



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

**PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**OFFICIAL OPENING AND WELCOME: DECOLONIALITY SUMMER
SCHOOL: *Decolonizing Knowledge, Power and Being***

Senate Hall, Muckleneuk Campus

12 – 23 January 2015

- Professor Rosemary Moeketsi, Executive Dean of the College of Human Sciences
- Our guest speaker today, Professor Mireille Fanon-Mendes France of the Frantz Fanon Foundation
- Prof Nelson Maldonado-Torres: Professor of Comparative Literature, Rutgers University

- Professor Tiffany Patterson: Associate Professor of African American and Diaspora Studies, History, and American Studies
- Professor Ramon Grosfoguel, Associate Professor: Ethnic Studies Department, Chicano/Latino Studies, UC Berkley.
- Professor Kwame Nimako, lecturer in International Relations at *Graduate School of Social Sciences* (GSSS) Universiteit van Amsterdam;
- Professor Sabelo Gatsheni – Ndlovu, Head of the Archie Mafeje Institute at the University of South Africa
- Dr Siphamandla Zondi, Head of the IGD
- Prof Vusi Gumede, Head of TMALI
- Distinguished guests, attendees, visitors to our beautiful country and university
- Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted and sincerely honoured to bid you all a warm welcome to this important Summer School on Decoloniality. Unisa's College of Human of Human Sciences is very proud to be hosting this event in association with the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) and the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI). The kind of collaboration that this school represents is echoed in the superb calibre and repute of our guest speakers and our attendees, and epitomizes our a very

fundamental belief and strategy at Unisa, of promoting authentic self-development and actualization through exploring, developing and generating new knowledge and insights that articulate our *own* world views and lived experience, as alternatives to the dominant western, largely neo-liberal discourses, which perpetuate the subjugation of other knowledges and continue the colonization of global minds. I would like to thank you all for honouring us with your presence.

The topic - *Decolonizing Knowledge, Power and Being* - is particularly apposite in this view. This is not a summer school that aims to extend or strengthen prevailing Euro-North America – centric epistemologies; it is a summer school whose deliberate aim is to add to global scholarship, epistemologies that offer new or perhaps additional interpretations of our human experience. Thus far, the narrative of colonial hegemonies has to a very significant extent, been written and disseminated predominantly by their colonial progenitors. As Fanon puts it in *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 118):

“In other words, there is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly — with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio — work their way into one’s mind and shape one’s view of the world of the group to which one belongs.”

To which I would add, that depending on which group that one belongs to, one's view of his or her own humanity - of the human experience - could be utopian or dystopian. Surely, we say, the power of the shaping process should reside in the hands of who are being so shaped? The answer is an unambiguous "yes"! and it is interesting to note how prevailing hegemonies are being challenged on a global scale, and the turbulence that this has brought with it. The challenge of course, is not to replace dystopia with dystopia, and I believe that in your process of engagement over the next two weeks, you will be confronted at some stage by that very question; that very challenge.

The Summer School will therefore be focusing on the changing of paradigms in understanding the intersecting relations between power, knowledge and being; in the development of a decolonized consciousness; striving towards contributing to the production of a new cohort of Decolonial thinkers and thought leaders; and the expansion of frontiers of knowledge away from Eurocentrism. It will offer a platform for learning and exchange of ideas around issues of power, knowledge production, and identity.

It is important to add that while the importance of this collective endeavor cannot be underestimated in terms of its socio-economic and

political value, the excitement associated with academic enterprise – the very essence of what it means to be an academic - is of equal value. And I must say, I have a very clear sense of that excitement right now! All too often in the daily duties of the academe we lose sight of our true calling and of the incredible pleasure and growth that flows from intellectual engagement and practice, from creativity and innovation. The next two weeks offer a rare opportunity for untrammelled intellectual pursuit, and we should also celebrate that!

I am aware that you will be covering an array of issues including:

- Modernity, Eurocentrism and coloniality
- Epistemic racism/patriarchy/sexism
- Zone of being/zone of non-being
- Knowledge and power
- Coloniality of being and subjectivity
- Development, nationalism and decolonization
- African archive and library
- African intellectual traditions
- Africa and the modern world
- Decolonizing the university

And at the end of the Summer School the attendees would be able to reflect seriously and critically on the following important questions:

- How is the modern world constituted?
- Who is producing knowledge?
- What institutions and disciplines legitimize it?
- What is knowledge for and who benefits from it?
- How is our social existence colonized and how to think about decolonization of being?
- What power hierarchies constitute the cartography of power of the global political economy we live in and how to go about decolonizing the world?

Ladies and gentlemen these are critical questions that should underpin and contextualize our scholarship at *all* times, and this summer school aims to equip its participants with the kind of informed objectivity and insight that will enable and facilitate useful critique, based on these questions, to enable us to move from theory to action. So I am particularly pleased that the school aims to assist emerging scholars to improve their methodological clarity, boost their analytical skills, and contribute towards diversifying scholarly thought, and that we will have with us Frantz Fanon's daughter, Mireille Fanon-Mendes France, as our

guest speaker, who will also be assisting us in this process. A special word of welcome to you Ms Fanon-Mendes France!

Unisa is also of the view that capacity building, especially in regard to our students and staff, should be a key pillar of our scholarship. So much so in fact, that in acknowledgement of this commitment, as well as our clear stance on an unambiguously African articulation and practice of ODL, we have been invited to host the The 26th ICDE World Conference with the theme: *Growing capacities for sustainable distance e-learning provision*. This is the first time the Conference is being held on the African Continent, and besides our commitment to capacity development on ODL, the awarding of the the bid to Unisa also speaks to our commitment to collaborative engagement, which I alluded to earlier. I have no doubt that this school will add immeasurably to our collective body of knowledge – knowledge that amongst others, will be harnessed in pursuit of the decolonisation of Knowledge, Power and Being.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to declare this school open and to wish you a very rich and rewarding time of growth, capacitation and knowledge production.

I thank you.