

TRIBUTES
ON THE PASSING OF
JOHN STUART KANE-BERMAN



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A: SA INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS¹

John Kane-Berman (1946-2022) – an outstanding South African

SAIRR website, 28 July 2022

<https://irr.org.za/media/john-kane-berman-1946-2022-2013-an-outstanding-south-africa>

With great sadness, the Institute of Race Relations announces the death after a short illness of John Kane-Berman, former CEO of the Institute, and a long-standing pillar of South African liberalism. He was 76.

Kane-Berman was born in Johannesburg in 1946. He was educated at St John's College, the University of the Witwatersrand and at Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

In a remarkable career beginning in journalism in the 1960s, he chronicled the harsh realities of South African society.

An incisive analyst, gifted writer and skilled manager, he became the Institute's CEO in 1983, remaining in that position until 2014. Where many peer organisations failed to survive the transition to democracy, he steered the Institute to a renewed relevance.

His work was always informed by an unshakeable commitment to freedom. This was the golden thread that ran through his work both before 1994 and after. He presciently identified threats to the country's democracy when this was unfashionable, and much of what he warned about has now become common cause.

His death robs South Africa's intellectual life of one of its most insightful, courageous and respected participants. He will in particular be greatly missed by his colleagues and former colleagues at the Institute.

IRR CEO John Endres said Kane-Berman left a "profound legacy", having been "a fearless proponent of liberalism before, during and after South Africa's democratic transition".

Endres added that Kane-Berman's "brave and unstinting commitment to the liberal cause inspired legions of South African liberals, myself included".

John Kane-Berman is survived by his partner Pierre Roestorf, and by his extended family.

¹ This section records institutional SAIRR communications. Much of the other content in this collation is also published by and/or through the Institute.

In Memoriam: John Kane-Berman 1946-2022

PoliticsWeb², 27 July 2022

<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/in-memoriam-john-kaneberman-19462022>

John Kane-Berman, who was born on the eve of apartheid and devoted his life to vigorously opposing the race nationalism of apartheid's ideologues and, at their defeat, the illiberal impulses of their successors, has died aged 76.

His conviction in the power of ideas was central to his long association with the South African Institute of Race Relations. It remains a profound and lasting influence on the liberal cause, and the continuing efforts to achieve a fairer, prospering South Africa.

Said John Endres, CEO of the South African Institute of Race Relations: "John Kane-Berman leaves a profound legacy. As CEO of the Institute from 1983 until 2014, he was a fearless proponent of liberalism before, during and after South Africa's democratic transition. He sharpened the SAIRR's focus, put it on a sound financial footing and set it on the path that turned it into the potent force that it is today.

"His brave and unstinting commitment to the liberal cause inspired legions of South African liberals, myself included. John Kane-Berman was known for his eloquent presentation, exceptional memory, thorough command of his subject matter and exemplary discipline. He was demanding, setting the highest standards for himself and others, because he realised the importance of the project he was engaged in: to insist that nothing less than true non-racialism and personal freedom would allow the dignity and prosperity of all South Africans to flourish."

Kane-Berman, the eldest of five brothers, was born in Johannesburg in 1946.

He was schooled at St John's College in Houghton, and went on to study at the University of the Witwatersrand and, as a Rhodes Scholar, the University of Oxford. He grew up in what he described as a "happy, comfortable, and politically conscious family". His father, Louis, had become a household name in South Africa as chairman of the Torch Commando, Second World War veterans who rallied to the cause when the Nationalists sought in the early 1950s to disenfranchise coloured South Africans in the Cape.

National Party leader and prime minister of the first apartheid administration, D F Malan, characterised the Torch Commando as "a most dangerous organisation"; Alan Paton fittingly described it as "the only white organisation the National Party ever feared".

Kane-Berman would reflect almost 50 years later "that the Torchmen's practical assertion of the right to free speech" had impressed him enormously, and was proof that, borrowing from Tennyson's Ulysses, "freedom of speech, sword-like, longs to shine in use [and] not be left to rust".

His life, Kane-Berman himself said, was really about opposition to the abuse of power and how its misuse hurt the most defenceless people. A clear memory was coming down to breakfast at the age of 14 to read about the Sharpeville Massacre in the *Rand Daily Mail*, and of how as a consequence of Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg Ambrose Reeves' efforts to challenge the official account of the

² First published on the SAIRR website and on the Institute's *Daily Friend* site.

shooting, his parents then took in the Bishop's son, Nicholas, his classmate, after the Reeves family had received death threats, making it untenable for the boy to remain at home.

Kane-Berman recalled that while there were not many liberals at St John's among the boys, this was "not true of the staff and least of all the headmaster Deane Yates" who gave him some of his earliest experience of formal political resistance in making him chairman of the St John's African Education Fund.

St John's proved influential in Kane-Berman's political education. As a schoolboy he went to listen to Beyers Naude, who had just formed the Christian Institute to oppose apartheid. The young Kane-Berman successfully challenged the college chaplains to reword a prayer which called for "the right solution to all the problems presented by the native and coloured peoples" to "the right solutions to all our racial problems" after telling the chaplains that those problems arose not from "native and coloured peoples" but rather from the attitudes of whites.

St John's also gave Kane-Berman his first experience of journalism, when he was appointed editor of *The Johannian*. In the aftermath of Harold Macmillan's 1960 visit to South Africa and his famous "Wind of Change" speech, Kane-Berman and his fellow editor Michael Arnold (who would go on to become the school chaplain) published Arnold's poem on the "Wind of Change" theme in the school magazine, which read, in part:

"This gentle breeze doth purge the desert air / Embalming flowers with a fragrance fair / A fragrance such as rank hyenas know / A rancid stench a polecat would forego", the latter line being a reference to *Die Burger* editor Piet Cillié's description of South Africa after Sharpeville as the "polecat of the world".

Later, while in the sixth form, he started a school newsletter titled *Sixth Sense* which, he recalled, "naturally specialised in publishing provocative and controversial stuff".

Encouraged by Deane Yates, and his parents, to write more of this type of thing, he was particularly pleased with his parody of Mark Anthony's rabble-rousing speech in *Julius Caesar*, which – published in the *Rand Daily Mail*, from which it went on to be quoted by Alan Paton – read as follows:

*Friends, citizens, countrymen, lend me your ears
I come to bury Freedom, not to praise her ...
The noble Vorster
Hath told you Freedom was a Communist
If it were so, it was a grievous fault
And grievously hath Freedom answered it
And Vorster is an honourable man ...*

His education continued at Wits, where in his first year he was prevailed upon by fellow Johannian Alan Murray to stand for the Students' Representative Council (SRC). This he did successfully, later becoming its President, in the course of which he met the young University of Natal lecturer, Lawrence Schlemmer, who would go on to become President of the South African Institute of Race Relations, and also Charles Simkins, who would go on to become the chairman of its board.

At Wits, Kane-Berman led campaigns against social segregation and government interference in higher education, earning him the wrath of several ministers. He himself was accused of being a "totalitarian liberal", while the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) – to which Wits

and several other campuses were affiliated – stood accused of being a front for “foreign ideologies [with the risk] of being manipulated by pro-communist elements”.

Despite Kane-Berman’s efforts, social segregation was used as a tool to undermine NUSAS, and when in 1967 Rhodes University refused to allow delegates to a NUSAS conference to eat together, he supported Steve Biko’s decision to break from NUSAS and launch the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) – on which Kane-Berman reflected decades later that the ensuing rise of Black Consciousness had been “a healthy and necessary development”.

The 1968 campaign he helped lead against the decision by the University of Cape Town to rescind the appointment of UCT graduate Archie Mafeje to a lectureship at that university was particularly influential.

Kane-Berman recalls his pledge to stand with UCT students in protest being met with “thunderous applause” by a packed Great Hall. That campaign led to tense student protests on Jan Smuts Avenue that attracted responses ranging from offers of support from the Hells Angels to denunciations and threats from the police minister, S L Muller, and Prime Minister John Vorster. Those confrontations culminated in a meeting with Vorster at the Union Buildings, an encounter Kane-Berman (who was accompanied by two colleagues) described as “less than gracious”, during which Vorster “exploded”, telling him that what he was doing “would not be tolerated”. The government feared the kind of student protests that had erupted earlier that year in Paris.

When, amidst the ongoing protests, he received a letter telling him that “so long as there is opposition to racialism and the clampdown on human freedom and expression, the government has not won”, he was very touched. The author was Raymond Tucker, who would later go on to become honorary legal advisor at the South African Institute of Race Relations.

Whereas Kane-Berman had successfully seen off attempts from the left and the right to capture NUSAS, it eventually fell to the left following his graduation. The *Sunday Times* described NUSAS “as one of the most enlightened and courageous bodies we have ever had in South Africa...a voice crying out against injustice and inhumanity”, while Kane-Berman, five decades later, described its collapse as the loss of a “liberal kindergarten” from which “South Africa has not recovered”.

From Wits it was off to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He found his Oxford years to be much slower in contrast to the fast-paced drama of Wits student politics, and the local issues were mundane by comparison, but he revelled in strolling the college lawns and river banks with friends from St John’s and Wits. He read extensively, recalling how he had been particularly influenced by William Sheridan Allen’s *Nazi Seizure of Power*, given the parallel with South Africa in how people could become conditioned over time to accept what they might not immediately have been prepared to accept. Kane-Berman later wrote that “white South Africans had been corrupted by such conditioning”.

On his return to South Africa, many of the books in his luggage were seized by customs officials – although he had been careful to send already banned publications by sea, and these arrived safely.

Shortly after that return he met Pierre Roestorf with whom, forty-one years later, he entered into a civil union performed by Constitutional Court judge Justice Edwin Cameron, who’d been in the army with Pierre.

With Oxford behind him and being exposed once again to the South African reality, Kane-Berman felt that four things should be done by whites to counter government conditioning: defend the rule

of law even in the face of bannings and detentions; assist black trade unions; pump the idea of majority rule into the public domain; and build contacts and friendships across the colour line.

While still abroad, he had had a visit from prominent journalist Benjamin Pogrud, who'd suggested he join the *Rand Daily Mail*. But his friend and fellow Old Johannian Clive Nettleton, who was assistant director of the South African Institute of Race Relations, persuaded him to join its research department instead. A report he wrote at that time led to a meeting with Graham Hatton, then assistant editor of the *Financial Mail*, who offered Kane-Berman a job that he later accepted; he ended up taking over the labour beat from Bob Nugent (later Judge Nugent), who was leaving to do his LLB.

Working under the tutelage of editor George Palmer and with the protection of the reputation of the *Financial Mail*, Kane-Berman was able use his position as a weapon, and to say things that might otherwise have been banned (his passport had already been confiscated, and though later returned, was valid for only one year at a time – following, Helen Suzman told him, approval by the security police). When in 1974, for example, Foreign Minister Pik Botha told the United Nations that “my government does not condone racial discrimination”, Kane-Berman sent a photographer to take pictures of the choicest apartheid signs to use on the cover and wrote in an accompanying piece that “(discrimination) is at the very heart of our society ... it governs every facet of our lives”. He knew that even John Vorster read the *Financial Mail* and understood the impact his exposés would have in shutting down the government’s space to whitewash apartheid.

It was while at the *Financial Mail* that he wrote his famous book on the Soweto uprising of 1976, “Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction”.

From the *Financial Mail*, Kane-Berman moved to freelance journalism before, in 1983, being prevailed upon by Jill and Ernie Wentzel to become CEO of the South African Institute of Race Relations.

Once there, he faced three formidable challenges. The first was that the Institute was essentially bankrupt and he needed to rebuild its finances against incredible odds. This he did with spectacular success, to the point that at his retirement it boasted a war chest of over R40 million.

The second was pressure from among his staff and structures to move further to the left, a risk he deftly disabled in a battle best set out by Jill Wentzel in her book “The Liberal Slideaway”, thus succeeding in reinforcing the Institute’s reputation as a liberal institution.

The third was pressure to join in the blanket endorsements of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the African National Congress (ANC), which the bulk of civil society and the global anti-apartheid movement were doing. But Kane-Berman knew that this would be a mistake, as lurking within those institutions were ideas sufficiently antithetical to freedom that South Africa risked trading one form of corrupt authoritarianism for another.

“This was a remarkable piece of foresight,” noted Kane-Berman’s long-time colleague, and successor as CEO of the Institute, Dr Frans Cronje, “that took almost 30 years to be vindicated, but for which John paid a heavy personal price.”

Instead of outsourcing the Institute’s moral and intellectual faculties to the UDF, Kane-Berman chose to keep these within the Institute and use the organisation to plant ideas that at the right moment could become the underpinning of a more just and free South African order. In doing so, he became a remarkably brilliant practitioner of battle-of-ideas theory, which holds that the winner of any great

political or ideological contest is ultimately the side that injects the greatest volume of compelling argument into the public domain.

To this end, it was while at the Institute that Kane-Berman delivered the balance of his 700 public speeches and wrote innumerable reports, hundreds of thousands of words in newspapers, and three of his four books, with “(South Africa’s) Silent Revolution”, published in 1989, being arguably the most influential for detailing how the resistance of ordinary people had become the most important and influential factor in defeating the apartheid system.

That work continued after 1994. By the time he retired as CEO in 2014, the Institute was securing scores of daily citations, making it the single most influential source of liberal ideas in the South African public domain.

Should a reformist government come to power in South Africa at any point in the next decade and succeed, it will do so largely because its policies reflect the ideas Kane-Berman made sure the Institute continued to press for even after liberation in 1994.

As a courageous and challenging public intellectual, John Kane-Berman straddled the old and new eras of modern South Africa with an unerring willingness to expose both to the same keen analysis. The vigour and conviction he brought to making the case for a better 21st South Africa welled from his acute knowledge of and intimacy with the grim country it had been.

Kane-Berman had an enormous influence on South Africa’s political evolution. It was at his behest that Robert Kennedy visited South Africa in 1966, placing a glaring spotlight on the country as he, the brother of the most famous man in the world, stood with the anti-apartheid cause.

His leadership within NUSAS in its confrontation with the government set the precedent for student politics of the next 30 years, and helped define its role in defeating apartheid.

As chairman of the youth branch of Helen Suzman’s Houghton constituency, Kane-Berman worked on the 1966 campaign (sleeping at times with a baseball bat in the campaign office) that underpinned her political rise and thereby that of the Progressive Party, as well as all that followed, including – as one of the most important consequences – South Africa’s present official opposition.

His relationships in Washington, especially with former Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker, had a disproportionate influence in shaping American policy towards southern Africa over the latter two decades of apartheid. It was Kane-Berman who suggested the questions that Margaret Thatcher used to hammer PW Botha at Chequers in 1984.

While at the *Financial Mail* and then at the South African Institute of Race Relations, Kane-Berman made sure that there was nowhere for the apartheid government to hide from the facts about the consequences of its policies. Later, his intellectual influence through the Institute was a large part of the reason why in the 1990s two nationalist political organisations settled on a broadly liberal Constitution for South Africa.

Kane-Berman delighted in how the powerless had turned the tables on the powerful and he was very glad to know that he had helped to create circumstances to aid them in doing so in South Africa.

His weapon, which lives on in the organisation he was so influential in shaping, was ideas. He understood that these mattered above all else and that unless you paid attention to them you could not understand, let alone counter, the absurdities that politicians got up to.

Kane-Berman's own unfussy phrase, "I myself never had any weapons, other than words" in his 2017 memoir, "Between Two Fires – Holding the liberal centre in South African politics", is a fitting epitaph for one of late 20th century South Africa's most notable warriors in the battle of ideas, a liberal thinker who was fearless and unhesitating in devoting his very considerable armoury of words to a lifetime's campaign for justice and truth.

B: INDIVIDUALS

JKB Condolence Page³

Daily Friend, 29 July 2022 (ongoing updates)

<https://dailyfriend.co.za/2022/07/29/john-kane-berman-remembered/>

Tributes from across the spectrum illuminate the high regard that former IRR chief executive John Kane-Berman earned in a lifetime devoted to fearlessly championing freedom and fairness.

Kane-Berman, who died after a short illness on Wednesday, is remembered as an incisive analyst, gifted writer and skilled manager, especially during his tenure as IRR CEO between 1983 and 2014.

The following is a selection of edited tributes shared with the IRR, as well as excerpts from tributes published elsewhere on the Daily Friend:

Beverley Johnson:

The Rhodes Scholarship community was deeply saddened to hear about John's passing on 27 July 2022, after a short illness. John will be remembered as a remarkable Rhodes Scholar, brilliant and determined, courageous and devoted to the greater good. His principled leadership of the SAIRR through the difficult years of apartheid, highlighted his resolve and resilience, and his deeply held beliefs in social justice.

All at the Rhodes Trust mourn John's passing. The Rhodes Scholars in Southern Africa have placed an obituary on their website: Alumni Southern Africa (ox.ac.uk); and the Rhodes Trust in Oxford have been informed of John's death. John will be remembered on the Trust's website too.

Ndumiso Luthuli:

We at the Rhodes Trust and National Secretariat were saddened to hear the news of John Kane-Berman's passing on 27 July 2022.

John lived a full and extraordinary life. He has been lauded as a gifted academic and political researcher; a courageous and ethical leader, who led the South African Institute of Race Relations with distinction and resilience through the turbulent years of apartheid. With a quiet determination, John contributed significantly to the fight to end apartheid and create a more just society for all in our beloved country. We give thanks for his selfless service and a life well lived.

³ Tributes carried elsewhere in this collation, and of which extracts appear on the SAIRR's *Daily Friend* "JKB Condolence Page" are not repeated here.

Patricia Suzman:

What sad news and a loss to all of us. John's contribution to SA was unique and his articles hugely informative.

Helen was always grateful for his help in galvanizing the Young Progs in the 1960s.

Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi:

I am devastated by the passing of Mr John Kane-Berman. He was one of my truest friends, the likes of which I am never likely to see again. Despite my age and the difficulties, I now find in travelling, I knew that I had to be present to bid farewell. Without this moment of closure, the loss of such a dear friend would have been impossible to bear.

I stand therefore with sorrow in my heart as I express my sympathies to John's family, to Mr Pierre Roestorf, and to the many colleagues and friends who are grieving this untimely loss. It is comforting to see the number of mourners who have come to honour this intellectual giant; this gifted writer; this man of immovable principle; this liberal par excellence.

It has been said many times that John was a liberal. But what is a liberal? In 1953, another of my great friends, Mr Alan Paton, defined a liberal in these words:

A generosity of spirit,
A tolerance of others,
An attempt to comprehend otherness,
A commitment to the rule of law,
A high ideal of the worth and dignity of man,
A repugnance for authoritarianism, and
A love of freedom.

That will forever be the portrait of John Kane-Berman.

John and I travelled a long journey together. We met in February 1975, when he visited Nongoma to interview me for the *Financial Mail* following a mass rally I had addressed in Soweto. I had been reporting on my discussions with Prime Minister John Vorster, and I remember telling this young journalist that I was terribly depressed by my conversation with the Prime Minister. Mr Kane-Berman listened intently and made copious notes. I was impressed by his insightful questions.

But I was even more impressed when his article came out, because it was the first of many articles which told the naked truth about me and about my role in the liberation struggle. He came to know me before the rift appeared between me and the ANC's mission-in-exile. And when the floodgates of propaganda were opened against me a few years later, John refused to be swayed.

He was a respected journalist, and despite all the pressure on the media to attack and vilify me, he stood by me through and through, becoming the voice of truth in the mayhem.

When he became CEO of the Institute of Race Relations, he took the Institute to levels of authority that few could match. It is a great tribute to his skill and his character that the Institute not only remained through the transition and into democracy, but that it became ever more respected and authoritative under his continued leadership.

I always admired John for his courage. He was, of course, an avid writer and one could quote from a myriad of works he penned. But one that impressed me deeply was his booklet of 1991 titled “Mau-Mauing the Media: A new censorship for a new South Africa”.

He was courageous enough to expose the beginnings of brown envelope journalism and to decry its impact on journalistic integrity and the primacy of truth.

It was surprising to me to see someone of his calibre stand by me through all those years of vilification. The temptation to plunge the communal knife into my back was so strong that even those whom I considered close to me fell victim to the temptation. I cannot help but think of Mr Walter Felgate, whom I met at the same time as I met John Kane-Berman.

Mr Felgate abandoned me, like so many close associates. Yet John remained. He was not swayed by their averments, nor did he question my innocence when I was labelled a sell-out or some kind of supporter of apartheid and racism. In the mire in which I found myself, I never had a more faithful friend.

Indeed, I consider him among the likes of Alan Paton and Helen Suzman, who similarly were faithful friends.

Thus, his death has hit me hard. This is no mere passing of a long-term acquaintance. This is the devastating close of a chapter that I thought would remain open until my own journey’s end.

For whatever remains of my own life, I know that I will never meet the likes of John Kane-Berman again. And until my final breath I will thank God for bringing such a wonderful child of God into my life. He truly blessed me.

Our country is poorer now, for having lost John. But the intellectual capital he created will continue to enrich us as his words are read and his ideas shared. He will remain a role model of what liberalism is all about.

He will teach us and inspire us and prompt us to question our assumptions long into the future.

But he himself will not be present, and that breaks my heart. I will miss him dearly. My one consolation is that our separation will surely not be long. Until we meet again, I pray that he rests in peace.

May the Lord comfort us all with His grace, settling in our hearts His peace that passes all understanding.

All I have left to say is, thank you, my dear and faithful friend.

Ed Stewart (former office-bearer at the International Republican Institute, Washington DC):

My greatest condolences to everyone at IRR who mourn John’s passing. I knew him for almost thirty years. He was absolutely steadfast in his commitment to individual liberty and democratic rule. He was one of the most forcefully eloquent and intellectual people I ever knew. He will be missed by all of us who love South Africa.

Brian Doctor QC:

A very great man has gone, and so young.

I've known him since he made a speech at Wits when I was a first-year student, and I was struck then by his implacable commitment to principle and decency. This is such a loss for Pierre, and for all of us. He was always fantastically good company and a wonderful friend. I shall miss him terribly.

Even though we have had little contact in the past year (since a Covid Zoom session) I'd always just assumed he would always be there, a rock of sanity and straightforward thinking, in a South Africa that has gone mad on more than one occasion.

Johannes van der Horst:

Thanks for your excellent piece about John, which captured the constant courage, richness and productivity of his life. I once had the pleasure of sharing lunch with him, and always devoured his articles. It's a great heritage that you are taking forward at the IRR, and as usual the stakes are high.

Peter Robinson:

It was a privilege to have followed John's analyses and arguments since he became CEO of the IRR many years ago. I was honoured to get to know him personally during my time on the IRR Council. We shared some travel experiences, including a reference for a personal tour guide in St Petersburg.

He will be remembered as one of South Africa's intellectual greats.

Barry D. Wood:

John Kane-Berman changed the course of my life. For that I am eternally grateful.

In need of work after two frustrating months in an alien land, in November 1974 a friend suggested I speak to John about joining the *Financial Mail*. We met in his tidy book-lined office at FM offices on the 9th floor of Carlton Centre. We talked amicably about student protests and apartheid and after some time John called in Graham Hatton, the assistant editor, whose office was next door.

John and Graham became my advocates, cajoling editor George Palmer to give a young American a chance. Not sure if I could do journalism, they gave me a test. Go out and interview the Tswana homeland chief, Lucas Mangope, who was in Johannesburg, and turn in the copy within 48-hours. I did and the interview ran. I was hired on a four-month trial at R600 per month.

In 1975 amid tension as Mozambique approached the June 25th date for independence from Portugal, John, the labour editor, suggested that we visit a workers' hostel at City Deep near Joburg.

We departed after dark, John driving the FM's Peugeot company car. We finagled our way past the guard's post, parked, and made our way into the hostel. Identifying ourselves as FM journalists, we were greeted with cordiality by the several dozen miners who lived in the cramped quarters. We asked questions about living and work conditions, took photographs of the multi-tiered bunks, drying clothes hanging from the rafters. Our work done, we departed.

Some days later George Palmer shared with John the letter he received from the irate manager at City Deep. Palmer was informed that two of his employees had seriously violated rules, first by trespassing, and then by entering an African hostel. He went so far as to identify the people we talked to...but they had no names, only five-digit numbers. To his credit Palmer defended his reporters and John's story and our photos appeared in the next issue.

No one doubts John's courage. He fearlessly stood up to the Nats, meticulously marshalling facts that gave the lie to the government's fatuous claims about separate development. A skilled wordsmith, John could promptly produce a leader on any number of topics. During the bloody aftermath of the Soweto uprising, John was called upon for commentary in the best papers in Britain, the US and Europe.

He also possessed a wicked, often understated sense of humour.

Mining magnate Harry Oppenheimer was always "Harry." He had witty Afrikaans labels for each of the leading Nats huddled in their Pretoria bunkers. He told good stories about his friend Helen Suzman, how she kept a small bottle of brandy in her purse, ready for when she needed it.

John and Pierre's homes, first in Auckland Park and more recently Montgomery Park, were elegantly furnished. Their table was exquisitely set. They were epicureans who regaled guests on the art collections of the Hermitage and other European galleries. John's indulgence was crossing the ocean aboard the QE2.

John Kane-Berman mentored my transition from academia to journalism. Decades later I hold to his and the FM's practice of reading back quotes to those who are quoted. When I reappeared in Johannesburg in 2010 after several years away, our friendship blossomed as if it hadn't been interrupted.

John Kane-Berman was a principled fighter for justice. He railed against the lies, corruption and incompetence of the ANC government just as he had railed against the evil of apartheid. Long-time colleague Frans Cronje says John died with no regrets, that he done what he set out to do.

(Having joined the FM in November 1974, Barry D. Wood moved to a full-time position. He then joined NBC News radio reporting on southern Africa. He was chief economics correspondent for Voice of America for 30 years and now writes the Daily Friend "American Dispatch" column in addition to being a correspondent for Hong Kong Radio.)

Reina Steenwijk:

John has always been a close friend, one whom I deeply admired for what he stood for and what he did. How brave he was in his unwavering stand in society, and how kind and considerate to me. His stance helped me a great deal when I worked for Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Chester Crocker (Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs of the United States):

John Kane-Berman's probing, determined, and incisive intellect shaped the thinking of several generations of South Africans. Following John's guidance, they understood what South Africa could become and how long a journey it would take to get there. No one did more to define the liberal narrative over decades. His voice will be missed.

Willem Cronje:

John was the rarest element of humanity: our moral compass. His death leaves us adrift. Adieu!

Jonathan Katzenellenbogen:

I was greatly saddened to hear of John's passing. He was a great intellectual force whom I had known for nearly fifty years.

Valerie Moller:

John's legacy will still be with us in years to come. John was a pathfinder who helped us navigate the complicated South African landscape, first under apartheid and then during the transition to democracy.

I well remember attending my first lecture in South Africa: John gave a presentation at the-then African Arts Centre in downtown Durban. He will have given that talk a few weeks after the 16 June Soweto student uprising.

I was new to South Africa at the time, having just arrived in the country with my husband to take up a social research "officer" position at the then University of Natal. So, John's book, "Soweto: Black Revolt White Reaction" served as my first introduction to the history of South Africa's race relations. That work, along with later ones by John, as well as the SAIRR's yearbook of South African social indicators, are all still on my bookshelf.

I shall be among the many who are very grateful to John for sharing his insights with us over the years. I'd like to think that all of us, in turn, have become more understanding of society through John.

Peter Honey:

John, and soon Pierre, became my and my wife's dearest personal friends in the forty-odd years that we knew him, then them as a couple. South Africa – and more broadly, the international understanding that to be South African exceeds coarse racial categorisation – has lost one of its fiercest and most eloquent champions. We shall miss John as a sensitive and doughty friend and rue the silencing of his guiding voice as the country looks to navigate perilous waters.

Temba Nolutshungu (Free Market Foundation director):

Colleagues and everyone who treasured his intellectual calibre and integrity will find it difficult to come to terms with gallant John's departure, never mind comprehending it. Way back, during the drafting of the Constitution, I witnessed this wonderful person (armed with amazing fixity of purpose) interacting with various parliamentary bodies, together with Anthea Jeffery at times.

His classical-liberal inputs – along with those of the very few articulating the same paradigm – resulted in South Africa’s internationally regarded, liberally oriented Constitution, despite some of its debatable shortcomings. Lest it be forgotten, this was against tremendous odds!

In my judgement, this was the pinnacle of his many and various initiatives and endeavours towards realising happiness and prosperity for the greatest number of people in the shortest possible time.

Jane Tempest:

John and I had many disagreements but I never lost my respect for his intellect and the dedication he gave to his cause.

Oliver Barker:

This is truly sad news. JKB was president of the SRC when I was at Wits and I have admired him and cherished his friendship ever since. Our fathers were also colleagues in law. I will miss his world view, incisive mind and intelligent conversation.... He was a special person and a truly great South African. *Hamba Kahle, John.*

Martin Brassey SC:

This is a great, great loss. One of the world’s finest people and a true liberal.

Graham McIntosh:

What an extraordinary South African life – rooted in reality; one of our finest minds, a tough intellectual, understood hard work but tempered by an ability to relax; always kind.

The Good Book says it for me “Truly a cedar has fallen”.

Peter Leon:

John was an extraordinary South African – brave, fearless and possessed of a ferocious intellect which he used to considerable effect under apartheid as much as he did under democracy.

The country can ill afford his passing at this difficult time in our history.

Joshua Berkowitz:

So, so very sad.

A personal and intellectual giant; a fearless champion for humanity, civility and the rule of law. A loss for all.

Mike Brown:

John was a fine man, admired by all, but me particularly, for his courage, integrity, intellectual brilliance, and analytical skills. From his days at Wits, where he was the student leader I most respected and admired, to his career at the SAIRR, he stood out above others for his commitment to the truth and to human decency. John was a great South African and he will be sorely missed by many.

Michael Peter:

What a tragic loss for ... all of us in South Africa and the world. Everyone who desires self-determination and self-actualisation, owes a debt of thanks to John and those like him, who have fearlessly and brilliantly helped to make these ideals and objectives increasingly attainable for us ordinary folk. We will remember and honour his monumental contributions through our continued efforts to advance the ideals and causes to which he devoted his life.

Theo Coggin:

When told on Wednesday night of John's death, it came to me that a giant African tree had fallen.

I worked with John in the late 1980s as Editor of the then *Race Relations News*, into the 1990s as his deputy director and then as a member of the SA Institute of Race Relations Board and Council. It was my privilege to be the Chairman of the Board to which John so meticulously reported in the last years of his full-time employment by the Institute. This was my formal relationship with him but, more importantly, John and I forged a unique friendship from the mid-1980s until his death in which my wife, Ruth, and I were able to share many happy moments with John and his beloved Pierre.

As a colleague, John was always both demanding and fair and, in my experience, never failed to look out for the well-being of those who reported to him. He was forthright and always set the highest work ethic for himself. Quite correctly, he expected high standards from the Institute, its researchers and other staff, and in this, he and I were always *ad idem*.

Many was the late night we spent musing over current affairs and the work of the Institute. And then John would return to his lifelong quest to turn out the most outstanding and unequalled research covering a vast array of topics that was read by members of every political persuasion.

Without a shadow of doubt, South Africa has lost a brilliant mind.

The richness of John's personality was such that he could combine his high professional standards with a passionate regard for the well-being of all humanity. He could not stand people who were racists in any shape or form and, in the many things that will be written about John, it bears repeating that this was the man who would put himself at risk by covering, as a reporter, the brutal onslaught by apartheid police on defenceless South Africans from all walks of life as they sought freedom from the yoke of the Nationalist government's myopic racial policies.

This should not be surprising, because John was a man not only of principle but also of immense courage. He had a great respect for diversity, exemplified by the wide array of Presidents who served the Institute during his tenure, including the indomitable Helen Suzman, and Bishop Stanley Mogoba, a Pan Africanist.

On a personal note, John valued highly and practised in his life the quality of loyalty and trust and respected that quality in others.

A man of deep faith, John's love of the English language was well illustrated by his insistence on using the original Book of Common Prayer and the King James Version of the Bible.

John was also essentially a family man. I did not know his father, other than through John, who would often tell us of the seminal role of his father in his life and in the Torch Commando and the Liberal Party. On the last occasion I spoke to him, he told me at length about the success of his brothers, their children and extended family. Most memorable was the manner in which he loved and cared for his mother, Gaby. In her final days, he would visit her every night, drink a whisky with her, and read to her. He was a son, brother and uncle par excellence.

Ruth and I will miss John, with his quick wit and brilliant mind, in our home to which he and Pierre were regular visitors and always every Christmas when he loved to have a traditional roast and potatoes. In his charming way, he would coax Ruth into playing the organ so that he could sing the carols and other hymns he so loved. Not least among these was *Adeste fidelis* (O come all ye faithful), in which some eight verses would be sung by the four of us in Latin, John impeccably so! I think John was often at his happiest in moments like these, not least because he and Pierre, his soulmate, husband and partner of fifty years, were among close friends.

To Pierre and the family, we send our condolences in your loss and thank you for sharing him with us. We and the Institute can celebrate a huge legacy in the life of John. We will all treasure his memory.

Though "sundered far, by faith we meet round one common Mercy Seat".

C: EXPANDED REFLECTIONS

John Kane-Berman – champion of liberal values and political and economic freedom for all

Daily Maverick, 31 July 2022

J Brooks Spector

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-07-31-john-kane-berman-champion-of-liberal-values-and-political-and-economic-freedom-for-all/>

The passing of John Kane-Berman at the age of 76 allows us to contemplate his hard-fought battle to defend liberal values and the political and economic redemption of South Africa.

After a lifetime defending the continuing relevance, potency and importance of classic liberal values in a South Africa fractured by ideological (and real) battles, John Kane-Berman has died at the age of 76.

Over a busy life, his contribution of leading the South African Institute of Race Relations during two contentious decades was critical for the survival of that institution and, simultaneously, for a respect of those classic liberal values. But his contribution in reporting on the country's newly energised labour movement must also be remembered for its importance in shaping attitudes during a critical time in South Africa's tumultuous political evolution.

John always fought his corner without restraint. If he believed in something, he marshalled the evidence and his arguments, and worked strenuously to convey the logic and importance of that view to readers and audiences — and, most especially, to those who might have disagreed with him. His absence leaves an empty space in South Africa's public life, one immensely difficult to fill.

John Kane-Berman was the eldest of Louis and Gabby Kane-Berman's five sons. John's father had been a successful lawyer in the post-war years and on into the 1970s, but his World War 2 experiences had clearly shaped him and his responses to social and political unfairness in his own nation.

Torch Commando

In the years after the war, he became a leader of the Torch Commando, the military veterans' organisation that had come into being to oppose the planned abolition of the voting franchise for coloured South Africans in the Cape, an act that was an integral part of the National Party's grand vision of an apartheid future for the country.

The Torch Commando, it was said, was the only organisation the National Party and its toadies ever really feared, given the Torch Commando members' first-hand experiences in actually fighting evil, authoritarian regimes, starting with fighting in East Africa, then moving to North Africa, and then, eventually, on to Sicily and the Italian Peninsula during six gruelling years of warfare against Italian and German armies. But Louis Kane-Berman's commitment to social justice also led him to assist

authentic grassroots organisations struggling to improve the lives of those seriously less fortunate in South Africa's greatly unequal and harshly segregated society.

For years, without any publicity, Louis Kane-Berman worked with my late father-in-law to set up, defend, and maintain the legal circumstances and financial viability of a social welfare organisation that over the years transported thousands of coloured children to a residential camp and school on the KwaZulu-Natal coast. For several months, those children received intensive educational tuition, nutritious food and well-supervised outdoor activities — away from baleful influences in their racially designated neighbourhoods that were part of apartheid's restrictions.

Such life lessons about one's responsibilities would have been closely observed by the young John Kane-Berman, despite his own privileged life and education through private schools, the University of the Witwatersrand, and then on to Oxford University and a Rhodes Scholarship. As *The Daily Friend** wrote of him: "Kane-Berman would reflect almost 50 years later 'that the Torchmen's practical assertion of the right to free speech' had impressed him enormously, and was proof that, borrowing from Tennyson's Ulysses, 'freedom of speech, sword-like, longs to shine in use [and] not be left to rust.'

"His life, Kane-Berman himself said, was really about opposition to the abuse of power and how its misuse hurt the most defenceless people. A clear memory was coming down to breakfast at the age of 14 to read about the Sharpeville Massacre in the *Rand Daily Mail*, and of how as a consequence of Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg Ambrose Reeves' efforts to challenge the official account of the shooting, his parents then took in the Bishop's son, Nicholas, his classmate, after the Reeves family had received death threats, making it untenable for the boy to remain at home.

"Kane-Berman recalled that while there were not many liberals at St John's among the boys, this was 'not true of the staff and least of all the headmaster Deane Yates' who gave him some of his earliest experience of formal political resistance in making him chairman of the St John's African Education Fund."

At Wits, John had been a leader in Nusas — the National Union of South African Students — but he supported black students like Steve Biko when they decided to break away from Nusas in order to establish their own organisation, Saso, the South African Students Organisation. They had taken this action following Rhodes University's refusal to allow integrated dining facilities for the delegates to Nusas' national gathering taking place at that university.

Labour and unions

After he had returned to South Africa from Oxford, following a research stint with the SA Institute of Race Relations, and an offer to join the *Rand Daily Mail*, John Kane-Berman instead joined the *Financial Mail*, the country's authoritative journal of business and public affairs. For his time there, the publication was led by its redoubtable editor, George Palmer. But, rather than becoming a reporter who might cover the country's roiling political battles among white politicians or business developments or debacles, John embraced the labour and unions beat he was given. This topic was still something of an orphan step-child, in comparison to the many other political and economic areas regularly covered by that periodical.

But, in his hands, he became the periodical's key reporter, analyst and observer of a rapidly evolving landscape as black trade unions were again legally allowed to organise and build their membership across the country's economic sectors. Because of his position, he had a prime seat to witness how the country's economy (and, soon enough, its politics, too) was changing as the weight and influence

of the unions were shifting the power equation across the nation. Those changes were also central to the creation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. Back in 1976, while at the *Financial Mail*, as his first of four books, Kane-Berman had written his influential volume on the recent Soweto Uprising, entitled, “Soweto: Black Rebellion, White Reaction.”

Cape liberal tradition

Meanwhile, still running in the background of Kane-Berman’s thinking, were the lingering intellectual influences of the much older Cape liberal tradition as well. Key among those was support for the qualified, colour-blind voting franchise for all South Africans (a position that was increasingly eviscerated following the creation of the Union of South Africa, and then eventually crushed by the subsequent rise of Afrikaner nationalism). Those influences also co-existed with a modernised version of John Stuart Mill-style economic liberalism.

As Kane-Berman had written in his memoir, “Between Two Fires”, “[B]ut our starting point was the property rights of the poor. In 1776, the same year in which the Americans proclaimed the God-given and ‘unalienable’ rights of man, Adam Smith wrote the following in “The Wealth of Nations”:

“The property which every man has is his own labour. As it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this... in what manner he thinks proper without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property. It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty both of the workman, and of those who might be disposed to employ him”.

“What flows from this moving passage is that without capital or education, the poor have nothing to exploit but their own willingness to work. Yet South Africa’s industrial relations system denies them this opportunity. We condemn slavery because we don’t think any man should be able to confiscate another man’s labour. But then we pass laws restricting his right to sell their labour. Either way he earns no money...”

For John Kane-Berman, these ideas pulled together in a strenuous defence of the principles of equality and fairness under the law, a thorough-going support for free speech, a defence of the security of property, and a belief that, ultimately, economic growth would be the best way to advance those deeply disadvantaged by race and class.

Sanctions

Crucially, for John Kane-Berman, there was his belief that apartheid was doomed to failure over the long run because of the pressing need to include more and more black workers fully into the modern economy, and to ensure they had the skills needed for that rather than that iniquitous limitation on them as “hewers of wood and haulers of water” — despite those stale political arguments about racial separation that continued to hamstring change for many whites. Such views, in turn, helped him decide to oppose economic sanctions, despite the political goal for its proponents, because sanctions would just bring great economic suffering to actual workers. Moreover, if they were effective enough, they would ruin the economy as well.

As I wrote in a review of his memoir when it was published,

“Kane-Berman’s reporting on labour issues also clearly shaped his world view more broadly. Observing the growing impact of unions on business, and the rise of a black, urban, unionised working (and even nascent middle) class, Kane-Berman insisted that economic

growth — accompanied by the absorption of black South Africans into the better paying, more skilled rungs of the ladder of the formal economy — would be the path to changing South Africa’s economy, and thus its politics, not sanctions.

As Kane-Berman wrote about that change later (just as he had made the point repeatedly in his writing still earlier), ‘In a paper I delivered in Zurich in 2003 I argued that in earlier years business had been “content to play along with apartheid. It had, however, become more critical as apartheid got in the way of doing business”’.

This equation became the core of Kane-Berman’s thinking on the recreation of South Africa.

I had continued,

“Thus the invisible hand of economics was, in Kane-Berman’s way of looking at it, the implacable machinery of history that would eventually set the country on a new path and out of the apartheid straitjacket, much more effectively than any other potential mechanism. And such a position found him becoming a leading opponent of the increasingly severe economic and trade sanctions regimen South Africa faced in the final decades of the apartheid era. His position was clearly not totally popular with the left, but it was entirely consistent with his belief in the magic — or effectiveness — of an economy increasingly unfettered by those older racial prescriptions and arbitrary race barriers”.

SA Institute of Race Relations

Following his years with the *Financial Mail*, Kane-Berman then took on the leadership of the SA Institute of Race Relations in 1983. This organisation was the country’s most publicly visible, most venerable upholder of an alternative vision for the nation under constitutional and legal structures, in contrast to the racially tinged morass apartheid was continuing to lead it into. But by taking over the SAIRR in 1983, he had become its head at an especially tricky time in its history.

Unquestionably, its yearly reports continued to deliver an unblinking statistical abstract and yearly report card on the nation’s economic, social, and political health — and its corresponding political, social, and economic disfigurement. This annual publication and its extraordinary comprehensiveness gave the SAIRR national and international cachet, well beyond its organisational size. Libraries and research centres around the world relied upon it for both basic data and deeper context for understanding and interpreting the South African condition. In addition, there was its authoritative reference library, as well as a flow of other publications from the research section of the institute. They included reports on specific apartheid-era atrocities, analyses of proposed, pending, or enacted legislation, and so much more.

Among all these efforts, it also had an active cultural programme with productions of works by playwrights like Athol Fugard, a public lecture series that drew crowds on a wide range of topics, as well as serving as the organisational base for internationally supported university bursary programmes. It was also home for Operation Hunger — the feeding project crucial for providing nourishment to thousands of destitute people. That project employed one of Nelson Mandela’s daughters during his imprisonment.

By the time Kane-Berman took on the role of CEO for the institute, the SAIRR’s financial coffers were virtually bare. His most immediate task became rebuilding the body’s financial infrastructure — trimming what could be hived off or ended, and raising the funds needed to keep SAIRR’s core alive for the battles yet to be waged.

Liberal principles

Concurrently, Kane-Berman also determined that a key task for him was to tighten the focus of the institution around a defence of liberal principles in order to clarify and focus its funding efforts, even if this meant some disaffection on the part of some of its oldest and most loyal supporters (as an organisation, it would not affiliate with the UDF, for example.)

All of this was occurring even as South Africa was moving towards great changes in the country's political future. These events included the vote (among whites) to pursue negotiations for the country's future; the unbanning of political parties — including the communists, the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress — and the release of political prisoners such as Nelson Mandela.

But such events also meant Kane-Berman's institution's political mission would be required to evolve beyond its relentless opposition to that older racial order and to become, instead, a principled critic and clear-eyed analyst of what was coming in its place.

As a statement of the Institute's new tasks after the demise of apartheid, Kane-Berman had written:

“While running the Institute in the post-apartheid era I was variously accused of being right-wing, neo-liberal, neoconservative, or whatever. I was also described as one of the ‘old lefties who’d become ‘new righties’, people who read Paul Johnson, Thomas Sowell, PJ O’Rourke, *Commentary* and *The Spectator* (guilty on all counts). We ran one or two articles in *Frontiers* (an SAIRR publication) pointing out that the ‘right-wing slur’ was designed to cow people into silence, but it never worked with us. A columnist on the *Cape Times* wrote that the Institute’s ‘increasingly outspoken brand of liberalism under the leadership of John Kane-Berman has put it very much at odds with the ANC and its academic supporters’. This was true, and it didn’t bother me either. We knew that criticism from liberals would be especially resented because they had always been part of the broad anti-apartheid family, which would give our opinions more weight. But we shouldn’t feel too much self-pity if we got more than our fair share of criticism, because we handed out plenty ourselves.”

In the final chapter of his memoirs, Kane-Berman summed things up for the country's future, when he wrote:

“The question now facing South Africa is whether the ANC can reform itself as the NP reformed itself. Does it have an FW de Klerk? Does it even have a John Vorster or a PW Botha? As this memoir has shown, they too played a role in dismantling apartheid. The NP was under immense pressure from all sides. The ANC is not — not yet anyway. Although pressure for Mr Zuma to resign has been growing following the strictures by the courts and the unceasing flow of reports of malfeasance on his part, there is little pressure for fundamental change in ANC policy.

“More than 50 years ago, when I joined the battle of ideas as a school-boy, the ruling party and prevailing ideology seemed monolithic, and impregnable. But they were not. The NP was compelled to abandon its own ideology. The ANC will have to do likewise. It will eventually have to liberalise economically, just as the NP had to liberalise. Even the communists in the ANC and the government will find themselves having to search for pragmatic solutions. The question is whether they can be prevented from doing more damage before they begin the retreat from revolutionary ideology into liberal pragmatism.”

One hopes that at least some of what Kane-Berman had hoped for in those closing words, written half a decade earlier, will come to fruition in the future for South Africa and in meeting its citizens' hopes for better days to come. If so, then John Kane-Berman's lifetime of dogged determination in advocating liberal values, come what may in the way of criticism towards him, will have served its purpose well.

Farewell, John.

John Kane-Berman: A giant has fallen

Daily Friend⁴, 29 July 2022

Ivo Vegter

<https://dailyfriend.co.za/2022/07/29/john-kane-berman-a-giant-has-fallen/>

The unexpected death of former IRR CEO John Kane-Berman, at the age of 76, will leave a large hole in the liberal firmament.

One morning, some time around my 17th birthday in the late 1980s, the headmaster called me and five other pupils at Hoërskool President in the south of Johannesburg to his office.

All top academic performers, we had been selected to go on a trip to the Pilanesberg Game Reserve, with similar teams from six or eight other schools.

Our group was all white, of course. Education, like most everything else, was strictly segregated by race throughout my school career.

The outstanding feature of this trip was that only one of the other participating schools was a whites-only school. The remainder represented Indian, coloured and black children.

The idea was to introduce pupils from different races to each other, by taking them on a camping trip where they would interact with each other, have conversations about their life experiences, cook traditional meals for each other, and learn that we were not so different, after all.

For the white kids, trips to game reserves were not a novelty. For the others, however, a whole new world opened up. Over just a few days, bonds and friendships were kindled across racial lines as we walked with rhinos, ate together, and sang around the campfire.

Non-racialism

It wasn't my first introduction to non-racialism; that happened when I was 12, when a Dutch aunt of mine travelled to South Africa to research a thesis on multi-racial churches under apartheid, such as St. Mary's Anglican Church in Johannesburg and Regina Mundi Catholic Church in Soweto.

It was, however, a rare visit across the barriers of 'separate development' that the government had worked hard to maintain, and this time I was old enough to contemplate the injustice of racial segregation.

Soon enough I would encounter both the 'Swart Gevaar' and the 'Rooi Komplot' at close quarters at Wits University.

Another year later, the ANC, PAC and SACP were unbanned, and Nelson Mandela was released from his 27-year incarceration. South Africa was on the path towards a new political dispensation, and as a student at a multi-racial university, I had a front-row seat.

⁴ The *Daily Friend* is the online newspaper of the SA Institute of Race Relations.

With hindsight, the idea of introducing promising schoolchildren to their counterparts across racial lines in the 1980s was inspired and influential.

It primed me to deal with the fairly traumatic realisation that much of my schooling consisted of government-sponsored indoctrination and racist conditioning, and that I had been lied to by the adults I was taught to trust and look up to.

The cross-cultural trip was an initiative of the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR), then under the leadership of John Kane-Berman.

Magisterial

It would be quite a while before I again encountered Kane-Berman, or the Institute. In those years, I was a technology journalist, which largely kept me out of South Africa's political and public debate.

I was a voracious reader, though, both of newspapers and thick, serious books. I read a lot of history. I explored various political philosophies to broaden my horizons beyond the Christian National Education the apartheid government had foisted upon us. I had learned some economics in a bid to comprehend the so-called new economy of the dotcom boom, and the subsequent bust which proved it to be a just the same old economy supercharged by easy money.

Just about when I embarked on a new life as a columnist, starting with *Maverick* magazine in the mid-2000s before it became the *Daily Maverick*, I was fortunate enough to attend a gala event hosted by the Institute for Race Relations.

The highlight of the evening was a magisterial speech by John Kane-Berman.

His command of South African politics and history, his facility with research and data, his commitment to theoretical and practical justice for the poor, and his classical liberal analysis of the country's trajectory all made a profound impact on me.

He was an intellectual heavyweight, who spoke with conviction of the ideal of non-racial freedom towards which I had also gravitated. I was impressed, and not a little intimidated.

Principled

Kane-Berman was as principled in his liberal critique of ANC governance as he had been as a vocal and highly influential critic of the apartheid government.

This was refreshing, in the face of what Jill Wentzel had called the "liberal slideaway" of the 1980s, when anti-apartheid liberals were loath to be seen criticising the new, democratic government, for fear of being painted as right-wingers or unreconstructed racial nationalists.

Many more interactions with the SAIRR would follow, including several commissions to write articles and research reports, which would ultimately result in my becoming a columnist for the *Daily Friend* in March 2020.

A generation older than I am, Kane-Berman laid the groundwork for that all the way back in 1988. He had been a journalist himself, and a compliment from him would feel like a major accolade.

Thriving

Others knew Kane-Berman and his work much better than I did. His monumental contributions to the liberal cause in South Africa, over a period of over 50 years, including his role in ensuring that

South Africa's Constitution is broadly liberal in character, are detailed in a *Daily Friend* obituary which I can highly recommend.

The cause of classical liberalism is thriving in South Africa, in large part because of Kane-Berman's inspirational work in building and developing the Institute over the 31 years he led it between 1983 and 2014. He has left an immense legacy, and South Africa owes him an enormous debt of gratitude.

There is a large hole in the firmament where John Kane-Berman's star once shone, but the ideas to which he committed his life and for which he worked tirelessly will long outlive him.

The man who called the ANC correctly

PoliticsWeb, 4 August 2022

Jeremy Gordin

<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/opinion/the-man-who-called-the-anc-right>

I went this morning to the funeral of John Kane-Berman (76). Besides being for some 31 years the CEO of the IRR (SA Institute of Race Relations) and a “fearless proponent of liberalism before, during, and after SA's democratic transition,” he was for many years a columnist here on PoliticsWeb.

There are (at least) two very fine obituaries of JKB – one, written by “the SAIRR,” was published on *Politicsweb* on 27 July – and another by J Brooks Spector on 31 July in the *Daily Maverick*. Perhaps needless to say, these – and the others – are very much worth reading.

This morning's funeral was held at St George's Anglican Church in Parktown. I reached there just a minute before the service began and – given that, as often happens, many people congregated towards the back of the church [i] – I headed for the front so I could find a seat; and I left immediately when the service ended.

So I wasn't able to get a good look at the many people present [ii]. But I did catch a glimpse of some – and can safely say that many of Johannesburg's leading “liberals” (for want of a better term) and others of a similar persuasion were there to pay their respects.

This was of course as it should have been; as the SAIRR obituary put it, JKB “devoted his life to vigorously opposing the race nationalism of apartheid's ideologues and, at their defeat, the illiberal impulses of their successors”.

I still have my tattered copy of JKB's book about the 1976 Soweto uprising, “Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction” (Ravan Press, 1978, cover design by Jackie Bosman, proofreading by Pat Schwartz [Tucker][iii]) – which I considered (and consider) to be one of the best local books ever of political reportage and analysis. I still know off by heart the final paragraph of the Preface:

“My greatest debt is to fellow-journalists, reporters and photographers alike, on various newspapers [iv]. Often at personal risk or cost, they told the story of what happened in Soweto. Some of them saw their newspapers closed down, others are still in detention as this book goes to the printers. They brought honour to their profession. Without them, this book could not have been written.”

When I first read this book, I was then just getting going as a journalist and that paragraph filled me with enormous pride; it still does.

This morning, having reached the front pews, I discovered that the seat just behind the one I took was reserved for 94-year-old Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi who, it was later announced, had very much wanted to be at the funeral but had fallen ill so couldn't make it.

This reminded me that I first met JKB 40 years ago, towards the end of 1981, when Stephen Mulholland had just been appointed editor of the *Financial Mail* (FM) and I (very much a junior) had gone there to work in the production department.

JKB was then an assistant editor or perhaps chief assistant editor of the FM. He had previously thrived as a labour and political journalist under the aegis of former editors George Palmer and (if I have this right) Graham Hatton. But JKB obviously seemed to feel (and possibly the feeling was mutual) that he wouldn't be "comfortable" at the FM with Mulholland at the helm.

I mention this because, if I recall correctly – given that Mulholland was an unabashed Friedmanite and also made it very clear that in his view the FM would predominantly deal with finance, economics and business, not politics and labour – the general "view" among younger journalists (all mostly lefties) was that the "tension" between the two men somehow represented a "left vs. right" struggle.

Yet at the same time there was much vindictive gossip aimed by those younger journalists at JKB, including some calling him "right wing" – largely because of his refusal to condemn Buthelezi and the Inkatha Freedom Party. But JKB remained steadfast.

Ah yes, old gossip, old arguments, none of which matter anymore and certainly didn't matter this morning.

JKB and I saw each other from time to time over the years and for the last time at the Constitutional Court launch of Justice Edwin Cameron's "Justice: A Personal Account" in, it must have been, 2014.

Then in 2019, we crossed pens (as it were). JKB took umbrage at my review of Anthea Jeffery's "People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa" – in which I had taken umbrage at Jeffery and JKB for "whacking the local media [of the nineties] retrospectively".

But here's the thing. If the subject were Jeffery's book and the work of those journalists, I'd probably write or say (more or less) the same thing today; and JKB would doubtless do so too.

But if I'd had the opportunity of coming across JKB in recent months, there is something else I would have discussed with him.

It relates to the quote in the fifth paragraph of this article: JKB "devoted his life to vigorously opposing the race nationalism of apartheid's ideologues and, at their defeat, the illiberal impulses of their successors".

And it relates in particular to the last six words of the quote: the illiberal impulses of their successors. I'd say this:

JKB, all I can say to you now, in 2022, is that you've had it spot-on all along. You called it right, as they say. The impulses of the "successors" have turned out to be a lot more than impulses – and far, far worse than illiberal. They're appalling and terrifying – and have ripped this place that we like so much into shreds.

Endnotes

[i] I always think it's a hangover from one's schooldays, where if you seat yourself at the front of the class, the teacher might ask you a question, or your friends might think you're a creep.

[ii] Journalists are notoriously bad at numbers, but I'd guess from 100 to 150 people.

[iii] Peter Randall, co-founder of Ravan, was to have been the book's editor, but he was banned on 19 October 1977.

[iv] JKB was referring to Gabu Tugwana, Zwelakhe Sisulu, Peter Magubane, Jon Qwelane, and many, many others.

John Kane-Berman was a tireless, effective crusader against apartheid⁵

Sunday Times, 31 July 2022

Chris Barron

As CEO of the SA Institute of Race Relations John Kane-Berman, who has died in Johannesburg at 76, exposed in relentless and damning detail the nuts and bolts of apartheid and its devastating impact on black lives.

The institute's famous annual *Survey*, of which he was editor-in-chief for 30 years, provided a factual record of everything that happened under apartheid, including the implementation of security laws, deaths in detention, forced removals, the dumping of people in rural wastelands, child malnutrition, conditions in the homelands, influx control and the migrant labour system.

When whites subsequently claimed they never knew about the full horrors of apartheid, he retorted it was all there in the SAIRR's annual *Survey*, the primary and most frequently cited source of information about apartheid for researchers, academics, commissions and journalists in SA and around the world.

⁵ Full obituary: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times-daily/opinion-and-analysis/2022-07-31-obituary--john-kane-berman-was-a-tireless-effective-crusader-against-apartheid/>

Reflections on the life and legacy of John Kane-Berman

Business Day, 7 August 2022

Michael Morris⁶

<https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/columnists/2022-08-07-michael-morris-reflections-on-the-life-and-legacy-of-john-kane-berman/>

Thinking about the recent death of John Kane-Berman is one of those rare instances when reckoning with what's lost, considerable though it is, seems on reflection to be substantially offset by what remains.

As I can't claim any intimate or long-standing friendship with JKB — as he was widely, and respectfully, known — I realise I am at risk of underestimating the sense of loss of those closest to him. But there is no mistaking what the former CEO of the SA Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) leaves for the rest of us in his vivid example of thinking and being.

We detect this in the things perceptive observers have said of him. In the eulogy he delivered at JKB's funeral last week, friend and former associate Paul Pereira described Kane-Berman's primary impulse as "a love of, and respect for, humanity". This, Pereira went on, "is why he wouldn't see history as inevitable, political realities as immovable, crass social engineering as acceptable, nor honesty and principles as negotiable". These qualities "run as the golden threads through his life".

A measure of this credo is his candour in describing in his autobiography, "Between Two Fires — Holding the Liberal Centre in SA Politics", significant shifts in his own thinking about changing society and improving people's lives. We encounter a thinker who wants to know for himself, who finds no comfort in ideological certainty.

In letters to his parents back home while at Oxford in the late 1960s (he was a Rhodes scholar), he "expressed scepticism about the ability of laissez-faire liberalism to solve the problems of poverty" and confessed his doubt "as to whether or not economic forces would undermine apartheid ... [since industry and apartheid] had grown up together".

In the early 1970s he was all for sanctions and "radical redistribution of wealth", convinced that liberals "who were suggesting that apartheid was crumbling were clutching at straws".

But a consequence of his blend of intellectual humility and curiosity was Kane-Berman being able to see all the more clearly the primacy of the individual in society, the common person who thinks and acts, and from time to time experiences a change of heart.

Having used his acclaimed book on the Soweto uprising, "Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction", to describe apartheid's "executive despotism in great detail", JKB recalled that his next book, "SA's Silent Revolution", published 12 years later, "chronicled... the very crumbling process I had been sceptical about".

⁶ Morris is head of media at the SA Institute of Race Relations.

In this work he contrasts, for instance, the “2- to 3-million forced removals” under apartheid with the 17.12-million arrests under the pass laws between 1916 and 1981. Responding to economic needs and opportunities, “Africans ... were simply voting against these laws with their feet”.

In this eloquent data point we might well recognise the deceptively lowly figure of Roy Campbell’s poetic imagination, the tiller of whom he writes:

*But as the turf divides
I see in the slow progress of his strides
Over the toppled clods and falling flowers
The timeless, surly patience of the serf
That moves the nearest to the naked earth
And ploughs down palaces, and thrones, and towers.*

JKB’s spirit lives on in this lesson: think carefully and be truthfully self-examining, but above all pay attention to people, ordinary people — the beating heart of liberalism — and observe as best you can the seeming commonplaces that are the sum of their small daily choices, for that is where history is made, and where the future becomes visible.

‘Daar gaan ‘n man verby’ – A reflection on John Kane-Berman⁷

Daily Friend, 4 August 2022

Paul Pereira

<https://dailyfriend.co.za/2022/08/04/daar-gaan-n-man-verby-a-reflection-on-john-kane-berman/>

In his autobiography, “Between Two Fires”, John Stuart Kane-Berman talks about writing as a presumptuous schoolboy to Alan Paton, congratulating him on his fine biography of Jan Hofmeyr.

Unbelievably, young Kane-Berman got a detailed response, in which Paton said that most South African biographers failed to understand the nature of biography, which was ‘not to make a point, preach a policy, help a party, or aggrandise a man – it was primarily to tell the life of a human being’.

You will find John Kane-Berman’s impressive chronological history, and get a good view on that, on the website of the South African Institute of Race Relations. John served the SAIRR well as CEO for 30 years from 1983. Until his death, he worked as an active public analyst. Their obituary’s salute to him is splendid, as are tributes and reflections issued by former colleagues and various organisations.

Who was John Kane-Berman the person?

John Kane-Berman was driven by a love of, and respect for, humanity.

It is why he wouldn’t see history as inevitable, political realities as immovable, crass social engineering as acceptable, nor honesty and principles as negotiable.

These run as the golden threads through his life, whether at work or play.

I am told that when he was Wits SRC chairman in 1967/68, John refused to allow the Rag Ball to be held at a segregated venue. The only integrated venue they could find was Margo’s Rainbow Resort in Bapsfontein. So there the Rag Ball was held.

His interest in labour relations and the trade union moment, both when he was an assistant editor of the *Financial Mail* in the early ‘70s and beyond, centred on the exploitation by both the apartheid state and the private sector of people on the lowest rungs of employment. These were the people he saw as the real force for change. Indeed, he was the first to recognise the dock and textile industry strikes of 1973 as a historical turning point.

Instrumental

Those strikes are largely forgotten now. It is worth dwelling a little on them, as they were seminal in our country’s development. JKB saw their significance immediately, and that was instrumental in shaping how he understood and analysed the coming reform-and-revolution years. That, I suggest, tells us a lot about John.

At New Year in 1973, black workers in South Africa had very few cards they could play. Denied a part in system politics, the power that usually accrues with that was cut off to them, as they were barred

⁷ This is an expanded version of the tribute delivered by Paul Pereira at Kane-Berman’s funeral at St George’s Anglican Church, Parktown, Johannesburg, on Thursday 4 August 2022.

from formal bargaining structures. Furthermore, they were banned under a temporary 1942 war diktat (never rescinded) from going on strike. The consequences of this were dire – in the major industrial city of Durban, 165 000 black industrial workers suffered a minimum wage that was set below the Poverty Datum Line.

Wildcat strikes spread across Natal and then the Witwatersrand in 1973. The government's response shocked many employers. That is, the state failed to act as expected: instead, the police declined to intervene in the illegal strikes; and the government abandoned white trade unions and their colour-bar protections, legally recognising the right of black workers to strike. Prime Minister John Vorster admonished not the strikers but rather their employers, saying they needed to realise that blacks 'are human beings with souls'.

Apartheid's retreat had begun.

It would be the pattern of the 20 years to come – black South Africans defying irrational laws that limited their life chances and making apartheid diktats unenforceable; the State often all a-bluster but then yielding in bits to the new realities-on-the-ground – in employment, urbanisation, sport, education, and on and on.

South Africa was liberating herself from the ground up, integrating in every way. Yet most public commentators here and abroad could only see immovable ideological opponents in place, and so missed what was really happening. Kane-Berman, in contrast, realised this instinctively and chronicled and encouraged what he termed the 'silent revolution' that brought South Africa freedom.

Ordinary folk

He saw that it was not ideologues or political movements, but ordinary folk, who were the main heroes in this epic – unsung heroes everywhere among us.

It was a key insight he could hardly have attained had he focused too hard on formal political developments and law – where everything is politics and politics is everything. Human existence is far too complex for that.

Liberalism was John's creed, although it's not really an 'ism' at all, but contains elements of the Enlightenment where all people are seen as worthy of human rights, dignity, and common decency. That understanding always drove Kane-Berman's approach to issues, rather than some simplistic pre-cooked ideological position.

His seminal book detailing the 1976 uprising that started in Soweto doesn't centre on educational or related language issues, as it might have done, but on the human story and costs, lest they be forgotten in broad-brush historical narratives.

John worked with the American Chamber of Commerce in SA to improve conditions of employment and to getting rid of workplace racial discrimination, setting precedents for others in the private sector to follow, and some did. His long-standing work on political violence took in the main themes of a political struggle, but he was always most drawn to the terror and personal tragedies that accompanied the use of violence – something he abhorred, no matter how it was dressed up as 'noble' or 'necessary'. He wouldn't buy that.

I remember well how, in the violent years leading up to the 1994 transition to full democracy, he would sit at his desk each morning, poring over daily violence reports, noting deaths and injuries.

Similarly, he detested people's rights being steamrolled by officialdom's hurtful practices of racial discrimination, never mind bannings and torture. The Institute's 1987 'Behind Closed Doors' study closely and grimly detailed deaths in detention. There would be no disappeared ones here.

Core to liberalism

You see this emphasis on human rights as core to liberalism in JKB's early post-apartheid work too.

Hence his campaign against the national unity government's 1995 tightening of bail conditions that caused one-third of our prison population to consist of people not yet found guilty of any crime. It drove his successful opposition to attempts in 1996 to strip the governance autonomy of voluntary non-profit associations, and informed his warnings that new labour legislation would lock the most vulnerable in society out of the formal sector job market.

Not for John any cosy deals among an exclusionary elite in a time of rainbows and miracles. More recently, his interest in environmental policy centred on economically vulnerable people. You want to get rid of 'dirty coal'? What about the mineworkers and townfolk of the Mpumalanga Highveld? Why is no-one thinking about them?

There was always an insistence on people being respected, for policy and practice to expand horizons of opportunity, for all people to have more free choices, and for the possibilities of life to increase.

That very respect for humanity as core, that essential humaneness, more than anything else, meant that John couldn't abide political propaganda, distortions of reality, or claims made in service of a cause rather than the truth. He wouldn't stand back for whitewashing or for blacklisting.

He took it as read that intellectual simplicity begets dishonesty. This made him intellectually rigorous and tough in the face of pressures to conform that he felt undermined honesty. Just for this, he should have been showered with accolades – but the formal ones were few, even though the ones he did receive were not insignificant.

Primary casualty

He worked through what, from 1984 to 1994, was a type of civil war, where truth is a primary casualty. He saw his mission, and that of his fellows, as holding the line for a deeper understanding of complex trends through the pursuit of excellence in fact-finding, nuanced language and curiosity. It was an approach respectful of the common good today – and for South Africans as yet unborn.

At the South African Institute of Race Relations, this made him a very demanding CEO and editor indeed.

He once explained his needs to research staff, telling them that it was not good enough for an airline pilot to get some things right in his job, to succeed at, say, 97% of his landings. 'The pilot must get everything right, with 100% excellence. That is our standard too, nothing less.'

One poor soul handed in a piece of work which contained something John thought interesting.

"What is your source for this claim?"

"Um, Wikipedia."

"Wikipedia is NOT a reference – it's no more than an unsubstantiated rumour!"

Aye, Kane-Berman was that most formidable of editors.

Of course, he was soft like mushy cheese if you'd simply:

- Check your facts
- Forget yourself as 'opionista' (to use a current term)
- Get every side of a story or argument and find what you're missing, especially if it countered your assumptions
- Write with precision
- Approach your work with humility
- Know that the purpose of the work is not you, but a higher duty to accuracy, care, integrity, and thus country; and
- Work to honesty and principle as vocation.

Eezy-peezy.

"Taught me everything"

John's teachings will have carried forward through many people's careers with knock-on, positive, effect. Says former Institute researcher and now 20-year resident of Vancouver Cheryl Chipps-Smith: "I came to the Institute as a university graduate. Then John raised me up. He taught me everything I know about writing. And I think of him every time I use an Oxford comma".

He was a tough but not hard taskmaster.

He had a deep softness to him, a sincere kindness, generosity of spirit, and not a little eccentricity. Witness the Institute's Auden House head office being painted in shades of purple soon after he became CEO.

Then there was his insistence on being called "Mr Kane-Berman" by colleagues, and only "John" when and if he had invited you to, a rare honour. As a brattish youngster, I chose to call him neither. It took him almost two years to realise I never addressed him by his preferred proper nouns. That amused him greatly, and so I became one of the invited ones. Throughout, though, I referred to him simply as "the King" to my colleagues.

John could be lots of fun, with a rascally, boyish humour.

We gave a presentation to Institute members in Durban one evening. Afterwards, JKB and I went off to the Royal Hotel's famous curry restaurant. There we may have had a beer. Or two. For it was a long evening – as there was much to discuss.

Afterwards we walked through darkened streets to our lodgings at the Durban Club. Impatient, John elected to climb the Club's perimeter back wall rather than go all the way to the front entrance. He scaled it, fell straight over the other side and onto his head. There was blood aplenty. He retired to his room.

Blood stains

We met for breakfast the next day. JKB would be flying straight back to the office while I had various engagements and would only get to Joburg the following day. But he hadn't been able to wash off the blood stains reddening his white mop.

Nothing to be done about that, he declared ... but we'd need a consistent explanation for his mishap. This, he proposed, should be that en route to the Club he'd tripped over a very large snake. As his public affairs manager, I protested.

"A snake in the Durban CBD! No-one will believe that!"

He just grinned: "Then we won't have deceived anyone. Stick to the line, Paul".

Easy for him to say. But when I got to the office, JKB's fiercely protective PA, Susi Eusman, summoned me at once. "What happened to the King in Durban? And don't you dare talk about some stupid snake!"

"It was a very scary snake," I mumbled.

"There is NO snake! You boys are not permitted to be out again without supervision!"

There would be other mirthful adventures. John was never boring.

He was a very private person, never happier than when surrounded by books in his exquisitely appointed home, with his beloved and wonderfully loving partner since 1972, Pierre Roestorf. Here we find John's anchor, his strongest support.

Despite some introversion, and despite waves of opposition to his viewpoints at different times, some of it downright nasty, John never shied from the public square. Through his career, he addressed about 700 audiences live (including the national cabinet), with print and electronic media appearances too many to count, here and across the world. His work wasn't without effect, to use English understatement, a thing whose power he appreciated.

Beyond formal political engagement

A Renaissance Man, his interest in societal progress and in the general welfare of his fellows went way beyond formal political engagement.

John served on the board of the New Era Schools Trust that pioneered non-racial schooling in South Africa; on the board of the Ithuba Trust; as chairman of the Robert Shapiro Trust; the Council of the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa; as deputy-chairman of the KwaZulu Natal Indaba.

A prime example of John's broad view of a citizen's duty, illustrative of the man himself, was his love for the African Children's Feeding Scheme, the ACFS, an organisation started by Fr Trevor Huddleston in 1945 that eventually fed tens of thousands of greater Johannesburg's most desperate children every day.

As a schoolboy he had organised and acted in plays he hosted in his parent's garage, with funds raised going to the ACFS. JKB never left the African Children's Feeding Scheme, continuing as a donor to the end, last visiting its operations across Gauteng's townships shortly before the Covid-19 lockdown. Says Adrian Wales, a director of the ACFS: 'John quietly walked alongside our children as an interested supporter for half a century. He bettered thousands of lives. We doff our cap.'

In paean after paean from his friends, we hear that John Kane-Berman was 'courageous'. But what do we really mean by that? It's an important question.

Imbongis in lofsang

It's especially important because the accolade 'courage' has become somewhat cheapened in recent years when applied by professional friends, one to another, for these are too often *imbongis in lofsang*. We should be wary of those who judge their own case.

For in any industry or sector or work type there is a human tendency to a homogenisation of ideas, with conventional wisdoms resulting. This comforts us. We all live, to greater or lesser degrees, in bubbles of our own conceptions of reality. How big or how constricted those bubbles are is always a choice.

Choosing too constricted a bubble – of those with whom to work based on shared narrow beliefs, or with whose ideas to consort – is not courage. You end up with an intense dialogue between people who have similar ideas but little or no dialogue between people who don't. That is a road to intellectual shrinkage and Hell.

A thoughtful man, the Institute's head of media relations, Michael Morris, noted in 2020: 'It is only possible to have a meaningful conversation ... by refusing to be hoodwinked or browbeaten, by cultivating habits of doubt and nurturing a healthy scepticism of popular wisdom. (That) does take courage.'

I think that's about right. John wasn't courageous because he took political positions sometimes at odds with other liberals. Such things might have been difficult, awkward and uncomfortable, but he always had support for them.

He was courageous because of a bigger bravery, based on imagination. This regarded all views as worthy of respect and exploration, with his only bottom line being that of human rights based on the dignity of adults being treated as free individual souls created by God.

Courage of imagination

This courage of imagination means a tolerance of political non-believers in any narrow ideological cause, provided they don't hurt anyone.

I was amazed to find at the Institute I joined in 1991, already eight years under JKB's captaincy, that most of his highly effective research staff weren't sympathetic to many of the boss's views. That didn't put them in any employment danger. JKB never used his Human Resources function as a tool of intellectual oppression. There was no "you go to the Gulag".

He could shift in policy stance, based on how he read the evidence and on what he thought could bring people more possibilities for advancement and liberty.

In the early 1970s, his *Financial Mail* colleagues saw his labour reporting sympathies as being to their left. When I came into his employ as a youngster, with the usual political simplicities of the young – in my case as a devout Reaganaut – he was clearly to my left, sympathetic to ideas of social democracy.

His views shifted somewhat over the decades, but John was never simplistic in thought. He thought for himself, and in his overall approach allowed for inquisitiveness. He wasn't just respectful of 'all ideas sincerely held', as he put it, but he allowed himself imagination. For John Kane-Berman to be pigeon-holed as an ideologue would be preposterous.

That isn't to claim that none of his viewpoints ever ossified, or that he couldn't be stubborn.

When he invited me to visit Pierre and him for tea at their home earlier this year, I went only after a negotiation. There was, you see, an institutional matter, close to us both, on which we profoundly disagreed. John refused to have it discussed further.

I said that if that was the case, then I'd be unable to see him because there'd be an elephant in the room blocking my view of him. John pondered that, and then decided: "Not to worry. We'll just sit outside!"

With Pierre's amazing hospitality, with tea-turned-into-wine, a thoroughly lekker afternoon ensued, with a gregarious John in top form. We shot the breeze properly. It would, unexpectedly, be my last audience with the King.

John Kane-Berman, the great *umfundisi*, is survived by Pierre; by three brothers, and by their families.

He is also survived by a legion of fired-up South African liberals. The positive effects of his influence will be with us for generations. For that, it is surely South Africa that is 'the lucky country'.

Institute communications director Hermann Pretorius notes as apposite the opening lines of the famous poem, *Generaal de Wet*, by Jan Celliers:

*Stil, broers
Daar gaan 'n man verby
Hy groet
En dis verlaas.
Daar's nog maar één soos hy
Bekyk hom goed.*

Tribute to John Kane-Berman⁸

4 August 2022

Paul Pereira

In his autobiography, *Between Two Fires*, John Stuart Kane Berman talks about writing as a presumptuous schoolboy to Alan Paton, congratulating him on a fine biography of Jan Hofmeyr.

Astonishingly, young Kane-Berman got a detailed response, where Paton says that most South African biographers fail to understand the nature of biography, which was “not to make a point, preach a policy, help a party, or aggrandise a man - it was primarily to tell the life of a human being”.

Today I will lay out the themes of the life of the person we come to honour.

You will find John Kane-Berman’s impressive chronological history, and get a good view on that, on the website of the South African Institute of Race Relations. John served the SAIRR well as CEO for 30 years from 1983. Until his death, he worked as an active public analyst. Their obituary’s salute to him is splendid, as are tributes and reflections issued by former colleagues and various organisations.

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It was a key insight that you can hardly have if you focus too hard on formal political developments and law – where everything is politics and politics is everything. Human existence is far too complex for that.

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⁸ Delivered at the funeral of John Stuart Kane-Berman, St George’s Anglican Church, Parktown, Johannesburg, 4 August 2022.

of a political struggle but he was always most drawn to the terror and personal tragedies that accompanied the use of violence – something he abhorred, no matter how it was dressed up as “noble” or “necessary”.

You see this emphasis on human rights as core to liberalism in JKB’s early post-apartheid work too.

Hence his campaign against the national unity government’s 1995 tightening of bail conditions that caused one-third of our prison population to consist of people not yet found guilty of any crime.

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In paean after paean from his friends, we hear that John Kane-Berman was "courageous". But what do we really mean by that? It's an important question.

A thoughtful man, the Institute's head of media relations, Michael Morris, noted in 2020 that:

"It is only possible to have a meaningful conversation ... by refusing to be hoodwinked or browbeaten, by cultivating habits of doubt and nurturing a healthy scepticism of popular wisdom. (That) does take courage".

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Apposite today is the famous poem by Jan Celliers:

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D: ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Condolences on the passing of John Kane-Berman

Democratic Alliance, 28 July 2022

Gwen Ngwenya (DA Head of Policy)

<https://www.da.org.za/2022/07/condolences-on-the-passing-of-john-kane-berman>

The Democratic Alliance is greatly saddened by the death of John Kane-Berman, who died in Johannesburg yesterday at the age of 76.

Mr Kane-Berman's life's work was in service of the principle of non-racialism. He believed in the power of ideas, excellence in research, and good writing. These he used to better South Africa.

As CEO of the then South African Institute of Race Relations from 1983 to 2014, he oversaw the SAIRR's prodigious and thorough research documenting the injustices and absurdities of apartheid and tracking South Africa's transition, including through its yearly comprehensive publication, the South Africa Survey.

He was very committed to the SAIRR's comprehensive bursary programme which enhanced the education of thousands in South Africa.

The ideas promoted by the SAIRR ensured the liberal basis of the South African Constitution adopted in 1996. His engagement with liberal ideas and non-racialism began early.

As President of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), he fought against racial segregation in universities. NUSAS under his leadership confronted government directly and elevated student politics to a key role-player in defeating apartheid.

As a young journalist for the Financial Mail, he played his part in exposing the apartheid government in its lies. Such was his influence that it is said that it was at his behest that Robert Kennedy visited South Africa in 1966 toward the anti-apartheid cause.

As a youth leader, he worked on Helen Suzman's 1966 campaign that enabled her political rise and that of the Progressive Party, the liberal party in which the Democratic Alliance has its roots.

Whether as a student, or as a journalist and then at the South African Institute of Race Relations, Kane-Berman made sure that there was nowhere for the apartheid government to hide from the facts about the consequences of its policies.

He continued to apply the same beliefs in the power of ideas and rigour in research to the challenges of post-apartheid South Africa.

Mr Kane-Berman played no small part in the demise of apartheid and in the persistence of the idea of the rule of law, non-racialism and protection of the vulnerable in the post-apartheid era.

The Democratic Alliance salutes his principled contribution to South Africa and offers its condolences to his partner Pierre Roestorf.

John Kane-Berman (Alston 1963)

Old Johannian Association, 28 July 2022

<https://www.stjohnscollege.co.za/news/2022/john-kane-berman>

The Johannian Community is saddened to learn of the passing of John Stuart Kane-Berman (Head of Alston 1963).

John received a first-class matric in 1962 before joining Sixth Form the following year. He was a Geoffrey Cherrington Bursary winner and was heavily involved in the literary, historical and political affairs at St John's.

He was the co-editor of *The Johannian* magazine in 1962 and 1963, to which he contributed many poems, articles and stories. He was also the secretary of the SJC Literary Society and Chairman of the History Society during those years. He was the Treasurer of the St John's African Education Fund under then Headmaster Deane Yates.

John left St John's to study at Wits and later Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He embarked on a career in journalism, writing for the Financial Mail and publishing four books, including "Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction and Silent Revolution".

In 1983 he was appointed the CEO of the SA Institute for Race Relations, a position he held until his retirement in 2014.

He was the recipient of the Golden Eagle Award in 2005 for tirelessly promoting constitutional and economic liberalism, providing guidance in current affairs to develop a free and open society and championing a multiracial and democratic South Africa.

John is survived by his partner, Pierre Roestorf, and extended family.

The Helen Suzman Foundation remembers John Kane-Berman

HSF, 4 August 2022

<https://hsf.org.za/news/press-releases/tribute-the-hsf-remembers-john-kane-berman>

It is with great sadness that the Helen Suzman Foundation records the passing of John Kane-Berman. Francis Antonie, HSF's former director, writes the tribute below.

John will be remembered not only as the CEO of the South African Institute of Race Relations, a position he held from 1983 until his retirement in 2014, but as a fierce and vocal defender of Liberalism. In both these roles he achieved a great deal. But his successes were also met with a range of hostile criticism coming, initially, from the right of the political spectrum, and later from the left.

John was rooted in Johannesburg, a city he loved.

After completing his school education at St John's College, he proceeded to Wits University, where he soon gained a reputation as an inspired, and inspiring, student leader, eventually becoming SRC President, and NUSAS Chairman. It was in those years that his liberalism was shaped and given full expression in his defence of the Rule of Law and in his commitment to non-racialism. He was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, which took him to Oxford, where he was exposed to some of the economic thinking which he would put to good use on his return to South Africa when he embarked on a career in journalism, writing for the *Financial Mail*.

Always a brilliant speaker, his experience of writing, under pressure, completed his education. He would transfer those acquired skills to his role as CEO of the SAIRR, always demanding from young staffers the exacting standards he had been trained to deliver and to expect from others. His years as a journalist, coupled with the publication of four significant books, equipped him to enter national political and policy debates.

His arrival at the SAIRR coincided with a period of great political and social turmoil. This was the era of the Tricameral Parliament (with its effective exclusion of Africans from the central political structures of the country), of sanctions and disinvestment campaigns, of the emergence of the UDF as a significant political force, of quite widespread violence, all leading eventually to the imposition of the states of emergency. Meanwhile, the Institute was itself faced with serious challenges, both financially and strategically, in how it should respond to the various crises.

But these issues not only challenged the larger liberal community, but indeed confronted the country at large.

The first was related to the sanctions and disinvestment campaigns. These were ultimately predicated on the belief that apartheid had flourished because of the capitalist system prevailing in South Africa. In order to overthrow apartheid, the argument went, it was thus necessary to undermine its capitalist system. This argument had informed the thinking of both the SACP and the ANC in exile, and a broad range of actors and activists in South Africa. It was, tragically, an era of "great simplification" and debates rarely if ever moved beyond first principles. That apartheid was recognized as a great evil was never in dispute, but liberals had always placed their hopes in the

powerful forces at work in the economy which allowed the service sector to develop and which had already begun to undermine apartheid.

John entered the debate with great energy, and sought to provide a more coherent response to the sanctions campaigns based on his own earlier work. He voiced his real concerns that the campaigns, if successful, would devastate the economy, and put back real reforms by a generation. These views were greeted by many with incomprehension and by others with outrage. Thus began what Jill Wentzel would later characterize as the “Liberal Slideaway”.

Another area which generated much controversy and anger amongst liberals related to the work of the Institute in monitoring and reporting on the ongoing violence in Natal, which some commentators had already then labelled a localised civil war. As with so many comparable regional and national conflicts, the very acts of monitoring and reporting become, or are seen to become, acts of partisanship. In the discussions which took place then and subsequently, it was clear that violence had become the preferred manner of engagement. John was sanguine about the violence which had so scarred KZN a year ago when I raised the question of its relationship to the violence of three decades ago. He also had no illusions about the role which elites play in orchestrating and managing violence.

John was not an optimist. He shared Alan Paton's disdain for optimism, which Paton had regarded as a very unChristian emotion, and a rather superficial and superfluous one at that. Instead, like Paton he chose to be hopeful about life and the future of South Africa. What underpinned his sense of hope was his belief in liberalism, with the centrality of the individual, derived from his deep understanding of the four Gospels, and his faith.

These sustained him through his life, as did the support and love of his life's partner, Pierre Roestorf, to whom we offer our deepest condolences.

May John rest in peace.

John Kane-Berman

Free Market Foundation, 29 July 2022

<https://www.freemarketfoundation.com/article-view/john-kane-berman>

The Free Market Foundation (FMF) has taken note of the passing of John Kane-Berman, the former CEO of the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), with which the FMF has had a long and friendly relationship.

Mr Kane-Berman has addressed the members and supporters of the FMF at multiple events, sharing his unique insights on South African politics. Most recently, Mr Kane-Berman represented the IRR at an FMF panel discussion on 5 February 2020 about the history of South Africa's liberal movement alongside the Democratic Alliance's Gwen Ngwenya and the FMF's Martin van Staden.

"John Kane-Berman was the undisputed face of classical liberalism in South Africa from the 1980s to the mid-2010s. In his many years of intellectual activism, he stood strong against liberal slideaway and conservative capture. Our fledgling movement is poorer without him. The FMF expresses its deepest condolences to the loved ones Mr Kane-Berman leaves behind," said Martin van Staden on behalf of the FMF's Executive Committee.

Sakeliga pays tribute to John Kane-Berman

Sakeliga⁹, July 28, 2022

<https://sakeliga.co.za/en/sakeliga-pays-tribute-to-john-kane-berman/>

Sakeliga is saddened by the passing of John Kane-Berman, former chief executive of the Institute of Race Relations.

Sakeliga drew on Kane-Berman's insights and his work at the IRR and was honoured to host him on several occasions as a speaker since 2011. Kane-Berman could be depended upon to offer incisive and erudite social analysis, not swept along in fashionable political trends or fleeting government visions and plans. Over the course of many decades, before and after 1994, he steadfastly maintained his distance from the politics of the day and secured the IRR as an independent institute supporting independent thought and reform.

We take encouragement from Kane-Berman's kind words for Sakeliga's work over the years and will remember him with fondness and respect.

⁹ See also Sakeliga tweet on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Sakeliga/status/1552660708705423360>

Solidarity Movement mourns the death of John Kane-Berman

Solidarity, 28 July 2022

<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/death-of-john-kaneberman-mourned--solidarity>

The Solidarity Movement mourns the death of John Kane-Berman and expressed condolences to his next of kin today.

According to Solidarity Movement Chairperson Flip Buys, several institutions of the Solidarity Movement had regular contact with Kane-Berman, and his opinions and input were always held in high regard and considered extremely valuable.

“Kane-Berman will be remembered for devoting his life to opposing the abuse of state power, which was an invaluable contribution,” Buys said.

John Kane-Berman remembered by the Rhodes Class of 1969

The Rhodes Scholarships for Southern Africa, Email to Pierre Roestorf, 12 August 2022

Dear Pierre

As previously advised, we shared the news of John's passing with the international Rhodes Scholar community, together with some of the articles and obituaries written about John, by Francis Antonie and Paul Pereira et al.

The Rhodes Class Leaders (1969), Bob Rae & Dick Menaker, have circulated this information to their class. Please see below the communique and response from classmate George Laurence QC.

You remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Warm regards

Beverley Johnson

Regional Manager

Email: beverley.johnson@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk, www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk

Richard Menaker, rgmenaker@hotmail.com, 12 August 2022

Dear Member of the Rhodes Class of 1969:

David Mungall of Rhodes house has conveyed the message that John Kane-Berman (Transvaal & Pembroke 1969) died last month in South Africa. David sent along the link below to an eloquent obituary obtained through PoliticsWeb tracing the path of John's remarkable life as an anti-apartheid activist.

Our classmate George Laurence had this to say about John—

"I knew him quite well from before the time that we were elected as Rhodes scholars [from South Africa]. He was, to be truthful, one of my heroes as a man who for 40 years argued tirelessly for the tenets of a properly functional multi-racial democracy. For the first 20 years his target was Apartheid South Africa; the next 20 the equally flawed and ruinously corrupt ANC regime. He never wavered in his defence of the interests of the poorest people who were so badly let down by both regimes (and continue to be).

"... he was through and through an utterly admirable man whose contribution to his country in my view equalled Mandela's though in a way history won't recognise. It was ever thus. He fought the good fight from a standpoint of principle and an unflinching confrontation of things as they are the better to expound how they might be improved."

Our cohort included certain individuals elected to the scholarship because they had a calling in human liberty. It is not an easy or even an appreciated mission at the time; the obstacles are daunting. Looking back and over time, I have come to understand that being among such colleagues was a privilege of the Rhodes experience.

And a good reason for humility.

Monday 8th August 2022

Mr Pierre Roestorf
17 Drakens
Montpark Drive
Montgomery Park
JOHANNESBURG
2195
SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Mr Roestorf,

I am deeply saddened to learn of the recent passing of your husband, John Kane-Berman. On behalf of the whole College, may I express my deepest condolences to you and your family at this difficult time.

I know that John maintained an interest in Pembroke and held close relationships with other members of our community. We are pleased to have access to the warm memories of Oxford and Pembroke that John records in his memoir. His significant achievements both while here and in South Africa in the decades that followed make us immensely proud to call him a member of our community.

Our thoughts are with you at this very sad time.

With deepest condolences,



E: MEDIA

Former IRR CEO John Kane-Berman dies aged 76

News24¹⁰, 29 July 2022

<https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/former-irr-ceo-john-kane-berman-dies-aged-76-20220728>

The former CEO of the Institute of Race Relations, John Kane-Berman, has died after a short illness.

Current IRR CEO, John Endres says Kane-Berman left behind a profound legacy.

Kane-Berman is survived by his partner, Pierre Roestorf, and extended family.

The former CEO of the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), John Kane-Berman, has died after a short illness. He died on Wednesday night at the age of 76.

The IRR said in a statement Kane-Berman was born in Johannesburg in 1946, the eldest of five boys.

After attending St John's College, the University of the Witwatersrand and Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, he embarked on a career in journalism at the Financial Mail.

During his time at there, Kane-Berman wrote his famous book on the 1976 uprising titled "Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction".

He wrote four books with "Silent Revolution", published in 1989, regarded as the most influential in detailing how the resistance of ordinary people had become an important and influential factor in defeating the apartheid system.

In 1983, Kane-Berman was approached by Jill and Ernie Wentzel to become the IRR's fifth CEO.

He remained in this position until his retirement in 2014.

Current IRR CEO John Endres said Kane-Berman left behind a profound legacy.

"His brave and unstinting commitment to the liberal cause inspired legions of South African liberals, myself included.

"John Kane-Berman was known for his eloquent presentation, exceptional memory, thorough command of his subject matter and exemplary discipline.

"He was insistent in demanding that nothing less than true non-racialism and personal freedom would allow the dignity and prosperity of all South Africans to flourish," said Endres.

Kane-Berman is survived by his partner, Pierre Roestorf, and extended family.

¹⁰ Afrikaans version on Netwerk24 at <https://www.netwerk24.com/netwerk24/nuus/mense/oud-hoof-van-sairv-sterf-op-76-jarige-ouderdom-20220728>.

John Kane-Berman mourned

Daily News, 5 August 2022

<https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/kwazulu-natal/john-kane-berman-mourned-e606eab1-b02a-4e2c-a766-4f47e184f6f2>

Durban — Tributes are pouring in for the former chief executive of the SA Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), John Kane-Berman, who died recently.

He was chief executive of the SAIRR from 1983 until his retirement in 2014.

Francis Antonie, former director of the Helen Suzman Foundation, said Kane-Berman held the position at the SAIRR as a fierce and vocal defender of liberalism.

Antonie said Kane-Berman's successes were met with hostile criticism from the right of the political spectrum, and later, from the left.

"It was in those years that his liberalism was shaped and given full expression in his defence of the rule of law and in his commitment to non-racialism.

"Oxford exposed him to some of the economic thinking which he would put to good use on his return to South Africa when he embarked on a career in journalism, writing for the Financial Mail," Antonie said.

Kane-Berman was described as a brilliant speaker, and his experience with writing completed his education, said Antonie.

"His years as a journalist, coupled with the publication of four books, equipped him to enter national political and policy debate."

Kane-Berman's arrival at the SAIRR coincided with a period of turmoil.

This was the era of the Tricameral Parliament (with its effective exclusion of Africans from the central political structures of the country), of sanctions and disinvestment campaigns, of the emergence of the UDF as a significant political force, of widespread violence, all leading to the imposition of states of emergency, said Antonie.

Meanwhile, the institute was faced with challenges related to the sanctions and disinvestment campaigns.

Antonie said these were predicated on the belief that apartheid flourished because of the capitalist system in South Africa. To overthrow apartheid, the argument went, it was necessary to undermine its capitalist system.

Kane-Berman was rooted in Johannesburg. He attended Wits University, where he gained a reputation as an inspired, and inspiring, student leader, eventually becoming SRC president, and chairperson of the National Union of South African Students.

SAIRR's John Kane-Berman dies, aged 76

TimesLive, 28 July 2022

<https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2022-07-28-sairrs-john-kane-berman-dies-aged-76/>

John Kane-Berman's life was about opposition to the abuse of power and how its misuse hurt the most defenceless people, says the Institute of Race Relations.

John Kane-Berman's life was about opposition to the abuse of power and how its misuse hurt the most defenceless people, says the Institute of Race Relations.

Former CEO of the Institute of Race Relations John Kane-Berman has died after a short illness. He was 76.

IRR CEO John Endres said Kane-Berman left a “profound legacy”, having been “a fearless proponent of liberalism before, during and after SA’s democratic transition”.

Kane-Berman was born in Johannesburg in 1946. He was educated at St John’s College, the University of the Witwatersrand and at Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. After a career beginning in journalism in the 1960s, he became the Institute’s CEO in 1983, remaining in that position until 2014.

Kane-Berman's life was about opposition to the abuse of power and how its misuse hurt the most defenceless people, said the IRR.

“His work was always informed by an unshakeable commitment to freedom. This was the golden thread that ran through his work both before 1994 and after,” said the IRR.

“Kane-Berman was known for his eloquent presentation, exceptional memory, thorough command of his subject matter and exemplary discipline. He was insistent in demanding that nothing less than true nonracialism and personal freedom would allow the dignity and prosperity of all South Africans to flourish.”

Kane-Berman is survived by his partner Pierre Roestorf, and by his extended family.

Former Institute of Race Relations CEO John Kane-Berman dies¹¹

Business Day, 28 July 2022

<https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2022-07-28-former-institute-of-race-relations-ceo-john-kane-berman-dies/>

Apartheid opponent John Kane-Berman, who headed the SA Institute of Race Relations (IRR) for more than three decades, has died.

Kane-Berman, who was 76, is survived by partner Pierre Roestorf, and by his extended family, the classical liberal think-tank said in a statement.

Kane-Berman was born in Johannesburg in 1946. He was educated at St John's College, the University of the Witwatersrand and at Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

He began his career in journalism in the 1960s, and became the institute's CEO in 1983, remaining in that position until 2014.

"Where many peer organisations failed to survive the transition to democracy, he steered the institute to a renewed relevance," the institute said.

IRR CEO John Endres said Kane-Berman left a "profound legacy", having been "a fearless proponent of liberalism before, during and after SA's democratic transition".

Endres added that Kane-Berman's "brave and unstinting commitment to the liberal cause inspired legions of South African liberals, myself included".

¹¹ See also "Voormalige hoof van IRV sterf", Maroela Media, 28 July 2022 at <https://maroelamedia.co.za/nuus/sa-nuus/voormalige-hoof-van-irv-sterf/#>

F: PODCASTS

South Africa loses a legend

Daily Friend, 28 July 2022

(Nicholas Lorimer and Chris Hattingh)

Listen at <https://dailyfriend.co.za/podcast-shows/>

Remembering John Kane-Berman

Chai FM (Johannesburg), 2 August 2022

(Sara Gon and Anthea Jeffery)

Listen at <https://www.chaifm.com/podcast/2022-08-02-dr-anthea-jeffery-remembering-john-kane-berman-of-the-irr/>

Two crickets in a thorn tree

Daily Friend, 5 August 2022

(Nicholas Lorimer and Gabriel Crouse)

Listen at <https://dailyfriend.co.za/2022/08/08/two-crickets-the-conservative-iceberg-sa-edition/>

The legacy of John Kane-Berman

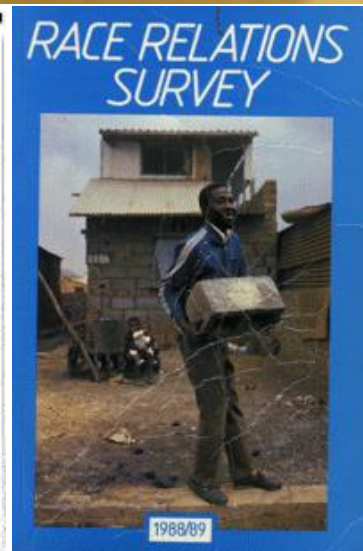
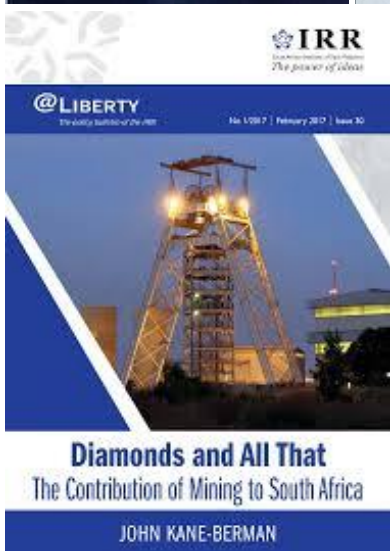
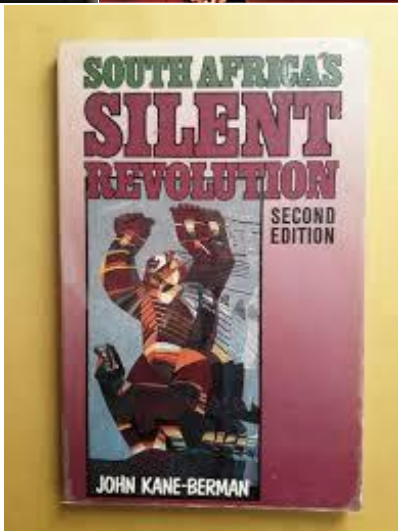
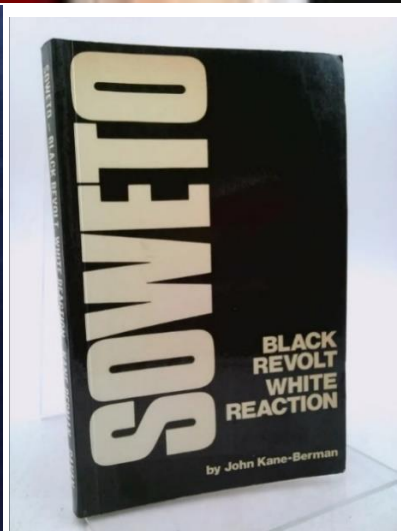
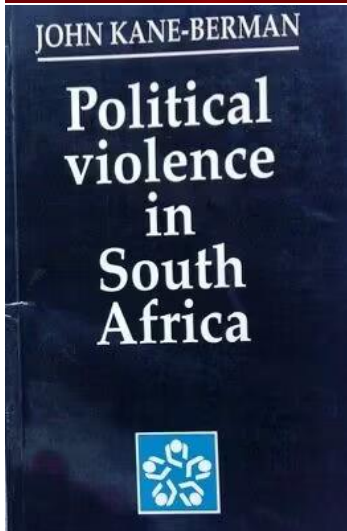
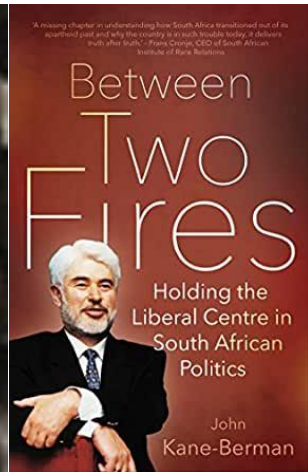
Solutions with David Ansara, 7 August 2022

(David Ansara with John Endres, CEO, SA Institute of Race Relations; Anthea Jeffery, Head of Policy Research, SA Institute of Race Relations; Paul Pereira, WHAM Media; Martin van Staden, Legal Fellow, Sakeliga; Temba Nolutshungu, Director, Free Market Foundation; Piet le Roux, CEO, Sakeliga)

Listen at

<https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3luZm0vcy81ODkzZTgwOC9wb2RjYXN0L3Jzcw/episode/YjVhMGY1ODQtMDUzMi00NzJkLThkYWYtNmY2YzJkN2VkOTew?hl=en-ZA&ved=2ahUKewiyxrCo7cP5AhUkQUEAHRrODNMQjrkEegQIBhAF&ep=6>

Watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WchVXPEw7kA>



Compiled by Paul Pereira, 13 August 2022, Johannesburg, paulpereira@gmail.com