NEWS 🗗

'Blacks can visit, but they can't live here'

Despite all its denials, allegations persist that apartheid is alive in the 'Afrikaner culture' enclave of Kleinfontein near Pretoria

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Hendrik Hancke Senior reporter

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The Kleinfontein community east of Pretoria, developed for white Afrikaners, has a primary school on the property. *Image: MARIANNE SCHWANKHART*

It takes just two hours from Johannesburg to travel back to the 1970s.

Or so it seemed this week during a visit to the "Afrikaner culture" enclave of Kleinfontein, where, despite emphatic denials from its leaders, black people can visit but can't live or work.

The settlement was founded in 1992, when the Boere Freedom Movement bought land east of Tshwane. The plan was to establish a growth point for Afrikaner self-determination.

It now has more than 600 houses, some light industry and several businesses, including a pizza restaurant, a "Boer" bank, a pharmacy, a butchery, a barber's shop and a hardware store. It consists of nine properties, none of which have been rezoned for residential purposes or subdivided. It uses groundwater and has a solar farm.

Scattered townhouses and worker homes frame its gravel roads. A white labourer was pulling up weeds in the settlement's graveyard when the Sunday Times arrived on Wednesday.

"I am from Durban, but I have a two-year-old child with a woman who lives near here. I moved to Kleinfontein when I got a job here to be closer to my child," said the tattooed worker, who did not want to identify himself.

At one house, a faux-gold statue of a heroic, bare-chested male figure raises what looks like a golden koeksister to the skies, while an equally faux-golden woman clings to his leg.



At one Kleinfontein house, a faux-gold statue of a heroic male figure raises what might be a golden koeksister (or hamburger) to the skies, while an equally faux-golden woman clings to his leg. *Image:* Hendrik Hancke

But, despite the tacky statue's suggestion, the fake glow of this Boer utopia has tarnished.

Resident Henk Celliers, who leads the "dissident" Kleinfontein Residents Association (KRA), says the enclave's "right of residence" policy is how Kleinfontein ensures the whiteness of its residents. "They hide behind Afrikaner culture, but you must go through a selection process where they meet you. If you are not white, Afrikaans and a Christian, you will not pass the selection."

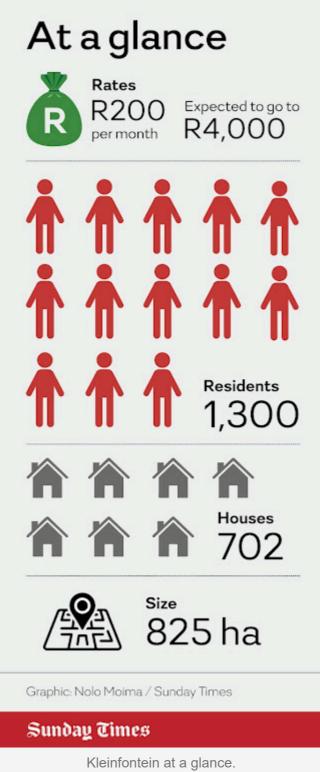


Image: Nolo Moima

He said black people are allowed to visit residents but may not work or live in Kleinfontein. "If I sneakily bring a black person in to work for me - let's say in my garden - I [have to] call him over and let him sit down on my stoep with a coffee if I spot anyone from management or security. We then pretend he is just visiting, so they cannot not say anything."

"Some time ago, a gardener working in my garden kicked up a stone with the Weedeater he was using. The stone broke a neighbour's glass sliding door. I called a glass place in Bronkhorstspruit and they sent someone out. This black man was let in by security to measure the window. Two hours after he left, he returned with the glass to install it, but security would not let him in. They told me he was allowed in to measure the door, but a white person had to install the new glass."

But Celliers' biggest gripe is with the way Kleinfontein is run.

The estate is a share block — a property ownership scheme in which individuals own shares in a company that owns the development. The shares owned by a member of the scheme give that person the right to use a specific unit in the development, rather than own it.

The land is zoned for agriculture, which means rates are 75% cheaper than those for residential land.

"I bought my plot in 2016, built my house in 2017, and moved in in 2020," Celliers said. "In total, I invested R3m to buy this property and bought 70 shares to the value of R1,000 per share. Kleinfontein relies on new investors buying shares in the company to create an illusion of increased financial security on their investments, with profits to be made." Celliers said.



Kleinfontein resident Henk Celliers, 75. *Image: Hendrik Hancke*

He claimed he was a victim of this scheme. He says money paid by earlier investors is used to fund the development of the settlement.

"They are transferring the duty of the developer to the investor to fund this illegal development, making the scheme highly profitable for some. Large amounts of funds are pocketed by the beneficiaries of the scheme in commissions, salaries and insider trading of shares," he said.

But Kleinfontein spokesperson Danny de Beer rubbished these claims. On the issue of racial exclusion, he said there are "no rules or regulations referring to race in Kleinfontein".

"Kleinfontein is an Afrikaner cultural community, not a white community. Why would one describe a Zulu or a Xhosa merely as black, robbing him of his cultural status? Why insist that Afrikaners are white and thereby deny Afrikaners are a cultural minority?

"Both Orania and Kleinfontein have a process called *verblyfreg* [right of residence] in terms of which details about the town are shared and evaluations done on applicants. For example, applicants with criminal records might, based on the severity of the record, be denied access. This application process is specifically made possible by sections of the Share Blocks Control Act."



One of Kleinfontein's houses. *Image: Hendrik Hancke*

On the claims by Celliers relating to how the scheme is operated, De Beer said Kleinfontein "has a sad history of infighting, with a number of dissident groups coming and going over the years".

"Clear accounting rules are applied in Kleinfontein, and capital expenditure is funded from capital income, while operating expenses are covered by levies. Some individuals, when they move to Kleinfontein, accept that it is an Afrikaner town and that it does not offer full-title ownership, but rather rights in terms of a share block scheme and, before that, a co-operative.

"The KRA is a dissident, splinter group with a questionable number of members — about 30 active members from Kleinfontein's total population of 1,300. The KRA not only withheld levies but also took their own community to court and named Tshwane as a second respondent. The court ordered the City of Tshwane to act and, instead of engaging the community, the city applied punitive property taxes to the community in September 2024.

"Because of the actions of the KRA, property taxes [paid by Kleinfontein to Tshwane] were raised from R6,000 a month to R126,000. The municipality then changed the valuation roll of all Kleinfontein's properties from R55m to R291m. If this is uncontested, the community will face a R2m monthly rates bill. The proposed revaluation will kick in on July 1, unless we successfully oppose it. Our complaint has to be lodged before May 2."



The local crèche is sponsored by Solidariteit's Helping Hands fund. *Image: Hendrik Hancke*

De Beer was referring to an application Celliers and other shareholders made to the Pretoria high court seeking to interdict the settlement's authority, Kleinfontein Aandeleblok, from further expanding the settlement until laws relating to planning and building regulations have been complied with. They were unhappy with the continued expansion of the township, which they said affected the quality of service delivery afforded to those already living there. In August, the court found the settlement was illegal and ordered the City of Tshwane to enforce all relevant laws relating to planning and building regulations. The next month, the city recategorised four of the Kleinfontein properties as "non-permitted use", which means a punitive rate of seven times the residential rate now applies to them.

A former Kleinfontein security guard, Flip Brits, 31, told the Sunday Times this week that he and his wife were hounded out of the estate. "I started working there in about 2020 and moved into Kleinfontein," he said. "My wife and I later reconciled, and I asked for permission for her to move in. They said yes and my wife, Desne, 31, and our two children, aged seven and nine, moved in."

Things went well, Brits said, "for almost eight months".

"Then I was called in to see the management of Kleinfontein. They said my wife had not undergone and passed the selection process. I named several other men who lived there whose wives also later joined them without undergoing this process, but they did not care."



Former Kleinfontein security guard Flip Brits and his wife, Desne. Brits claims they were forced out of the settlement because Desne, who joined him after he moved in, is not white.

Image: Supplied

"I told them that the reason they were picking on my wife was because they found out she isn't white, but they denied it.

"My wife, who is very light-skinned, was completely isolated and ignored by other residents. The management started looking for issues with my work until we agreed to move out if they would help us find another space. They gave us 30 days to move out, otherwise my wife had to move with the children by the end of the 30 days."

But De Beer denied the family left for this reason, saying Brits was fired for watching pornography while on duty.

Brits denies this, saying De Beer was confusing him with another Kleinfontein resident "who incidentally still lives there".

"I was not fired, but I resigned, and it had nothing to do with pornography. I received a written warning for letting in a vehicle they said I was not supposed to let in. I know of no coloured people who live there or have lived there except for my wife," Brits said.

The City of Tshwane did not respond to several requests for comment on and information about their plans for Kleinfontein.



Kleinfontein worker houses. *Image: Hendrik Hancke*

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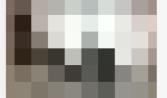
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