

The prefix UBU refers to the abstract. So *ubuntu* is the quality of being human. It is the quality, or the behaviour, of *ntu* society, ie, sharing, charitableness, cooperation. It is this quality which distinguishes a human creature from an animal or a spirit. When you do something that is not humane then you are being like an animal.

The prefix *abe* is the plural of *umu* which refers to a person. So *abantu* are the people of *ntu* society.

Strictly speaking it's not possible to refer to the people who came in 1652 with a different way of life and took our land, as *abantu*. We distinguish those who came after 1652 with the words *abeLungu* or *abaMhlope*. This distinction could not have carried on if the new arrivals had shared the land and way of life in a humane way.

AbeLungu refers to people who are privileged. If I were to arrive in a Mercedes Benz and wearing a suit, people would say *umLungu oMnyama ufikile* a black privileged person has arrived. The root *hlope* simply means white. So *abaMhlope* are white people.

Today the meaning you give to *abantu* depends on the context in which you use it. If you go into a hall in which a riot has taken place and three black people and three white people have been killed you will simply say six people are dead (*abantu bafile*). Later you may distinguish between their colours. But if you are saying that people are suffering because of the high rents then it is implied that you are talking about black people because white people are privileged, they appear to be quite okay and without any problems.'

A new kind of banning order?

While banning as a form of silencing people remains on the statute book, it has been less frequently used in recent years. In 1980 due to world pressure it was dropped, with 11 people banned at that stage. Now it has cropped up again in another guise.

Once again it is a question of playing with words. Since the State of Emergency was de-

clared, some 65 people have effectively been banned, under restriction orders.

These people ironically are included in the statistics of those 'released' from detention under the State of Emergency regulations. On their release they were issued with orders similar to the one published below. . . The penalty for breaking these orders is a fine of R10 000 or 10 years in prison.

SCHEDULE

Conditions of release of Mr X

The said MR X shall not without the permission of the Minister of Law and Order, during the period from the date of his release, for as long as the Regulations promulgated by Proclamation R121 of July 21 1985, issued in terms of the Public Safety Act, 1953 (Act 3 of 1953), remain in force —

- (1) absent himself from the magisterial district of JOHANNESBURG;
- (2) take part in any manner whatsoever in the activities or affairs of any of the following organisations:
 - MEDIA ADVISORY AND RESOURCE SERVICE (MARS);
 - COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE (CRIC);
 - SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS PRESS UNION (SASPU);
 - JOHANNESBURG DEMOCRATIC ACTION COMMITTEE (JODAC);
 - ANY TRADE UNION;
 - ANY YOUTH ORGANISATION; OR
 - ANY ORGANISATION RELATED TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN THE MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT OF JOHANNESBURG.

- (3) enter the premises of any school or other educational institution;
- (4) (i) prepare, compile, publish or disseminate in any manner whatsoever any publication as defined in the Internal Security Act, 1982 (Act 74 of 1982);
 - (ii) participate or assist in any manner whatsoever in the preparation, compilation, publication or dissemination of any publication as so defined;
 - (iii) contribute, prepare or compile in any manner whatsoever any material for publication in any publication as so defined;
- (5) attend any gathering —
 - (i) at which any form of State or any principle or policy of, or action or contemplated action by, the Government of the Republic of South Africa is attacked, criticised or discussed;
 - (ii) at which any local authority as defined in section 1 of the Black Local Authorities Act, 1982 (Act 102 of 1982), is attacked, criticised or discussed;
 - (iii) of pupils or students; or
- (6) enter the premises of FREEWAY HOUSE in De Korte Street, Braamfontein or KHOTSO HOUSE in De Villiers Street, Johannesburg for any purposes whatsoever.

'Since the beginning of the State of Emergency, I have been assisting relatives of detainees. It is now six months and one week after the declaration of the State of Emergency. There are about 80 'emergency' detainees in Modderbee who have been there for five or six months. Many of them are not well known and don't have anyone outside who knows how to go about lobbying for their release. I often wonder if the authorities have forgotten them.

None of them have been charged with a crime as a reason for their detention. Not one of them was released before Christmas, nor were their families able to visit them over the Christmas period.

During my visits to Modderbee I have met many of the mothers, wives and sisters personally. I have watched as their hands tremble as they hand over money for their relatives. I have seen a mother cry as she feared she might die before the release of her son. I have seen the desperation of a mother whose 14-year-old son was detained for 5½ months. I have no answer for them when they ask "when will the detainees be released".

I shall spend my day outside Modderbee Prison, without food, to show my solidarity with the suffering of these women and with the detainees themselves who have been separated from their families for six months — who have been imprisoned indefinitely without due process of law.'

Gill de Vlieg

Gill de Vlieg, outside Modderbee Prison, January 28



photo: Jo-Anne Collinge

CONTENTS

- 1 Editorial
- 2 Tribute to Molly Blackburn
Sheena Duncan
- 2 A sister remembers
Judy Chalmers
- 4 Tribute to Brian Bishop
Mary Burton
- 5 The funeral
Laura Pollecutt
- 7 Black workers on white farms
Cape Rural Interest Group
- 9 Dependence on the 'dop'
- 11 Hunger in the homelands
David Webster and Ina Perlman
- 18 People and whites
Aninka Claassens
- 18 Ubuntu, abantu, abeLungu
Buntu Mfenyana
- 19 A new kind of banning order?
- 20 Some personal observations on the disinvestment campaign
Sheena Duncan
- 22 Members page
- 23 Mamelodi massacre
Glenda Webster

- 26 Briefing on violence
Kathy Jagoe
- 27 The destabilisation of Moutse
Glenda Webster
- 28 Cosatu : Elijah Barayi interviewed
- 29 Rural workers — case studies
- 30 Rethinking economic strategies
Alan Hirsch

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A piece of the peace ribbon