

Email sent to [saw@thos.co.za](mailto:saw@thos.co.za) on 17th July, 2001 (*response to a request why people left SA*)

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I left SA **after 40 years** because:

South Africa in 1994 was not the same as in 1954, when I docked in Cape Town as a 20-year old Swiss with lots of ideals;

In the end, I kept on being pestered with political problems and questioning, mainly from black artists (I was then in the art business, and as a Swiss citizen, I had to be neutral, I couldn't do much about the political system in South Africa, I did not have any voting rights in SA, though I had to pay taxes);

We were cleaned out of many of our possessions from our house in Roosevelt Park, Johannesburg, 4 times over 2 years shortly before our departure, twice thoroughly;

Every day, I'd be pestered "money please, baas" - it became sickening;

A few times black people came to our front door at home, asking for money, but when offered food instead they refused it and walked away, complaining;

From the moment direct flights from NY to JHB ceased, my important clients from the USA did not visit us anymore and those from Europe stayed in Europe and South African businessmen increasingly travelled abroad and did their business deals abroad;

The art market in SA collapsed more and more (I had been an art dealer in JHB since 1961, with lots of ups and downs every now and then);

I was the only white tenant left in Victory House in the city centre - clients from the North of Johannesburg increasingly refused to visit us and people working in offices in the city centre rather stayed in their office over lunch;

Weekly I had to look down from the third floor premises on unending black crowds wielding batons, red banners, flags with sickle and hammer, toppling heavy concrete municipal rubbish bins, banging on cars, demonstrating one way or another: down Harrison Street came the ANC, Cosatu, the Communists and other hangers-on, including a few stray whites; along Fox Street marched the Inkatha, all chanting threatening war songs that I did not understand - many times I was all shaking and I often had to cry aloud to the Lord (who else would hear me ?). I did not know what to do any more; I perceived my environment to be highly threatening to my family and myself.

As a foreigner, I had limited chances under the pre-1994 regime (nor did my wife as an English speaking person from the O.F.S.), and I certainly would have none under the new regime (no pension or medical benefits, social security etc.);

Two of our children had already left SA to do higher studies in Switzerland; our last child was to precede us by a few months.

We finally left SA end of 1993, as emigrants being only allowed to take out ZAR100'000 (in those days equal to about CHF45'000), *including* furniture, cash etc., the remainder including life insurances being blocked under severe foreign exchange controls prevailing at that time.

I went back to my home country, Switzerland, after 40 years, a refugee as it were, with all my dreams thrashed, too old to find work, just about a pauper, with no more hopes, except happy to be healthy and to be near our grown-up children.

South Africa - a sick society then and now!  
But I still love it, I've spent 2/3rds of my life there, it is sore.

Sorry for the moaning, but it had to be said sometimes ....  
Fernand F. Haenggi