

## PREAMBLE

"The story of Sarah Bartmann is the story of the African people of our country in all their echelons....We need to cast our eyes back to a period less than ten years ago. Then the state ideology, whatever the garments in which it was clothed, was firmly based on the criminal notion that some had been called upon to enlighten and tame the hordes of barbarians, as Sarah Bartmann was enlightened and tamed. The legacy of those centuries remains.... This means that we still have an important task ahead of us – to carry out the historic mission of restoring human dignity of Sarah Bartmann, of transforming ours into a truly non racial, non racist and prosperous country, providing a better life for all our people. A troubled and painful history has presented us with the challenge and possibility to translate into reality the noble vision that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. When that is done, then it will be possible for us to say that Sarah Bartmann has truly come home. The changing times tell us that she did not suffer and die in vain. Our presence at her gravesite demands that we act to ensure that what happened to her should never be repeated"

**President Thabo Mbeki, Second President of the democratic Republic of South Africa, excerpt from his, Speech at the interment ceremony of Sarah Bartmann, Hankey, 09 August 2002.**

In line with this instructive excerpt from the former President Mbeki's speech, the Department of Arts and Culture through the Reference Group – appointed by the Minister of Arts and Culture to provide strategic advice on the development of the Sarah Bartmann legacy – has drafted this base document to serve as a foundation on which this project will be anchored. The base document is not only an attempt at reinterpreting and rewriting of our history as well as reconfiguring our heritage landscape but it is also a precursor to the construction of The Sarah Bartmann Centre of Remembrance which will serve as a physical manifestation

of the story of Sarah Bartmann. The Centre will stand as a stark reminder to the people of South Africa, our continent, Africa and the rest of the world, of the atrocities that have been perpetrated against indigenous populations in various historical epochs. However, such a project will not be designed neither to invite vengeful and retributive sentiments nor to instill perpetual feelings of victim-hood, but to say never in our lifetime and never among our future generations shall we allow oppression and dehumanization of our people across racial, gender, ethnic and creedal spectrum to recur.

The story of Sarah Bartmann should help us to undergo an emotional catharsis, which is a pre-requisite for healing the wounds and scars that this nation bear. Such national healing will provide the suitable atmosphere and environment for nation building, national reconciliation and social cohesion. The story should enable us to reflect on our unpleasant past experiences in such a way that we can all see and realize that the worst times are over. It should be told in such a way that we will all draw strength and power from it so that we can overcome current challenges of underdevelopment, destitution, poverty and crime.

Out of adversities, hardships and trials that were suffered by Sarah Bartmann will emerge a heritage infrastructure that will benefit not only the people of Hankey but the province and the entire country. Cultural, educational and economic activities that will take place around this infrastructure will confirm and re-assure us that these men and women who suffered before us did not do so in vain.

The document expounds on the historical, ideological and socio-political contexts of the now, and the ideological imperatives of heritage and cultural work of, and groundwork for the development of a centre and human rights memorial in Eastern and Western Cape respectively.

It addresses the key issue of fusing physical built structures with a cosmological understanding of the world and KhoiSan spirituality and interaction with the

world. These relate to the symbolism of the circular shape, and the understanding of the necessity for a space of healing. The latter relates to both the abuse suffered by Sarah Bartmann as an individual, and moves towards the symbolic nature of healing with regard to the dispossession of the KhoiSan of their culture, heritage, land rights and intellectual property rights.

The document discusses issues concerning the representation of indigenous people, the naming of indigenous people including the assumed names given to communities of diverse peoples such as those that constitute the collective known as KhoiSan. It debates concerns related to the epistemological understanding of cosmology and the world separated from formal knowledge as indigenous knowledge. These issues comprise concerns about intellectual property rights, the definition and application of indigenous knowledge, and the formal acts of preservation and collection by institutions which by necessity produce a power imbalance between the rightholders of the indigenous knowledge, and the legislative mandated entities who are the custodians of the knowledge and material culture.

In essence, the document attempts to answer former President Thabo Mbeki in urging the South African nature, and the world at large to restore human dignity to Sarah Bartmann.

The Document was produced by the Department of Arts and Culture and the Sarah Bartmann Reference Group which comprises notable academics, community workers, government officials and parliamentarians