

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

Steve Bantu Biko 10th Annual Memorial Lecture

14:00 12 September 2020: On-line via Teams

Welcome and Opening Remarks
Professor Sibongile Muthwa
Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University

Theme:

Breaking the Barriers of Neo-Colonialism to Restore True Humanity & Dignity

Welcome: Imagine a new world

It is my privilege to welcome all of you who have joined us on-line for this memorial lecture today.

I extend greetings to **Professor Ibbo Mandaza**, our key note speaker this afternoon and **Prof Simphiwe Sesante**, who is the respondent

I greet the Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Members of the professoriate and the academic community

University Students

AZAPO and black consciousness cadres

Socially active citizens and the broader community nationally and internationally

This august audience would be keenly aware that today, 12 September 2020, is 43 years since the brutal murder of Stephen Bantu Biko in 1977. As we commemorate his life, snuffed out at the hands of the illegitimate apartheid regime, may we also remember the life of Adv. George Bizos, a justice warrior who defended so many, including black consciousness activists, who passed away earlier this week on Wednesday 9 September 2020. I wonder what the two of them are discussing, as we come together for this lecture today?

We are proud and humbled, as Nelson Mandela University, that this is the 10th year that we are hosting the Steve Bantu Biko Memorial Lecture. I wish to recall those who have honoured us as speakers since the inception of these commemorative lectures from 2011 onwards:

Dr Mosibudi Mangena

Professor Itumeleng Mosala

Mr Pandelani Nefolovhodwe

Mr Peter Jones

Advocate Mojanku Gumbi

Dr Mathatha Tsedu

Professor Molefi Kete Asante

Dr Andile M-Africa; and

A cohort of younger cadres and students who participated in more dialogic panel settings in the recent years.

Thank you all.

In reflecting on all the scholars who have shared their wisdom, insights and teachings with us on this platform across the decade, I have taken note, however, that there has only been one female speaker [other than the young female cadres on the dialogical platform]. This needs to be corrected.

I wish to extend our well-wishes to Peter Jones, who is recovering from a debilitating stroke last year. You continue to inspire us and stand tall as the “last black man to see Biko alive” as AZAPO noted at the time. We trust that you will recover fully, as you did after 18 months of solitary confinement when you and Steve were arrested at the Makhanda Roadblock on 18 August, 1977.

The corona virus pandemic has made us pause, across the globe, in an attempt to (re)assess and imagine a new world. But perhaps more profound, are the spontaneous local and global uprisings rejecting gender-based violence and harm in the #MeToo movement, and systemic racism evinced in the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Peter Jones noted in 2014 that *‘Biko, the Black Consciousness Movement, as well as Fanon, all believed in individual freedom and collective liberation, grounded in the idea of social transformation towards a radically humanist society’*. Yet the #MeToo and BlackLivesMatter mass mobilizations are a clear demonstration that the ideal of a humanist society are nowhere near achieved.

In the South African context, 26 years after the break with and fracturing of Apartheid in 1994, we need to ask the fundamental question of why are we still struggling to accept ourselves and be accepted by others? One had hoped that, after almost three decades, we would have been able to overthrow the chains of mental and physical oppression as Biko so eloquently exhorted us to do. In South Africa, and globally, however, black lives remain cheap: from the Marikana Miners, to the latest casualty in Eldorado Park of 16 year old Nateniel Julies, to Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in the United States. And whilst we call out these names, we need to recall the hundreds of women

who have been raped, brutalized and murdered, whose names are never acknowledged in the public domain and whom we often too easily forget. As we re-visit Biko's teachings, and increase our self-reflexiveness, there must be conscious work to build spaces that affirm Black women and are free from sexism, misogyny, and environments in which men are centered. Collectively, our positioning should be unapologetic, without needing to qualify blackness, because to love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others. Biko taught that *'freedom from whiteness would not be achieved unless Black people exercised the power to construct who they were and produced their own knowledge'* (Green et al [2007:399] citing Biko). He also calls for a 'More Human Face'. Peter Jones guides us that *'this process of change involves as a necessary stage the "imagining of the impossible" beyond the immediate situation and working out critically how the "impossible" can be made possible'*.

So as we convene today, let us engage with the wisdoms that our speakers will share, to carve out bold new *imaginings*, steeped in the principles of Stephen Bantu Biko, and as expounded upon over the last decade during each Memorial lecture. Let us recommit to strive collectively for that radically humanist society --- a more just, inclusive and humane world - socially, economically and politically.

In our quest to be a socially-engaged university, I wish to acknowledge the quality of the interactive and engaging relationship between CANRAD, and AZAPO both locally and nationally. Our joint efforts have brought to bear the

longest running Biko memorial annual public lecture in South Africa. We trust this will continue in ways that make the impossible possible.

I thank you. Enkosi

Private Notes:

Zandi Radebe from UNISA is the facilitator (Sonwabo Stuurman backup).
Lelethu Mhambehlala of Poetic Soul will render two poems as part of the 'cultural programme' as people log onto the site from 13h40 onwards.

NB. Free online CANRAD Occasional Publication 'Steve Bantu Biko Lives: The Quest For a Human Face' containing Lectures 2011 – 2016 as well as a downloadable DVD-ROM

Speakers & Titles of Steve Bantu Biko Annual Memorial Lectures (2011 – 2019)

2011: Dr Mosibudi Mangena: “ Bantu Biko, an unequal symbol of liberation” [12 Sept]

2012: Prof Itumeleng Mosala: “ Rise, Biko, rise for the sake of our country: The quest for a true humanity” [12 Sept]

2013: Mr Pandelani Nefolovhodwe: “ Raising critical consciousness: Assessing the state of transformation in South Africa” [12 Sept]

2014: Mr Peter Jones: “ Imagine another country: The relevance of Steve Biko, his legacy and movement” [11 Sept]

2015: Adv Mojamku Gumbi: “ Black poverty and the search for a human face: The thesis, antithesis and synthesis” [10 Sept]

2016: Dr Mathatha Tsedu: “ Locating Steve Biko as a revolutionary thinker in contemporary South Africa” [12 Sept]

2017: Prof Molefi Kete Asante: ‘The Afrocentric Vision of Bantu Stephen Biko’ [12 Sept], with Zolisa Marawu, Okuhle Dyosophu and Mbongisi Dyantyi

2018: Youth Touched by Biko: The Quest for ‘A more Human Face’ [12 Sept], with Camille Jacobs, Bwanika Lwanga, Vuyo Tshingila, Cikizwa Dabula, Veli Mbele and Dr Andile M-Afrika

2019: ‘Black Womxn You are on your own: A Feminist Ghost Dance with Biko’ [12 Sept] with Courtney Thomas, Zaphesheya Dlamini, Cikiswa Dabula and Nomtha Menye (Malaika wa Azania --- No Show; Nontle Mbuthuma informed sick)