

Copy of letter from ARCHIE CRAIL

Regina Saskatchewan  
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The President  
Comrade O.R. Tambo  
African National Congress (SA)  
Box 31791  
Lusaka

Dear Comrade President,

Greetings from me and my family. Your New Year message has been a source of renewed inspiration both for us here in North America and the people within South Africa. There can be no greater directive to the people than to make the country ungovernable.

Comrade President, there are two questions that I wish to address to you.

The first deals with a comrade and friend Christian Philander Aaron, who like myself hails from Paarl in the Western Cape is currently incarcerated in Luanda Angola. During 1978 we were both engaged by the Anglican Diocese of Damaraland in Namibia. I was based in Windhoek and Christian was a teacher at St. Mary's Odibo near the Namibian-Angolan border.

The possibility in that situation were very real that he could be taken into Angola together with other Namibians by SWAPO soldiers. However, since we both believed in the cause of the Namibian people under the leadership of SWAPO, this was no immediate reason for anxiety.

In November of the same year, Christian was taken together with two other teachers and thirteen students across the border. When his parents heard about this they were of course alarmed. From the church offices I did my best to placate them, assuming that he was indeed in safe hands and once the confusion had abated he would be returned. One of the teachers Frank Bolshorst, a white S.A. male of Dutch descent was released in 1979 as a South African spy by President Sam Nujoma of SWAPO.



For my part, I have spoken and written to various ANC (SA) and SWAPO leaders about the possibility of Christian's release without getting any reply. Among those were Comrade Isaac Makopo, formerly Chief Rep of Botswana, Comrade Cassius of the MK and Comrade Susan Haongwa of SWAPO.

The irony of it all is that during 1978 we received material support from the SWAPO leadership in Windhoek to integrate some South Africans from Paarl into the ranks of PLAN.

Although the International Red Cross facilitates communication between Christian and his family, the latter would rather have him at home. I beg you therefore, to give this problem some consideration.

Comrade President, my second question is not a very popular one at the present time, and I doubt whether it has been for the past century. It essentially deals with my people, the Coloureds of South Africa. It is not an easy one for me to address, and it has taken me months of contemplation and research into seventeenth century documents before I could summon up the courage to speak about something that is so obvious but nobody wishes to mention.

Within South Africa the term "Coloured" has been a source of much debate. Black Consciousness elements have started referring to them as "so-called Coloured" without resorting to a more positive term like Khoi or Khoi San. Even in our own ANC publications Coloured is sometimes printed between italics. All this contributes to a perception of an unidentifiable people in African terms. To that end we have been called a "people without a culture". The Xhosa term, which should be familiar to you.

We, who had given some of the Ngoni peoples the clicks so prevalent in the Xhosa tongue, are now virtually without a language of our own. With few exceptions, being Northern Namakwaland and the North West Cape area notably the Upington-Kakamas area, the Khoi language is nowhere else spoken. Only in Namibia have I found it spoken and taught in primary schools. All this the result of Portuguese, Dutch and English colonizers.



Modern day Boers have been actively involved in the eradication of our culture and should not be regarded as blameless.

In a liberated South Africa, nobody would speak of Bapedi, Venda, Shangaan or other minorities. Likewise, we descendants of the Khoi people do not wish to be called a minority for whom special privileges have to be enacted by the state. Similarly, we do not wish to be put in a position where reactionary Boer and other elements could use us as defenders of Afrikaans - a language which we to this day speak with a Khoi accent.

The common picture that most people form of the modern day Khoi (Coloured) person is an urbanised individual whose ancestry is hardly mentioned. If at all it is mentioned, stress is laid on a white European male who came to South Africa. Pointedly left out is the Khoi, San or Ngoni contribution. A man skilled in the ways of the world, racist and biased intent on making money.

We as the younger generation wish to redress this position. We no longer wish to be observers or coloured portrayals of the struggle. As we are essentially part of Africa, a strong effort must be made to show our indigenous roots and the waves of colonization that has caused us to be what we are today.

In conclusion Comrade President I realise that my perception is somewhat garbled. Only through discussion can we crystalize our thoughts and decide on a plan of action. Furthermore, as I have said at the beginning, this is not a popular subject; but I do believe that now is the time to address what could in the long term become a destabilising factor in a liberated South Africa.

Yours in the struggle

Amandla

ARCHIE CRAIL