

#Africa Month: A cultural and intellectual fanfare to remember

31 May 2022 | STORY Nonsindiso Qwabe | PHOTO Supplied

SEOs:

Africa Month, University of the Free State, Africa Month, Organisation of African Unity, Bloemfontein Campus, South Campus, Qwaqwa Campus, Dr Jerry Mofokeng wa Makhetha, Sasol Library, Library and Information Services, Prof Francis Petersen, Academy for Multilingualism, African Language Press, Office for International Affairs, Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice, Odeion School of Music, Prof Bagele Chilisa, Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

“Africa’s story has been written by others; we need to own our problems and solutions and write our own story.” Paul Kamage, President of Rwanda.

In May, the UFS celebrated the 59th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), where members of state undertook to coordinate and intensify their efforts to provide a better life for people in Africa. The commemoration of Africa Day takes a different theme each year. This year, under the theme ‘Celebrating African education as a conduit for African unity’, the university incorporated a hybrid variety of cultural and intellectual contributions. African unity was celebrated through a fanfare of visual and performing arts, opinion pieces, and poetry submissions, with memorable events taking place across the university’s three campuses.

Some of the events of Africa Month were as follows:

On 18 May, legendary actor and playwright and a UFS honorary doctorate recipient, Dr Jerry Mofokeng wa Makhetha, launched his memoir *I Am A Man* at the UFS Sasol Library on the Bloemfontein Campus. The memoir delves into his complex relationship with masculinity, fatherhood, and identity. Click here to watch the book launch: <https://www.ufs.ac.za/supportservices/departments/international-affairs/unlisted-pages/africa-month-2022/book-launch>

On 19 May, the UFS Library and Information Services, in collaboration with the Academy for Multilingualism, launched the African Languages Press as part of its commitment to fostering multilingualism and the preservation of indigenous African languages.

On 23 May, the first of three dialogues on African higher education – also the opening ceremony of the Africa Week celebrations – took place on the South Campus. The dialogues were a collaboration between the Office for International Affairs and the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice. The dialogue

positioned African education as a catalyst for writing the Africa story. During his keynote address, Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the UFS, who was joined by other intellectuals, said as a continent, Africa has forged through similar trials and challenges, and was now at a place where the struggles have led to an exciting and fertile breeding ground for new knowledge creation, independent thought, and innovation. Read more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULjy0Q-Gk18>

In celebration of Africa Day on 25 May, the Bloemfontein Campus hosted a stimulating dialogue on issues of African unity and harmonising African education. Also on Africa Day, the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies hosted its annual memorial lecture. Renowned post-colonial scholar, researcher, author, and educator, Prof Bagele Chilisa, gave a talk on research and knowledge production in Africa. Prof Chilisa called for a fifth research paradigm rooted in the philosophy of ubuntu. “The academia in Africa needs a critical math to unlock the doors of intellectual imprisonment and to participate as equal partners with the Global North in redefining the contours and boundaries of academic disciplines.” Watch the lecture here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqRzxhaRnzk>

In the spirit of celebrating Africa, the Odeion School of Music on the Bloemfontein Campus held a concert themed ‘Modern African Soundscapes: Tales from the South and West’, celebrating the legacy of icons of popular genres from Southern and West Africa, such as the late Hugh Masekela, Caiphus Semenya, and the late Oliver Mtukudzi, to name a few.

To conclude the commemorations, the last in the series of dialogues on African higher education was held in Golden Gate on 27 May. Sealing the dialogues were discussions around the importance of student engagement in African education at institutions of higher learning, as well as the importance of collaborations with African institutions as a way of developing young minds and shaping the African agenda. Click here to watch the dialogue: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXZ4DBjzkGw>

PHOTO:

SUPPLIED

SOCIAL MEDIA:

In the spirit of celebrating Africa during Africa Month, the UFS celebrated the 59th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), where members of state undertook to coordinate and intensify their efforts to provide a better life for people in Africa. The commemoration of Africa Day takes a different theme each year. This year, under the theme ‘Celebrating African education as a conduit for African unity’, the university incorporated a hybrid variety of cultural and intellectual contributions. African unity was celebrated through a fanfare of visual and performing arts, opinion

pieces, and poetry submissions, with memorable events taking place across the university's three campuses.