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Newsletter of the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice

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THE HUMAN EMBRACE

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



INSTITUTE FOR  
RECONCILIATION  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE  
INSTITUUT VIR  
VERSOENING EN  
SOSIALE GERECHTIGHEID

## THE INSTITUTE SHARPENS ITS GAME

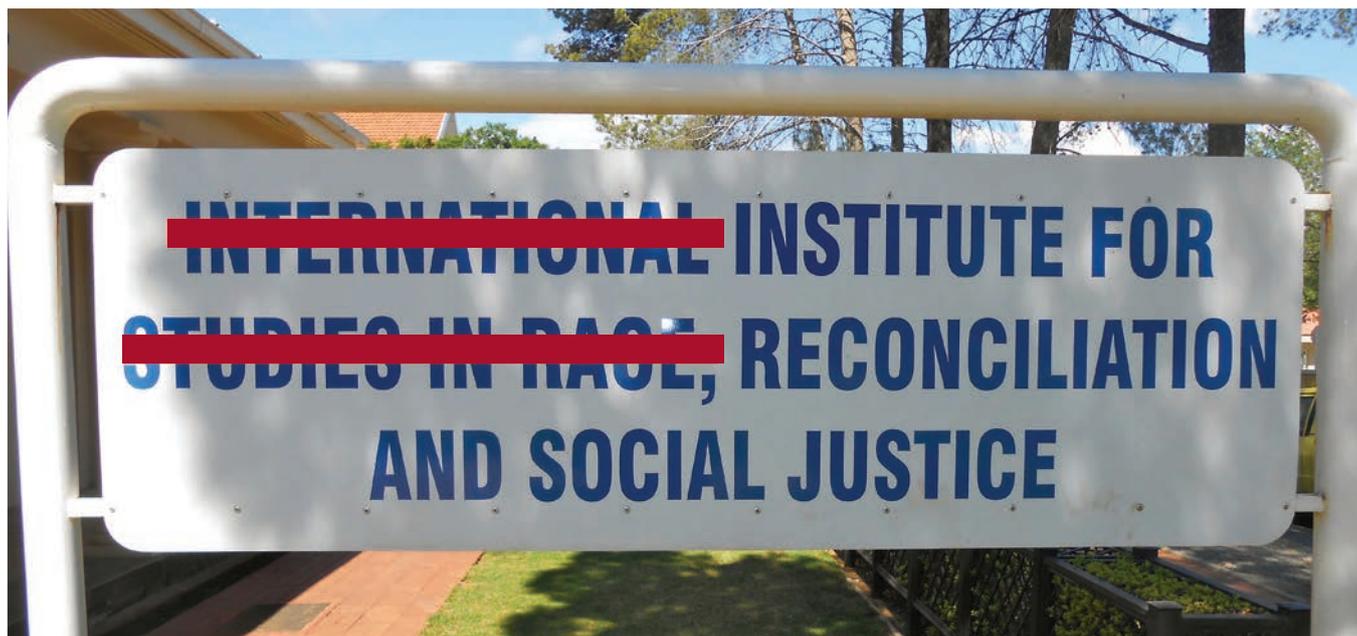
**T**he *International Institute for Studies in Race, Reconciliation and Social Justice* will henceforth be known as the *Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice*. This change is only the superficial aspect of a proposal aimed at sharpening the mandate, structure and governance of the Institute that was approved and adopted by the UFS council in September this year.

In addition to the name change it was proposed to create two distinct but complementary pillars for the work of the Institute, one being research and the other Institutional Transformation and Human Rights. In many ways, there is nothing “new” to this proposal: historically tied to the Reitz incident, the Institute was founded on the desire to relate the University’s academic mandate to the complex South African social context. From this point of view, the proposal merely reflects the way in which existing expectations and potentialities have found concrete expression within the operations of the Institute.

The primary research mandate of the Institute is retained, with a slight focusing towards social “justice”, “reconciliation”, and “equality”. The concept of “social justice” in particular has proven to be very productive as an operating and intellectual principal since it more or less captures the multitude of expectations relating to the Institute.

The unfolding of the operations of the Institute suggests that it can take on the mandate of “institutional transformation” as an intellectual and operational enterprise. That is, it can act as an observatory of institutional transformation and capture the multitude of transformative initiatives as an integrated human-academic project. No specific function in this regard performed in other divisions will be shifted to the Institute.

The Human Rights function lives up to the commitment made in the post-Reitz settlement agreement to set up a “centre for human rights.” To avoid policy ambiguity, it was proposed that the centre best be thought of as a “desk.”



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# News

## Celebrating Social Justice through the *Arts*



In August the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice held its first annual Artistic Social Justice Week. This event has been initiated with the aim of exploring new and different ways of understanding social relations – an endeavour which is crucial to the Institute's objective of confronting the histories, policies and practices that have shaped and constrained the intellectual and social mandates of higher education institutions.

Highlights included a photo exhibition called the f word: images of forgiveness and a cabaret, *Vagina Dentata* (co-organised and sponsored by Student Life and Leadership). Other performances included a poetry evening, a performance by the disabled students under the leadership of Galetswane Kumwimba, a photo exhibition by the UFS LGBTIQ organisation under the leadership of Andrew Westover and a theatrical performance by UFS students. The events took place at the Institute and the Centenary Complex Art Gallery with the assistance of the curator, Angela De Jesus. [Read more about the productions on page 9.](#)

## Institute to launch Intellectual Apprenticeship Programme

The Institute will launch a multi-disciplinary academic enrichment programme for honours and master's students in 2013. The Intellectual Apprenticeship Programme, as it will be called, is the brainchild of Mr John Samuel and its aim is to provide a unique learning experience to students from all faculties at the UFS.

The programme will draw scholars from several faculties who will present conversation-based seminars focused on their own research interests, to the extent that this research is engaged with contemporary political and social issues.

The Intellectual Apprenticeship Programme is intended to build capacity for scholarship among postgraduate students, encourage trans-disciplinary academic inquiry, and act as a catalytic intervention in the broader intellectual culture of the University of the Free State. Furthermore it strives to link the intellectual project of the Institute with the broader University community.

# Living with *ghosts*



In July this year the UFS hosted a Global Leadership Summit where students from North America, Europe and Japan visited our campus for two weeks as part of the UFS's Leadership for Change Programme. During this time the visitors, together with UFS students and staff, attended seminars and took part in discussions exploring the complex social and political challenges facing the world at large and to ask how students and higher education institutions could take the lead in meeting these challenges.

The Institute was involved in several of these activities. The director of the Institute, Prof. André Keet, together with the Institute's research assistants presented a seminar in which old and new artworks on campus were analysed in terms of "ghostliness." It was argued that these artworks had the ability to be haunting reminders of the past, but at the same time pointed to a different way of inhabiting the present, that is, in a way that resists cherished, but perhaps untenable notions of belonging, entitlement and destiny. The presentation was introduced by a theatrical performance – conceptualised and performed by the Institute's research assistants – of the well-known scene in *Hamlet* where the title character is visited by his father's ghost.

The Institute, together with Prof. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, also organised and facilitated a panel discussion on transition and social justice, and Prof. Keet delivered a lecture in which he presented an overview of the Institute, its philosophy and drive, and what we mean by reconciliation at a higher education institute.



## Institute hosts International Winter School for the second time

From 16 July till 10 August 2012 the UFS hosted the International Winter School on Pluralism and Development for a second time. The Winter School is organised by the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice in cooperation with the University for Humanistic Studies in the Netherlands. The annual Winter School programme consists of a series of lectures, workshops and field trips. Previously it was presented in the Netherlands (2004, 2005 and 2006), India (2007 and 2008), Indonesia (2009 and 2010) and South Africa (2011).

The Winter School brings together an international group of staff from civil society, activists and graduate students and is taught by an international and interdisciplinary staff with expertise in ethics, human rights, political theory, comparative religious studies, sustainable development, governance, gender and education. Candidates have been selected in cooperation with the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOS) in The Hague and partner organisations of the Hivos Pluralism Knowledge Program. Funding from Hivos has made participation by staff and students possible. This year participants from South Africa and Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Uganda, India and the Netherlands engaged in comparative dialogue based on theories and practices of pluralism and development. Participants are encouraged to exchange their views and to critically examine their own opinions and question their assumptions and experiences of development, particularly in the context of different forms of pluralism in society.

The 2012 Winter School on Pluralism and Development was coordinated by Caroline Suransky, JC van der Merwe, Henk Manschot and Sitharamam Kakarala.

# Public Lectures



## ***The Blackness of Black*** **-Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o enthralled the UFS**

Through a joint initiative of the UFS Centre for Africa Studies and the Institute, world-renowned author and playwright, Ngugi wa Thiong'o enthralled UFS staff, students and members of the Free State community on Africa Day, 25 May 2012. Africa Day commemorates the founding of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), and is an opportunity to critically reflect on the challenges facing the continent and deepen our commitment to the African Renaissance.

Armed with literary eloquence, wit and moving anecdotes, Wa Thiong'o captured the hearts and minds of the audience with his lecture, "The Blackness of Black", which posed provocative questions about the notions of "Africanness" and "Blackness" and offered an insightful view of the dilemmas facing Africa and the perceived negativity about "Africanness."

Wa Thiong'o recounted numerous incidents where he, and others, were discriminated against and subjected to prejudice because of the colour of their skin, remarking that, "We have to rediscover and reclaim the sense of the sacred in the black body." One way to achieve this, according to Wa Thiong'o, is for the African middle class to uplift the ordinary working people on the continent and to "reconnect with Kwame Nkrumah's dreams of a politically and economically united Africa, rooted in the working people of Africa".

Addressing the often contentious issue regarding who can be called an African, Wa Thiong'o told the audience that "Africanness" extends beyond the colour of the skin. To Wa Thiong'o, "Black" as a reference to the body is often used interchangeably with African, but various shades of colour from very light to very dark, characterise the continent. He prefers to think of the African in the more inclusive sense. Wa Thiong'o then challenged the audience to be more reflective about their "Africanness" and work together to build a cohesive continent rooted in the ideals of development and self-determination.



## ***Public Protector says academics can help fight corruption***

The 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 saw the Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela, gracing the Bloemfontein campus of the University of the Free State. Upon invitation by the Institute, the Public Protector delivered a lecture on academic freedom and corruption in the context of secrecy laws.

In her lecture Advocate Madonsela pointed out the role of academics in fighting corruption by noting that, "... the role of the academics is to develop laws and provide expertise to fight corruption." She argued that corruption is a problem that is affecting the broader society as can be seen by the number of public service protests in the country. She cited a number of cases that pointed to a strong correlation between lack of service delivery and corruption, and argued that this societal ill was delaying the realisation of an equal and just society.

Addressing the issue of the so called "Secrecy Bill", the Public Protector noted with caution that it is of vital importance for a country to have a law that seeks to protect state information. However, she questioned the stipulations of the bill in its current form and emphasised the need for a balance between public interest and the protection of sensitive information.

Those who attended the lecture had an opportunity to ask her questions about her lecture and her work. Before delivering her lecture she also met with various stakeholders including members of the Free State Legislature, UFS Senior Management and students.

# CONVERSING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Since 2009 the Institute embarked on a number of activities that feed into the research areas of the Institute. Central among these activities is the Critical Conversation series. At least twice a month a selection of university faculty and students are invited to take part in a conversation with an invited scholar. The objective of these conversations is to interrogate social and political issues in an intellectually robust way, allowing for the emergence of new theoretical and practical approaches. Speakers in 2012 include Neville Alexander, Helene Strauss, Eusebius McKaiser, Ram Kakarala, Leon Wessels and Tim Murithi. Past speakers include Jay Naidoo, Eva Hoffman, Izzeldin Abuelaish, Lis Lange, Pieter Duvenage and Jonathan Jansen. **Read more about the conversations in 2012 below and on pages 6, 7 and 8.**

## *Dr Neville Alexander:* The centrality of the language question in the new South Africa



Dr Neville Alexander, one of South Africa's foremost intellectuals and activists, passed away on 27 August this year at his home in Grassy Park after suffering ill health. Dr Alexander was a radical participant in the making of South African history. In March this year, UFS staff and students were fortunate to be able to listen to and engage Dr Alexander as he shared some of his thoughts on the politics of language and its ramifications in the South African public space.

Dr Alexander's point of departure was that, next to the economic system and the land question, South Africa's language question is one of the central issues that need to be resolved in the near future.

Dr Alexander argued that language bears a two-fold, fundamental relation to power, that is, in the ability of individuals or groups to realise their intentions by means of language or, conversely, the ability of individuals or groups to impose their agendas on others.

For human beings to produce the means of subsistence, they have to cooperate, and in order to do so they have to communicate. Language is the main instrument of communication at the disposal of human beings; consequently, the specific language(s) in which the production processes take place become(s) the language(s) of power.

Dr Alexander expressed concern about the lack of implementation with regards to language policy across the board since a consistently democratic language policy is a critical component of the consolidation and expansion of the democratic society we are committed to. He was, however, cautiously enthused by the "forward-looking" perspectives with regards to acknowledging and integrating in significant ways the foundational importance of language in general and African languages in particular.

On 3 September 2012, the Vice-Chancellor and Rector, Prof. Jonathan Jansen, John Samuel, Prof. Melanie Walker and Dr Lis Lange shared some of their personal experiences and thoughts in a memorial conversation held in honour of Dr Alexander's remarkable life.

## What Use is *Empathy*?



On Tuesday the 18<sup>th</sup> of September the Institute had the privilege to host Prof. Stuart Taberner from the German Department at the University of Leeds. This was part of the Institute's Critical Conversation series that

focuses on highlighting and discussing some of the difficult issues that are confronting the university and society at large. The topic of the Critical Conversation was: What Use is Empathy? Some Lessons from The Recent German Experience of Coming – To – Terms with the Past.

During his presentation Prof. Taberner focused on how spontaneous public initiatives of memorialising the past had been bought into by the government and how the government had

started to institutionalise and professionalise these memorials in many parts of Germany. Prof. Taberner shared pictures of some of the memorials with the audience, for example, the Blindenwerkstatt Otto Weidt Museum. The museum is dedicated to Otto Weidt, a non-Jewish German industrialist who saved blind and deaf Jews from deportation by employing them in his broom factory and declaring them to be useful to the Nazi war effort.

Such memorials create a moving experience for visitors to these places and trigger empathy especially amongst young people. However, Prof. Taberner posed a question to the audience on whether the recent developments in Germany of memorialising the past and how the past is used to educate the present are entirely helpful. In answering this question he emphasised that he did not rule out the importance of empathy, but rather he questioned whether there was a higher value beyond triggering empathy amongst young people. Thus raising the topic of the presentation: What Use Is Empathy?

## Panel shares perspectives on Environmental Justice



On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2012, the Institute in collaboration with the UFS Green Movement hosted a panel discussion under the topic *Perspectives on Environmental Justice. Spaces and the Environment*, one of the Institute's overarching research themes formed the basis of this discussion.

The Institute drew a variety of speakers from different academic backgrounds to share their views on this contentious subject. This included Prof. Phillippe Burger from the UFS Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Dr Ilze Keevy from the UFS Faculty of Law, Prof. Gustav Visser from the UFS Geography Department and Thabo Mongale from Students for Law and Social Justice.

The notion of "green-brown rights" permeated the conversation as it turned to a number of issues, including, waste, waste management, spatial politics and the economy.

To complement the panel discussion, a photo exhibition was held in the Institute's courtyard. The photographs, taken by Prof. Burger, depicted contentious issues around waste, urbanisation and city planning in various parts of the Free State province.

## *Between a Mirage and a Dream* – In Conversation with Prof. Ram Kakarala

In this conversation, Prof. Ram Kakarala, Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society in Bangalore, spoke to UFS staff and students about reimagining democratic change in a "pluricultural" world. His talk took as its starting point the lamentable fact that the dream of democratic change with which the majority of postcolonial/post-apartheid African and Asian nations began their independent political journey, has remained till date a mirage, even in those nations where there is a commendable constitutional framework. Reasons for this failure was argued to be the inherent limitations of laws, constitutions and institutions and the emergence of a "pluricultural" world, where identity became a site of politicisation in which polarisation and conflict acquired new significance.

## *Rationales for Human Rights Education and International Trends* – In Conversation with Felisa Tibbitts

Felisa Tibbitts, the co-founder and Director of Human Rights Education Associates (HREA), an internationally recognised non-governmental organisation dedicated to education and learning about human rights (<http://www.hrea.org>) and a fellow at the Harvard Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy visited the Institute during the month of August.

Ms Tibbitts presented her work on Human Rights Education with a particular focus on the methodology she uses in her work across the world.

Ms Tibbitts also visited with the UFS Debate Society where she shared her perspectives on the future of human rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. The Institute has also partnered with Ms Tibbitts on a research project themed "humanizing pedagogy."

Ms Tibbitts began her work in the human rights education field in the early 1990s in post-totalitarian Europe. She has supported curricular development efforts in human rights, law-related and civic education programming in Albania, Croatia, El Salvador, Estonia, Gaza, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Morocco, Romania, Ukraine and the United States and has carried out training in over 20 countries.

Ms. Tibbitts has worked as an evaluator for human rights-related training programmes for the Ford Foundation, Amnesty International and a range of UN agencies; in 2007, she evaluated the UN capacity-building programme for African Union peacekeepers in Darfur and is currently engaged in a global evaluation of Unicef's efforts in life skills education.

## Deborah Meier on Education and Social Justice



Earlier this year celebrated author and educator, Deborah Meier, visited the UFS. Meier ranks among the most acclaimed leaders of the school reform movement in the United States and she was the first educator to receive a McArthur “genius” award. During her visit, Meier shared some of her thoughts on democracy and education under the auspices of the Institute’s Critical Conversation series.

Speaking from her experience of the United States education system, Meier said that she had always been primarily concerned by the fact that schools were not engaging children in discussions about important and difficult topics such as democracy, race and class. As far as democracy is concerned, Meier pointed out, most schools view the occasional voting exercise as a lesson in democracy, but as far as she is concerned, voting is the least important aspect of democracy. She admits that democracy is almost impossible to define but in her view engaging with this difficulty is already an important democratic act – an act which should find its rightful place in the classroom.

Meier pointed out that children are effectively “incarcerated” for the six hours they spend at school everyday, and expressed her grave concern with the fact that this time was not used to nurture and develop the considerable energy and creativity present in young children; Meier envisions a school that can rise up to this challenge. At one point she mused, “Did I miss something? Did we invent some other institution that was taking on this responsibility?”

## In conversation with *Libby Roderick*

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2012, the Institute hosted a Critical Conversation session with Libby Roderick at DF Malherbe House. Libby is the Director of the Difficult Dialogues Initiative at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She conducts workshops on a range of topics for universities nationwide and has edited a book on Alaska Native cultures and issues.

Libby was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska where she still lives part of the time. She graduated summa cum laude from Yale University in American Studies, and has worked as a TV and print news reporter, radio consultant, nuclear weapons educator and writer on Alaska Native issues. She is also an internationally acclaimed singer/songwriter, poet, activist, teacher and lifelong Alaskan. The surprising power and depth of her music and the humor and spontaneity of her performances have attracted large and enthusiastic audiences across the continent and fans all over the world.

The University of the Free State (UFS) invited Libby to facilitate a training programme for academic staff in Difficult Dialogues from

the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2012. The conversation hosted by the Institute served as an introduction to the concept behind the Difficult Dialogues.

As an ice breaker to the “critical conversation” Libby tapped into her artistic ability and shared one of her original songs with the audience. She also shared some of her personal experiences relating to her work on reconciling the Alaska Natives with modern society.

The informal nature of the conversation led to people sharing their frustration with the current academic climate at the University. Libby used the opportunity to encourage them to find ways to talk about their grievances and also referred them to resources such as the book called “Start Talking”. “Start Talking” is a guide for engaging difficult dialogue in higher education published by the University of Alaska. Libby also makes reference to this guide book when she conducts her training programmes.

## In Conversation with Eusebius McKaiser: *Race and Opposition Politics*



Eusebius McKaiser is one of South Africa’s youngest social commentators and public intellectuals. Eusebius has established himself as a thought-provoking and engaging thinker in the South African public space. He often disrupts thinking, challenges deeply held views and promotes critical thinking and dialogue.

As a seasoned debater and public speaker, McKaiser thoroughly engaged staff and students during his two-day visit to the institute. On 2 May 2012, Eusebius presented a public lecture titled “There’s a Bantu in my bathroom” to 70 members of staff and students. In this public lecture, McKaiser examined whether or not it’s morally acceptable to have racial preferences for whom you live with. He argued that unless domestic racism, and privately held racial preferences are eliminated, efforts to achieve a non-racist society in the public space will fail.

On 3 May 2012, Eusebius held a political discussion forum on opposition politics and the dynamics of the ever-changing political landscape in the country.

Titled “Can the Democratic Alliance become a serious threat to the African National Congress hegemony?”, this discussion drew a large audience in the attempt to examine the role of the opposition in South African politics.

## In Search of a *New* National Narrative

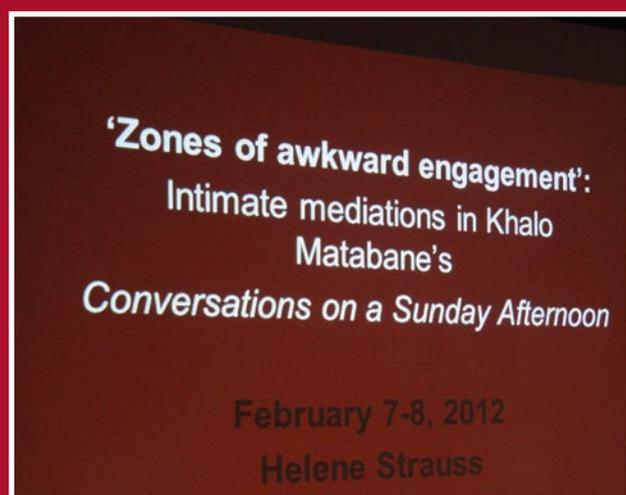
Do we need a new national narrative that can make sense of where we are and where we are going? Do we need a new story that will inspire a commitment in all of us to strive to get to our destination? These were some of the provocative questions posed in a critical conversation with Zubeida Jaffer, seasoned activist, award-winning author and Writer-in-Residence at the UFS.

Jaffer started off the conversation examining the work of the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the discussion documents of the ruling party. Filled with a promise of hope, the NPC's Vision 2030 makes the case for a South Africa geared towards "a second transition within a global set of conditions."

Jaffer pointed out that before the first democratic elections in 1994, there were essentially three competing narratives coursing through the country's lifeblood in the past century: the liberation narrative, the Afrikaner narrative that became side-tracked by apartheid ideology and the liberal narrative committed to assimilation of the African majority into an European ethos. The liberation narrative ended in the euphoria of the 1994 elections, an event that is etched in the hearts of all South Africans, and in turn led to the emergence of the "Rainbow Nation" narrative. In her talk, Jaffer re-visited this story in an attempt to trace our former successes in crafting a national narrative.

It was argued that we need a simple story that acknowledges our failings but recognises our strengths too. This narrative could run alongside the National Development Plan spelling out clearly what is expected of us as citizens.

## Zones of Awkward Engagement: Prof. Helene Strauss



On the 7th and 8th of February 2012, 40 students and staff convened at DF Malherbe House for an exciting two-part series conducted by Professor Helene Strauss (Senior Professor in the English Department at the UFS). This Critical Conversation commenced with a screening of the film *Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon* by South African director and producer, Zakes Matabane. The film explores the plight of refugees in South Africa and the effects of war and displacement on people from Africa and the rest of the world. Shot over three weeks in the inner city of Johannesburg, the film proved to be a powerful examination of the struggle to overcome the challenges of xenophobia and pervasive conflict. The subtle nuances of the film provoked discussion and debate the following afternoon that emphasised the complex nature of boundaries, difference and identity

We also spoke to...

## Tim Murithi



Dr Tim Murithi from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation delivered a paper at the Institute in which he argued that South Africans were in need of a radical solution to free them from the race construct still dominating social relations.

## Leon Wessels



Prof. Leon Wessels joined us for a Critical Conversation in which he recounted a number of stories relating to his own experiences of the complexities and paradoxes of reconciliation.

# Talking Arts and Culture

## The *F* word (Vagina Dentata)

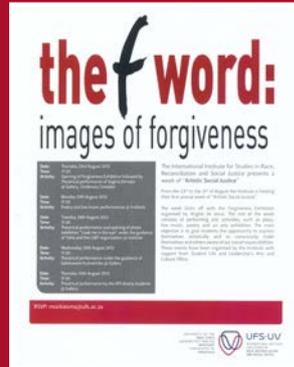


UFS students and staff were treated to several exceptional productions during the Institute's Artistic Social Justice Week, an initiative with which the Institute's mandate found expression in the visual, literary and performing arts.

On opening night the audience cackled and cringed during the performance of the cabaret *Vagina Dentata*. This production in the German tradition of the genre was developed by postgraduate cabaret students at the University of Stellenbosch Drama Department and can be described as a daring and provocative musical satire.

The production looks at the unique and sometimes gut-wrenching stories of South African women. It's feminist, sexy and does not beat about the bush. In her introductory speech, Cornelia Faasen observed that in this production the notion of "the woman" becomes a metaphor for how the country is raped by those in power. This is Protest Theatre by a new generation of South Africans, facing the truths head on, and making sure their voices are heard.

*The f word: images of forgiveness*, is a photo exhibition coupled with narrative accounts that tells the stories of people whose



lives have been shattered by violence, tragedy and injustice and who are learning to forgive, reconcile or move on. The project is the brainchild of British journalist Marina Cantacuzino and photographer Brian Moody. Together they have collected numerous personal accounts from the UK, South Africa, USA, Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine.

Those whose voices are celebrated in the exhibition work in prisons, schools and faith communities – any group who wants to explore the nature of forgiveness, whether in the wider political context or within their own lives. The project is founded on the idea that by listening to the voices of people who have experienced reconciliation and renewal after trauma and unrest, it is possible to see alternatives to endless cycles of conflict, violence, crime and injustice. The remarkable stories in *the f word* aim to do just this.

## The life and work of Ernest Mancoba



South African filmmaker and current director of the Art Ubuntu Trust, Bridget Thompson enthralled staff and students on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012 with a presentation on the work of African artist and philosopher, Ernest Mancoba. Ernest Mancoba was an exemplary artist, but he was more than just an artist. He was also a philosopher with a profound "African sense" of the role of art in society.

Thompson gave a thought-provoking analysis of Mancoba's work as well as giving the audience a preview into the man's life through a series of short video clips and discussions. Mancoba believed that "art is not something to tickle and entertain, it is serious, the message that artists have for society is a matter of life and death."

He concluded: "We will destroy ourselves, we will destroy the world if we cannot accept the values embedded in the proverb: 'Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu'."

Mancoba's work is a careful elaboration of these principles; his work is dense with references to his world and country of origin, at the same time it speaks to all humanity. This event was organised by Zubeida Jaffer.

To find out more about the work of the Art Ubuntu Trust and Ernest Mancoba, please visit: <http://www.artubuntu.org/>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UceUHcMciLU>

# University Engagement



## Finding ways of walking Together

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in collaboration with the Institute recently hosted a two-day workshop on dialogue as a tool for social change. Students and young people in the Free State, gathered at the Institute to discuss ways in which dialogue can be used as a tool for social change in their respective communities.

This initiative is a response to the call to come together to fix the way South Africans talk to each other. The assumptions are that something is wrong with the spaces and the manner in which conversations happen. There are calls for “dialogue”, but what is actually meant is “debate”. Dialogue and debate are two different things.

The initiative aims to build a critical analysis of the quality and impact of *current dialogue efforts*; *what the cumulative effect of these dialogue efforts is*; and *how dialogue can achieve system level impact*. Where is dialogue working and not working and why? How can we improve the quality of conversations and interaction in order to jointly tackle the huge challenges such as inequality and improving the standard of education?

The desired results from the workshop session are already in fruition. A group of young people from the University and the local Heidedal community will be hosting a series of dialogues in the community around issues of active citizenry and capacity building.



## LGBTIQ week at UFS

A week of campus-based events was hosted by the Institute in March this year to coincide with Human Rights Day. These events were focused on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex and queer/questioning communities and individuals in South Africa and globally.

The week kicked off with the film screening of *If These Walls Could Talk II* which depicted a range of diverse sexual orientations, and the challenges faced by sexual minorities within heteronormative socio-political contexts. A panel discussion of the film was held the following evening, where students and staff engaged with the panel on issues such as the in/visibility of LGBTIQ communities, discrimination, religious intolerance and lack of acceptance from family and friends. On Thursday, a silent march was attended by members of top management, staff, students and members of the local media as a form of peaceful protest against hate crimes and human rights violations related to sexual orientation. The week served as the launch of regular conversations about diversity and sexual orientation on campus.

The Institute is collaborating with the University of the Witwatersrand in implementing a Safe Zones project on campus, which will create safe spaces where LGBTIQ staff and students will be able to receive support and assistance on campus. The LGBTIQ student organization Out@Kovsie is partnering with the Institute to create these safe spaces at the university, as part of the broader process of transformation at UFS.

For any further information regarding LGBTIQ projects and research on campus, or upcoming events, feel free to contact Talita Calitz at [calitzML@ufs.ac.za](mailto:calitzML@ufs.ac.za).

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# Research

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## The Institute's research work

In 2011 the Institute adopted an innovative research agenda consisting of a variety of conceptual strategies and thematic areas. The overarching framework is *Shared Complicities and Mutual Vulnerabilities: Democracies of Proximity (social cohesion) and the Futures of Justice*. This framework takes its primary focus to be the study of structural inequality, everyday violence and disrespect in human relations. A number of research outputs are expected in 2013. These outputs will be the result of local projects as well as a number of national and international research collaborations.

### Institute research projects

#### Reitz Research Project

The Reitz research project consists of several related projects:

Reitz digital archive

Post-Reitz Interviews

Book projects: Living with difference: *Mapping 'Reitz', the meaning of 'Reitz', moving beyond 'Reitz'* (to be published in 2013).

#### Reconciled diversity: Young South Africans in conversation with Allan Boesak

This book publication will be the result of a series of conversations with students from diverse backgrounds under the theme 'Reconciled Diversity.' The conversations took place over a period of six months and were facilitated by Dr Allan Boesak (to be published in 2013).

#### Social Cohesion Comparative Study

Inter-disciplinary comparative study on Social Cohesion involving the Dihlabeng Municipality (Eastern Free State) and the Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process (Western Cape). This project is currently in the proposal phase.

## National research collaborations

#### Curriculum as Discourse

NRF-funded inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional national research project committed to the broader project of transformation in higher education, exploring curriculum practices and content as well as the disciplinary traditions in six selected fields of study.

#### Safe Spaces

Completed NRF-funded study in collaboration with North West University on Human Rights Education. Book published in 2012.

#### Special Edition of Perspectives in Education: Rethinking citizenship and social justice in education

The Institute is one of the guest editors of this special edition of the journal *Perspectives in Education* to appear in 2012.

## International research collaborations

#### Dignity and Difference

Comparative study on 'Dignity and Difference' in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society in Bangalore, India and the Kosmopolis Institute in Utrecht, Netherlands.

#### Humanizing Pedagogy

A planned large-scale empirical study on the theme of *Rights, Citizenship and Social Cohesion/Justice* in collaboration with partners in the United States.

#### Diversity in Higher Education

Funded project on Higher Education in collaboration with the University of California Los Angeles, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the UFS and North West University.

# Get involved with the Institute's work

UFS staff (academic or otherwise), as well any person or institution outside of the university, locally or internationally, who want to get involved with the Institute's work are welcome to approach us with project proposals. The Institute has also initiated a Student Volunteer Programme for interested undergraduate and postgraduate students registered at the UFS. Participants will be given the opportunity to independently develop and drive projects that link up with the Institute's mandate. Students who wish to participate will be required to show a keen interest in social justice issues, identify and interpret issues of concern on the University's various campuses and actively engage with the surrounding communities. The Director, additional staff and affiliates of the Institute will offer support, mentorship and guidance to the volunteer group. Interested students should contact Sibusiso Tshabalala at [tshabalalasb@ufs.ac.za](mailto:tshabalalasb@ufs.ac.za)

## Postgraduate studies at the Institute

A number of options exist for students who wish to pursue postgraduate studies in affiliation with the Institute. Linked to and located within a variety of national, regional and international networks, the Institute offers research engagement and supervision with renowned academics and experts in the fields of reconciliation and social justice. Students can also register with a range of departments across faculties for full research master's and doctoral degrees associated with the Institute. The research framework of the Institute is aimed at exploring how human relations across an infinite number of "divides" can be rethought and reconstituted for democratic arrangements and practices to advance reconciliation and social justice. Limited funding and support is available.

Under the leadership of the Institute, a steering committee has been set up to develop an M.Phil. Degree in Reconciliation and Social Justice. Straddling the faculties of Humanities, Law, Education, Theology and the natural and economic sciences, it explores the social dynamics of human relations as intrinsically linked to development and sustainable democracy. This degree is also closely tied to the university's strategic direction in terms of both the Academic and Human project. The M.Phil. in Reconciliation and Social Justice will be offered from 2014.

## So long *John* and thanks for all the *Fish*



John Samuel will bid farewell to the UFS at the end of 2012. He joined the university in 2010 and was tasked to set up the Institute. He went about this challenging undertaking guided by his unwavering belief that because universities occupy a unique public space, they have the responsibility to be, what he refers to as "havens of democratic habits for students". His biggest concern with universities was that they fail our students in this regard: "Neither in what we teach, nor in the culture and behaviour of universities do we encourage democratic habits."

Mr Samuel was therefore adamant that the Institute locate its work in that critical public space that universities occupy in democratic societies. He identified the following strategic thrusts driving the work of the Institute:

- To help the university develop the skills, capacities and practices that will strengthen its ability to respond to the challenge of institutional transformation.
- To attempt to energise the intellectual culture at the UFS; to excite a new social imagination around these challenges as well as the intellectual courage to deal honestly and squarely with it.
- To foster and cultivate rigorous scholarship so that we have the intellectual equipment to deal with what sometimes appear to be insurmountable challenges.
- To help members of the university community to become active participants in public dialogue.

Establishing a new Institute at the UFS had its own unique challenges, the biggest of which was to position the institute as a safe, critical space that belongs to whole university community. Through the course of more than 80 interviews with staff and students he listened to everyone, but also planted the seeds of a new way of talking about race, reconciliation and social justice. He deliberately tried to break down the barriers between different faculties, between staff and students as well as between academic and other staff members.

His passion for education and love for his country and our continent inspired all who had the privilege to work with him. He always put students first and established a culture and atmosphere at the Institute that reinforces the idea of the Institute as a home for the whole university community and beyond. The man who never refers to himself as the former Chief Executive Officer of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, but merely as "someone who has worked for Mr Mandela" never closed the door to his office – no matter who was visiting or what was discussed. His integrity rubbed off on everyone as did his love for literature. He will always be part of the Institute and his contribution will always be honoured. Hopefully he will now have more time to spend with Nora and his family as well as taking on the challenges associated with fishing, birding and baking the ultimate bread.

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# General

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## About the *Institute*

### Background

The Institute is one of the flagship intellectual projects of the University of the Free State. The Institute, more than any other initiative, represents the interface between the University's Human and Academic Projects, which rests on cultivating humanity as a counter-strategy to the disrespect and violence that pervade human relations.

Following the 'Reitz incident' in February 2008, and in light of a worldwide intensification of social conflict, a collective vision took shape to set up a research outfit that would exemplify the scholarship and practice of reconciliation, forgiveness and social justice. After an incubation period of consultations and discussions lasting almost three years, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu launched the Institute on 27 January 2011.

### Mission:

The mission of the Institute entails the study of the manifestations of race in higher education, linking such inquiry to the related matters of reconciliation and social justice in the South African context against the backdrop of racial, ethnic and tribal conflicts elsewhere in the world.

### Aims:

To conduct studies on race, reconciliation and social justice; in particular, the Institute will regard studies on reconciliation and forgiveness as crucial dimensions of the pursuit of democracy and social justice;

To generate comparative and international research of its scholarship and practice, establishing an international presence by entering into dialogue with the experiences of racial and ethnic violence in places like Rwanda;

To pursue scholarship on race studies (not diversity more broadly) in university contexts and, while the work of the Institute will no doubt be distributed widely within communities and on campuses, it seeks to be a premier international site of research on race, reconciliation and social justice;

To serve the national and international higher education (HE) environments through a proactive approach, closely and strategically linking academic research with practical application (praxis), thus contributing to viable and contextually relevant interventions in these environments; and

To serve the institutional needs of the UFS by becoming a forum the research of which is linked to social, institutional and curricular change within the university environment.

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# Botlino

Newsletter of the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice

THE HUMAN EMBRACE