

This Week @Fort Hare



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

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Getting To Know Dr Nthabi Taole-Mjimba

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Partnerships & Innovation

Dr Nthabi Taole-Mjimba, the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Partnerships and Innovation (DVC-RPI) is officially in seat. She joined the UFH on 1 July, bringing along two decades' wealth of experience in the national system of innovation, including higher education, research councils, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector.

Before joining the UFH, she held the position of Director: Research and Innovation at the University of Pretoria, where she played a key role in providing strategic direction for the research, innovation and internationalisation portfolio of the university.

Dr Taole-Mjimba shared her plans for her new role with *ThisWeek@FortHare*.

“Focus on research, partnerships and innovation at the level of DVC is new in the history of UFH. I want to be part of the community that will take this great university to greater heights in those areas.”

>> Dr Nthabi Taole-Mjimba

Please share a bit about your professional background?

Professional

I have been in the research and innovation management space for most of my professional life. As a young professional, I had the opportunity of working on information systems in both the telecommunication and library environments. I have also worked in senior management positions in the two research councils, namely the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the National Research Foundation. This experience sharpened my systems thinking skills through leading a number of consensus studies which championed the use of evidence-based policy and practice in state matters in the case of ASSAf, and leading the national DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence programme at the NRF.

Personal Life

I enjoy close relationships with members of my nuclear and extended families. Besides being a daughter, wife, mother, sister, aunt and cousin, I have always also been surrounded by people whom I consider family because of the nature of the relationships we have. These include mentors, spiritual leaders and friends whom I met in both social and work spaces.

Hobbies and Interests

I like travelling and sightseeing. I have been fortunate to travel to many parts of the world and appreciated their beauty and different cultures. I also like walking for leisure, especially in natural and scenic environments.

Further, I also make time to read books on personal development and leadership. Currently I am reading *The Spirit of Leadership: Cultivating the Attributes that Influence Human Action* by Myles Munroe.

What motivated you to come to the University of Fort Hare?

Contribution is key to my decision to be in this space. I was motivated by the University's intention to grow its research and innovation profile. As you may know, focus on research, partnerships and innovation at the level of DVC is new in the history of UFH. I want to be part of the community that will take this great university to greater heights in those areas.

Having worked in similar systems elsewhere, I intend to use my experience to contribute towards building and growing this very important portfolio, right here at Fort Hare. This university has nurtured several great African leaders and I wish to contribute towards the nurturing of

the next generation of great African leaders in research and innovation. Of course, I do recognise that the context is different, hence I always emphasise the need to bring in collective wisdom in this endeavour.

What are the key focus areas in portfolio?

The portfolio comprises the following entities:

- Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GMRDC);
- UFH Libraries;
- International Office; and
- Research Institutes, centres and units.

The main function of this position is to provide institutional leadership in creating a new and dynamic, efficient and well-functioning research and innovation portfolio. The focus areas include strengthening and growing the research and innovation profile of the university, increasing research capacity, output and impact in both quality and quantity terms. We will also seek to increase the university's postgraduate student capacity and enhance both local and international partnerships. In addition, UFH Libraries will receive special attention as they remain critical in providing a sustainable relevant information resource base to support teaching, learning and research.

What is your approach to executing key responsibilities?

First, I want to understand how all the entities under my portfolio operate. I have already started holding meetings with relevant senior management in this regard. Soon, I will also be engaging faculty leadership through various structures. Despite the ongoing orientation, there are a number of tasks that I have to perform immediately which will give a clearer picture of the context within which I operate.

Second, through the engagements mentioned above, I intend to consolidate my plan of action by addressing the identified gaps simultaneously with enhancing areas of strength. The new strategic plan, which is nearing its completion, will be the anchor of what we do.

Third, we will work on restructuring the GMRDC, which currently houses the university's research management and administrative services. The renewed focus on research and innovation brings with it some capacity demands which are not adequately addressed in the current set-up.

Continued on next page...

So far, which areas have you identified as pockets of excellence and which ones require strengthening?

Pockets of Excellence

I have been in this position for only three weeks and I have had an opportunity to meet and engage with both the executive and some colleagues in senior management. I have noted a great sense of collegiality and political will to take the university to greater heights. One should also acknowledge the university's role in ensuring that teaching and learning as well as research continue with minimum glitches during the COVID-19 pandemic era. This has been a trying time for all sectors and higher education in particular, and UFH continues to make strides in providing appropriate virtual platforms for its community.

UFH also has very strong partnerships locally and internationally and this is an area that will be increasingly important, especially in this era of shrinking budgets.

Challenges

In my portfolio, I have noted some gaps in policies as well as the relevant guidelines. Research and innovation policies are critical in providing guidance to researchers and professional staff in performing related tasks and can be used as points of reference. These gaps will have to be addressed in line with the renewed emphasis on creating a research focused university.

Another area of concern is the need to review some research entities. Without regular reviews, we may miss growth opportunities that come with reflection and scrutiny.

I have also noted cross-cutting challenges that are systemic in nature, which I believe may require support from different internal

stakeholders. This could also be strengthened by refocusing on a change in institutional culture. This will bring in a need to revisit the related set of values.

Lastly, what are your aspirations for the university as it sets off on its journey of a decade of renewal (2020 to 2030). What is your advice on how to reach the envisaged destination?

In this decade of renewal, we want to build this great institution to become a sustainable African university that prides itself in quality and excellent teaching, learning and research; a university that is a leader in providing solutions to societal challenges.

UFH must reclaim its position of being a university of choice for South Africa's and indeed Africa's aspiring leaders in research, business, politics and other fields.

I believe the key to [reaching the envisaged destination] is to remain people-centred and to work together with our partners, locally and globally to ensure that we give expression to the vision of the university.



Staff in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture continue to fly the UFH flag high – both on local and international platforms. Since its launch in 2019, *ThisWeek@FortHare* has, in almost every edition, carried an article that displays excellent academic citizenship by a member or members of the faculty.

In this very edition, there are FOUR such exhibits viz:

- Research Articles Highlight Constraints that Limit Milk Production in the Eastern Cape
- Prof Niall Vine Champions Participation of UFH Zoology and Entomology Department in Aquaculture Africa Magazine Online Focus Session
- UFH Animal Science Staff and Student to participate in International Society of Applied Ethology Congress
- UFH Edited Research Journal on Medicinal Plants Accepted into Directory of Open Access Journal

It is against this background that a dedicated campaign is being launched in August to recruit top notch students to enrol for programmes offered by the Faculty of Science and Agriculture from 2022.

Led by Institutional Advancement, the campaign is a partnership between Advancement, the Faculty (represented by the Acting Dean, Prof Michael Aliber) and the Office of the Deputy Registrar – Academic Affairs (represented by Dr Rose Masha).

“The campaign takes a holistic approach and focuses on the soul of the university which is the UFH Alice Campus, by highlighting the remarkable achievements and programmes offered by our Faculty of Science and Agriculture”

Giving a glimpse into what is to come from this campaign, Mr Khotso Moabi (Marketing Manager) said:

“The campaign takes a holistic approach and focuses on the soul of the university which is the UFH Alice Campus, by highlighting the remarkable achievements and programmes offered by our Faculty of Science and Agriculture. We seek to recognize and attract prospective students, equip them with information to make informed decisions about their post-matric studies. The campaign will be digitally-led to navigate current constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure we reach as many potential students as possible - from all corners of the world.”

More details will be revealed during the month of August. In the main, the campaign will focus on digital platforms, because this is where the targeted student market resides. Watch this space.

by Tandi Mapukata



PROF NIALL VINE CHAMPIONS PARTICIPATION OF UFH ZOOLOGY and ENTOMOLOGY DEPARTMENT IN AQUACULTURE AFRICA MAGAZINE ONLINE FOCUS SESSION



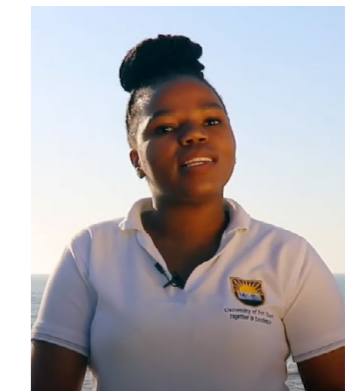
>> Prof Niall Vine



>> Dr Unathi Heshula



>> Dr Craig Tambling



>> Ms Ziyanda Mzozo

On 22 July the UFH Zoology and Entomology Department was featured on the Aquaculture Africa Magazine (AAM) live online FOCUS session.

The AAM is a networking channel for aquaculture information on the African continent. It reports on a wide range of aquaculture topics including species, production systems, feed, aquatic disease, country matters, markets environmental impacts, projects, current events, employment and more.

The live 30-minute sessions comprise discussions with personnel and students from institutions that provide aquaculture training and research. The UFH session attracted participants from different parts of the world.

The UFH Team comprised the following:

- **Associate Prof Niall Vine**
Research and Academic Coordinator for Aquaculture
- **Dr Unathi Heshula**
Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning and Community Engagement, Faculty of Science and Agriculture)
- **Dr Craig Tambling**
Head of Department: Zoology and Entomology
- **Ms Ziyanda Mzozo**
PhD candidate

UFH SESSION OVERVIEW: by Mr Etienne Hinrichsen – Africa Aquaculture Magazine

A 20-minute video detailing the research and training programmes conducted and offered by the Department was shared with the participants. The clip showcases scenic views of the research sites and demonstrations of the training programmes. Eight(8) postgraduate students spoke about their research, while Prof Vine gave an overview of the remarkable programmes that are offered by the department.

Key Partnerships and Collaborations

During his time at UFH, Prof Vine (Research and Academic Coordinator for Aquaculture) has established a number of key partnerships and collaborations with government, academic and industry partners.

“Depending on the role-player, these collaborations have helped to fund student bursaries, pay project running expenses or provide access to role player facilities for the students to conduct their research,” said Prof Vine.

This includes a relationship with Kingfish Enterprise. “As Fort Hare has a campus in East London, it was a no-brainer for me to nurture the relationship with the commercial aquaculture farm”.

Watch the video here



<https://youtu.be/cyeZwl8zTL8>

Kingfish Enterprises is situated at the East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ). “The farm primarily focusses on producing yellowtail kingfish and dusky kob but also investigates a number of other marine species, including pacific oyster and abalone.”

“Based on signed MoU’s and funding from both the university and elsewhere, my research group has established the Fort Hare Aquaculture Research Unit where we can conduct research which is driven by the local aquaculture industry. Currently, all research conducted by my research group not only creates student graduation outputs but many of my students have published their research in major international aquaculture journals.

Students are also exposed to working on a commercial farm. This provides context of what it means to possibly pursue a career in aquaculture and enhances their academic exposure while adding to their technical skill set”, explained Prof Vine.

The presentation from the team was followed by a round of questions. Dr Heshula responded to questions around possible partnerships while Dr Tambling responded to questions on applying and enrolling to study for programmes offered by the department. Ms Mzozo (PhD student) spoke about the benefits of being a student in the Zoology and Entomology department.

by Aretha Linden

RESEARCH ARTICLES HIGHLIGHT CONSTRAINTS THAT LIMIT THE MILK PRODUCTION INDUSTRY IN THE EASTERN CAPE

Dr Ishmael Festus Jaja (Animal Health Lecturer in the Department of Livestock and Pasture) and Mr Yanga Diniso (Agriculture PhD student), have co-authored and published two compelling research papers that highlight the constraints that limit the milk production industry in the Eastern Cape.

The papers were part of Mr Diniso's Master's research work.

The first paper titled: *Dairy farm-workers' knowledge of factors responsible for culling and mortality in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa* was published in the Journal of Tropical Animal Health and Production <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11250-021-02845-6>

The second paper: *A retrospective survey of the factors responsible for culling and mortality in dairy farms in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa* was published in the Elsevier Journal (ScienceDirect) – Scientific African <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2021.e00838>

In an interview with *ThisWeek@FortHare*, the collaborators said both studies revolved around constraints that limit the milk production industry in the province, for example, culling and mortality (removal and death) of dairy cows. According to them, these constraints limit the industry's productivity, growth, and distribution.

Inspiration and objectives

The inspiration behind their research was driven by food security and local economic development through growth and distribution, they said. The objective of the first study was to evaluate dairy farm-workers' knowledge of factors responsible for culling and mortality of dairy cows. The second study sought to identify and document the factors responsible for culling and mortality in dairy farms in the province.

"The dairy industry has a huge potential to address several socio-economic issues such as youth unemployment, significantly contribute to poverty alleviation and increase access to nutritious foods (milk and milk-related products).

However, this is just not happening. The country imports thousands of tonnes of milk annually, the number of dairy farms is gradually dropping in our province (from 206 in December 2020 to 172 in July 2021). The province has dropped from being the top milk producing province in South Africa to 3rd position behind Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal."

"The dairy industry has a huge potential to address several socio-economic issues such as youth unemployment, significantly contribute to poverty alleviation and increase access to nutritious foods."

"This became sore and generated a lot of concern regarding the underlying factors that limit the industry's potential. These underlying factors required consistent attention and investigation, starting with the workers' knowledge and attitudes. A drive to uncover why dairy cows die or are removed from the farms was thus triggered."

Some of the findings:

- Many young people with a post-matric education joined the dairy industry with an impressive young women representation of 40%.
- Inexperienced (but educated), poor sources of dairy information and selective on-farm dissemination of dairy farm information contributed to farm-workers' poor knowledge about culling and mortality of dairy cows. "On that note, researchers, government, tertiary institutions, and curriculum designers need to be engaged to devise means of capitalising on the industry's potential".
- Reproduction problems and diseases were the leading factors responsible for the culling and mortality of dairy cows and these were common even in other countries.
- Stock-theft by nearby communities was found to be the only common and specific challenge in the Eastern Cape.

"Several dairy farms in this study reported trespassing and damage to fences as a significant challenge. Damage to fences resulted in village bulls entering the farms and mating with the dairy cows. Consequently, undesirable calves were born and sexually transmitted diseases were transferred, thus forcing the farms to get rid of those cows and incur undue costs. This is a societal issue that poses a fatal threat to the dairy industry and food security at large. If these are left unattended by the communities and law enforcers, more farms will shut down, more jobs will be lost, and households will be affected," elaborated the authors.

by Aretha Linden



>> Dr Ishmael Festus Jaja



>> Mr Yanga Diniso



Mr Yanga Simamkele Vieira Diniso is an aspiring scholar, philanthropist, youth development agent and food security activist. He holds a Diploma in agriculture from Fort Cox College, a BSc and MSc in Agriculture (Animal production Science) from the University of Fort Hare. He is currently a PhD candidate at UFH under the supervision of Dr Jaja.

Dr. Ishmael Festus Jaja is a Veterinary surgeon and holds a Master's and Doctorate in Animal Science. His research focuses on food security specifically food safety, food loss, zoonosis, antimicrobial resistance and diseases of production animals. He lectures in infectious and non-infectious diseases of animals, anatomy, and physiology of farm animals in the Department of Livestock and Pasture Science, University of Fort Hare.

UFH Animal Science Staff and Student to participate in International Society of Applied Ethology Congress



>> Mr Maliviwe Mpayipheli



>> Athi Zangwa

“Currently, the application of the animal welfare science to livestock production - especially under communal farming systems in South Africa - is one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted disciplines.”

Two members of the UFH Animal Science department: Mr Maliviwe Mpayipheli (Lecturer) and Athi Zangwa (Master's student), have been awarded a Developing Countries Congress Attendance Fellowship (DCCAF) to the International Society of Applied Ethology (ISAE) congress.

The ISAE DCCAF is funded by the Open Philanthropy Project. It will be held online between 2 and 8 August. According to the ISAE Development Officer Maria Camila Ceballos Betancourt, the overall goal of the programme is to increase the knowledge base of animal welfare science, particularly farm animal welfare science within developing countries, to build collaborative links within and across developing countries and regions.

Speakers will include various leading scientists in the sector. Participants will also get an opportunity to engage each other and join virtual farm tours.

Mpayipheli believes the opportunity will allow him to interact with leading scientists and acquire more knowledge in the area of animal welfare science. Such knowledge can inform change to the UFH Livestock and Pasture Science department's curriculum.

“Currently, the application of the animal welfare science to livestock production - especially under communal farming systems in South Africa - is one of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted disciplines. The recent High Court case against live sheep exportation to the Middle East brought by the National Council of Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, is a perfect example of this misunderstanding and misinterpretation”, he said.

Postgraduate student Zangwa said he was honoured to be selected as a participant in the congress because his research is on animal identification and the grazing behaviour of non-descript goats of communal farmers.

by Aretha Linden



>> Prof Anthony Jide Afolayan

UFH Edited Research Journal on Medicinal Plants accepted into Directory of Open Access Journal

Yet another research journal edited by a UFH Academic has been accepted into the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

Professor Anthony Jide Afolayan, Research Professor in the Department of Botany under the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, shared the exciting news of the acceptance of the *Journal of Medicinal Plants for Economic Development* (JOMPED) into the DOAJ.

This is the second UFH edited research journal that has received recognition from the DOAJ in last two months.

In our previous edition of *ThisWeek@FortHare*, we shared the news on the accreditation of the Department of Public Administration's journal titled: *Journal Local Government Research and Innovation* (JOLGRI). Associate Professor Ogo Nzewi and Head of the Public Administration department is the editor-in-chief.

JOMPED is the official publication of the Society for Medicinal Plants and Economic Development. Prof Afolayan is the editor-in-chief of the publication.

The journal is dedicated to the dissemination of research information on the use of plants and plant products for economic and social development especially in the developing world. It publishes original research papers, critical reviews and communications on the latest developments in phytomedicine, with strong emphasis on originality and scientific quality.

by Aretha Linden

“We consider this a significant milestone for our journal. We have observed that readership numbers of articles published in DOAJ indexed journals usually demonstrate a threefold increase.”

“We consider this a significant milestone for our journal. We have observed that readership numbers of articles published in DOAJ indexed journals usually demonstrate a threefold increase. This is because the articles are visible to several search engines, thereby increasing the google scholar index of the authors. I wish to commend the efforts of our editors and the efforts of our meticulous reviewers,” said Prof Afolayan.

The DAOJ currently has 900 000 page views and 300 000 unique visitors from all over the world and is often cited as a source of quality, open access journals in research and scholarly publishing circles.

For more details on the journal or to submit articles please visit: www.jompmed.org



PROF KHESWA ADVOCATES FOR DESTIGMATISING OF LGBTI COMMUNITY AT PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND CLINICS



>> Prof Jabulani Kheswa

Associate Professor Jabulani Kheswa and Head of the Psychology Department at the University of Fort Hare was among scholars who attended and gave presentations at a webinar hosted by the South African Sexual Health Association (SASHA) in conjunction with Stellenbosch University. The event took place on 14 July 2021.

Themed: *Sexual Health in the Public System: Navigating Help and Hindrance*, the session sought to highlight public health concerns about the barriers associated with accessing sexual health services at public hospitals and clinics.

In his presentation titled: *Stigma and discrimination against LGBTI community in accessing sexual health treatment in public hospitals*, Prof Kheswa brings to the fore his concerns about the inequalities and discrimination faced by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexed (LGBTI) community.

“My concern is that even after 27 years of democracy, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 Of 1996, transformation and social justice are still not benefiting every citizen in this country. Research on the LGBTI community shows that non-heterosexual youth in particular,

are subjected to marginalization and social rejection even from health care providers such as nurses and medical practitioners,” he stated in an interview with *ThisWeek@FortHare*.

According to him, an alarming number of gays and bisexual men in particular, continue to contract sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, human papillomavirus (HPV) and HIV/AIDS - owing to fears of being discriminated against when seeking medical support at clinics.

“No wonder some resort to alcohol and drug abuse as a form of coping mechanism, especially when they realize that their bodies are immunocompromised.”

Prof Kheswa states that despite the availability of sexual health services, many LGBTI members delay or avoid seeking care.

“In culturally and religiously embedded societies like in the Sub-Saharan region namely; Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa, where sexuality is defined in terms of heteronormativity and subjugation of same-sex relationships, LGBTI individuals would be reminded that being gay is “un-African”.

“My concern is that even after 27 years of democracy, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 Of 1996, transformation and social justice are still not benefiting every citizen in this country.”

For example, as most lesbians feel comfortable in maintaining their natural hair and predominantly wearing men’s clothing such as chinos and All-Star tekkies, they would be judged, categorized and end up being ridiculed by the nurses and/or medical practitioners when they need sexual health services such as a pap smear to detect (the presence of) cervical cancer.”

“Thus, even gays prefer to get all the information that concerns their health from the internet and seek help from chemists far away from where they live. But it becomes a challenge for the unemployed and those living in rural areas owing to financial constraints.”

According to Prof Kheswa, a study conducted in Tshwane in the Gauteng Province indicated that 11 of the 14 men who volunteered to participate in post-rape care, mentioned having been ridiculed by policemen when they laid charges of rape.

“Furthermore, there is little - if not none - confidentiality at public hospitals and clinics owing to poor infrastructure. So, you can imagine how many LGBTI individuals are being discriminated in their communities even in residences at institutions of higher learning.”

Asked how society can move away from this form of discrimination, Prof Kheswa said a framework of intersectionality and health equity was key, specifically in relation to training and related support for health care providers who work with the LGBTI community.

“It is imperative to adopt Sisonke Gender Justice’s vision of gender-nonconforming individuals to enjoy equitable, caring, healthy and happy relationships that contribute to the development of gender-just and democratic societies,” he stated.

by Aretha Linden

UFH Senior Researcher, Dr Fobosi imparts critical Minibus Taxi Industry knowledge at National and International Conferences



>> Dr Siyabulela Fobosi

“The state privileges formalised public transport strategies over others, because institutions are characterised by a pattern of strategic selectivity that reflects and modifies the balance of social forces and, in other words, delineates which interests, strategies, and policies can be enforced in a given context”

Last month (June), Dr Siyabulela Christopher Fobosi, UFH UNESCO ‘Oliver Tambo’ Chair of Human Rights Senior Researcher, presented papers at two virtual conferences – one national and the other, international

The first conference was the 27th International Conference on Urban and Maritime Transport and the Environment held between 16 and 18 June.

The title of his paper presented at this international conference is titled: *‘The lack of strategic intervention in the regulation of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa’*. During his presentation, Dr Fobosi stated that the continued failure of the state to transform the industry signifies a lack of strategic intervention and strategic selectivity.

“The exclusion of the industry from the Integrated Transport Plans (ITPs) of the municipalities is a case in point. The state privileges formalised public transport strategies over others, because institutions are characterised by a pattern of strategic selectivity that reflects and modifies the balance of social forces and, in other words, delineates which interests, strategies, and policies can be enforced in a given context,” he stated.

The second presentation was at the South African Sociological Association conference, on 27-30 June 2021 where he gave a presentation on his paper titled: *‘Uncovering precarious working conditions in the Global South: A case of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa’*. At this conference, Dr Fobosi stated that the one thing that is common between all sociologists is the notion of uncovering the hidden

and underlying social structures which give rise to that which we see. “For example, the precarious working conditions in the minibus taxi industry. South Africa’s minibus taxi industry exists inside social institutions – the interrelated arrangement of accepted practices and social jobs to fulfil the social need. The industry is arranged around economic institutions (facilitated by the state) which manage economic and property relations.”

According to him, through social institutions, the state subjects the minibus taxi sector to some form of social control (exemplified through regulations, for example licensing of taxis). As such, Dr Fobosi used the case of the minibus taxi industry to uncover, unmask, and debunk the existence of precarious working conditions in the Global South. “The industry has recurrent precariousness. Taxi owners, taxi drivers and taxi marshals engage in types of behaviour which are recurrent. Participating in these conferences offered me an opportunity to contribute to knowledge – a practice that is very important in academia. Knowledge sharing in the academy facilitates critical engagement.”

Lastly, Dr Fobosi recommended that the state be actively involved in the transformation of the minibus taxi industry. “The leaders of the industry should also show willingness to have the industry formalised. The informal, unregulated and precarious context of the industry threatens its existence, and therefore, the formalisation process should be rethought to involve different stakeholders,” he concluded.

Tracking our youngest and brightest:

Itumeleng Mothlabane: UFH Honours Student and Activist appointed to serve on the EU Commission Youth Sounding Board



>> Ms Itumeleng Mothlabane

Ms Itumeleng Mothlabane, a UFH Business Management (Hons) student, gender activist and innovator, has been appointed to become a member of the Youth Sounding Board for the European Union Commission.

The Youth Sounding Board is a space for young people to influence the EU’s external action through its international partnerships. The board will advise the Commissioner for International Partnerships on the relevance and effectiveness of EU external action when it comes to youth matters.

Members were selected through an open call that resulted in a staggering 4 000 applications from more than 150 countries.

Itumeleng’s appointment follows several initiatives that she has been involved in. These include a passion for activism that started at age 12 when she founded an organization called Sakhingomso, at Thubalethu High School, aimed at dealing with challenges faced by high school learners.

“I want to use this platform to amplify the voices of working class marginalized young people in Africa, more especially women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) people”.

She has also been involved in initiatives such as the Higher Education HIV and AIDS Programme (HEAIDS) Institutional Coordinating Committee, Eastern Cape Zazi Women Empowerment, as well as participating in the UFH Student Parliament.

Currently, Itumeleng serves as a South African Youth Representative to *Africa free of New HIV Infections (AfnHi)*, an Africa-based network for HIV prevention and research network.

Following all these initiatives, her efforts in gender activism and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), she was recognized by the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) and was offered an opportunity to be a campaign ambassador for the European Commission.

Speaking to *ThisWeek@FortHare*, Itumeleng said:

“I carry with me the voices of young people from across Africa and I’m determined to make sure that they are heard in the global space. I look forward to working with 25 of the world’s brilliant minds and building meaningful networks for the spaces I am in. I want to use this platform to amplify the voices of working class marginalized young people in Africa, more especially women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA) people”.

by Asaduma Baloyi

NEW UFH SRC 2021/22

“Different interests aside, collective student interests are at the heart of the new student leadership, and that is the key for us towards a progressive direction”.

The University of Fort Hare has constituted its 2020/21 Student Representative Council (SRC) following a week-long online voting process for both East London and Alice campuses.

Like all higher education institutions, Fort Hare had to be compliant with Covid-19 adjustments which prohibit political party rallies, physical voting or mass gatherings.

The elections were contested by six student political formations and independent contestants. The office bearers are as follows:

- Mkhanyiseli Nomana (Institutional SRC President)
- Xola Tshayela (Deputy President)
- Abulele Maqungo (Secretary General)
- Mtyide Fezile (Deputy Secretary General)
- Yanga Mnikina (Treasurer)
- Abongile Mfanta (Alice Campus Premier) and
- Sandiso Mbulawa (East London Campus Premier)

Speaking to *ThisWeek@FortHare*, Secretary General (SG), Abulele Maqungo shared his thoughts regarding the concerns as well as the programme of action of the newly appointed SRC.

“Different interests aside, collective student interests are at the heart of the new student leadership, and that is the key for us towards a progressive direction”.

The SG said although a number of challenges have been identified - amongst them unloading data and outstanding allowances- these outstanding matters can be resolved - especially if management monitors turnaround times and ensures accountability by the relevant offices. According to him, the university should focus on other broad issues like classroom and other learning facilities (eg science laboratories), library material and 4IR.

He called on all student services staff to demonstrate a positive attitude and high levels of professionalism.

Maqungo commended the recently appointed Dean of Students. “We can clearly see that he wants to develop us and is very progressive. Years down the line he will look at us with pride”.

About the Covid-19 pandemic he said, “It is here. We must accept that it’s going to be with us for some time. Let us learn how to live with it, what we have to do and what not to do”.

The SG took a swipe at fellow students for the destruction of property during protests, saying it’s the same property they have to benefit from. “We need to be responsible and reason more, take these issues where we can win them – to the boardroom”, he pleaded.

On gender-based violence, the SG called on the university to facilitate and invest in sustainable awareness programmes where young people can participate comfortably.

by Mawande Mrashula



Mkhanyiseli Nomana
PRESIDENT



Xola Tshayela
DEPUTY PRESIDENT



Abulele Maqungo
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Racism in SA: Where are we getting it wrong?



>> Bellita Banda-Malinga

Opinion Piece by Bellita Banda-Malinga
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For a country whose history is painted in pain, bloodshed and gross human rights violations as a result of apartheid, it is disheartening that, 27 years into democracy, racism still lingers.

The painful part is that it is also taking place in an environment where children are sent to school not only to be educated and become future leaders, but also to be transformed and learn the importance of *ubuntu*.

They are also taught to promote and respect the human rights of every individual regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, class and gender.

SA is well known for taking gigantic strides not only to heal past divisions among the citizenry, but by showing its commitment through the signing of international conventions that seek to redress racism.

“It is clear that the suggested recommendations have failed to work or were not effectively and efficiently implemented, hence the issue of racial discrimination in schools remains topical.”

For instance, SA has acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1976. Article 13(1) of the ICCPR states that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality, and should strengthen the sense of dignity, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The country is also a signatory of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Icerd) of 1965. Article 1 of Icerd defines racial discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin with the purpose or effect of impairing the enjoyment on equal footing of human rights.

Affirmative action policies or measures are not to be deemed as racial discrimination.

The above conventions have been adapted to the education system of SA since 1994 in a bid to address inequalities and the racial divide that arose because of apartheid.

The department of basic education has drawn on the SA constitution and the SA School Act (Sasa) of 1996 for how racism is to be eradicated through inclusive education in schools.

Section 9, subsections (1) and (2), of Chapter 2 in the constitution states:

- That everyone is equal before the law, and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law; and

- That equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination, may be taken.

On the other hand, the second paragraph of the Sasa preamble contains the following: “Whereas this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress the past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners, and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people’s talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination...”

The above does not only show compatibility with the international conventions but highlights SA’s commitment to the annihilation of racism within the teaching and learning environment while promoting human rights.

But a glance at the current situation, underscored by the recent outcry in schools concerning racism, paints a desolate picture.

Media reports are awash with stories of how micro-aggressions have slowly turned to macro-aggressions and are the order of the day in schools. These at face value appear like minor issues and yet cause considerable harm, for instance by fuelling school dropout rates and low pupil achievement, and making those at the receiving end of these aggressions feel like unworthy beings. For some, waking up to go to school every day becomes a living nightmare.

There is a need to gain more ground in fighting racism in SA schools. Gone are the days that parents, pupils, learning institutions, NGOs and education stakeholders could just sit back and think this is going to take care of itself.

Much has been written by scholars on institutionalised racism in schools. Numerous recommendations have also been made in the process on how racism can be curbed in schools. These include:

- Promoting an inclusive education teaching and learning environment;
- Curriculum development that is infused with anti-racist content;
- Antiracism policies that should be interweaved within the school code of conduct;
- On and off-job training and workshop for teachers with a focus on multiculturalism diversity; racial literacy education; and

- Implementation of support mechanisms designed to assist pupils who are victims of racial discrimination, well as clear reporting channels.

It is clear that the suggested recommendations have failed to work or were not effectively and efficiently implemented, hence the issue of racial discrimination in schools remains topical.

There is a need for policymakers to work together with policy implementers so that what is being proposed by education stakeholders becomes more than just image protection.

Recent narrations by pupils who have come out to say “yes, my rights have been grossly violated on a racial basis,” show how deep the scourge of racism remains entrenched in SA.

So, what will it take to end racism? Is it going to take pupils and parents picketing outside their schools for action to be taken? We have witnessed situations where pupils commit suicide due to a lack of systemic intervention from school authorities and a fear of victimisation.

There appears to be more questions than answers concerning the issue of racism in schools. Moreover, racism in schools is a microcosm of larger societal problems due to the history of apartheid in SA.

This has led to a number of practices that have disproportionately affected black students, such as admission policies, medium of instruction and extra-curricular activities, especially in the sporting fraternity.

In addition, the blame game remains the order of the day, and accountability and transparency as to how perpetrators of racism are reprimanded remains questionable, perhaps even secret. This has promoted a stygian gloom which has given birth to high levels of racial discrimination that is often subtle and insidious.

Worse, the defensiveness and connivance of authorities at schools where high levels of racist utterances occur have only worsened the status quo. We cannot run away from the fact that systematic racism has taken centre stage in SA schools and is becoming a culture in our learning spaces.

It is unfortunate that schools are still living up to what was advanced by the late US president Lyndon B Johnson: “Until justice is blind to colour; until education is unaware of race; until opportunity is unconcerned with the colour of man’s skin, emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact.”

UFH ALUMNAE - DRs Nolulamo Gwagwa and Rolene Wagner appointed to Leadership Roles

As we usher in Women's Month (August), the university celebrates two of its esteemed alumnae, Drs Nolulamo Lulu Gwagwa and Rolene Wagner who have been appointed to leading roles in their respective career fields.

On 14 July, Barloworld (a leading industrial processing, distribution and services company) announced the appointment of Dr Gwagwa as an independent non-executive director and Chairperson of the Board, with effect from 1 October 2021.

A week later, the Eastern Cape provincial government introduced Dr Wagner as the new Superintendent-General of the EC Health Department as from 1 August.



>> Dr Lulu Gwagwa

Dr Lulu Gwagwa, SA's first black Town Planner holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from UFH. She also holds a Masters in Town and Regional Planning from the University of Natal; an MSc (cum laude) from London

School of Economics and Political Science; an MPhil from St Augustine College SA). She obtained her a PhD from the University College, London.

Dr Gwagwa has four decades of experience across multiple industries in the public and private sectors. She has served on the boards of companies in the business-to-business operating environment and has international exposure in managing complex governance structures. Dr Gwagwa has also served on the boards of several large South African organisations including FirstRand Limited, Sun International Limited, and Afrox Limited. Currently, she serves on the boards of Massmart Holdings Limited and Zutari Proprietary Limited (as chairperson).

In November 2020, she was the guest speaker at the UFH 3rd Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Public Lecture. Delivering her keynote address, Dr Gwagwa said: "I am greatly honoured to speak at the platform of my alma mater. When I first entered the gates of UFH in February 1976 I was an impressionable and very naïve 17-year-old. It was a dream come true for me. This institution definitely opened my eyes and my mind."

Dr Rolene Wagner is a respected medical director who holds a Master's Degree in Public Health from UFH. She also holds an MBChB Degree from the University of Cape Town and an MPhil (cum laude) in Public Health from the University of Western Cape.

Before taking up her current position as a Medical Director of Netcare based in Gauteng, Dr Wagner was the CEO of East London's Frere Hospital for over eight years. Under her leadership, Frere Hospital won a number of awards, including the International Hospital Federation Award in recognition of the hospital's turnaround quality improvement project.



>> Dr Rolene Wagner

Health MEC Nomakhosazana Meth said no better person could have been appointed. "Dr Wagner is just what the department needs and we are happy she is back with us after she was stolen by the private sector. With her leadership skills and knowledge of the health sector - working with senior management, organised labour and workers - we are sure she will excel."

by Aretha Linden

Congratulations to Nokholeji's phenomenal women!



University of Fort Hare
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INTRODUCING THE NEW INTERIM COMMITTEE OF THE WESTERN CAPE ALUMNI CHAPTER

26 July 2021

To all Members of UFH Alumni Community

On Sunday, 25 July 2021, elections for the new Interim Committee of the Western Cape Chapter were held through a Teams Microsoft Virtual platform. The following luminary alumni of the University were elected into positions in the Interim Committee of the Western Cape Chapter:



Mr Dumisani Favour Lutweyi
CHAIRPERSON



Mr Thabile Soga
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON



Mrs Jacqueline Maliti
SECRETARY



Mr Sakhekile Mali
ADDITIONAL MEMBER



Mrs Ntombizisizwe Lutweyi
ADDITIONAL MEMBER



Mr Mthozami Xiphu
ADDITIONAL MEMBER

The President of Convocation, Advocate Andile Mini, welcomed them and has pledged that the Convocation Executive Committee will work closely and support the Western Cape Chapter Interim Committee.

Kind regards,
President of Convocation
Adv. Andile Mini

UFH pays tribute to Master Architech, Sindile Ngonyama

Designer of the Phyllis Ntantala Collaborative Library



>> Sindile Ngonyama



The University of Fort Hare joins the SA architecture industry in mourning the passing of Mr Sindile Ngonyama, one of SA's finest Architects and the designer of the Phyllis Ntantala Collaborative Library.

According to media reports, Mr Ngonyama born 1958, died last week. Leaving behind his wife and three children. "Despite many hardships, Ngonyama went to head up several associations and initiatives." Reported the *Daily Dispatch*. This include being appointed as deputy president of the SA Black Technical and Allied Careers Organisation, founder of the Mdantsane Development Trust and his role as Director of Ngonyama & Associates (Pty) Ltd.

The Phyllis Ntantala Library is one of many breathtaking buildings/structures designed by Ngonyama & Associates.

First of its kind, the collaborative library is a joint project between UFH, University of South Africa (UNISA), Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

It was officially opened on 27 October 2018, by former DHET Minister, Dr Naledi Pandor. Named after Eastern-Cape born scholar, Phyllis Ntantala, the R200 million library is situated on the UFH East London campus (corner of Hill and Church Streets.)

In 2019, the library won the highest award in the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) Border-Kei Regional awards.

In an interview with the UFH Corporate Newsletter: *ThisWeek@FortHare*, Mr Ngonyama said: "the building was conceptualized to ensure an end product which must at all times, provide a humane, user-friendly and inclusionary atmosphere." An objective that was achieved as the building which caters for over 18 000 students from the three universities, carefully provides for social interactive spaces located at strategic spots, in all its floors.

During the interview, Mr Ngonyama expressed his pride in the design of the library, saying he personally felt a sense of fulfilment for the building and the end product it became.

The University community will forever treasure this building and will always strive to uphold the designer's (Mr Ngonyama's) objective which is to provide a humane, user-friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

May his soul rest in peace.

Adapted by Institutional Advancement



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your fortnightly newsletter

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