

# UNIZULU webinar sheds light on coloniality of power in postcolonial Africa

NALEDI HLEFANE

A RECENT University of Zululand (UNIZULU) webinar, which tackled the topic of coloniality of power in postcolonial Africa, has reinforced the notion of a new world order where knowledge from all parts of the globe are considered and promoted.

The Vice-Chancellor's office and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences organised the webinar, which was the first of a series earmarked for 2023.

"This webinar builds on the inaugural conference on African Thought that took place in December 2022. The conference was built to give practical expression to the university's strategic goal of establishing the university as an authentic African university and a node for African thought," said UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtose.

Historian and decolonial/postcolonial theorist, Professor Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni was invited to decipher and provide insights into the topic. Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni is currently Professor and Chair of Epistemologies of the Global South with Emphasis on Africa at the University of Bayreuth in Germany. He is also a member of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the institution.

Laying the foundation before the guest speaker's presentation, Prof Mtose first unpacked the coloniality of power, knowledge and being – sharing how these are all interlinked. She proceeded to share some ideas on how to think about the decolonial task that lies ahead, and concluded by mentioning UNIZULU initiatives that have been embarked upon in the furtherance of the decolonial journey.

In so doing, the VC sought to illustrate the entanglements of colonialism that the decolonial movement needs to confront. She raised a concern that universities are expected to be part of the solution to the problem of coloniality of knowledge, however the epistemological boundaries within which academics and students operate pose a challenge when



Professor Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni was the guest speaker during the recently held webinar organised by the office of the Vice-Chancellor. He dissected the topic of coloniality of knowledge in postcolonial Africa. Image: Samkele Sokhela.

they carry out research.

"To challenge the current issue of epistemological boundaries in higher education, UNIZULU has crafted its vision 2027, which will see the institution becoming a node for Africa thought. The launch of this vision and other related activities are aimed at developing ways of disobeying the western epistemic frames of reference. The VC's Public Lecture Webinar series must be understood as situated in this space," Prof Mtose noted.

Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni divided his presentation into four segments. He first spoke about what he terms the contemporary politics of knowledge, a point he

felt would help the audience understand why colonisation and decolonisation are still topics of conversation, particularly in the domain of knowledge in the 21st Century.

He noted that the term knowledge is and always has been defined from a Euro-North American perspective, which unsurprisingly seeks to advance Euro-North American thoughts and ideas while shunning other knowledge systems.

He also took the attendees back, speaking of how knowledge is colonised and the consequences of such practice. He drew the audience's attention to scholar ratings which only consider the

Professor Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor. Image: Samkele Sokhela.

best academics as those who publish in Euro-North American journals.

Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni also spoke of how common it is to find the Global North gathering in Africa for knowledge collection, which they then go to process in their native lands and thereafter develop into theories, models, concepts which are thereafter consumed on the African continent.

"There is an uneven intellectual division of labour, with Africa being a site of extraction of data and Europe a site of production of theories, models, and concepts consumed on the continent," he said.

Thirdly, he spoke about the long struggle of decolonisation of knowledge and concluded by focusing on decoloniality. "After 1945, the world shifted from empire to modern nation-states. That shift is celebrated as decolonisation. The modern world system is very clever. When anti-colonial, anti-systemic forces converge on it, with the intention to destroy it, it issues new global orders which disguise it and give it a new lease on life," Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni stressed.

Dr Aghogho Akpome, who responded to the guest presentation, shared Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni's sentiments. He noted that there was also a conscious effort in the knowledge space to derail the decolonisation project.

He viewed this as a deliberate attempt to create epistemic confusion where there is none and to downplay the intervention. "It is one of the characteristics of Euro-modernist reduction to devalue, demean and downplay any kind of knowledge that does not originate from and does not serve the interest of the colonial empire," he added.

Prof Ndlovu-Gatsheni envisions a pluriversal future where "the different knowledge of the world come together into an ecology of knowledge to enhance and enrich the African experience and to move us out of the current crisis we are in".

# Miss Culture winner and UNIZULU student has sights set on establishing a business

NALEDI HLEFANE

FOLLOWING her recent victory in the inaugural Miss Culture uMhlathuze Municipality pageant, University of Zululand (UNIZULU) student Zinhle Ngubane intends to use her R10 000 cash prize to establish a small business hiring out and selling traditional attire and accessories.

Ngubane's inspiration came when the judging panel enquired about what she would do with the prize money if she were to be crowned Miss Culture.

"I immediately thought of traditional items and how expensive they can be to purchase, even though they are in demand. I then figured that it would be a good idea to sell and hire out such items," said Ngubane.

She plans to source her stock from local suppliers around KwaZulu-Natal, particularly older black women. A self-taught bead maker, Ngubane will also have her own beaded creations on offer to showcase her newly acquired skill.

Her ultimate goal is to make traditional wear and accessories more appealing to the youth. In the near future, she envisions showcasing a collection of items that will incorporate traditional elements in modern fashion such as beaded chunky high heels and handbags.

Ntombe Hlongwa, who organised the pageant under her company Winzaar Trading, assured that as part of the competition outcomes, Ngubane will receive ongoing business mentorship until the end of her reign.

Hlongwa said she was certain that Ngubane would be an exemplary ambassador of the Miss Culture uMhlathuze Municipality brand as she is mature, deeply rooted in her culture and seeks to make a positive change in society.

Ngubane is in the third-year of her BCom in Banking and Business Management degree at UNIZULU, and she is also a member of Ubuhlebezwe, a UNIZULU student society for maidens.

## ABOUT THE CONTEST

The idea of a cultural pageant came after Hlongwa discovered the daunting statistics of teenage pregnancy and new



Zinhle Ngubane, the reigning Miss Culture uMhlathuze Municipality. Picture: James Thwala

HIV infections in the country. It dawned on her that abstinence from sexual intercourse before marriage is an old cultural practice that has been somewhat lost in modern-day society, and is the answer to curbing these and other issues affecting youth.

She aspired to develop a programme that would encourage young women to preserve their culture and virginity, which led to the development of Miss Culture as part of Winzaar Trading's Ubuntombi Bami project.

The competition started off with 68 participants, who had to be between the ages of 18 and 25, proud of their culture, articulate and exude the utmost confidence. A total of 15 hopefuls were eventually extracted from the initial number of participants and qualified to walk the runway at the official event held at Empangeni's Civic Centre. Each paraded various traditional outfits in four rounds, before the top three contestants were announced. The star-studded judging panel included musical duo Q Twins and DJ Happygal.

"We are very proud of what we did with the maidens. It was their first time entering a beauty pageant that is aligned with what they believe in," Hlongwa said.

# UNIZULU hosts Kenyan education delegates

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE International Linkages Office within the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently held an engagement with the Kenyan Embassy to share experiences in the spaces of higher education and training, research, technology, and innovation. The aim was to explore potential areas of scientific and technological co-operation between UNIZULU and Kenyan public universities.

Representing the embassy was Dellon Chimbadzo and Adan Ibrahim, both from the High Commission of Kenya.

Prof Sewela Mabusela, Director of Teaching and Learning, welcomed the attaché to the university, highlighting the importance of partnerships. "We believe in the value of partnerships. Our goal is to go to all communities and see the people we are partnering with, because technology can only take us so far," she said.

The engagement was in line with UNIZULU's Vision 2027 strategic plan, which aims to develop the distinctiveness of the institution as an African university. To

Africanise the institution, the university leadership has taken a decision to forge relations with African universities, Kenyan universities, and universities from the Global South, as they share similar issues, can learn from each other and apply common solutions to their shared problems.

Research in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), promotion of African languages, collaborative research in the agricultural economy, and community engagement are some of the few areas the International Linkages Office seeks to collaborate on.

Prof Nontokozi Mashiya, Director in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, reiterated the importance of diversity among students and staff as part of a growing academic environment.

In addition to International office staff and the Kenyan delegates, the successful event was also attended by representatives of the Teaching and Learning Centre, Community Engagement Office, and the Research and Innovation Office.

The visit culminated in a tour of both the KwaDlangezwa and Richards Bay campuses.



UNIZULU staff recently met with Kenyan delegates to discuss possible areas of collaboration with universities in Kenya. Picture: Supplied

# Ulundi District LO teachers reminded that teaching is a noble profession

NOMPILLO DLAMINI

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently held its Life Orientation (LO) Teachers Seminar in Ulundi, Zululand District.

The event was treated as a platform for the university to meaningfully connect and engage with LO teachers, who have great influence in the lives of learners, especially where career choices are concerned. The event was hosted in Ulundi and attended by the district's teachers, co-ordinators and practitioners, as well as by high profile guests from the district's education department.

Teachers were conscientised about academic programmes offered at the university's four faculties: Science, Agriculture and Engineering; Education; Commerce, Administration and Law; and Humanities and Social Sciences. Information about the first-year application process via the Central Application Office (CAO), and admission requirements were also shared.

Delivering her keynote address, Nokuthula Ndaba, a lecturer at UNIZULU's Faculty of Education, reminded educators that teaching is a noble profession.

"However, when we say this, we don't mean that the profession itself is noble. We are referring to a person who is in the profession. When we talk of a noble profession, we are talking about a person that is honest. As a teacher, honesty is one of the essential ingredients to



UNIZULU lecturer, Nokuthula Ndaba, during her keynote address at the recent LO Teachers Seminar held in Ulundi. Picture: Samkele Sokhela

your character.

"Teachers also need to be righteous. They need to be morally upright. We've got a decay of morals in our society. If our morals as teachers were to be correct, I know that this would in turn transfer to our learners."

She expressed both concern and sadness about the fact that teaching no longer enjoys the respect it used to in the "olden days". However, she admitted that teachers themselves have played a role in the decay of the profession's image.

"Teachers are no longer honoured in society and it's because of how we

behave in society (as teachers). A teacher has to be a person of virtue and of good ethics. You must be an ethical and honourable person. Teachers are a precious component in society. They are second to parents.

"You will recall that we were told, as teachers, that we act in loco parentis (in the place of a parent). When you stand in front of your learners, you have to understand that you have now been given that authority of being a parent and you must deliver nothing less. We want authority from you and we want you to be able to manage our children," she

added, while urging teachers to remember that their profession is the bedrock of all professions.

"Without us, there would be no doctors, accountants, and the like. We are the custodians of professionalism as teachers. People must learn from us how they should behave in their workplaces."

Ndaba also urged teachers to take care of themselves in order to serve their profession well, and be good examples to their learners. She added that people are tripartite beings who are made of the body, spirit and mind.

"We as teachers tend to neglect the spirit. Spiritually, the teacher is dead. That's why you find the teacher stealing at the school. You even find some teachers in inappropriate romantic relations with their learners. Some of the things that you do, especially in your youth, will catch up with you. This is why it is important that as a Life Orientation teacher, you must guard yourself to practise what you preach.

"As a teacher, you have to be an omnivorous reader. You must read extensively. When you teach, learners must be inspired by your knowledge. We have teachers who are shallow when they give lessons – and what makes you to be shallow is your lack of knowledge as a teacher. We have teachers who don't even read newspapers. You cannot find wisdom where ignorance thrives. At my age, wisdom must ooze out of me."

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