

United in homophobia

Those who loved Eugene Terre'Blanche and those who hated him all believe he did not enjoy sex with men, writes Cheryl Potgieter

THERE is an advert linked to the World Cup that has various South African personalities talking about what makes us South African. The world is told that South Africans are friendly and love to dance and sing.

However, this week it was again confirmed that South Africans across race and class share one common characteristic: we are a nation of homophobes.

Put differently: we hate homosexuals. Stated bluntly, we do not believe that homosexuality exists and we are in denial.

At present those who loved Eugene Terre'Blanche, those who hated him, as well as most of those in the middle share one common belief: he did not enjoy sex with men and neither did the accused enjoy sex with men.

Those who believe the accused murdered Terre'Blanche because of strong anti-white sentiment being stirred up in the country, those who believe he was murdered because he was being racist towards his workers, and those in the middle also share a common belief: he did not enjoy sex with men.

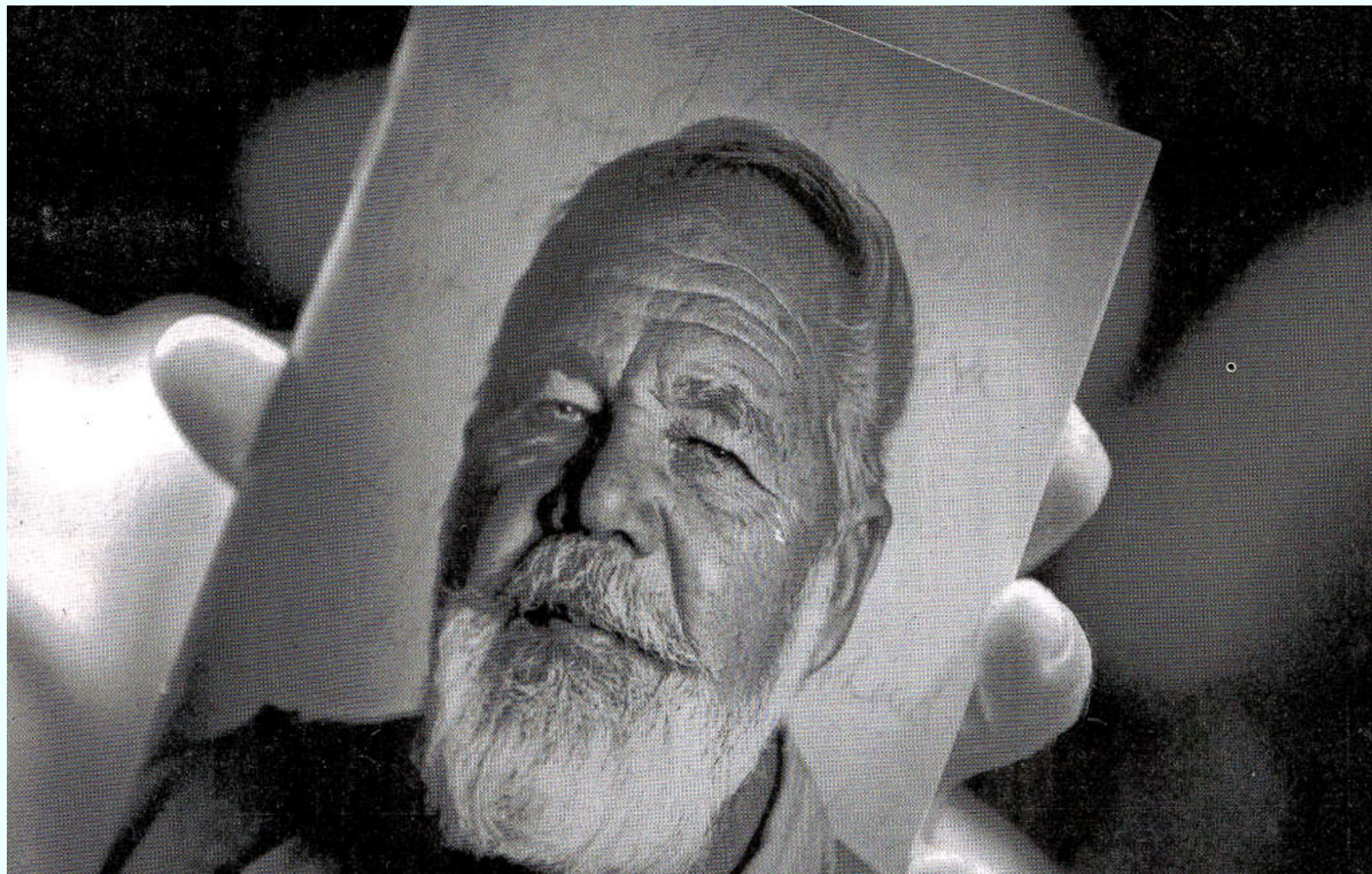
Sex, consensual or not, definitely did not take place between him and the accused.

Last week there was an outcry when the news broke that the defence for the two accused of murdering Terre'Blanche would argue that he and the accused had sex.

I have to say that I was not surprised by the allegation that sex had taken place. Neither was I surprised that black and white South Africans were outraged and that they immediately and vehemently discounted and denied that sex was even a remote possibility.

I was not surprised as I remembered that years ago there were allegations from within AWB ranks that their leader, Terre'Blanche, had sexual relationships with men.

My recollection was confirmed in reports by the journalist Mariechen Waldner. She had recounted how upset Terre'Blanche got when she interviewed him years ago and asked about an incident involving AWB men swimming naked in the



South Africa may not agree on Eugene Terre'Blanche's politics or the reason he died but they all agree that he and those accused of his murder did not have sex, says the writer.

then Transkei. Terre'Blanche called his brother and screamed: "Tell them I am not a moffie (gay)."

I was also not surprised when a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council indicated that 78 percent of South Africans across all race groups re-

sponded positively to the statement: "It is always wrong for two adults of the same sex to have sexual relations."

We do not even need the statistics to prove our nation's homophobic nature. The number of black lesbians raped and murdered

in what is called "corrective rape" is extremely high.

The response, or lack of response, of various individuals within the criminal justice system to the problem is extremely worrying. Not wanting to flog a particular horse (in this case not

Terre'Blanche's famous one), our arts and culture minister's homophobic response to black lesbian bodies at an art exhibition is also still fresh in my memory.

In addition, statements in the past week from both camps they deny that homosexuality could pos-

sibly have been a factor in Terre'Blanche's death. AWB secretary-general Andre Visage has been quoted as stating that it is impossible because Terre'Blanche "did not like moffies".

And to prove just "how heterosexual" Terre'Blanche was, Visage

mentioned Terre'Blanche's affair two decades ago with the journalist Jani Allan.

Clearly in Visage's world view – one shared by most South Africans – it is "human nature" to cheat on your wife. But to have sex with a man – irrespective of colour – is impossible, improbable, and unacceptable.

As a psychologist I know that often people who have sexual feelings for people of the same sex are extremely hostile to gays and lesbians. It is called internalised homophobia.

What has most outraged me, and what should outrage our nation, is the about-turn of the defence. Puna Moroko, the defence lawyer, has revealed that one of the accused had mentioned sodomy. But he clearly did not pursue the issue as he states that the consultation was very short. It did not satisfy or make sense to him and he therefore dropped it as a line of defence.

He goes on to state that he did not believe there was "sodomy" and Mahlangu, the accused, accepted his advice. He effectively silenced the accused. I believe that the accused, by mentioning sodomy, was being very brave and the risk he was taking was very high.

One of the immediate consequences would be losing the title of "real man" as well as the support of family, friends and the community.

Now my hypothesis is that Moroko was too uncomfortable to talk about sex between men. This argument would mean that his clients are no longer "real African men" and one can only imagine the outcry from the community.

The AWB feels the same about Terre'Blanche. If he had sex with men, and black men at that, then he is no longer a "real Afrikaner man".

So going into this trial South Africans are united in the belief that real men, both black and white, do not have sex with other men. So are we as a nation going to sing and dance to a new song? Shoot the homo-sexual: *dubul' istabane*.

● Cheryl Potgieter is dean of research (UKZN) and professor in psychology.