

# Heritage: It's who I am, so speak to me according

By [Loyiso Twala](#)

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I'll open by saying, Heritage is essentially who I am. Yes, it is tradition, but it goes beyond that. As an individual, my heritage informs a lot about me.



Image supplied. Loyiso Twala, McCann Joburg chief creative officer: "How do I celebrate the heritage of my target audience?"

It informs what tribe I'm from and far more insightfully how I eat, what I eat, where I go, why I go there, who I associate with and why, how I speak, how I want to be spoken to, what I wear and what I don't, how I wear it, what I care about, what I love, who I love, what I believe and don't, and what matters to me et cetera.

The 'why' behind it all, with insightful and nuanced meaning to language, lifestyle, symbols, words, and colours are the things that define shared heritage. For a marketer and creative agency, to understand this is golden, as it informs the creatives on how to reach me, entice me, impress me and ultimately connect with my share of pocket and of heart. T

his is where nuance and insights reign supreme. It all lies within said marketer and creative agency caring enough to celebrate my heritage.

## Represent them

As professionals, choosing to celebrate the heritage of the people our work aims to reach, not only suggests but demands our brands to better represent the already represented and start to represent the underrepresented. Quote me on that one.

Therefore, if the question is “how do I celebrate the heritage of my target audience?” The answer is: to represent them. People must consistently recognise themselves in the creative brands produce.

Representation is and has been a big theme in the creative world in recent years, and all the aforementioned is the reason for that. A lot of traditional advertising thinking practiced over time did inadvertently create a world of stereotypes that led to reinforcing biases that lack nuance and insight.

## The trap of default thinking

It is this thinking that has led to many marketers and creative agencies to fall into the trap and the habit of ‘default thinking’ versus an openness and curiosity to insights that introduce more nuanced understanding of the target audience. And believe it or not, that target audience is... people. It’s you, It’s me, and we’re people. Not a sale, not a data point, not a demographic but people. And people are dynamic with complexities that make for an opportunity to continually discover nuance and insight without end.

By not considering the heritage of the people we communicate to, we only create work and shape brands that are irrelevant, inappropriate, offensive, and meaningless. This work and the brands will fail to connect beyond a transactional relationship with the people it aims to attract and retain.



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The second a competitor brand appears to be more resonant, the quicker the consumer jumps ship because there’s a lack of a real connection to make that switch harder.

In addition, work that is timeless is work that leans into an insight that touches a nerve and turns people on, which in turn celebrates who people truly are (their heritage). Overlook this to your own peril. It is more than just a theoretical conversation around creative work alone, but it is a transformative idea that shifts the industry from a perspective of budget commitments to more purposed work and talent recruited in marketing departments and creative agencies alike to create this kind of work.

## Embracing heritage

Going into 2023, we can expect pioneering brands to embrace heritage in the following ways:

1. By being less euro-centric and more afro-centric in their storytelling; unfolding never-seen-or-heard before stories to give a voice to those who have been silenced or neglected in the past.
2. By seeing design that is informed by local cues and less by notions of Afro-futurism.
3. By seeing more work in local languages, not just as a translation, but as interpretation with cultural insight that’s inspired the very idea.
4. By having lived experiences of the undermined and underrepresented from parts of our communities championed by brands, including but not limited to cause marketing.

All of this should be done around the clock as a standard - beyond the heritage month culture-washing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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