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A motherless pariah searching for identity and relevance

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A MOTHERLESS PARIAH SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY AND RELEVANCE.

A personal narrative of inter-racial segregation exploring the journey of a mixed-race child, growing up not knowing his biological mother for more than four decades and his journey in search of his roots, identity and relevance in a still racially and class-divided, post-democratic South Africa.

by

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS BY COURSEWORK AND RESEARCH REPORT

in the field of

JOURNALISM & MEDIA STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

2018

Dedication

To the fighting spirit of the Khoi- San descendants in their tireless battle to seek recognition on their first nation status ……

Acknowledgements

To my wife Verona, our two boys Leeroy and Shakil, my daughter Elvira, our family and extended family who had to endure countless interrogations and questions regarding the family tree, the patients to sit through countless readings of the piece to seek correction, guidance and assistance, to gather crucial information…

To my Supervisors Kevin Davie and Lesley Cowling for their encouragement and support, who had to go through countless corrections and extended pieces and to my classmates who assisted me to craft the narrative from its original conception to where it is now.

Declaration

I declare that this personal narrative submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the field of Journalism and Media Studies is my own unaided and original work.

It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Signed _____ on _____ day of _____ 2018.

ABSTRACT

A Motherless pariah searching for Identity and Relevance

I was 41 years old when I met my mother for the first time in the small farming town of Olifantshoek. I was a mixed-race child, born out of wedlock as a consequence of a liaison between a Black mother and a “so-called Coloured” father in Apartheid South Africa, at a time when such a liaison was deemed a criminal offence.

This research report takes the form of a personal account of enforced separation, racial bias and interracial segregation that divided communities of colour, particularly the “so-called Coloured” community, which included my own family.

It narrates how my “African” mother’s perceived unsuitability to raise a child due to her Blackness, willfully deprived me of a bond with my biological mother, my extended maternal family and in essence, left me a motherless pariah, still searching for the knowledge of my true identity and relevance in the land of my birth. The essay seeks also to use my personal story to explore the race and identity issues that face the so-called “Coloured” community. It includes an examination of issues in the history of the colonised inhabitants of the Cape, apartheid-era rules and restrictions around interracial mixing, and debates within the “Coloured” community.

The piece concludes that my existence as a South African is not determined and defined by colour, ethnicity or race classification, but rather by the acceptance of who I am as an individual and as a human being. It argues that the term “Coloured” is unhelpful and that new ways should be found to facilitate the ownership of positive identity.

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