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It’s all Jan van Riebeeck’s fault

The rush to the Cape gathers momentum.

*Magnus Heystek | 12 October 2015 00:01*

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Last week I became a ‘racist’, and so did a number of other people as well.

Last week I joined the throng of South Africans, plus a smattering of foreigners, buying a property in the beautiful Western Cape with perhaps the intention of living there for most of the year once I’ve retired.

But according to Tina Joemat-Pettersson, our esteemed Minister of Energy and member of the ANC’s National Executive Committee (NEC), that act now makes me (and the others, irrespective of their race and political affiliation) a racist, someone longing after an Orania-type whites-only black-less society.

Last week Joemat-Pettersson, speaking at an ANC rally in the Western Cape, had the following to say: “Those who do not believe in black majority rule, who still want to perpetuate white minority, have moved from Gauteng to the Western Cape. Those who still want to be racist have descended on your shores. You have new Jan van Riebeecks here.”

To this she added: “Ït is never mentioned that there is a coalition of white anti-left and anti-progressive forces here. The province is systematically not moving towards federalism; they are moving to an Orania, an independent State of the Western Cape,” [**she was quoted on News24 here**](http://m.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/Western-Cape-turning-into-new-Orania-Joemat-Pettersson-20151003?isapp=true) as saying.

That there is a rush of upcountry people moving down south, is unquestioned. This has been evident for some years now. You make your money in Gauteng, sell your business or retire and move down to the beauty and lifestyle of the Cape.

Stellenbosch remains a favourite; Somerset West is very popular among Afrikaans retirees, while the V&A Waterfront, Camps Bay and Clifton, have made those who bought there 20 years or so ago very wealthy. Property values in these areas have been rising at double the rate of increases in other parts of the country for more than two decades now.

I have always wanted to own a property in the Cape: whether inland at an estate such as Val de Vie in Paarl, Stellenbosch, the Franschhoek winelands or elsewhere in the region where you can hear the waves crashing at your front door – a typical Vaalie-desire.

Over the past 12 months, property prices in the Western Cape have risen by over 13% (y/y), compared with the rest of the country, with growth of around 5% year-on-year. This has been a trend for a long time now and residential property prices in the Western Cape are on average 40-50% higher than the rest of the country. The prices in certain enclaves of Cape Town, such as Constantia or Steenberg are probably double that of an equivalent-sized property in Johannesburg or Pretoria.

**The Yacht Club**

As with many others, my decision to buy in the Western Cape was delayed by having school-going children, affordability and business commitments. But now the stars seem to have aligned and I have taken the plunge, purchasing a (very small and very expensive) unit in the newly released The Yacht Club, brought to market by Amdec, developers of among others Melrose Arch.

The Yacht Club is a mixed-use (office, hotel and residential) development built adjacent to the V&A Waterfront on the Roggebaai Canal, which links the V&A with the Cape Town City Centre.

Available land in this part of Cape Town is very scarce and very expensive. It was therefore no surprise that the first phase of the development, marketed by Pam Golding, was sold out in three days. Seems like those up-north racists can’t wait to put on their Van Riebeeck outfits.

As a result, the second phase of the development (there are three in total) was brought forward with a concomitant upward adjustment in the prices for units in the second phase, such was the demand for units. Let those racists pay, I say.

Even so, the second phase is virtually sold out and earlier this week there were only 19 units left for sale from the original 93 units, representing sales of more than R330 million. The total value of the development will be worth R1.2 billion.

The Yacht Club is set to become one of the most successful property launches in SA for a very long time. North-facing units look out over a working harbour, the sea and, in the distance, Robben Island. South-facing units overlook the Roggebaai Canal, Table Mountain and Cape Town city centre. Does it get better than that?

**Location, location, location?**

I spoke to Nicholas Stopforth, joint-MD of Amdec, about the rush of property sales earlier this week, just ahead of the Johannesburg launch. Who’s buying and why are they buying, I asked him?

No he didn’t say this, but he might as well have.

Investors – black and white – from the Cape as well as from up north, have bought for a variety of reasons. Investment purposes, second-homes, downscaling, whatever. The point is that they are buying because they can and want to. Since when has buying a property and moving somewhere else become an act of racism?

It’s only in the mind of someone herself so drenched in racism that this becomes an issue.

I can assure our esteemed minister that I didn’t purchase this property because I want to be walking up and down Adderley Street in a Jan van Riebeeck outfit with my glorified walking stick.

**Why did I buy in Cape Town?**

I bought my property, in no particular order, for: the beauty of Cape Town and surrounding areas, the proximity to Table Mountain and the winelands and coastal areas both west and east. I like the buzz, the Sea Point promenade and the range of world-class restaurants. I even like the wet winters and the highway going nowhere.

I also think it will be a superb investment over time, whether I live in it or rent it out.

And did I mention that the Western Cape is by far the best managed province in the country; generally cleaner, better organised and less corrupt than the other eight provinces, all run by the ANC?

Does it make you a racist if you desire these things for you and your family which are normal in most modern countries all over the world? Or is good corporate governance and a clean city just a western thing?

The Democratic Alliance and the way it is managing the Western Cape must be really getting up the ANC’s nose.

The Cape Town city centre is the only city-centre in SA which has not fallen into disrepair and destitution. It has remained a vibrant and well-maintained city centre with property owners rewarded for sticking it out.

As far as being anti-progressive, all I can say is that if the management of the rest of South Africa is considered to be ‘progressive’, in the words of Joemat-Pettersson, then I don’t want to be part of it any more.

Calling me a racist is just plain cheap politics.

**Onse Jan**

And please get your historical facts about Van Riebeeck right. Onse Jan was sent to the Cape by his employer, the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie ([**Dutch East India Company**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_East_India_Company)), the largest global company of its time, to set up a supply station for the company’s ships plying the Europe/Far East trade route. He didn’t stay long and left after a couple of years.

His replacement, Simon van der Stel, who established Groot Constantia and Vergelegen, was a Dutchman born on Mauritius from an Indian mother, and therefore of mixed race.

But then again, historical accuracy doesn’t count for much in local politics, or does it?

*\*Magnus Heystek is investment strategist at Brenthurst Wealth. He can be reached for ideas and suggestions at****magnus@heystek.co.za****. Anyone with strong views on Regulation 28 of the Pensions Act?*