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## The Emotional Labour of Loving Thy Neighbour

### Miscegenation, Emotions and the Law in Early and High Apartheid-Era South Africa

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## **The Emotional Labour of Loving Thy Neighbour: Miscegenation, Emotional Practices and the Law in Apartheid South Africa**

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The Immorality Act outlawed sexual relations between white individuals and people of other races in apartheid South Africa. Originally passed in Union-era South Africa in 1927, the Act prohibited ‘illicit carnal intercourse between Europeans and natives’. In 1950, the Act was extended to include intercourse between ‘Europeans’ and all ‘non-Europeans’.

Through a reading of a selection of court cases brought under the Act after its amendment in 1950, some with appurtenant press coverage, I probe the emotional practices (Scheer 2012) of the defendants involved, both in their being ‘caught in the act’ and in their subsequent interaction with the authorities and the legal system.

Whilst the Act itself only outlawed acting upon a mobilisation of interracial sexual desire, an analysis of the ‘emotion work’ (Ahmed 2004) carried out by racial discourse found in parliamentary debates, pro-apartheid press coverage, and judicial reasoning, reveals that the Act was intended to also discourage the more complex emotional practice of interracial love.

The argument is, that individuals prosecuted under the Act were aware of this paradox and were therefore forced to navigate within the frail intersection of emotional practices, apartheid discourse and the law. The defendants employed different strategies of ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 1983), sometimes retrospectively, with the hope of affecting the subsequent legal or political outcome of their case. Such emotional navigation, both successful and unsuccessful, or completely absent, appears to have born influence on factors such as individual culpability and sentencing, the decisions on which could turn out to be either advantageous or disadvantageous to the respective defendant.

Ultimately, the cases in question encourage a discussion on the nature and durability of the apartheid state as an ‘emotional regime’ (Reddy 2001) in which emotional norms were strictly drawn and enforced along racial lines. **291 words.**

### **Biographical Statement**

Jagger Andersen Kirkby is a doctoral student at the Department of History at Lund University, Sweden. The above paper constitutes part of his work on his on-going doctoral project with the working title ‘Segregation and Sentiment: The Emotional Politics of Apartheid, c. 1948-1990’. His research interests include the modern history of South Africa, race and racism, the history and theory of emotions, segregation, and postcolonial theory.