

Freedom and space

O KUTENDA of Keetmanshoop is perfectly correct when stating in his letter of November 12 that when I write about the history of Afrikaans in Namibia, my source is from what I have heard and read, not my own personal experience.

But, given some time, what has been heard and read can also be internalised as one's own experience. I have heard and read many similar stories to those of O Kutenda about the dehumanising role some speakers of Afrikaans have played in Namibia in the past, especially during times of war. It is my sincere wish that in future different stories can be told in and about Afrikaans.

I would appreciate some attention for a few of my own experiences; hopefully they are not

quite as 'standard' as O Kutenda assumes. In 1988 the Department of Afrikaans supported the decision to opt for English as the only medium of instruction at the then Academy, because we were very conscious of the great negativity attached to the language. (It was also during these times that my family suffered harassment because of my husband's involvement in actively promoting the Namibian peace plan, UN Resolution 435). In 1990, during a visit of Russian students studying Afrikaans at the Academy, I said in a TV interview that the loss of the official status of Afrikaans in Namibia is not necessarily bad, because it might allow the language to play a new role within Namibian society.

Although I do not now agree with the way in which this policy is implemented, especially in the education system, I still agree with Diescho when he states that Afrikaans is too heavy a political baggage in order to have maintained its official status. This 'political baggage' is the symbolic value the language carries, not intrinsic characteristics. I actually agree with Diescho on so many points; in my response I explicitly stated three instances of agreement. • In 1990 I wrote a very favourable review, in Afrikaans, of his important novel *Born of the Sun*. I have great appreciation for the stories he has to tell.

I do therefore find it a pity that O Kutenda finds

on so many points; in my response I explicitly stated three instances of agreement. In 1990 I wrote a very favourable review, in Afrikaans, of his important novel Born of the Sun. I have great appreciation for the stories he has to tell.

I do therefore find it a pity that O Kutenda finds it 'crazy' to expect from surnames 'such as Lombard and Hofmeyr to agree with Diescho'. William Hofmeyr is a lecturer in the Department of English at Unam. I therefore again object to the assumptions based upon languages and surnames as if they were fixed entities without any possibility of historical change.

And I again ask for freedom and space for all Afrikaans-speaking Namibians to contribute to the peaceful building of our nation - in Afrikaans, where applicable. Again it is not a specific language which is peaceful. Peace is promoted by human beings in open relationships to one another, without prejudices formed by, for instance, the mere reading of a surname:

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Note to readers: The Editor reserves the right to shorten letters.
- Ed