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THIS WEEK:

- * Letter from the President: Oliver Tambo Remembered
 - * Celebrating our heritage: Ubuntu is learned, not natural or automatic, behavior
-

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Oliver Tambo Remembered

Had he lived, Oliver Tambo would have been 90 years old a few days ago, on 27 October, having been born on this day in 1917. To celebrate this birthday and honour a great leader of our people, many people gathered in Johannesburg on 27 October to launch the important book, *Oliver Tambo Remembered*, edited by a Member of the ANC National Executive Committee, Z Pallo Jordan.

The book contains acknowledgements by the publisher, Pan Macmillan South Africa, of a number of people, for what they did to make the book possible. These are Thembi and Dali Tambo, Lindiwe Mabuza, Z Pallo Jordan, Mike Terry, Thami Ntenteni, Andrea Nattrass. The publisher also thanked Mats Ásman, Paul Boateng, Nadine Hack and Jerry Dunfey for making available photographs in their possession.

The Acknowledgements conclude by saying, "The publication of this book was only possible because of the generosity of all the contributors who took time out of their schedules to write their contributions, and in doing so have helped us to commemorate and celebrate the life of one of South Africa's most important leaders."

I mention these Acknowledgements because I would like to join Macmillan and also extend our sincere thanks to the people mentioned by the publisher, including the 79 contributors who supplied the articles and interviews that appear in *Oliver Tambo Remembered*, and therefore constitute the authors of the book.

The contributors constitute a wide spectrum of South Africans and non-South Africans who reflect on the Oliver Tambo they met, their impressions of OR the person and OR the leader, and the impact on them of their interaction with Oliver Tambo.

A review of the book

Professor Kader Asmal spoke at the launch of *Oliver Tambo Remembered* on 27 October 2007, at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. Below we reproduce some of the remarks made by Professor Asmal, which amount to a review of the book.

Among other things he said: "By instinct and philosophy, I am a republican but for me our High Commissioner in London (Lindiwe Mabuza), has always been a 'princess' as through her regal manner, she has been able to achieve the impossible - to get 80 widely-dispersed individuals to celebrate Oliver Tambo's life...

"(The book) is a unique collection of responses from an extraordinary range of people recalling aspects of Oliver Reginald Tambo's life in a very personal remembrance...Who else but Oliver could evoke such fond, warm and personal responses from 80 people, from the banker, de Rothschild, to a candid Geoffrey Howe, a former British Foreign Secretary, from the President of South Africa to ordinary South Africans, from lawyers and artists and from international activists?

"Oliver Tambo Remembered should be recommended reading for everyone throughout the length and breadth of our country. It is not only for members of the African National Congress. The book should be in every secondary school as providing literary and historical insights into our freedom road.

"It provides a unique insight into Oliver Tambo's leadership qualities - his intellect, his modesty, his loyalty, his inspiration, his refusal to resort to populism, his willingness to respect and to listen to others whatever their status in the movement and, above all, an absolute determination to achieve the vision of the new South Africa as enshrined in the Freedom Charter. It was these qualities which enabled him to preserve and strengthen the unity of the ANC during the most difficult annals of our history.

"No histrionics, no tub-thumping, but calmness and reflection and always aware of the goal, freedom for our people. Reading this book, nobody can deny that one of OR's greatest qualities - and it contributed greatly to his influence - was dignity. His career invoked pride and a strong sense of belonging, a camaraderie in struggle which few other movements could match, and which we now seem to have lost.

"Oliver Tambo's humanity shines through the pages of Oliver Tambo Remembered. It documents how he refused to put self before the ANC or to allow the ANC to put its interests before those of the people of South Africa. On the 90th anniversary of his birth, all of us in the African National Congress should honour Oliver Tambo's memory, by pledging to strive to embed these qualities into the root and branch of the movement throughout the country...

"At a time when the ANC is looking to the future and its leadership and that of the country, it is important to reflect on the lessons, qualities and defining moments of our past leaders to see what relevance we can draw for our present situation.

"At this time we must recall, as many of the contributors have pointed out, the articulate manner in which OR crafted the language of debate - the absence of fiery, irrational, emotional rhetoric in his words and the characteristic of deliberation and communication of carefully constructed arguments always aimed at building the individuals, the movement and its cause.

"It often saddens me to see how far from this we have moved in our current struggle for posts which we elevate to so-called succession, where it sometimes seems as if individuals, the movement and its continued historic cause and calling, seem to be fair game on the altar of personal ambition...

"Oliver Tambo's life was truly heroic, as so many contributors point out. But he did not give his life to make his country a fit place for heroes, but to ensure recognition for the courage and dignity of ordinary men and women living their daily

lives in peace and freedom. Everyday in South Africa, we are grateful for this gift from him."

The relevance of our past leaders

Given what the contributors to Oliver Tambo Remembered have written, it is obvious that they would agree with Kader Asmal, himself a contributor to the book, that, "At a time when the ANC is looking to the future and its leadership and that of the country, it is important to reflect on the lessons, qualities and defining moments of our past leaders to see what relevance we can draw for our present situation."

In this regard, Kader Asmal said: "(OR's) career invoked pride and a strong sense of belonging, a camaraderie in struggle which few other movements could match, and which we now seem to have lost."

In his review of Oliver Tambo Remembered when he spoke at the Apartheid Museum, Kader Asmal reported on the view shared by the contributors about Oliver Tambo's intellect, his aversion to populism, histrionics and tub-thumping, his capacity to approach all questions with calmness and reflection, the absence of fiery, irrational, emotional rhetoric in his words and his characteristic of deliberation and communication of carefully constructed arguments.

Professor Asmal has correctly said that to empower ourselves correctly to respond to the challenges ahead, we must "reflect on the lessons, qualities and defining moments of our past leaders."

That reflection must include a serious and honest effort to apply our minds to the challenge that Professor Asmal placed at the door of all genuine cadres of our movement when he expressed his regret that our movement seems to have lost the "pride and a strong sense of belonging, a camaraderie in struggle" to which OR made an invaluable contribution.

We must use our intellects, as OR would have done, without resort to irrational, emotional rhetoric, and present carefully constructed arguments to answer the critically important question - why does it seem that we have lost the pride in our movement which Oliver Tambo inspired throughout the ranks of our members and supporters?

The necklacing must stop

In his own article in Oliver Tambo Remembered, Kader Asmal correctly refers to a closed meeting that took place in Harare in September 1987 during that year's International Conference on Children, Repression, and the Law in Apartheid South Africa, which was attended by a significant number of representatives of our country's mass democratic movement. He writes:

"A call was made for all the South Africans to gather together, away from the conference...There was silence when (OR) spoke movingly about violence by the regime and then, about 'necklacing'. There was a hush - exiles did not know what would happen next - but then there was a dramatic full-throated roar of approval when Tambo said, 'This must stop'.

"I don't think he had discussed this matter with the NEC of the ANC. His was a cry, drawing on the humanism of our struggle and the need to relate means to ends. He did not need anyone's permission to do this."

Professor Asmal is correct that Oliver Tambo wanted the 'necklacing' to stop, driven by the humanism of our struggle and the need to ensure that this struggle did not turn our people into blood-thirsty and mindless brutes with no respect for human life and human dignity.

At the ANC Headquarters in Lusaka, we had discussed the urgent need to call on the masses of our people firmly to repudiate the practice of 'necklacing'. At the same time, our Headquarters was interested that the call of our movement in this regard should enjoy the support of the leadership of the mass democratic movement in our country.

OR thought the presence of many among this leadership at the Harare International Conference on Children provided us with a good opportunity to communicate the message that the entirety of our movement had to intervene to stop the 'necklacing'. To ensure that this message reached the masses of our people, successful arrangements were also made to ensure that it reached some sections of our domestic media.

Considering the importance of OR's statement on 'necklacing', Helen Suzman sought to have this statement published. To her dismay, PW Botha refused. Cynically, Botha preferred that the 'necklacing' should continue. This would give the apartheid regime the possibility, with charred human bodies as evidence, further to demonise especially the ANC and the United Democratic Front (UDF), falsely attributing the unacceptable practice of 'necklacing' to them!

I have referred to this episode to make the point that the ANC that Oliver Tambo built, of which millions were and are proud, was and is characterised by a value system symbolised by the life, the words and deeds of that great hero of our people, Oliver Tambo.

The loss of noble values?

It is because there are some who claim to belong among us, but act in a manner that is openly contemptuous of this value system, that Kader Asmal was moved to grieve that we now seem to have lost something of great value to us as members and cadres of the ANC. But what is the reason for this?

It is not difficult to discover this reason. This is that the titanic struggle our movement waged for many decades, during which Oliver Tambo played the unequalled role explained by the contributors to Oliver Tambo Remembered, emerged victorious in 1994. That victory also resulted in our election as a governing party, which gave us a people's mandate to control the levers of state power.

The fact of the matter is that some within our movement, and others who joined us because there was no longer any danger of arrest, persecution and death, as was the case during the years of struggle, saw our victory, the victory of the National Democratic Revolution, as a golden opportunity for them to abuse state power to advance their personal interests, especially to accumulate personal material wealth.

When I addressed the Constitutional Assembly on 8 May 1996, on the occasion of the adoption of our Constitution, and speaking on behalf of our movement, the ANC, I said:

"Among us prowl the products of our immoral and amoral past - killers who have no sense of the worth of human life, rapists who have absolute disdain for the women of our country, animals who would seek to benefit from the vulnerability of the children, the disabled and the old, the rapacious who brook no obstacle in their

quest for self-enrichment.

"All this I know and know to be true because I am an African. Because of that, I am also able to state this fundamental truth that I am born of a people who are heroes and heroines...The great masses who are our mother and father will not permit that the behaviour of the few results in the description of our country and people as barbaric."

There are a few among our ranks who "brook no obstacle in their quest for self-enrichment" and other forms of self-elevation. These are the people Kader Asmal warned us about when he said that we must do everything to remain loyal to the memory of Oliver Tambo, who "refused to put self before the ANC or to allow the ANC to put its interests before those of the people of South Africa."

He sought to alert us to the need to oppose in a principled manner, relying on carefully constructed arguments, without resort to populism, histrionics, tub-thumping, irrational and emotional rhetoric, all those that have put our noble people's movement in disrepute.

These range from:

- * the criminals who, while wearing ANC t-shirts, have corruptly abused their positions in government to manipulate government tenders to enrich themselves and their collaborators;
- * through those in the public service, members of the ANC and the progressive trade union movement, who have illegally given themselves social grants meant for the poor;
- * to those who attend ANC meetings carrying weapons, to intimidate loyal members of our movement to elect them into positions of leadership;
- * to those who work to build a personal support base within our movement by buying membership cards for people who have not sought to join the ANC, and promoting cronies to occupy senior positions in our movement, even relying on ethnic mobilisation;
- * to those who organise and finance mercenary groups of "concerned citizens", who often engage in public violent demonstrations, apparently protesting about 'failures in service delivery', with the demonstrators sympathetically and wrongly presented by the media as 'angry residents';
- * to those who use their positions within our movement to institute illegitimate disciplinary action against those who differ from them, to secure the expulsion of honest and dedicated revolutionaries;
- * to those who have sought to discredit the laws, the criminal justice institutions and procedures of the democratic state, and therefore the democratic state brought about by the sacrifices of the masses of our people, to justify illegal actions; and,
- * those who, in the most obscene manner, not hesitating to use similarly obscene language, openly disrupt ANC public gatherings, in pursuit of objectives that stand in direct opposition to everything that Oliver Tambo stood for.

None of these activities is consistent with the values the masses of our people and their movement, the ANC, uphold. These masses remain, as ever, our mother and father, and will not permit that the unacceptable behaviour of the few damages the image and prestige of their movement.

A revolutionary oath

To remind all of us of what it means to be a member of the ANC, at our 2005 National General Council, I quoted the Oath contained in the ANC Constitution, to which all ANC members, who join and remain members of our movement of their free will, must

subscribe. The Oath says:

"I solemnly declare that I will abide by the aims and objectives of the African National Congress as set out in the Constitution, the Freedom Charter and other duly adopted policy positions, that I am joining the organisation voluntarily and without motives of material advantage or personal gain, that I agree to respect the Constitution and the structures and to work as a loyal member of the organisation, that I will place my energies and skills at the disposal of the organisation and carry out tasks given to me, that I will work towards making the ANC an even more effective instrument of liberation in the hands of the people, and that I will defend the unity and integrity of the organisation and its principles, and combat any tendency towards disruption and factionalism."

The overwhelming majority of our members and supporters unreservedly respect and strive to honour the noble perspective contained in this Oath. This majority will not allow that the movement that Oliver Tambo built, based on these prescriptions, gets derailed by a few who are members of the African National Congress only because they have bought ANC membership cards, diverting it from its historic task successfully to lead the National Democratic Revolution.

Fundamental tasks of the revolution

When he opened the conference on "Whites in a Changing South Africa", convened by the Five Freedoms Forum and the African National Congress in Lusaka on 1 July 1989, Oliver Tambo said: "It is indeed our collective responsibility to rid our country of the cause of conflict, deprivation and disunity which has earned it the distaste of the rest of humanity. We are not an accursed people, singularly incapable of raising ourselves from the quagmire of racism and human degradation. Ours is a gifted and industrious society, with as yet untapped potential to offer humankind a towering example of non-racial unity based on the recognition of the rich tapestry of cultures that make up South Africa. We can and must do it!"

Oliver Tambo said all this 18 years ago in 1989. The ANC is still confronted with the task to lead all our people, black and white, to:

- * rid our country of the cause of conflict, deprivation and disunity among our people; and,
- * offer humankind a towering example of non-racial unity based on the recognition of the rich tapestry of cultures that make up South Africa.

As Kader Asmal said, and as all the contributors to *Oliver Tambo Remembered* would say, this immensely valuable book is required reading for all our people because it provides us with a vivid picture of what kind of cadre and citizen we need to ensure that we accomplish the national goals Oliver Tambo set our nation in 1989.

Oliver Tambo Remembered tells us why Nelson Mandela said at the funeral of his lifelong friend and comrade, Oliver Tambo - "Let all of us who live say that while we live, the ideals for which Oliver Tambo lived, sacrificed, and died, will not die!"

Reflecting this commitment faithfully to honour the memory of Oliver Tambo, one of our freedom songs, that was derived from a hymn, and which we sang during the difficult years of the liberation struggle, says:

Ma ebizwa amagama amaqhawe
Ngab' elami
Ngolifika likhona!

Koba njani
 Sesihlezi noTambo
 Sesimtshela
 NgamaBhun' egingqika!

(When the roll call of heroes and heroines is read, will my name feature among these?
 What will the atmosphere be when we meet Tambo to report to him about how we,
 revolutionary combatants, destroyed the oppressors!)

Thabo Mbeki

<Readers' Views - Musa Xulu>

CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE

Ubuntu is learned, not natural or automatic, behavior

There is a saying in isiZulu language which says: "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", meaning a human being is a human being because of others, or one owes one's humanity to other people. It has equivalents in almost every African language spoken in South Africa. Its essence is to define the basics of humanity. Because it is mentioned so often its deeper meaning is often perused over, and accepted as known to all. Experience, however, shows that this is not necessarily so.

IsiZulu, like many other related African languages, uses idioms, sayings and even non-linguistic, but related, expressions like music, theatre and dance to communicate the fundamentals of life and its under-bearing social order. The essence of language in Africa, therefore, is not just to allow people to talk and get through life; it is to consistently define life and its meanings and preserve tangible and intangible knowledge systems.

Consequently, humans, rivers, mountains, skies, the weather, animals, and in fact everything, has life and patterns of behavior that need consistent definition. As these change, so does language. Its expansion is in this way continuous as it attempts to define the changes. When, as a result of schooling, the missionaries, urbanisation and industrialisation, Africans came to contact with new words and new meanings the African languages expanded tremendously.

Umuntu, at its simplest meaning, is a person or human being. This is so, until one hears someone thanking some good done towards him/ her by saying: "ungenze umuntu," meaning, "you have made me into a human being" or negatively: "U Sibanibani, akumuntu lowo" meaning, so and so is not a human being. So, to be umuntu is an attained status. One has to constantly work towards attaining this status. Once attained, it must be maintained. Furthermore, it seems to be revered, or to have been revered and held in high status in the past. Thus, one would hear: "Eyi! u Sibanibani, umuntu lowo," meaning so and so is a human being. However, there is not to be heard something like: "Mina ngiwumuntu" or such self-praise. It seems like this status is always bestowed by others. Further, it cannot be demanded, it cannot be asked for, it can, however, be worked for.

This is where the role of others creeps in to the lives of individuals. For one to attain this most sought after status of being umuntu one needs the participation of others in their life. One also needs the general acceptance of their standards of behavior, talk, walk, dress and actually be cultured in a manner that meets the basis

of humanity. Umuntu is definable.

There are various contexts in which one's approval by others is demonstrative of the attainment of the umuntu status. It should be pointed out that in isiZulu there are many words which define people who, through their behavioral patterns and other, are not able to attain the status of umuntu. Among these are: umgulukudu, a badly behaved, ill-mannered vagabond, and inswelaboya, one who displays animal-like behavior, but lacks, animal skin and hairs. Even today no-one seeks to be labeled in these terms.

In traditional African society music gives meaning to the saying "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu". African music is organised in a call-and-response format. There is often one leader who starts the song, and a chorus of many who respond. In almost all the time, the leader is desperate for the response, because if it does not come, this may mean non-acceptance of their person. Ultimately when the song is ripe, the dancer steps forward to begin the dance. They too, are desperate for the chorus response, hand-clapping, ululating and general encouragement, because should these not come, the dancer will simply be unable to continue with the dance. The dancer needs these, because a successful dance improves one's chances of being recognised as umuntu. In a traditional setting no one wants to live as a non-umuntu, angimuntu walutho. However, it is also important to mention that a successful dance is not *always* the one which is aesthetically superior, but the one in which there is collective, cascaded participation by those who complement the dance, hand clappers, ululating parties, drummers and admirers..

According to ethnomusicologist, John Miller Chernoff (1979), music thus ordered works to establish a framework for communal integrity and "offers a superb approach to understanding Africans' attitudes about what their relationship to each other should be." In such events people are always alert of each other and act in complementary ways. According to John Blacking (1980) the Venda tshikona dance achieves this interrelatedness of human beings, and, as it happens, creates the biggest universe known to Venda society as each one present demonstrably sees the role of others in their life.

In most African communities the dependence of one's life to the cooperation and complementarity of others is also demonstrated through exchange of gifts. Exchange of gifts is one of Africa's biggest inheritances. People just want to give, and give back, even poor to the rich. When a wedding occurs in the village, many people, some totally unrelated to the bride and groom, will go out of their way to procure gifts for their relatives, which they give out as the wedding proceeds, as a side event.

Imonjonjo, in isiZulu, is beer prepared by non-relatives of the bride and groom who use the wedding event as a platform to cement their own relations by exchanging gifts of beer and snacks on the sides of the main event. In this way, an African wedding, due to its all-complementary nature is a festival of shows, side-shows and gifts. It is not expected that the wedding parties themselves should provide everything for their guests. In line with umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, the wedding parties only provide a stage for this chain of shows, side shows, gifts and complementarity to take place. The bride thus weds to the village, and the groom is a brother-in-law to everyone in the bride's village. And so, relations multiply.

There is another complex issue closely related to the idea of complementary existence. After putting an emphasis on one's dependence on others for the completion of one's identity, it is possible to think that in African thought there is no concept of individuality. To the contrary, there is a lot of individuality, but its acceptable existence exists within the self same context of umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu.

Its meaning is that one needs the communal whole to advance one's individuality. In traditional Zulu society the biggest marker of one's individuality was one's set of praises -izibongo. But one seldom composed their own izibongo; this being left to the discretion of others, who compose their praises based on their known and accepted achievements. But such achievements must meet with the criteria for generally accepted public behavior. To have no praises or to have short praises would be indicative of one's ineptness.

So, the dancer as well needed the communal whole to demonstrate their dance skills, but they had to be part of the communal whole first, and to be known for complementing others. No matter how beautiful the song, people would not respond to it, if they had not established the credentials of the leader of the song. And no matter how beautifully one dances, no one would recite one's praises unless they were composed within the communal whole.

At the level of economic activity, it is often easy to understand African attitudes to wealth, if one reconstructs the pre-colonial economy through language and social patterns. Zulus, especially during the time of Kings Shaka to Cetshwayo (1816 to 1879), were basically accumulators of wealth. This is supported by Shaka's praises: "Oth'esadl'ezinye, wadl'ezinye" (a reference to his capturing of others' izinkomo-cattle) To have many cattle, goats, sheep and to work all the land available and have plenty of provisions and food security, immediately raised the social status of an individual. King Shaka himself undertook many attacks and expeditions in pursuit of wealth, mainly cattle and women. The inner circle of his council were all rich men, who had many cattle, wives and children. Kings and their inner circle needed cattle to sustain the economy of the state and their politics of patronage. So, they went to war.

However, there is a concept in isiZulu called ukusisa. In ukusisa, the rich lent part of their wealth - cattle - to the poor to allow them to build their own wealth. At some stage in future cattle so given would have to be returned, but not their offspring, which became the property of the borrower. And so the wealth was spread and shared.

Within such a framework, the community would take responsibility to ensure that each household had adequate food and supply of milk and meat. And so, different households would organise an ilimo, which included brewing beer and inviting or allowing the whole community to come and work one's fields. So, when the time for harvest arrived, every household would have enough food. Some kings even organised food festivals and went to the extent of ritualising food and food supply. The Zulu First Fruits Ceremony, umkhosi wokweshwama, is an example. It has equivalents in most parts of Africa and the Diaspora. These took the form of bring and share, and provided opportunities to prove that the nation had enough food supplies.

A religious belief system in which the departed continuously watch over the living, which the departed themselves are judged and have their lives and influence expanded by those who remember them, ensures complementarity between the living and the dead, each in need of the other. In African thought a person truly dies when his influence on the living ends, and so he is forgotten. No ancestor wants to be forgotten.

There is language for every occasion in most African languages. Speech becomes structured differently when there is a death, and speech so meant cannot be used in a wedding and in everyday life.

In traditional Zulu society women continuously expand the horizons of the language by engaging in hlonipha language, So, all women married to the Zulu of eNtembeni clan

near Melmoth, where Sitheku, son of king Mpande, is the chief ancestor, avoid at all cost any word that involves theku and will, therefore, refer to eThekweni (Durban) as e-Hwebini. Those married to the Zungu of Manzini will avoid pronouncing the word amanzi (water), and call it amada. The effect of hlonipha language is to raise the status of the ancestor, exploiting the power of what is not said. It also expands the language by providing new words and new meanings to words. So, an ancestor needs women to marry in to his clan in order to hlonipha him and thus immortalise his name - by avoiding its mention.

Clan names, izithakazelo (iziduko in Xhosa), provide a platform for individuals to expand their personal identities. Firstly, before surnames emerged, possibly some 200 to 300 years ago, at least in Zulu society, people were known by their names and the names of their father, always mentioned together in sequence. So, u Shaka ka Senzangakhona, that is Shaka of Senzangakhona; uZulu ka Nogandaya, that is, Zulu whose father is Nogandaya. One needs a good name for one's father to enhance one's identity, and so ill-treating one's parents is out of the question.

A woman who married would be known as ka - then the name of the father and later the surname. Thus, ka Mboni (daughter of Mboni), ka Majola. (daughter of Majola), kaMsweli, daughter of Msweli, and so on. Women would be further identified with the solo song - inkondlo, which they sing, compulsorily so, during the wedding. Of course solo here is still within the confines of umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. No-one could sing solo without the participation of others. These days married women are only Mrs so and so. Does it enhance their status?

The concept of umuntu is linked to the concept of ubuntu, which would be all activities which make one qualify as umuntu. The intervening period of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid did much to hurt the concepts of ubuntu and umuntu as an attained, learned and taught status. The effect was to erase the supporting knowledge that defines it. However, even today contemporary African communities in the townships, rural villages and even suburbs are very much grappling with living by the concept of ubuntu. Everyone wants to be an umuntu. But do they know how?. Only now there are no opportunities for people to learn to be an umuntu-abantu, So, many do not attain the status. This impacts on their sense of judgment, discretion, and even where some celebrate crime, criminality and bad behavior while seeing no value in the lives of others. So, killing them becomes easy. Are criminals rapists, cheats and others abantu? Traditional society provided for rehabilitation.

So, of what significance are these ideas, values, expressions? Well, they fall in the category of intangible heritage. It is the intellectual aspect of heritage, that which cannot be touched, but is there and is definitive of life around us. What shall be done?

Ubuntu and good citizenship are learned, not automatic behaviors. Umuntu remains an evasive but attainable status. Black South Africa needs platforms to recycle these ideals so they gain currency. At the least they can be appendaged to our education system. What of our museums, archives, universities and libraries? Is it not time that cultural officers and students should be out there collecting intangible heritage and structuring it for preservation and recycling? What of publishing firms? What of themes for indigenous films? What of indigenous musicals, theatre and commercial music?

KwaZulu Natal Premier Sibusiso Ndebele's provincial heritage initiatives of seeking to collect and consolidate all written records on and about isiZulu, motivated by the death of Professor Mazisi Kunene last year, and the Family Roots Project, aimed at assisting clans and families trace their roots and reconnect, to name a few, will,

when accomplished, give reality and meaning to the urgency of reconstructing African realities in this ever transforming South Africa.

** Prof Musa Xulu is an ethnomusicologist and cultural researcher, and advisor in the Office of the Premier, KwaZulu Natal. This article, the second from Prof Xulu, is part of a series from readers on the subject of African languages and literature.

More articles and comments will be published in future editions.

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