

2023 CBE Decolonisation
Committee Newsletter
Decolonisation or Humanisation



UNIVERSITY
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**The Future
Reimagined**

Message from the College Decolonisation Committee Chairperson, Naiefa Rashied

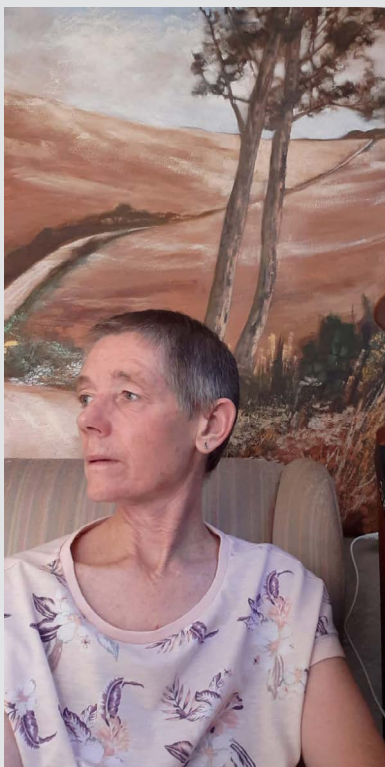


It is an honour to present our first (long overdue!) committee newsletter. This issue focuses on reflections from two faculties at UJ, Humanities and College of Business and Economics. The theme is 'Decolonisation' or 'Humanisation', and all three pieces focus on the humanity behind our push for decolonisation. This issue is dedicated to sceptics of decolonisation, whom I invite to reflect on the essence of this cause, which is not only the emancipation from coloniality but also ascension to humanity. A humanity that is devoid of shaming, rejecting and dehumanising the sanctity of indigenous languages, dress, practises, thought processes and knowledge.

Nginyabonga Kakhulu! (Thank you!) to our contributors, for so generously sharing your reflections and experiences. I invite members of the college and university community to please share your reflections with us at the CDC for our next newsletter. It is one way for us to share our lived experiences, with honesty and compassion. Shorter submissions are preferred, preferably between 200 and 500 words, but longer submissions are welcome too. They could be reflective, ethnographic, poetic, qualitative, quantitative or anything you deem appropriate in the context of decolonisation. You are also welcome to suggest names for our newsletter. Lastly, I humbly invite colleagues in the CBE to join our decolonisation committee. The more voices, the better! Hamba kahle! (Go well!).

'Decolonisation' or 'Humanisation', Thoughts on Endogenous Knowledge Systems, and Reflections on Claiming South Africa as my Home

Jacqueline Gamble – Storytelling Facilitator & Academic Editor



I wonder at the correctness of the term 'decolonisation' as descriptive of the deeply emotional appeal from my fellow, Black, South Africans for me, as a White South African, to look at, interact with and think about them with compassion, respect and humility. The word 'colonisation' is a red rag to a bull, or an accusation which evokes fear, guilt and withdrawal in many White South Africans. So 'decolonisation' likely evokes an even more intense and negative response. Words can be very powerful and should be chosen carefully, with awareness of the feelings and responses they evoke. I would like to talk about the 'humanisation' of us as South Africans, so revealing the true motivation urging the call to 'decolonisation'.

Our imperative as South Africans is to feel the humanity of every one of us as deeply and evocatively as we feel the humanity of our dearest beloveds, our lover, our child, our parent. I wonder at our fear of doing that, our fear at what we may be forced to give up or take on if we see and feel the humanness of the other in our presence. So we keep the door to seeing, to feeling, shut tight. But maybe there is nothing to fear, because in opening the door to seeing and feeling, we receive the capacity for compassion. Compassion isn't only a gift to the other. It is a gift to self.

I know from experience that when I feel compassion, I connect deeply with the humanity of others, feeling in turn my own humanity. This is deeply healing for me. The most powerful way I know to evoke

compassion is to hear the story of the other person. But the story must be personal, individual, without agenda or expectation of outcome. The humanity of one evokes the humanity of the other. When the story is politicised or sets out to blame or evoke guilt, the other will recoil in fear or defend with anger. When humanity is evoked, compassion is evoked, and connection is possible. What always touches me is how my simplest communication of compassion for the other brings the joy of respectful relatedness, no expectation, no agenda, just a moment which I carry with me into the rest of my day.

I read about White 'frailty' and 'defensiveness' and 'denial'. I believe these responses are primarily based in fear which paralyses the capacity of White South Africans to connect with the humanity of Black South Africans. I reflect on how much we miss out on in allowing this groundless fear to deny us the joy that relatedness brings.

I ask you to do this one thing: Within the week ahead of you, take the risk of asking a fellow South African, who you don't know, a question which invites them to tell you what matters to them most as a South African. Take the time to listen, then share what matters most to you as a South African. Identify the feeling in what you have both shared. Think about how you feel about that person now compared to before you shared with them. If you feel to, tell of your interaction in the next edition of this newsletter.

Regarding knowledge systems, I love the hope that Endogenous Knowledge Systems bring. I felt such relief and even joy when, on editing a chapter for a soon-to-be-published book, I read: 'One way to rebalance skewed knowledge systems would be to blend existing Western and Indigenous Knowledge Systems so that the benefits of both systems can be utilised appropriately.' I have edited several academic dissertations in the last year which have left me feeling concerned, although acknowledging the candidates' emotional motivation, at the bid to oust Western Knowledge Systems completely. I have personal experience of being denied my ancestral heritage, having been adopted as a little girl of 16 months. My birth name and my ancestral heritage were kept from me, both by my adoptive parents and by the social welfare system in Zimbabwe. I searched for 20 years to find out who my parents are and, so importantly, what my

ancestral heritage is. It was a deeply destructive experience growing into adulthood without connectedness to my personal and ancestral roots. From this life experience I feel that it is critical for the ancestral, Black people of our country to learn about, deeply integrate and live with pride their ancestral traditions. What healing and what power! I would like to remain a South African, living in this land which is my home, but I do wonder at how my presence and way of life as a White South African creates a barrier to fellow, Black South Africans' claiming their heritage and their power, and how I make changes to remove those barriers. I would return to my ancestral lands of Ireland and Wales if it meant that South Africans who are ancestrally rooted in this land can live their power and their wellness guided by their ancient traditions. For many years I have intuited the critical importance of ancient wisdom to the healing and wellness of humanity. My preference would be that, as well as claiming our individual ancestral roots, we claim our common roots as people and live our power and wellness together!

When Naiefa Rashied asked me to share my thoughts on decoloniality and Endogenous Knowledge Systems, I felt quite threatened, in part [being a White 60-something South African born in Kenya] by what is probably a classic White response to an invitation to comment on issues fundamental to Black South Africans, issues which historically emanate from the actions of my forebears, perpetuated by ancestral/adoptive generations before me, and by me to this very day, some conscious and much unconscious. However, I decided to risk inadvertently saying the 'wrong' thing and evoking anger at my White failure to even begin to comprehend what millions of other South Africans have endured and suffered, and continue to do so. I was unsure how my claim to South Africa as my country, my home, would be received. These are some of the fears and cautions with which I live as a White South African – and I know I am not alone. For those not conscious of these emotions and so, failing to stop their impulsive racist reactions, their inhumanity towards Black South Africans, horrifyingly, perpetuates itself.

– It is time to Wake Up to the Me in You –

Towards Decolonial Love During these Troubled Times

Dr Nokulunga Shabalala – Department of Psychology, Faculty of Humanities

Simply being born of the species, *Homo sapiens* may be a necessary condition to be a human being, but it is not sufficient. One ought to become – in the ethical sense – a human being.

– *Ndumiso Dladla (2017)* –



It was the last day of the year, day 365 of 2022, in sunny Cape Town. Our friends were already seated at a long table in a restaurant overlooking Sea Point. It was beautiful; right in the middle of an upmarket restaurant in Cape Town, this table of Melanin (and by this, I mean black people – for the people at the back who may be confused). They were toasting, laughing and enjoying the same sun that all patrons paid good money to experience. There was a couple from Atlanta, USA, at the table, and we were quickly introduced. They have loved Cape Town, they added, and could not wait to come back to visit the rest of South Africa. One of them had been to Johannesburg and said they would live there with the choice of visiting Cape Town from time to time. I awkwardly responded, 'I'd visit America, but I don't know about living there; I'm used to our brand of racism – the police killings are hectic!' – a nice light-hearted segue over some chardonnay. My less socially awkward friend adds, 'We are very desensitised to racism here. We are just so used to it happening – it's inevitable. You can't cry every day, it is the way it is'. One of our new American friends responds, 'But y'all are the majority right? Why don't y'all just eat them? If we [black people in America] were the majority... we'd take 'em to the streets!'

There are several things to interpret from this conversation. The first is how race and racism operate in the mundane (Kiguwa, 2019). Racialised moments are daily occurrences troubling mostly to black bodies, who often have to grapple with precarity in most spaces they inhabit. In his book, *Here is a Table: A Philosophical Essay on History and Race/ism*, Dladla (2017) deeply delves into racism in South Africa and its history. He highlights how unethical this is as racism and, indeed, coloniality serve to benefit white supremacy exclusively. He reflects on the nature of racism as a mechanism that places doubt in the minds of black people about their humanity or being (2017). This doubt manifests in different ways; racialised moments become confusing – the usual thought of, 'should I be offended by that thing that was said', and having to check if one's emotional reaction is appropriate or having to constantly explain our subjective experience. Relating to this is a reflection of what my friend and I said – me saying I have grown accustomed to this unethical thing and her further highlighting that we have been, to an extent, desensitised. Hence, the persistence of day-to-day racialised moments. There are deep intergenerational wounds that we have not started to heal yet. It makes me think of a quote I once heard on *Grey's Anatomy*,

Not all wounds are superficial. Most wounds run deeper than we can imagine. You can't see them with the naked eye...the trick with any kind of wound or disease is to dig down and find the real source of the injury, and once you've found it, try like hell to heal that sucker.

Fanon (1963, as cited in Edwards, 2022) also spoke about clinically detecting and surgically removing the rot left in the minds of black people by imperialism (p. 1). The alternative is that we sheepishly carry on and do not question the status quo, to our detriment (Shabalala, 2019). Biko (1978) warned

about this weapon that the oppressor has: 'the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (Biko, 1979, p. 69). Forty-five years later, we are still reflecting on this very thing, which means Fanon's call for the removal of the rot has never been more critical as we live through some of the consequences of the rotting.

The last issue I want to reflect on from that conversation is the response from our new friend asking why we do not eat them. Cannibalism aside, we can understand this statement as an enquiry into why we do not revolt and protest. Perhaps something synonymous with Winnie Madikizela Mandela's sentiments of standing 'together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches...[to] liberate this country' (1986, as cited in Canham, 2017). Unpacking black rage both in its destruction and its potential for liberation is something Canham (2017) articulates beautifully and is a recommended read and perhaps too intricate to unpack here. However, he highlights that black rage is reasonable given situations that led to things like fallism (Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall) and, more recently, the Black Lives Matter movement. Despite this, black rage is often metabolised and represented as black threat (Canham, 2017, p. 2). Further reinforcing this idea of the zone of blackness being the zone of non-being or not human (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). While funny at the time, our friend's sentiments pointed to black people being positioned in the zone of non-being in our quest for social justice and resisting coloniality.

I have recently turned back to my doctoral dissertation to avoid letting it collect dust. I wondered why I had been so resistant to revisiting and working more from it. Writing about race, racism, and coloniality is a tough endeavour. Explaining black subjectivity is tiring (Kiguwa, 2019), and I often experience this saddening hopelessness where Uhuru is slowly becoming synonymous with Waiting for Godot, who, of course, never arrives. Explaining our being and the violence black bodies endure and constantly appealing to some Ubuntu is bone-tiring work (Kiguwa, 2019, p. 19). So, why do we still do it? Why do we still explain? As Lau (2021) highlights, there is an overt agenda towards social transformation across various institutions

in South Africa. However, Black people constantly have to fight being positioned as alien within these institutions (Lau, 2021). This fight is decoloniality and cannot stop until we arrive at decolonial love and radical humanness – Ubuntu. This fight is about social justice – removing the sepsis; that is where we start.

Decolonising the Black Psyche

Decoloniality is the direct response and rejection of coloniality – remnants of the oppressive colonial world that present in contemporary times (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). I do not wish to essentialise blackness or black subjectivity. However, many, like Ngubane (2015), have argued that South Africa's segregationist past has often led black people to not fully embrace their personhood. This is because proximity to whiteness is often rewarded, and whiteness remains the standard. I have also argued elsewhere (Shabalala, 2022) about the issue of multiple intersecting realities that shape black subjectivity and have led me, in particular, to experience the imposter phenomenon. Biko (1979) urged for the pumping of life back into the black body and filling it with pride, especially when inhabiting spaces where they are the minority (Shabalala, 2019). He further argued that the freedom to be – opposed to the freedom from oppression (Dladla, 2017) – comes from within (Biko, 1979). It suggests that much of the work is our responsibility in order to be free to achieve greatness unapologetically (Shabalala, 2019). Although seemingly hopeless at times, these are conversations we need to keep having, and we need to have them in ways that feel authentic to us. Otherwise, decoloniality and transformation become empty signifiers and catchphrases. Biko (1979) suggested that it is necessary for the process of black evolution to be shown in order to understand Black subjectivity today. He also alluded to this being possible through re-establishing Ubuntu.

Towards Decolonial Love and Ubuntu

So, in closing. What is meant by decolonial love, one might ask? It is an anti-colonial attitude that recognises shared humanity (Edwards, 2022). It is understanding that overcomes differences and moves towards radical relationality and healing (Detmer, 2008) that embraces multiple ways of being. These goals, radical

relationality – the understanding that all social phenomena are mediated and constituted by the relational (Powell, 2013), and healing – an important concept in the context of historical intergenerational trauma – are processes that require a great deal of humanness or Ubuntu. Ramose (2015) argues that humanness suggests both a condition of being and becoming and ceaseless unfolding and defines Ubuntu as a process of humanness where one has to affirm their own humanity by recognising the humanity in others. He further argues that through this process, we have no option but to be humane, respectful and polite towards one another. This is where our ethical compass is established; by doing and being in relation to others (Ramose, 2015).

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Creating an Indigenous Language Glossary: A Reflection

Naiefa Rashied, School of Economics, College of Business and Economics

Team: Lulama Boyce, Boitumelo Kuzwayo, Lethiwe Nzama, Melinda Dube, Munyadziwa Nevhutanda, Lesego Khumalo, Department of Commercial Accounting, College of Business and Economics



On Wednesday 18 January 2023, I had the privilege of meeting with an amazing team from the Department of Commercial Accounting. They had taken the time to create an indigenous language glossary, in a number of South African languages. Not only did they give careful thought to formulating and reflecting on the auditing terminology used in this glossary, they created a platform for compassion too! A platform for humanised, relatable learning, a tool to facilitate deep yet authentic engagement in the world of auditing. Auditing can be described as more theoretical and linguistics-based relative to accounting, which results in more terminology and principles that require the use of more words as opposed to calculations.

The team started by using their prescribed Lexis Nexis Auditing textbooks. These books already contained some indigenous language glossaries, which the team expanded upon in both Nguni and Bantu languages. The expanded glossary was shared with the department for comment, exclusions or additions. Terminology in an indigenous South African language can be difficult to correctly conceptualise given its limited use in the discipline. Moreover, colloquial forms of an indigenous language tend to differ from their linguistic origins. The same indigenous language could even differ between cities in the same province. Therefore, members of the Department of Commercial Accounting reflected on the terminology and amended them where necessary. Later on, students and lecturers triangulated this terminology further, to build an inclusive and accurate glossary. This formed

the foundation for indigenous language-building in auditing and a platform for students and lecturers to reflect on the subject matter in their mother tongue. Indigenous language glossaries are not simply about teaching or learning in a language alternative to English; they give the learner autonomy in their learning process. This allows them the freedom to use their mother tongue as a constructive tool in their learning process, while upholding the pride and dignity of the language of their home, their tribe. For too long indigenous languages have been labelled as 'primitive' or 'unprofessional', as is cultural attire (a topic for a future newsletter), when in fact, they are tools of liberation, identity and pride for our future labour force. In this case, a means to make auditing concepts more relatable, particularly for students from quantile 1 and 2 schools.

Auditing glossaries were then used to facilitate deep learning in tutorials. Tutors speaking either a Bantu or Nguni language were appointed to facilitate specific tutorials. While this improved the student experience on average, students did not always understand these glossaries as intended (for example, students from Eswatini considered Zulu glossaries too linguistically complicated to understand). Subsequently, a further triangulation between student, tutor and lecturer took place to refine terminology in order to build these glossaries more accurately. This triangulation exercise occurred across both groups of indigenous languages. I include below glossary extracts for the various languages:

Professional Scepticism				
English: An attitude that includes a questioning mind and a critical assessment of evidence				
IsiZulu	IsiXhosa	Sepedi	Setswana	Tshivenda
Translated term				
Ukungakholwa umsebenzi	Ukungavumelani nento ngokwengcaphephe (i-professional skepticism)	Bohlatse bja tlhakišo bjo thulanago le bjo hlahlobilwego.	Pelaelo ya seporofešenale	U timatima ha khathulo
Definition				
Ukuziphatha okufaka ingqondo ebuzayo kanye nobufakazibokuhlola okuhlolisayo.	Imo yokungabuvisisi ncam ubungqina obuthile, nokubugocagoca ngemibuzo, ubucikida ngandlelazonke.	Maikutlo ao a akaretšago phetollano ya kelello le tekolo ye tseleletšego ya bohlatse	Maikutlo a a akaretsang mogopolo o o nang le dipotso le go sekaseka bosupi go bo bona diphoso.	Ku vhonele ku katelaho u vhudzisa muhumbulo na thathuvho i kontaho ya vhutanzi.

Participating students indicated that they would attend tutorials in their indigenous language again, if given the opportunity. An indication of the importance of indigenous languages in supplementing English-language disciplinary jargon (in this case, auditing), as opposed to replacing them.

If you are interested in sharing your experiences with indigenous language glossaries or if you have any questions, please join us later this year for a seminar reflecting on the process of building indigenous language glossaries. You are also most welcome to write about your experiences for the next edition of our newsletter.

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