[Re]claiming the *Riel* as Khoisan Indigenous Cultural Knowledge

Micheal M. van Wyk

Department of Teacher Education, College of Education, University of South Africa, South Africa 0001
E-mail: vwykmm@unisa.ac.za

ABSTRACT The Afrocentric philosophy is based on the principles of inclusivity, cultural specificity, critical awareness, committedness and political awareness. The *riel* is the oldest entertainment form used as a social, cultural and educational tool by the Khoisan people. The purpose of this article is to [re]claim the *riel* as Khoisan indigenous knowledge by showing ways in which an Ubuntu-based research approach can be used to research indigenous culture. Data were collected through oral history, field notes and semistructured interviews. Seven themes emerged from the data. A case is argued for using the *riel* as Khoisan cultural heritage to promote nation building in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Since colonial invasions, African indigenous culture has weathered rapid change. Many researchers made real attempts to get inside the African culture but, even so, there has been a tendency to see culture in terms of the coloniser's precepts and to assess educational needs in terms of the coloniser's agenda. When establishing formal education, there was no adequate reference to the indigenous education that Africans already had or to the depth of the ancestral opinions that influenced African thinking (Bishop 1998). Even at present, in assessing change, researchers who are interested in indigenous culture and education have made small reference to the extent to which African values have survived, or to the extent to which these values have continued to influence African researchers' actions at different junctures. It is important for researchers to remind themselves that much of the literature on African culture and education can be ideologically traced back to the emergence of "knowledge" about indigenous peoples in the context of European imperialism and expansion. In brief, Africans were often judged in European contexts and not in terms of their own (Gillian 2002).

Now, as a democratic country, South Africa is engaged in the unfolding process of bringing indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) into focus as a legitimate field of academic enquiry in its own right. The researcher has attended several conferences and workshops nationally and internationally where debates and issues have become critical and intense regarding concep-

tual frameworks and methodological procedures relating to the IKS field. It is in the light of this that the researcher explores the Afrocentric-indigenous approach as an alternative method of studying IKSs, especially "Khoisan cultural knowledge". In March 1996, the then Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki (Mbeki 1996) addressed the national assembly regarding cultural heritage. He acknowledged and advocated Khoisan cultural heritage:

I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape – they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and dependence …(p. 23)

This statement recognises the historical contribution of other South Africans that made Mbeki and his broad constituency *African*. Thus, "I am formed by the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still, part of me", and "In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East". These statements, and the subsequent adoption of the Bill and promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South African Constitution 1996) later the same year, paved the way for robust debates at national, provincial and local levels of government and in civil society about the meaning of "I am an *African-Khoisan*" in different spheres of society, including the heritage sector.

To conclude, the above statement prompted the researcher to investigate why the *riel* is the

oldest entertainment form used as a social, cultural and educational tool by the Khoisan people in Southern Africa.

Emanating from this motivation, the Afrocentric paradigm which foreground this paper, explores African identity, and especially Khoisan cultural identity. This perspective of the African people, including Khoisan, as centred, located, oriented, and grounded in this philosophy. This idea has been coined as "Afrocentricity" by Molefe Asante (1987, 1990) in order to convey the profound need for African people to be [re]located historically, economically, socially, politically, and philosophically. Asante (1995:1) explained Afrocentricity as follows:

To say that we are decentred means essentially that we have lost our own cultural footing and become other than our cultural and political origins, dislocated and disoriented. We are essentially insane, that is, living an absurdity from which we will never be able to free our minds until we return to the source. Afrocentricity as a theory of change intends to re- locate the African person as subject. As a pan-African idea, Afrocentricity becomes the key to the proper education of children and the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed, survival.

Afrocentricity is therefore, an educational, philosophical and theoretical paradigm whose origins are attributed to Asante's works *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987), and *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* (1990). These books form the essential core of the idea that interpretation and explanation based on the role of Africans as subjects is most consistent with reality. It became a growing intellectual idea in the 1980s as scores of African American and African scholars adopted an Afrocentric orientation to data. Afrocentricity is generally opposed to theories that "dislocate" Africans to the periphery of human thought and experience. From a research point of view, Asante argues that Afrocentricity can have a significant impact upon the way African researchers view their identity, specifically considering the African people as centred, located, oriented, and grounded. The argument is that, for a millennium, Africans have been moved off social, political, philosophical, and economic agendas. Consequently it becomes necessary to examine all data from the standpoint of Africans as subjects and human agents rather than as objects in a European frame of reference. Of course, this means that Afrocentricity has implications for indigenous African culture. The Afrocentric method suggests cultural and social immersion, as opposed to scientific distance, as the best approach to understanding African phenomena. This means that the researcher must have some familiarity with the history, language, philosophy, and myths of the people under study. This point takes on a normative and cultural dimension since research cannot be reduced to the mere collection and production of value-free scientific knowledge. The concept becomes a way of linking the purpose of research to the very discourse that emerges and is legitimised from within the African framework. Such a position is critical in Africa because researchers may misrepresent indigenous cultural practices and thus perpetuate myths about the indigenous African culture.

My view is that the *riel*, as cultural heritage, must be appropriated by its legitimate and rightful owners, the Khoisan people, to be preserved for the next generation. The principles underlying this paradigm are in line with the qualitative research, which researchers should actively be involved in to produce knowledge suited to the cultural and social context in which they operate. In essence, this implies that the researcher does not attempt to appear as an invisible anonymous voice of authority, but as a real historical individual with concrete specific desires and interests (Dei 2000; Van Wyk 1996; Tabet 1997). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), the researcher is more concerned with an understanding of the social phenomenon from the actor's perspective, by participating in the lives of the actors. In such research, the researcher empathises and identifies with the people being studied in order to understand how they see things. Any acceptable approach to studying the Khoisan cultural dance called the *riel* requires an approach sufficiently comprehensive to address questions of how knowledge is being structured and used. The application of five Afrocentric canons, therefore, mandates that the researcher to consider the political, ideological, social, and cultural beliefs and motivations of participants. This approach necessitates a more comprehensive approach that goes beyond questions of what is learnt, by whom, and how quickly, to consider questions of how the knowledge being disseminated is structured and used.

The approach the researcher is suggesting requires all participants to be encouraged to search for layers of subtext beyond what is actually revealed in texts and other discourses.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF "CULTURAL HERITAGE"

To start with, however, a reference to the concept of "culture", which has been studied by anthropologists, is provided. It may be useful to begin with the definition of "culture" by Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871): "Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Moreover, UNESCO, in its Draft Medium-term plan (1990-1995) report (1989:57), defined "cultural heritage" as the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind. As a constituent part of the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognisable features and is the storehouse of human experience. The preservation and the presentation of the cultural heritage, therefore, constitute a cornerstone of any cultural policy. The preservation of the cultural heritage now covers the nonphysical cultural heritage, which includes the signs and symbols passed on by oral transmission, artistic and literary forms of expression, languages, ways of life, myths, beliefs and rituals, value systems and traditional knowledge and know-how (UNESCO 1989). Culture consists of the "lifeways" of a group, in this case the Khoisan, including its distinctive commitment to certain values and subsistence patterns (Eisenhart and Borko 1993). Eisenhart and Borko explain that cultures are coherent, profound and systemic to the extent that "discrepancy in school achievement" could be the manifestation of discontinuity between culture at home and the expectations at school. Hence, Ditton (2007) recognises different epistemologies in different contexts and cultures.

The democratic government of South Africa provided new impetus and direction to the national discourse about culture, nation building and social cohesion. The main point of departure of the national government was to strive towards building a uniquely prosperous nation, conscious of its diverse heritage of peoples. Through these actions, the democratic government demonstrated real commitment to the spirit of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a communal way of life which deems that society must be run for the sake of all, requiring cooperation as well as sharing and charity (Broodryk 2006). Therefore, Ubuntu is the quality of being human (Murithi 2006). Additionally, Ubuntu involves caring, sharing, respect, and compassion and ensures a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family (Broodryk 2006). Mtuze (1999) gives the fundamentals of Ubuntu thus: "In this kind of existence, one person's personhood and identity is fulfilled and complemented by the other person's personhood. Each person is because the other person is. Each person exists because the other person exists." Hence, Ubuntu is about amicable personal relationships, accentuates the importance of agreement, and has, according to Mkabela (2005), a capacity for the pursuit of the consensus and reconciliation of Khoisan culture in nation building.

This article explores Khoisan decedents' views [re]claiming the *riel* as legitimate cultural knowledge for Africa and globally in the quest for recognition as part of indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs).

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

The purpose of this paper is to revive the *riel*[1] as indigenous knowledge by showing ways in which the Afrocentric approach can be used for researching indigenous culture through an Ubuntu research paradigm. Tutu (2004) identifies Ubuntu-based research with participative research paradigms by stating that "we are bound with others . . . in Ubuntu". Broodryk (2006) supports Tutu's view: The emphasis is on togetherness . . . as a cooperative and community we are heading for the same end result . . . we can share what we have, our thoughts included." Thus, among other things, Ubuntu implies empowering participants in research (that is, as social responsibility), and emphasises unity or consensus in decision- making, and the processes that lead to decisions. Essentially, as a research philosophy, Ubuntu gives the research process a human face, as opposed to some top-

down imposed research processes, and advocates humane collaboration with the participants and community, in respect of their spirituality, values, needs, norms, and mores. Therefore, Ubuntu ameliorates tensions in research discourse and brings the researcher to the level of the participants. Greet Khoisan, sit with them, understand their needs and, if possible, eat with them. In short, become a Khoisan for full cooperation of Ubuntu in research. This type of research undertakes an African analysis and produces indigenous African knowledge that recognises the African voice; that tells another story. Since validity has the power of truth and identifies acceptable research as well as accurate construction of knowledge (Gay et al. 2006; Reviere 2001), these and other authors such as Mkabela and Luthuli (1997) and Merriam (1998) recommend research paradigms that are compatible with contexts, and that include participants' perspectives and interpretations, instead of satisfying universal or global "truths". Ubuntu based research reaffirms the centrality of cultural experience as the place to begin creating a dynamic multicultural approach to research.

This research is unique to the social structure and cultural values of African indigenous communities, such as the *Khoisan²*

- ensure development of an African-centred perspective;
- ensure that ethics are culturally defined and have an indigenous African code;
- create guidelines and ensure genuine incorporation of indigenous African views in such documents; and
- ensure research methods and styles that are culturally acceptable.

Ubuntu Research Design

The narrative-based and community-inquiry-based methods as research designs were used. The researcher integrated tenets of Ubuntu, which were in accord with traditional Western evaluation methodology: (1) a respect for others; (2) an agreement on criteria; and (3) dialogue or "mutual exposure" of beliefs. Research methodologies, as understood from Mkabela and Luthuli (1997) and Reviere (2001), that were compatible with the three tenets of Ubuntu briefly explained below, included: ethical considerations, action evaluation, interpretative approaches, case studies and discourse analysis. Through Ubuntu, I communicated, and agreed on, methodology through dialogue with the participants. This study employed semistructured interviews, oral histories and photographic images. These were undertaken in order to gain a richer and deeper understanding of views on becoming "rieldancers" through narratives (Miles and Huberman 1984; Bathmaker and Harnett 2010). Linde (1993) coined these stories, culturally defined landmarks – even of peoples' lives, which are repeated over time and across occasions. Moreover, Mishler (1999) states that the stories people tell about their lives are identity performances. Over time, personal stories become landmark events related to life experiences.

Participants and Data-Collection Procedure

Four participants responded to my official invitation for the interviews. Data were collected through oral history (story telling), field notes and semi-structured interviews. Interviews with the participants were conducted at different, agreed times (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). The interviews were conducted in places where they felt comfortable and lasted from one to two hours. The interviews were first transcribed in detail and saved as original versions. To make the participants' narratives more visible and readable, the transcribed interviews were then rewritten as condensed and coherent stories. To ensure that there were no major changes to the content of the refined participants' narratives, they were compared with the original transcript and the tapes from the interviews. One of my senior research colleagues[3] verified transcripts and responses. The participants' narratives were then organised thematically before they were analysed in a five-phase process. Analyses of the participants' narratives are both *inductive* and *deductive* in nature. These interviews were inductive in that the researcher sought recurring themes in participants' ways of talking about the *riel* as a dance and art form, and the importance of the *riel* as a specific social, cultural, educational tool.

Ubuntu-based Ethical Considerations

Assurance was given to the participants that data collected was only research purpose. The

researcher did obtain permission from the community leader and elders from the area to conduct evaluation (Mkabela and Luthuli 1997; Merriam 1998), but also an ubuntu obligation to acknowledge the elderly, spiritual leaders, chiefs, and other forms of leadership around the community, including those who were not participants. Additionally, in view of oneness in ubuntu, seeking approval from elders and community leader increased the participants' participation because their local leadership blessed the evaluation, and therefore reduced tensions and improved power relations between participants and researcher (Mkabela 2005). Decolonising research considers the dissemination of research outcomes as a collaboration that acknowledges the contribution of indigenous peoples and, most importantly, informs them of the methods of dissemination (Reviere 2001; Prior 2006). Thus, ubuntu ethics included clearly identifying participants' contributions to outcomes, sharing, analysing and discussing the findings with the teachers, declaring fully my intentions in conducting the evaluation, clarifying the participants' and the researcher's actions, needs, and benefits. According to ubuntu ethical requirements, the researcher explained the purpose of the study. He then explained the purpose of confidentiality to the participants. The participants agreed that the researcher could use their first names, namely *Gert, Elias, Janneman, Susana* and *Mietjie[4]* in the study.

RESULTS

Data was analysed and seven themes emerged from the narratives[5] and interviews conducted that highlight the *riel* as the oldest and original entertainment form of dance in Khoisan culture.

The *Riel* as a Powerful Symbol of a Social Function

Giurchescu (2001) mentions that dance is a social function. Considering the social level of interaction, movement patterns and style, these function as symbols of social relationships between individuals and groups, and between groups. Giurchescu (2001) argues in her paper entitled, *The power of dance and its social and political uses,* that dance has always been an important symbolic instrument in ritual context, in art events, in social communication and po-

litical action. The *riel,* as a Khoisan dance, is a powerful symbol of a social function. It not only alludes to the changing world, but also becomes an instrument of change. According to Langer (1979), the power of dance, considered in its artistic features, lies in the ecstatic function, which takes the dancers out of themselves, removes them from everyday life, and transports them into a virtual world of time and space. Moreover, Blacking (1984) refers to dance as follows:

The power of dance rests in acts of performance by dancers and spectators alike, in the process of making sense of dance in the cultural products of those processes, and in linking dance to other sets of ideas and social experiences.

Gert and Janneman expanded on this by saying that the *riel* is a form of social event: "In essence, the *riel* is an outdoor dance, a veld dance, and a modern form of some of the oldest indigenous dances of the Khoi and the San."

The *Riel* as a Multidimensional Cultural Text

Giurchescu (2001) is of the opinion that dance is a multidimensional cultural text. This implies that dance could integrate all the dimensions as coherent and dynamic factors of culture. According to the theory of culture text, it is the socio-communicative relevance of the dance performance that endows this process with the quality of text (Flaherty 1995; Mutema 2003). Moreover, Eisenhart and Borko (1993) argue that culture consists of the lifeways of a group, including its distinctive commitment to certain values and subsistence patterns. This way of life is demonstrated by the Khoisan people. In their way of life, Reviere (2001) suggests, Ubuntu defines the individual in terms of rules of conduct or social ethics in relation to others. For example, the *riel* consists of cultural movements (gestures) which are welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, and makes the group willing to share. These are attributes that one could argue, contributed to the advancement of the culture of the Khoisan people.

Janneman reaffirmed the *riel* as a cultural tool:

I believed from the outset that this dance of our people must get a rightful place on the South African cultural calendar. Today you can see

that the riel is a huge hit. Within four years the culture event became one of its most successful ATKV cultural initiatives. It is our way of life.

The riel as an Ubuntu cultural tool of the Khoisan is available to others, willing to affirm others, and is able to benefit others because of the assurance that they belong to a community. Moreover, Asante (1995) contends that the concept, "Afrocentricity", is not about being colour conscious. He believes that is not a matter of colour but of culture that matters in people's orientation to centeredness, especially among the Khoisan. Hence, Ubuntu is also about amicable personal relationships, accentuates the importance of agreement, and has, according to Mutema (2003) and Mkabela (2005), a capacity for the pursuit of consensus and reconciliation. I believe that the riel could be used as a powerful unifying and reconciliation tool to unite all South Africans.

The respondents (Mietjie and Susana) mentioned:

We are really proud to part of this project. One of the objectives of the project is to advance the riel as cultural event amongst all people especially the youth, for enjoyment in our rural towns. When we started in 2006 we could barely scrape together seven groups. They continue. Preliminary rounds start each year throughout the different municipal districts in the Northern Cape Province. Each district winner (individual and group) participate in the final event in the Paarl to crown the ultimate winners (both individual and group categories). Yet each year the number of entries virtually doubled. Let's give you some figures. By 2007 we had only 14 and, by 2010, as many as 61 groups. These groups came from all over South Africa. Let's give you some names from the Northern Cape. Did you know the Calvinia Sitstappers, Boesmanland Stofskoppers and the Bêtjies van Bêtjiesfontein? These groups travelled miles to challenge fellow finalists from Bitterfontein and Rietfontein to be crowned as ultimate winner of the riel. Our vision is to expose the dance to the "white" and "black" fellow South Africans in the next years. We want to be part of nation building.

The *Riel* as an Expression of Khoisan Identity

In the Lak region of Southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, Wolffram (2006) conducted a study on music and dance performances by the Lak indigenous island people, in which they demonstrate through their performances who they are, what they consists of and how powerful they can be as a community. Gert believes that the *riel,* "with its centuries-old rhythms and steps from the Khoisan and Nama dance traditions ... over time, merged with contemporary influences, including Scottish reel dancing, hence we called it the *riel*". Both participants emphasised that this dance is performed as a social event as told by their grandparents: "To this day, most of the dance takes place in a circle with some variations." Gert mentioned that no-one really knows what the *riel* looked like in its purest form, or when and where the transition took place because there has been no research on it. He went on to say, "What I know today ... This *riel* was danced by the descendants of the Khoisan and that it became the dance of the working classes, particularly between the 1940s and 1980s. This is our identity performed in the open air, under trees or on dusty plains by rural folk in isolated areas, particularly in the Northern Cape." He mentioned that, five years ago, he received an invitation from the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging* (ATKV)[6] to participate in the arts and culture event but he was not able to assemble a group to participate in the Cape Town event.

Giving their point of view, Mietjie and Gert said this dance style encapsulates the Khoisan identity:

It was the only socialised and entertainment form of our people. We did it with only a single "ramkie" (tin guitar made out of an empty oil can and a piece of wood with strings). Sometimes we do it with the odd handmade violin or, sometimes, a banjo, accordion or mouth organ. Our people come from places such as Kweekkraal, Kliprand, Molsvlei, Spoegrivier and Soebatsfontein[7] to enjoy them. These towns may be hard to find on a map, but for the people living there, the ancient art of dance is alive and well. To this day ... this is Khoisan identity.

The *Riel* as an Exciting Community Engagement Project

Asante (1995) points out that, "as a pan-African idea, Afrocentricity becomes the key to the proper education of children and the essence of an African cultural revival and, indeed, sur-

vival". Needless to say, this is exactly why the Khoisan people [re]claimed their heritage and acknowledged their legitimate stance to the government and the world at large. Gert mentioned that the *riel* is an exciting community engagement project with great potential: *"Our project is a runaway success so far and now more youth teams are involved especially the rural areas of the Northern and Eastern Cape provinces. What we experienced now, is that our youth is really part of this project. This project is moving and is still growing."* His face changed; a big smile appeared. He could not sit still. In his chair, he is like a child who is so excited to answer this one.

Gert continued: *I am so excited about this project. I believe it is the hype around the competition; the ultimate winner will be crowned. The trip to "Taalmonument" in Paarl[8] for the participants and the media exposure are huge attractions (TV broadcasting, the judges and audience). Others are learning from each other about the dance. I conducted a couple of workshops on the dance last year. It was huge learning experience for me and participants.*

According to the respondents (Gert and Mietjie), the *riel* is a new learning experience to them. They believe it could be used as an educational tool to eradicate poverty and promote community involvement. Gert experienced the *riel* as a sense of belonging. According to the Afrocentric curriculum, researchers and scholars attempt to provide a framework for the reconstruction of African cultures and identities around the best morals, values, and cultural practices that both traditional and contemporary African societies have to offer (Asante 1988; Asante 1991). However, not all cultural practices of African societies are automatically to be considered "authentic," useful, and/or positive (Giddings 2001; Jones 2001; Wilson 1998). Furthermore, African-centred curriculum researchers and scholars do not teach children about traditional African societies so that they might relive them (as if they were ever fixed or could ever be fixed). The purpose of teaching about and re-appropriating aspects of traditional African societies is to construct a more correct version of African history and to reconstruct culture and identity to help African children solve their present and future problems (Wilson 1998; Caruthers 2000; Giddings 2001). Giddings

(2001), as well as Lee, Lomotey and Shujaa (2001) contend that Afrocentric content must be infused into the school curriculum. Mietjie responded that the *riel* is like an educational tool to support and straighten our cultural heritage in South Africa, especially with the focus being on the youth.

She referred to the youth:

The ultimate objective of the riel is to get more rural youngsters in this cultural project. Some of them have no training and entrainment [sic] in their home townships. Some of them hardly ever have the opportunity to go away. This event gives the young people opportunities and exposure to change their lives for the better. We want to help our children and decrease teenage pregnancies in our areas. They must be proud people of the soil, true South Africans. Our other objective is the documentation of the dance in our schools textbooks so that other cultures could learn about our culture.

A Case for the Revival of the *Riel* as Khoisan Culture for Nation Building

Local subjects are imbued with an awareness of self and their place within a collective. Being informed about the self, the Khoisan community, and their culture, is important if we are to appreciate the challenges and respond accordingly. Since Khoisan culture and issues of identity are powerfully linked, we cannot dismiss power of indigeneity and local cultural knowings. In 1996, the then Dr Ben Ngubane[9], Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology said that the arts, culture and heritage could not be exceptions in this transformation process, since they too had been overtly affected by the maldistribution of skills, resources and infrastructure during the apartheid era. In fact, given that the arts are premised on freedom of expression and critical thought, transformation in this area is crucial to empowering creative voices throughout the country, and is therefore integral to the success of the democratic project. Inspired by the former minister's statement, the participants' point of view is that the *riel* special and unique.

According to Mietjie and Janneman:

The riel has shaken its negative image (baggage) along with the notion that it is old-fashioned and from a bygone era. They point out:

"It is now danced by politicians, community leaders, police officers, teachers, even church ministers. The riel is proudly South African!"

In September 1996 the National Heritage Resources Act was promulgated to replace the National Monuments Council with the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) and provincial heritage authorities as from 1995. Following the first three years of implementation of the Act, a submission to the first Council of SAHRA by its chief executive officer (CEO) (SAHRA, n.d.:2) noted with concern that one of the challenges the institution had to cope with was that: "… culture and heritage cut across the functions of various institutions. Therefore, every institution plays a role in heritage resources management. There is a potential that the principles of heritage management are compromised". Gert alluded to a particular example – why he thinks that *riel* shows huge potential to accommodate other races and cultures and to advance the course of *riel* as indigenous knowledge.

He commented:

Before I forget or miss this one! In Merweville in the central Karoo town (Northern Cape Province) the female "white" principal of the local primary school is the leader of their riel dance group. He mentioned that "it is not hard to understand and realise [why] the riel is growing in popularity. It is contagious."

Respondents (Gert, Susana and Mietjie) concluded: *"We reclaim and have revived our culture. So let's do the riel!"*

Asante (1991) as well as Alivizatou (2011) support the valid claim of the participants that *riel* as a dance form must be revived, acknowledged and even advanced to promote the course of Khoisan culture. Moreover Zebec (2006) and Bhola (2002) is of the view that the purpose of continuity and revival as valuable dialectical relationships – and in this case the *riel* as indigenous knowledge phenomenon – "is to preserve the old customs and to pass them on to the younger generation". According to the respondents (Gert and Mietjie), it is the heartfelt, intensely rhythmic music of the *riel* which is infectious in its energy. They said that the *riel* is here to stay for coming generations.

In summation, at the *Imbizo*[10] held in November 2006, Nelson Mandela received the Ubuntu Award of the National Heritage Council (NHC) and, in his address, he reminded the country:

Ubuntu is not a parochial phenomenon, but rather has added globally to our common search for a better world. Our heritage is the world's heritage. And our heritage should be lived in the present … We should strive for excellence in the living of Ubuntu and not allow it to become merely a subject of study by heritage institutions.

CONCLUSION

Arising from the literature review, the Afrocentric approach is based on the principles of inclusivity, cultural specificity, critical awareness, committedness and political awareness. The purpose of this article was achieved whereby participants echoed to [re]claim the *riel* as Khoisan indigenous cultural knowledge by showing ways in which an ubuntu-based research approach can be used to research indigenous culture. Participants felt strongly that more must be done to "support and safeguard" the *riel* as an indigenous artistic form which aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and nonformal education, as well as the revitalisation of the various aspects of such heritage. The purpose of using an Ubuntu research design as a community inquiry-based method was to provide valuable insights into the cultural activities of Khoisan people as communities of practice. Further, respondents alluded that the *riel* is the oldest, the original entertainment form of dance used as a social, cultural and educational tool by the Khoisan people long before Western cultures and traditions arrived at the Cape of Good Hope. It is also clear from the interviewees and oral history that the vigorous and vivid display of the *riel* by dancers which encapsulates the multiple realities of Khoisan cultural heritage. From storytelling to interviews, the *riel* as a dance form encapsulate an opportunity for both community display and personal demonstration. Respondents further highlighted that communities literally perform themselves to show their potential as cooperative entities and capabilities as creative, influential, and successful groups. In support of Khoisan cultural heritage, political and community leaders, as well as the Nelson Mandela Foundation, called for the preservation of our cultural heritage, making a

special case for acknowledging the *riel* as part of Khoisan cultural heritage in the process of nation building in South Africa and globally at large.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

[1] The oldest and original entertainment form of dance used as a social, cultural and educational tool by the Khoisan people

[2] Khoisan (also spelled Khoesaan, Khoesan or Khoe-San) is a unifying name for two ethnic groups of Southern Africa, who share physical and putatively linguistic characteristics distinct from the Bantu majority of the region. Culturally, the Khoisan is divided into the foraging San and the pastoral Khoi.

[3] This colleague is an NRF-rated researcher and specialises in qualitative-research designs and narrative inquiry-based research methods.

[4] Before I could begin with the study, I obtained consent from the respondents. I explained the purpose of the study. I decided beforehand to use *pseudonyms* for the names of the participants in this study.

[5] The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and then translated into English. The Afrikaans language is one of the eleven official South African languages.

[6] This is a non-profit cultural organisation in South Africa promoting Afrikaans cultural, social and educational events (Afrikaanse kultuur).

[7] These are rural towns in the Northern Cape Province, South Africa.

[8] A century-old agricultural town (produces fruit, vegetables and exports different wines) localised in the Breede River region of the Western Cape Province.

[9] The First Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, in Mr Nelson Mandela's cabinet in the newly elected democratic South African government of 1994

[10] This was a door-to-door campaign held by ruling party, the African Nationalist Congress (ANC), in the Umtata region of the Eastern Cape Province.

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