

RHETORIC IN THE RED OCTOBER CAMPAIGN: EXPLORING THE WHITE  
VICTIM IDENTITY OF POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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This study explores whiteness through a rhetorical analysis of the language used in a speech made at a Red October campaign rally in South Africa in October, 2013. The Red October campaign positions white South Africans as an oppressed minority group in the country, and this study looks at linguistic choices and devices used to construct a white victim identity in post-apartheid South Africa. This thesis considers gender, religion, race, culture, class and ethnicity as intersections that contribute to the discursive construction of whiteness in the new South Africa. Ultimately, the study gives us a better understanding of whiteness, and particularly whiteness in South Africa, and the importance of language and power in certain political, social and cultural contexts.

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Aan ma Mariaan, pa Hans, Faan, Marisa, Louise, Gerno, Juan en Emi.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

On 10 October 2013, as part of the Red October campaign, approximately 800 white South Africans participated in a protest march at the country's Union Buildings to hand over a memorandum to the South African government. In the memorandum, the movement focuses on whites being an "ethnic minority" and accuses the democratic South African government of failing its white citizens. According to the group's website, "People all over the World released RED Balloons in the skies, in protest against the inhumane Slaughter and Oppression of the White People of South Africa. This needs to stop and can no longer be ignored" (Red October, 2014).

The protest has been influenced by three prominent figures of Afrikaner society – two of them, Sunette Bridges and Steve Hofmeyr, are Afrikaans pop singers, while the third, Dan Roodt is an academic. The Red October protest has created a platform for white South Africans to claim minority status and, in the process, co-opt civil rights language. It has a strong presence and support online, making it possible for expat Afrikaners across the world to participate, and is continuing to lead physical protests and rallies across South Africa and in other parts of the world. The Red October campaign draws on the rhetoric of whiteness and Afrikanerhood in significant ways to try to appeal to and mobilize its audience.

In this thesis I look at a speech performed by speakers Bridges and Hofmeyr at the primary Red October rally to study the discursive construction of whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa. Specifically, I am interested in looking at the use of rhetorical

strategies and devices, which includes linguistic choices and recurring themes and images that emerge in their speech. This speech forms a core part of the Red October campaign because it was made at the first ever Red October rally, where it was filmed and disseminated online for other white South Africans and expats to see. The speech is significant because it contains the key messages of the Red October campaign and reveals important information about whiteness in post-Apartheid South Africa.

My research questions for this study are as follows: How do Hofmeyr and Bridges try to construct appeal with the audience through their speech? What rhetorical devices are they using and how? What does the language in this speech reveal about the discursive construction of whiteness in the “new South Africa”?

### **Background and Context**

As South Africa’s fifth democratic election appears on the horizon, its struggle to overcome decades of racial segregation is still fresh in the memory of the nation. In April 1994 millions throughout the country and around the world cheered as long lines of voters queued to participate in the first step of legitimizing the country’s transformation to a new, and what was anticipated to be a more equal, society.

On the eve of democracy, the release of the African National Congress leader Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela marked what Shapiro (Eades, 1999) called an “increased desire on the part of Africans, coloreds, Indians, and many whites for a continued pattern of change away from a system of almost complete white domination and racial segregation know as apartheid that had violently disrupted their country internally and increasingly isolated them externally” (Eades, 1999). Apartheid was an extreme form of racial segregation to protect advantaged whiteness that originated with colonial conquest

that in 1948, with the founding of the National Party, evolved into a system of ‘apart’-ness that was woven into every aspect of South African life (Eades, 1999; Steyn, 2001). When Afrikaners assumed political office, they perfected an existing system of segregation that served the interests of Afrikaners, who continued its entrenchment through legal and constitutional means.

The Apartheid narrative had at its core the belief that South Africa had “originated” in 1652 with the arrival of Dutch settlers. Afrikaners particularly saw the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape of Good Hope as the planting of a nation and the bringing of civilization to the “dark continent” of Africa (Cloete, 1992). Additionally, white mythology has it that “Europeans and Africans arrived roughly at the same time: this leads some whites to claim that territorial segregation, one of the main planks of latter-day apartheid, is justified” (Anzovin, 1987, p. 7).

With their arrival, colonialists created an immediate division of races by implementing slavery. Ownership of the Cape region had been contested by British colonialists as “South Africa became a treasured and controversial piece of the African pie to promote commerce, Christianity and civilization” (Eades, 1999, p. 5). After The Great Trek, a relocation of Dutch Boers to the north of the country, the tension between the Boer and British colonies reached its climax at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the South African War. According to Eades, Britain’s continued acquisition of territory in South Africa “aroused resentment and increased nationalism in the Boer republics” (p. 6).

The formal declaration of the Union of South Africa in 1910, as well as the discovery of gold and diamonds, secured white dominance in the country. “Early apartheid was shaped by a general political program of segregation that included pass

laws (laws that restricted black population of white areas), differentiation in wage levels, mission-based schools, and a white franchise” (Eades, 1999, p. 7). Such institutionalized white privilege first appeared in law books in 1913 with the passing of the Natives Land Act, which prohibited African purchase or lease of land outside certain areas known as “reserves.” Eventually, under the rule of H.F. Verwoerd, the “pillars” of apartheid were established in the form of race definition, control over African migration, white control of politics, separation of labor, separate institutions and separate amenities. These pillars “kept black South Africans almost out of sight from whites” (Eades, 1999, p. 15). Racial classification formed a central part of the apartheid system. These historically developed divisions became crucial from the 1950s and were fundamental in creating a social hierarchy that underpinned white dominance in a mixed-race society. The four classifications separated whites (or Europeans), coloureds (those who were a mixture of different groups including whites), Asians (Indians), and Bantus (Africans). These divisions are highly complex, particularly when the divisions within each group are examined.

According to Eades, Afrikaners dominated the initial stages of the development of apartheid. Right-wing forces gained control over South African politics and managed to create a government that included only one ethnic group, representing about 12% of the population. “The term “nation” was translated by Afrikaners into a group identity based on race and Afrikaner culture” (Eades, 1999, p. 35). Consequently, as Afrikaners increasingly dominated state power in the country, their sense of identity became more racial than cultural. They came to identify themselves as a group with the first claim to certain privileges.

In the 1980s, with growing resistance to apartheid, Afrikaners' self-perception became more defensive. State power had become a way for Afrikaners not only to uphold the apartheid system but ultimately to support their identity. On the eve of change feelings of victimization surfaced among Afrikaners, and they demanded that their history be legitimized and their contribution to the country be acknowledged. Unlike Afrikaners, English whites at this point had no created tradition or straightforward ideology, and their nationalism was not as strong.

In February 1990 President F. W. de Klerk announced the unbanning of political groups such as the African National Congress (ANC), as well as the release of a list of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela. According to Eades, change was both embraced and resisted by white groups: "That the de Klerk government accepted the results of the election and transferred power peacefully boded well for the new South Africa. That some disaffected whites, especially Afrikaners in the countryside, stepped up militia training and warned of an impending Armageddon did not" (Eades, 1999, p. 31). Significantly, Eades notes that eventually identification among different groups in South Africa started changing in the late 1990s when language and ethnic group status become more prominent forms of identity than political identification.

### **Theory and Literature Review**

It is against this political background that I am interested in studying whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. Whiteness, according to Frankenberg, is the shape that white people's lives take as it has been shaped by race. In the same way men are "gendered," she refers to white people as "raced" (Frankenberg, 1988, p. 1). Frankenberg explains three key aspects of whiteness: Whiteness is a location of structural advantage and racial

privilege; it's a "standpoint," a place from which "white people look at ourselves, at others and at society" (p. 1); and whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. She adds that whiteness refers to "a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (Frankenberg, 1988, p. 6).

Frankenberg believes that studying whiteness means looking critically at the concept of race itself. To her, the most useful definition of race is one where it is viewed as socially constructed and tied to power relations and processes of struggle, and significantly, whose meaning changes over time. Omi and Winant support the idea of race as being socially constructed and not static. They refer specifically to how race had previously been viewed as a biological category, one that placed people of color as biologically inferior to white people. According to Omi and Winant, this construction was used to justify economic and political inequities. Thus, the way race has generally been viewed, with whiteness as unnamed and unmarked, has produced the "autonomous white/Western self" in opposition to the "marked Other racial and cultural categories" (Frankenberg, 1988, p. 17) that co-constructs the dominant racial category. Hall (1996) echoes the idea of race as socially constructed and changing with his critical view of the racial binary, the "us" vs "them." In a chapter on the construction of blackness, he says about binaries: "They become, not only what they have, at times, certainly been – mutually excluding categories, but also, what they sometimes are – differential points on a sliding scale" (Hall, 1996, p. 215).

Whiteness in South Africa then should be viewed in its historical and political context, of which apartheid formed a large part. According to Steyn (2001), the system of

apartheid was a “logical, if extreme, interpretation of modern Western whiteness” (p. xxxi). South Africa was the last country in Africa to achieve majority rule, and is home to a comparatively larger group of white citizens than any other African country. The legal system that enshrined the privilege of whites in South Africa has disappeared and they face adjusting to a new situation in which “their traditional senses of identity, purpose, and place in society have largely become obsolete and in need of substantial modification” (Schutte, 1995, p. 1). The collapse of the regime of white dominance and shifting of power has “fragmented” whiteness in South Africa. Steyn claims that “different narratives of what it means to be white are vying for legitimation in the hearts and minds of white South Africans.”(Steyn, 2001, p.xxxi). She believes South Africans would have to reinterpret and reconfigure the available discourses to create meaningful identities in a context where political circumstances have drastically changed.

The pre-1994 context allowed whites as the privileged group to take their identity as the standard by which everyone else is measured. Steyn refers to the “master narrative” that provided the dominant frame for sense making and that even defined the terms for oppositional identities. The master narrative was historically constructed as “absolutely centered, unitary, masculine” and legally enforced minority white supremacy (Steyn, 2001, p. 151). Fundamental to this narrative of white identity is “othering” (p. xxv) - the process of identifying the self with a series of signifiers that are believed to be desirable, while identifying those one overpowers with the oppositional chain that one rejects. JanMohamed (Steyn, 2001), calls this an “ideologically-driven psychological projection” that attempts to create “a pure, homogeneous identity for the self, while simultaneously creating a focus in the other for all the qualities one cannot tolerate in

oneself, a kind of inverted self-image” (p. 14). The “other” is perceived as an evil the dominant seeks to disassociate from and in the process becomes threatening. The oppressor accumulates “surplus morality” in this way and simultaneously becomes the master and the innocent – a basis on which hate and aggression towards the “other” is justified.

“Fear” has thus formed the core of the white colonial project in South Africa. “Whiteness in South Africa has always, at least in some part, been constellated around discourses of resistance against a constant threat” (Steyn, 2001, p. 25). These fears have been acted onto, and through, black bodies. The anxieties that were always present are fears of being dominated and overrun, losing their purity as a race, and consequently for Afrikaners, the fear of cultural genocide through intermingling. This anxiety pervades the nation’s psyche with a feeling of the end just being put off – what Steyn (2001, p. 25) refers to as the “rolling apocalypse.”.

The pervasive fears of South African whites have also become characteristic of their process of coming to terms with their loss of a sense of importance and relevance. This is reflected in the “widespread tendency to refer to their position as marginalized” (Steyn, 2001, p. 159). Schutte effectively argues that this group is not marginalized, however, stating, “though numerically a minority, South African whites are a majority in terms of the political and economic power they wield” (Schutte, 1995, p. 4).

Schutte, in his study of white identities of post-apartheid South Africa in the form of interviews, makes the point that whiteness in South Africa is challenging to study because of the confusion of race, ethnicity, class, and culture, stating that “the context of inequality and oppression in which they justify their separate existence exposes their



argument that their ethnic consciousness is culturally and racially based” (1995, p. 25). He argues that racism is thus concealed by the claim of cultural ethnic awareness. He adds that South African whites have been self-defined as an ethnic group, but this is merely their own creation, a social construction.

I therefore cannot study whiteness in South Africa without looking into the culture (or ethnic group, as they identify) that has been synonymous with the white race and has been labeled the creators of apartheid. I have to study the Red October movement by also exploring its elements of Afrikanerhood.

#### *Afrikanerhood in South Africa*

Steyn views Afrikaners as a “sociologically indigenous” group with a deep connection to the country. “Unlike their English neighbours, who were also emigrants they seem seldom to have thought of “home” as somewhere behind them. Instead they struggled for years to find a new home and a new unity as a people” (Steyn, 2001, p. 29). According to Schutte, Afrikaners were more rural and often illiterate, and therefore not treated as equals by the British settlers. A kind of internal colonization existed within the white group as Afrikaners had to fight for first-class citizen status. “The texture of the Afrikaners’ whiteness, then, was coarsened by discourses of indignation and rebellion toward the more confident whiteness of overlordship assumed by the English” (Schutte, 1995, p. 26).

Afrikaners, under the white ruling government, eventually gained not only power over the state but also over the knowledge circulating among whites. Textbooks were controlled by the Afrikaner-led government and taught white people that black people were inferior, the Afrikaner had a special relationship with the Christian God, South

Africa rightfully belonged to the Afrikaner, South Africa was an agricultural country and Afrikaners its farmers, the Afrikaner military was strong and ingenious, the Afrikaner was threatened, South Africa was the leader of Africa and that the Afrikaner has a God-given task in Africa (Cloete, 1992; Schutte, 1995;). At that point, to be an Afrikaner one had to meet the criteria of being white and Afrikaans-speaking (Cloete, 1992).

Steyn argues, therefore, that post-apartheid South Africans grew up in a context that did not problematize the superiority of whiteness, let alone the notion of “race.” Additionally, whatever the individual experiences or responses of people in South Africa was, it was the “apartheid version of the master narrative of whiteness that underwrote their material and psychological existence” (2001, p. 58). The master narrative fell apart in April 1994 with the democratic elections, and now there are many “shades of whitenesses” legally available to white South Africans – all but the previously legally endorsed master narrative.

#### *The importance of studying whiteness*

According to Steyn, the very fact that whiteness has become visible as a construct of academic study shows that it is losing its ideological hold on intellectuals globally and challenges the assertion that whiteness is still invisible in South Africa. Understanding the interaction between power and privilege in the contemporary world has “brought about the upsurge of academic interest in whiteness” (Steyn, 2001, p. xxv).

She believes that deconstructing whiteness “saps” (p. xxviii) its power by revealing the social construction of the narratives of South African whites within a particular political and historical context, and showing whose interests those narratives have served. “The issue is to reconceptualize racial polarization as a white problem to be

located and addressed in the discourses, socialization, political and economic privilege of white people, the racial elite, rather than coming from “the existence of blacks”” (Steyn, 2001, p. xxviii).

However, she calls for more studies on the white diaspora that are removed from the Euro-American center who share creolized cultural narratives. The disruption of power in South Africa, where whites are continuing to seek their livelihood in a situation where they have neither numerical nor political power, is unusual in the history of whiteness. “By definition therefore the circumstances in the new South Africa problematize the way whiteness was constructed as the social positionality of domination” (Steyn, 2001, p. 164). At the time of her study, Steyn felt that literature on whiteness written from a North American perspective represented attitudes of the old apartheid South Africa and couldn’t make space for new white identities that have started developing in the country. Schutte also emphasizes the complexity of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa, because “the rationales whites produce for the structure of their society and the nature of their culture would differ from the rationalisations and self-justifications of their counterparts in white America” (Schutte, 1995, p. 4). He therefore calls for more knowledge about how white people in South Africa think and construct their identities.

In many ways, what the Red October movement is currently doing was predicted by Schutte when he wrote *What Racists Believe* in 1995, stating that “in my view, a majority of whites, even liberals, whether Afrikaans or English speaking, will seek legal or constitutional guarantees for the preservation of their group. If legal protection proves

impossible, they will erect social and physical boundaries to achieve the same end” (Schutte, 1995, p. 74). He sees this as a form of white privilege.

In a text on organized racism, Blee (2002) affirms the importance of studying whiteness, particularly in the context of constructing identity. She believes that understanding whiteness could be used to lure people out of racist groups and racist activities. By analyzing and understanding these groups through accurate analysis, one is more empowered to challenge racist activism and the mobilization of prejudiced groups. This is echoed by Frankenberg’s view that “by examining and naming the terrain of whiteness, it may, I think, be possible to generate or work toward antiracist forms of whiteness, or at least antiracist strategies for reworking the terrain of whiteness” (1988, p. 7). Blee also calls attention to racist groups’ reliance on mass communication and the Internet to disseminate their ideologies. Even though she is unsure of the ultimate effect of the Internet on racist organizing, she thinks that it may aid coordination and make racist ideas appear more legitimate.

According to Gerbaudo, modern media have always created a channel that social movements could use to communicate, organize, and mobilize. Social media, in particular, are resources for conveying abstract opinions and choreographing collective action to create a sense of common identity (Gerbaudo, 2012). In the same way, Van de Donk, Loader, Nixon, and Rucht (2004) refer to new media and social media as “alternative communication spaces” that develop and widely circulate information with fewer conventions or editorial filters than in the mainstream media. They warn, however, that one should not necessarily be idealizing these developments without a critical eye.

“For one thing, the activists one finds on the net are not all necessarily democratic in character: there are also racists, neo-nazis, and other unsavoury types” (p. xiii).

The Internet has also played an important role in creating and maintaining nationalism. “Nations thrive in cyberspace, and the internet has become a key technology for keeping nations (and other abstract communities) together” (Eriksen, 2007, p. 1). According to Eriksen, the Internet is currently used to strengthen national identities, and this includes nations who have lost their territory, such as the Afrikaners in South Africa. These Afrikaners have resisted the new democracy by championing the building of a “white homeland,” engaging in terrorist attacks to destabilize the state, and others have “created a virtual nation, or perhaps a nation-in-waiting, on the Internet” (2007, p. 11).

The rhetoric used on these sites and in these movements range from dangerous to moderate and include the yearning for their own nation-state, the praising of the beauty of the land, and the glorifying of past Afrikaner achievements. This rhetoric makes a compassionate appeal to the international community by portraying Afrikaners as a tormented group of martyrs and victims. “Afrikaners still largely live in South Africa, though many feel that they have been deprived of their civil rights” (Eriksen, p. 11), and Eriksen believes this Afrikaner belief that their rights have been stripped of them will be used more as rallying points for political action.

Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities*, talks about how the nation has existed and still exists even without any scientific definition. He calls nations “modular” and says they are capable of being transplanted “with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological installations” (Anderson, p. 48).

Anderson defines nation as an imagined political community that is both inherently limited and sovereign. These communities are imagined because people who are members have never heard or met, or possibly never will, many of the other members, yet an image of communion exists in each individual. Nation, regardless of inequalities that may exist within each, “is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p. 50).

Even though this study focuses on a speech made offline, it is important to keep in mind that this speech was and still is disseminated online and much of the reaction to and interactivity with the speech occurred online, on different platforms. Much of its reach and impact can therefore be influenced by its online presence. This is significant especially in the context of the campaign receiving little to no supportive media coverage that made the Red October supporters more reliant on the Internet for receiving messages and participating in the campaign. My analysis of this speech is also mediated, as I looked at an online version of a video that was filmed as the speech was made.

A live speech, such as the one I am analyzing, is a source or a channel aimed at getting certain messages across to the target audience. Language choice thus makes some of the important messages stronger and possibly enhances or influences currently held knowledges. This type of interaction, because it isn’t mediated at the time when the speech is made, could have a more persuasive impact on its receivers by providing a more memorable and powerful message to them (Moffitt, 1999). In this study I therefore consider how the key messages of the campaign’s primary speech is constructed, and by whom they are constructed.

RQs: How do Hofmeyr and Bridges try to construct appeal with the audience through their speech? What rhetorical devices are they using and how? What does the

language in this speech reveal about the discursive construction of whiteness in the “new South Africa”?

### **Motivation for Research Topic**

Many of the aspects that the literature covers seem to be visible in the Red October movement, if only on surface level. I chose this particular topic because exploring these issues in-depth is not only valuable to challenging racial inequality in post-apartheid South Africa but it also holds value for me personally. I believe that white South Africans have been affected by the apartheid lenses in more ways than we realize, and it is therefore crucial for us to deconstruct what we have been taught. I believe that many of these ideas still linger in white society, whether overtly or whether more covertly within some white identities. I think that researching the rhetoric of whiteness and Afrikanerhood is important for challenging white supremacy, right-wing groups, racists, and generally influential leaders but also to challenge other inequalities such as experienced by certain gender, class, sexuality, and age positions, among others, within our current social structures. Ideally, understanding the historical and current race relations of South Africa can also guide our society to its goal of social and economic integration. To make sense of identities and the structures within which they exist, the core of my analysis focuses on language. Language plays a big role in the expression of power in South Africa – even though this use seems to be dynamic and changing. To some, the rhetorical strategies that are present in the Red October movement might seem obvious, and I therefore think having grown up in an Afrikaner society and having been indoctrinated with similar rhetorical messages myself it is helpful to understand how these strategies operate and in fact make a lot of sense in a protest such as Red October.

## **Methodological Discussion**

For this study I look at how whiteness is discursively constructed within the Red October campaign. My method will therefore suitably be a rhetorical analysis.

Specifically, for this study I look at rhetoric in a speech that was delivered by Steve Hofmeyr and Sunette Bridges at a Red October rally at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. In criticism, according to Foss (2004), rhetoric is defined as “the human use of symbols to communicate” (p. 4). Foss believes that human beings use symbols to frame their experience, and therefore every symbolic choice we make results in seeing the world in one way rather than another. On an informal, daily basis, we tend to respond to symbols by saying “I like it” or “I don’t like it.” Analyzing rhetoric and investigating symbols involves engaging in this natural process in a more conscious, systematic, and focused way, to better understand our response to them. I chose this approach for my study primarily because of my agreement with Foss that “knowledge of the operation of rhetoric can help make us more sophisticated audience members for messages” (Foss, 2004, p. 8). She explains that if we better understand the variety of options available to people who use rhetoric as they construct messages and how they function together to create the effects they produce, we are able to question the choices made in the construction of acts and artifacts. “We are less inclined to accept existing rhetorical practices and to respond uncritically to the messages we encounter. As a result, we become more engaged and active participants in shaping the nature of the worlds in which we live” (Foss, 2004, p. 8).

In a study on the rhetoric used to indoctrinate youth in post-war Spain, Pinto (2004) discusses the several different rhetorical strategies that can be used to influence or



persuade a group of people. The simulation of multiple voices, creating the illusion of dialogue between different representatives and the use of emotionally charged language through myth-making are some strategies that have been used to go as far as controlling and manipulating audiences. In the same text, Menz talks about the process of constructing ideological language through not only myth making but also anthropomorphization (giving a “body” image to the nation of Spain) and sacrilization (elevating their leaders to be godly figures). According to Menz, these rhetorical devices “often appear in the form of metaphors, stereotypes, slogans, and symbols” (Pinto, 2004, p. 653). Kinneavy adds here that from the constant positioning and framing of these key symbolic components rises an overarching myth in public discourse. Significantly, Pinto comments that the discourse created by these rhetorical strategies is a world free from the need to comment on reality, and therefore these words and images become a substitute for reality.

I initially became aware of the Red October movement because I follow several self-identified South African antiracist advocates on Twitter, and during the month of October I saw a range of aggressive interactions on my Twitter feed that were centered around the campaign. I soon read the movement’s website and followed some of its most important opinion leaders to get a sense of the ideas they were representing. I joined the “debate” around the Red October campaign and engaged with people that were either for or against the movement. As I increasingly became personally attacked by supporters of the movement, I noticed how members were drawing on the rhetoric of white privilege and Afrikaner nationalism to make their arguments.

I realized that I wanted to know how the Red October lured its members – what kind of rhetoric was hitting at the heart of an Afrikaner and a white South African to make them join in an actual protest for “white minority rights”? To answer my question about how Red October managed to appeal to the white and specifically Afrikaner community, I wanted to look at a text that I could analyze that would make this clear. Hofmeyr and Bridges’ speech is an ideal artifact to answer this question, and I found it publicly available in a video format on their website. It had also been circulating widely on Facebook and Twitter at the time.

As a white, Afrikaans-speaking South African woman who was born in 1988 and therefore experienced a change in race dynamics in the country throughout my entire life, I believe that I can bring a valuable perspective to the discourse of whiteness and Afrikanerhood. I find that my position within the ethnic, racial, and cultural structures of South Africa makes a qualitative analysis the ideal tool for me to study this topic. I want to stress that in many ways studying this is also highly personal for me – trying to understand where I come from, what could have shaped my own beliefs and those close to me, and therefore gaining the knowledge to challenge white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2013) in the academia but also on a realistically interpersonal level when I return to South Africa. I hope that this study will make me a more critical audience member within my own culture and give me the language and knowledge to challenge the power and ideology of the people shaping that culture, especially as it affects other South Africans.

### **Self-reflexivity in the Analysis**

As I was doing my data collection for this thesis my views on addressing racism underwent different levels of transformation, and this is important to share because I believe it influences my analysis. Working with antiracism efforts in Eugene and on the University of Oregon campus has exposed me to different approaches to meeting people where they are at regarding understanding issues of race. In many cases I had seen people become exhausted trying to explain, elaborate, and educate others on structural and systematic oppression. In other cases I felt that people had been dismissed as bad people because they don't "get it" or weren't using the right language to talk about these concepts. In certain contexts I felt like there was very little space to ask questions and even less space to admit to grappling with and struggling to understand issues of racial oppression.

I realized that many narratives around racial justice in the groups I worked with completely denounces the concept of meeting people where they're at. In some of the communities I participated I felt like people were unable to see other people, particularly white male individuals, as human beings because of the privileged identities they seem to embody. Something about that made me feel uncomfortable and made me rethink my position and approach as an aspiring ally to resisting racial oppression. From that position, I realized I felt that there was a lack of compassion in the antiracism approach I, and many like me, had been taking.

I don't view compassion as a way to accept racism in our society or to apologize for racist behaviour, but I do feel that compassion is a key part in seeing people as human beings and that their complexities form part of the identities they embody. I believe that

for some, compassion might be useful in addressing racism and working with people to dismantle the prejudices and other ideas that they have been either indoctrinated with in certain communities or that the white supremacist systems and structures have socialized them to believe.

This realization helps me explore and analyze the speech made by the two Afrikaner leaders of the Red October movement in a different way. Listening to them speak I realized I can condemn the prejudiced ideas they distribute, but I can also have compassion for where they're coming from. Allowing myself to look at and try to understand the complexities of both the Afrikaner and white identities in South Africa helps me gain much more insight into understanding why certain rhetorical strategies were used to persuade and mobilize the members of the Red October movement. I believe that in many ways my self-reflexivity in this study in fact lessens the bias I bring to it. My research aims to be intersectional, and therefore considers how class, gender, race, culture, religion and nation affect each other in this context, and considers that these intersections do not operate independently from each other. Being able to both recognize the oppressive structures that play into this speech, and also see the complexities of the people participating in the Red October movement, requires me to try to maintain some level of objectivity.

### **The Red October Rally Context**

Throughout modern South African history there has existed an array of groups aimed at looking after its white citizens. The most renowned of these, although they advocate more specifically for Afrikaners, are the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB), The Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF), the Boeremag, and the political party

Vryheidsfront Plus. The AWB - Afrikaner Resistance Movement - was established in South Africa in the 1980s when resistance to Apartheid was on the rise and is currently perhaps best known for the fact that its former leader, white-supremacist Eugene Terreblanche, was hacked to death on his farm in 2010. The Boeremag - Farmer Force - is an extremist right-wing militia group whose ringleader Mike du Toit was convicted for treason in 2013 for attempting to assassinate Nelson Mandela in the early 1990s.

Most of these groups have been and still are overtly racist and adhere to the ideology of white supremacy. Beaugrande regards ideology as a “system that sets priorities among “ideas” (concepts, meanings, actions), and legitimizes certain ones as “true,” “proper,” “natural,” “correct,” “valuable,” “respectable,” and the like” (Beaugrande, 1997, p. 517). Because the ideologies of these groups are based on and have been supported by the ideological structures that were in power when they were founded, they have no place in the new, multiracial South Africa.

It is against this backdrop that the Red October movement has recently emerged. Red October takes a different approach to image-making strategies in regards to looking out for South Africa’s white citizens, as it advocates for “the oppression of Ethnic Minorities in South Africa” (Red October, 2014) - these minorities being white people. The Red October march also prides itself in being a peaceful movement. Where the Red October movement differs from other campaigns that have used the media or public institutions as channels to promote their ideas, the Red October marches have received little media coverage and almost no positive coverage in the mainstream South African media. The movement’s only sounding board to distribute its ideology has been through social media platforms such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and its website. The name Red

October stems from the fact that its first public rally was held in the month of October. The color red, and the use of red balloons, refers to bloodshed and emphasizes its rallying point that blood is shed by whites, while black people are seen as being responsible for that violence. More specifically the red in Red October has strong connotations with farm murders, which, as is discussed in this study, forms a key part of the creation of the white victim in the new South Africa.

The first Red October protest march took place in Pretoria on October 10, 2013. Approximately 800 white people marched on the grounds of the Union Buildings, where the president of South Africa is housed, to hand over a memorandum to the South African government. On the same day marches occurred in a couple of other towns and cities in South Africa, and white South African expats in places such as Australia and the United States of America participated in the protest as well. It is at the Union Buildings in Pretoria that the speech I analyze in this chapter was given. Various people, including pastors and artists, addressed the crowd, but I will look specifically at the rhetoric used in the speech of the two people that have spearheaded the Red October movement, Sunette Bridges and Steve Hofmeyr.

Sunette Bridges describes herself on her website as a “43-year old Mother of 5, Afrikaner, Artist, Writer and often described as a Human Rights Activist. I see myself rather as a concerned citizen of the once prosperous country called South Africa” (Bridges, 2014). Bridges is essentially an Afrikaans pop singer whose fame can be attributed to the popularity of her father, the former much-loved Afrikaner performer, Bles Bridges. Steve Hofmeyr has popular culture star status in South Africa as well, at least among Afrikaners. In this community Hofmeyr is viewed as an actor, singer,

songwriter, presenter, poet, writer, activist, and blogger. Hofmeyr wrote and performed the anthem of the Blue Bulls rugby team called *Die Bloubul*, and this has made him widely popular among rugby supporters, especially Afrikaners in the northern regions of South Africa. Both Bridges and Hofmeyr are therefore influential South African celebrities who have confident and charismatic characteristics. When trying to understand the ways in which Hofmeyr and Bridges try to influence the audience, it is important to know this background to have an idea of how they are viewed and perhaps trusted by the audience because of their celebrity status.

In the next section I analyze the rhetorical devices and strategies that Steve Hofmeyr and Sunette Bridges use to try to construct appeal with their audience at the Red October rally. Rhetoric, from a Western perspective, aims to persuade an audience with three tools: logos, pathos, and ethos. Logos is established when the speaker draws on logical reasoning, pathos is established when the speaker appeals to the emotions and personal lives of the audience, and ethos is established by the audience perception of the speaker's character and their possible shared values (Trenholm, 2008). According to Trenholm, most researchers agree that "the success or failure of a speech depends on how the speaker is perceived by the audience" (Trenholm, 2008, p. 260).

Rice and Atkin also emphasize the importance of speakers in the success of a speech, saying that campaigns create or use opinion leaders who "exert interpersonal influence on focal individuals" (2013, p. 6). They add that campaigns generally aim at these opinion leader audiences because they seem to be more susceptible to campaign messages. Additionally, the advantage of opinion leaders from a certain culture or

background in a campaign allows them to “customize the messages to the unique needs and values of individuals in a more precise and context-relevant manner” (Rice & Atkin, 2013, p. 6) My study therefore not only includes exploring what imagery and language Bridges and Hofmeyr draw upon in their speeches but also how that relates to who they are as speakers.



## CHAPTER II

### ANALYSIS

As explained in the analyses below, the audience that Bridges and Hofmeyr tries to appeal to appears to be a white, Afrikaner, Christian, working class, and male-dominated society.

#### **Afrikanerhood, Whiteness and Code-Switching**

One of the most important techniques that both Bridges and Hofmeyr use in their speeches to establish ethos and pathos with the audience at the Red October rally is code-switching. Code-switching is a language phenomena and considered an “in-group” occurrence that is generally seen as “a device used to affirm participants’ claims to membership and the solidarity of the group in contrast to outsiders” (Woolard, 1988, p. 69). Particularly, in this setting the speakers switch between using two different languages: English and Afrikaans. Afrikaans has its origins in Dutch but has also been influenced by German, Indian and Indonesian languages and Khoikhoi dialects, among others (South African History Online, 2014). Afrikaans has a unique place in the power dynamics that have played out in South Africa. The language originated as a “bastard language” spoken by lower class white people; “respectable” whites spoke Dutch at the time (Cloete, 1992). It is a language used predominantly by Afrikaners and is therefore symbolic of Afrikaner culture. The choice between using English and Afrikaans at the Red October march has important implications because of the different power relationships these two languages have had in South Africa. During the British occupation of South Africa, English was the dominant and dominating language of the

country and symbolized British rule. Under this rule most Afrikaners were forced to learn English and in many spaces were forbidden to speak Afrikaans. For Afrikaners, the English language had therefore become a symbol of the oppression of Afrikaner culture.

During apartheid, Afrikaans had shifted from being an oppressed language to being the language of the oppressor. Afrikaans had become the institutional language of the country and was meant to replace any African languages by being a compulsory language in all schools. Because ultimately English has become the lingua franca of the “new” South Africa, a way to navigate among the 11 official languages and many others, English has in many ways become the language of reconciliation for many South Africans. The current use of both these languages, however, does not occur in a historical vacuum as I explained above. According to Williams, “a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 55). In this text Woolard and Schieffelin discuss the link between identity and language ideology. Thus, they look at how language is used by groups to identify and signify power – looking at the “roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group” and understanding “social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral or political interests” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 57). Equating language and nation in the way explained above, is in itself a historical and ideological construct and is interlinked with linguistic choices as an expression of power.

The term ideology reminds analysts that cultural frames have social histories and it signals a commitment to address the relevance of power relations to the nature

of cultural forms and ask how essential meanings about language are socially produced as effective and powerful. (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 58)

Hofmeyr starts his speech in Afrikaans, and the bulk of the speech is conducted in this language, his native language. A few minutes in, he switches to English, but also openly resists it. “Yes I’m going to have to say some of this stuff in English, but sometimes I wonder why?” The majority of the crowd cheers loudly and reacts positively to this comment. With this resistance, Hofmeyr chooses to establish ethos with Afrikaans speakers and thus reveals what he considers to be the in-group of the Red October movement. Does “whiteness” then require the ability to speak the Afrikaans language or ultimately to be an Afrikaner? This sentence and the overwhelming use of Afrikaans at the rally potentially poke a hole in Red October’s entire argument of advocating for a “minority group” because racially, whites are numerically fewer than black people. But culturally or ethnically, Afrikaners are not numerically fewer than most African cultures or ethnicity groups such as Venda and Shangaan groups. If Hofmeyr is thus excluding English speaking whites through language, and is actively only speaking to Afrikaners because he chooses Afrikaans, it could mean that these messages are meant to be received by an in-group determined by culture or ethnicity and less determined by race. It is interesting to see Hofmeyr, being an Afrikaner who has just established ethos with Afrikaners in the audience, trying to navigate the historical tensions between the Afrikaners and the British. Whites in South Africa are not a homogeneous group, and tensions between the two predominant white groups still exist. From my observations, Hofmeyr ends up speaking mostly Afrikaans and draws on Afrikaner cultural references, thus making Afrikaners the central point of this speech.

If my assumption that this speech is more directed at Afrikaners than at whites as a whole is true, then the entire use of language in this situation is meant to create a stronger relationship between the speaker and audience – the speaker communicating predominantly from his position as Afrikaner and the audience receiving the message as mostly Afrikaners.

Hofmeyr resists the use of English, while still attempting to make English-speaking whites feel part of the protest and while still making references to an overarching white group to legitimize the Red October movement. His attempts are inconsistent, however, and throughout the speech he conflates Afrikanerhood with whiteness. For example, Hofmeyr tells the crowd: “You know you are the only minority group in Africa marching for the luxury of mother-tongue education?” Using the word luxury is a technique to make this “fact” seem absurd, because in Hofmeyr’s view this is a given for all groups, but for Afrikaners it’s unfairly considered a “luxury.” Hofmeyr also places a strong and loud emphasis on the words “Africa” and “mother-tongue education.” Through this sentence it becomes clear that he’s not including English-speaking whites because the mother-tongue that he refers to is Afrikaans and not English.

“Everybody else wants to speak English,” followed by a switch to Afrikaans through a low whisper *maar nie ons nie*, “but not us.” Here Hofmeyr uses “us” again, but at this point I feel it is fair to say that “us” only includes Afrikaans speakers because it has been established that the referred to in-group doesn’t want to speak English. He is therefore trying to create rapport with what he perceives to be his target audience – Afrikaners. He uses language strategically in this sentence: he starts out in English, but

then, to highlight the fact Afrikaners don't want to speak English, he completes the second part in Afrikaans.

Hofmeyr fails to mention that the march demands spaces for “exclusive” Afrikaans education and creates the idea that Afrikaans as a language is being oppressed or even prohibited at South African institutions. In reality, these institutions are simply integrating Afrikaans with several other languages, or making English the primary language in certain classrooms. None of the African languages in South Africa has the same privileges that Afrikaans has – few to none classrooms teach entire courses in other African languages, but there are many in Afrikaans. By insinuating that its language is threatened, Hofmeyr is trying to persuade the audience that Afrikaners are victims in the new South Africa.

Hofmeyr then digs into the issue of the education system and overtly expresses his longing for the previous Afrikaans school systems, which he strongly emphasizes as “brilliant.” He claims that if you were educated in that system, you would have been bilingual and would have learned English anyway. Here, his argument is contradicting because he is openly resistant to using English and to the use of English in the education system, but then he praises the Afrikaans school systems for having taught English. This could potentially be because he is trying to construct an argument based on logos – the idea that Afrikaans should rationally be protected and in order to do that it should receive higher status than other languages and be separated from English. In the current education system, students still learn at least two languages, except Afrikaans isn't compulsory anymore but English is. The battle between the dominance of these two

languages symbolizes the historic and current tensions between the two represented groups that unite under the umbrella of a white minority.

When Hofmeyr tries to explain that the Red October campaign is inclusive, he says *hierdie protes is uit die staanspoor uit vanaf Afrikaners, en wittes*, “this protest originates from Afrikaners, and whites.” As a way to emphasize the word “Afrikaners,” Hofmeyr includes “and whites” softer and with less emphasis, as an afterthought. Here Afrikaners and whites are acknowledged as two separate entities. Hofmeyr separates the two to indicate that they are not a homogenous white group, and this acknowledgement can in many ways be read as a rejection of English-speaking whites, which in turn again establishes ethos with the Afrikaners in the audience. The confusion and contradictions about whether this protest is created by whites and for whites as a homogenous group, or whether it is in fact created for the advocacy of Afrikaner needs, recurs throughout the speech.

A few paragraphs later Hofmeyr switches from Afrikaans to English when saying: “you must know what the answer is when you say you’re going to march as an Afrikaner or an Afrikaans person or a white person.” Here, Hofmeyr seems pretty aware of the conflation of ethnicity, culture, and race in this protest and “you” is thus meant to include both English-speaking whites and Afrikaners. Hofmeyr communicates differently in Afrikaans and in English. He makes mistakes such as using the word “answer” instead of something more fitting like “response.” That brings up the issue whether the words he uses in English are as strategically chosen as they are in Afrikaans, and that could impact the type of message that English speakers are receiving compared to Afrikaans speakers. Having established himself as an Afrikaner and having actively set himself apart from

English-speaking groups, his use of the English language comes across as less sincere and almost fabricated. To me, Hofmeyr seems more theatrical and that he is “performing” the English language. I consequently feel like he is not establishing ethos with English speaking whites, and I am not sure if it is even possible for him to do so. I assume the majority of the crowd here is Afrikaans speaking, given how the audience reacts to comments on resisting English, and it therefore makes sense why Hofmeyr keeps switching to Afrikaans even though he tries to be inclusive. But it also narrows the spectrum of what whiteness means, if this protest is based on advocating for whites.

This also brings up the idea that Afrikaners are willing to put aside the differences they have with English speaking whites and unite under the umbrella of the white race because they are desperate to set themselves apart from black people on the grounds of race, the way they were able to during Apartheid. In many ways, under this whiteness umbrella the myth of unity is created. Pinto (2004) writes about such a myth of unity that existed among Spaniards and Hispanics in post-war Spain to successfully establish the belief of superiority and racial pride in these groups. According to Pinto, stressing unity “prevents the expression of discrepancies” (Pinto, 2004, p. 633) on cultural, political and religious levels. This speech is for the most part performed in a way to avoid the differences between Afrikaners and English-speaking whites, possibly to protect that image of unity.

Finally, when Hofmeyr says *Ek kyk na my eie mense en staan op as 'n volk*, “I look after my own people and rise as a nation,” he says it in Afrikaans. By choice of language then the message is clear that his *volk* is the Afrikaner. The word *volk* is in itself symbolic to Afrikaners, and brings up the nostalgic ideas of unity and overcoming

hardships in the Anglo Boer war era. Again these images recall a period when English whites and Afrikaner whites were pitted against each other, and the word *volk*, especially pronounced in Afrikaans, has value only to the Afrikaner side of the battle.

Hofmeyr's linguistic choices tell us more about how identity is constructed through the use of nationalism in the midst of the confusion of ethnicity, culture, and race. The *volk*, or nation, is symbolically constructed around Afrikaner nationalism. Anderson's (1983) definition of nation as an "imagined political community" (p. 48), applies to this context as the Afrikaner nation is imagined as inherently limited and sovereign. Particularly, the nationalism constructed through the speakers' choice of words is not a mere awakening of a nation to self-consciousness, but contributes to the invention of a nation that does not exist. A characteristic of nation, and a reason why nationalism is such a powerful tool for mobilization, is that "even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1983, p. 49). According to Anderson, for the most part nations "dream of being free, and if under God, directly so" (1983, p. 50).

The fight for freedom and sovereignty emerges strongly in many of the images that Hofmeyr uses, particularly in reference to the Anglo-Boer War. He emphasizes the national identity of the Afrikaners in the audience by using Afrikaner nostalgic images, and particularly ones that create boundaries between this nation and another one (for example the British). Hofmeyr says for example, *In elke oorlog waarin jou voorvaders betrokke was was hulle as 'n reel die minderheid. Die minderheid! Dan wen hulle. Dis waarvan af jy kom, het jy vergeet?* "In every war your ancestors were involved in, they



were as a rule the minority. The minority! Then they win. That's where you come from, have you forgotten?" *Jou* "your" and *jy* "you" here address Afrikaners. It has been a central part of the pride of Afrikaner nationalism that they have historically been the minority in certain battles and that some of those battles were won as a minority. One of those battles was fought against the British in the Anglo-Boer war. It has formed a key part of Afrikanerhood that the British were defeated by the Afrikaners, who view themselves as a particularly powerful and strong nation, but this "win" has been widely contested in South African history. Hofmeyr tries to encourage the audience by instilling pride in their heritage, "have you forgotten?" a heritage that has now been represented as an extremely courageous nation.

To make the Afrikaner audience believe that it can follow in the footsteps of its ancestors by triumphing as a minority, Hofmeyr and Bridges convince members of their minority status by playing into their belief that their culture is threatened. The anxiety of cultural genocide has always been present in the minds of Afrikaners (Steyn, 2001). The Red October movement thus becomes personal, the movement becomes about protecting a threatened culture and not just about the rights that whites have in the new South Africa. Hofmeyr and Bridges establishes both pathos and ethos with the audience by using a variety of imagery that evoke the feeling of a threatened Afrikaner culture, which again suggests "whiteness" as constructed by this movement inherently implies Afrikanerhood.

For example Hofmeyr says straightforwardly: *Ons is in 'n hoek, ons is klein, ons is min, ons het nie mag nie, ons is 'n minderheidsgroep*. "We are in a corner, we are small, we are few, we don't have power, we are a minority group." Hofmeyr says this in

a rushed pace, creating the illusion of a running list of oppressions that whites or Afrikaners (because he is speaking in Afrikaans) experiences in the post-Apartheid South Africa. The concepts of being “small,” “few,” powerless, and a “minority group” are associated with what oppressed groups experience globally and Hofmeyr is confidently confirming the members’ beliefs that they are victims and that their culture is therefore threatened. Hofmeyr expresses these ideas with energy and confidence - possibly a technique to mobilize the group for direct action.

*Farm murders symbolic of threatened culture*

Farm murders have become a symbol of threatened Afrikaner culture in general white public discourse, and this has been legitimized through the Red October movement, particularly in the way Hofmeyr establishes pathos with the audience. Mid-speech Hofmeyr lists in Afrikaans all the elements of treasured Afrikaner culture that this group “loses” every time a *boer* (farmer) is killed.

*Elke keer as daar ‘n boer vermoor word... “Every time a boer is murdered...”*

This list is made up of specific references to food, poets, poems, religion, singers, songs, books, Afrikaans metaphors, the former national anthem, Voortrekkers, city and street names, sports teams, sports players, Afrikaans, Afrikaner education. The lists starts with more contemporary Afrikaner rituals and beliefs, such as drinking brandy and Coke, and then Hofmeyr works his way down history lane to more nostalgic images that have shaped what Afrikanerhood means today. The list evokes emotion from Afrikaners, and their fear is maintained by the reminder of what they are losing in the new South Africa. This fear is exacerbated by the specifics that Hofmeyr uses, and he does so purposefully to evoke emotions of sentimentality and nostalgia in the audience so that they can feel

that there is a lot at stake. Much of the purpose of this list boils down to what Hofmeyr says in the following: *Verloor jy 'n klein stukkie taal, 'n klein stukkie identiteit, 'n klein stukkie kultuur, 'n klein stukkie jy.* “You lose a small piece of language, a small piece of identity, a small piece of culture, a small piece of you.” These are the most important threats to a group’s existence - losing either its language, its identity, its culture or, as Hofmeyr brings it back to the personal, losing a piece of each individual of the group who has inevitably been shaped by the other three elements. These elements are interlinked, and a threat to any of them can be used to mobilize the group to protect them. It has been evident throughout this speech that all four of these elements are embedded in Afrikanerhood, thus part of “whiteness” is being Afrikaner or subscribing to Afrikaner values, or speaking Afrikaans.

### **The Role of Class in the Creation of the White Victim**

The images of a threatened culture that were used above contribute to the creation of the white victim. However another aspect of victimhood less related to culture or ethnicity but moreso to class emerges as an important element of the Red October campaign. As Bridges and Hofmeyr play with the image of victimhood, it brings up the question of what kind of audience would be most susceptible to feeling threatened and victimized in the new South Africa? I argue that working class people would find some of Bridges and Hofmeyr’s key messages more appealing. This is because working class white people possibly have more at stake when there is competition for jobs. Working class whites’ livelihoods are therefore more directly affected by the current Black Economic Empowerment and other Affirmative Action policies. Bridges says “We are unhappy about the fact that there are laws in this country that determine that you can’t get

a job if you're white." I find it interesting that Bridges uses "we" in this sentence. She is trying to include herself with the group that is affected by these "laws." Hofmeyr echoes that in his poem: "The one you chose to keep from the workplace by virtue of skin colour." Because this poem is called I am the Afrikaner, and it is written by Hofmeyr, he includes himself in the group that is being kept from the "workplace."

In reality Bridges and Hofmeyr are both middle- to upper-class white South Africans who earn their money through a completely white industry - the Afrikaans entertainment industry and market - and they are both therefore unaffected by the competition of the integrated job sphere. Bridges, however, attempts to establish ethos in another way around this issue, by finding a relevant common value between her and the audience: their children. "Fifty-six percent of our children leave this country every single year because they cannot find jobs." Bridges uses "our" to include herself in this experience and in many ways to insert herself in the class struggle. She emphasizes "every" and "single" to exaggerate the perceived gravity of the situation. Here Bridges also establishes logos because she is using facts to strengthen her argument. However, these facts stem from personal research done by Hofmeyr, Bridges, and the academic Dan Roodt, and are therefore not credible. Bridges' argument is also narrow, as it ignores the privileges of being mobile enough to find employment options internationally. In many ways then, the Red October movement tries to legitimize whites' minority status by illustrating how one's race status (white in this case) is synonymous with one's class status. This would then make the group seem similar to other minorities, such as many African Americans, Native Americans, or Hispanic Americans in the United States of America whose working class identities can be directly tied to their racial identities.

### **Age, Religion and Code-Switching**

Code-switching in Bridges' speech also reveals different components in the discursive construction of whiteness in South Africa. Bridges conducts most of her speech in English but closes it off by singing an Afrikaans song. Two intersections are important to note in the language used in Bridges' song. Because the Afrikaans in this song comes across as formal and official, it is possible that she is trying to construct appeal with the audience on the basis of age and religion.

The song's rhythm and tone is very much in line with the current Afrikaner popular music that older Afrikaners listen to. Bridges' status as a celebrity, the popularity of her father, and her music genre is consumed and appreciated more by an older Afrikaner generation, and it is therefore possible to assume that the Red October rally is not necessarily aimed at including young people. This is because the generations that were raised in the height of Apartheid or older lived insulated lives as Afrikaners. They listened to the same kind of music, engaged with the same kind of media, and also used a particular, formal form of Afrikaans.

Specific words such as *nyd*, "jealousy"; *verbond*, "vow"; *smag*, "yearn"; *verduur*, "endure"; and *vergader*, "gather" are rarely used in everyday Afrikaans speech by young people. These words could potentially have been chosen to fit the rhyming or rhythm scheme of the song, but they also set the more conservative and formal tone of her song.

If Bridges aims at an older demographic, the age groups that were raised during apartheid when the Boer War was glorified, one can better understand why these Afrikaner nostalgia concepts are drawn upon to establish pathos, ethos, and logos with

this particular audience. Throughout the song Bridges uses language to evoke images of Voortrekkers and their struggles in the Great Trek.

*Ons het met min die reis begin*, “We started the journey with little,” is one such image. Bridges aims to create a sense of nostalgia for the origins of Afrikaner culture, providing a connection with its early colonial background. “We” here refers to the Dutch settlers that arrived at the Cape of Good Hope with Jan van Riebeeck. The older generation of Afrikaners believe that its Dutch ancestors arrived in “uncivilized” South Africa in a setting of obstacles that they had to overcome with “little” compared to other groups such as the British or the Europeans on other continents. The Afrikaner generations with this perspective take a lot of pride in the hardships their ancestors had overcome and also have a lot of gratitude for their ancestors. The sentence also invokes a sense of humility, a technique Afrikaners have used to frame their role in colonialism to distract from the violence and conquering they have engaged in on this “journey.” Younger Afrikaners experience much less of this pride, gratitude, and nostalgia toward their colonial heritage because they have a stronger connection to South Africa and being South African in the “rainbow nation” sense than being an Afrikaner with European ancestry. The colonial perspective of “uncivilized” Africa is still taught to Afrikaner children, but as the dominance of the Afrikaner culture has dwindled, so has its domination of South African history. Younger Afrikaners, the post-apartheid generation, have therefore grown up in a less indoctrinated society, and a lot of them do not find such a strong appeal in Voortrekker imagery. The way whiteness is constructed through the Red October movement, therefore, is to include a group that will find appeal with

Vootrekker and similar Afrikaner histories, and whiteness here thus requires a certain age group as the in-group.

Many of the Voortrekker imagery that appeal to older white citizens also include scenes of conflict and battle, such as the line in Bridges's song, *Kon elke stryd in geloof oorwin*, "Could win every battle through faith." This narrative of winning battles is characteristic of a nostalgic view on Afrikaner culture, and Bridges uses this as another way of establishing pathos with the audience. The concept of battle creates the idea that Afrikaners are a strong and powerful group, and thus Bridges uses that to mobilize the Red October members. The idea of Afrikaners as a strong and powerful nation recurs throughout Bridges and Hofmeyr's speeches. Whites were indoctrinated during Apartheid with the idea that the Apartheid government had one of the strongest and most powerful armies in the world. This idea made white South Africans believe they could defeat anyone that threatened their reign and power and consequently convinced average white citizens not to give into change.

"Faith" resonates with the Afrikaner belief of their special relationship with the Christian God who has helped and will help them win their battles. Bridges emphasizes the importance of religion in the survival of the Afrikaner culture by begging God to *Hernu U verbond*, "Renew Your vow." The "vow" is sure to make the audience, again assumed as being older and therefore more susceptible to these images, feel nostalgic. Afrikaners believe that they have a special bond with God, and that idea stems from the "promise" God made to them in the battle of Blood River against Dingaan and his Zulu warriors after they vowed to commemorate the day to Him. According to Afrikaners' version of history, God had "chosen" Afrikaners for victory, and ever since the day has

been celebrated as *Geloftedag*, or Day of the Vow/Covenant. After 1994 it has become Reconciliation Day. As mentioned above, the word *verbond* is an Afrikaans word not used often by the new generation of Afrikaners and the word itself is used only in connection with religion, Afrikaner history, or formal and official institutions.

Age is thus an important component of whiteness as it is established through the Red October movement, but the formal language in Bridges' song is also possibly constructing appeal on the basis of religion. As seen above, these two concepts are interlinked. It is possible that younger white South Africans aren't raised in such strict and isolated religious contexts anymore, and the Red October movement could therefore be unsuccessful in constructing appeal with them through the images of Afrikaner nostalgia and the accompanying Afrikaner-Christianity portrayals.

Yet throughout history religious imagery has been successful in constructing an appealing religious nation state, such as the Catholic Spain that Pinto (2004) describes in his discourse analysis of post-War Spain. By using Christian symbolism and images of the Christian nation's godliness, power and civilization, the myth of the Afrikaner-Christian nation that has a special relationship with God is strengthened. This myth awards Afrikaners with higher morality, because it both justifies their participation in the protest as the "chosen" nation and creates the idea that the Red October protest is part of a moral crusade. These images are similar to those used by early South African colonialists who used religious rhetoric to disguise their racism. Bridges' use of Protestant Christian imagery is also used to establish ethos with the audience because most Afrikaners and especially older Afrikaners are devout Christians. By addressing God in this song, and doing so in the opening line, she is showing that honoring God is



first priority to her, and therefore this grants her permission to be trusted by the audience: *Ek skryf 'n brief aan U O Heer*, “I write a letter to you oh Lord.” The word “Heer” is a way of addressing God that’s specific to Afrikaans. It’s a respectful yet loving word for God, but has also been used to refer to “gentleman” in Afrikaner culture. The word “U” is also a very respectful word for “you” that’s only used in formal Afrikaans or if addressing the Christian God. This line therefore establishes ethos because Bridges singles herself out as “I” and knows how to address God in a way that illustrates her shared feelings with the crowd about respect for Him. That respect for God is required in the Afrikaner community, and thus forms a part of whiteness as created through this movement. Reaching out to God with this opening line makes it seem as if the situation is urgent, as if whites are turning to God because they are desperate for His help.

Bridges also confirms her relationship with the Christian God by revealing her belief that he is the only God. *Want ons weet almal leef in Hom*, “Because we know everyone lives in Him.” It is a crucial part of the practice of Christianity in the Afrikaner culture to believe that He is the only true God. Bridges affirms not only that but also the Afrikaner belief that the Christian religion is superior to all other religions. This sentence sounds like a bottomline - “because” indicates that ultimately everything will follow God’s plan because no-one can exist without God and God is therefore the highest form of power. What interests me then is who *almal* “everyone” is. I believe that Bridges could be referring specifically to the Afrikaner or white South African community and that her “everyone” is not inclusive of all races and cultures. During Apartheid churches were segregated because black people were considered immoral and not capable of equality under God. This prejudice still lingers among Afrikaners especially, as many of them

don't see all races as having equal moral status. Regardless of who "everyone" includes on the basis of race, I think it is important to note that this part of the speech only includes Christians, and therefore whites from any other religion or no religion do not achieve the same kind of "whiteness" as it is constructed by Red October.

Another important technique Bridges uses to once more confirm her shared religious values with the audience is by drawing on biblical references. *As dit U wil is o Vader, waar ons in U Naam vergader*, "If it's your will oh father, where we gather in Your name." This affirms her trust in God as she says whether He "saves" whites in the new South Africa is His resolve. In this way she establishes ethos. The second part of the sentence alludes to Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." Or in Afrikaans: *Waar twee of drie in Ny Naam vergader, daar is Ek in hul midde*. This Bible reference is important because it comforts the audience that God is present at this rally, and therefore they can feel more confident in participating in a protest legitimated by divine power. Again, these biblical references and drawing upon the Christian God as a symbol of strength, morality, and Afrikanerhood is significant to the South African context and to this speech. One can conclude from Bridges' song that age and religion are important components in how whiteness is discursively constructed.

### **Gender Dynamics in the Movement**

According to Cloete, as she writes about the similarities between Afrikaners and other colonizing countries' attempts to bring "civilization" to the African continent, patriarchy in the South African context has looked similar to the way it does in other colonized/colonizing contexts. "The Afrikaners' attitude towards women reflected and

still does reflect the sentiments and practices of any other patriarchal society” (Cloete, p. 55). One unique element that has existed within white South African, and particularly Afrikaner, gender relations is that eventually the Afrikaner also “expected Afrikaner women to sublimate themselves to and collaborate in the establishment of Afrikaner nationalism’s *volks-utopia*” (Cloete, 1992, p. 45). In her discussion of the masculinity of the Afrikaans language in which all concepts and entities are generally male, Cloete says: “The concept “Afrikaner” is undeniably masculine, literally and figuratively and not simply experientially.”

Before Hofmeyr starts his speech, both he and Bridges are on stage together. They give each other a large amount of praise and admiration to help one another establish ethos with the audience. This public mutual respect creates a sense of strong leadership as well as unity in the movement. There are significant differences in Hofmeyr and Bridges’ communication and behavior however, and I find it worth addressing them through the lens of gender. I think it is important to note that there is a male and a female speaker at this rally. This could potentially mean balancing the more aggressive and forward qualities of a stereotypical male speaker with the seemingly compassionate and patient qualities of a stereotypical female speaker. But instead of their gender diversity being a sign of equality, in this section I argue that it suits the heteronormative patriarchy that Cloete tells us exists within Afrikanerhood.

Bridges’ introduction of Hofmeyr, who she calls “everyone’s favorite,” sets him up to be the heroic male figure and automatically reduces herself to the female side-kick. She doesn’t even have to introduce him by his full name, and through most of the introduction she just uses the word *hy* - “him.” Yet everyone knows who she means by

hy, because he is the one the crowd has been waiting for, the rest of the speakers were simply setting the scene for his speech. In the Christian religion as practiced by Afrikaners, God is mostly referred to as He or Him, and yet everyone knows who you are talking about. I feel that Hofmeyr is given superior status by Bridges in the same way, by not announcing his name when praising and thanking him. Bridges praises him with a desperation in her voice, multiple times claiming that the audience and herself are unworthy of his time and presence. *Hy het geen idee hoeveel dit vir elkeen van ons wat hier is beteken nie. Baie dankie dat hy sy stem leen vir ons mense. Veral vir die van ons wat nie vir hulleself kan praat nie.* “He has no idea how much it means to every one of us that’s here. Thank him [sic] that he is borrowing his voice to our people. Especially to those of us who can’t speak for themselves.” This last sentence is spoken much softer and evokes emotion because it is rather dramatized. Bridges acts the role of the submissive female who presents the “real” leader to the crowd. By the crowd Hofmeyr is now viewed as the hero who gives a voice to the voiceless. He also does it in an archetypal “selfless” manner because he generously “borrows” his time and presence to the movement. This is in opposition to Bridges who is expected to give, without receiving extra recognition. In fact, the praise that Bridges receives from Hofmeyr reveals more about gender dynamics within the Red October movement.

Hofmeyr tells the audience *daai is ‘n generaal*, “that is a general.” Hofmeyr uses more informal Afrikaans, for example *daai* is a shortened version of *daardie*, which is the formal Afrikaans word for “that.” The disparity in their interaction with the crowd is significant, because Hofmeyr is much more relaxed when speaking. This could be due to the higher level of confidence men in a patriarchal society can access, or generally

because he is a famous Afrikaans pop artist in South Africa. Bridges comes across as confident as well but immediately takes a backseat as Hofmeyr enters the scene. Throughout her speech, it seems as if Bridges is more cautious with her words. As a woman she has no room in her efforts to persuade the audience and to challenge them or deviate from their beliefs at the same time. She therefore has to use words and images carefully to prove that she can be trusted. Bridges more conscientiously has to play into Afrikaner sentiments to prove that her female perspective is as worthy as a male's. I personally believe this is why she tries to push boundaries with her speech, in favour of the audience, by bringing up the idea of sovereignty. "And this government should engage with people who want to talk to them about looking after ourselves and governing ourselves." Self-governance is a topic few whites want to risk bringing up in public because separate living was exactly the kind of rhetoric that former governments had used to justify Apartheid. Yet Bridges is willing to go there to prove her bravery and competency - at an equal status with males. Cloete (1992) recalls several events in the history of the Afrikaner where women were stripped of their heroism while men were "lionised" (p. 48). She adds that "heroics or mythologies aside, there is enough documented evidence that the boer woman had the physical toughness and endurance to hold their own against or with the men" (Cloete, 1998, p. 48).

It is therefore interesting that Hofmeyr calls Bridges *generaal*. *Generaal* is a word mostly associated with men because generals in white South African history have predominantly been male. Afrikaners have a positive association with the word "general", because some of the leaders whose guidance they still draw on, such as *Generaal De La Rey* (there is a mainstream pop culture song about him), were generals.

Again, the idea of a battle being fought is constructed to create nostalgia for the “successes” of the Boer War. Because Hofmeyr uses words with male connotations, he “elevates” Bridges to illustrate to the crowd that she has the same level of competency as a man. This could be Hofmeyr’s way of awarding Bridges her heroism status, in contrast to how women were viewed in the Boer war period, as Cloete mentions above. However, after he calls her a general, he insinuates that she is disposable by adding *net so vyf van hulle nodig*, “you only need about five of them.” In contrast to how Bridges views Hofmeyr as the central and key figure to this protest, Hofmeyr represents Bridges as being one of a few other individuals who simply needs to get the job done, and therefore she is not as “special” to the movement as he is. Cloete notes too that women in the Afrikaner history have been awarded the role as “servant to the *volk*” (Cloete, 1992, p. 51), similar to Bridges’ role in the speech at the Red October rally.

Hofmeyr thus doesn’t treat her, as a female, as also a core part of the protest and he does not measure her competency in the same way he would his own or that of other males. This is evident by how he praises her for her event-planning skills and her behind-the-scenes work on organizing the protest. Instead of making her heroic in the same way she did with him, he diminishes the role she has played in this protest by making light of her work. He says jokingly: *Ek was al by groter proteste waar ons nie een ou kon kry om toilette te reel nie*. “I have been to bigger protest marches where we couldn’t find one guy to organize toilets.” Hofmeyr’s specific reference to toilets, a word associated with “petty” and lower class work, evokes laughter among the crowd. He manages to simultaneously give Bridges credit and minimize her effort.

Hofmeyr adds to that *Alles self gedoen*, “she [sic] did everything herself,” which comes across as very paternalistic. He seems to suggest that the audience should be proud and impressed that Bridges managed this much by herself because perhaps he believes women usually aren’t competent enough to do that. Finally, adding to that paternalism, he praises her for always being available. *Druk op haar knoppie en sy’s daar*, “Call on her and she’ll be there.” Again this is contrasted to Hofmeyr who generously “borrows” his time to the audience.

The way Hofmeyr refers to Bridges makes her seem dutiful, and he uses images to connote that she knows her place and knows loyalty. This loyalty and commitment is expected of her, whereas with Hofmeyr it is asked and appreciated to the extent that people fear that he might withdraw it. He therefore has power in coming across confident and independent, which creates an interesting dynamic among him and Bridges and the audience. Bridges and the audience now have to appreciate Hofmeyr to his satisfaction, because as a male he has the privilege of abandoning the movement. He thus has much more agency than Bridges; he has the choice to be there. I believe this makes the crowd want him to be there even more.

This type of audience could potentially not respect a female leader to take the lead and will automatically view a woman in a supportive role. This movement can therefore not exist without its male leadership, and the two leaders need to actively play into patriarchy to appeal to the audience. Bridges is doing what is expected of her, but Hofmeyr gets extra praise. Seeing these familiar cultural behaviors among the speakers makes the audience feel more comfortable with participating because clearly these

speakers represent the same values as the audience, whether consciously or subconsciously.

Hofmeyr opens with a unique Afrikaner proverb that he directs at Bridges: *Klein botteltjie, groot gif*, which translates to “small container, big poison.” It refers to something that might look harmless or powerless, but is indeed strong and powerful. This comment is directed only at Afrikaners, because English-speaking whites might not understand it or experience the same kind of connection and interpretation that Afrikaners connect with their own proverbs and images. Why would Hofmeyr need to illustrate to the crowd that Bridges is powerful even though she “seems” harmless? This is potentially because the general perspective of the audience has been shaped by patriarchal views and they therefore don’t recognise or acknowledge Bridges’ strength - and the use of this sentence then proves that Hofmeyr is conscious of the crowd’s view. The fact that the speakers are aware of the patriarchy within which this speech takes place, tells me that it is possible that they are using gender roles and norms to construct an appeal to the audience. This means that “whiteness” as it is constructed through the Red October movement exists within and requires a patriarchal structure.

Hofmeyr’s paternalistic attitude isn’t limited to his relationship with Bridges. This behavior is also visible in other moments in the speech, but this time they are directed at the audience.

After announcing that he looks after his own people who will stand up as a nation, Hofmeyr tells the crowd to *Kies jou groep. Kies jou groep, en mobiliseer*, translating to “Choose your group. Choose your group and mobilize.” The tone of this sentence suggest a paternalistic attitude, because his words and pronunciation is strong, and it comes



across as a command. The “k” and the “s” are pronounced strongly in Afrikaans, and the word *kies* as pronounced by Hofmeyr is firm and intimidating or even threatening. The same goes for the “b” “s” and “r” consonants in the word *mobiliseer*. With this sentence Hofmeyr comes across not only as a strong, confident leader but also powerful enough to give commands or orders to the audience.

At one point Hofmeyr talks about discriminating against others and then firmly states *Dit doen ons nie*, “that we don’t do.” He again seems confident, and his paternalistic attitude is evident in the way he uses “we” in this sentence. According to Fowler and Kress (1979), the use of first-person plural ‘we,’ is often associated with situations in which the speaker has power over the hearer (for example parent to child). They call this use “potentially dangerous” and “not wholly sincere” (Fowler & Kress, 1979, p.?). With “we” he includes himself with the audience, but by telling them how and what is appropriate, he remains in a leadership position and puts himself in the top of the hierarchy. Hofmeyr then comes across as a fatherly figure speaking for the household in a way that teaches the household this is not our way of doing things. He could be saying it in a didactic manner, or also in a way that eases the audience’s conscience in case it was doubtful whether this protest march in fact discriminates against others. Furthermore, the pronoun “we” as used in this sentence implies previous dialogue, but “the ‘we’ narrator has no access to the current communicative intentions or expectations of any of its other members, since his/her speech act is not preceded by group deliberations” (Fowler & Kress, p. 246). In this way Hofmeyr again establishes ethos with the audience, which becomes a necessary relationship of trust for his paternalism to be practiced unnoticed.

This enables Hofmeyr to come across as sincere and therefore make the views and values that he preaches seem shared by the audience instead of possibly imposed on them.

In another instance the strong but paternalistic influence Hofmeyr has on the audience is well illustrated when he asks *Is ons anders?* “Are we different?” A large part of the audience immediately says no, but then Hofmeyr responds in English “you bet your bottom dime we are.” He increases his perceived confidence by using an English idiom to respond. He then asks *Is ons beter?* “Are we better?” to which a large part of the crowd this time responds with yes. The crowd then, not having an understanding of the importance of their communication, reveals the racism of the protest, even though Bridges and Hofmeyr actively try to represent the movement as not racist. Hofmeyr responds with a lowered voice *Ons is beter as niemand nie.* “We are better than no-one.” With this lower, almost-whispering voice he sounds more authoritative. It seems as if Hofmeyr is trying to teach the already prejudiced crowd how not to be racist, or at least how not to represent themselves as racist. In his paternalistic way he teaches the crowd, almost like kids, what is right and wrong in order not to jeopardize the movement. In this case right is that they should not express that they are better than other cultures, but they are allowed to express that they are different. Hofmeyr is thus powerful enough to influence and change the perspectives of the crowd, whereas Bridges, as mentioned earlier, has to encourage and play into the already existing views of the mostly Afrikaner audience. The intended effect of having these two speakers at the rally, and for them to enact gender roles in this specific way, is thus to find rapport with the audience and build ethos in a patriarchal cultural context.

### **Discussion: The Creation of the White Victim**

Bridges and Hofmeyr are both strong and influential leaders, but the views they advocate did not necessarily start with them. Many of the persuasive ideas in these speeches are themselves rooted in the indoctrination of the previous ruling government. The majority of the crowd seem to be Afrikaners who were born and raised under the Apartheid regime and have therefore experienced the powerful indoctrination of that government. Bridges and Hofmeyr thus recreate and maintain the ideological beliefs of the Apartheid era through their speeches. I have touched on the fear of a threatened Afrikaner culture earlier in this study, and in this section I unpack the creation of both the myth of white significance during Apartheid and also, consequently, the establishment of the idea of the post-Apartheid “rolling apocalypse.” These concepts illustrate whites’ struggle to come to terms with their loss of power and are useful persuasion techniques because they create the idea that whites are victims of the new South Africa. Menz (1989) addresses the importance of studying myth making and similar forms of inserting discourse with emotional enthusiasm by stating that “myth has the function of binding together social groups in order to represent their interests and to create a common basis of identification” (p. 233). I argue therefore that Hofmeyr and Bridges establish pathos with the audience through the reinforcement of already existing myths, which ultimately creates the “victim” identity of the contemporary South African white.

A recurring myth in white public discourse is the idea that whites had been significant and almost crucial to the development of South Africa throughout its history. This view represents intelligent, visionary, talented whites in opposition to their perspective of their weak, unintelligent, and unambitious black counterparts. These

concepts are very clear in Hofmeyr's "I am the Afrikaner" poem when he says: "The one without whose employ this would not have once been the gem of Africa." Hofmeyr thus affirms what the audience already believes, that without whites the economy and capitalist system of South Africa would not have developed because in their view black people would not have been capable of managing resources (Hofmeyr's emphasis on "gem"), such as gold and diamonds.

This myth does not allow any credit to the role that people of color played in building South Africa, and the Afrikaner is viewed as the sole contributor to the successes of the country. As Hofmeyr says, "I am the Afrikaner, the veritable orphan of this continent, if you like, that once placed this continent on the world map, with more achievements than mortality rates and rape rates." It is important to whites to feel significant in the new South Africa and they do so through the discursive construction of a "better" old (Apartheid) South Africa and a "worse" new (post-Apartheid) South Africa. Hofmeyr establishes pathos with the audience through these myths, and he therefore contributes to creating an appealing image of the Apartheid state. In the first sentence Hofmeyr says that South Africa had "once" been the gem of Africa. That implies that it is no longer true and that South Africa had thus economically worsened under the black government. In the second sentence Hofmeyr insinuates that during white rule South Africa achieved much more in comparison to today's black rule that he associates with "mortality" and "rape." These are the elements of the "rolling apocalypse" that I mentioned in the literature review - the Afrikaner view that morality, civilization, and safety is in a permanent decline since the regime change in 1994. This view is essentially based on many whites' inability to come to terms with their loss of

power and privilege. During apartheid, white people had the privilege of receiving special security treatment by the apartheid government, and white bodies were protected with extra rigor. In the new South Africa, security looks the same for black and white people, but because whites are used to the idea of safe and segregated neighborhoods, they now feel targeted. In Bridges' song she uses the lines *Ons mense smag na vrede Heer*. "Our people yearn for peace Lord." This implies that there isn't peace in the country and can be interpreted by the audience that a war is being waged against whites in the new South Africa and that the Red October protest is meant to put an end to it by bringing the issue to global attention. She follows up that sentence with *Ons kan nie meer die pyn verduur*. "We can't endure the pain anymore." The words "endure" and "anymore" imply desperation. It also evokes the image of ongoing suffering. This sentence thus fulfills the myth of the "rolling apocalypse" because it creates the idea that the situation in South Africa is only getting worse and that this protest exists because of the desperation created through what is perceived as a violent decline of the South African society.

That image of decline is a powerful tool of persuasion for the white audience that supports Red October, not only because they feel they are directly targeted through it but also because the society that they had lived in and maintained during Apartheid resonated so deeply with them. Hofmeyr's claim that *Ons verteenwoordig die beskawing wat ons wou gesien het*, "We represent the civilization that we wanted to see," supports that. The word "civilization" has many connotations in this context. It could conjure images of the colonial conquest of the Dutch settlers and eventually the Afrikaners and their pursuit of bringing "civilization" to Africa, conveying to the audience that none of that was in vain and this group of whites are the fruit of their ancestors' efforts. It could also contrast this

group who view themselves as civilized whites with what they view as South Africa's uncivilized black people. In many ways in white discourse, white people have become synonymous with white rule and black people have become synonymous with black rule. In this way Hofmeyr creates the image of Apartheid as an era of "civilization" under white rule and post-Apartheid as an uncivil era under black rule. Hofmeyr uses this image to underscore the feeling of the post-Apartheid decline. He provides additional evidence for whites' value of the old South African society by saying: "We march to prove to the world that there are South Africans left who refuse to acclimatize to the substandard. We know South Africans, they deserve better." The word "acclimatize," an active word, tells one that Hofmeyr is referring to the current state of the nation. Here "substandard" represents whites' view of post-Apartheid and the current black administration. Two pronouns are interesting in this sentence, "we" and "South Africans." Hofmeyr establishes ethos with the audience by including himself with them and with the act of marching. He also establishes an in-group through "we," one that "knows" "South Africans." From the first sentence one can gather that "we" represents the white group, the group that Hofmeyr currently addresses. Taking into account the segregated history of South Africa, one can assume that the only groups that whites "know" is whites or Afrikaners. "South Africans" who "deserve better" are thus white South Africans. This is one of the few if not only moments in the speech when Hofmeyr implies that this group is not just white or Afrikaner but South African. I interpret this to show progression in Hofmeyr's speech, which follows a similar path to transformation in South Africa as whites first and foremost identified as whites or Afrikaners and eventually newer generations prefer identifying as South African.

Despite this moment of progression in the speech, Hofmeyr's images again regress to older and more conservative existing myths. White people's praise for the old "better" South Africa is evident in the sacrifices they feel they had willingly made for the new South Africa. "The one without whose [inaudible] you would still be facing the mightiest defense force on this continent, but the one who chose against blood and power, only to inherit the bloodiest land in the universe." It is a common belief among white South Africans that the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) had been one of the most powerful militaries in the world during Apartheid. This was a technique of the white government to create the illusion that white power had been stronger and more resilient than it actually was, and as mentioned above, it was meant to prevent white people from giving in to an inevitable change. Hofmeyr makes the audience believe that whites had generously given up power and had willingly chosen against violence (of which there was plenty). This image is meant to make whites and Afrikaners seem innocent because of the noble and honorable deed they believe they did. To some extent they perceive themselves as white saviors of powerless black people in an oppressive system that seems to be unrelated to these whites.

From this platform of "innocence" it is much easier for Hofmeyr to shape the idea of the undeserving Afrikaner victim, as he tries with the words "only to inherit the bloodiest land in the universe." This dramatic exaggeration of South Africa as the "bloodiest land" in the entire "universe" contributes to the image of victimhood. It pushes the audience to focus solely on its own suffering and narrows its perspective - a strategy to have a stronger influence on that perspective. Finally the word "inherit" also plays a role in constructing the victim image. Because whites have been and come from settlers

in South Africa, there has been some tension about whether they actually have a right to South African land. Hofmeyr thus strategically uses the word “inherit” to subtly convey the message that whites and Afrikaners rightfully have access to South African land, and because of that legitimacy they also have the right to be victims on and through this land.

Hofmeyr draws on images that are sentimental to Afrikaners to create the idea that this group has given up everything of value to the survival of its culture for the new South Africa. Hofmeyr says Afrikaners have given up their “graves,” “contracts,” “long recorded heritage,” and “legitimate sovereignty.” These honourable Afrikaners are then thanked with “name changes” and “removing of monuments and holidays.” Whites in the new South Africa are thus not only victims of violence but also victims of ingratitude. These images are in general also linked with globally threatened cultures and ethnicities and reaffirm the audience’s minority status. As mentioned before, farm murders are symbolic of a threatened Afrikaner culture, but street and town name changes also symbolize that threat and the consequent victimization of Afrikaners. Feeling threatened and oppressed by these changes again indicate whites’ struggle to accept their loss of power and privileges. Instead of facing the privilege they historically had of naming cities, towns and streets, the Red October uses these name changes to mobilize whites who are in fear of losing their heritage and culture. Hofmeyr hits home with another symbol of threatened Afrikaner culture: loss of language. He says “I am the Afrikaner that lost his mother tongue at the altar of transformation.” With this sentence he manages not only to reinforce the image of a threatened culture but also of Afrikaner innocence. Hofmeyr chooses the words “mother tongue” to exaggerate the loss of Afrikaans, at this point a symbol of Afrikaner culture as a whole. The loss of a “mother tongue” is



universally understood to mean a threat to its represented culture, and here Hofmeyr is able to place Afrikaners in the same pool as other minorities globally. Hofmeyr uses a biblical image with the word “altar,” implying sacrifice. This again plays into the idea that white people and Afrikaners had willingly and honourably chosen transformation and are therefore saviors. They are innocent and have no ties with Apartheid.

The combination of all these elements of language use and appropriation is a rhetorical strategy to ultimately create the white victim of the new South Africa. “Now I am the *boer* you tie to the sofa to witness the six hour rape of her daughters who want to be nowhere else but on the land producing food for your family.” The word “now” gives us an indication of time progression and that Hofmeyr is speaking of post-Apartheid South Africa. Hofmeyr uses several emotionally charged words to construct the victim myth. The word *boer* as mentioned earlier has a lot of significance to Afrikaners, and the *boer* identity is associated with honour and pride. Hofmeyr uses the word “daughters” to evoke the image of the most vulnerable citizens in the South African society. Here “daughters” are synonymous with whites who are represented as powerless and innocent. The image of “rape” is also significant because creating the threat of sexuality had been one of the strongest techniques during Apartheid to victimize white people and to demonize black people. During Apartheid this was also a way for the “master narrative” of whites to “other” people of color and specifically black people. In white public discourse the threat of black on white rape has continued to exist. The word also evokes the image of taking, stealing and violently removing power, here specifically from the image of the innocent Afrikaner. Furthermore Hofmeyr underscores their victimization by creating the idea that these white South Africans are selfless, because all they want is

to feed the nation. And in that white savior gesture, they want to be inclusive, they are selfless enough to feed “your” family. “Your” here refers to black people, the opposite of “our.”

The white victim image is finally crystallized with Hofmeyr’s song that he performs as part of the speech, *Ons sal dit oorleef*, “We will survive it.” This phrase is repeated throughout the song and resonates with the old Afrikaner belief that they are a strong and resilient group. Hofmeyr uses an emotional tone and facial expressions as he sings this song. Survival is an extreme image that suits the exaggerated threats to Afrikaner culture that have been used throughout this speech.

#### *Search for acceptance*

Throughout this study I have been trying to make sense of where the speakers and the participating members of the Red October movement are coming from. Some of their arguments can be openly prejudiced, racist, privileged, misguided, and simply inaccurate. But there are also moments in the speech when white South Africans’ yearning to be relevant in the new South Africa is clear, and this in many ways reveals their insecurities. One such moment is when Hofmeyr says “We are also South Africans.” “We” clearly refers to white people and the word “also” possibly comes from a place where these white people are questioning their own legitimacy as citizens of the new South Africa. This could be because they are aware of their colonial roots in the country, or it could be because they feel that the current Affirmative Action policies are pressuring them to feel like they don’t belong. Either way, in the midst of images of a threatened culture and white victimhood, I sense a feeling of being unwanted in the new South Africa, which creates a fear of not knowing where they belong.

As mentioned before, Afrikaners do not have any ties with their European ancestry and have lived on South African soil for several generations. This culture has had its origins in South Africa, and without being legitimized as South Africans, Afrikaners have nowhere and nothing else to turn to. South Africa is all they have known for decades, and now they are insecure about the place of their identity in the new socio-political context of South Africa. Hofmeyr's speech thus reveals some hints of self-reflexivity of white's position in the new South Africa. He ends his poem by saying "I am your Afrikaner" with a strong emphasis on "your." In this sentence "your" refers to South Africa in general, and instead of contributing to all the myths and beliefs that South Africa belongs to Afrikaners, here Hofmeyr expresses that Afrikaners belong to South Africa. However, this sentence, in the context of the rest of the paragraph, also comes across as a warning: I am your Afrikaner, and if you don't accept me into your society it will deteriorate because you need me. Hofmeyr's entire poem is built on the images of why white South Africans are a necessity to the welfare of South Africa, and many of these images are threatening. Therefore, even as white South Africans and Afrikaners have a need to belong in the new South Africa, much of that is based on the prejudiced belief that whites are superior and that South Africa will deteriorate if it relies only on people of color's contribution to the country.

### CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

In this study I explore the rhetoric used to construct appeal with white and Afrikaner audiences at a Red October campaign rally. This speech is important to study because of the rhetorical strategies that are used to mobilize Afrikaners and white people in the new South Africa through the creation of the myth of the white victim. The rhetoric in this speech has adapted to a particular historical and political context, similar to how image-making strategies had to change in Spain in the 1940s to avoid evoking the idea of support for fascism. Pinto calls this a “transformation,” which included the removal of the fascist salute to appeal to international recognition because a fascist image for Spain at the time was “entirely disadvantageous” (Pinto, 2004, p. 650).

With whiteness at its core, several significant intersections emerge in the campaign and are discussed in this study, including gender, age, religion, class, culture, race and ethnicity.

In terms of gender, I look closely at the relationship between Bridges and Hofmeyr. Judging by the language they use in their interactions with each other on stage, Hofmeyr is clearly set up to be the heroic male leader of this campaign. The importance of his male status in a campaign that takes place within a patriarchal society is that he first and foremost has the power to both affirm the beliefs of whites and Afrikaners in the audience, and also to challenge and modify those beliefs without people losing trust in him. Secondly, Hofmeyr and Bridges establish ethos with the audience by playing into traditional gender roles – Hofmeyr being the valued savior, and Bridges the loyal and

taken for granted female who mostly does the behind the scenes work. To gain equal status to her male counterpart, Bridges carefully plays into Afrikaner beliefs and goes as far as suggesting a taboo, such as sovereignty, to prove herself worthy. Some of the metaphors and images that Hofmeyr uses when speaking about Bridges suggest that he is aware of the gender dynamics between them and he therefore consciously subscribes to these gender roles to satisfy and sustain trust with the audience. This gender dynamic also translates into a paternalistic relationship that Hofmeyr has with the audience. Hofmeyr is comfortable handing out commands to the audience and at times speaks to them as if he is teaching them life lessons, much like a father does with his children.

Age and religion are intertwined concepts in the new South Africa. Bridges uses a more formal version of Afrikaans that appeal to an older generation of Afrikaners. She also draws upon several images that evoke nostalgia for the Anglo-Boer war period of South African history that has more relevance and meaning to older Afrikaners. Due to the fact that the post-Apartheid generation has not been indoctrinated with the same appreciation for and loyalty to Afrikaner heritage and history, these images do not construct appeal with Afrikaner and white youth. Bridges' formal language is also used in religion, and she is therefore able to construct appeal with Protestant Christians in the audience. She also does so through quotes and images from the Bible, and through several images reminding the mostly Afrikaner audience of their special relationship with the Christian God. In the same way that young white South Africans have not experienced the indoctrination of Afrikaner nationalism, they also don't subscribe to the strict and devout forms of practicing Christianity that were required during Apartheid.

Therefore, even the religious imagery in Bridges' speech appeal more to an older age demographic and only to those who believe in the Christian God.

Understanding class dynamics within the Red October campaign requires not only looking at the class demographic of the audience but also at the techniques the speakers use to establish ethos with the audience using a class platform. Bridges and Hofmeyr try to construct appeal with working class Afrikaners and whites because these are the groups more directly affected by Affirmative Action and Economic Equity policies. Several quotes throughout the speech refer to whites' inability to find jobs and having to flee the country to be employed. Both Bridges and Hofmeyr are personally unaffected by this issue because their income is dependent on the white music industry and market and it will remain stable regardless of the integration of the workplace. Bridges still manages to establish ethos with the audience by finding the common value of motherhood as she refers to the battle of "our children" to find employment. Even though Affirmative Action policy is a recurring theme throughout the speech, there is no covert reference to class differences within the white group (Afrikaners generally being much poorer than English whites) or between white people and people of color in South Africa (black people being much poorer than whites regardless of policies aimed to establish economic equality).

Throughout the analysis it is challenging to approach the conflation between race, ethnicity, and culture in the current South African context. This is primarily because for many in this campaign, whiteness in South Africa is synonymous with Afrikanerhood and vice versa. The Red October movement claims to represent white South Africans, the "white minority," but through Hofmeyr's code-switching techniques it becomes clear that the "white minority" in fact means Afrikaners. As inclusive as Hofmeyr tries to be, he

always switches back to Afrikaans from English, and even openly resists using the English language at the rally. Much of the imagery Hofmeyr and Bridges draw on are sentimental only to Afrikaners, and the nostalgia of these images has its origins in the period of the Anglo-Boer War when the British and Afrikaners were in fact at war with each other.

Additionally, some of the rhetorical images that recur throughout the speeches evoke the fear of a threatened culture, the Afrikaner culture. In many ways Afrikaners thus use this platform, which was originally aimed at highlighting the plight of the white racial minority of the country, to create awareness around the issues that Afrikaners are experiencing as a culture (or ethnicity). As explained in the text, neither as an ethnicity nor a culture are Afrikaners a minority, and therefore they are almost obliged to unite with English speakers under the umbrella of whiteness to be able to use global minority status language for mobilization. Additionally, uniting under “whiteness” also enables “othering” to take place, so that the Red October movement can demonize black people in the same way it had during Apartheid, when English whites and Afrikaners had once before united as an overarching “white” group. These, and several other techniques are used by the Red October campaign to ultimately create the white victim of the new South Africa.

Ultimately the language that Hofmeyr and Bridges use in their speeches is aimed at primarily achieving two things. Firstly, as mentioned above, they try to create the idea of white and Afrikaner victimhood. The speakers emphasize the idea of a threatened culture by referring to the different ways in which Afrikanerhood is under pressure. These include multiple references to farm murders, street name changes, and loss of

Afrikaans in the education system. These and similar imagery establish pathos with the audience because they are mostly drawn upon using emotive language – some of them are even conveyed in poetry or song form. Hofmeyr and Bridges also manage to create the concept of the “innocent Afrikaner” in relation to Apartheid by generating beliefs that if it weren’t for the selfless choice of this group, the legal oppression of people of color would never have ended. From that platform of “innocence” then, it is much easier to create the idea of the unfairly treated white victim in the new South Africa.

Secondly, another important achievement of the speakers’ language use is legitimizing the Red October campaign. This goes hand in hand with the creation of the white victim, as Hofmeyr and Bridges’ message aims to persuade the audience that they are a minority and they are threatened in the new South Africa, and therefore the very existence of the Red October movement is rightful. This is important to note, because it has bigger implications for whites and Afrikaners in South Africa. This legitimization of the Red October movement and what it stands for translates into a legitimization of white people’s place in the new South Africa. Some of the images in the speeches seem to be in reaction to whites, and particularly Afrikaners’, insecurities about where they belong – such as Bridges’ exclamation that “we are also South African.” Through the legitimization of the Red October campaign then, Hofmeyr and Bridges are validating white people’s existence, fears, and challenges in the new South Africa. What interests me is that instead of legitimizing whites by metaphorically uniting them with the rest of South Africa as South Africans, white people’s place in South Africa is legitimized here by giving them minority and victim status.



Despite their racist technique of “othering” to establish the white victim and consequently the legitimacy of the current position of white people in the socio-political context of South Africa, I think that it is important to pay attention to this yearning for “belonging” that seems to be a big part of the white and Afrikaner experience in the new South Africa. There is a stark difference between how white youth operate in post-Apartheid South Africa in comparison to older white people, especially Afrikaners. Younger generations identify more openly and comfortably with being South African rather than being English or Afrikaner, and they therefore have a deeper sense of belonging to and in the country. Older Afrikaners and white people are still struggling to come to terms with the drastic loss of power that they experienced in 1994, and their sense of belonging to a country where they don’t have political power anymore is much less confident. I anticipate that this campaign will perhaps be Afrikaners and whites’ final straw to try to remain significant, and in many ways more significant than their black counterparts, in the new South Africa. This campaign is important to understanding how the racial landscape has evolved in the country – whereas a few years ago whites had enough power to establish groups and campaigns that were based on racist ideologies, the Red October campaign is an example of how white people’s approach has had to adapt. They no longer have the power to distribute overtly racist ideas because it isn’t tolerated anymore (at least publicly), and therefore they have taken a new approach to obtain significance, by positing themselves as a threatened and oppressed minority.

Even though their power over the messages they disseminate has changed, Afrikaners are not powerless communicators. This above-mentioned positioning requires appropriation of the language used by minority groups and oppressed groups across the

world. Hofmeyr and Bridges structure their rhetorical devices in a way to consistently appropriate victim and oppressed imagery and language. Studying this speech therefore also brings into question language and power in the discursive construction of whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. The language used in both Bridges and Hofmeyr's speeches are aimed at establishing ethos, logos, and pathos with the audience, and as mentioned before, to create the white victim image. Considering the position of this group of white speakers in the historical, social, and economic contexts of the country, their linguistic choices are in fact an expression of the power that they still have in South Africa. In many ways this approach is similar to colonial ventures in the history of South Africa – white people in higher positions of power are taking power from economically oppressed groups by co-opting their language of struggle. The language choices in this speech are thus a re-enactment of oppression of minority groups. This strategy is effective because it appeals to a group of people who believe that they have lost all their power in the current South African context, but it doesn't reflect the reality of this context.

The racial demographics of South Africa are unique. With the largest white population of any other African country, the Red October campaign claiming minority status for whites is in itself unique. The adaptation from generally more politically violent and overtly discriminatory campaigns of an already powerful group to one that claims to be peaceful and to be fighting oppression, might have important implications for other racial, ethnic or cultural groups around the world. It will be interesting to observe how campaigns adapt to their socio-political environment in South Africa and across the world in dynamic and changing contexts.

This study contributes to our knowledge and understanding of whiteness and more specifically, on whiteness in the post-apartheid South African context. Considering how different intersections operate in relation to whiteness, this study provides insight into the important role that language plays in expressing power and establishing identity. This study also makes a contribution to research and knowledge on how communication strategies adapt to their political, cultural, and social contexts.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

#### *Limitations*

Using a rhetorical analysis as method has its limitations in the sense that you interpret how the speechmakers aim to construct appeal with the audience, but without interviewing them, you can't say for sure what their intention was. In the same way, without interviewing the audience, you can't know for certain what techniques appeal to them and how. A rhetorical analysis is an interpretation and you have to rely on your knowledge of the context and the speakers to do as significant an analysis as possible. A limitation of this study is thus not knowing whether the rhetorical strategies and devices used by Bridges and Hofmeyr were actually successful.

My sample, the video of Hofmeyr and Bridges at the Red October rally, is more useful to me than if the speech was written, because I am able to listen to intonation and to watch their body language. At the same time, however, this is a mediated version of the speech and could therefore limit my ability to analyze it in the same way as I could have if I attended the rally myself. On the same note, the speeches seem to me the best option to study the discursive construction of whiteness in the Red October campaign, but there could be more useful samples such as the Memorandum that they handed over to

the South African government or news articles written on the campaign. In this study I also look at just one speech that forms part of an entire campaign. This speech could be providing me with just one perspective of what the entire campaign stands for, and even more a limited representation of white people's beliefs as a whole. This speech in the context of this campaign is likely to attract people with a certain point of view and therefore allows me to look at only one aspect of how whiteness is discursively constructed.

#### *Future research*

As mentioned before, from a communication perspective it is important to continue research on how campaigns worldwide are adapting to their socio-political and economic contexts. Understanding how rhetoric is used in campaigns is useful in trying to determine the status of the context itself in which a certain campaign is launched. Exploring such rhetorical strategies without the limitations I mentioned above would most likely require a survey or interviews with the white and Afrikaner community of South Africa.

Furthermore, I have also expressed interest in white identity and the sense of belonging in the new South Africa. In the news articles that were written about the Red October campaign, I found it interesting that many different white identities were visible in the comments sections of these articles. On the one hand white people labeled "right-wing" commented in support of the campaign, and on the other hand white people labeled "liberal" commented against it. The spectrum in the middle of those two poles was also represented with commentary including a "color-blindness" approach and often a rainbow nation perspective. Originally my study was going to include a chapter on

these “in-betweeners” as I like to refer to them, but unfortunately the question would be too big and would require an entire study done independently of this one. It has been 13 years since Steyn (2001) wrote her book on the five different types of white identities in South Africa. With the death of Nelson Mandela, 20 years of democracy on the horizon, a variety of nation-branding efforts and the post-Apartheid generation’s coming of age, I think it will be valuable for future researchers to conduct a study to determine the current types of white identities that exist within South Africa. Determining and understanding how white people in South Africa currently identify themselves will provide researchers with a better idea of how aware these groups are of the current socio-political context of the country. In return, whether for purposes of addressing racism, or other target audience-related issues, it would simply provide campaign makers with a clearer sense of how to construct appeal with the white South African audience. With a more critical approach, I think that the use of language and its signification of power in the general South African and white South African context will always remain an important subject of research, because as the context of the country changes, so will its power dynamics and language-use.

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