Both models have their strong and weak points and they differ in terms of what is brought to presence and what is absent.

However, whether one favours the strict father or nurturing parent model, one should always keep in mind that the residence is not literally a family. We use certain parts of the concept of a “family” to understand certain qualities of a “residence”, but the family

and the residence are two uniquely different societal structures. Therefore one cannot even argue that the residence is an extension of the home, as some have argued in the past. What this metaphor does highlight is a unique sense of belonging that is cultivated in a residence. The challenge is how to transform residence life into living/learning communities that are in line with our human rights-based Constitution, without compromising the sense of belonging inherent in the metaphor. One might argue that the idea of *ubuntu* is the underlying ethic and that it therefore needs to be explored. However, the over-use and exploitation of the word *ubuntu* makes it nearly unusable and Krog (2008:355) chooses to translate it as “interconnectedness-towards-wholeness” describing it as follows:

Interconnectedness-towards-wholeness is more than just a theoretical knowledge that all things in the world are linked, it means both a mental and physical awareness that one can only ‘become’ who one is, or could be, through fullness of that which is around one – both physical and metaphysical. ...Wholeness is thus not a passive state of nirvana, but a process of becoming in which everybody and everything is moving towards its fullest self, building itself; one can only reach that fullest self, through and with Others which include ancestors and universe.

When students from different cultural and/or religious backgrounds share the same living space, it is important to keep in mind that there are limits to people’s ability to understand each other. Boman *et al.* (2002: 308) rightly argues that there is “an ethical responsibility to let someone else go beyond my understanding of him or her”. Such an ethical attitude requires a moral sensitivity that needs to be cultivated in residences. Boman *et al.* (2002: 309), however, argues that we should be careful “not to assume, without trying the utmost, that people distant to ourselves are not possible to understand”. Residence life provides a unique opportunity in this regard, and the editor of the *Irawa* (the official student newspaper) aptly captures this: “Until we move from merely tolerating one another to a sincere form of regard; until we stop objectifying ourselves by referring to the idea of living together as ‘integration’; until we stop pointing fingers and begin evaluating ourselves; and until we stop living by the standards of our respective groups and begin living by the code of humanity, then there will be no solution for this campus, and no solution for this country” (Turkington 2009: 8).

## CONCLUSION

One thing that South Africans hopefully have realised after 15 years of democracy, is that no one personality or any achievement by a national sports team will unite the people of this country – regardless of the fact that it will certainly contribute to the process. Instead, what is needed is the creation of a nation in which all individuals take their responsibilities as citizens seriously as defined by the Constitution. Only then will the idea that South Africa belongs to all those who live in it be realised. “We now need to live and work as citizens of a democracy willing to explore the challenges of our new identity as a democratic state inhabited by people with a diversity of identities, yet sharing a common national identity as South Africans” (Ramphela 2008: 296).

It is indeed disappointing that we as a nation have lost some of the momentum gained in the early 1990s with regard to nation building. Institutions of Higher Education in general and the UFS in particular have an important contribution to make towards the South African project. Residence life gives the university a unique opportunity to make a significant contribution in this regard. In order to achieve this, the UFS need to re-establish its identity as a public (not private) institution that it is situated in Africa (not Europe) and that it is a university in the true sense of the word (not a business corporation). Only then will the UFS be able to support students in their academic endeavour that will determine not only their vocational future, but also establish their identity as citizens of South Africa. Ramphele (2008: 127-128) illuminates this as follows: “The challenge facing our young democracy is for its citizens to go beyond the symbols of citizenship, be they the flag or national anthem, to defending our core constitutional values... Civic-mindedness means we have to go beyond doing no harm to doing good”. This is the ultimate challenge of being “philosopher in residence”.

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#### *Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> At this stage, the possible ideological aspect (in the negative sense of the term) of these two movements is not at issue. Note that I will be using the term “ideology” throughout this article in its negative sense.

<sup>2</sup> This article focuses specifically on the experience of white Afrikaner male students.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that New Afrikaner Protest Movement is not a homogenous phenomenon. In the work of Melissa Steyn (2001), for instance, one finds different typical narratives of how whites see themselves in a changing South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> The core of this argument benefitted from a series of critical discussions with my colleague, Johann Visagie.

<sup>5</sup> The positive contribution that residence life can make towards first-year students’ learning and academic success is a topic of research worldwide. See Zeller (2005); Brandon, Hirt and Cameron (2008); Lewis, Forsythe, Sweeney, Bartone, Bullis and Snook (2005).

<sup>6</sup> An in-depth discussion of the nature of a university falls outside the scope of this article. See Visagie (2005), Stewart (2007) and Waghid (2008) in this regard.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Igubu Agency visit their website at [www.igubu.co.za](http://www.igubu.co.za).

<sup>8</sup> Being a philosopher who follows a rational, systematic approach (strongly influenced by the Stoics) the first approach comes naturally for me. However, I soon realised that while this approach might be successful in the classroom, it has limited success in engaging with the students when it comes to residence life. Being confronted with an approach that does not come naturally to me, has not only enabled me to communicate in a more meaningful way with the students in the residence but has also enriched the way in which I lecture in the classroom.

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