Some Final Thoughts
Navigating the future as an African people of Camissa cultural heritage

A decade ago I wrote a book – Navigating Cape Identities: Exploring Roots in South Africa. The book was reprinted three times and widely disseminated and it stimulated much discourse and debate. I have continued writing over the last decade and spread my papers around to encourage further debate and discourse. These ideas were taken up by artists, dancers, writers, film-makers, tourism companies, radio and television and brought to larger audiences. I also involved myself with a great project that Elna Boesak put together – a six part series “Os Geskiedenis Tussen die Kraake” (Our history caught between the cracks). In addition, I worked on a business plan with Dr Jatti Bredekamp to transform the old cultural history museum occupying the slave lodge building and to have it renamed the Slave Lodge Museum.

Then 15 years ago I produced an exhibition called “The Ties that Bind Us” which was shown at the Slave Lodge Museum for a year before touring the province. In 2010 I was awarded Provincial Honours for my contributions to building heritage awareness, promoting memory and bringing to light intangible aspects of our past.

Some of the ideas that I communicated through blogsites and social media contributed towards the inspiration of large projects like those of Dali Tambo, the Adelaide and Oliver Tambo Foundations, and National Heritage Project that asked me to research and write over 20 biographies of national figures, and advise sculptors who had been commissioned to create life-size images of them for a National Heritage Park in Pretoria. The Afrikaaps multi-media song, poetry and dance stage show extended the privilege to the late great Dr Neville Alexander and I to offer guidance and to participate in the show, in the form of interview clips screened as part of the performance which played to audiences of thousands and then even more through the video produced by Dylan Valley. An emerging Cape Town Museum had me working as researcher-writer with Sylvia Vollenhoven and Basil Apollis on twelve mini videos of lesser known historical figures. Presently I am working on a three part television series on “The Ties that Bind Us” and I have participated in other audio-visual and TV series projects that spread a different understanding and exploration of our past that went outside of the colonial narrative.

I mention these things in answer to a question put to me many times – “What is heritage activism?” While these activities give examples of what is done practically, the core of what is done by a heritage activist is to expose hidden or suppressed heritage; and to deepen understanding of the past so as to show people how knowing our past assists us in navigating the present and working for a better future.

As I have entered the world of the beginnings of old age, my ‘activism’ has mellowed into being more of a ‘Heritage Whisperer’. This means that one uses one’s time and energies by strategically finding young receptive ears and minds into which one can whisper the stories of that which is still hidden; and whisper encouragement to become heritage investigators. It involves leaving a legacy in written and audio-visual work to point young people in the directions of explorations still to be done. This whispering takes many forms. For instance I encourage young fine-artists and graphic artists to imagine the past based on stories that have emerged from between the cracks, and then to
paint and draw personalities and scenes of the past. I point to the fact that this is exactly what the colonial society did. The famous picture of Jan van Riebeeck and his landing party on the beach with the flag and the Khoena standing in awe with Devil’s Peak in the background is an imagined scene by Charles Bell 200 years after the event. An much of the sketches and paintings of the first 250 years of colonial settlement to underpin colonial history and events are all actually imaginations at work, long after the fact. These then illustrate history books, hang in galleries and museums and universities. If young artists of the 21st century do not counter this skewed history our heritage may never be told. We have 2000 years of relatively imageless history until we come into the age of photography and film. So there is a huge task before our youth to explore our history, heritage and ancestry and tell the story in imagery. Our institutions should be commissioning young artist to tackle this challenge. As long as the European view of Africa remains the dominant view, Africa will be on the back-foot. So this is an example of the subversive whisper of a heritage whisperer.

When I was a youngster and became a political activist in the very dangerous environment of the Apartheid police state, I was branded as a ‘betooger and terroris’ (an instigator of disruption and a terrorist). I completely reject the term ‘terrorist’ as I was not. I opposed Apartheid terrorism. But I was an instigator and a disruptor. A ‘Heritage Whisperer’ is a disruptor of skewed and false narratives of our past and I am an instigator of exploration and healing.

What I have tried to do with these essays is provide a storyline similar to that which we find in school text-books so that the average person can be able to repeat it to others. This is not the work of an academic and I don’t particularly see myself in that role. As such I am painting a version of history like so many do. I would encourage you to question my version too, just as I encourage you to assail other versions because this is how we discover new things and learn more.

I only spent a very short three years in high school before going out to work in my teens, but in my first year at high school I was lucky to have a very unorthodox and rebellious Irish priest as a history teacher. On the first day of history class he came into the classroom history book in hand. He strode up and down in silence, giving us piercing looks, and then very suddenly and violently he threw the history book into the dustbin. We were in awe because books were seen as sacred things. He bellowed our, “Rubbish! Propaganda! I refuse to teach you this rubbish.” He went on to tell us that we would be exploring history over the next year and then two weeks before we would have the examination he would tell us what the examiners wanted us to say and coach us in the official line. He told us that all histories are versions and they are not a science and everything must be questioned. I often get very rigid thinkers (or non-thinkers) who reflect on my work and sharply rebuke me for being WRONG, simply because it is not the version that they have foremost in their minds. For such characters history is a sacred and rigid set of linear events purported to be factual. If we are going to explore history, I tell people throw away the linear. Throw away the holy cows of the Mfecane, Great-trek and Boer war because they may well be simple ideological constructs designed to control thinking. Pull these apart and look at what all was happening at those times and what may have precede those events. Did Shaka Zulu really invent the short stabbing spear and the horning military tactics or were these adopted by the Rozvi Empire long before the events in the second decade of the 19th century? Dare to say differently and to hell with the holy cows. This is how new knowledge emerges. It does not come about in the manner many approach history today where it’s all cut and paste and spreading of pseudo history. Also it is very important to create frameworks that assist people to explore otherwise we simply get versions of history claiming to be breaking new ground but it’s the same skewed colonial history just with a spin put to it.
Over the last two decades I have promoted the concept of “seven steps in Cape identity formation and Camissa heritage” linked to the symbolic seven steps of District Six. I have also promoted the Camissa Embrace and Camissa as an alternative to the demeaning and racist term “Coloured”. I have promoted the need for Camissa people to reclaim their African heritage and identity from those who have de-Africanised people with the “Coloured” brand. The “Coloured” brand effectively is just the same has the hot-iron branding that was used in slavery. Whether the Colonial regime, Apartheid regime or ANC regime wields the brand it does not matter, because its no less a dehumanising brand. If we go as far as adopting the brand ourselves then that is even worse. As Bob Marley once sang, “none but ourselves can free our minds”.

Over the last 20 years over sixty companies have begun to carry the name CAMISSA and it is widely used by many others. This is how the new replaces the old and not simply by government decrees. Recently Clarence Ford of Heart Radio, who has a business called Camissa Solutions, and the entertainer extraordinaire Allistair Izobell, some others and I engaged in a dialogue through a public meeting and found that there is an appetite among people out there to rally to a name that really speaks to who we are instead of this “Coloured” label. But, there is also an appetite for demanding not to be marginalised or discriminated against. People want their dignity and equality and respect as South Africans and as an African people second to none. Others also want to reclaim their Khoena or Khoi identity and Camissa and Khoi are not mutually exclusive.

I still also believe that my greatest wish could come true, to have a museum in Cape Town dedicated to the story of the peopling of the Cape – the Camissa story. ‘Gallerie de Camissa’ remains a dream that I hope will materialise one day. It would be a place of visitation with exhibits that explain the story between the covers of this book. This is a very different story to the dominant narratives. Such a museum would also seek to reconnect the Camissa people with their African brothers and sisters across South Africa and across the continent of Africa. There are the equivalent people to the Camissa in every African port city on our continent and its islands from Cabo Verde to Zanzibar.

I have noticed over time that many websites in the tourism arena and others carry a lot of my work, most often without accreditation. I have also seen printed works where parts of my work appear as though it is that of others, sometimes even containing a mistake or two made by me as I made in one version and which in later versions I have corrected. This of course goes with the territory in allowing an open-source approach to the work done. My stated role is that of a teacher, story teller and heritage activist rather than that of an academic. But what does tick me off is when people not only use my work without acknowledging that it’s not their own, but also warp its original intent or put inappropriate or even commercial spins on it.

Having left school in my teens without a full high school education to go work in a factory meant that I had no long and solid basic educational grounding. It was hard work catching up through self-instruction, night classes and technical artisanship training and education while working. Besides drawing from the reading habit inculcated in me by my lowly educated working class mother, was helped to improve my thinking and writing skills through political classes in the liberation movement under such great tutors such as commissars Professor Jack Simons and Mzala Jabulani Nxumalo. In my forties I was accepted on a university Master’s Programme and attained a distinction for an MSc degree where Cape Indigene and Cape Slavery heritage as a focus area in heritage tourism development and management was the focus of my dissertation.
But doing a degree part time does not drum into one’s head enough about the protocols required when pursuing research. However, someone did come along and drummed it into my head for me, namely the late Dr Robert Shell, who gently but forcefully in a heated exchange with me, impressed on me that one had to painstakingly cite sources and accredit those whose work you build your case on. He referred to me as an organic intellectual with rough edges and that people would wink and call me “Van Anderen” if I did not pay more strict attention to the protocols of research work, even if my role was that of a community elder and teacher. It was a good lesson learnt. Nowadays I become exasperated when I see others presenting my work as though it’s their own. However I do strongly believe in open access and that distinctions must be made between those seeking recognition for academic prowess and those who are simply educators.

I therefore decided to put all of the essays I have written over the past decade and more into a book and give them a coherent thread. I did this after many requests for a single book where people could begin to explore key facets of the past which are hidden, or fall between the gaps of the dominant stories. Much of the new work being done in the arena of history and heritage education simply puts a spin on old skewed stories and presents them as post -colonial thinking, when they are actually just rehashed myths and colonial perspectives. People starved of material will ‘ooh and ah’ in wonder but after a while it will be found that the new work has not actually assailed the key planks of thought peddled by colonial perspectives on our past.

I felt that there were some key areas to focus on, rather than attempting to present a comprehensive micro historical tome or almanac of South African history with bells and whistles. This meant looking critically at key myths that have been unwittingly embraced by many in our community. By tackling these myths I believed I would be taking the first faltering steps toward a post-colonial and post-Apartheid evaluation of the past. I also chose to focus on the history and heritage of the Camissa (“Coloured”) people because its message also resonates with many other stories of the peopling of South Africa.

Go to any South African museum and you will not really find enlightening exhibits on African social history over the last 2000 years. What you will find are stone-age and iron-age sets of exhibits and not much more. In place of social history you will be spun a line about social history emerging from colonising Europeans who arrived at more or less the same time as invading Black sub-Saharan Africans labelled as ‘Bantu aliens’. There is a grudging mention of quaint noble savage communities of primitive hunter-gatherers and more recent nomadic pastoralists with no real attachment to land and abode. From these notions and myths arose the deep belief systems of South Africans.

The first myth is that there really was no civilisation in South Africa before Europeans arrived. Then there is the myth that there was a single indigenous people called Khoisan who were the “First People” of much of South Africa. This myth worked hand in glove with the “otherwise empty land “ myth. And of course then there was the myth that a people labelled ‘Blacks’ or ‘Bantu’ or ‘Nguni’ invaded the land of the ‘Brown People’, who were seen as naive primitives, part human and part beast, living as noble savages. These myths blotted out a complex 2000 year old history of the peopling of South Africa before colonialism. Thus I felt the need to start with an exploration going back to the first formations of new societies in Southern and South Africa when there were no borders - 200 BC.

Thereafter there is the myth or dishonest story about how the port city of Cape Town was started. A related myth is that indigenous South Africans were isolated and innocent of the broader world. The
entire story of the Khoena, their long relationships with those of predominantly Sub-Saharan ancestry labelled as ‘Bantu’ or ‘Nguni’, the nature of their societies and so on, required a closer look because there were many who were stereotyping ancestral lineage and playing into the notion of the ‘noble savage’. In the popular history focus on pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, the whole arena of the only ‘first People,’ the San, as a distinct people with many diverse communities all over Southern Africa and in the Cape, gets drowned out. The |Xam, more than any of the later migrants including the Khoena, have their story expunged as surely as they were physically expunged. The genocide of the |Xam or Cape San and all who participated in this requires a light to be shone on it.

There is also a new wave of dishonest stories, in which history is deliberately being falsified around the Khoena (or Khoi) as a cover for racist and fraudulent behaviour, and those under greatest threat from this are the genuine Khoena (or Khoi) revivalist formations. It will be up to them to challenge and expose such people and take the necessary steps to distance themselves from their utterances. These dodgy fake Khoi characters can be likened to the old Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweeging (AWB) and their leader, the late Eugene Terreblanche, except that they are people of colour.

I need to be clear here and ensure that the reader understands that I differentiate between false and fraudulent Khoi revivalists and the genuine Khoi Revivalists. The latter do not make alliances with those responsible for the ‘Crimes against Humanity’ as per the UN and the Rome Statutes of the international criminal court. The latter also do not engage in racist tirades against fellow Africans. Most of the fake and fraudulent Khoi/Khoisan are likely to have no ancestral link to the Khoena and certainly none to the San. This is the lunatic fringe sector who have infiltrated the heritage arena under the banner of Khoisan revivalism. Their every utterance is framed by race-hatred and exclusivist claims based on pseudo-history.

They speak of starting a war for the secession of the Cape as a country of so-called pure Khoisan, who in their opinion are effectively people labelled ‘Coloured’. They have created false historical tribes, kingdoms and an empire. Much of this is based on intellectual bankruptcy and ignorance where a few colonial texts with Dutch speculations are seized upon to make the wayward claims. Every second one of these characters claims very specific ancestral lineage and royalty. Their manner of talking and reasoning displays some deep psychopathic personality disorders as well as serious delusional behaviours. The term ‘Khoisan’ itself was coined by a German zoologist Leonard Schultz that experiment on Nama and Herero people imprisoned in concentration camps in Namibia and who used the decapitated heads of those Nama killed in acts of genocide.

It is disappointing to see reputable academics still churning out new work using the term Khoisan or Khoesan and attempting to define people or peoples to whom this refers, without regard to its shameful historical association with the Nama massacres by the Germans in Namibia, then they wonder why modern day revivalist go off on wayward tangents based on such academic use.

I mention the differences between false and genuine movements of memory of our Khoena (or Khoi) heritage to address those critics who because of the really unacceptable behaviours of ‘othering’ by some, have sought to dismiss all Khoi revivalism and their claims. The critics are right to condemn the unacceptable behaviours but wrong to use this to deny the legitimacy of the Khoena as an African people.

Khoena (or Khoi) revivalism is not something new. It has an over 200 year history which took many forms. The Oorlam groups, the Griqua, the Korana and the various historical mission-based
communities and other rebellions such as the Kat River rebellion all have elements of Khoi Revivalism in it. This book has deliberately stopped short of including the Khoi Revivalist tradition of the past two centuries for many reasons.

A few of those reasons include the fact that schism has been a huge feature of revivalism and it also has a collaborator and resister division which is very complex. I stopped short at a strategic turning point – Ordinance 50. Others, who have dared to venture into this territory, quickly lose objectivity and again the colonial mentality shines through. The scurrilous role of missionaries who played their own game aligned to the colonial project in the colours of both sides in the emergence of Khoena (or Khoi) self-determination movements is never honestly dealt with. Missions in South Africa are romanticised and undeservedly given a mantle of respectability and even claim to have offered protection o the Khoena. Except for a few notable exceptions this was not the case. Missionaries and guns were the assault weapon of colonialism. The role of late Christianisation at the end of the 18th century for the Khoena (or Khoi) and from 1830 regarding the slaves is a sordid story. Personalities such as Dr Johannes van der Kemp were exceptions to the norm.

Some of the Khoena (or Khoi) resistance formations too were hoping beyond hope that the European Settlers would embrace them as their own, so the split was not even two ways. In ideological terms there were many ideological expressions and this included a microcosm of early liberation theology. It is also from around the 1820s that expressions in the written word by Khoi activists can be found and one in reading these will find just how many different ways there were among the Khoena of expressing revival and self-determination and liberation. Much of this is flowered with skewed histories, a desperate cry to be accepted by the Colonial authorities as a people in their own tight, and huge doses of missionary-isms that often are tell-tale slips that expose the fact that the missionary cause and the Khoena (or Khoi) cause was not the same. What I will say is that there was a strong form of proto-African nationalism present in the Khoena (or Khoi) struggles from 1828 to 1904 long before the emergence of the (African) Native Nationalism roots post 1885. The Kimberley African League and the African Political Organisation, as well as the rebellion of the East Griqualanders were later manifestations of this continuity when the fore-runner organisations of the ANC began to emerge. The ANC itself was a latecomer in adopting the term African, which has a history as a term of identity among Khoi and Camissa that traces back to the 1690s.

Robert Ross has made a huge contribution to research in compiling a valuable anthology of post 1828 Khoena revivalist writing up to 1860 that is of great relevance today. Although I have reservations about his unacceptable use of the term ‘Khoesan’ throughout the book, with its murky history involving genocide of Namaqua people and Dr Schultz who created this erroneous term Khoisan contextual to his experiments on victims of atrocity in that genocide. The term Khoisan has no factual basis whatsoever as denoting a people or racist ‘people-type’ and Förster leaves us with no doubt about Schultz’ Nazi experimentation among the Khoena of Namibia.

Olusoga and Erichsen in making the argument to recognise that Nazism developed in the colonies show us how German zoologist turned anthropologist Leonard Schultz suggested that, for the German colonial project to succeed, those races unfit for labour should disappear: “We, who build our houses on the graves of these races, have a responsibility to safeguard civilisation, sparing no means.”
People reading ‘These Oppressions Won’t Cease’ can get the impression that the peoples of the time knew the term and used the term. It also does not help to say that it is a useful portmanteau word or that it was difficult to tell the difference between Khoe peoples on the one hand and Cape San such as the |Xam or !Kun on the other. The term Khoisan/Khoesan was not used in the time covered by this important work by Robert Ross and could have been avoided as Chennells and Steenkamp clearly demonstrate that it is on record since 2010 that the South African San Council considers the term as being derogatory and racist after a huge outcry around research ethics, which led to the SASC publishing a code of ethics for researchers as well as widely correspondence on terminology.

While the other terms each have shortcomings, the accepted protocol now is Khoi/Khoe/Khoena (plural) and San – two very distinct families of peoples each with their own histories. The terms Khoesan and Bushmen are rejected by the South African San Council which is the formal internationally accepted organisation of indigenous people known as San. (there is however one group that controversially use the term Bushmen to describe themselves) Often the |Xam and !Kun were victims of genocidal practices by the Khoena and by joining the two as one it adds insult to injury. Use of the term Khoesan/Khoisan persists only in the linguistic arena and by some geneticists and social historians who have ignored the published code of conduct and correspondence by the SA San Council. It has also been ignored by white far-right elements in South Africa who in alliance with characters on the fakery fringe of the Khoi Revivalist movement claim that there was a people called Khoisan who had a king or Khoebaha and kingdom in the Cape despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and have in gimmicky fashion announced secession of the Cape from South Africa. The academic arena should be more careful and sensitive as use of these terms jump the academic tracks into the political arena and cause much destructiveness.

The Ross book captures 98 texts of Khoena individuals of all persuasions that can give us a window into the campaigns, challenges, thinking, proposals and practices of Khoena struggles for freedom between 1828 and 1860. Ross also provides a few earlier texts and contextualises the events of the times. The book largely focuses on the Kat Rive Rebellion and its pre and post events. There are many other scenarios across South Africa to also take into account. It is however an invaluable legacy work for which we can only be grateful to the author, whatever our differences of opinion may be on terminology. I have taken time to make issue about terminology only for the very fact that academia in South Africa is responsible for creating race-type identity stereotypes and much confusion simply for the convenience of communication in a shorthand. This shorthand rooted in a colonial paradigm unfortunately has created a blurred lens when we attempt to glean understanding of the past, free of the colonial lens overlay.

The Ross book illustrates that modern day Khoena (or Khoi) revivalism cannot simply look at what happened in the 17th century and not look at what happened later when 18th to 19th century revivalism appeared. The attempts to project a primitivist revivalism in the 21st century largely based on European 17th century views contrasts with 19th century self-determination efforts. African nationalist history also like Apartheid history has cherry picked and avoided looking at the earliest proto-African nationalism of those today labelled by the ANC as a non-African minority – or as “Blacks in general (BIGS)” when differentiating Khoi and Camissa from the Apartheid era definitions of “Africans”.

This book has clearly demonstrated that by 1904 there were 92 181 Khoena (or Khoi), and their communities – Nama, Korana, Damara, Griqua and Cape Khoena. The tiny number of surviving San (4 168) is included in this figure. It’s a figure that illustrates the tragic genocidal demise of the San.
Today there are only 7,500 San left in South Africa and of this figure only 1,500 are original South African San. This book also acknowledges that the UN, ILO and AU all recognise that such communities exist today in defiance of the SA government’s continued use of the term ‘Coloured’. This includes the Revivalist Cape Khoena who could make up around 30,000 of the 92,181 of that time. Today the five Khoena (or Khoi) groupings also make up at least one third of the population labelled ‘Coloured’ and they do have the right to be recognised as Africans with these heritages. In 2018 one could estimate that around one million people of the five million classified as ‘Coloured’ would make up the six groups of Khoena and San.

But this book also addresses the other larger component making up four million of those classified as ‘Coloured’ and shines a light on this historical and cultural heritage which also is marginalised and unrecognised as an African people – these are the Camissa people who are discriminated against by continuation in the 21st century of their de-Africanisation originally imposed by the British colonial administration and the Apartheid regime.

This book has zoomed in on aspects of South African history to broadly introduce this set of stories to readers and encourage them to go and learn more. This is a subversive book in the tradition of that great African scholar of the Caribbean, Walter Rodney, who was cut down in his prime, assassinated for his challenging pen. ‘How Europe Under-developed Africa’ was Walter Rodney’s most well-known work. This book attempts to prise open the false stifling stories and expose the muted stories at least a little, to show how colonialism has under-developed South Africa and Southern Africa’s land and people, carved her up, and twisted her past.

This book also gives a coherent history and describes the heritage of those labelled ‘Coloured’ in a manner that has not been undertaken before. It does not start in 1652 but has its genesis, along with all other Africans of Southern Africa, where the peopling of South Africa began, namely with foundation communities along the Shashe and Limpopo rivers. It is a story that does not promote the notion of Khoisan vs Bantu/Nguni. It looks at how much more intricate a story exists of the birthing of many peoples in a particular region, who then fan out to different parts of South Africa over 1800 years. It talks of the embrace of three rivers – the Limpopo, the Kai !Gariep and the Camissa.

The Camissa embrace shows just how diverse peoples from Africa, south Asia, southeast Asia, China and Europe first met at a shoreline frontier and evolved from there on the two trajectorys of oppressor and oppressed. Our history has always focussed on the oppressors’ story, whereas this story talks to the history and heritage of resistance and of rising above the adversity. It’s about an emergence of a Camissa African people with a vibrant culture and a legacy second to none.

This story is aimed at cultivating a liberation experience in the realm of the search for identity. Our ancestors’ story of taking a resistance road, meeting one excruciating experience at a time but surviving and rising above adversity is something to be very proud of. Their contributions to development are something to be very proud of and to celebrate. It is this that is our heritage and not ethnicity or ‘race’.

This is a book about the important role of memory in freeing us and enabling us to know where we are located in South African and African history. Camissa people do not have to walk in the shadows. We can be immensely proud. We can claim our African-ness and we can just like any other cultural group say, “I am Camissa and I am an African who is proud to call myself South African.” It is in
finding out who we are that we are able to show leadership and blaze a path to where we want to be. In South Africa there are Africans who are proud of their diverse heritage and the ties that bind us. As Camissa we are one of those diverse African cultural heritages.

In South Africa we long for the day that those who cling to “whiteness” shed this colour obsession and proudly share their Afro-European Culture with us in an equal and respectful manner. There is no need to keep ‘white’ and ‘whiteness’ alive. This is not a heritage and it is not culture – it’s a notion of colour and ‘race’ and ‘race-supremacism’. South Africans of Afro-European heritage should celebrate and develop an Afro-European contribution to South Africa if they really want to put the past behind them and embrace a brave new future.

Likewise to those with a proud Afro-Asian culture with all its sub-tributaries – celebrate this and your love for South Africa and embrace all others. We accentuate our diversity rather too much, beautiful as it may be, and focus too little on the “Ties that Bind Us”.

We need to get to a place where we are all as proudly Mzantsi as we are proud of our diverse sub-cultural heritages. Race and colour-coding do not have a place in our future. It is my dearest wish to be able to see our state and government abolish the last vestiges of the Apartheid system that still shamefully dominates our lives 24 years after the first non-racial democratic parliament and cabinet was established. The de-Africanisation of those labelled “Coloured” is a blot on our political landscape.

The future is in our hands. We should never navigate this future by ‘othering’ our fellow South Africans. We should always maintain dignity and integrity and never bring our communities into disrepute.

I am proudly Camissa; proudly African; and proudly South African with no contradiction between these facets of my identity. I celebrate 26 people in my family tree who were enslaved and I celebrate 5 people who were Khoena, and in my base ancestry I celebrate 19 who were from 7 different European countries. If I cut myself off from any of these tributaries I would not be who I am. I am also an internationalist in my outlook and so much, much, more.

So, abolish that nasty term foisted upon us, ‘Coloured,’ and let’s move on as an African people saying NO to de-Africanisation and proclaiming proudly:

Os issie Coloured!
Os is Camissa!
Is ja!
Os is!
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