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The town that's still Whites Only

February 12 2010 at 04:03pm

Welcome to Orania where everything is orange.

The tablecloths, the town signs, the brochures, they're all orange.

Only white folks are allowed to move into the Northern Cape town.

This naked segregation is made possible by the fact that it's all been built on private land: only the R369 road that runs through it is actually owned by the government.

The rest is basically a private farm, but with houses and streets.

The whole thing - including a lot of the original buildings and a municipal swimming pool - was bought from the government by Orania's founders in 1991.

Then, it was a ghost town owned by the Department of Water Affairs.

Now it's expanded to over 700 people, with an OK Bazaars, a post office, a petrol station, a pecan nut factory, a couple of bars, a cemetery, two restaurants and even a spa where ladies can go to get their nails done.

By law, Orania is registered as a company. So every one of the townsfolk is a "shareholder" rather than a "resident".

But is it - as the world outside believes - full of racists?

The inhabitants, of course, will tell you "no".

They're very angry, they say, about what the media has been saying about them.

"Apartheid's policy of 'separate development' didn't work," explains Carel Boshoff IV, Orania's boss.

"Because you can't integrate different races economically, but not socially. So we've created a society where we do all the manual work ourselves. *Selfwerksaamheid*, we call it."

Boshoff is the son of the town's founder Carel Boshoff III.

He's also the grandson of "The Architect of Apartheid" himself, HF Verwoerd.

In some ways, Orania is probably a less racist town than many of the towns surrounding it - simply

because there's less chance to be racist when there aren't any black people living in your town to look down on.

In fact, non-whites are allowed to visit and to stay in the town's guesthouses, Boshoff IV explains.

"I regularly get asked by black journalists whether they can move into the town," he says, "and I always say yes.

"The thing is, anyone moving in must be approved by the governing body.

"And we ask them two questions. Firstly, can you support yourself? Because there aren't many safety nets in our society.

"And secondly, are you committed to upholding the goal of this society: Afrikaner self-determination.

"So if you are English-speaking, or black but totally committed to this goal, then you would qualify...

"Anyone who moves here and tells you they aren't racist is a liar," mutters Geoff, the local garage attendant in the town's bar.

His speech is littered with the K-word, then he talks at length about how all blacks are hopelessly corrupt.

Geoff's been here for eight years. But since his wife died recently, he's sold up, bought a caravan and is leaving the town next week for the West Coast.

The bar owner gives him a dirty look and turns up the Lil Wayne song on the radio to try to drown him out.

"Don't listen to him," he tells us after Geoff leaves. "He's... uh... very old-fashioned.

"Not everyone here is like him..." - Daily Voice

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