

## Case 4.

Onewang Rebecca Kasienyane, South African National Assembly Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Labour, announced last year that Parliament would soon consider a proposal to limit affirmative action to those born before 2 February 1990 – the day bans on the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC) and other liberation organizations were lifted. The announcement by Ms. Kasienyane, an ANC Member of Parliament from North West Province, followed public hearings by her Committee on Youth Unemployment. In committee meetings, affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies came under fire from some youth organizations that complained about their perceived unfairness.

The request to ban affirmative action for “born frees” (i.e., South Africans born after 2 February 1990) came from the University of Pretoria’s Tuks Afrikaanse Studente (TAS), an Afrikaner youth organization. The membership argued that most young white people born after that date knew nothing about the apartheid dispensation and, as such, should not be penalized when trying to find work. At the public hearing, Cornelius Jansen van Rensburg of TAS went further. He presented statistics showing that the number of matriculating black students had grown by 100 percent under affirmative action, while the number of white students had decreased by 20 percent. Jansen van Rensburg asserted that, whether the difference can be ascribed to large-scale emigration or the government quota system for specialized courses, white students were being disadvantaged twice: in university admissions, and in the job market. “We had nothing to do with the previous regime, and now we are the ones bearing the brunt of a policy that is in fact not serving the academic aim, but is used to oppress us,” said Jansen van Rensburg.

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) later came out most strongly against the proposal of dispensation for born frees. “The country should deal with the enormous inequalities created under apartheid for the past three centuries, rather than worrying about who gets the meat and how the affirmative action is poison for others,” said the union. “A black child born in 2006 in a squatter camp still does not enjoy the same privileges and opportunities as white children.”

Reacting to The Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA), which welcomed the proposal, NUMSA stated, “We will vigorously frustrate attempts by the Federation and opposition parties in Parliament to limit affirmative action. Affirmative action was put on the agenda for social and economic change and it was all about scrapping and burying apartheid.”

FUDUSA spokesperson Kim Mapley said the federation had always believed that affirmative action should be implemented for a defined period only and that those who grew up with equal opportunities should be excluded from the process.