

BLOOD RELATIVES – OPENING SPEECH

I would like to begin by extending a warm welcome to the newest member of our TRIBE -

LARA SOPHIA

BORN A FEW WEEKS AGO TO PROUD PARENTS

LYNNJO AND CEDRIC.

When Cedric Nunn asked me to open the Durban exhibition of his Blood Relatives Photographic portfolio I was initially hesitant.

Why me I asked?

Then as the motivation behind the theme, the knowledge of the people, the community, the places and the times grew I felt the excitement of being part of the South African “identity issue”.

I am a 3rd generation descendant of John Dunn and like Cedric; we can trace our roots back to the union between two nationalities, the Scots and the Zulus. How I dislike the past obsession with the word race and colour. I make a point of replying to the question “Who are you?” “What are you?” with the statement that “I am a South African”.

When I look back to the period before our new dispensation I cannot help but smile. The Government through all its policies attempted to pigeon hole every citizen and thereby dictate the type of service and opportunity each would receive from jobs, to transport, education and even toilets! In simple terms it saw only two types of South African, Black & White - just like the photographs you have come to view today.

But, like the photographs, in reality we are all shades of grey. Our past fate and to a strange degree our now future, was determined by the classification in our identity documents, birth certificates and the like. In most cases a glance at the person would give a clear indication of their classification but the old Government had its problem areas as some citizens did their utmost to influence their classification so as to improve their access to opportunities. Looking back those who were not classified as white have countless stories of how they tried to fool the authorities and some were so successful that

they actually cut ties with their blood relatives. Now of course they are trying to re-discover their roots!

Being classified within a community which the Government of yesterday really didn't want to acknowledge existed outside of the Cape, did have its problems. Now we like to make these sound more respectable by the expression "challenges" We found for example that we didn't appear to fall under any clear jurisdiction and nobody wanted to take responsibility for our welfare or what few rights we had. Like all cornered and disowned communities we fought back, we challenged authority (a much better use of the word in my opinion), we made demands and while the armed conflict was not really our style we rebelled.

Being in the very rural setting of Mangete our lives were not affected on a daily basis by government policies and it was only when we came out of the area and sought jobs, work permits, business rights, documentation etc that the indeterminate nature of our status became apparent.

I so well remember my Father trying to get a permit to open a general dealer store and being frustrated with constant refusals because he did not fit into the stereotype, saying in a confused quotation "I appear to be neither fish nor beef."

I have always maintained that the word coloured is a description, an adjective and did not want to spend the rest of my life being called an adjective and I join Cedric in saying that we are South Africans with many cultural ties, whether any of these choose to accept us or not. We forge new and continual relations with other Africans, South Africans and other people from the seven continents. And importantly, we have no hang ups about who we are or whether we are now too white in a black world. Are we? Desmond Tutu is right in calling us a rainbow nation!!

I must congratulate Cedric Nunn on this exhibition for bringing together so many haunting images of the past & present. It has been a lifetime quest of his to capture, preserve and present these images of South African life, Kwa Zulu Natal history and in particular Mangete through his truly great artistic skills. We thank him and congratulate him.

And now I have the greatest pride and pleasure in declaring this exhibition open.