



SOL PLAATJE
UNIVERSITY

AFRICA DAY LECTURE



“Culture and Liberation Struggle in South Africa”, a book edited by Dr. Lance Nawa.

A Division Student Affairs Initiative in collaboration with the School of Humanities

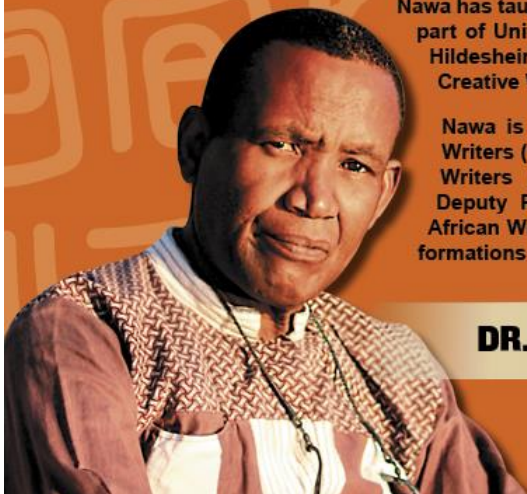
25th May 2022 | 17:30 - 19:00 | Auditorium C113

An award-winning academic and creative writer, Dr. Nawa obtained D Litt et Phil (PhD) degree from the University of South Africa in cultural policy research, 2012. He has more than 25 years of experience in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in South Africa as an activist and practitioner in capacities such as researcher, lecturer, author, poet, journalist, book reviewer, member of various related organisations/councils/boards.

Nawa has published extensively in peer-reviewed academic journals and also his own books such as Wandering tributaries (short stories), Through the eye of the needle (poetry), Bela Bela Land claim: the best restitution model in South Africa, Theatre in Transition: Artistic processes and cultural policy in South Africa (co-ed), and Culture and liberation struggle in South Africa: from colonialism to post-apartheid. He has also presented papers at national and international conferences.

Nawa has taught at tertiary institutions such as Vista University (now part of University of Pretoria), Tshwane University of Technology, Hildesheim University (Germany). He is now a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the Sol Plaatje University (SPU).

Nawa is the last President of the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) and current Secretary-General of the National Writers Association of South Africa (NWASA), as well as Deputy President (Southern Africa) of the Ghana-based Pan African Writers Association (PAWA); an umbrella body of writers formations in Africa.



DR. LEBOGANG LANCE NAWA

– SCHOLAR AND CULTURAL ACTIVIST

AFRICA DAY LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE SOL PLAATJE UNIVERSITY

By: Dr. Lebogang Lance Nawa

Date: 25 May 2022

Time: 17:30 – 19:00

Venue: Auditorium C113

TOPIC: CELEBRATING TEEMANENG'S LIVING SPIRITS: VALUABLE LESSONS FROM HOME-GROWN LEGENDS

Greetings!

All Protocol Observed!

I declare, from the onset, that I stand before you to deliver this address in no capacity other than my personal. To this end, I write thus, as the editor, in the blurb of the recently published book, *Culture and Liberation Struggle in South Africa: from Colonialism to Post-Apartheid*, whose front cover picture makes up the publicity poster of this event:

I live and die by the mantra that life has no rehearsal.

I live and speak once, and my voice must not haunt me
even in my eternity.

Thus, whatever I write is done with my faculties
highly charged and receptive of the consequences.

The topic of my address today is *CELEBRATING TEEMANENG'S LIVING SPIRITS: VALUABLE LESSONS FROM HOME-GROWN LEGENDS*. It is a tribute to several African luminaries who are associated with this city and the broader Northern Cape geo-political region by either an umbilical cord or footprint. They are Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, Solomon

Tshekisho Plaatje, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, Francis Goitsewang Baard, Aggrey Zola Klaaste, Mittah Seperepere [Goeman] and Yvonne Mokgoro. Prior to their eulogy, however, I would like to do salutations.

Firstly, I express my gratitude to Sabata-mpho Mokae; the School of Humanities' Creative Writing Lecturer and renowned Setswana author who likes to go by the moniker "Unknown Novelist". It is he who sometime in January this year who called me while I was busy with my farming errands.

I had by then a year earlier taken earlier retirement from the academia and public service alike for being subtly and brutally ostracised for standing up for the downtrodden, refusing to exchange principles for salaries, as well as not being a group thinker.

With an audibly feeble voice, Mokae informed me about his ailing health and enquired if I was in a position to come here and take over his 2nd and 3rd years creative writing classes as he was compelled to take a few months' medical sabbatical to try to heal. I happily obliged because Mokae and I share a history.

It was sometime in 2005 when Mokae attended the launch of my debut collection of poetry, *Through the eye of the needle*, in Pretoria. By then, I had a few years earlier published a debut collection of short stories, *Wandering Tributaries*, and occasional works in magazines such as Staffrider and Tribute.

The launch of *Through the eye of the needle* was also graced by the likes of South Africa's Poet Laurette; the late Prof. Keorapetse Kgositse. At the time, Sabata was a budding radio and print journalist who later interviewed me about my works for both channels. I reciprocated by appraising his earlier poetry edition which subsequently got published. The relationship morphed to a point when I couldn't refuse to rescue him from distress even when it meant sacrificing my own livelihood through farming and other independent scholarly ventures.

I could have come years earlier had my discussion - at the inception of this prestigious institution - with Vice Chancellor Prof. Yunus Ballim bore fruits before he departed at the end of his tenure. Prof. Ballim and I had been talking about the importance of the subject of cultural policy as the epicentre of heritage studies academic scheme because, by inference, one is bequeathed what already exists. And the source of that inheritance is culture. Although the dynamics of the conversation with Prof. Ballim are reserved for another occasion, I will later in this address glide over one salient aspect.

So, in short, it was also Mokae who recommended me to speak at this occasion. *Ke a leboga, Nkgonne. Badimo ke bao. Fola tlhe* so that I can gladly return to my crops and livestock which I miss so much!

Secondly, I thank Professor Victor Teise for officialising Sabata's request to me on behalf of the university.

Thirdly, I also express appreciation to SPU School of Humanities for hosting me.

Fourthly, I am also indebted to the Student Affairs Division for consultations with me in preparations for this occasion. *Ke a leboga* Gobonamang Merahe, Kgaelelo Dialo, Thuso and others. With enthusiastic and efficient young public administrators like you, this university, and the country at large, seem to be in good hands.

This address is also refined by the wise counsel of Sabata and Adv Ras Siphon Gideon Mantula. To you I say: knowledge not shared is obsolete, stale and a disservice to both the bearer and humanity alike! *Ke leboga go menagane borraetsho!*

Last but not least, I salute you, the audience for taking time-off from your busy schedule to listen to me. Thank you, *Ke a leboga, Baie Dankie!*

For the uninitiated, what I have been doing may seem a waste of data. But since we are celebrating Africa, I was simply activating one cornerstone of its being: *botho/Ubuntu!* To celebrate Africa and not embody *botho* is false.

Now to the Africa Month Celebration.

There is no gainsaying that each day of our lives there is someone celebrating his or her birth. It may as well be one of you amongst us here today. Happy birthday to you!

So, why is it that we are celebrating our birthdays? What wishes do we make before blowing the candles?

We do so to acknowledge our existence and recommit to purpose. Sadly however, there are those among us who, according to my primary and high schoolmate, fellow-artist and scholar, Dr. Sello Galane, classify as people who deplete our food reserves. *Ba, ke batho ba fetšang mabele*, Galane says.

Today, we will be celebrating those who actually cultivate *mabele* of inspiration for eternal wisdom that Africa is characterised by.

We are told that this Month, we are celebrating Africa. Why?

It was 59 years ago on this day, 25 May 1963, that leaders of several African states assembled at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to form the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The names of the leaders who attended this auspicious occasion are, to but a few: Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Leopold Senghor, and Sekou Touré.

The name of the Organisation of African Unity by itself spells its main objectives and the underlying. This address is not to appraise the OAU, but rather to sift some points on the notion

of Africa Month that is celebrated annually since then by African countries to remind themselves of pledges to the continent's advancement.

South Africa became the 53rd member to join the AU on 23 May 1994; following the application for acceptance on behalf of the country by Former Minister Alfred Nzo: the former Secretary-General of the African National Congress (ANC) .

As you know, the OAU changed its name to Africa Union (AU) 20 years ago on 9 July 2002 in Durban. This date does not escape my attention and this question: shouldn't South Africa also celebrate this historic occasion not only in May but during this period (9 July) as well?

I pose this question for two reasons. One, to demonstrate the seriousness about the 25th May which Namibia and Zimbabwe have declared a holiday - since 2002 in the case of Namibia and 2020 for Zimbabwe. Second, by doing the first, we entrench the significance of the day in our individual and collective psyches as a day of reflection in our national patriotic consciousness and commitment to African ideals as opposed to the commercial gimmicks of being convenient one-day Africans on specific days draped in specular ethnic garments straight out of the pages and screens of the *National Geographic*.

It is only during this month of the 25th specifically when some among us relish *pap* cooked from white maize and entrails/tripe/*mala mogodu seshebo* as African cuisine in spite of the fact that white maize is an import from Europe and that a slaughtered animal is skinned for meat before the innards. As a matter of fact, where I grew up, on such occasions, we children were given these as cast-aways to play house with.

Now, has the poverty level gone to an extent whereby only the meat goes to non-Africans and the leftovers to Africans? On this count, we must interrogate the praxis of Africa Day for pomp and ceremony vs Africa Day for liberation against mental slavery, economic degradation and political apostasy.

I lean towards the Africa liberation celebration dictum because, as you know, it is not yet uhuru even for countries who were freed from their colonial political shackles as earlier as the 1960s. The independence of these countries has always been characterised by turmoil, political instability, wars, famine and so forth which conceal Adam Smith's figurative hidden hand of the very oppressors who feigned departure from African territories, yet supply armour to fuel the carnage. These faceless people now rule the continent through, amongst others, agents decorated with impressive corporate titles like Board Member, Chief Executive Officer and - worst - Economists who literally don't even have dimes in their pockets.

Some of the bearers of these titles wear the same melanised skins as us. These puppets are as insidious as the brutality of their masters. Just so as to be cautious not to tar everyone with the same brush, let me compromise but saying not all of them are like that. You do believe me, neh?

Through some of these agencies, the western oligarchy release reports that elucidate, through incalculable statistics, Africa's poverty levels and then by the same stroke offer it loans to cure dependency from them. This is like a computer wizard creating a virus and then an antidote, simultaneously. Just have a look for instance at the situation in Ethiopia, while not forgetting South Africa, to see exactly what I mean.

It is against this backdrop that by joining the AU, South Africa was baptised by fire through the appointment of President Thabo Mbeki to Chair the organisation's Peace and Security Council. Mbeki traversed the continent trying to quell the conflicts with a peace pipe. As he did this, Mbeki was acutely aware that sometimes the sources of conflict are ignorance, fear of the unknown, chauvinism and knowledge impoverishment especially about own conditions and that of the others. To this extent, Mbeki even committed his own country's financial budget to try to preserve ancient Timbuktu manuscripts.

Regrettably, the peace and wisdom smoke from Mbeki's pipe was soon extinguished by some of his own comrades so that they could dance or ride their ways on coins in order to be bestowed Honorary Chiefs of some villages in West Africa.

On the contrary, in 2019, President Kgalema Motlanthe summoned me to join his entourage to Zimbabwe in order to conduct a Commission of Inquiry into the electoral violence of August 2018 which maimed and claimed lives. History records me as the lead writer of the Commission's Report.

The lesson to be extracted from my involvement in this mission, as well as to prefix President Motlanthe's title as 'former', is to make a point that one doesn't have to sit in the ivory towers revolving chairs to serve the African continent and humanity in toto.

Recently, President Motlanthe travelled again up north to Ethiopia to deal with the Tigray dispute. The conflict is still raging, and South Africa's role in Ethiopia, West Sahara, Mozambique and so forth is yet to be emboldened with decisive Pan-African leadership.

Now back to Kimberly. I use the name Teemaneng in the title of this address because I subscribe to self-determination. I hope the South African Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC) Minister are eavesdropping.

Anyway, this city is renowned for many firsts. It is said to be the first in the southern Hemisphere to be electrified. By southern hemisphere, I am referring to areas covering five continents and oceans with territories consisting of southern African countries as well as New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and so forth.

Kimberley is also credited for being the first to have a railway infrastructure linking it to Cape Town, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The then British military strategically referred to the

infrastructure as 'communication lines' which are now been vandalised under the watch of government without crime spies - the word 'intelligence' is too generous for them.

There are many other first accolades to count, suffice to add that Kimberley is located in a region whereby anthropologists claim to have uncovered the *Taung Skull* as fossil evidence of early human presence here.

If indeed this area is deemed to be one of the repository of the cradle of human kind, shouldn't we look up to its wisdom to solve vexing questions about its existence? Before we get carried away and pat ourselves on our shoulders, let's pause for a while and imagine concomitant tragedies that accompanied these firsts, namely: the first mine disasters, exploitation, and environment degradation.

As I am about to peel each layer of these, let's start of by listening to what the artists, as the neck pulse of the body society, have to say.

Sabata-mpho Mokaë says this in the poem, *the skull of taung*:

there is no skull in taung
Just the black smoke atop the plateau
Of burning foreskins of young boys
Hoping to become men
In the morning I dipped my body
In kolong river but discovered
No skull in taung resting on pebbles

old men shed tears of drunken stupor
in unison and celebration
of their boys who are under an illusion
that their foreskins will grow

into blankets of manhood

so now I call myself a man
after all the rituals
yet the offspring from my mutilated loins
bare a night face of hunger

no
I am not a man
But merely a foreskin
Thrown into the rivers of taung

What comes out of the poem through reference to rites of passage is the issue of identity which is also embedded in the *firstism* notion by those who have the authority to label things. And here I am referring to those who coin *firstism* consciousness in order to drive wedges among African siblings through marking the footprints of whoever has arrived at a certain territory from the down north migration and upscaling them on some racial hierarchy by virtue of this. This is the very first thing that creates cognitive dissonance – illusion as Mokae poeticise - in the mind of some South Africans about the national question.

On this count, I refer to the wisdom of Patric Tarig Mellet, the author of the book *The lie of 1652: A Decolonised History*. This is what Mellet, a Cape Townian of diverse ancestry, states in his Facebook post of 20 May 2022:

Everyone who still spreads the fake garbage history that South Africa was an empty land except for San and Khoe so-called "First Nations" when the Europeans arrived should take time to watch this video [Search for *The Lost Kingdom of Mapungubwe*... <https://youtu.be/szcuw-I2-WI>] on the first great African Kingdom of Mapungubwe in 950 AD and its making from around 150 AD via the evolution from Bambata cultures; Kalundu, Nkope, Kwale cultures, and the emergence of Khoe, Ziwa, Zizho and Kalanga cultures over 800 years alongside the original Tshua and Khwe cultures in what I call the "Thoathoa Circle" covering Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa and spreading out to include Namibia, Angola, Mozambique. By 800 AD, South African people were trading via interlocuters with other continents while the Europeans were in the dark ages. The evolution of societies across South Africa right down to the Western Cape from 150 AD to 1100 AD is the true story of the peopling of South Africa and it is not a story of single ethnic societies. The history of Southern Africa over the last 2500 years is no different to the evolution of societies in Europe, Asia or the Americas and is as multi-ethnic here as in any other place in the world. Cousin connections criss-cross Southern Africa. We were fed a pack of lies instead of African social history. These lies propagated that all the many ethnicities in South Africa never mixed, never had children together and lived in separate silos. Lots of people still believe this empty land nonsense and "Firstism" nonsense. Our social history is a lot more complex and the peopling evolution was no different to other parts of the world. The Europeans were also late-comers to Southern Africa which was engaging in trade with parts of the world which Western Europeans only engaged much later.

Now back home to Kimberly, Mokae once again says in the poem, *the big hole*:

oupa sê vir my

eintlik wie se gat is die grootgat?

does it belong to those who dug it with their hands,

or does it belong to those who took the shining stone

away?

grandpa tells me the story of this big hole,

this big gaping hole that looks at me and laughs,

perhaps it laughs because your grandfather

owned the land,

dug the land,

took out the shing stone,

gave it to them,
and died a pauper.

now nobody wants the big hole,
because it aint got no shining stone no more.
it's just a dirty, stinking *gat*
whoever wants it will surely have
the biggest, deepest, most useless *gat in die wêreld*

Just in case Mokae could be accused of speaking out of the house, let's share what David wa Mahlaamela, a poet from Limpopo, thousands of kilometres away almost at the north border of South Africa, has to say about Kimberley in *City of Diamonds*:

They call it a city of diamonds,
all I see are dead faces buried in poverty,
14.5 million carats of diamonds are gone,
what Barnato and Rhodes left behind is a naked hole,
the world's biggest man-made hole,
the hole I feel in every soul of these people,
confronted by the inferno of job losses.

A diamond is forever – they were told
while working straight shifts and overtimes,
sweating and toiling down underground,
pushing haul trucks and drilling kimberlite
returning to their homes with empty hands,
faces wrinkled and freckled.

Some families are still waiting to see the merciful gleam
in diamonds that stole lives of their beloved ones.

died in a mission to enrich the Oppenheimers
who seem to be tightening their shoe laces
preparing to sprint out of this country.

So next time you meet
a *phuza-faced* old man saying:
Koop vir my 'n bier asseblief my maat,
or street girls auctioning thighs across Samaria road,
when you see a bullfight of seven stars okapis
or hear someone saying *ek slaan jou tande uit, boet!*
When you hear of prison cells full to the banks
or hear that K.H is overflowing with HIV/Aids patients,
just understand first where they come from
for this is the city of survivors,
the city whose diamonds are stolen.

Some of the issues that the two poets are raising struck home to me recently when I went to *Die Groot Gat* to enquire about the logistics of taking out my creative writing students on an excursion so that they could later produce works of literature additional to what we have just been exposed to by their forebears. The stories of broken bones and suffocated dreams of wealth submerged at the bottom of the deep hole are too many to unearth by occasional poems and plays regardless of quality.

Accordingly, we do so, in a sense, to cleanse the area that stands like an open grave and exorcise the restless spirits who were never to again see the sun, moon and stars since plunging to their death.

When I got to the hole, I discovered that it was closed for tourists because there was no water reticulation for the city for days, resulting in ablution facilities being in bad shape. The management, it was said, did not want to expose tourists to the ugly and smelly sight.

On my way from the hole, I was struck by how the streets potholes seem to mimic the big hole. The roads here, as in other parts of South Africa, are more potholes than tar.

One drives further around and witnesses tourist sites abandoned except for human excrement decorations where there were once fountains! That said, these questions beg for answers: is this what we should celebrate? What happened to political leadership and civic responsibility as well as activism?

As we ponder over the questions, let us now celebrate the real leaders of this region and learn something from them in order to salvage ourselves from degeneration and end up like *batho ba go fetša mabele*.

As we do this, we must bear in mind that this is a solemn occasion as some of the luminaries have transitioned to another realm. So, as we summon spirits, we are venturing onto the spiritual realm in the mode of Mbongeni Ngema's play, *Woza Albert*, in which he figuratively resurrects the bones of our departed leaders such as Nkosi Albert Luthuli, Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Beyers Naude. Stated appropriately, we now *vusa matambo* or *re tsosa marapo a ba robetseng*.

We commence with HE who could see beyond the naked ear in order to awaken the so-called African giant induced into some mysterious sleep through wizardry, perhaps?

Vuka iSanusi Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa vuka!

The spiritual icon iSanusi Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa spent his last days on earth in Kuruman after he was continuously excommunicated and haunted out of several residences for being accused of being a quack, apartheid apologist and political sell-out. During his time in this region, he built a monument in the Magojaneng village through which knowledge about Africa could be transmitted to the next generations. This is but one of his several self-constructed

cultural sites in the country that are left by government to dilapidate instead of being maintained for posterity.

A profound Kemet High-Priest, Mutwa was a living encyclopaedia of African Historiography who shared lots of knowledge about human origin in Africa, pointing especially towards Mpumalanga to the ruins of ancient African cities as well as the stone circles calendar “Inzalo Yelanga”, commonly misappropriated as Adam’s calendar.

Mutwa also exposed the deliberate, ignorant or otherwise misidentification of the authentic creators of rock paintings in this region as quests to peddle the firstism discussed earlier. In order not to belabour the firstism discourse, I refer you to Mutwa’s book, *Indaba, My Children*, for further insights.

Published in 1963, this book should be certified as an African classic of all-times. It contains poetry, short stories, plays, and scientific non-fiction that took many years for science-based institutions and universities to catch up with his revelations, even about extra-terrestrial existence.

Mutwa passed on to the yonder on 25 March 2020: two days before the announcement of the first Covid-19 lockdown by President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa. The timing of Mutwa’s death and burial in Kuruman, as well as the link to the covid-19 pronouncement, is not lost to history’s rear-view mirror. iSanusi is also known to have held sharp views on vaccine controversy, especially pertaining to spirituality, from his childhood experience.

Tsoga Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje tsoga!

A lot has been written, and continue to be written by the likes of Brian Willan and Sabatampho Mokae about Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, after whom this university and the local

municipality is named. It must, though, be hastened to acknowledge that his grandfather's authentic surname is Mogodi (first-name Selogilwe), but later nicknamed Plaatje, by a Dutch farmer on whose property in the Free State within the Philippolis district, he (Selogilwe Mogodi) had leased a portion for grazing his cattle. The moniker was drawn from Mogodi's short stature and rather flat head. His son, Kushumani, Tshekisho's father, replicated his built. This but only helped to stamp the nickname. Ever since then the family got the tag certified as its official surname. From this episode, rises the ugly octopus head of identity. That is why even to date, our legend's native name is mutilated left, right and centre!

Be that as it may, being in the presence of one expert Plaatje biographer in this hall, I must tread carefully here, lest I be embarrassed. Therefore, I will just skim over two things about which he epitomises for me, namely: land, and the arts. I do so knowing also that the university is providing another opportunity for you to learn more other things about this African giant through the launch of another book launch on 19 June 2022 in celebration of his life 90 years after his transition.

Sol Plaatje knows intimately the horror of landlessness and dispossession. He spent his life migrating from Free State to Kimberly, then Mahikeng, back to Kimberly, Soweto, and finally back to Kimberley west-end cemetery where he was interred.

The Plaatje family first lived in Pniel village just outside Kimberley and later at the Malay Camp which was subsequently uprooted through gradual forced removal until 1959. The Lyndhurst Road Public School, for which Sol Plaatje was a committee member, made way for the current Fire Station.

One of the prominent pupils at the school at the time of Plaatje's tenure was ZK Mathews – the first black Professor at the University of Fort Hare. Mathews was followed by Sol Plaatje's protégé, Silas Modiri Molema, as a teacher. Molema became the first black South African

medical doctor, and the ANC's Secretary-General in 1949 and later the Treasurer-General. Ngaka Modiri Molema obtained his medical doctorate in 1919 from the University of Glasgow. Around 1909 to 1915, Sol Plaatje lived at his first house in Kimberly. It was on 14 Shannon Street. This is where he used to run *Tsala ea Batho*. It was renamed thus from its fore-runner, *Koranta ea Becoana* (1901–1908), because it now also published in Africa languages other than Setswana, as was the case previously.

Plaatje later relocated to 32 Angel Street where his wife died. The Shannon street house space is where his statue is now perched in front of the offices of the municipality named after him. The municipal offices and the statue are right in front of where some part of Malay Camp used to be. The statue, itself dejected, is staring at the unkempt park in resignation.

This background characterises Plaatje political activism whose climax was his election in 1912 as the first Secretary-General of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later renamed the African National Congress (ANC). It was through his insights from land struggles that he eventually wrote *Native Life in South Africa: Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion*. One of the famous quotes to be extracted from this publication goes thus: "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth."

At this time, Plaatje was a journalist and editor of the black-owned newspapers referred to earlier. It was during this period that Plaatje cycled around the country to observe and capture in writing first-hand ravages of the Land Act of 1913 on its natives, culminating in the writing and publishing of the aptly titled book. His method of inquiry qualifies him to also be classified a pioneer in protest journalism or activist journalism. Now today, the once glorious movement for which Plaatje served has the audacity to even suggest that farmers could, as part of land

restoration, decide to donate portions of their estate as if the people from which some of the pieces of land were stolen did not have their birth rights! So, this we must celebrate?

Land is inextricably linked to livelihood. 2022 is declared AU Nutrition year. The general objective of the AU Nutrition year for 2022 is to secure greater political commitment and investment in nutrition to address the ongoing nutrition challenges. The simple question is: how do we fulfil this objective against land deprivation? As a practising full-time farmer back home before I came here, I have learnt about so many programmes that government claim to assist aspirant farmers with. I have had so many visits over the years at my farm by officials from the relevant local agriculture department whose primary objective, it seemed, was just for me to sign their log books and then *totsiens!*

At a continental level, it was pleasing to hear from the media two days ago that the African Development Bank (AfDB) has announced, at its Annual Meetings in Accra, Ghana, that its board of directors approved \$1.5billion to assist African countries in averting a looming food crisis on the continent in the wake of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This is the way to go. After all, several official global reports predict that agriculture will be the next cradle of economy, and by extension, a leading industry to deal with food security for a growing world population. And of course, unlike any other continent, Africa is blessed with land mass and favourable conditions that belie the fact it currently relies on imports from the less endowed; such that when they fight among each other - which they have been doing since time immemorial - Africa is adversely affected. We even take sides in these white tribal wars while we could be tilling the land.

Nature is the first and last gift to humanity. We get born in it and get buried in it. Food is the lifeblood of existence. Before we are born, we spent nine months swirling in our mothers sacred pool, drinking from the umbilical cord. When we are born, the major activity we do is to eat so

that we can grow. And as we grow, before we can play, work, travel, or find roofs over our heads, we have to eat. As the saying goes: *tsie e fofa ka moswang*. It is this wisdom the Afrikaners have learned from breaking the backs of our mothers while being piggybacked as toddlers. From the lessons, they ensured that they centred their existence and providence on agriculture. In this count, another teaching from our forebears comes to bear: *lehumo le tswa tshimong*. To this end, I say to you through my short poem, *Plough!*, from my second poetry edition, *This land is native*. I now read it as though Sol Plaatje would:

I look at history
through my black-eye bean
and see its roots grow
inside the tummies of my people
who used to withstand hunger and disease
with proper diet

Now they shrink and die
like dry beans unplanted

Plough!

Sol Plaatje was also a lover of the arts. He is the first African to have a novel, *Mhudi*, published in English. He is also the first person to translate William Shakespeare's work into Setswana. Furthermore, he rode his famous bicycle around villages showing films – or bioscope as it was then called - from a projector. From this profile, one assumes that his own political organisation – by extension, the governing party – would take the arts seriously. But, to our horror, the late ANC stalwart Prof. Keorapetse Kgosisile reveals the following:

It took the ANC until 1982, a period of seventy years, to establish the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC); and that was after the unarguable success of the historic Culture and Resistance festival earlier that year ... Even then it was a kind of

compromise, for some years it remained a sub-department of the Department. And after moving back into the country [from exile and the unbanning] the leadership wasted time debating whether there was still a need for this department to exist ... The DAC remains somewhat like a tolerated, mischievous stepchild of the movement ... This backwardness becomes even more perplexing, at times very infuriating, when you consider that Sol Plaatje, the first Secretary General of the ANC, was not only an outstanding figure in the leadership of the ANC, [but] he was also a leading artist and cultural worker with a keen sense of social responsibility.

With these words, it's not surprising that the relevant Minister was recently not ashamed to try and convince the outraged nation that there is merit in splashing R22m to erect a monstrous flag as if in an adolescent boys' whose-one-is-bigger-than-the-other dilto competition with Afrikaner right-wingers when they want to hoist their grandfathers' *Vierkleur*. Fortunately, he was instructed by his giggling boss to 'cancel that thing'.

On a more serious note: culture is the catalyst for development especially in the west, as well as in CUBA. By culture, I include artistic expressions. Recently, the contribution of culture to world gross domestic product (GDP) is reported to surpass even the traditional mining, construction and agriculture industries combined. That's why culture often receives the lion share of budget in world cities and government departments. Similarly, there are universities established mainly to specialise in cultural studies, especially components such as cultural policy, cultural diplomacy and arts management. These institutions even devise special journals to ventilate knowledge on these subjects. South Africa is trailing far behind on the culture crusade.

Their extent of the awareness of the power of culture in world economy and social cohesion is graphically captured by Colin Mercer thus:

Mainstream western culture has always been planned - through the education system, through our cultural institutions and agencies, through policy frameworks

- and so well planned, in fact, over a couple of centuries, that the result appears effortless, natural and universal: cultural capital, we recall, is the most fully internalised of all capitals.

Last year, The AU had declared 2021 as “The AU Year of the Arts, Culture And Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want”. From where I am sitting as a cultural activist, I am still in the dark about what became of this in South Africa. It seems to have been deafening silence coming from government to the arts fraternity about the call. Yet I am reliably informed that towards the end of the same year, someone who is remotely associated with the organised arts, was invited to Ghana in December 2021 to attend, on behalf of the country, the AU’s closing ceremony for the theme. Fortunately or unfortunately (depending on from which perspective one looks at this), the person could not make the trip due to the Covid-19 situation.

Here at the Sol Plaatje University, we celebrate this year’s Africa Month under the theme: “Arts as a liberation tool to articulate our freedom towards our diversity and environmental sustainability.” Once more, let’s ask: how do we ensure environmental unsustainability against the backdrop of landlessness expressed earlier? From another side: how do we respect our environment when the land is mutilated for diamonds and the wounds are left open? Simply put: why is it that the land is not rehabilitated after been dug by miners?

Our land is haunted. Our land is plagued by respiratory diseases from these activities. Let me share with you a personal anecdote to drive the latter point home.

A few days after my arrival here, I always felt like I was choking from dust while in the office. And I wondered why because our mothers here regularly kept the offices clean and that the campus is surrounded by tar roads. To test that I was not hallucinating, one day when I was consulting with a student in my office, I asked her if she smelled any dust in the room. She looked at me like a madman when I kept on drinking water to deal with the imaginary respiratory attack.

A recent tour to the Africana Research library down the streets came to partially solve the dust mystery. On this tour, I, together with Rre Mokaë, were accompanying an entourage of the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Literacy 4Life Campaign. The library guide informed us that one of the major problems they encounter in preserving old manuscripts written about almost anything on Kimberley is dust. 'Kimberley has high volume of dust in the air', the library guide confirms, authoritatively.

I believe I have sufficiently addressed the aspect of the role of the arts in liberation, suffice to inform you that I will soon expatiate on the subject in a seminar to be hosted by the School of Humanities. At this event, I will talk about the role of the arts in the liberation struggle against apartheid and colonialism from the recently published book I have edited, *Culture and liberation struggle: from colonialism to post-apartheid*.

Earlier today, I enjoyed the privilege of handing over one copy of the book to Amada Mokhachane, as the overall winner of the Creative Writing Competition as part of today's celebrations.

This is a seminal book to be published in this country on the subject. It is an anthology of articles, biographies, interviews, personal memoirs, photo essays, and tributes by the actual cultural activists who at times exchanged or abandoned their tools of trades for military wares and related assortments to liberate the country.

I will donate copy of this book to the School of Humanities during the event. Actually, I am now tempted to add two other books as a contribution to knowledge and wisdom the ancestors we are celebrating this evening bequeathed this region, the country, the continent, and the entire globe where humanity is found. These two books are fiction editions *Wandering tributaries* (short stories) and *Through the eye of the needle* (poetry).

That's the end of the commercial break!

Vuka Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe vuka!

We are now talking about the most feared revolutionary by the apartheid junta. We are talking about someone who was separated from fellow-prisoners at the Robben Island. The powers that be at the time, were so obsessively wary of the man to mix with his fellow-inmates that not only did they keep him in solitary confinement in a separate building, but they also specially enacted the infamous “Sobukwe clause” within the 1963 General Laws Amendment Act No 37. This statute at face value seemed to grant broadly applicable powers, but was actually meant to authorise the arbitrary extension of Sobukwe’s imprisonment.

What was Sobukwe’s crime? Answer: when his peers were hankering for assimilation into whiteness as equals at the figurative dining table, mainly through a vote as panacea to their political subjugation, Sobukwe advocated for the reclaiming of stolen land because he knew that it is for the land that his forbearers risked limbs and lives – not a piece of paper with an ironic tragic cross to toss into a ballot box.

Sobukwe’s “house arrest” continued here in Galeshewe after his release from Robben Island in May 1969 until his untimely departure to inhabit the ethereal realm of our ancestors on 27 February 1978.

As you know, as part of his house arrest conditions, Sobukwe was forbidden to talk to two people at the time. But the humanitarian he was, he used to hang around at the gate of his yard at greet every passer-by. Apparently, this taught the residents one salient features of *botho*: greeting.

‘The Prof’ or ‘Malome’, as he was affectionately called, was also a teacher and lawyer. Both trades are significant, but I want to briefly delve into the latter. It has come to my notice that the judiciary has now become another frontier of political combat. Actually, this is not necessarily something new. Almost everything about colonialism and apartheid was legalised

so as to give the doctrines political legitimacy. Accordingly, in response, some leaders of the liberation movement took up the gown as combat gears.

What is different now is that it is becoming a tradition for Afrikaner right-wingers, under the banner of Afriforum and Solidarity, to sidestep primary avenues such as parliament where they have representation in spite of residency at Orania, in order to stealthily reverse the gains of our liberation through legal means and pull us back to the days of *die voortrekker laager*.

I therefore appeal to the Minister of Higher Education and University Chancellors and Vice Chancellors, as well as University Councils to invest energy and resources into legal studies so as to cultivate a culture of legal activism in response to this reactionary onslaught.

Tsoga, Francis Goitsemanng Baard, tsoga!

Mme Frances Goitsemanng Baard was born on 01 October 1909 in Kimberley, and grew up at Greenfield settlement, one of the oldest in the area. Upon my recent visit to the area with Rre Moka, I was informed that some days ago the Greenfield High School was closed for a while due to gang shootings around its vicinity.

Greenfield refuses to develop. Actually, it is degenerating. We were greeted by squalor, emaciated scavenging debris that decorated the streets, ablution water flowing down the uneven roads, and a cattle kraal perched out of context around a corner as if insisting to be relevant to the surrounding from which only concrete pavements and tar roll out for grazing. Undeterred by these conditions, we both made a return visit a while later with the same entourage of the Africana research library to render poetry and donate books to the Greenfield High School learners.

After her departure from this area, MaBaard committed her life to the struggle of workers until her banishment to Mabopane, Pretoria until her death in 1997. It is her unflinching combat for

the farm workers in particular that stands out for me on MaBaard, especially for this region, as captured by the two poets earlier. We have seen also with the Mogodi/Plaatje experience, the impact of the farming conditions not only on the living conditions, but also on the national question.

Tsoga, Mittah Seperepere [Goieman], tsoga!

Born and bred in this region, Mme Mittah Seperepere was a member of the ANC since 1958 until her death in 2010. She was exiled in Botswana and Tanzania from 1966 (a year after her imprisonment in South Africa) until 1990 when she returned to South Africa. She is renowned for having started a primary school attached to the famous ANC School, Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania. She served on various ANC structures including as a representative of the ANC Women's Section in the Germany.

I personally came to contact with Mme Seperepere for the first time around 2009/10. At the time, I was part of the SAGNC delegation on a road show around the country on the importance of national symbols and place names. It was in Galeshewe when Mme Mittah spoke to the issue. She referred to the Mayibuye iAfrika Campaign to advocate to the *back to the roots* campaign.

I later wrote about this in some academic journal:

Seperere (pers.comm June 3, 2010) traces the predicaments of culture within the ANC to a brief period before its exile when it changed its political character, or some elements thereof, from African nationalism to non-racialism; the latter of which emphasised ethnic-based cultural diversity. This, Seperere laments, hampered the evolution of African culture towards integration and unity. She reinforces her point by recording this as a period when the ANC abandoned the 'Mayibuye iAfrika Campaign' which was symbolised by a raised clenched fist with a thumb sticking out and pointing backwards so as to gesticulate the return to core

values of African culture in the liberation struggle and general outlook of life. Since then, the thumb is clasped together with other fingers into a solid fist.

The clenched fist, MmeMittah said in Galeshewe, symbolised the freezing of the genuine struggle for freedom by liberal tendencies within the liberation movement. Sadly, even the Mayibuye Precinct in Galeshewe, today is symbolically frozen in destitute and despair. How then do we unfreeze the real liberation struggle of Africa? MmeMittah is asking you.

Vuka, Aggrey Zola Klaaste, Vuka!

Another Kimberley-born and Greenfield resident, Aggrey Zola Klaaste, left this horizons to spread his wings across South Africa from Johannesburg where he was a journalist and editor of The Sowetan newspaper in his later years. It was through this publication that in 1988 he launched his famous “Nation Building” project whose major objective was to attempt to repair the damage caused by apartheid to the fabric of black communities across the country. This philosophy was different from its *kumbaya Rainbowism* successor.

The least this community - from which Klaaste comes - can do to celebrate and preserve his legacy as well as advancing his ideals is to throw its weight Aggrey Klaaste Trust, headed by his son, Gerome.

O tsogile, Yvonne Mokgoro, o tsogile!

By way of introduction, Justice Yvonne Mokgoro was the first Chairperson of the Sol Plaatje University Council from 2014 to 2021. I suspect she had assumed this position to, amongst others, guarantee that the university should have more in common with Sol Plaatje other than just the name. The jury is out here on whether or not the university is living up to that expectation.

A former Judge of the first bench of South Africa's Constitutional Court, Justice Mokgoro is undoubtedly one of the country's sharp-minded legal eagles who epitomises a post-1994 judiciary characterised by independence from political meddling, amongst others.

Her curriculum vitae is unparalleled and too voluminous for this address, save to emphasise that in 2013, she was appointed to Chair a Tribunal into the investigation of the ethical conduct of the President of the Lesotho Court of Appeal. With this feather in her cap, Justice Mokgoro would have been one of the best candidates to sit on the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights had time permitted. The Protocol on the establishment of this august house was adopted in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 9 June 1998 and entered into force on 25 January 2004.

She retired from the Concourt in 2009 after 15 years' service. Fortunately, her steadfast services are not lost to the country and the world at large. She is currently involved in various community development projects which include the protection and advancement of children's rights. Justice Mokgoro states as Chairperson of Nelson Mandela's Children Fund in the 2012 Annual Report:

The extent to which children continue to be denied the simple joy of being children has gone beyond alarming proportions. The fact that the society keeps going through shocking episodes and then goes about its normal way as if nothing has happened, is even more concerning. This may signal a society gradually becoming desensitised to the plight of the children. The absence of remedial action on behalf of children, may in fact present us with a future we would like to bequeath to generations after us. Children are in fact the image of a future we are creating by the manner in which they are treated by society today.

How do we create favourable conditions for children when the society is ravaged by crime? Justice and Policing go hand in glove. However, to talk about Justice Mokgoro in the same breath as the South African Police Service (SAPS) is to spoil her grandeur. The less said about the clowns in blue the better, suffice to galvanise the society to create conditions necessary for the eradication of crime whilst simultaneously policing itself.

Tsoga, Thari e ntsho, Tsoga!

As I conclude, I refer you back to the sleeping giant metaphor. Let us invoke the late Dr. Henrik Clarke to help us, through the 1992 edition of his book, *Christopher Columbus and the Afrikan holocaust : slavery and the rise of European capitalism*, to understand the global might and capacity of this so-called sleeping African giant:

We must take into consideration that in the West Indies, in South America, and in the United States there are easily 250 million African people. In the South Sea Islands, the Pacific Islands, and India and parts of Asia, maybe another 50 million. There are over 300 million Africans living outside of Africa. There are 500 million Africans in Africa. In the 21st century there will be a billion African people on the face of the earth. Where is our economy going to come from? If we built a shoe factory and made shoes for that many people our shoe factories would be running all night and all day! If we just think of serving each other, look what we can have. I'm saying that we have to start thinking "nation," thinking "alliances," the first alliance being with ourselves, because out of the Middle Passage and those who survived it came the making of a new civilization, a whole new way of life. If there are any people strong enough to have survived, they are strong enough to remake the world. If we can do this, we can do anything.

Finally, in spite of some uncomplimentary sentiments on Kimberley on some pockets of this address, this region remains close to my heart. For some reason, I keep on been drawn to it like to a pilgrimage. I hope soon I will discover why. Sometimes in the early 1990s, I used to annually drive 9 hours unaided from my village Marokolong, or alternately, Eersterust township, to Keimoes in Upington in order to visit my late comrade and friend Ainsworth Ballakistan and family. From these visits, I wrote the aptly titled poem, *Keimoes*, from *Through the eye of the needle*, which I would like to recite thus:

The night is long
and so is my visit to a friend in Keimoes

as I lie on my back on top of Tierberg
and count countless stars perched
in the dark dome above my head.

Each one of them tells of tributaries flowing vigorously
along the main stream of the Orange River
like veins around a spine.

Here people carry nights on their feet
to meet each other at dawn across eilande
between tributaries where they would glisten together
in shades of the earth like precious stones
only found in these surroundings.

In sounds of waterfalls, and the Nama caves
from which they originated, they speak of how
political greed, the kind many land-dispossessed people
have witnessed, compete with floods in washing away
their soil, livestock and personal belongings,
into the river crawling like a python to Augrabies falls.
left behind in a barren land, they are now forced
to eke out a living among carcasses and rocks.

And there, in a corner too dark for an eye,
a maiden waits like a firefly for a truck to ferry her
to a winery where she will trample her sobriety
and virginity away, barefoot, on overripe grapes
for the brewing of wine for which only a gallon
will be her wages.

But still the voices are hospitable to visitors:
come, come, welcome our friend, come
and share with us bread we have baked

over burning coals.

Come, come, welcome our comrade, come and fish
with us the history behind rock paintings from our rivers.

Come, welcome stranger, come and sleep with us
under the stars, without fear of stings from daggers
and reptiles alike, after the day's scorching sun
has turned houses into gas chambers.

Such nights are, you will see, friend, great equalisers
between the stars and the moon, man and animal,
poverty and wealth.

Such nights are, you will learn, comrade, our womb
of a tapestry of proud African people.

Programme director, I once more thank you for the opportunity as I now sit down with
this spiritual chant:

PULA!