

6. Final analysis by Prof. Suleman Dangor (CRL Commissioner)

There are three issues that stand out in relation to the theme of Africa Day:

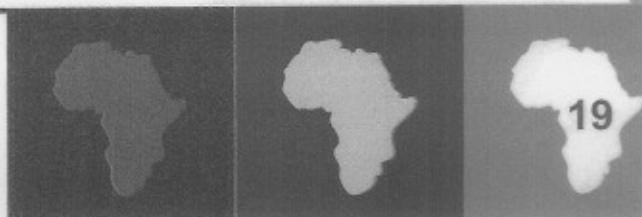
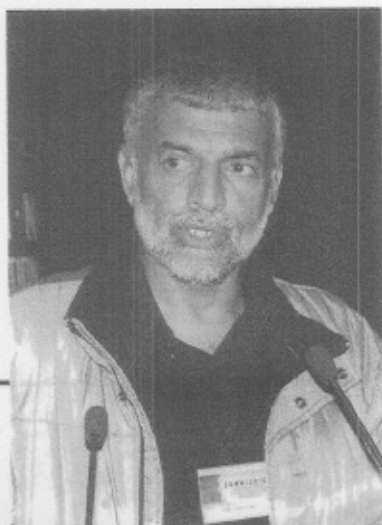
- Affirming African Culture
- Establishing the equality of all cultures
- Dealing with the challenges towards the promotion of African Culture.

In the previous political dispensation, cultural diversity was used to divide communities. Today, all the diverse cultures in South Africa are recognised, acknowledged and accorded constitutional protection. However, while people have the right to express their specific culture, there is a common acceptance that beyond these specificities there are common values that we share and that should serve to unite us as a nation. This explains the demand for cultural rights to be understood within the context of human rights.

We are aware also that in the past "European" culture was considered superior to all other cultures in South Africa. While it enjoyed a privileged status, some "non-European" cultures were marginalized, under-resourced and even disparaged. We must now transcend the cultural barriers that were enforced upon us and find ways in which our diversity can contribute to enriching the nation. This will require a radical transformation in the attitudes of cultural communities to one another.

The quest for promoting previously marginalized cultures and protecting existing cultures entails many challenges such as the following:

- The "minority" cultures should not be ignored since all cultures have a constitutional right to protection.
- Programmes and activities should be designed to attract the youth who generally seem unconcerned about their own culture.
- African states should be prevailed on to consider developing national policies for African culture. While South Africa has given constitutional right to the expression of African culture, the issue goes beyond recognition.
- The media has to be made aware of its responsibility in promoting African culture. This goes beyond broadcasting in African languages. The issue is much more critical and relates to the contents of the programmes on radio and television.
- African writers who focus on African culture must be encouraged.
- African indigenous knowledge must be nurtured.
- Curricula and textbooks based on the African world view must be generated.



7. Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations to the CRL Commission.

Further research: The themes that structured discussions at the seminar suggest there are a number of directions for further research available to the Commission. For example, the presentation by Dr. Boezak points to a local community where the intersection between unity, diversity and identity is particularly interesting, from a nation-building perspective no less than from a cultural, religious, and linguistic rights perspective. Key issues here include exploring what kind of recovery of identity is implicated in the advocacy and lobbying work being done by organisations representing these communities. What are the resources available to these communities and how have these been mobilised differently to achieve the not inconsiderable achievements thus far? What are the different facets of these communities, in terms of their culture, religion and language? Are their fault lines in this diversity? What are the tensions, how do these map geographically and how do they reflect the historical processes of these communities' subjugation? There are lessons to be learnt here and the Commission should explore developing a mutual and strategic partnership with this community.

Likewise with regard to the presentation of Maj.-Gen. Opperman, the Commission can make an important contribution to nation-building by being sensitive to the challenges facing the Afrikaner cultural community, but in a way that situates the Afrikaner's struggles over cultural identity and heritage conservation within broader debates over these same issues confronting other cultural communities. There are also a range of questions that the Commission may explore about cultural, religious and linguistic diversity within the Afrikaner community.

Recalling the earlier discussion about the participation of the Deaf community in the work of the Commission, the Commission should undertake research into this cultural and linguistic community to understand their needs and the role they can play in nation building. Towards this end, the Commission should consider inviting a representative of the Deaf community to brief the Commission on the issues and challenges facing the community.

Seminar series: The Commission should host a seminar every four months dedicated alternatively to culture, religion and language. Over the course of a year the Commission would have held three seminars, one addressed to each of its main focus areas. The seminars should not be high-profile events, but academically inclined with participants drawn from relevant universities and institutions. Participants should be requested to present a paper that they will be expected to prepare in a publishable form. The Commission might investigate paying participants a small fee to ensure they turn the notes they will speak to at the seminar into something of a publishable standard. The seminar series would be a valuable ongoing programme for the Commission and will ensure the Commission receives input from knowledgeable intellectuals working in the field as well as offering the Commission the opportunity to build partnerships.



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Publications: The importance of ensuring that participants in the seminar programme prepare a paper of a publishable standard is that it establishes the opportunity for a another range of tangible outcomes and material products. The Commission should make papers from the on-going seminar series available on the Commission's website. Depending on the standard, the Commission should also explore the possibility of **partnering with a recognised South Africa academic journal** to publish the papers of one or all the seminars, or alternatively partnering with three different journals to publish the papers presented at each of the three seminars held through the year. The journal may prefer to dedicate one issue of the journal during the year to publish the papers or may bring out a Special Edition of the journal for the purpose of publishing the papers. In addition to producing a tangible output that the Commission may cite and use in its further work, such an initiative would significantly contribute to the public debate as well as raise the profile of the Commission. Inviting a distinguished expert to be guest editor of the journal for that issue would further raise the Commission's profile and ensure greater circulation of the journal and well as promote discussion of the Commission's work. (For an example of such an initiative, see the special edition of the Human Rights Quarterly published jointly with the International Human Rights Exchange (IHRE) in April 2002 and dedicated to publishing a selection of papers prepared by participants in the IHRE programme).

The Commission should also explore the possibility of publishing selected seminar papers in an **occasional papers series**. This would involve inviting an author or authors to prepare a longer version of their original paper which could then be published digitally as a PDF document, numbered in a series of occasional papers produced by the Commission and published on the Commission's website. Occasional papers need not be sourced exclusively from the seminar series and anyone interested in writing a paper should be invited to do so, with the provision that it be an academic paper of a publishable standard. As the CRL Commission will publish the papers and they will together form an occasional papers series, branding is important. The format should be uniform across the papers and each might have a cover page with the CRL Commission logo, title, author's name(s), and a series title, such as "CRL Commission Occasional Paper No. 4 (2005)". The advantage of this is that it converts a tangible outcome of the Commission's on-going work, say the seminar series, into a substantial body of work that will grow over time, and at little extra cost.

A crucial component to all of this is the Commission's website. It is an invaluable resource through which the Commission can promote its work as well as disseminate its tangible outcomes, including occasional papers, the seminar programmes, and invitations to write on topics, and so on. Not only is the profile of the Commission raised, thus attracting greater interest and therefore greater participation, but the Commission's partners can see the fruits of their involvement and the general public can witness that, in the broadest sense, the CRL Commission is supporting democracy in South Africa, its constitutionally mandated task.



8: The Chairperson's Speech at the Gala Dinner

On the evening of the 25th, the CRL Commission hosted jointly with the Department of Foreign Affairs a gala dinner. At the dinner, the chairperson of the CRL Commission Dr. Mongezi Guma delivered a speech wherein he reiterated and reaffirmed much of what had been said in the course of the morning's deliberations.

He recalled that the OAU was established exactly 42 years previously with the aims to, inter alia, promote the unity and solidarity of the African states and coordinate and intensify cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people's of Africa. After 20 years of sustained effort at working toward these goals, and recognising that policy approaches were not delivering the desired results, he recalled that the OAU began modifying its approach. These adjustments pivoted on ensuring that the treatise, declarations and other initiatives of the OAU better reflected the political and social changes taking place across the continent. The final step in this reorientation involved the dissolution of the OAU and the formation of the AU in 2002. He noted that the transformation represented a fundamental paradigm shift, from a narrowly political focus to a more inclusive vision of economic integration and social development. Echoing Hosia Mohlabane's presentation at the seminar's first session, the chairperson pointed to the address of the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Lalla Ben Barka, to the 2nd OAU Civil Society Conference in June 2002 to summarise this shift:

... The African peoples must own the process of regional integration. It must be broadened from a government-led process to one that engages the broadest spectrum of Africans, including citizens, their elected representatives, civil society organizations, intellectuals and academics, the private sector, and the Diaspora

This shift towards a more inclusive programme of action for African development is not only sensitive and even responsive to the history of manipulation and subjugation of culture in Africa, but is also alert to the strategic possibilities of working creatively with diversity and agency. In this sense, the chairperson argued that the challenge is no longer to transcend cultural identities, but to harness them as part of the national project.

As part of this effort to draw on cultural diversity as a resource in promoting unity and authoring identity, the chairperson ended his address by announcing two initiatives by the CRL Commission. The first is the establishment of a Council of Elders with unique expertise, knowledge and sensitivity as evidenced by their respective contribution to their respective areas and communities, "a traditional weapon of mature and respected people." The second initiative is the CRL Commission Awards that will recognise and acknowledge role models past and present who in their lives have embodied a "commitment to promote peace, ubuntu, tolerance, unity, mutual respect and the protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities."

The chairperson ended his speech by reaffirming that Africa Day represents our collective commitment to people-centred development.



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