

## *Lesotho and South Africa: A Clarion Call for a Pan-Africanist Future*

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From 19 to 20 March 2022, the UFS Borderlands research team led by Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga (PI) and coordinated by Dr Moorosi Leshoele, participated in an online think-tank conference with the theme, *Lesotho and South Africa: A Clarion Call for a Pan-Africanist Future*. This is an NIHSS/UFS-funded research project in collaboration with the Academic Forum for Development of Lesotho (AFDeL). The keynote speakers were Molefi Kete Asante, Professor and Chair, Department of Africology at Temple University in Philadelphia and President of the Molefi Kete Asante Institute for Afrocentric Studies; and Dr Khabele Matlosa, former Director of the Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Out of a total of 16 papers presented, the UFS Borderlands team presented 10 papers, 5 of which were read by students in the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (3) and the Department of History (2). This was a massive haul where all the student presenters delivered papers at an international conference for the first time in their lives. Some of the topics presented ranged from *Lesotho-RSA Relations: Shrewd Neighbourly or Hegemonic in Nature*; *'You have to pay with your body': Women's experiences of sexual assault at the Lesotho-South Africa 'paqama gates'*; and *'We are wholly surrounded': Evolving paradoxes of spatiality, communitarianism, bordering and mobility along the Lesotho-South Africa border communities*.

This piece in commemoration of Africa Month and Africa Day seeks to focus on and contribute to these two sub-themes: a) UFS collaborations/partnerships on the African continent and b) narratives of research and student excellence associated with African unity. Pan-Africanism, which is a galvanising philosophical force and movement for Africans on the continent and people of African descent globally to unite to rid themselves of all forms of subjugation, predates the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) by close to five decades. This would therefore explain why many of the OAU's founding mothers and fathers were staunch Pan-Africanists, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, etc.

As is widely known, the OAU was inaugurated on 25 May 1963, which helped fast-track the independence wave across the continent including on the way to the independence of Namibia (1990) and South Africa (1994). Ironically, the former gained independence from the latter<sup>1</sup>. The OAU pursued five main goals, namely to: (a) promote the unity and solidarity of African states; (b) coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; (c) defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and independence; (d) eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and (e) promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup>. This first continental institution had some relative successes and failures, as widely acknowledged and particularly in relation to goal (d), which has registered few gains. Neo-colonialism, coloniality, neo-imperialism, economic domination, epistemic domination, and cultural domination ('culturecide') continue unabated to this day.

Many argue that for Africa and African people in the diaspora to emerge from the quagmire they are submerged in, education must play a more central role in all efforts geared at restoring the dignity of African people wherever they may find themselves in the world, as mandated by global Pan-African thinking. However true this premise may be, what often seems to fall between the cracks in these debates is 'what kind of education does Africa need to enable it to be an equal partner in the global arena?' This question is quite important to seriously reflect on as we commemorate Africa Month in 2022, because coloniality<sup>3</sup> continues to shape not only our body polity and socio-economic affairs throughout the continent, but more so our education systems that are still heavily Eurocentric, with the same curricula that continues to centre Euro-American civilisations and norms, and peripherises and 'others' African indigenous knowledge systems and civilisations. To this end, we argue that what we need is not so much a decolonisation of education and all other facets of our society per se, but rather that we need to deepen *decoloniality* of education and society at large such that is open to epistemic diversity.

The Borderlands Project and conference therefore sought to educate the public and policy makers by illuminating challenges and opportunities presented by the borders between Lesotho and South

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<sup>1</sup> Namibia was a colony of Apartheid South Africa until 1990.

<sup>2</sup> The OAU Charter (1963:3).

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the situation where colonial masters have long left the colonies and they have given locals political/flag independence, but their ways and institutions of governance remain intact and are merely adopted almost wholesale by the new local/indigenous administrators. Similar to the Fanonian paradox of 'black skin, white masks'.

Africa in relation to the ideals of the African Union, premised on Pan-Africanism regarding the free movement of persons and goods and cultural cross-pollination. It emerged at the conference, among others, that there are numerous examples of countries in Africa and in the world where one country or more may be an enclave or semi-enclave of another or where there are very strong cultural ties and affinities; interventions are then put in place for the free movement of people and trade is also made seamless. For instance, Dr Matlosa pointed the delegates to well-functioning examples of relations between Gambia-Senegal and Zanzibar-Tanzania where certain concessions are made relating to borders, i.e., no passport requirement policy is practised in these countries. In the case of the Zanzibar-Tanzania relations, the former is semi-autonomous in certain aspects, but its citizens still enjoy all the rights as citizens of the mainland Tanzania. It has been proposed that Lesotho and South Africa could possibly learn a lot from these examples and models.

Between Lesotho and South Africa, there is unfortunately no free movement of people and goods, and there are very little shared socio-economic benefits. Borders between the two countries are strictly monitored and controlled, including patrols by the army and other security personnel. It is mostly the Basotho who are at the receiving end of these containment measures, as they cannot easily enter South Africa to access many socio-economic services that are lacking in Lesotho. It is a socio-economic relationship in which the developmental potential of the two countries is inhibited (almost deliberately), one way or the other, by their adherence to tenets of independence, nationhood, sovereignty, tight border control, all of which result in the two countries' separate and unsustainable development pathways.

This piece sought to bring to the fore, firstly, how Africa Month came about and the role and significance of the OAU for the cause of Pan-African unity on the continent. Second, it sought to show the relevance of the conference to the 2022 Africa Day theme, *celebrating African education as a conduit for African unity*; and thirdly, it shared some of the issues that emerged at the conference, which underscored an urgent need for a socio-political, cultural, and epistemic unification of Africa through a Pan-Africanist prism. To do this, in our view, is to live true to the OAU and AU's call for member states to coordinate and intensify "cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people of Africa" and to build towards the African idea of Africa. Kwame Nkrumah was indeed correct in his analysis that Africa either unites or perishes, and Thomas Sankara echoed the same sentiments in his efforts at the OAU in Addis Abbaba in 1987

to rally African leaders to repudiate odious colonial debt. Lastly, Africa should draw lessons from the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and from the NATO military alliance, such that Africans too create a formidable African Standby Force which can counter any threat from any nation.

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