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Orania building a different future

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It's not as if they didn't care about Eugene Terre Blanche in Orania. It's just that the murdered AWB leader's notion of a volkstaat was not one that was shared by the good burghers of this sleepy Northern Cape town.



A DIFFERENT WAY: No black labourers work in Orania - whites do their own manual work Picture: SHELLEY CHRISTIANS

Photograph by:

Carel Boshoff IV, Northern Cape Freedom Front Plus leader and president of the Orania Movement, said it was nothing more than a longing for old-fashioned apartheid.

"The ideal of wit baasskap is finished, and probably has been for 40 years or so," he said.

Boshoff was asked to attend the funeral in Ventersdorp but said he "just didn't have the loyalty or the energy".

Not that he thought the funeral itself was inconsequential. The political consequences of farm murders, which Terre Blanche's death had come to symbolise, was enormous, Boshoff said.

His sentiments were echoed by his father - Professor Carel Boshoff, the founder of Orania, referred to the persistent farm murders as "nothing other than a state of war".

"But I'm not enamoured of him," the elder Boshoff said of Terre Blanche. "He chose a path of confrontation, of conflict. We wanted another way."

He referred to the June 1998 statement by the then provincial affairs and constitutional development minister Valli Moosa to the effect that the Afrikaner pursuit to develop the so-called "North West Corridor" as a home for their language and culture within the framework of the constitution and the bill of rights was legitimate as far as government was concerned.

"We're citizens of the country," Boshoff said. "We want to develop with the support of the government. Peace and stability, that's all we want."

As a gesture of reconciliation, former president Nelson Mandela visited the town in 1995 to have tea with Betsie Verwoerd, widow of the late architect of grand apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd.

Mandela also visited the local Orania Museum, where he wrote in the visitors' book: "We had an interesting visit to this museum which contains an important aspect of the country's history."

Dr Manie Opperman, the former town mayor, said he was concerned that Terre Blanche may be regarded by some

as a "martyr figure", which, he felt, would not contribute towards reconciliation.

Neither, he added, were recent comments by ANC Youth League president Julius Malema and the controversy over the "Shoot the Boer" song doing much to "ease the situation".

Malema visited the town last year, and praised the residents. "They co-operate instead of working against each other," he said at the time.

Many residents of Orania see it as an ideal place to live where crime is low, and the town frequently gets inquiries from around the country from people wanting to move there.

However, Opperman warned that life in Orania was not easy. "Here, we take the concept of self-sufficiency very seriously," he said. "We do all the work, ourselves. And it's quite hard for Afrikaners to adapt to manual labour."