

Editorial

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!ke e: /xarra //ke: – ‘diverse people unite’, or ‘people who are different joining together’¹, or ‘unity in diversity’. Launched at Kwaggafontein on Freedom Day, 27 April 2000, our South African motto and National coat of arms symbolise democratic change, the birth of a new patriotism, and a call to the multiply diversity characterising the South African nation, to unite². Primarily referring to the call to unify thought and action³, the motto’s symbols also unify notions of foundation – common sense of belonging and national pride, growth, wisdom, identity, peace – and ascendance – beauty, growth, life and light⁴.

By choosing to cast the new South African motto in the language of the oldest known inhabitants, it signifies our common heritage and the greeting figures our common humanity and equality. Conventionally indicating defence and authority, the shield, spear and knobkierie in their horizontal position, symbolise spiritual defence and peace. If these symbols represent both contemporary and future ideals, they are also relevant in so far as they transcend a past characterised by the misuse of diversity and difference in the production of inequality, and discrimination.

¹ Translation from the Khoisan language of the /Xam people, see <http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/national-symbols.htm>; <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Communications/Coat%20of%20Arms/coatofarms.htm>

² See the ‘Address by President Thabo Mbeki at the Unveiling of the Coat of Arms’, Kwaggafontein, 27 April 2000 at <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/000502438p1001.htm>.

³ For how it links up with the Batho Pele, see <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/symbols/coa/index.htm>.

⁴ See <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/symbols/coa/index.htm>.

Colonising and apartheid political ideologies used the array of differences that characterise South Africa for factional interests, to marginalise and exclude. However, the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles united South Africa's populace in their common resolve to resist and overthrow these illegitimate, racist, and internationally condemned systems. Since its earliest beginnings, the struggle for freedom also projected a new democratic system that would guarantee equality, freedom and dignity in a unified republic. By expressing this call to unity in the language of the /Xam – an extinct language – our national emblem not only calls forth the common memory of this history of struggle and the contributions of our leaders, since South Africa's earliest times. It also signifies that which has been lost irretrievably, the 'minus in the origin'. The birth of democratic South Africa and processes of unification, integration and fusion came at a price. Yet, affirmative and united action in terms of our Constitution and Bill of Human Rights beyond the losses of the past – not least in the area of Religion Education – can build on the foundations of our past struggle to produce the supplements necessary for a united and prosperous nation.

Following nearly a decade-long process of widespread consultation the South African government launched the 'Policy on Religion and Education' at Parliament in Cape Town on 9 September 2003⁵. Recognising the significance of religion in South Africa, and the religious diversity of our country, the state has taken on the responsibility to train teachers and provide education about religion, religions and religious diversity to the nation. The state has recognized the need to have religion taught by properly educated and trained religion educators according to an inclusive religious curriculum. This issue of *Alternation* provides a sample of articles by some of the educators and researchers who participate in this process. Amongst others, they are at the forefront of educating and training prospective teachers and lay the foundations of both Religion Education (RE) and Religion Studies (RS) as school subjects.

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⁵ See Minister Kader Asmal's speech at the launch of the policy at: <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03091712461005.htm>.
