

ACTIVITY

ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

In the *The Heart of Redness*, a novel by South African author Zakes Mda, the chief of Qolorha-by-Sea has called a meeting where the villages are to find out more about plans to develop the coast where they live into a luxurious holiday resort. After introductions from the chief, the developers begin to demonstrate their grand plans for the village.

Mr Smith talks of the wonders that will happen at Qolorha-by-Sea. There will be boats and waterskiing and jet-skiing. People from across the seas will ride the waves in a sport called surfing. There will be merry-go-rounds for the children, and rides that twist and turn while the riders scream in ecstatic fright. "This will be the

place for roller coaster enthusiasts who spend their lives travelling the world in search of the biggest and most daring rides," he says.

Bhonco and his supporters applaud. None of them have seen a roller coaster before. But it does not matter. If it is something that brings civilisation, then it is good for Qolorha. But Camagu is not impressed.

"You talk of all these rides and all these wonderful things," he

says, "but for whose benefit are they? What will these villagers who are sitting here get from all these things? Will their children ride on the merry-go-rounds and roller-coasters? Of course not! They will not have any money to pay for these things. These things will be enjoyed only by rich people who will come here and pollute our rivers and our ocean."

"Who are you to talk for the people of Qolorha?" asks Bhonco. "You talk of our rivers and our ocean. Since when do you belong here?"

"Hey you, Bhonco!" shouts Zim. "Today this Camagu is talking a lot of sense. He is right. They will destroy our trees and the plants of our forefathers for nothing. We, the people of Qolorha, will not gain anything from this."

"You will get jobs," says Lefa Leballo desperately. Then he looks at Camagu pleadingly. "Please don't talk these people against a project of such national importance."

"It is of national importance only to your company and shareholders, not to these people!" yells Camagu. "Jobs? Bah! They will lose more than they will gain from jobs. I tell you, people of Qolorha, these visitors are interested only in profits for their company. This sea will no longer belong to you. You will have to pay to use it."

WHO'S WHO IN QOLORHA-BY-SEA

Mr Smith: A business consultant

Bhonco and Zim: Elders of the village, and sworn enemies

Camagu: A middle-aged university graduate, recently arrived from the city, where he has been unable to find a job

Lefa Leballo: The chief executive of the company planning to develop the coast



CAMAGU'S VISION

"You have nothing to offer these people," says Mr Smith to Camagu. "If you fight against these wonderful developments, what do you have to offer in their place?"

"The promotion of the kind of tourists that will benefit the people, that will not destroy indigenous forests, that will not bring hordes of people who will pollute the rivers and drive away the birds."

"That is just a dream," shouts Lefa Leballo. "There is no such tourism."

"We can work it out, people of Qolorha," appeals Camagu. "We can sit down and plan it. There are many people out there who enjoy communing with unspoiled nature."

CAMAGU'S IDEAS

"The villagers should come together, and using the natural material that is found here, the very materials that they use to build their own houses, they can build a back-packers hostel. There are many tourists who like to admire the beauty of nature and watch birds without killing them. Such tourists would enjoy the villager's hospitality. Shellfish and umngqusho (maize with beans), cooked in the unique manner of the people of Qolorha, would be prepared for the guests."

"Come to think of it, we can even create our own electricity! From the sun! There is plenty of sunshine here! We can harness the sun to light our hostel and our houses! We can even cook and warm our water with the sun! These are not just dreams. Such things are already happening in other places."



"If the villagers come together to build this holiday place that gives travellers an opportunity to experience life in an African home, they will not be working for anyone but themselves. It will not be big and wonderful like the gambling city with roller coasters and cable cars. But it will be ours. The Chinese have a saying that it is better to be the head of a chicken than the backside of an elephant."

At the end of the meeting, Lefa Leballo says adamantly, "We are going ahead with our plans. The government has already approved this project. How will you stop progress and development?"

For a while, Camagu does not know how to answer this. Then in an inspired moment, he suddenly shouts, "How will I stop you? I will tell you how I will stop you! I will have this village declared a national heritage site. Then no one will touch it..."

After a long campaign, the village is declared a national heritage site, and the government issues a court order against the development of the coast as a major tourism resort and gambling city.

Activity: Read the extract above with the class, perform it as a play, or hold a classroom debate based on the story. End with a vote about the Qolorha-by-Sea coastal development plans. Do you agree with Lefa Leballo or Camagu?

Abridged excerpt from *The Heart of Redness* by Zakes Mda, published by Oxford University Press Southern Africa

