

In *Heart of Redness* by Zakes Mda, the author shows how traditions and culture can act as a barrier on progressing forward as a 'civilization' globally. While also showing that traditions and culture are what ultimately make different countries unique and thus should honor their heritage. Two prominent characters in the novel Xoliswa Ximiya, daughter of Bhonco and Qukezwa, daughter of Zim, exhibit this polarizing idea at large. Xoliswa looks forward to getting rid of traditions, a concept deemed as 'redness' throughout the novel and thus, hopes to become 'civilized' by steering away from 'redness'. Meanwhile, Qukezwa would rather keep traditional values as far as honoring their cultural identity leading to her opposition towards the progress of civilization. For instance, when Xoliswa and her father are at Dalton's store preparing for their nkamkam, the text states the following, "To the amahomba, clothes are an art form. But to highly civilized people like Xoliswa Ximiya, isiXhosa costume is an embarrassment. It is high time her parents changed from *ubuqaba*—backwardness and heathenism. They must become *amagqobhoka*—enlightened ones—like her. She has bought her parents dresses and suits in the latest European styles." (44). Clearly, the author describes the Xoliswa character as an infatuated European progressive who would pick European culture over her own roots any day. Similarly, the concept of clothing is seen as a link between what is supposed to be appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to 'civilization'. Yet, this character seems to be blinded by the fact that European clothing is their own European tradition. Xoliswa fails to recognize that her traditional isiXhosa costume is just as meaningful as she devotes European fashion to be. If anything, isiXhosa costume is a lot more meaningful because it is what the village was raised up to wear and differentiates from other fashions. In addition, when Xoliswa is speaking to Camagu about America, the author states the following, "She informs him that he will be happy in that wonderful country. She herself has lived there, empowering herself with the skill of teaching English as a second language. It is a fairytale country, with beautiful people. People like Dolly Parton and Eddie Murphy. It is a vast country that is highly technological" (64). Similarly, this shows that the author seems to be playing on Xoliswa's infatuation with American culture as well, not just on European culture. Likewise, the quote shows that education and the language of English are seen to be considered civilized by Xoliswa. Again, it seems to be that she is yet again blinded by the foreign exclusivity that she is ignoring the fact that different countries have something differently unique to offer. In addition, here, Xoliswa is idealizing Patron as an actual 'beautiful' white woman figure. Which is interesting to point out because then she uses Eddie Murphy who is a black man as one of her 'beautiful' people. Yet it is these two iconic American figures who are represented to her as what civilization is. When Xoliswa is continuing her outburst on 'beautiful America' to Camagu, she states the following, "You have seen how backward this place is. We cannot stop civilization just because some sentimental old fools want to preserve birds and trees and an outmoded way of life" (67). Similarly, preserving ancestral land to Xoliswa is to be old-fashioned and an impediment towards a civil life. The remedy for this 'curse' according to Xoliswa is to bring in tourism into the region and to show these tourists just how 'civilized' these villagers really are. By 'civilized', it should be noted that what it really comes down to be is essentially European mannered. In contrast to Xoliswa's unappreciative manner is her understanding nemesis, Qukezwa. Qukezwa states the following to Camagu after chopping down the threatening plants, "This is the inkberry. It kills other plants. These flowers that you like so much will eventually become berries. Each berry is a prospective plant that will kill the plants of my forefathers" (90). In Qukezwa, there is a greater richer understanding for her culture. There is an appreciation for her ancestral land. Where Xoliswa found no use in settling for tending to nature, Qukezwa understands that there is importance in even the simplicity of it. This while also honoring her village's past. She does not busy herself with the ideas of another distant future but rather in mending the soil that made her who she is. In addition to this, Qukezwa states the following to Camagu on how tourism will affect the villages peace, "White man's education has made you stupid. This whole sea will belong to tourists and their boats and their water sports. Those women will no longer harvest the sea for their own food and to sell at the Blue Flamingo" (103). Here, Qukezwa uses education in a different way, by demeaning it useless for the village's sake. Evidently, western education is only useful in western culture. Qukezwa acknowledges that instead of idealizing it as Xoliswa does by dreading its non-existence in the village. Likewise, she understands that tourism will only take away from the villager's traditions and mode of living. Whereas, Xoliswa believes tourism will give the villagers a sense of civilization. Qukezwa states the following about a tradition, "You need to throw silver so that your road will shine with good fortune. your thin girlfriend should have advised you that when you came to Qolorha for the first time you ought to have come here to throw money into the sea, for that is where the ancestors are" (104). It is beliefs like these which mark a cultures significance and differs from the mainstream 'civilized' life that everyone aspires to cultivate. Similarly, Qukezwa states the following custom, "You must drink from the sea when you are a stranger, so that the sea can get used to you. Then it will love you" (122). Here, Qukezwa manifests another belief that marks her lineage. In the long run, these traditions are only taught by parents with the purpose that their children will grow up appreciating their cultural history and teach it to their kin and so on. Through Qukezwa and Xoliswa, the author establishes what a 'civilized' culture would be like without traditions and culture. While also emphasizing the unique heritage that the community creates while contributing this greater importance to the world.