Segregation steadily developed from around the end of the first fifty years of Jan van Riebeeck’s settlement. During the time of Adam Tas and Henning Huising’s campaign against Governor Willem Adrian van der Stel, when they called for his impeachment, the issue of racism came to the fore. The two had made allegations of corruption and despotism against the Governor and together with other signatories they called for his removal as governor. When more than three times as many people in the colony wrote a counter petition to that of Adam Tas and his supporters, showing support for Governor van der Stel, then Tas, Huising and their ilk responded to the VOC saying that those petitioning should be ignored as they were “the black brood among us.” They also referenced the fact that Willem was of mixed European and Asian ancestry as his grandmother was the daughter of an Asian slave. 410

The Internet-based First Fifty Years Project411 collating Cape of Good Hope records is an amazing website painstakingly put together with the most comprehensive and easily navigable database, by a dedicated team led by its founder Delia Robertson and with the participation by one of South Africa’s best micro-historian researchers, Mansell Upham. It is an invaluable historical and genealogical research tool which demonstrates just how much of an integrated though class stratified society the early Cape Colony was before racism slowly but steadily took hold and entrench itself.

By 1950, with the introduction of the Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act, Abolition of Mixed Marriages Act and Immorality Act, the racist trajectory had reached the beginning of its pinnacle when for the first time the state attempted to classify the entire population into fixed groups based on the false notion of race. Scientifically, there is no such thing as separate "races" — all human beings belong to the same race.412

In South Africa, race classification determined people’s voting rights, where they could reside, where they could be educated, where they could buy or sell property, their social status, the jobs for which they could apply, the size of their pension and the quality of their children’s education.413

This short chapter simply exposes, particularly for new generations who did not live through this racist and humiliating experience that devastated many lives, the clinical instruments used to classify people and how the term ‘Coloured’ was at the centre of this system. Perhaps when people are able to look at the path of our history and heritage as explained in the previous chapters and then look at this Nazi-type racist social engineering it may be easier to see why expressions like ‘proudly Coloured’, ‘Bruin-Ou’ or ‘Kullid’ are not ‘cool’ and indeed are found to be unacceptable. Likewise with the use of terms like ‘First Nation’ and ‘plurality of Nations’ which were the concepts of Dr Verwoerd that underpinned Apartheid ideology. The ideology of ‘Separate Development’ which argued that South Africa was a constellation of separate nations each entitled to self-determination was more commonly known as Apartheid and it is inscribe as a ‘Crime against Humanity’ in international law, known as the Rome Statute of the
International Criminal Court. We are challenged to rid ourselves of this racist Nazi past and define our cultural heritage as Africans with a distinguishable cultural heritage and history, with untainted terminology of which we can be proud.

The Population Registration Act became law and the classification of whites and coloureds in Cape Town took off in 1957, carried out by Electoral Officers. In January 1958, a Population Registration Office was opened. My moment of truth was reached in 1972 when I first started working as a 16 year old and had to register with the department of Home Affairs to obtain an ID book. I had been born in 1956 and was passed from pillar to post through three foster homes and then placed in a Catholic welfare children’s home and industrial trade’s school. Many youngsters from so-called ‘in-between’ or more crudely ‘halfnaatjie’ families turning 16 at that time were shocked at their treatment and the implications of getting identity documents. If you were fair, and mixed with and were acceptable to whites, you could easily pass for white on condition that you practically denounced your family and friends who were classified as ‘Coloured’. Many did this and never again communicated or associated with their own kith and kin. It was decision time!

Many chose their families and cultural heritage over being pass-whites, but besides the humiliations they endured at the hands of officialdom, they also often were ridiculed in society and forced into the position of being between the wire and the wall. In Cape Town there were specific neighbourhoods called ‘grey areas’ where the majority of these ‘in-between’ people lived their wretched lives.

Males had the added challenge of doing military service against their own people if they chose to pass as white, or possibly facing imprisonment or worse if they chose not to do service but rather to fight the system and maintain their family loyalty and cultural identity. They faced arrest and interrogation and could easily just disappear.

For fair skinned ‘Coloured’ youngsters it was considered madness to not take the opportunity to pass. But many did not take that so-called opportunity and suffered for it. Dark complexioned youngsters had other kinds of problems, such as being abandoned by their families. Children’s homes and institutions all had children of ‘dubious race’. The lighter children of colour were fostered out as ‘white children’ to white families and darker children separated from white single mothers were placed with ‘Coloured’ families. Children’s home institutions became half-way houses for these types of cases. These things were not talked about and even in the ‘new South Africa’ the world of ‘in-between’ people and their Apartheid experience is not mentioned. This experience was similar to that of the aborigine children who were taken away from their parents.

There were also children caught between other worlds: in the Black-Coloured interface, the Black-Chinese interface and Black-Indian interface. There were also children born to whites who were what were called ‘throwback kids’ where the old ancestry of colour visited the current generation. In their communities they were called ‘whitey’ or ‘blackie’ or worse. Each had their pain caused by social engineering and Nazi-type race classification. Classification as ‘Coloured’ was not as simple as it may seem to some.

When one looks at the definitions of what was supposed to be ‘Coloured’ it was as clear as mud. Many also succumbed to a very well thought out indoctrination process launched in the late 1970s by PW Botha, who had already experimented with it in the Cape Coloured Corps of the SADF while he was
Defence Minister. Botha created the ‘Brown Consciousness’ movement to counter the ‘Black Consciousness Movement’.

It had really shaken up the National Party when in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Black Consciousness Movement hit the political scene. The core message was that all people of colour, regardless of degrees of complexion or affiliation with ethnic groups or whether classified as Native, Coloured, Indian or Chinese, should consider them Black and say “I am Black and I am proud of it.” This was revolutionary and it sent fear and shockwaves through the white community. This kind of “Black unity” preached by the charismatic Steve Biko was seen as particularly dangerous and more so when it sparked off strikes, student protests and the 1976/77 national youth uprising.

So Botha as part of something they called a ‘total strategy’, hatched an indoctrination plan to be pushed particularly in rural ‘Coloured’ schools and among ‘Coloured’ people in military, police and civil service families, and also through Dutch Reformed churches and Evangelical and Pentecostal church congregations. The NP carefully cultivated the notion of ‘Bruine Afrikaner’ and the concept of ‘Bruin Man’. It found fertile ground. The NP also decided to ditch the term ‘Bantu’ which had replaced ‘Native’ and then deliberately decided to use the term ‘Black’ in an ethnically exclusive manner instead. And virtually every person in South Africa became a sucker and accepted it. Even the ANC which had its own antagonisms to the Black Consciousness Movement, began to use the ethnic version of ‘Black’ and this is how the Apartheid Regime pulled off its greatest propaganda success. Soon everyone was talking about ‘Bruin-Ous’ and ‘dangerous blacks’ or ‘darkies’.

Regardless of the muddled definition of ‘Coloured and the huge amounts of manipulation in the arena of identity, it was virtually impossible to come up with a stereotype for ‘Coloured’ simply based on appearance. So another stereotype was created whereby the ‘Coloured’ person was projected as a clown, a drunk, having loose morals, and a party animal always with a gangster edge. It was difficulty to define a ‘Coloured’ person by complexion and features or type of hair because every shade of pale or dark was present and every feature of the world was present in ‘Coloured’ communities - African, Southeast Asian, Indian and European features. It was easier for the Apartheid masters of our universe to paint ‘Coloured’ people as being the jokers in the pack. The notion of a ‘Coloured race’ was as mad as was exclusivity or singularity. It was all nonsense and nothing proved this better than the legislation itself.

DEFINITIONS: Population Registration Act of 1950

A White person is one who in appearance is, or who is generally accepted as, a white person, but does not include a person who although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a Coloured person.

A Native is a person who is in fact or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa.

A Coloured person is a person who is not a white person, nor a native.

Section 5. (1) Every person whose name is included in the register shall be classified by the Director as a white person, a coloured person or a native, as the case may be, and every coloured person and every native whose name is so included shall be classified by the Director according to the ethnic or other group to which he belongs.
Section 5. (2) The Governor-General may by proclamation in the Gazette prescribe and define the ethnic or other groups into which coloured persons and natives shall be classified in terms of sub-section (1), and may in like manner amend or withdraw any such proclamation.

In terms of Section 5 (2) the different ethnic groups of Coloured were established and numerically coded for ID Number purposes as:

- Cape Coloured (01)
- Cape Malay (02)
- Griqua / Nama (03)
- Chinese (04)
- Indian (05)
- Other Asian (06)
- Other Coloured (07)

A process was established whereby people could appeal to have their classification changed and an Office for Race Classification was established to have oversight of the classification system. A re-classification board was empowered to reclassify people according to such criteria such as outer appearance, general acceptance and social standing. Officials were authorised to make a determination using characteristics such as the person's head hair; characteristics of the person's other hair; skin colour; facial features; home language and especially the knowledge of Afrikaans; area where the person lived, the person's friends and acquaintances; employment; socioeconomic status; eating and drinking habits. In the process, people endured preposterous indignities.

The Population Registration Act of 1950 was underpinned by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, which made it illegal for a white person to marry a person of another race. With the enactment of the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950, it also became a crime for a white person and a person of another race to have sexual intercourse.

The Group Areas act of 1950 spelt out more detailed definitions of the groups envisaged by the Apartheid system: DEFINITIONS OF GROUPS: Group Areas Act 1950; Section 2(1) as amended in 1966

For the purposes of this ACT, there shall be the following Groups:

(a) **WHITE GROUP** where a WHITE person is one who is in appearance obviously WHITE and not generally accepted as COLOURED or who is generally accepted as WHITE and is not obviously NON-WHITE provided that a person shall not be classified as a WHITE person if one of his natural parents has been classified as a COLOURED or a Native.

(b) a **NATIVE GROUP** where a NATIVE is a person who is, or is generally accepted as, a member of any ABORIGINAL RACE or TRIBE of Africa.

(c) a **COLOURED GROUP** in which shall be included:

(i) any person WHO IS NOT a member of the WHITE group or the NATIVE group;
(ii) any woman, to whichever race, tribe or class she may belong, between whom and a person who is, in terms of sub-paragraph (i), a member of the Coloured group, there exists a marriage, or who cohabits with such a person.

(iii) any white man between whom and a woman who in terms of sub-paragraph (i) is a member of the Coloured group, there exists a marriage, or who cohabits with such a woman.

After a while the Apartheid state, urged on by an ideologue who really hated Indians, Eben Donges, decided to create a fourth classification silo for ‘Asiatic’, so Indians, Chinese and ‘Other Asian’ were removed from the category ‘Coloured’ and given a separate silo of ‘race’ identification.

This then was the basis for using the term ‘Coloured’ under Apartheid and it has remained the basis for the ANC government to continue discriminatory practices associated with Apartheid, even although the legislation that gave birth to the political term ‘Coloured’ had been repealed.

Although the post-Apartheid government of the ANC repealed all the Apartheid legislation which formed the basis for using the term ‘Coloured’, the ANC government kept the segregation of Africans alive by refusing to recognise that ‘Coloured’ people had as much right to their African identity being recognised as had Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Sotho people, et al.

The ANC not only breathed new life into the term ‘Coloured’ but they also spoke of ‘Coloured’ as being a non-African minority and used the phrase – “Blacks in general and Africans in particular”, meaning that ‘Coloureds’ were second class non-Africans to those using the Apartheid ethnic label ‘Blacks’ who were regarded as the only Africans. In fact some even refer to those they perceive to be ‘Coloured non-Africans’ as ‘those BIGs’ or ‘BC blacks’. In so doing, the ANC government and the party kept the Apartheid theory and practice alive. They also through this flawed thinking that Egyptians, Cape Verdeans, Moroccans, Malagasy and other peoples of Africa were not real Africans. The ANC had thus embraced the kind of ‘race’ based thinking that one would associate with Apartheid and Nazi Germany. Subsequently other parties like the EFF also began to parrot this. One party leader actually said, “An African is only someone who looks like me”.

The ANC also betrayed its older heritage, which recognised as African, all people with at least one ancestor that was indigenous to the continent. This interpretation dates from its 1919 conference where it followed the lead of organisations like the African Politican Organisation and the Kimberley African League in adopting the term African to replace “South African Native” but by the 1960s the ANC had adopted into its way of thinking and speaking the same approach of the Apartheid regime in talking of four so-called ‘race’ silos. It is noteworthy that both the APO and KAL were predominantly made up of a membership of Khoi and Camissa people who expressed themselves as being Africans. The Apartheid construct of ‘Native’ was now ‘African’. The progression from there had been that the Apartheid Regime tried to replace ‘Native’ with the term ‘Bantu’ and then replaced ‘Bantu’ with an ethnic version of the word ‘Black’.

Until 1958 ‘Coloured’ people like James La Guma and Johnny Gomas held both membership and executive positions in the ANC as did arguably ‘Coloured’ people like Walter Sisulu and ZK Matthews. What exactly was it that separated people into two different types of ‘Coloured’? The only answer is the decision by the ANC to wield classification as arbitrarily as the Apartheid state had done and ignore the individual right and group rights to self-determination of identity as Africans. What had started out simply as a tactic by the ANC to create Congresses along the lines of the Apartheid silos for mobilisation
purposes, ended up becoming an entrenched political culture. By 1985 with the rise of the UDF and MDM this serious error was rolled back, and the ANC re-embraced the 1919 position; and to give emphasis to this roll-back the four-spoked wheel on the ANC logo was rightly changed to the multi-spoked mine-shaft wheel. But once in power the ANC quickly reverted to the Apartheid style position that was popularised in the 1960s based on narrow ethno-nationalism that became a dominant tendency in the party.

In 1955 when the ANC, SAIC were joined by the Congress of Democrats as a white liberal-left formation, pressure was put on anti-Apartheid leaders classified as ‘Coloured’ to follow a likewise path and a number of people with diverse political views formed the SA Coloured People’s Congress (initially named ‘Organisation’). Both within the SACPO and outside of the SACPO not all were comfortable with this approach because it mirrored the Apartheid regime’s classificatory system. However those who argued that this was simply a temporal tactic to get people working together across ‘race’ lines won the day. However the whole separatist multi-racial, rather than non-racial project fell apart within 9 years and the SACPO was abandoned in exile. In the beginning such politically different personalites such as Reg September, Richard van der Ross and Barney Desai were all founders of the SACPO.

What I illustrate here is that two opposing nationalist movements both upheld and manipulated this notion of ‘Coloured’ as being separate from African. Post 1994 it was a convenience that the term ‘Coloured’ was allowed to just fester on, regardless of many voices among the December 1st movement and the Khoena Revivalists, calling on the ANC to honour its obligation to give back to those classified ‘Coloured’ their African identity. These were not people on the far left, but were ANC and UDF members. This was the roots of the Camissa and Khoi movements that have gained in broad popularity since then.

As already shown in the previous chapters, there is a political history to the term ‘Coloured’ as a term imposed by others on a range of people herded under one politicised umbrella simply to impose racist decisions, controls and racial classification. We initially saw how the term ‘Coloured’ slowly evolved under the 19th century British colonial administration as a catch-all term to replace the previous division using three terms – Slave, Free Blacks and Hottentots. Initially it was simply a case of using the word ‘Other’ or ‘Mixed’ alongside “Hottentot”, as in the 1865 census. At one stage the term ‘Coloured’ meant all people of colour, both ‘Native’ and ‘Other’ in official administration documents. In fact when one peruses old documentation from the mid-19th century until 1910 one sees the interchangeable use of mixed, other and ‘Coloured’. In the census reports for 1891 and 1904, there were four racial classifications–Natives, Whites, Hottentots and Coloureds.

Depending also on who did the registering many pale Camissa people (‘Coloured’) were registered as Europeans. But in the run up to establishing the Union of South Africa we are told by Zuberi and Khalfani\(^\text{417}\) that in 1903 a census committee sat down in Pretoria and deliberated at a mini conference as to who should be classified as what in a British South Africa after the English victory in the Boer War. By the 1904 census the view of creating the ‘Coloured’ category and who all should fall under this category was established, but it was only implemented in the first post-Union od South Africa census in 1911.

The new single silo of ‘Coloured’ became a catch all for a range of people. Here the status of “prize negroes” (also known as Prize Slaves or liberated Africans)\(^\text{418}\), Mazbiekers (African slaves and indentured labourers and their descendants from the northern parts of South Africa up to as far as the Zambezi and
across into Mozambique), as well as Kroo descendants of the Royal Navy from West Africa, other African indentured labourers (known as ‘rightless Africans’ and their descendants, and African-American immigrants and Caribbean seamen was discussed. It was decided that they would all be included in the category of ‘Coloured’. Thus a range of Africans of Sub-Saharan ancestry was by a stroke of a pen made ‘Coloured’.

The general theme of creating the category of ‘Coloured’ was de-Africanisation.

Beginning in 1840 already the formerly enslaved were referred to broadly as the ‘Coloured’ population in the Cape, but the meaning of the term continuously evolved. The word ‘race’ was used in the 1865 census to describe the various population groups in South Africa for the first time, but the term ‘Coloured’ was not used.

Between the 1904 census and the 1911 census the single category of ‘Coloured’ emerged that defied the popular notions of ‘Coloured’ simply being a mix of ‘Malay slaves, Khoi and Europeans’ as some try to explain it. It also included a huge Sub-Saharan African component and overall the Khoena (or Khoi) and other African ancestral lineages was the dominant feature of who was deemed ‘Coloured’.

For those who have any doubt about the identity of the majority of slaves after 1770 being from Africa and Madagascar I would recommend reading the details about the slaves that came through Mozambique covered extensively in Slaves, Routes and Oral Tradition in Southeastern Africa. Considering the widespread capture of slaves in the old Orange Free State and the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek covered by Eldridge & Morton, as well as by many others covering the slave trade along the Limpopo and in northern KZN, will quickly demolish the notion of slavery in South Africa being simply a Cape phenomenon. Also it will demolish the notion that the Khoena (or Khoi) and other South Africans were never enslaved.

Zuberi and Khalfani show us that in 1875 the number of racial classifications was increased to six. The two additional classifications were Malay and Fingoes (Mfengu). Five of the six racial classifications were referred to as ‘Coloured’ classes and here for a brief period ‘Coloured’ had a different meaning (as all people of colour). The ‘Hottentot’ classification included returns from the “Hottentots, Namaquas, Hill Damaras and Koranas, and the scanty remnant of Bushmen still surviving within the Colony. Here also many persons of mixed race have been enumerated as Hottentots....The enumerators evidently in the somewhat perplexing task of deciding on race were in this and other cases guided by the predominance of European or Hottentot characteristics in the person of those who were to be classified.”

Eventually all these Khoena (or Khoi) categories making up about 30% of those to be classified as ‘Coloured’ were by a stroke of the pen rendered ‘de-Africanised Coloured’. A significant number of the Khoena were, also by the stroke of the pen, based on features and shade of their complexion, deemed to be ‘Native’- i.e. Xhosa or Tswana or Sotho in the main. Zuberi and Khalfani tell us that at the Pretoria conference on October 21, 1903, where representatives from most of British South Africa met to facilitate the coordination and standardization of the 1904 census throughout British South Africa, this is how official consensus was reached on who should be ‘Coloured’.

The processes culminating in 1911 were aimed at creating a rigid demarcation between ‘Black’ or ‘Native’ and ‘Coloured’, whereas what happened in 1950 with the new Apartheid Acts was a cleaning up
and shutting down exercise of social engineering whereby the blurring lines between ‘White’ and ‘Coloured’ could be eradicated too.

This history of the term shows clearly that the term ‘Coloured’ has never denoted a people. There was never a single ethnic group called ‘Coloured’. It was something that was politically engineered into existence in a Nazi-style social engineering exercise.

If we study the census records between 1865 and the 1890s we are able to gauge broadly that around 30% of the 1904 Coloured population in the census could have been Khoena (or Khoi), but also that a substantial percentage of those regarded as “Native” were Khoena (or Khoi) lumped together with Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana. Dr van der Ross states that by the 1960s 36% of people classified as Coloured were Khoena (or Khoi). My only difference with this figure would be to say that 30% had predominantly Khoena (or Khoi) ancestry and about 6% had some Khoena ancestry but predominantly other ancestral ties. I would suggest that those classified as ‘Native/Bantu/Blacks’ had around 17% direct Khoena (or Khoi) links with about another 3% having some Khoena (or Khoi) ancestry.

Thus there is a strong case for the recognition of the Khoena (or Khoi) cultural heritage. The primary Khoena (or Khoi) groupings are the Nama, who are relatively easy to define; the Griqua who, although a revivalist formation, have been existent for 200 years; the Korana, who have some old links like the Nama but are predominantly revivalist; (refugee Khoena from the Western and Eastern Cape with a similar long revivalist history, who re-joined the tiny surviving !Gora component in the Kai !Gariep region 200 years ago); and finally there are the many splintered modern revivalist Khoena groupings with the oldest of these going back no more than 30 years.

The latter involve ‘Khoisan’ associations and revived Khoena tribal formations. Alongside these are the surviving San formations in South Africa made up of around 1500 San from South Africa and about 6000 San who relocated to South Africa from Namibia and Angola.

The UN, ILO and the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights and its working group on indigenous peoples recognise these five groups as being indigenous peoples who face marginalisation and discrimination. This recognition does not imply that these are the only indigenous people of South Africa, nor that other tribes and peoples do not also have Khoena (or Khoi) and San heritage within their ancestry. The key focus is that discrimination and marginalisation exist towards these five groups of people. These declarations do not support attacks on the dignity and rights of others and in fact are as clear about what they do not support as they are about what they support. The UN unfortunately failed to note that the South African Damara/Damasqua/Damaran and the South African Oorlam are also part of those marginalised even though as a result of Apartheid most were forcibly removed to Namibian ‘homelands’.

These declarations have all often been violated in South Africa by the unacceptable behaviour of some elements that have crept into the revivalist movement, and this undermines the genuine struggle of the Khoena (or Khoi) and the San against marginalisation. It is well worth reading all these documents and absorbing their detail.

The vast majority of people classified as ‘Coloured’ have much more diverse ancestry, which includes an element of Khoena (or Khoi) ancestry. Their roots include very strong and diverse Sub-Saharan African roots (around 36%), as well other tributaries, including Indian, Southeast Asian, Chinese, and other elements, for example about 12% European. There are around twenty five micro-tributaries in the
ancestry of those classified as ‘Coloured’. It would be well to explore all of these roots and their contexts in the peopling of South Africa. Until those categorised as ‘Coloured’ are recognised as an African people of Camissa heritage they too have a case to be made against discrimination and marginalisation, and continuation of Apartheid as a crime against humanity, as the de-Africanisation process has not ended.

By the principle of self-determination as individuals, based on a sound exploration of history, heritage descent or genealogy, it is a very personal matter as to where one wishes to place an emphasis in terms of identity and affiliation. This however cannot be at the expense of the dignity and rights of others or on false and fraudulent claims, or by means of racist and other acts of violation against others.

There is a big danger when micro-groups start popping up and making claims on behalf of much larger communities who are not interested in taking on the narrow ideas of the micro-group. The vast majority of people classified by the Apartheid regime are not interested in narrowing their roots down to revived identities of 400 years ago. While the micro-groups have every right to express their own beliefs and sense of rootedness they need to be very careful when aggressive, inflammatory and even violent action is used to forcefully try to impose their views as the only views or to make material demands on behalf of others past or present, other than the general demand for social upliftment of the poor and marginalised facing discrimination.

Personal self-determination is very different when one elevates the personal to that of society or social formations as a whole. It is in this mix and the confusion surrounding it that fakery and fraud starts to take root.

Two things stand out as most important, namely that the strongest ancestral links among people classified as ‘Coloured’ are contained in the African ancestral reality whether indigenous to South Africa or the continent, and secondly that with the other roots, slavery and indentureship resulted in forced migration to Africa of the original ancestors and the only bonds that their offspring have had over more than three centuries have been with Africa. There can be no doubt that those classified as ‘Coloured’ are primarily Africans seeking restoration of their birth-rights.

There can also be no doubt that Coloured history includes experiential bonds of facing a crime against humanity in the form of the slavery system and resistance against that system and where this experience was intricately bound up with the experiences and resistance of indigenous Africans of this region of Africa. That experience included ethnic clearing, cultural ethnocide and genocide. Effectively a new cultural heritage emerged from the experience of these Africans here on African soil. This heritage identity was not a ‘race’, it was not an ‘ethnic formation’. It did not have a uniform colour nor a set of features, and it was not a people holding a single faith or language.

The identity was a common experience of adversity in many shapes and forms and a common experience of rising above that adversity and resisting those who set themselves up as overlords against them. In doing so the many tributaries in our beings found a unique cultural expression in cuisine, dance, music, dress, language, creativity, expression and faith.

Those who wish to explore a revivalist path in singling out their Khoena (or Khoi) ancestry have every right to do so, as it is a fact that these identities were shut down in the period 1903 to 19114 by colonial decree. However there is ample information in the domain of research which puts a ceiling on such affiliation and which shows us exactly where forced assimilation into either the narrow ‘native’ silo or into the broad ‘Coloured’ silo took place. For example, among those labelled ‘Coloured’ in the Cape
Peninsula and surrounds up to the Hottentots Holland Mountains and Malmesbury there is a definitively minimal Khoena (or Khoi) affiliation, with 90% being descendants of slaves and other tributaries, whereas areas in the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape show significantly larger numbers with Khoena (or Khoi) ancestry. But this affiliation is present in Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana communities in addition to those classified as ‘Coloured’ or who have affiliation to ‘Coloured’.

Thus our challenge is finding a way of having others as well as ourselves show respect for the broader sector of our society labelled ‘Coloured’. In terms of culture, heritage, legacy and memory those of us labelled ‘Coloured’ in its 5 sub-categories are an integral part of Africa and South Africa. We are challenged to give expression, in one encapsulating word, to what our cultural heritage affinity is, our cultural heritage that is deeply rooted in our experience and speaks to our birthing.

We also have to acknowledge that some may well be so attached to the term ‘Coloured’ that they will continue to use it as a matter of choice. For those who are insulted by it we cannot force anyone to stop self-identifying with it, but we can demand that the state does not continue to use it and practice discrimination, social engineering and marginalisation in doing so. We can demand African unity from the state.

Many have been grappling with this challenge for years and a number of us have said we have found a way to celebrate our cultural heritage and a way in which we can project ourselves in a dignified manner. We wish our brothers and sisters well who wish to revive Khoena cultural heritage and memory. A part of ourselves are in solidarity with that quest, but there are many other parts of our heritage that we also celebrate as Africans and the best way to project this is to claim our Camissa heritage and declare that we are Proudly Camissa.

This is not pride in ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ or ‘colour’ and neither is it a political statement. We are simply Proudly Camissa. We are the surviving generations of people who experienced some of histories worst experiences of crimes against humanity – ethnic clearing and cultural ethnocide; genocide; slavery; and Apartheid. We are born of a people who rose above adversity and it is this that primarily defines us and this is our African experience. We believe that the international parameters established by the UN, ILO and AU also cover our right to self-determination, respect, non-discrimination and non-marginalisation. The ANC government’s insistence on keeping the Apartheid race-silos alive and on defining us as ‘Coloured’ in terms of legislation repealed by our democratic parliament, is a violation of our basic rights. We fought for Apartheid to be totally dismantled and it is shameful that the government still uses Apartheid terminology and practices.

Camissa is the river that embraced us and which we embraced; the sweet life-giving water with its many tributaries and springs speaks of our own tributaries – a range of oppressed and downtrodden peoples. The river was the silent witness to our experiences. It featured large as the strategic point on the shoreline frontier and was the site of the founding settlement of Cape Town and the first entrepreneurial trading post controlled by indigenous people. As in our own experience as enslaved people and indigenous people, the river was seized and controlled for the use of an imperial commercial company – the VOC. This set the parameters for colonising behaviour across South Africa and the dispossession of all communities. Camissa talks to our experience of adversity and it talks to our pre-colonial freedom. Over the years it was covered up by city superstructure just as our identity was covered over and hidden from sight. But the river still flows as it always did. It still bubbles with life. It survived.

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It is for these reasons that I believe that a non-racial, non-ethnic, indigenous term for a river of sweet waters, an African river, speaks to me of a tapestry identity within my broader African identity and South African identity.

Os issie “Coloured”…. Os is Camissa!

Os is!

Is Ja!

(We are not “Coloured”…. We are Camissa! We are! Oh yes we are!)

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https://archive.org/details/diaryofadamtas00tasa

411 Robertson D; First Fifty Years website; http://e-family.co.za/ffy/index.htm


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