

PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

SECOND SESSION

MAY 21ST 2003

NEW YORK CITY, U.S.A.

Statement on behalf of :

- GRIQUA NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOUTH AFRICA
- NATIONAL KHOI-SAN CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE

AGENDA ITEM : 5

RE: CULTURAL EXTINCTION

Mr Chairman;

I am making this statement on behalf of my own organization, The Griqua National Conference of South Africa as well as the umbrella body for Khoi and San people in South Africa, called the National Khoi-San Consultative Conference .

Mr. Chair, cultural survival for Khoi and San people in South Africa is really a huge problem and a matter of great concern. South Africa is known worldwide for it's history of the extreme oppression of the human rights of the former so-called "non-white population". Khoi and San indigenous people, as part of this non-white sector, suffered the most as far as cultural extinction is concerned. Our people were robbed of their ancestral land to an extent where virtually nothing was left. The colonisers and the subsequent *apartheid* regime took away every square metre of indigenous people's land. Those who did not die in the genocidal wars were driven into squatter and location camps. Others took direction to nearby towns and cities.

It is thus easy to understand that alienation and extinction of indigenous languages cultures and traditions would soon follow. In these new living conditions they were forced to adopt Western European culture and to speak the language of the coloniser, Afrikaans. The master plan behind it all was to transform them into a new identity. Today the majority of the descendants of the once proud Khoi and San tribes are just known as COULERED PEOPLE

of South Africa. Many of these people now desperately want to know who they really are and how they can be reconnected to their cultural roots.

It is also interesting to note that the Bantu-speaking South Africans were treated somewhat different as far as language and culture is concerned. For the colonisers and especially the *apartheid* regime, it was crucially important to maintain and even protect the Nguni and Sotho (Black) cultures and languages in order to justify the establishment of the controversial *HOMELAND POLICY* and later the system of allegedly *INDEPENDENT STATES*. The reason why I mention this, is to point out that the Khoi and San people did not even had a homeland left where they could practice their culture and speak their languages.

My recommendations therefore are:

That the Permanent Forum, through the U.N. system, call upon the new government to:

- **Review their land reform policy** in a way that Khoi and San people can lay historical claims for ancestral land. The current constitution states that no land can be claimed pre the 1913 cut-off date for land claims. Almost all Khoi and San land have been taken before 1913. Our people firmly believe that without our own land, the practice of our culture is almost impossible
- To speed up the indigenous language revival program to allow our children and youth to speak the tongue of their ancestors again
- To support I.P's to establish cultural centres or cultural villages where our people and especially our young people, can be involved in training programs concerning their languages and cultures
- **South Africa needs to urgently adopt an action plan on endangered languages.**
- **Government should assist in the standardisation and promotion of the Xun and Kwedam languages.**
- **Khoekoe literacy and culture studies should be made more widely available.**

- **Khoi and San place names should be restored and connected including the Kai Garib[Orange River]**

I THANK YOU.

PRESENTED BY : CECIL le FLEUR