

abaseyukuphinde
bavivele ukuyolwa izimpi
nor ever again be trained
for war
und sie werden nicht mehr lernen,
Kriege zu führen
en hulle sal nie meer leer
om oorlog te maak nie

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The Merger Planning Secretariat
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Greetings,

Following your public invitation in the "Sunday Times" of the 2nd of March 2003, I hereby submit my suggestion of a name I regard most suitable for the new institution to be created through the merger of the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal in January 2004.

Hoping to be hearing from you in due course, I remain

yours faithfully

(signed: Dr. Ben Khumalo-Seegelken)

“oThukela University”

iYunivesithi oThukela

Universiteit oThukela

a new name for the
“FIRST TRULY SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY”

a new institution that is demographically representative and future-oriented,
serving the interests of South Africa and Africa more responsibly,
enhancing access to tertiary education
and leading the transformation of higher education in South Africa

in a regional system
shaped, divided and disadvantaged
by colonialism and apartheid.

Ben Khumalo-Seegeken

oThukela University

iYunivesithi oThukela
Universiteit oThukela

1 "oThukela" - What's in a name?

°symbolically holding together

` phezulu + phansi = simunye!
` mpumalanga + ntshonalanga `

°border converted into a stream of life-giving water

°non-discriminatory life-giving tradition

2 "oThukela - and ?"

°eye-opener for richness and diversity

°exercise in reconciliation and lesson in peace-making

°encouragement: **growing-together**

programmatic name:

°quench thirst; °build bridges;

°irrigate and cultivate;

°swim across and widen the horizon;

°save lives; °provide sanctuary;

°endure droughts and floods;

°keep top and bottom together;

°remain yourself whilst progressively changing.

local commitment / global perspective

1 "oThukela" - What's in a name?

For the two institutions hitherto known as the "University of Durban-Westville" and the "University of Natal" I propose the new name **oThukela University** with the corresponding versions in isiZulu, Afrikaans and other languages, "iYunivesithi oThukela", "Universiteit oThukela", etc.

"oThukela" is the locative form of the name of the river "uThukela" that flows from north-west to south-east through the province in which the two merging institutions are situated, meaning "at, adjacent to or on the banks of uThukela".

On its journey from the heights of the mountain-range, the Drakensberg, down the steep landscape till it reaches sea-level on entering the Indian ocean, "uThukela" undergoes a series of changes in speed, width, depth, temperature and colour.¹ A number of tributaries, each with a unique history and a particular name, pour into the on-going stream and make it gradually swell into a river of remarkable size and reputation. Over the centuries factors including weather, climate, seasons, droughts and floods have made acquaintance with "uThukela" and have left their footprints on it, giving it the form and history it bears - almost just as much as politics, peace, conflicts and wars, have done and still do. "uThukela" is more than just a river somewhere in Africa!

In searching for the most suitable name one other point of orientation could possibly be the three rivers "uMsunduzi", "uMngeni" and "uMlazi" that are geographically nearer to the physical venue of the institution concerned; "uThukela", however, has - exactly on that reason - the advantage of the bigger sister by being geographically somehow further away whilst remaining near enough to be a point of identification - right in the centre of the province.

Literally and figuratively - physically and symbolically - uThukela holds together the region south and north of it as a viable entity of its own and as a significant component of the sub-continent. The joint venture "oThukela University" faces the challenge of serving primarily "South Africa and Africa" as responsibly as the vein "uThukela" does and has always been doing.

The following could be some further guideline in understanding the deeper meaning and significance of the new name:

- °` phezulu + phansi = simuye! ^ (up + down = we are one)

uThukela forms a link between the heights of the Drakensberg and the depths of the Indian Ocean. People sharing an identity derived from this symbol remain at all levels one

¹ From the sea coast to the summits of the Drakensberg the relief exceeds 3385m. which, for a country little more than 250km. wide and lacking orogenic mountain folding, is exceptional. (Lester King: "The Natal Monocline: explaining the Origin and Scenery of Natal, South Africa", Durban, 1972)

entity in diversity and always in living contact with the rest of the world - *by land, by water, by air.*

- ° mpumalanga + ntshonalanga (east + west ...)

uThukela forms the one, the Orange River the other arm that together maintain a certain relationship between the waters to the east (the Indian Ocean) and the waters to the west (the Atlantic Ocean), symbolizing two important ribs on both sides of the back-bone (Drakensberg) holding the eastern and the western halves of the one big body (Southern Africa) together.

- ° border converted into a stream of life-giving water

uThukela has often been given the function of dividing and keeping settlements and states apart; all the same this river has through generations been seen and used also as a stream of life-giving water by

the Khoi-San and the abaNguni;
the amaZulu, "amambuka", "amakholwa", "amazemtiti"
and other native communities;
the colonists, the Voortrekker and the missionaries;
the contract-labourers and the imperialists;
the villagers, the farmers and industrialists.

The non-discriminatory life-giving tradition of this African old lady, "uThukela", would certainly inspire present and future generations seeking for reconciled co-existence and set a good example for others in similar situations.

Symbolic significance and historical reasons not being the only factors in finding a new common identity, it is nevertheless encouraging to note how far they help in widening the scope and delving in this issue in some depth. Geopolitical and constitutional guidelines on the one and primarily emotional considerations on the other hand will certainly favour consolidation under wider and future-oriented perspectives that are presented by the name "oThukela".

2 "oThukela - and ?"

The new name "oThukela" sets a stream of learning processes in motion. Whilst historians and political scientists shall be arguing, whether or to what extent the two institutions should merge under this particular name, the name "oThukela" shall - in the same process - be gaining familiarity and advancing to serve as

- an eye-opener for the richness and diversity not yet activated adequately;
- an exercise in reconciliation and a further lesson in peace-making;
- an encouragement in "growing-together in order to grow together".

The programmatic name "oThukela" simultaneously extends an *invitation* and poses a *commitment*. Everyone within and around the new institution gets the opportunity of being part in trying to

- ° quench thirst and let others do so too
- ° build bridges and help ends meet
- ° irrigate and cultivate
- ° swim across and widen the horizon
- ° save lives
- ° provide sanctuary for unique and endangered species
- ° endure droughts and floods
- ° keep top and bottom together
- ° remain yourself whilst progressively changing.

Intellectuals and other participants in the process of enhancing access to tertiary education and leading the transformation of higher education in South Africa shall have a *permanent source of inspiration* and a *reliable reminder* in the programmatic name "oThukela". Research and implementation under the banner "oThukela" lay emphasis on local commitment whilst keeping a watchful eye on remaining globally and future oriented.

Last but not least: "oThukela", a name in a language once marginalized and disused, symbolically redresses the injustices of the past and unveils new perspectives towards a continent kindling a *revived sense of self-esteem and self-reliance* in universal interplay.

Tertiary education rooted at "oThukela" remains imbedded in a global network of streams and perspectives essential not only for South Africa.

Dr. Ben Khumalo-Seegelken
13th March 2003

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