**Episode Two - El Dorado**

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

southern African people, land, British, diamond, labour, migration, local, Bantu speaking ethnic groups, European settlers, cattle, Africans, claim, diggers, wage, identities,

00:00

Welcome to episode two of El Dorado. The next 20 minutes contains strong material that you may find triggering. So be cautious. On that note, there will be colonial terms which I'll explain. So, we're on the same page, South Africa’s colonial past is a melody of coveting eyes from both the Dutch and the British. The Dutch settled in what was referred to as the Cape of Good Hope. Jan Van Riebeek was tasked with setting up a refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company in 1652 and with him came the company’s employees. Britain annexed the Cape of Good Hope in 1815, Natal in 1843 before waging wars against the Boers over territory they called the republic of Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The region where diamonds were discovered would fall in the hands of the British Crown. Upheaval would descend on Southern Africans as you will hear.

01:13

One Kota please.

In the previous episode we learnt about what sparked my inquiry into why the rainbow nation is suffering from afrophobia. To recap Afrophobia is fear of the Black other. We travelled back in time to nineteenth century Southern Africa. Just to note there wasn’t a South Africa until 1910 when Britain unified her annexed territories to form a state. It was made up of The Cape of Good Hope, Natal, the Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

If you recall, the Eureka diamond was found along the Vaal and Gariep river. Don’t forget the Orange river is a colonial name for the Gariep river. We learnt about tensions over land between the Korannas, Griquas, Boers and the British.

We fell upon a partnership between Southern Africa’s First Nation, The San and !Kora that disrupted colonial expansion but had a tragic ending. The discovery of diamonds only exacerbated the situation.

We then found ourselves in the present listening to Aunty Patience’s experiences in running her kitchen in Windsor. Today I’m eating lunch from my uncle's friend's food truck, you’ll hear from him soon but for now let’s go back in time.

02:53

Do not look where you feel. Look why you slipped.

European settlers justified colonial expansion and the dispossession of land from local ethnic groups on the basis of the vacant land myth. Vacant here refers to two notions.

One is in reference to geographical emptiness in the Western legal sense of land being ‘unused’. If you can recall from episode one there was constant friction among European settlers and locals. The Dutch and KhoiKhoi saw pasture differently, for the KhoiKhoi land was for the community not a commodity with monetary value.

Most of the Bantu and Khoikhoi communities used the land in rotation, often leaving large sections of land fallow while they cultivated another region or moved their herds to greener pastures.

Europeans failed to recognise that local ethnic groups had their own political systems and structures. The idea that Southern Africa was uninhabited meant that they were blindsided by internal struggles.

The second notion of ‘vacantness’ is the emptying of African people’s humanity with a set of negative stereotypes like ‘us and them’, ‘self and other.’

Note, Kaffir is a derogatory term that was used by colonists to describe amaXhosa, a Bantu ethnic group.

04:27

The Grahams time journal 1838

The Caffers were still troublesome. The official returns of the depredations committed by those people during the month of April, give a total loss of thirty-seven horses, and five hundred and twenty one cattle; out of which only six horses and one hundred and ninety-nine cattle had been recovered.

It is asked how long this state of things is to continue? And whether the inhabitants are to sit quietly while the Caffers cripple their resources, and render them an easy prey for their insatiable cupidity?

05:00

AmaXhosa were depicted as the usurpers of the whole territory between the Great Kei and Fish River. This was what used as justification for Britain to raid Xhosa territory in the Cape. Sir Harry Smith, a British general, claimed that if Xhosa were.

05:17

the possessors of this soil by right of conquest should be ejected by the same right.

05:24

Discoveries of cultural artefacts like the San rock paintings fuelled Europeans’ ideology that Bantu speaking people like amaXhosa were new to the region, but this wasn’t true.

Southern Africa was populated with different identities across the region including the First Nation before the arrival of the British and the Dutch.

The great migration of the Bantu speaking people is a mixture of both fiction and fact due to the speculation of their true origins and motivations for migrating. What stands the test of time is that Bantu speaking people migrated to Southern Africa not in one swift move but in different points in history.

Linguistics explanations suggest that the first and second wave of migration occurred between 3500 BCE and 2000 BC. The last wave was around 2,000 BCE to 1,000 BCE, approximately about 4,000 and 3,000 years ago.

How Bantu people migrated isn’t so clear. One line of thought is that migration took place from Central Africa to Southern Africa. The other claims a large group of Bantus came out of a region from Cameroon and Nigeria, heading eastward splitting into two groups, one to the south and another to the east.

Africans are a people in perpetual movement. Every historical move was a search for land and water that could support life and security to assure another chance of survival.

Competition for land and water was intensified by drought and environmental degradation. An episode of this type of migration that lives in the cultural memories of Southern Africans is Mfecane.

Mfecane is a Nguni word that means ‘crushing’ and is synonymous with war and hunger. The Sotho people refer to it as ‘difaqane’ which means ‘forced migration’ and ‘hammering.’ The period is also referred to as the ’Shakan Revolution’ to describe warfare and migration that accompanied the rise of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka.

In the late 1700's water became scarce in southern Africa and in 1800 a massive drought caused the mahlatule famine. It is believed Portuguese traders had brought maize to Africa, which replaced other forms of grain. Maize farming needed rainfall and when the drought arrived conflict over water, grain and cattle rose.

Powerful chiefdoms from the Nguni people emerged in response to the fierce competition for diminishing resources.

The Ndwandwe, led by Zwide, the Ngwane under Sobhuza and the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo changed the military, political and social systems of the southern African people completely.

These changes made a way for Shaka Zulu’s rise to power and his dream of a Zulu kingdom came to fruition, but at the cost of displacing other ethnic groups within the region and creating new identities. For example,

The Tsonga were traders who followed rivers inland, where they were bartered cloth and beads for ivory, copper, and salt. They lived on the coastal plain with a loose cluster of linguistically related people who had a few distinguishing customs. Their small groups could offer only limited resistance to the invading Nguni. The Ndwandwe general, Soshangane established a Kingdom called the Gaza, which was located in south-eastern Africa in the area of southern Mozambique and south-eastern Zimbabwe.

Tsonga areas which were not ruled by the Nguni were consistently raided for cattle and enslaved people. This constant rift prompted men within the community to seek wage employment.

All of this disruption and migration was occurring in the midst of colonial expansion creeping in. The process of subjugating local ethnic groups into wage labourers had begun particularly for those impacted by ecological change and conflicts over land like the Griquas in episode one.

The Tsonga and Shangaan from southern Mozambique stayed the longest as migrant workers on a single contract.

Motivations for wage employment would soon alter as European conquest loomed over Southern Africa like a dark cloud. Her precious minerals, metals and stone were not just attractive for settlement but for imperial domination.

Digging for diamonds in the Big Hole began in 1871. Local ethnic groups, Boer families, British treasure seekers, gold diggers from Australians and the United States descended into Griqualand West, Nicholas Waterboer’s land that was annexed under British rule.

Migration to the diamond fields was for one purpose, the acquisitions of guns. The only weapon with which local Africans could hope to protect themselves, their land, and cattle against colonialism.

Men arrived to the diamond fields barefooted in an emaciated state; weary, grimy, hungry, trailing along sometimes with bleeding feet, hanging heads, and bodies staggering with faintness to earn £6 for a gun.

Though they were unfit for hard labour they were forced to work twelve hours a day and more. They would work from 4 - 12 months depending on the type of gun they wished to purchase. They slept on the earth without shelter or in brushwood huts and suffered greatly from the cold. They lived on mealie-meal, with an occasional chunk of refuse meat.

There were no laws to regulate wages and working conditions or impose safety measures against accident or disease.

White diggers had the tendency to terrorise Black miners chasing them around to aimlessly punch their heads when they got caught. Derogatory terms such as ‘boy’ were thrown around the compound. Australian settlers thought no more of shooting a native than a bird.

European diggers soon realised they would be able to recruit adequate supplies of Black labour if they were able to sell guns to migrant workers.

The Tswana sent men to earn so they could buy guns and ammunition, Sotho chiefs sent young men instead. The Zulu were still in full possession of their land when the diamond fields were opened, so Cetshwayo forbade Zulus who lived under his tutelage from becoming migrant workers whilst allowing other identities to go and work.

The Pondo acquired arms through the sale of cattle, whilst the Venda traded ivory for their ammunition. Unlike other identities, the Venda acted as mercenaries and taught other ethnic groups such as the Shona, how to repair rifles and manufacture gunpowder from local materials.

Quite often miners fell victim to dodgy dealings, many of the weapons sold to them were both old and defective without ammunition or with inadequate supplies.

The Tswana once fought the British against the annexation of their southern territory with home-made bullets made from corrugated iron stripped off the roofs of the houses of European settlers.

When the British attempted to disarm the Sotho in 1880, 4000 miners left their jobs in Kimberley to fight for their chiefdoms.

While the miners laboured away in pursuit of safety and security the diamonds, they dug up were an estimated value of one and a half million. Initially some of the claim owners were African but European diggers fought to exert control over production and formulated rules which excluded the local ethnic groups from owning claims. By the end of the 1870s most of their claims were bought out on the basis of yet another myth.

Coloured claimholders were said to be more successful than Europeans because they received stones stolen by relatives and friends. AmaXhosa claimholders were morphed into thieves for assimilating. Charles Alfred Payton, a British adventurer wrote this his personal account of diamond digging.

14:44

The raw, untutored, unclad Kafirs, fresh from their “kraals ” up the mountains, are by far the best and most trustworthy workmen. The contact of civilisation seems to be almost invariably pernicious and demoralising to the peculiar organisation of our Kafir friends. Above all things, mistrust a Kafir who speaks English and wears trousers.

15:05

A Diamond Diggers' Protection Society was formed in 1870, issuing a set of regulations that stipulated, ‘no licence to dig should be granted to a Native’.

This held no legal validity after Britain annexed Griqua’s land from Nicolaas Waterboer until violent riots from European diggers forced the hands of the British to suspend digging licenses held by Africans.

Gwayi Tyamzashe in 1883 was the last African to hold a claim thereafter the role of Africans was purely wage labour.

These new regulations would be the model for the pass laws. The suspension was centred on the registration of labour contracts. Every labourer was to produce an endorsed certificate on demand and to leave the diamond fields lawfully, they had to take out a pass. Anyone without a pass ran the risk of arrest, a £5 fine, and three months hard labour or twenty-five lashes.

This ’us and them’ mentality swept across Southern Africa killing every prospect of economic independence and land ownership from African people along with their humanity. The subjugation of Black bodies through labour introduced a new value system. A double consciousness, that meant looking at oneself through the eyes of others, measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in.

So, if I am seen as a commodity, treated as a commodity, the people who look like me are treated as commodities, how will I see myself?

If you can recall from episode one, Frankz Fanon referred to the colonies as a market.

Racial capitalism designed a crabs in a barrel like system and I believe the rising afrophobia attacks in South Africa is a by-product of that.

My uncles took lead in this next interview. One his friends is a law student who owns a food truck in Windsor. He is a political refugee, for this reason his voice will be distorted to mask his identity.

He had written a paper on the experiences of being an unemployed graduate that caught my uncle’s attention.

17:34

The tears of unemployed graduate.

No, I had not even given it a title but that was what I was writing about. Ukuthi, just struggling to compliance. I think my partner would remind me of this cause she took interest in that. But no, I was just I was just venting out my frustrations on paper nje. What I was going to I've made an intrapreneur out of myself having had all those expectations ukuthi with this degree I’m going to do something nge zami zandla. I had to remake myself, have no expectations whatsoever, I’m living life I’ve got to hustle.

18:24

Just like the rest of us ndoda would you have thought of seeking a livelihood in a foreign land?

18:30

The tricky part is graduate or not a graduate no one can bring ama expectations awefamily or awakhe, you will get so frustrated and sink into substance abuse from alcohol to drugs and crime. No one is born a criminal, those people who do crime they are just chancers who’ve got frustrations ukuthi I deserve this, I deserve a job I am a graduate. I deserve this. I work hard they deserve to be at least employed by potential employers they don’t know that they don’t care. When you say life is not fair, that’s the point.

19:20

He later felt that a sit-down interview would be better for us and for you to understand his journey. We all sat down around a table in my studio in Ferndale, Randburg, quietly anticipating his story.

19:36

You know, I penned something when I was very emotional. I can't remember what title I gave it but it had to do with the struggle of a Black entrepreneur who’s a foreigner here in South Africa. Basically, what I was going through I found by business being on the on the wrong side of the law is specially with a compliance issue that he's got that have got to do with being permitted to trade at a certain place. Those laws are for the local Metro for the local city. City by laws, and yeah, I had to deal with that. I had to deal with fines, I had to deal with bribes.

Yeah, yeah during the time, really, I felt the hand of the law like squeezing out all the entrepreneurship spirit out of me or everyone because the vendors, street vendors well those that cannot be licenced by law at our locality. Where the stuff taken away without any impound slip, I have it impound slips myself of the mobile kitchen and all the contents and I would have paid fines. It has really gave me a huge setback. It is has had a very deep impact painful impact in my personal life or my aspirations and family. It has been bad.

Now what I realised was that there was a hand behind the authorities when I tried and figured out the political climate of the area that I'd actually ignored. We usually you'd see that all you need is capital, all you need is client base all you need is market research. I've done that market research. I looked for capital around friends and family and they got it I avoided taking a loan with an interest. And I thought I'd been successful yet, the only way to for others that can influence law authorities is to really muscle out muscle somebody out of the business like in any way possible. And tell you that you can't be licenced, and they will influence that. You get a law enforcer telling you that here you will not be licenced then you go to the authorities, and they say no. We do not know that there is a place where somebody cannot be licenced, just go, and pay your fines. Present your receipts in court come back and re-apply that which I did, at some point in time might I had to be a security guard for some months.

For a while, when I left trying to save everything, I used the money that was for my room’s rent, I paid the impound fees for the mobile kitchen, got it out of impoundment, I slept in an abandoned car that was in my complex ways where I used to say. Then I talked to the caretaker who had some space to take my stuff into his place I packed everything in the kitchen including my personal belongings. So, like I would get a shower in his place in like two- or three-days intervals and look for peace jobs dig up here the assist plumbers and painters up until one of my friends invited me to stay with his family Hilbrow. That's when I got the job of being a security guard in muscle town. I was a security guard at some residential area. Yeah, that's how I could buy some little handouts of food and some pocket money people smuggling in if visitors don't have IDs. That will earn me some 20 rand that would be for bread.

We had coffee there and sugar was available, and bread was our meal, it was so precious during that time. I got by.

My girlfriend used to work at McDonald's. I skipped to mention that she's a qualified internal auditor but as well she has been forced to entrepreneurship because she owes the institution to at TUT, Tswana University of Technology she owns a quite a lot. I owe 4.2 she owes like almost 40,000 that she should pay up before she can go for her honours. So, she can get a certificate so right. But that not being the point the point is that we had to put up all what we could have and pay those fines that amounted to 15,000 all those we paid then that's how we got to business. Like resilience, like telling yourself that going back home is not an option. I cannot go empty handed things are even tougher back home. I have to fight whilst I am here and make an honest living. At some point in time I to tell some copes this little business that I started I've used the more than 50,000 to invest in, I have not invested in guns or anything that people that any machinery that could be used to commit crimes I could have invested in a very fast illegal cars and go around stealing and I have not done that I just want to sell food and make a living.

26:41

In today’s society where materialism and affluence is synonymous with people’s worth and value, trying to make ends meet for migrants is not just for survival, it’s for the people banking on their success. It is to prove to themselves that you can make it despite all the odds and going back home is not an option. As you heard from my uncle’s friend, it took a toll on him not being able to feed himself, have shelter, bathe, I mean these are basic human rights. He was forced into entrepreneurship to survive and yet his lifeline was being suffocated by afrophobia.

Fortunate enough he didn’t give into the trap of committing a crime to live, that is not everyone’s story. Dignity is not just denied to migrants and refugees but local South Africans.

Join me, next time to learn about the Gold Rush and its equally devastating legacies. We will travel to one of South Africa’s most profitable mines in the heart of the Maandagshoek to hear oral histories from the community.

Spokes- person for the Maandagshoek Development Committee, Emmanuel Mokgoga, believes that "the mines are creating poverty for our people, …the government is quiet, they don't say anything."

Until next time, thank you for listening.

El Dorado is a family and communal production, this podcast series would not have been possible without the help of my uncles and cousin. Thank you to all the locals that shared their stories with us.