

# Botno

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

## The Institute celebrates **20 YEARS** of democracy



At the student panel discussion on *Higher Education after 20 Years of Freedom* were: (from left to right) André Keet, Keabetswe Magano, Tsholofelo Lephalo, Jonathan Jansen, Sibusiso Tshabalala, Christopher Rawson and Phiwe Mathe.

South Africa's 20 years of democracy celebrations provide us with an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the threads that make up the South African story. This milestone is indeed an opportunity for stock-taking across all sectors of society and its institutions. The Institute joined the rest of the higher education sector in 2014 by becoming part of the Common Campaign Days project of Higher Education South Africa (HESA) and organised a series of events to mark *20 Years of Democracy*. The events varied from conferences, book launches, critical conversations and exhibitions to a Human Rights Advocacy campaign. The first event was a student panel discussion on *Higher Education after 20 Years of Freedom*. The panellists also participated in a discussion on the QwaQwa campus the following

day which coincided with the opening of the Institute's offices on the campus. Another highlight of the *20 Years of Democracy* celebrations campaign was the Human Rights Activation campaign aimed at *activating* active citizenry amongst students and staff through its message of RESPECT the rights of others, KNOW your rights, and GROW yourself.

As part of the Critical Conversation Series, the Institute invites young scholar activists to share their work with the University community. Natasha Vally led the first of these conversations on the topic of social grants and was followed by Kwezilomso Mbandazayo who shared her work on the One in Nine Campaign. Read more about these and other conversations on pages 8 – 12.

News

2

Conferences &  
Colloquia

5

Conversing  
the research  
project

8

About the  
Institute

15

# News

## The Institute at QwaQwa



Prakash Naidoo (Campus Principal: Qwa Qwa Campus)



Elsa Crause, André Keet and Choice Makhetha



On 15 May 2014, the university celebrated 20 years of democracy with the launch of an office of the Institute at the QwaQwa campus. In his opening remarks André Keet (Director of the Institute) commended the QwaQwa campus community on their positive welcoming of the Institute and urged students and staff to utilize the Institute: "Every day we must look for opportunities where we can contribute towards building a more just and diverse form of knowledge. However, this cannot happen if we do not contribute to developing the spaces around us; the Institute is here to assist in these processes. Do not think of the Institute as doing work outside the scope of what a university must do. Gender discrimination happens here where teaching and learning as well as research is undertaken. Every day, you must look for opportunities where you can contribute towards building a more just and diverse form of knowledge".

Elsa Crause (Vice-principle: Academic) urged the students to be aware of their own prejudices so that they may be part of the

solution: "Social justice should be global, thereby allowing all to participate fully in addressing their own prejudices and to avoid hurting each other". Messages of support from Choice Makhetha (Vice-Rector: External Affairs), Prakash Naidoo (Campus Principal) and Inno Dube (Student Representative Council member on Politics and Transformation) were also presented.

The launch took place in a festive atmosphere with students performing musical and dance items ranging from hip hop to isiZulu and Sesotho traditional songs. As part of its launch, the Institute also organised a student panel discussion that saw the Student Representative Councils (SRC) from both QwaQwa and the main campus participating in a dialogue themed *Higher Education after 20 Years of Freedom*. A lively discussion followed in which students raised issues ranging from media and the freedom of speech to those of justice and equality in the new democratic South Africa.

## Student **voices** and **opinions**

In the first semester of 2014, the Youth Forum and Student Critical Theory groups continued to meet regularly and discuss various aspects of social justice as they pertain to campus life and beyond. The students held an animated discussion on the Language Policy at the UFS and it was unanimously agreed among all language groups that the Language Policy needs urgent attention in light of the changes that have taken place in the country and against fluctuating demands in higher education. An opinion poll revealed that the parallel medium policy is still very problematic both in terms of practical execution and moral fairness. The students are to be applauded for boldly and responsibly addressing acts of discrimination on campus and open discussions proved to be both thought-provoking and informative. There was great acknowledgement in the groups that exclusionary problems persist and students recognized a need across all sectors to recommit ourselves to one another in solidarity under the Constitution.



Chris Rawson



Amos Mokobe & Nandi Bester



Piet Tibane

# Ambassadors for *transformation*



Taymoon Mohammed-Altamash chairs the student roundtable discussion in which Phiwe Mathe and Chris Rawson represented the UFS.



Allan Zinn, Melissa Steyn, Garth Stevens, Norman Duncan, Xoliswa Mtose, Hugo Canham and JC Van der Merwe (back).

Students and staff from the Transformation Desk of the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice attended an Anti-Racism Network in Higher Education (ARNHE) Colloquium which was hosted by the University of Pretoria on 10 April 2014. The theme of the day was *Transformation and Upliftment*. Proff Norman Duncan (UP) and Melissa Steyn (WITS) made the opening remarks after which Professor Garth Stevens of Wits University presented the keynote address entitled: *Transformation in South Africa HE: 20 years into the democratic era*. This was followed by the first roundtable discussion in which academics and staff from transformation offices at different universities and organizations further explored the theme of the keynote address. Participants included: Dr Hugo

Canham (WITS), Prof Christof Heyns (UP), Dr Matete Madiba (UP), Ms Patience Mushungwa (UP), Dr Christi van der Westhuizen, Prof Crain Soudien (UCT), Prof Xoliswa Mtose (UniZulu) and Ms Rejane William (WITS).

The second roundtable discussion focused on *Students as ambassadors for transformation* and was chaired by SRC Vice-President of UP, Taymoon Mohammed-Altamash. The UFS was represented by our SRC President, Phiwe Mathe, and Chris Rawson, our SRC member for Transformation. Both were commended for their insightful and mature contributions by Prof Tammy Shefer (UWC) who made the concluding remarks.

## Human Rights Awareness Campaign

The Human Rights Desk launched a major awareness-raising campaign at the end of January. The Human Rights Activation Campaign is aimed at *activating* active citizenry amongst students through human rights awareness and education. Students from the Institute as well as volunteers put up posters and distributed pamphlets carrying the message: RESPECT the rights of others, KNOW your rights and GROW yourself. Students and staff on all three campuses are encouraged to share their ideas and challenges in this campaign that will run throughout the year. The essence of the campaign can be captured as follows:

**Respect the rights of others:** The best method of protecting one's own rights is by respecting the rights of others. In this way we, as students and staff, become less selfish, less self-regarding and less self-centred, and by implication, more selfless, generous and compassionate.

**Know your rights:** Getting to know your rights means that one has to understand what kind of rights can be claimed, protected and promoted. It makes us realise, through recognizing our own rights, that human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status.

**Grow yourself:** Human Rights provide one of the most important means for growth. In this sense, human rights can be thought of as a code of conduct. They help us act in non-discriminatory and compassionate ways and, at the same time, highlight our endeavours to grow and study as an university community with regards to students, staff and community responsibility.



# Celebrating *Human Rights Day*



Huibrecht Hoffman (Co-ordinator of the Human Rights Desk).

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) celebrates and commemorates Human Rights Day on 21 of March through a variety of events and campaigns in partnership with other stakeholders. The Free State Provincial Office has partnered with the Institute and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) for this event themed *Reflections on 20 years of democracy and human rights in South Africa*. The symposium brought together public officials, academics, civil society organizations, community development workers and students to reflect candidly on 20 years of democracy, to gauge progress made in realizing socio-economic and equality rights and identify key challenges facing South Africa. The panel consisted of Buang Jones (Acting provincial manager of

the Free State Branch of the SAHRC), Com Nondumiso Maphazi (Commissioner: Commission for Gender Equality), Adv M Mokoteli (Director at Legal Advocacy for Women), Nadine Lake (Centre for Gender Studies) and Ilze Keevy (Department Constitutional Law). They illuminated the progress that has been made in the effort to realize human rights for all, but also reflected on areas in which there is significantly more work to be done. The comments and questions from the audience indicated that the spirit of the community has changed considerably from where it stood at the dawn of democracy. Citizens are beginning to exercise their sense of agency in actively demanding improved education, better decision making and accountability of those in power positions.

## Freedom of *Expression*

In celebration of 20 years of freedom, the Human Rights Desk and the Centre for Health and Wellness collaborated in the organisation of an arts project. The aim of the project was to provide students with the opportunity to reflect and project their interpretations of *Freedom of Expression* through acrylic on canvas. Freedom month served as backdrop to this event, bringing the broader spectrum of South African freedom under the spotlight. Each canvass was done as a group which again encouraged students to discuss different interpretations of the subject in order to create their combined expression as an art piece. The completed paintings were used as point of reference in a reflective conversation held on 15 April 2014, with the topic "*Freedom*" in *Freedom of Expression*.

## Open day

The UFS was a hive of excitement and activity with the annual Kopsie Open Day on Saturday 10 May 2014. The Institute's volunteers joined the Human Rights Desk in creating awareness about the work of the Institute in general as well as promoting the Human Rights Activation campaign to all prospective students. This event invited as much interest as it did engagement by means of questions and conversations exchanged.



# Conferences & Colloquia

## The politics of engaged scholarship



The convenors: André Keet and Frans Kamsteeg (VU).



Jonathan Jansen delivering the keynote address on the first day.

From 30–31 January 2014, the Institute co-hosted a colloquium entitled *Diversity and the politics of engaged scholarship: A Comparative study in Higher Education* with the University of California (Los Angeles) and the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. A range of national and globalizing processes of a cultural, political, economic and social nature, together with the dramatic increase in student participation and mobility in higher education worldwide, has brought the reality of diversity into the operational spaces of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In the context of this diversity, HEIs are presented with productive opportunities to foster critical debate and to advance social justice. This colloquium explored how scholars from various disciplines engaged in studying diversity in higher education, what this engagement meant for the results of their work, what topics they chose, what approaches they employed and how they disseminated their findings. Specific attention was paid to what it means to study diversity in settings as different from one another as the Netherlands, South Africa and the USA. In South Africa, all HEIs struggle with the transformation process on a number of levels: the demand for redress and equality; knowledge diversity; quality education; academic excellence; and diversity in teaching

and learning. In the Netherlands and USA, universities are also challenged by the demands of an increasingly diverse student population and its implications for engaged scholarship.

The colloquium featured a broad range of keynotes and papers that engendered a stimulating exploration of important issues in higher learning. Frans Kamsteeg, Harry Wels and Wim Haan discussed *First generation VU students: diverse backgrounds and experiences* and Ina ter Avest spoke about *Inclusive exclusion: special treatment for first-generation students*. There were also presentations made that focused on the experiences of people living with disabilities, namely: Oliver Mutanga *Rights (dis)qualifications? Examining the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD) in the South African higher education context* and Heidi Lourens *Blessing in disguise? – Responses of students with a visual impairment to social exclusion*. From UCLA, Tyrone Howard and Devon Carbado presented papers on *Race, gender & equity in higher education: Creating pathway for underrepresented groups* and *The diversity loop* respectively.



Colleagues from UCLA: Devon Carbado, Charles Alexander, Tyrone Howard with Thabo Motsoane (UFS).

# Who's your Mommy?



Clockwise: Nadine Lake, Christi Van der Westhuizen, Shireen Hassim, Kate Law and Helene Strauss.

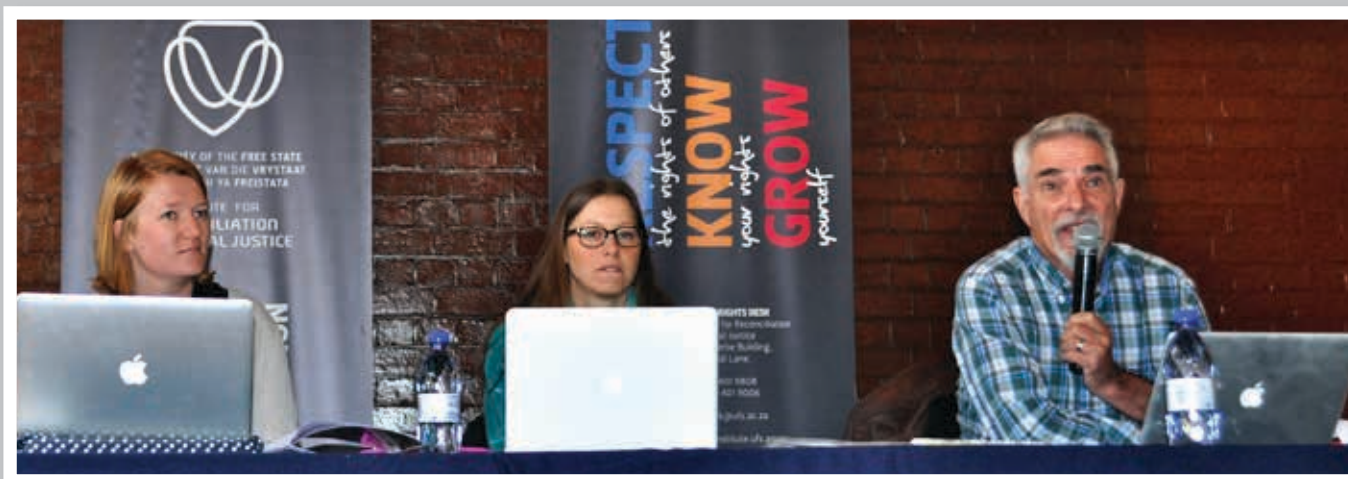
The Institute hosted an interdisciplinary seminar entitled: *WHO'S YOUR MOMMY? A Seminar on the (Ab)uses of the Mother of the Nation/Volksmoeder* on 19 March 2014. The focus was on the traction of models of femininity both in international narratives about South Africa and in relation to women in contemporary South Africa and Zimbabwe.

16 December 2013 marked the centenary of the Afrikaner national Vrouemonument (or Women's Monument) in Bloemfontein. In the introduction to the seminar, Christi van der Westhuizen quoted from a 1926 promotional brochure on the Women's Monument which presents readers with role models of women who are "patient, suffering, afflicted, frail, defenceless, tender, delicate and refined. The monument's main statue is of a seated woman with an emaciated child on her lap 'who stares over the Free State plains, overwhelmed with sorrow... Next to her is a... woman, standing proudly to the east, seeing the Unseen (or ineffable) new sunrise for the Afrikaner volk which will erupt through the dark sorrow'". According to van der Westhuizen, the monument is an exclusive symbol calling on white Afrikaans women to serve the volk as per the set of prescriptions in the quotation above. But, while it marks a particular moment in the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, it also captures – in concrete – how nationalisms conceive women. While there are significant divergences between African nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism's conceptions of womanhood, both draw strongly on the ideology of motherhood to demarcate political space for women. Women's agency hinges on

their maternal function, as actualised through their relationships with men. Selflessness and sacrifice are prized virtues. But, whereas Afrikaner nationalism's version of woman/mother was used to sequester women in the home during Apartheid, African nationalism's woman/mother became infused with a militancy during the struggle years that has allowed African women to claim the public sphere after Apartheid.

The half-day seminar investigated the deployment of mother of the nation/volksmoeder models in nationalisms in relation to ideal femininities. The keynote address was given by Shireen Hassim, a professor in political studies at WITS, titled *Can mothers have rights? A feminist gaze on the dilemmas of Maternalism in South Africa*. The discussant, Benita Moolman, (a research specialist in Human and Social Development at the HSRC) added her points to the previous address. Matau Setshase from the Center for Africa Studies at the UFS moderated the session in which Helene Strauss and Nadine Lake presented. The title of presentation by Helene Strauss was *Interrupting the international narrative of South Africa's neoliberal rainbow family: Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in the Canadian print media since the late 1980's*. Nadine Lake presented on *Mothers of the Nation? A queer perspective on nationalist belonging for black lesbians in post-Apartheid South Africa*. In the final session, Christi van der Westhuizen gave a critical analysis of *The afterlife of the Volksmoeder* which was followed by a presentation by Dr Kate Law on *The continuing struggle: Black women in Zimbabwe, c. 1980-2010*.

# Silence after violence



Laura de Becker (Wits), Friederike Mieth (Marburg) University and Rob Gordon (Senior professor in Anthropology and convenor of the conference).

From 22–23 May 2014, the Institute hosted a Colloquium entitled *Silence after violence* in partnership with the Carolyn and Leonard Miller Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont. During the colloquium, scholars from various disciplines examined the occurrence of silence after grave violations of human rights and questioned the notion that this silence is necessarily harmful and prevents healing in the aftermath of violence. In the last decades, testimony and witnessing have emerged as a dominant paradigm that underpins transitional justice practices and institutional frameworks such as truth commissions, archives of testimony, and testimony-based museums. Drawing on various local and historical contexts, the papers presented challenged the absolute binary between silence and speaking out by exploring the much messier and more complicated realities on the ground.

A central focus of several papers was the role of silences in the forming of national communities. Efforts at nation-building often come at the price of 'letting bygones be bygones' in order to ensure a common future of previously conflicting factions of former victims and perpetrators. This may, however, come at the cost of historical accuracy as was shown in an examination of memorials in Rwanda that tend to give simplified accounts of history, thus side-lining any factors beyond colonialism that contributed to the genocide in an attempt to achieve a harmonized national history. Moreover, as was argued in several papers that dealt with the situation in Namibia, new national master narratives of successful liberation movements effectively marginalize experiences of torture and internment that occurred in the course of the liberation struggle.

Various papers addressed the problematic and complicated ethical nature of testimony-based practices as such. Making trauma the focus of research and international humanitarian efforts can, as was shown in a case study of Sierra Leone, lead to an underestimation of resilience and a pathologizing of individuals who have made the conscious decision to no longer dwell upon the past. At the same time, narratives of trauma can provide broader histories with the seemingly unquestionable authority of authenticity and in-the-flesh experience, as was shown with regards to the memories of veterans of Apartheid South Africa's border wars. Moreover, once in the public, testimonial narratives often have considerable social repercussions and are open to decontextualizing and re-framing in ways that might be significantly at odds with their author's original intentions.

Beyond the dichotomy of repressive silence and the often highly regulated realm of speaking out, it might be visual culture that creates an alternate space. In Namibia, where the dominant national master narrative does not allow for dissenting voices, photography has proven to be a medium in which those conflictual memories can be expressed. The *Mekhonjo!* exhibition by John Liebenberg and Christo Doherty presented eleven portraits of PLAN veterans in the process of speaking about, and coming to terms with, their very different experiences in the Namibian War of Liberation. Since SWAPO's election victory in Namibia, the new government has mythologized the heroism of the armed struggle with several North Korean designed monuments but the story of the individual PLAN fighters' experiences is only now being articulated. Not only are their stories of great courage and determination against impossible odds articulated, but also of repression, torture and disastrous decisions by the Plan leadership.



André Keet (Convenor), Elham Atashi and Gertrude Fester (Keynote speaker).



Co-convenors: Christian Williams, Yehonatan Alsheh and Anja Henebury.



Christo Doherty (Wits) and Christian Williams.

# CONVERSING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In a context in which national and international societal problems require complex understandings and the identification of paths and modalities for action, it is necessary to foreground the role of the public university as a community of scholars and students who operate within a social context and has a responsibility towards that context as well as a responsibility to legitimizing the university as a public institution. Under the banner of *Critical Conversations*, the Institute clusters a series of modalities of dialogue that aim to generate debate, critique and the investigation of the implications that theory has for our praxis as scholars, students and citizens. Given the cyclical and self-referential tendencies of our intellectual work (always returning to the same beginning, which in most instances are our intellectual comfort zones), the hope is that these critical conversations will help us to engage in a deep, scholarly manner with social reality and our interpretative and knowledge schemes for 'acting on it'; and to subject our ways of knowing in order that productive critique for innovative social practices continues to emerge.



## Taking people for GRANTED

On 25 February 2014, Natasha Vally (PhD Fellow at WISER), led a conversation on *Taking people for GRANTED: Why social grants don't make people dependent*. Her research on social assistance in South Africa is an ethnographic project with a view to unravel the underlying significant theoretical implications embedded in all levels of application for, and delivery of, state social grants. More than 10 million South Africans receive social grants; these include old age and child support grants. While these grants are a lifeline to many, in public discourse they are often viewed as making people overly dependent on the state and, by extension, unable to be self-sufficient. Vally engaged in debunking this idea and showed that grants almost entirely serve to pay for services the state has a moral and legal imperative to provide in the first place. She also engaged with the notion of "dependence" itself as a way to discuss the politics embedded in the term. She refutes the idea that social grants makes people lazy and argued that women in particular, are more likely to look for work upon receiving social grants.

## The *erosion* of the *Humanities*

On 11 February 2014, the Institute collaborated with the department of English in hosting a critical conversation with Susan Spearey (Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Brock University) on *Mindfulness and the erosion of the Humanities*. Her research focuses on post-conflict literature and culture, and on pedagogies of witnessing. This talk explored the potential for mindfulness and related embodied awareness practices to enhance the ability of students and instructors in the Humanities to engage with, and respond to, different forms of crisis that emanate from the framing of post-secondary education at this moment in late capitalism. She gave an analysis of how the incorporation of mindfulness practices in the Humanities classroom potentially opens space for individuals and collectives to engage attentively and ethically with questions of power, social justice and transformative potential, and to loosen the hold of cycles of "compulsive becoming" that entrain learners to reproduce the logic of prevailing paradigms of social control. Spearey discussed the impact of the crises of late capitalism on post-secondary education in the global north alongside the transformation initiatives currently underway at the UFS.





## Indecent *dissent*

In a context where political protest and dissent is increasingly clamped down, Kwezilomso Mbandazayo analysed the motivations and nature of the feminist interventions by the One in Nine Campaign at two marches' in 2012: the ANCWL's march on Women's Day and the JHB Pride Parade march. Critique against these spaces informed the formation of the Johannesburg People's Pride (JPP) as a movement for change on all levels, primarily driven by activists identifying themselves as lesbian, gay, transgendered, intersex and queer people. Harnessing people's agency through egalitarian methods of organising within the JPP have been energetically supported and contested within a discourse dominated by identity-based and single-issue politics. In this conversation, Mbandazayo, who describes herself as a Black feminist thinker working within the One in Nine Campaign, asked key questions about these debates. The Institute collaborated with the post graduate student council and Out@Kovsies to present this conversation on 26 February 2014.

## Reviewing *residence life*

On 9 May 2014, a residence life review meeting was organised by Andricia Hinckemann (Residence Affairs & Ex officio: Campus Residences Student Council) and Clarise Haasbroek (City student Affairs & Ex officio: Commuter Student Council). The objective of the review was to provide student leaders with a platform to engage in internal affairs and issues confronting residence communities. All participants were asked to draw out possible resolutions to the current issues within residences as a proactive measure to avert unforeseeable conflicts. Prof André Keet facilitated the discussion between residence leaders, students and the SRC residence leadership. Although student leaders collectively agreed that residences are the most effective spaces to get people active in campus interaction, they jointly acknowledged that difficulties persist for students engaged in residence life in the demonstration of values of togetherness and solidarity across social and historical divides.

## Donna Bryson



Donna Bryson is a seasoned American journalist who lived in South Africa for several years. Her first foreign assignment brought her to the country in 1993 and she covered the 1994 elections. After turns in reporting from India (1996-1999), Egypt (1999-2005) and the UK (2005-2008), she returned to the country. She was appointed Johannesburg chief of bureau for The Associated Press (AP), a position she filled until 2012. She is now a freelance journalist and writer, living in Colorado. *It's a black-white thing* is her first book and, on 5 June 2014, the Institute in cooperation with the Department of Communication and Brand Management,

hosted a public discussion between Jonathan Jansen and Donna Bryson about the book. Bryson said that the question that led her to writing the book was: "To what extent have *South Africans changed in any significant way since 1994? Or are black and white simply repeating old patterns?*" She came to the UFS to investigate and, after speaking to students and university staff, she realised that the UFS was a microcosm of what was happening in the rest of the country. The interview was followed by a lively discussion in which audience members shared their views on the book.

# Ben Turok



Neil Roos, Philippe Burger, Ben Turok and Jonathan Jansen.

Ben Turok was an anti-Apartheid activist, economics professor and former South African Member of Parliament. In his book *"With my head above the parapet. An insider account of the ANC in power"*, the maverick MP offers a compelling insider evaluation of the successes and failures of the ANC and its government. While maintaining a measure of finely tuned restraint, Prof Turok seeks to understand the workings of the body politic of which he has been an active member for many years in varying capacities.

This event was hosted by the Institute in cooperation with the Office of the Vice Chancellor on 11 June 2014. Neil Roos facilitated a fascinating and highly entertaining discussion between Turok and a panel consisting of Jonathan Jansen, Philippe Burger and John Samuel. Turok offered an insightful account of the African National Congress (ANC) led government in recent history, while offering a critical insider evaluation of the ANC's work, and how the party has allowed a turn towards individual material accumulation.

## Dignity, Compassion and Community Service

The Human Rights Desk in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Centre hosted a seminar entitled *Dignity, Compassion and Community Service* on 28 May 2014. During this seminar, representatives from the Health and Wellness Centre (Estelle Heideman), Student Affairs (Angelo Mockie) and the Directorate of Community Engagement (Billyboy Ramahlele) took part in a discussion on the topic of the UFS as a 'community linked university' and the community service initiatives the UFS employs.

Community engagement forms the continuously negotiated collaborations and partnerships between the university and other partners with the aim of building and exchanging knowledge, skills, expertise and resources. A compelling discussion point was the acute need to identify who the community is, as this has often been construed as people who are suffering from poverty, are unprivileged and disadvantaged. Community service should not rely on a 'good deeds model' that results in the disempowerment of the community. The University uses a combined approach – it goes into the community and recognizes the skills and knowledge in the community, and that many people have gained insight

from their experiences. Therefore, the University does not purely work for the community, but rather works in the community, with the community and from the community. It is important to embrace a principle of reciprocity of learning (on the one hand people must acquire skills whilst on the other, also contribute to their community). Community service fulfils a vital role in that it provides students and many other individuals with the opportunity to become active citizens and contribute to society, and exposes them to diversity and multiculturalism. It also grants people the fortuity to access the bounty of indigenous or localized knowledge that is veiled within the community. A necessity is the proper preparation and training that students and other participants must undergo in order to equip themselves with the necessary skills as occasionally, the circumstances the participants are exposed to can be very difficult. There is a need to inculcate a 'spirit of service' and engaged citizenship in community service. All panellists agreed that the UFS should continue to ensure that it shares its philosophy and values with the community and build relationships of trust, mutual accountability and responsibility.



Billyboy Ramahlele



Estelle Heideman



Angelo Mockie

# Higher education after *20 years of freedom*



Tsholofelo Lephalo, Keabetswe Magano, Sibusiso Tshabalala, Christopher Rawson and Phiwe Mathe.

What does it mean to be a *transformed* university 20 years after democracy? A panel discussion facilitated by Sibusiso Tshabalala on 13 May 2014 attempted to address this question and raised the question of whether we are mindful enough of this responsibility, as students, administrators and academics? Tshabalala argued that this is a unique opportunity for the UFS to hold itself accountable as a community and as custodians of this university, saying “We should reflect on the successes made by the UFS community in advancing institutional transformation, as well as on the persisting challenges that hinder the transformation agenda at the UFS.” Keabetswe Magano took a closer look at demographics and said that the history of racial prejudice and segregation at the UFS raises questions about policies on integration (in University residences and lecture halls) and employment equity (the hiring

of support staff, lecturers and the professoriate). Although the UFS raises the issues of race in relation to student access and equity, she questioned to what extent it deals with the *impact* of other determining factors like disability, class, religion and sexual orientation. She challenged the audience to develop a more nuanced outlook on the role of demographics as a key element of transformation.

Tsholofelo Lephalo raised the issue of the democratization and deracialization of the University. She stated that democratisation is often associated with the move away from *authoritarianism* to allowing students to participate freely and openly in the making of decisions. Members of the audience had different views on to what extent this has been achieved. Christopher Rawson focused on the building of a culture of intellectual diversity. Given the fact that Universities have political and intellectual histories, he argued that the intellectual history of the UFS served, in the main, a racist and deeply divisive political and cultural project, namely Afrikaner nationalism. Rawson said that if the UFS is set on building a culture of intellectual diversity, it is important to ask: *Where does it source this diversity from?*

Phiwe Mathe addressed the issue of symbols and their meaning at a University, as symbols at a university are often a reflection of the identity of the institution. Mathe focused on the political purpose of symbols and argued that symbols (names of buildings, insignia, artistic works etc.) can be partisan and represent the past racial order, whilst, on the other hand, symbols can be inclusive and reflect the cultural and social diversity of a university. The audience engaged in a lively discussion on what would be the *ideal* set of symbols that represent a deeply transformative and inclusive UFS. The panellists travelled the next day to the Qwa Qwa campus where they were joined by members of the QwaQwa SRC in another lively debate.

## Jan de Groof



On 7 April 2014, Georgia Du Plessis from the Department of Constitutional Law and Philosophy of Law facilitated a breakfast discussion with Jan de Groof on the relevance of the rule of law for education. De Groof is professor at the College of Europe (Bruges) and has dedicated his academic and professional career to higher education, education policy, the legislative framework of universities, international and European law, fundamental rights in the domain of religion, culture, education, and ethics.

# John Higgins

The Institute co-hosted the launch of John Higgins' latest book with the Directorate on Research and Academic Planning on 25 February 2014. Lis Lange facilitated the discussion on *Academic freedom in a democratic South Africa: Essays and interviews on higher education and the Humanities*. Higgins is Professor and Fellow of English at the University of Cape Town. He posed questions such as: how do we understand academic freedom today? Does it still have relevance in the face of the managerial and ideological pressures which are reconfiguring higher education institutions? And what about the humanities? In an increasingly market-driven world, what do the humanities have to offer society? These two sets of questions provided the guiding threads of related enquiries that make up this hard-hitting and controversial study.

*Academic freedom in a democratic South Africa* argues that the principle of supporting and extending open intellectual enquiry is essential to realizing the full public value of higher education, and that in this task, the humanities and the forms of argument and analysis that they embody have a crucial role to play.



Lis Lange and John Higgins.

## Race, equality and transformation

In celebration of Human Rights Day on the main campus, the SRC organised a dialogue session entitled *Race, equality and transformation – hearing all sides* with Prof André Keet, Director of the Institute, as the guest speaker. The purpose of the discussion was to reflect on 20 years of the country's democracy with the aim of giving the campus community a platform to engage in critical issues knotted in the university's and country's transformation agenda. During his opening remarks, the president of the SRC, Phiwe Mathe, said: "Material realisation has to be one of the questions we direct to our Constitution when speaking about democracy because education and employment remains central when addressing the issue of democracy". Prof Keet emphasised that the core function of the University rests on transformation and if one has the desire to move forward, one needs to acknowledge one's complicity: "To co-exist, you need to make yourself a stranger to a place of your familiarity and you need to compromise in order to make others comfortable".



# Pumla Dineo Gqola

Pumla Dineo Gqola is the feminist author of *What is slavery to me? Postcolonial/slave memory in post-apartheid South Africa* (2010) and *A Renegade called Simphiwe* (2013). She is Associate Professor of African literary and gender studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Gqola has an active teaching and research interest in African, postcolonial and feminist literatures of the African world, and has published widely on slave memory, Black Consciousness literature, post-Apartheid public culture and African feminisms. The book launch of "A renegade called Simphiwe" took place on 10 March 2014 and was co-hosted by the Department of English and the Institute.

# Research

The research vision of the Institute is to be a premier interdisciplinary site for intellectual inquiries relating to, but not dogmatically limited to: social cohesion, reconciliation and social justice; critical studies in higher education transformation; and dexterous scholarship on human rights and *critical* human rights education. Research projects, conferences, publications and post graduate studies are organized around the following three research programmes:

## Programme 1: Social Cohesion, Reconciliation and Social Justice

This research programme aims at rethinking the social and its heterogeneity; studying the social dynamics of disrespect, disaffiliation, solidarity, integration and friendship; exploring the structures of social domination and freedom; and crafting possibilities for social justice agency through transformative praxes. As a critical enterprise, students will revisit and redefine current notions of reconciliation, social cohesion, inclusivity, social justice, human rights, diversity and citizenship in a changing world by applying interdisciplinary approaches to its analyses and practice.

## Programme 2: Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation

This research programme focuses on critical analyses of higher education transformation that study *inclusion and exclusion* in relation to: the social structure of the academy, the power-relations embedded within the organisation of knowledge, its disciplines and disciples; the construction of professional and student identities; the regulation of student life and voice; staff and student access and success; the mechanics of authority within knowledge generation processes; research subjects, objects, topics and trends; pedagogical typologies; the interplay between pedagogy, research and institutional culture; and the connectionist dynamics between higher education and the state, private sector, interest groups, pressure formations and broader society.

## Programme 3: Human Rights and Critical Human Rights Education

The objectives of this research programme are to: deepen the study of human rights in higher education and in society in general; study human rights and its violation globally; generate comparative and international research initiatives on the scholarship of human rights education within various socio-political contexts; engender creative approaches by which human rights can be enriched by inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches; and prompt inquiry into the linkages between human rights and peace, conflict, development, multiculturalism, citizenship and democracy.

# Research Projects

The Institute is currently working on a number of research projects independently and in collaboration with a number of national and international partners. These projects are all aligned with the research programmes of the Institute.

## Reitz Research Project

The 'Reitz' archive is functional, populated and is continuously developing. The first monograph titled '*Reitz*', *Race, Rights and Reconciliation* (JC Van der Merwe & Dionne Van Reenen) is being finalised. This will be the first publication in the newly established *Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation Series*. Another publication, *The Mapping of Reitz* (Teuns Verschoor), is nearing completion. Project leader: JC Van der Merwe (vdmjc@ufs.ac.za).

## Pedagogies to Advance Capabilities

This is a two-year (2013-2014) collaboration between three-countries (SA – UFS and UWC, the Netherlands, Cyprus) that focuses on Universities as 'Spaces for social justice: Pedagogies to advance capabilities'. The project aim is to work with university practitioner-researchers to investigate the university as a 'space of justice' that advances the capabilities and valuable functioning of all students through curriculum and pedagogical arrangements. The project is on-going and also includes an 'advocacy' dimension aiming at raising awareness about the need to continuously contemplate and improve upon pedagogical practices as one of the major leverage points for real transformation. Project leaders: Melanie Walker (WalkerMJ@ufs.ac.za) and André Keet (KeetA@ufs.ac.za).

## Humanizing Pedagogies

This is a large-scale empirical study on the theme of *Rights, Citizenship and Social Cohesion/Justice* in collaboration with NMMU and partners in the United States. The study is driven by colleagues from NMMU and explores the following themes:

- Understanding humanizing pedagogies and its meanings; critical engagement with humanizing pedagogies; new interpretive schemes; progressive practices; and innovative praxes.
- Humanizing pedagogies and teaching and learning strategies, research practices; staff-student dynamics; and community engagement practices.
- Staff, student and community initiatives

## Dignity and Difference

This is an international comparative study on “Dignity and Difference” in collaboration with the Glocal University in India and the Kosmopolis Institute at the University of Humanistic Studies in the Netherlands. The Institute will host the International Summer School on “Pluralism and Social Change” from 6–21 December 2014. The Summer School is a collaborative initiative between the Institute and the University of Humanistic Studies (the Netherlands), The Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos), Glocal University (India) and Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. Project leaders: Caroline Suransky (c.suransky@uvh.nl) and JC Van der Merwe (vdmjc@ufs.ac.za).

## Curriculum as Discourse

This inter-disciplinary and inter-institutional national research project is committed to the broader project of transformation in higher education. The study is an NRF-approved and funded project (Knowledge Fields- Education research in South Africa) that applies a primarily qualitative methodology that includes researchers from the following universities: the University of Stellenbosch, University of the Western Cape, University of Fort Hare, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and the University of the Free State. This study explores curriculum practices and content as well as the disciplinary traditions in selected fields of study (specifically psychology, occupational therapy and architecture) across institutional sites, probing for patterns of inclusion and exclusion at the level of disciplinary and curriculum practices and content; nationally and potential implications for through-put. This study is coordinated by the Anti-Racism Network in Higher Education.

## Human Rights and Citizenship Framings in Higher education Institutions

This research project explores how students and staff frame the notions of human rights and citizenship both pre-theoretically and theoretically; how such framings have an impact on the university's transformation agenda; and in which ways citizenship and human rights activism can be reconstituted within university spaces. This exploration will assist the research team to inquire into intuitive human rights and citizenship expressions within social reality. Such an analysis of these intuitive understandings will better link the abstracted notions of rights and citizenship with an activism that may already be rooted in pre-theoretical experiences. Apart from its broader intellectual contribution, such systematized observations will serve the strategies and activities that the university will employ in its pursuit to develop a culture of human rights and inclusive citizenship. Project leaders: André Keet (KeetA@ufs.ac.za) and Willy Nel (NelWN@ufs.ac.za).

## Post-graduate Studies

Students can register with a range of departments across faculties for full research Master's and Doctoral degrees associated with any one of the three research programmes of the Institute: 'Social Cohesion, Reconciliation and Social Justice', 'Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation' and 'Human Rights and Critical Human Rights Education'. In addition to this the Institute offers the following two postgraduate programmes:

## Interdisciplinary Masters and Doctoral Studies in Social Cohesion, Reconciliation and Social Justice

This programme provides development opportunities for academics, professionals and practitioners to advance social critique and social justice-directed transformation in various contexts. This programme is ideally suited for persons working in public and private institutions, community and non-governmental organisations, social movements, regional and transnational structures, and those pursuing careers across a variety of social justice fields. Both the Masters' and Doctoral programmes require a full research dissertation/thesis, and students will also be expected to attend specialist cohort sessions on agreed-upon times. This programme is open to all students with background studies in the economic and management sciences, natural sciences, health sciences, social sciences, law, education, theology, and so on, including those in the heritage, development, human rights, transitional justice and peace sectors; and candidates in the cultural and creative industries. For more information contact Annelie de Man (demana@ufs.ac.za)

## Structured MA in Reconciliation and Social Cohesion

This programme develops an inter-disciplinary research approach to the social, ethical, political and theological aspects of reconciliation and social cohesion. In the first semester, students enrol for two (30 credit) compulsory modules that focus on research, namely: Theoretical and Epistemological Frames (Discourse and Disruptions); and Researching Reconciliation and Social Cohesion. In the second semester, students choose three (20 credit) modules out of four available electives: (a) Dignity and difference; (b) Justice, democracy and wellness; (c) Mourning, forgiveness, trauma and memory; (d) Public theology and liberating justice; or The liturgies of a life together. In the second year, students will complete a 90 Credit research dissertation. This programme will commence as soon as it has been approved by the CHE. For more information contact Willy Nel (NelWN@ufs.ac.za).

# General

## About the *Institute*

The Institute is one of the flagship intellectual projects of the University of the Free State. The Institute, more than any other academic initiative, represents the University's *Human Project*, which rests on cultivating humanity as a counter-strategy to the disrespect and violence that pervades human relations. Following the 'Reitz incident' in February 2008, and within the context of a worldwide intensification of racism and 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.

The Institute's mandate is divided into three complimentary legs – one being research and the other two being institutional transformation/higher education transformation and human rights. These two areas work hand in hand with the research mandate, in the sense that the Institute's approach to transformation in higher education and human rights is informed by its research framework while its research agenda is responsive to work done in the area of transformation in higher education and human rights.

## Get involved with the *Institute's* work

The UFS staff, as well any person or institution outside of the university, locally or internationally, who wants 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 post-graduate 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. For more information visit the website at <http://institute.ufs.ac.za>.

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THE HUMAN EMBRACE

Newsletter of the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice