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Scientific racism: Histories, legacies and ethics Steve Biko Bioethics Lecture, 12 September 2023

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In 1936, Raymond Dart led the Wits University Expedition to the Kalahari where he used the tools of physical anthropology, including bodily measurements, face masks and comparative anatomy, to promote the ill-fated concept of race typology to understand human evolution. Dart's successor at the Wits School of Anatomical Sciences, Phillip Tobias, and his colleagues continued these anthropological practices in numerous expeditions to the Kalahari and elsewhere in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, including an excavation of the grave of Cornelius Kok II in Campbell, Northern Cape in 1961. This paper reviews these practices and their contribution to scientific racism in South Africa. The paper also explores the impact that Steve Biko's life and death had on medical ethics at Wits University in the 1970s, leading to Wits Medical School's submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the decision to hold an Internal Reconciliation Commission (IRC). While the IRC was important, the absence of any review of pre-apartheid and apartheid-era anthropological practices at the Wits School of Anatomical Sciences meant that it was incomplete. This paper concludes by suggesting that there is a need to acknowledge and revisit this painful history of scientific racism to build a greater understanding of history, transparency and ethics for the future.

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Much of this paper is based on my research for *Darwin's Hunch: Science, Race and the Search for Human Origins* published by Jacana Media in 2016.

Charles Darwin wrote in 1871 in *The Descent of Man* that it was likely that all humans on Earth had common origins in Africa. His theory–Darwin's hunch–was not widely accepted at the time. Most of his peers believed that humans had first evolved in Europe or perhaps Asia. That thinking came from the false assumption at the time that white Europeans were superior to other people around the world and that there was a hierarchy of race. Colonial thinking infused many fields including palaeoanthropology. Based on a fossil found in 1912 called Piltdown Man, palaeontologists excitedly and wrongly declared that humans had their origins in Sussex, England.[1-3]

This paper is structured chronologically in four parts. The first part is on the history of comparative anatomy and race typology, which discusses the work of both Raymond Dart and Phillip Tobias from the 1920s through to the 1980s. The second part focuses on the impact of Steve Bikos' life and death on medical ethics. Part three looks at post-apartheid shifts and the paper closes with the question, 'Where to go from here?' '*Wits. For Good*'.

Part one – History of comparative anatomy and race typology

Born in Australia in 1893, Raymond Dart was educated there and in the UK before he moved to South Africa (SA) in 1922. He came to Johannesburg as the Head of the Department of Anatomy at the University of the Witwatersrand. Most people know of Dart because, in February 1925, he described the Taung Child Skull, the famous fossil blasted out of a mine in Taung, SA. Writing for *Nature*, he named the fossil *Australopithecus africanus*, meaning southern ape of Africa and argued that humans had their origins in Africa. Just as Darwin was rejected in 1871, Dart's idea was rejected by many scientists in 1925, especially with their belief in Piltdown Man. It would take decades for Dart to be proven correct.[4]

In my years of research for this book across various archives, a consistent finding emerged: for over two centuries, scientists regarded black people as specimens rather than human beings. The field of palaeoanthropology, anatomy and medical science are built on a foundation of racist science and white supremacy, which has a bearing on bioethics today. I must warn readers that for some people the stories I am about to share may be upsetting, for others they will be shocking and for many, these stories will provoke anger.[1]

It was Carl Linnaeus, the Swedish botanist in the mid-1700s who first named *Homo sapiens*, and divided humans into four varieties defined largely by geography and physical appearance. Linnaeus created a fifth group called *Homo monstrosus*, which included what he called 'monstrous' or 'abnormal' people, and he placed the Khoi and the San people of southern Africa in this category. This naming was powerful and dehumanising. Linnaeus sent a painful ripple effect across the centuries.[5]

Over 100 years later when Charles Darwin published *The Descent of Man*, Linnaeus' naming continued to have influence. It impacted Robert Broom, a Scottish medical doctor and palaeontologist who arrived in SA in the late 1800s and declared 'the most interesting specimens were the natives'. Many universities in Europe as well as museums and universities in the USA had begun collecting human skeletons and the international skeleton trade was brisk. In a letter to Lawrence Wells, Broom described his work in 1897: 'I cut their heads off and boiled them in paraffin tins on the kitchen stove and sent them to Turner'. William Turner was an anatomist at the

University of Edinburgh. White supremacy had taken hold in science around the world.[6,7]

When Dart arrived in SA, he started a human skeleton collection. He had seen these collections in Europe and the UK, where the motivation for starting them was to understand comparative anatomy and race. He was impressed by the Terry Human Skeleton Collection in St. Louis in the USA, where anatomists looked especially at the skeletons of people indigenous to the Americas.[8]

Many scientists at the time, including Dart, thought that humans could be divided into separate, distinct and pure racial types, which we now know do not exist. Dart believed that race typology, which classified humans by their physical characteristics, was an important aspect of physical anthropology. He was particularly interested in the anatomy of the people of southern Africa, especially the San and the Khoi, believing that understanding their anatomy would give him a clue to understand race typology and human evolution.[9,10]

In 1936, Dart led a Wits expedition of scientists to the Kalahari. The Wits scientists conducted their research in the stylised setting of a camp that had been created by Donald Bain, a former farmer and hunter. Knowing that many local people were struggling to find food and water, he offered rations of both and brought them together to an area called Tweerivieren.[9,11]

The patriarch and acknowledged leader of the group in the camp, a man named !Gurice, was said to be close to 100 years old. Dart recorded the names of the 77 people in the camp, many of whom were !Gurice's family, and issued each of them with a cardboard tag and a number. !Gurice was tagged as Kal (Kalahari) 4. His daughter, /Khanako became Kal 5. His granddaughter /Keri-/Keri was tagged as Kal 51.[12-14]

Dart and his assistant, Eric Williams, took cranial measurements and measured facial characteristics. They recorded eye colour and hair texture and wrote their findings on the cardboard tags. Dart's 1937 publication in the Wits journal *Bantu Studies* makes disturbing reading, as he gave special attention to the measurements of the external female genitalia. He believed that taking measurements and photographs of intimate body parts would contribute to the effort to confirm racial types. In 'The Great Long National Insult', Yvette Abrahams writes about the sexual obsession that Europeans held with the Khoi and the San as long ago as the 1600s. Dart and his male colleagues brought these anthropological practices into the 20th century.[14-16]

After the measurements were completed, the scientists led each person to a second tent to have their face mask taken. Dart had learned the face mask technique on an earlier Italian expedition led by Attilio Gatti through Somalia, Ethiopia and the Congo. Lido Cipriani, an Italian physical anthropologist had developed the technique to gather face masks by moulding plaster of paris on the faces of living people. Cipriani believed in the superiority of Italians and the inferiority of Africans and later worked for the Italian Race Office. Dart saw this process as a significant new methodology in the field of physical anthropology.[13,17]

!Gurice was the first person to go through the process, lying down on a table in the tent. After his face mask was complete, !Gurice took the mask in his hands, looking at it closely. He asserted his control over the situation, walked off with his mask and could not be persuaded to give it back.[12]

There were no standard procedures in place in 1936 for seeking a research subject's consent. The Hippocratic oath was originally written in 400 B.C. and translated into English in the 1700s, but it was not adopted by the World Medical Association until 1948. There were no required procedures in place at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1936 and few, if any, established protocols at universities around the world. The ethics of taking these casts and measurements was never questioned by the scientists at the time.

Dart and Williams took 70 face masks of nearly all the adults and some of the children at the camp at Tweerivieren. From then on, through to the 1980s, almost every expedition from the Wits Department of Anatomy to study living people across Africa included taking face masks. Today at Wits, there are over 1 000 masks in the Raymond A. Dart Collection of African Life and Death Masks. While the collection was on display for almost a century, the current curators have taken them down and placed them in storage.[12,18]

After the Wits expedition, Raymond Dart brought members of this same San community, including !Gurice and /Khanako, to Johannesburg and placed them on display at the Empire Exhibition, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the city of Johannesburg, and took place on what is now the Wits West campus, near Empire Road. The Tower of Light, still a notable landmark on campus, was built especially for the Exhibition. Speakers at the open-air pavilion spoke about the San's physical characteristics and referred in demeaning ways to their role in human evolution.[13,19,20]

After returning from the Kalahari in 1936, Dart wrote that Bushmen 'are, as it were, living fossils, representative of the primitive state of all mankind, mementos of our primaeval past'. Dart was not the only person using the term 'living fossil'. Jan Smuts, the former Prime Minister of SA, was supportive of Dart and Robert Broom and also used the offensive, incorrect term. Living human beings are not fossils. Dart and Smuts supported the development of a Bushman reserve, similar to the reservations for indigenous people in the USA. The legislation did not pass, but it is one example of how the push for segregation existed in SA long before apartheid.[21,22]

When !Gurice and /Khanako and their family returned to the Kalahari, they were evicted from the land. For close to 50 years, under apartheid, they were dispersed and their community was destroyed.[13,23]

Thanks to the research of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) professors Ciraj Rassool and Patricia Hayes, and their chapter, 'Science and Spectacle', I learned that /Khanako's daughter /Keri-/Keri's skeleton had become part of the Raymond A. Dart Collection of Modern Human Skeletons. Rassool and Hayes had visited the Wits Department of Anatomy in 1996 and found that /Keri-/Keri's skeleton was no longer in the collection. They wrote that it had 'gone missing'. I spent many days in the Dart papers in the Wits archive on the 4th floor of Solomon Mahlangu House, looking for information about /Keri-/Keri's life. In one of the boxes in the archive, under a pile of letters, I found a very disturbing story about /Keri-/Keri's death.[1,13]

On 9 September 1939, Dart received a telegram: 'Kanacos (sic) eldest daughter perfect specimen bushwoman dying Oudtshoorn Hospital. If interested communicate Dr. Nel local'. Dr Nel was the superintendent of the Oudtshoorn Hospital. Two days later, Dart sent Nel a telegram 'Re:Bushwoman. Please send information for government authorities concerning name, nature of illness, expectation of life, and possibility of being claimed by relatives'. Dr Nel responded the next day. The information he gave Dart was that the young woman's name was /Keri-/Keri. She was suffering from septic pneumonia and her prognosis

was uncertain. /Keri-/Keri was barely 20 years old, could hardly breathe and was lying in a hospital far from home.[1,24,25]

'I wish to thank you for your wire concerning the Bushwoman, Keri Keri and her complaint', wrote Dart. He informed Nel that he had secured approval from the acting secretary for Education, Mr Van Zyl, for the University of the Witwatersrand 'to obtain from Oudtshoorn the body of a female bushman when it becomes available'.[26,27]

'The only point about which we are uncertain here', wrote Dart, 'is whether or not there is any likelihood of the body being claimed by a relative. We have presumed that this was unlikely but calculations in that respect can be easily upset'.[26]

There is no documentation indicating whether Dart, Dr Nel or anyone else informed /Keri-/Keri's mother, Khanako, or any of her other relatives with whom Dart had previously been in communication. After Dart exchanged telegrams with Dr Nel in Oudtshoorn, while /Keri-/Keri was still in the hospital with pneumonia, Dart asked his chief technician Eric Williams to write to Dr Nel about how to embalm her body. Two days later, on 16 September 1939, Dart received the news he had been waiting for. 'Bushwoman died last night. Nearest embalmer available Port Elizabeth'.[1,28]

It was Williams who drove to Oudtshoorn to retrieve /Keri-/Keri's body and sent a signed telegram to Dart on 18 September saying 'Arrived safely Everything OK'. He drove back to Johannesburg with /Keri-/Keri's body in the back of his bakkie. Within 10 days of receiving the telegram alerting Dart to /Keri-/Keri's illness, her body was in the possession of the Department of Anatomy at Wits University. In his effort to understand pure racial types, Dart saw /Keri-/Keri's body and her skeleton as a 'specimen' to be studied.

There would be no burial for /Keri-/Keri. For her family, there would be no closure. For over six decades, her body cast stood on display at the Department of Anatomy before it was put away in storage. For 50 years, her skeleton remained on a shelf in the Dart Collection of Modern Human Skeletons. At some point in the late 1980s or early 1990s, the department lost track of her skeleton. It is not clear if it was stolen or misplaced. One theory is that it was taken out for teaching purposes and never returned. With the help of Brendon Billings and Tobias Houlton at the School of Anatomical Sciences, I spent years looking, but her skeleton has never been found.[1]

In many ways, /Keri-/Keri's story is reminiscent of Sarah Baartman's. As a Khoi woman held in slavery, Baartman, like /Keri-/Keri was pulled away from her home and family to be placed on show at an exhibition and to be studied by scientists. Both women died young. The French anatomist Georges Cuvier made a body cast of Baartman that was on display at the Musee de L'Homme in Paris until 1974. /Keri-/Keri's cast stood on display at Wits for over six decades until the early 2000s when it was put away in storage.[16]

Phillip Tobias was Raymond Dart's student in the 1940s and 50s and he took over from Dart as the Head of the Department of Anatomy at Wits Medical School in 1959. Like Dart, with the Taung Child Skull, Tobias was widely known for his work in palaeoanthropology. He worked for years in East Africa with Mary and Louis Leakey and described *Homo habilis*. Tobias reopened the Sterkfontein caves outside Johannesburg and contributed to the growing ancient fossil collection at Wits, which in 2014 moved from the School of Anatomical Sciences to the Evolutionary Studies Institute on the main campus.

In several ways, Tobias differed from Dart. As a young Jewish student, he was deeply affected by World War II. Hitler's Holocaust raised scientific questions for him about race. In 1948, he was elected the President of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), and he was supportive of Wits University remaining open to Black students as the government imposed apartheid. Yet, Tobias embodied many contradictions.

As Dart's protégé, Tobias fully embraced race typology. Fifteen years after Dart's expedition, in 1951, Tobias made his first of many trips to the Kalahari to study the San. Each of these trips involved measuring every part of a San person's anatomy, as Dart did, including women's labia.[29]

In 1953, writing a journal article about race, Tobias condemned the invalid interpretation of race purity by the Nazis, but he said the scientific reaction might have 'led the pendulum to swing almost too far in the opposite direction. We find today a tendency to deny the validity of the race concept for anthropology… A steadying of the pendulum is required'.[30]

Tobias travelled to Paris in 1955 to study fossils. While he was there, he viewed Sarah Baartman's remains on display. Little did he know that 40 years later, he would be involved in the efforts to return her remains to SA.

From the time Tobias took over from Dart as head of the Department of Anatomy, for over 35 years, he continued to take face masks at each expedition across southern Africa. He also added 2 000 human skeletons to the Dart Collection well into the 1980s.[18]

Tobias illustrated the paradox of his opposition to apartheid and his scientific practices when he led another expedition to Campbell in the Northern Cape in 1961. Tobias exhumed the skeletons of Cornelius Kok II who had died 103 years earlier in 1858. He exhumed the remains of several other family members as well, as he wanted to collect other 'types' of skeletons for the Dart Collection. Scientific researchers did not include contextual information and biographies, but simply labelled them 'Griqua skeletons'. According to a local newspaper article at the time, upon seeing a member of the Griqua community at the exhumation, the 70-year-old Niels Watermond, Tobias described him as 'a wonderful link with the primitive'.[31]

By this time, apartheid laws were in full swing. The Population Registration Act initially classified Griqua people as African. They had to carry a reference book and pay a poll tax. If a person did not mention to a government official that they were Griqua, but instead said they were Coloured, they could be exempt from the tax. By the 1960s, most people who had previously described themselves as Griqua were classified as Coloured.[32]

Tobias told the Kok family, and the local newspaper reported, that it would be two years before experiments and investigations would be completed and Cornelius Kok's remains would be returned. However, the skeletons remained at Wits for decades. One of Tobias' students, a Canadian PhD student named Alan Morris, chose to focus on the Griqua skeletons in 1977 and completed his PhD in 1984. Morris is now Professor Emeritus at the Department of Human Biology at the University of Cape Town (UCT). It was only after the end of apartheid that the Kok family approached Tobias, 35 years after the skeletons were taken, saying they wanted their ancestors' remains back.[33-35]

The return ceremony was held at Wits in 1996. However, it took another nine years of negotiations before the remains were reburied in Campbell in 2007. This is a story of science, race and institutional power.[33,35]

Back in 1962, another South African physical anthropologist, Ronald Singer spoke about 'grave digging', which he said scientists fondly called 'excavating'. After that initial trip to Campbell, Tobias led three further trips with students in 1963, 1967 and 1971 for excavations. His trips interested other Wits professors, including Trefor Jenkins and Hertha De Villiers, who had also been a student of Dart's. All three professors took measurements of women's labia in Campbell, which contributed to journal articles well into the 1960s.[36-38]

Tobias' public profile in relation to understanding race, resulted in an increasing number of visitors to the Department of Anatomy, asking for assistance with racial classification. This was not unusual, as in the 1920s, Dart had served as a witness in two court cases to establish the race of the accused. On one occasion in 1966, Tobias responded to a request from the Princess Alice Adoption Home. A nurse came into Tobias' office with a baby girl. They needed help to classify the baby's race before they could place her for adoption. The nurse told Tobias that the baby had an Australian mother and that the father's name was Amamoo. 'There is reason to be suspicious', said Tobias. After a long period of examining the baby's hair, facial features and head shape, he declared that he could not confirm the baby was white.[1,39,40]

On a second visit with the baby, Tobias called his colleague Hertha De Villiers into his office to assist with the examination. 'There might be some Aboriginal features here', said Tobias. As a result, the nurse was thinking that the baby would be sent toa Coloured orphanage. At that moment, the phone rang and Tobias took an international call. 'You handle this', he said to De Villiers. When De Villiers said the baby was a beautiful child, the nurse urged De Villiers to adopt her. 'That's absurd', said De Villiers. But in the end, she did. Decades later, it became clear that the baby had an Australian mother and her father was Samuel Amamoo from Ghana.[40]

Today, that baby, Phillippa Yaa De Villiers, is a published poet, author, playwright and Lecturer in creative writing at Wits University.

In 1978, Tobias wrote a book that brought together his work in the Kalahari entitled *The Bushmen*. In his chapter entitled 'The San: An Evolutionary Perspective' Tobias wrote, 'In general, it would not be accurate to speak of them as "living fossils" since most of them do not represent the survival of an otherwise extinct kind of man'. It was preposterous that Tobias used this term that Dart, Broom and Smuts had used 50 years earlier. Tobias closed the chapter by saying 'We may regard the San as being living fossils, not only in their hunter-gatherer ways of life, but perhaps even in their biological heritage'.[41]

Tobias wrote these passages in the late 1970s, around the time of Steve Biko's death. Let us now turn to Steve Biko and how his life and death opened the way to address medical ethics at Wits.

Part two – Steve Biko's impact on medical ethics

In 1966, Steve Biko began studying medicine at the University of Natal. At a young age, he understood colonial thinking, racism and white supremacy and he knew how destructive they were. In *I Write What I Like*, he wrote 'The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed'. His contributions to philosophy and the Black Consciousness Movement pushed back against the overwhelming influence of colonial and racist thinking.[42]

On 12 September 1977, Steve Biko died in detention. He was murdered. Two days earlier, healthy and 30 years old, he had been arrested in Port Elizabeth. In prison, the security police beat him badly and this is where the medical profession was implicated. Dr Ivor Lang recorded that he found nothing wrong with Biko. Dr Benjamin Tucker examined him and recommended that Biko be taken to the hospital, but after the security police argued with him, he changed his mind and said it was not necessary. Security police drove Biko over 700 km to Pretoria. Biko made the trip, naked in the back of a van, where he was injured further—reminiscent of /Keri-/Keri's body making the trip in the back of a bakkie from Oudtshoorn to Johannesburg. Biko died the next night, alone, in the hospital.[43-45]

It was the South African Medical and Dental Council's role to protect patients from improper medical conduct. They did not hold the doctors accountable and tried to cover up. This single death in detention, among many under apartheid, led to an outcry and prompted many efforts related to human rights, medicine and health.[46,47]

Professor Yosuf (Joe) Veriava, who is now Professor Emeritus at Wits, was one of the people to raise the alarm. Submissions to the Council were ignored but Veriava, a medical doctor, persisted. He was joined by other doctors including Tim Wilson and Dumisani Mzamane. Tobias, who was Dean of Medicine at the time, joined along with Frances Ames and Trefor Jenkins. The group took their case to the Pretoria Supreme Court—Veriava and others v. the South African Medical and Dental Council. To their surprise, on 30 January 1985, the judgement ordered the Council to hold a formal disciplinary hearing for the two doctors involved and to pay the costs for the case. Doctors Lang and Tucker were found guilty. Lang received only a caution and continued to practice for five more years until he retired. Tucker was struck off the role, but he issued a public apology and successfully applied to be reinstated.[46]

During this process, doctors at UCT and Wits saw the need to establish local medical ethics committees that would have status in the faculty and offer advice to doctors. Trefor Jenkins was involved in creating course material about medical ethics. Joe Veriava again played a role in 1997 when the Wits Faculty of Health Science was asked to make a submission to special hearings on the health sector held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Max Price, the Dean, Trefor Jenkins and Veriava put together the material. In his submission, Price said 'We look specifically at the failure of the faculty to address human rights and ethics as a substantive and formal component of the curriculum prior to 1984'.[48]

Price shared that in preparation for the TRC submission, many white staff members believed that Wits had offered a liberal environment and an 'oasis of freedom' to black staff and students during apartheid. However, in interviews, this proved untrue. Many Black staff and students felt angry and bitter because they experienced exclusion, humiliation and hurt by discriminatory practices.[49]

As a result, Wits decided to conduct an Internal Reconciliation Commission (IRC). 'If you don't look at everything from the past' - they declared, 'the legacy will continue'. Most of the submissions to the IRC related to the discrimination against Black students in the 1960s and 70s under apartheid. For example, Veriava remembers clearly that Black students were not allowed in post-mortem sessions if white bodies were being examined.[49,50]

The IRC did not review the history of the Dart Collection of Human Skeletons or the Dart Collection of Masks. There was no review of anthropological practices at Wits Medical School and the Department of Anatomy from the 1920s through to the 1980s, and no review of the trips to the Kalahari and other parts of the country and the continent. The IRC focused on the impact of apartheid. It did not look more deeply at the influence of colonial thinking, white supremacy and a hierarchy of race that had been embedded even prior to the establishment of apartheid in 1948. Scientific racism was not only in people's minds but also in the bodily remains in the basement of the building.

Reflecting on the IRC, Professor Emeritus Joe Veriava said, 'because the IRC did not review the faculty's earlier, pre-apartheid history, the process was incomplete'.[50] Nevertheless, the IRC was an important process. The Faculty of Health Sciences placed a statue and a plaque at the entrance to Wits Medical School. The plaque reads:

'The Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, commits itself to the ideals of non-discrimination in its teaching, the constitution of its student body, the selection and promotion of its staff and in its administration. It reaffirms its rejection of racism and other violations of human rights in whatever form they make their challenge.

In committing itself to these ideals, the faculty acknowledges that these values have not been honoured and it apologises for the hurt and suffering caused to students, staff and patients by past racial and other discriminatory practices.

The faculty recognises the respect that staff and students have in preserving these ideals and pays tribute to the efforts of those who strove to bring about change for the benefit of future generations. 2 February 2000'.[46,49]

Thirty years after Bikos' death, in 2007, Professor Ames Dhai became the Founder and Director of the Steve Biko Centre for Bioethics at Wits. Professor Joe Veriava served as Board Chair from its founding until his retirement.

Part three – Late apartheid and Post-apartheid shifts

'No South African physical anthropologist was involved in providing the scientific underpinning for the government's race classification practices', wrote Tobias in 1985 when he was 60 years old. 'Tobias was correct in the strict sense that no physical anthropologist submitted proposals to the government' wrote Tobias's student, Alan Morris, '... nor did they join in the legislative or administrative process'. But Morris goes on to say that they were involved because they 'provided a fertile growth medium in which the apartheid ideology could flourish'. The work of physical anthropologists mirrors the efforts of government racial classification. They were active in other universities and museums around the country, including the UCT and the University of Pretoria (UP). At Stellenbosch, physical anthropologists worked hard to distinguish the physical characteristics between White Afrikaaners and people classified as Coloured.[51-54]

But by the late-1980s, apartheid was under threat. At the same time, the scientific understanding of race and the theories of human evolution were changing. The field of genetics was proposing new ideas about human origins.

Himla Soodyall, who is now the Executive Officer of the Academy of Science of South Africa, is a human geneticist who studied at Wits in the 1980s with Trefor Jenkins. She later worked with mitochondrial DNA, which is passed down only through the maternal line. It was in 1987 that three researchers from the USA published their research in *Nature,* entitled 'Mitochondrial DNA and Human Evolution'. The impact was dramatic. For years there had been different interpretations of the fossil record. What the research showed was that all human beings on Earth shared a common ancestor about 200 000 years ago in Africa.[1,55]

Newsweek magazine picked up on the implications of the research and printed a famous cover story in 1988. The new science had made its way into the popular press and was starting to shape public opinion. Once again, there was a negative reaction to the theory that humans had origins in Africa. It happened with Darwin. It happened with Dart and the Taung Child Skull and it happened again in the 1980s and 90s with Mitochondrial DNA.[56]

Just as the understanding of human origins was shifting, so too was the political environment in SA, giving rise to new dynamics in the post-apartheid era. Tobias was involved with the return ceremony to the Kok family in 1996, the same year he was involved in another discussion about returning remains. Given his senior position at Wits, he was asked by the SA government to serve on a reference committee on the return of Sarah Baartman's remains. As a result, Tobias was part of a lengthy and heated debate about whether a sample of Sarah Baartman's remains, once they were returned to SA, should be retained for further DNA testing that would allow for scientific analysis.[57]

But Dr. Yvette Abrahams, who had conducted many years of research and written her PhD about Baartman also served on the reference committee. Abrahams who is now the Acting Director of the San and Khoi Centre at UCT, took the opposite view. Using Baartman's body for scientific research would be wrong, she said, 'because it is exactly what we have spent the last decade saying was wrong for the French'. Initially, Himla Soodyall who also served on the committee, agreed with Tobias, wanting to prove that Sarah Baartman's soft tissue belonged to the same person as her skeleton. But after listening to the debates, Soodyall agreed and said, 'healing is going to be a better antidote than the proof of evidence-based science'.[58,59]

While Tobias had reached out to his scientific colleagues in France about the return of Sarah Baartman's remains, for many years the French said no. It was the powerful poem by South African poet Diana Ferrus entitled 'I've come to take you home' that finally convinced the French. The poem was entered into legislation and the French government finally agreed. Her poem shaped history and in 2002, Sarah Baartman's remains were welcomed back to SA.[57,60]

Tobias continued to argue that 'it was a trifle naïve to think that the two, three or at most four English speaking physical anthropologists in South Africa helped create the climate or public opinion of apartheid'. He continued to stand by his view that they had not provided Malan, Verwoerd or Strijdom with the 'scientific underpinning of their philosophy'.[61]

Tobias had the opportunity to work with the new post-apartheid government and reshape his reputation. But just as he wanted to reinvent himself, he wanted to protect Dart's legacy as well. To the end of his life in 2012, Tobias continued to be loyal to Dart and he downplayed the racism implicit in Dart's race typology, which he

too had embraced. Despite his prolific writing throughout his life, he never wrote or spoke openly about /Keri-/Keri.[1]

Yet, the story of !Gurice, /Khanako and /Keri-/Keri's community continued into the post-apartheid era. Their extended family and their descendants brought a legal land claim forward in SA, which they won in 1999. The /Khomani San have a proud heritage and ancestry, and it was Ouma /Una Rooi and others who helped to save their indigenous language /Nuu. In 2017, the South African San Institute developed an excellent San Code of Research Ethics that covers issues of respect, honesty, justice and fairness.[13,62,63]

In 2002, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) aired a documentary called 'Tobias' Bodies'. 'We are all African', said Tobias to the camera. Repeatedly, Tobias made the point that we are all human beings and that we are all members of the same species, *Homo sapiens*, which was an important message. The lifting of apartheid provided an environment in which Tobias felt more comfortable embracing this new narrative of human origins.[1,64]

In 2000, Ciraj Rassool and Martin Legasick published *Skeletons in the Cupboard*. For the first time, they chronicled the skeleton trade in SA at the turn of the 20th century and described in detail how human remains were collected unethically by numerous museum and university collections and so began the slow process of working toward a national policy on human remains.[65]

For over 20 years, requests for reburial of remains have been dealt with on an ad hoc basis. Descendant communities and advocates have been pushing for the government to develop a national policy on human remains that can guide all curators, museums and universities. Finally, in March 2021, the draft policy on Repatriation and Restitution of Human Remains was ratified by Parliament. The new legislation allows for the establishment of a National Advisory Committee and the establishment of a dedicated office in the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) overseen by the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.[66]

Part four: Where to from here? 'Wits. For Good.'

Reviewing the history of physical anthropology, anatomy and palaeoanthropology illuminates the need for a reckoning with the past. While some have argued that all collections of human remains should be reburied, the new national legislation says that they can be used for ethical research and educational purposes. But exactly how will that be implemented?[66]

There are two curators of the Dart Collections at the Wits School of Anatomical Sciences today, Brendon Billings and Anja Meyer. They have inherited these collections, just as curators of collections throughout the country and across the world. Over the past several years, they have implemented new internal policies and created ethics committees to oversee the collections. But these issues are not theirs alone. This reckoning is part of a broader faculty, it is institutional and it is ours as a society.[66-70]

On its website, Wits says '"For Good" is our reason for being. It is why we seek to create new knowledge'. In 2022, Wits celebrated its 100th birthday. In 2025, we will mark the Centenary of Raymond Dart having described the Taung Child Skull in *Nature*. It is time for us to reflect on what has changed in that century. This is a great opportunity for us all.[71]

As mentioned at the opening of this article, many fields, including anatomy, anthropology and palaeoanthropology, are built on a foundation of racist science. So today in 2024, as we reflect on bioethics, we must be aware of these layers of racism and lasting influence. Only with that awareness and knowledge will doctors and medical professionals, geneticists, archaeologists and anthropologists be able to build a more complete understanding of ethics that embraces everyone. Only then will we be able to build a new generation of anatomists, anthropologists and scholars.

Drawing on Diana Ferrus's poem 'I've Come to Take You Home',[60] we can gain a sense of how to humanise, not only Sarah Baartman, but also /Keri-/Keri, and all those ancestral remains in need of rest.

I have come to take you home
where the ancient mountains shout your name.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill.
Your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white –
I have come to take you home
where I will sing for you,
for you have brought me peace,
for you have brought us peace.

Declaration. None.

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Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yz-oEx0X6Ms
Link to references: https://www.samedical.org/file/2191

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