CULTIVATING SOLIDARITY AT THE SITE OF STRUGGLE

IZIKO LAMAQABANE

ISSUE [003] 2026 PRAXIS JOURNAL

LAND FAITH & IDENITY

ANOTHER YEAR IN SEARCH OF SOLIDARITY

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AMANDLA! AWETHU!

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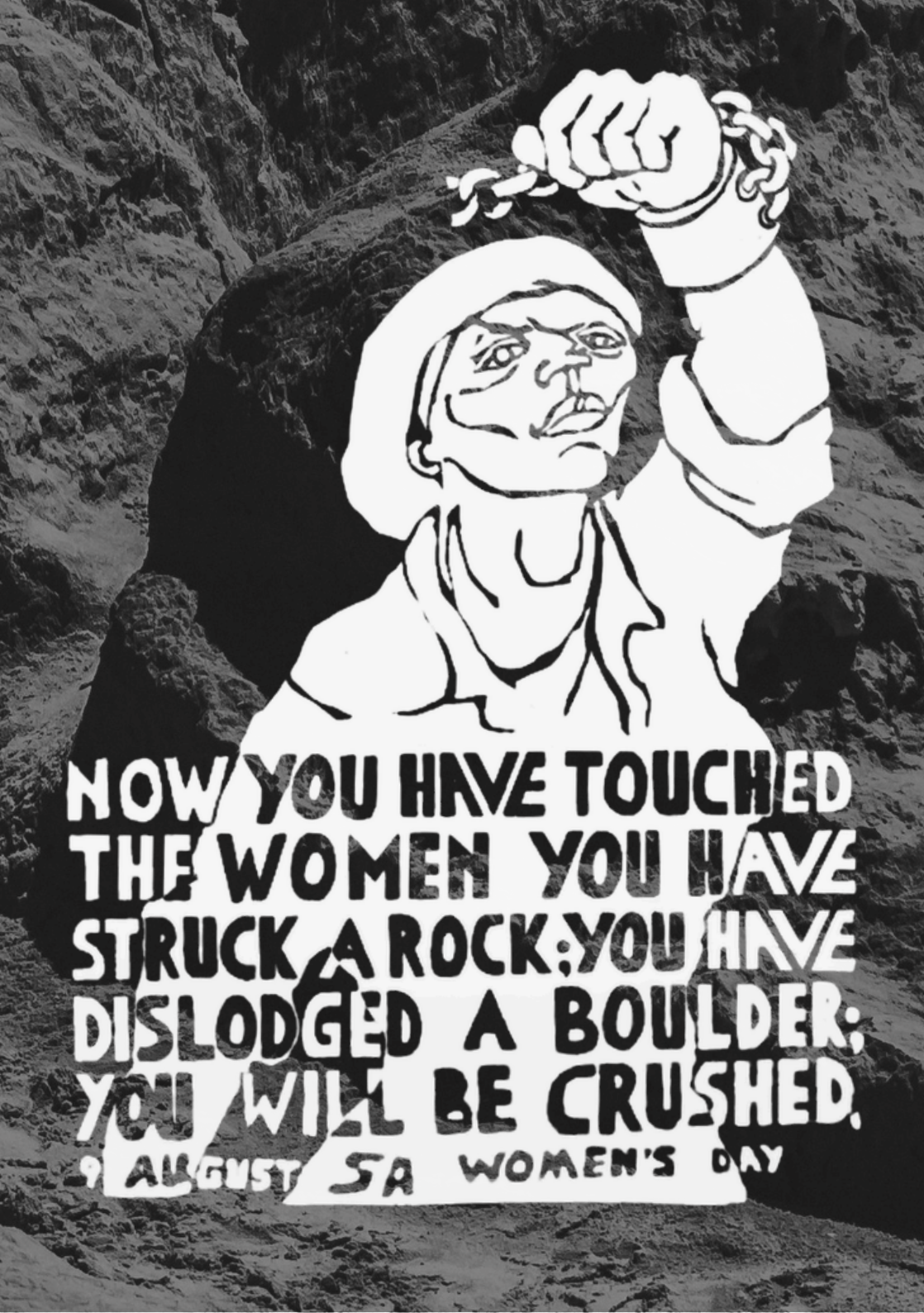
ABOUT IZIKO LAMAQABANE

Iziko Lamaqabane is on a pilgrimage to heal colonial wounds, disrupt systemic violence, and cultivate faith formed by and expressed in liberative praxis. By working in relational solidarity with urban peace and justice practitioners, Iziko serves those active at the site of struggle by facilitating spaces of retreat, exchange and collective learning grounded at the intersection of anabaptism, black liberation theology & critical consciousness.

Meaning *"the gathering space of comradeship,"* our naming highlights our pedagogical approach to accompaniment on the pilgrimage of liberation. As a faith informed support centre for peace and justice practitioners, it is our conviction that the more we can walk together, sharing stories, friendship and knowledgies, the more our wisdom, longevity and capacity to disrupt violence and oppression will grow. Our practices at Iziko emerge from this desire to serve practitioners by exchanging and practicing our 'Four R's' together: re-search, re-source, re-member, and re-treat.




NOW YOU HAVE TOUCHED
THE WOMEN YOU HAVE
STRUCK A ROCK: YOU HAVE
DISLODGED A BOULDER:
YOU WILL BE CRUSHED.
9 AUGUST SA WOMEN'S DAY

THE WEAVER BIRD

George Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor-Williams

The weaver bird built in our house
And laid its eggs on our only tree
We did not want to send it away
We watched the building of the nest
And supervised the egg-laying.
And the weaver returned in the guise of the owner
Preaching salvation to us that owned the house
They say it came from the west
Where the storms at sea had felled the gulls
And the fishers dried their nets by lantern light
Its sermon is the divination of ourselves
And our new horizons limit at its nest
But we cannot join the prayers and answers of the communicants.
We look for new homes every day,
For new altars we strive to rebuild
The old shrines defiled by the weaver's excrement.



George Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor-Williams (1935–2013) was a Ghanaian poet, author, and diplomat. From the 70s to the 90s, primary and secondary school students across English-speaking West Africa were very likely to have read his short poem, "The Weaver Bird", as part of their compulsory Literature or English studies, alongside other political poetry like those of Leopold Sedar Senghor, David Diop, John Pepper Clark, Niyi Osundare, and Kwesi Brew.

REPAIRING THE BREACH: BUILDING SOLIDARITY LINES ACROSS SPACES OF STRUGGLE

Buyisiwe Pokie Nkutha Putu

A circle expands forever
It covers all who wish to hold hands
And its size depends on each other
It is a vision of solidarity

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "The Story of a Circle" (2001, p. 97)

Justice work brings us into different spaces and introduces us to people whose experiences, knowledge and struggles may be different from our own. These spaces include academic institutions, faith communities, social movements, community initiatives and sites of struggle. Sometimes we are invited to share our work or participate in a conversation. At other times, we visit a community, listen to its experiences or meet people who are working towards similar goals. Such encounters may seem limited to a particular event, but they can become the beginning of relationships that continue long afterwards.

For Iziko Lamaqabane, these experiences raise an important question: how do we build solidarity lines deliberately, allowing relationships formed in one space to reach into others? Think of a friend who introduces you to someone they know. Over time, that person becomes your friend too, and through them you meet others (Nkosi Gola). The circle grows beyond the people who first came together. In much the same way, an invitation to a seminar, a visit to a site of struggle or a conversation with another collective can open doors to relationships that neither side may have anticipated.

This is what makes building solidarity lines significant. It is not simply

about meeting people, collecting contacts or establishing partnerships. It is about recognising the possibilities that emerge when people remain connected, introduce others to one another and share opportunities to learn and work together. A relationship does not have to lead immediately to a joint project to be meaningful. Sometimes its value lies in making another encounter possible, bringing a different experience into view or helping people recognise a connection between their respective struggles.

Ghanaian theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye's poem "The Story of a Circle" offers a compelling image for understanding this process. Her circle expands, turns outward to engage with the world and turns inward for self-critique. It is a circle that makes room for others while remaining attentive to its own responsibilities. Oduyoye reminds us that a circle cannot be formed by one person alone. Solidarity, too, depends on participation and on the willingness to recognise what others bring to the relationship (Oduyoye, 2001, p. 97).

The image also helps us think about what happens after we have been welcomed into a particular space. Do we maintain the connection? Do we share an opportunity with someone who might benefit from it? Can we introduce people whose work might speak to one another, even though they have not yet met? Building solidarity lines deliberately means paying attention to these possibilities. It means understanding that our participation in one space can create openings for others, and that relationships grow when people are willing to nurture them.

The spaces in which justice work takes place have much to learn from one another. Academic spaces provide opportunities for research, critical reflection and the exchange of ideas. Sites of struggle offer encounters with lived realities, community knowledge and the daily work of confronting injustice. Faith communities, social movements and other collectives bring their own experiences, questions and practices. These contributions are different, and they are not always recognised equally. Yet meaningful engagement becomes possible when people are willing to listen across these spaces rather than assume that knowledge and answers reside in only one of them.

This matters because access to resources, institutional recognition and



influential platforms is not evenly distributed. Some people and collectives have greater opportunities to make their work visible, while others carry important knowledge and experience that receive far less attention. Building solidarity lines calls us to notice these differences and consider how connections can create room for voices and experiences that might otherwise remain unheard. It also requires respect for the independence of those we encounter. Solidarity should not mean that one party determines the direction of the work or expects others to fit into its priorities.

Malawian-born theologian Isabel Apawo Phiri, writing with Philip Vinod Peacock, observes that "injustice permeates every dimension of human relationships and our relationship with the earth" (Phiri and Peacock, 2017). This reminds us that struggles for justice are connected, even when people approach them from different starting points. Work addressing gender inequality, economic injustice, racial oppression or ecological destruction may take place in separate spaces, but the concerns often intersect. Relationships across these spaces can help us recognise those connections and learn how different efforts might support one another.

For Iziko Lamaqabane, building solidarity lines means taking seriously the invitations we receive, the spaces in which we are welcomed and the people whose experiences we encounter. It also means looking beyond the immediate event to consider what relationships might grow from it. This is not about placing Iziko at the centre of a network or assuming that it has all the answers. It is about participating in a wider process of connection, learning and exchange, where relationships can extend beyond those who first meet and create opportunities for others to connect as well.

Isaiah 58:6–12 offers a theological perspective on this responsibility. The prophet challenges a community whose religious observance exists alongside exploitation and suffering. The passage insists that faith must be expressed through action that confronts injustice and responds to people's material needs. It concludes with the promise that those who participate in this work will be called "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in" (Isaiah 58:12, NRSV).

The image of repairing the breach need not mean that every

relationship is broken. It can also invite us to consider the distances that exist between people, spaces and struggles, and how new connections might bridge them. Building solidarity lines creates opportunities for people to encounter one another, share what they know and discover possibilities for engagement that may not have existed before. In this sense, repair is not only about addressing what has been damaged; it is also about making connections that enable something new to emerge.

Building solidarity lines takes time and attention. It asks us to value the invitation, the conversation and the introduction, and to recognise that each can have a life beyond the moment in which it occurs. It also asks us to remain open to relationships that do not follow a predetermined path. We cannot always know where a connection will lead, but we can choose to nurture it with care, reciprocity and a willingness to learn.

Oduyoye's expanding circle reminds us that solidarity grows when people make room for one another and remain open to self-critique. Isaiah's call to repair the breach invites us to consider how our relationships can contribute to a more just world. Together, these images encourage us to see solidarity not as a finished achievement, but as a practice that develops through the connections we make and sustain.

Building solidarity lines is about more than who we meet. It is about what becomes possible when we remain connected, make room for others and allow relationships to reach beyond the spaces in which they began.



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Phiri, I.A. and Peacock, P.V. (2017). Presentation on Gender Justice at WCRC General Council. World Communion of Reformed Churches General Council, 1 July. Available at: https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/presentation-on-gender-justice-at-wcrc-general-council.

The Holy Bible. Isaiah 58:6–12. New Revised Standard Version.

COMRADESHIP: DARING TO ENTER THE TERRAIN OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Nkosi Gola

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

How can comradeship be made possible where Black people are in constant survival mode? A large part of Iziko Lamaqabane's work is building intentional friendships and solidarity spaces for liberative praxis. Vukani Bantu-Tsogang Batho, the Council for World Mission (CWM), and the University of South Africa's Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology have joined in an intentionally low paced process that Prof. Kobo, in her reflections, calls communal becoming. The pace is deliberate: all parties acknowledge that African liberation depends on Black solidarity, and solidarity cannot be rushed.

This process began in shared grief over Prof. Vuyani Vellem's sudden departure from this world. Many of us at this table walked with him, in different spaces and in different ways. Though he has departed, Vellem remains a guiding voice on this liberative pilgrimage. Vellem insisted that Black Theology must begin from Black pain and that Black life is the ground upon which we gather.

What has become clear is that, however important each of our projects is, working in silos further fragments the Black struggle. Heeding Biko's warning against a fragmented struggle, which yields Black people only limited freedoms, we gathered, ate together, and thought together about possibilities for liberative praxis. Many of us are friends, but we refused to make that friendship an end in itself. That is a luxury, and in a world organised against Black life, that Black people have never been afforded. To borrow from Biko, Black friendship must be a "politicising thing":

political friendship, which is to say comradeship. Jodi Dean (2019) puts it this way: "the term comrade indexes a political relation, a set of expectations for action toward a common goal. It highlights the sameness of those on the same side no matter their differences, comrades stand together."

Dean writes of comradeship in general terms. Why does it fit the Black condition in particular? Because the very structures that exploit Black people have made them a collective. Colonialism, apartheid and racial capitalism did not seek individual consent before extracting labour, land and life. Pain imposed as a collective fate can only be answered collectively. This is the praxis behind Black Consciousness and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed: the oppressed must reclaim their collective agency before liberation is possible. Comradeship gives that response a political form. It turns shared pain, an imposed reality, into shared choice, a commitment we make to the Black struggle and to one another, toward collective freedom.

Amos 3:3 asks the same of us. To be "agreed" is not to hold uniformity in opinions or to erase differences. It means being united in an imaginative process that attempts to refashion the black future and being bound together by that shared vision. This matches Dean's insistence that comrades stand together "no matter their differences." Comradeship does not require sameness. It requires a common horizon and the discipline of walking toward it together.

Comradeship binds action. In this binding, it collectivises solidarity and directs it by a shared vision of the future. Black pain will end only through Black solidarity, and Black people must unite in order to become. This is our saddest reality: there is always a valid reason to be against one another, because the system is designed that way. Entering comradeship means weighing all those reasons against Black oppression and the need for Black liberation, and subjecting every dispute among us to that weighing. Mao distinguishes antagonistic (irreconcilable) from non-antagonistic (reconcilable) contradictions; contradictions among Black people must be treated as non-antagonistic and therefore always reconcilable.

To enter into comradeship is to enter the terrain of the impossible,

especially given the ceaseless shedding of Black blood in Africa as a sacrifice to racialised capital. Black Liberation, therefore, as contingent to black comradeship, is a sacred journey, a pilgrimage toward the end of human pain, and of Black pain in particular.



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THIS [UN]SACRED SPACE OF SOLIDARITY

Fabian Ashwin Oliver

"We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity."

Fred Hampton (1948–1969)

If solidarity is going to mean something to us amid this constant onslaught of anti-Blackness, perhaps it must begin with the simple and radical act of gathering.

The convening of friends, and those who would become friends, created a space in which we could sit at the wound together. To share. To listen. To breathe. To offer one another the quiet assurance that we are not mad (or we are). This shit is real.

Chairman Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party offers us a counternarrative to the logic of violence. If fire cannot extinguish fire, then perhaps the undoing of violence requires an antidote of our own making. It requires, in the words of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, refusing that which has been refused to you. To face a violent world without simply reproducing its violence. The poiesis of something else from outside the terms of the violence itself. Solidarity, then, enters us into a realm of possibility.

There is something profoundly paradoxical about Christ's teaching: "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20). And yet, under apartheid, Black gathering itself was a crime. Solidarity was rendered criminal. In gathering, Christ – The crucified one becomes a co-conspirator in the crime of Black assembly. Black solidarity,



therefore, is not neutral; it shifts the very metaphysical assumptive logic of law, death, and the status quo of whiteness.

During this Hub, care itself became an act of solidarity. As scholar and cultural theorist Saidiya Hartman reminds us, "care is the antidote to violence." I experienced something of this profoundly throughout our gathering.

One of the things I appreciated most was the fluidity of the process, the non-methodological methodology that became our starting point. At first, this openness unsettled some participants. During the closing reflections, one person spoke about how the fluid structure disrupted the desire for control, certainty, performance, and the constant need to arrive at something measurable. And yet, slowly, the openness became liberating. It invited stillness. Presence. Attentiveness. The courage to simply exist. Perhaps solidarity begins there too: before the strategy, before the manifesto, before the answer. *With the permission to exist together.*

Stand, Look, Discern, Walk

The theme of standing at the crossroads, becoming witness, discerning from the ancient paths, and ultimately walking towards a praxis of sustained solidarity for justice was explored with careful attentiveness.

When I look at my own crossroads, I see dreams hijacked. Black people dying before their time. And what is time once Blackness enters the room? I see Inequality. Those who remain seemingly "stuck" or deliberately "kept" at the margins.

Even my supposed crossroads require interrogation. Can we all access the crossroads? Who is visible there? Who is rendered illegible? Whose body is permitted to stand, and whose body is made to disappear? Legibility and invisibility mark the very ground upon which the crossroads exist.

Together, we considered the cost of standing at the crossroads, a cost that is, in many ways, tantamount to carrying the weighty cross of engaged activism. But we also wondered about the privilege, and even the

impossibility, of standing. It asks whether our tactics themselves reproduce the optics of surveillance. It brings us again to the Spivak-ian query: *Can the subaltern speak?*

Through the lens of disability theology, even the premise of "standing" must be troubled. Does standing quietly reaffirm certain normative understandings of the body, privileging the able-bodied, anthropocentric, and heteronormative subject as the one who can witness, speak, and resist? Then there is the impossibility of standing: the grotesque reality in which Black life cannot stand because the weight of colonisation is always on its neck. Perhaps solidarity is an embodied work on the ground: pulling the boot from your neck whilst you turn out the bullet in my leg.

Not saving me.
Not speaking for me.
But refusing to leave me alone in the wound.

We further reflected on how quickly we turn towards hope. 'Perhaps we move to hope too quickly because lament makes us uncomfortable.' Yet the crossroads offer us permission to lament: to remain, for a moment, with the unfinished business of a post-1994 society where, while there is much for which we are grateful, deep and stubborn structures of inequality remain.

And this is where the Parable of the Sower was used differently. 'What if Black solidarity is growing among the thorns?' Among neocolonialism, patriarchy, racism, and economic exploitation?

What if the soil is depleted and yet something still insists on growing? Black solidarity emerges thorn-resistant, wounded, but not without life. Still reaching towards the light, strengthened by the One who raises the sun each morning.

Let's Do It All Over Again

There is a temptation to understand solidarity in only two ways: as utopian romanticism or as pessimism about whether genuine solidarity is

possible at all.

The utopian vision can become a blinding blanket, allowing us to celebrate solidarity without confronting the contradictions and violences within it. Pessimism, on the other hand, can become a stagnant praxis of impossibility, where the failures of solidarity become evidence that solidarity itself is no longer worth pursuing. But what might a third way look like? Perhaps spaces such as the Solidarity Hub offer us a glimpse.

Ultimately, I leave deeply grateful for the space that was convened. We were invited to sit within a wounded society, to lament, cry, laugh, hope, resist coloniality, and discern pathways towards life and justice together.

My deep gratitude to Act Ubumbano, Church Land Programme, Iziko Lamaqabane, the Jesuit Institute, and all the friends and comrades who attended and helped make this space possible. May you be encouraged to continue this deeply life-giving work.

Aluta Continua.





Mtutuzeli Matshoba, "A Pilgrimage to the Isle of Makana", In Staffrider 2:2, (1979), 18.

BODIES, BREAD AND THE DECOLONIAL TABLE

REFLECTIONS FROM THE ACT UBUMBANO GATHERING

Zenzile Molo

In the biting midwinter cold of Johannesburg, thirty of us gathered at the Jesuit Institute in Auckland Park, brought together collectively by ACT Ubumbano, Church Land Program, and Iziko Lamaqabane to reflect on the crossroads confronting our communities. We came from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia as community organisers, activists, pastors, theologians and academics, carrying questions that could not be settled through another carefully worded declaration. Jeremiah 6:16 invited us to stand at the crossroads and discern which paths lead towards life. Yet I kept wondering whether finding those paths also required us to examine the road itself, who constructed it, whose interests it serves and why so many people continue to suffer along it.

Those questions were already present in the room. Juliet spoke about surviving an economy structured by anti-Blackness, while Zodwa questioned the promise of education when structural unemployment continues to consume the futures of young people. Phumla and Cindy named the exhaustion that makes surrender appear reasonable when circumstances seem impossible to change. Their contributions brought us back to the material contradictions of what I have come to call our Nameless Country, where changes in political administration have not translated into an equivalent transformation in Black people's conditions of life. I valued the honesty of these conversations because they refused to reduce suffering to an abstract theological problem. Instead, they challenged us to examine what our faith, institutions and organising practices are doing in response.



It was within this context that Nkosi challenged our familiar reading of the Good Samaritan. We have inherited a reading that celebrates the compassion of someone who stops to assist a wounded stranger, but what happens when the Samaritan becomes institutionalised? Churches, NGOs and charitable organisations can build programmes, funding proposals and public reputations around people experiencing suffering, while those same people remain excluded from determining how resources are distributed or how their circumstances might change. The Samaritan becomes the celebrated hero, while the wounded person provides the evidence through which somebody else's goodness is established.

This is not an argument against compassion, because I know how necessary food, pastoral care and accompaniment are when people are struggling to survive. My concern is what happens when care becomes a substitute for confronting the causes of suffering. Paulo Freire's critique of charity that preserves dependency helps us recognise this danger, while Gustavo Gutiérrez's liberation theology challenges us to understand poverty as a violation of human dignity rather than an unfortunate condition requiring occasional kindness. These arguments reminded me of what emerged during our gathering as tap dancing with suffering, our ability to become increasingly sophisticated at tending wounds while avoiding the political and economic arrangements that continue producing them.

Once we take this criticism seriously, I think the Jericho road can no longer be treated as neutral ground where violence happens by chance. We must ask who travels safely along it, who benefits from its arrangements and why certain bodies remain repeatedly exposed to suffering. These questions confront the political economy of the 1994 negotiated settlement, which formally ended legislated apartheid without fundamentally redistributing the land, wealth and spatial privileges accumulated through colonial dispossession and racial capitalism. Post-apartheid apartheid names this contradiction between formal political change and the continuing material arrangements of Black dispossession.

Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality of power helps explain how colonial relationships can survive the institutions that established them.

If the same road continually produces wounded people, improving our ability to administer bandages cannot remain our final ambition. Nevertheless, we cannot abandon those who are suffering while demanding structural transformation. The challenge is to hold both responsibilities together, responding to immediate needs while organising against the conditions that make suffering predictable. Otherwise, compassion becomes a societal pacifier, making oppression more bearable without disturbing its foundations. The wound remains visible while the knife disappears from view.

Bread, Bodies and the Decolonial Table

Our closing communion, led by Nkosi, brought this argument from the Jericho road to the table. Gathering us informally, he disrupted the rigid and pious postures through which formal religion can sometimes alienate ordinary people like myself from the sacred. Nkosi gathered us informally, completely decentring the performative solemnity that so often alienates, he returned us to the Lord's Prayer and its deeply material request: “Give us this day our daily bread.” After the conversations we had been having, this familiar prayer carried a different weight. Bread was no longer simply a sacred symbol to be received, but an invitation to interrogate the conditions through which people eat or go hungry.

Bread comes from land, seed, water and human labour, but it reaches our tables through systems of ownership, production and distribution that determine who can afford it. Frantz Fanon's connection between land, bread and dignity reminds us that liberation cannot be separated from people's ability to sustain their material lives. When we pray for daily bread, we must therefore ask who owns the soil, who controls agricultural production, commercial mills and retail chains, and whose labour remains invisible between the harvest and supermarket shelves. More uncomfortably, why has bread, something fundamental to communal survival, become a commodity protected by the logic of profit while



children continue to go hungry eKasi?

The arrangement of Nkosi's communion table made these questions more difficult to avoid. Nobody stood over the elements determining who was worthy, and everyone was invited to take, eat and drink according to their need. Our group flipchart had described Jesus as a disruptor who shared tables with outsiders, and here that understanding found expression in the way we gathered. Yet an open table does not automatically dismantle inequality. The deeper question is whether those invited to receive bread are also permitted to determine how bread, authority and belonging are organised.

Pokie's question about how Black women sustain their lives within systems of domination exposed another contradiction. Across many African households, Black women carry much of the labour required to feed families, care for children and elders, and stretch inadequate resources. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musa Dube have challenged theological traditions that overlook women's experiences while reproducing patriarchal authority. Their work invites us to recognise the everyday practices through which women sustain life as sources of theological knowledge, rather than simply domestic responsibilities that religious institutions can take for granted.

The contradiction becomes particularly visible when women till the soil, carry water, prepare food and sustain communities, while male-dominated religious institutions can deny them authority over the sacred meal. The same hands that knead the dough can be considered unworthy to bless it. This is not merely a disagreement about religious tradition, but a question about who controls the labour, knowledge and bodies through which life is sustained. Opening the table must therefore mean more than allowing previously excluded people to participate in arrangements they had no authority to shape.

As we shared bread in the Auckland Park cold, I began to recognise the relationship between the institutionalised Samaritan and the communion table. Both can reproduce arrangements in which some people possess the authority to give while others are expected to remain grateful recipients. Yet the table also offered another imagination, one in which people

participate in determining the conditions of their collective lives rather than being permanently reduced to benefactors and beneficiaries. Bread becomes a question about the commons, while the body becomes a question about whose humanity and authority are recognised.

I left the gathering appreciating the courage with which people questioned our practices, including those of our own institutions. What remains with me is the danger of becoming increasingly effective at interpreting suffering while remaining politically inadequate in confronting its causes. Our theological work cannot simply produce better language for wounded bodies, nor can communion become a comforting ritual detached from the political economy of hunger. If we are serious about liberation, the relationships we imagine around the table must also challenge the arrangements of power beyond it.

Perhaps this is what standing at the crossroads demands of us. We must continue binding wounds while confronting what causes them, sharing bread while challenging who controls its production, and opening tables while dismantling the hierarchies that have historically determined who belongs. Our calling is neither to manage wounded people nor to sanctify the highway by making its violence more bearable. Rather, we must allow ourselves to be inhabited by the struggles of our people, recognising that liberation requires more than the generosity of those who possess resources.

The task is not simply to imagine a world where every wounded traveller finds a compassionate Samaritan, or where everyone is occasionally invited to share bread. It is to ask whether we have the collective courage to disrupt the traffic, reclaim the bread and transform the road itself, so that the conditions producing wounded bodies are no longer accepted as the ordinary arrangements of life.







NIFEA CONSULTATION ON ECONOMY OF PEACE

Mziwandile Nkutha

On the 26 - 28 August 2026, Mziwandile (Mzi) Nkutha, attended the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) Consultation on Economy of Peace in Panama City. An ecumenical gathering of church leaders, theologians, economists, and peace-building community leaders from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle-East, Europe and North America. NIEFEA is generative, dialogical and formative space co-organized by ecumenical initiative of World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodists Council, the Council for World Mission and United Society Partners in the Gospel.

The gathering recognized the following fact: *"the world exist at the epoch when war economies are thriving and resources are being diverted, at an unprecedented scale, towards militarization. Between a quarter and half of international wars since 1973 and the recent U.S military interventions in Venezuela and Iran have been linked to the control of oil for energy security, economic leverage, and strategic power. Militarism itself is a significant driver of the climate crisis with militaries accounting for nearly six percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions. Wars also act as risk multipliers that accelerate ecological tipping points. For eleven consecutive years now, global military spending has been rising, reaching its highest level ever recorded in 2025. These expenditures take away from the demands of climate mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, as well as basic human rights and needs including health and education."*

Mzi participated in a panel discussion on **Economic Pathways to Peace** as one of the respondents. Iziko Lamaqabane would like to express deep gratitude to Daimon Mkandawire CWM's Ecology and Economy in Africa Region for extending an invitation to participate at the NIFEA Consultation on Economy of Peace.




NIFEA Consultation on
Economy of Peace
26-28 AUGUST 2026, PANAMA CITY, PANAMA



LAND DIALOGUE(S): REFLECTION ON A CONTINUED JOURNEY

Ntandoyenkosi Mlambo

On May 14, 2026 the Church Land Programme held a Land Dialogue in Pietermaritzburg. The Land Dialogue invited activists from grassroot organisations across the province, activists in support organisations who stand in solidarity with the landless of South Africa, and activists who use scholarship to reveal the death dealing measures of land injustice. Now, as a lecturer, theologian and historian I assume to have been placed in the third category. However, it took some time to engage both activism and scholarship.

The first hurdle was the flight delay that got us in the room late. In the flight, my nervousness grew. This wasn't some conference where you could dig into what you "know". It was going to be a room in which people live the struggle of land injustice. And being hours didn't help. We arrived, and the anxiety deepened. So my body made the quick decision to speak as little as possible. Usually, that anxiety would be something I bring up in my next therapy session (!). But, in this case, it was helpful. Stopping. Quieting the mind. Listening. I listened to my elders as they spoke of repeated struggles with traditional leaders that don't hold isinto in mind when dealing with **their** land.

During the dialogue, there were stories of displacement and threats. One woman told her story of being threatened by those in her community for fighting for land and justice. She told us that they said she spoke too much. This woman, old enough to be anyone's mother or grandmother in the room, spoke with a quiet strength. Another participant spoke of their continued struggle against mining of their land and the ecological risks.


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This particular story, which is ongoing, reveals the complications of communal land rights (with imbalances of power between chiefs and people) and "development" in South Africa.

I listened as young people spoke on trying to build a life out of knowing land. I have been in dialogues before, but this was different. It felt uncomfortable because I was (and am) the middle class scholar wanting to always be in the activist space. Here were people who have no choice but to be activists. It inspired two thoughts. The first is that theological reflection and resistance to injustice lives in the bones. The second is to fight against the all-consuming nature of "academic theology".

My journey to what is called "academic theology" began in the desire to learn. As a young professional in a corporate field of fast moving consumer goods, I explored all option of learning about my faith at a deeper level. In the end, the church based short courses were interesting but not fulfilling. So, as people who look for meaning in life, I started another degree. Now, this degree was not meant to become a career as a theologian. However, the meaning became a thought process.

The thinking part of theologising is the critical analysis. In critical analysis, the study of the Divine is paired alongside human behaviour and our thoughts on our reality. Also, the critical analysis is done self reflexively, understanding that as theologians our own positionality shifts theology and how we see the Divine.

The other part of theologising is action. My personal issue (and continued fight) with what is named "academic theology" is its separation by academics from real life. Any academic can tell you the story of how they even landed in theology classes to begin with. And yet, there is some interesting separation of academic theology and lived theology. This is as if somehow entering classes loses the connotation and human behaviour that led them there. Stephan De Beer say this:

...I lament the fact that some of us, and some of our institutions, masquerade radical theologies (whether black theology, liberation theology, womanist theology, feminist theology, or queer theology), although we have departed from solidarity. These theologies have often become neo-orthodoxies, articulated in classrooms but seldom originating from the existential pain and struggles of grass-root spaces." (2026: 5-6)

I agree with this lament and the need to be **active** theologians. The rational split between mind and body has no links with the reality of belief in a world in which it is grounded.

That active nature must be grounded in positionality. I walked in to the dialogue with a certain understanding that I am in many ways part of the oppressed as a Black woman and yet also a part of upwardly mobile middle class of South Africa. This causes discomfort. But journey's like the Land Dialogue provide space to hold that tension and play a part in resistance through solidarity. I am not part of these communities or stories but I stand in solidarity and use my work to promote justice and highlight these stories. Perhaps, in this moment, that is what is needed from me. And in the continued journey, the beautiful people behind this resistance will build this country and hold us who in tension in balance. That is ubuntu.



De Beer, S.F., 2026, "'Where are the prophets?': How academic theology failed us', HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 82(1), a10981. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v82i1.10981



REFLECTIONS ON THE FAITH IN SOLIDARITY HUB

Lethuxolo Nkosi-Soetwater

Earlier this year (in May), we gathered as individuals from several organisations at the Jesuit Institute in Auckland Park as part of a two-day Faith in Solidarity hub. This gathering, a partnership between Church Land Programme, ACT Ubambano, and Iziko Lamaqabane, offered us the/an opportunity to think through the state of the world that we operate in as faith practitioners. Central to our reflections was the evil that continues to persist in the world – with the overarching question, "How long will evil dominate?" This question, deeply inspired by the prophet's lament in Habakkuk 1, forced us to pause and consider the daily occurrences around us. At this time, South Africa was in the height of anti-immigrant protests and anticipating what would happen to people who are oppressed, dispossessed, refugees, and expelled when organisations such as March and March and Abahambe met people such as this in their homes and/or workplaces. The violence and intolerance incited by organisations such as these was in addition to, and already existing, a range of 'politics and practices of death' that have become inherent in our society. Amidst the anxiety caused by such uncertainty, we were tasked with considering what peace-making in contexts such as these looks like and what it would require of us.

Understanding that the world being driven by mechanisms of evil causes persistent uncertainty, we were confronted with the question of why it would be necessary to hope and to pray in a context such as this. Reflecting on Jeremiah 6:16 (Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, "We will not walk in it." We used this verse to guide us in thinking through matters of death and destruction and why it is that shame is not felt by those who contribute to the injustice that leads

to death and destruction. This place, the place at which we pause to ponder the world around us, the verse before us and our next steps, was what we called "the crossroads". Amid the busyness, confluence, and urgency characteristic of crossroads intersections, we considered the benefits of pausing to take in what we see before rushing to act.

What was identified at the crossroads that we paused at were poverty and despair, the resurgence of white supremacy, soaring rates of violence, corruption and the fragility of our democracy, and persistent legacies of a colonial past that continue to haunt the nation, among other atrocities. At this realisation, we were called to meditate on why it is that we are particularly sensitive to the injustice and inhumanity around us. What becomes our responsibility when we are pained by this distortion of humanity? How do we attend to the rupture that disfigures human relationships so much that others may not see that humanity is at stake? When this weighs so heavily on us, are hopelessness and despair appropriate responses?

Jeremiah 6:16 invokes the methodology that is central to the praxis of the organisations gathered – to see, then judge, then act. Pausing at the crossroads was the invitation to see, while sitting in the uncertainty provided the opportunity to judge. As a practitioner within the academic space – where immediate responses to questions and problems are often encouraged- sitting in uncertainty and taking considerable time to ponder whether an answer to the problem at hand even exists posed a significant challenge. By problematising the urge to answer quickly, I was confronted with the power dynamic that exists in both asking questions and providing answers. While a choice must indeed be made between hopelessness and despair, inaction, and action – there is consideration that must be given to how it is that the choice is made. There is a humility in knowing that we are not the first or only people to recognise the distortion of humanity, nor are we the only people affected by it. I learnt that questions about what is seen at the crossroads and what can be done about what we see cannot be asked in isolation.

Attending to the rupture in human relations is a journey that requires of us that we consider people around us, people affected, and sometimes





even the people affecting, in the questions that we ask, in the uncertainty that we sit in and in the responses we choose. It is imperative to understand that there is, in fact, a power dynamic involved in deciding which questions get asked (and which do not get asked), as well as which responses are considered (and which are not considered). This forms part of making knowledge – exercising agency and authority.

This realisation/understanding helps consider live-giving practices of solidarity. The two-day gathering concluded with a thought-provoking Eucharist offered by Nkosi Gola of Iziko Lamaqabane. Both practical and symbolic, this moment inspired a commitment to practising acts of solidarity intended to bring together the broken parts of the collective body (humanity as the body of Christ). At this point, we each walked away with commitments made to how we will move forward in our respective spaces where we confront and address the evil that persists. Given that the space within which I operate is centred on the performance of empire and power that dominates, my commitments going forward were to remain aware and honest of what could be my own complicity in the sustenance of the systems that maintain empire. Both the academic space and theology itself can, at times, collude with violent and harmful systems that re-inscribe harm and further sever us (in those spaces) from those we ought to journey with, the rest of the body of Christ. Taking this seriously has necessitated that I be intentional in the ways I approach research, teaching and learning. The combination of humility, carrying an awareness of how power informs my actions, and intentionally learning from those I seek to teach has been what I walked away from the experience with. And, for this, I am grateful.



LAND DIALOGUE REFLECTION

Zodwa Nsibande

On 14 May 2026, the Church Land Programme (CLP) hosted a Land Dialogue with more than 30 activists from different communities and formations with whom we have been building relationships through their various struggles. The participants came from diverse contexts: women involved in livelihood initiatives such as beadwork and food production; activists organising communities resisting open-cast mining; communities opposing mega-development projects such as dams that threaten to displace them; farm dwellers resisting evictions; and communities whose struggles centre on land and housing in the city.

The gathering came against the backdrop of a series of conversations that CLP has been having with different formations. Through these conversations, we have been reflecting on how the question of land—and particularly discussions about landlessness—has increasingly been dominated by politicians. For some, land has become a mobilisation tool, often allowing them to present themselves as being in solidarity with people who have been made landless, while the lived experiences and voices of those communities remain marginalised.

For CLP, it was important to create a space that forms part of our praxis: a space where activists themselves could speak from their own experiences. They are the ones who have first-hand experience of marginalisation, dispossession and landlessness. The dialogue therefore sought to explore the question: ***"What does land look like beyond conquest?"***

One of the common concerns that emerged was that, over the years, activists organising around land have increasingly been drawn into adopting the language of "rights" as the dominant language through which they articulate their demands. This is partly because the language of rights is what many government officials and some NGOs use when engaging communities. However, the dialogue challenged us to think beyond this framework. The real land question, participants argued, is not simply



about being granted certain rights to land, but about asking: How do communities that have been made landless restore and reclaim what was taken from them?

Many communities spoke about forced removals, the destruction of homes and the displacement of people from ancestral land. Others described the devastating impact of mining operations, including damaged roads, polluted water sources, destroyed grazing land, and threats to graves and other sacred sites. Several participants spoke about the pain of watching their communities suffer while companies continue to profit from resources extracted from their land.

Women shared stories of violence, loss and resilience. Community leaders spoke about young people becoming disconnected from the history of land struggles. Farm dwellers described the restrictive conditions under which they live on commercial farms, where even basic decisions concerning housing and livelihoods can remain subject to the approval of landowners. Despite the differences between these struggles, a common concern emerged repeatedly: the struggle for land remains unfinished.

One of the important points of collective agreement was the need for community activists to reclaim the language of the land struggle. This was seen as an important first step towards re-imagining the struggle for land beyond conquest. Rather than allowing politicians, institutions or development frameworks to define the land question on behalf of communities, activists need to reclaim the concepts, narratives and aspirations that emerge from their own lived experiences.

The dialogue also revisited the analogy of a cow that is nurtured and cared for. Imagine that someone needs only the spleen of the cow—a small part of the whole animal. Yet, to obtain it, the entire cow has to be killed and cut open. This analogy resonated strongly with communities affected by mining. Mining companies may come to extract only particular minerals from beneath the land, but the process can destroy the wider ecological and social systems that sustain communities. Once the minerals have been extracted, communities are often left with land that can no longer support food production, grazing or other livelihoods.

Several speakers highlighted that even where communities are granted


LAND IS LIFE
LAND IS LIFE
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LAND IS DIGNITY

limited rights to use land, they often remain excluded from ownership and control of the resources found beneath or on that land. Others reflected on how laws intended to regulate land frequently fail to address historical injustices and, in some cases, can reproduce forms of exclusion rather than contribute to genuine transformation.

The dialogue therefore opened up a deeper reflection on what it means to struggle for land. It challenged the assumption that the land question can be resolved simply through access, tenure or individual rights. Instead, it invited participants to think about land as a source of livelihood, belonging, memory, culture, dignity and collective life. It also raised questions about who has the power to determine how land is used, who benefits from its resources, and whose knowledge and history are recognised.

The dialogue concluded with reflections on the road ahead. Participants acknowledged that there are no simple solutions or immediate resolutions to the land question. However, there was a strong sense that the gathering had created something valuable: a deeper collective understanding of the land question and a renewed commitment to continuing the struggle together.

It was emphasised that spaces like the Land Dialogue need to be created within individual communities and across different struggles. Such spaces can allow communities to learn from one another, connect struggles that are often treated as separate, and keep alive the collective memory and imagination necessary for building a different relationship with land.

The Land Dialogue reaffirmed that the question of land remains central to people's lives. It is not only a question of ownership or legal rights, but also a question of history, dignity, livelihood, belonging and power. Meaningful transformation will require continued organising, collective learning and action, as well as the courage to reclaim the language through which communities understand and articulate their own struggles.

The struggle continues, but we continue together. As Frantz Fanon reminds us in The Wretched of the Earth: *"For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity."*



A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON IZIKO LAMAQABANE'S "GOD, MONEY, AND GLOBAL INITITIVES (GMGI)" ONLINE PROGRAM

The global economic and development contexts require a rigorous reflection on how the notion of economic development has been, still is, inextricably bound with the long histories of colonial-imperialism and racial extractive economies of domination. As such, economic institutions, as well as economic policy developments at the scale of geopolitical and bilateral relations still lingers on the logic of global coloniality as economic power. What would it mean, therefore, to disentangle by way of rethinking, and decentering from the hegemonic logic of coloniality of power embedded in global economic development, especially emerging economies? Fundamental for "Marxism the notion that the world is unethical is due to its submission by relations to capital," that is, exploitation and the alienation of the human turned into surplus value (profit).

This online curriculum (offered for the first time in 2026 for a cohort of Chinese students) seeks to create a critical framework to rethink current global economic models and explore otherwise possibilities, or alternative, economic development rooted in the practices of care, solidarity, and egalitarianism. The online curriculum predicated on essentializing economies developed through the practices of care, solidarity, and egalitarianism requires specific pedagogical and critical methods of study and research. One of the concomitant methods of eruditive critical learning is Freirean concept of "pedagogy of the oppressed," emphasizing two critical elements: conscientization, defined as the process of coming into critical awareness of the social, political and economic contradictions of reality that leads to humanization. The other is praxis, referring to the attempt to keep theory and practice in a balanced dialect so that one acts reflectively and thinks for action. These two essential elements will assist in framing the online discursive and dissident critical reflections, allowing participants to bring their thoughts to shape and in turn be shaped through dialogue.

READING THE ECONOMY TWICE:

HOW GMGI BROUGHT COLONIAL HISTORY AND TODAY'S SOUTH AFRICA TO CHINESE STUDENTS

Chaoran (Chris) Xue et al., 2026

This summer, a group of Chinese students took part in God, Money, and Global Initiatives (GMGI), a ten-week online seminar built on Iziko Lamaqabane's Political Economies and Development Series. Over thirty hours, South African scholars and community organisers took us from the diamond and gold discoveries of the late 1800s to a communal garden in present-day Khayelitsha. Reading the students' reflections side by side, one change stands out. We arrived treating colonialism as a chapter in a history book and economics as a neutral science. We left seeing colonial history as a structure still at work in South Africa's economy, and economics as a set of choices about whose lives count.

For many Chinese students, colonial history is learned mainly through China's own experience, and Africa appears mostly through the language of China–Africa cooperation. GMGI offered a close look at one country's colonial economy, taught by people who live with its consequences.

Unlearning "neutral" economics

The moment most students named came in the session on apartheid economics. The facilitator first presented the apartheid economy in purely market terms: land, capital accumulation, job reservation, migration. South Africa became the most industrialised country in Africa, and the story read like a textbook. No Black worker had been named. Then the same material was taught again with race restored: the hut tax that pushed rural families into wage labour, the laws that reserved skilled and managerial jobs for white workers, the land legislation that stripped Black ownership outright.

One student wrote that these were not distortions of a free market operating on top of apartheid; they were how the market ran. Another said that seeing the same facts taught twice, once as neutral and once as partial, made him stop trusting "neutral" as a description and start reading it as a choice. Cedric Robinson's argument that capitalism was never race-neutral stopped being a theory and became a lens. Students began asking the question the very first session had posed: when an economy is called "successful," who decides what success means, and who gets edited out?

Colonialism as a living structure

The second lesson was that colonialism did not end when the flags changed. The session on post-colonial theory brought students to Fanon's question: why does independence so rarely emancipate? South Africa after 1994 is the sharpest case. The political transition succeeded, yet the mining complex, land distribution and the ownership of capital barely moved. As one student put it, the coloniser left; the economy stayed colonised.

The session on empowerment policies compared Zambianisation, Zimbabwe's indigenisation and South Africa's B-BBEE. One student admitted arriving with a simple story (colonialism took the resources, so independence should hand them back) and leaving with a harder one: transferring ownership of existing assets is not the same as transforming an economy that remains extractive, commodity-dependent and locked into unequal trade. The session on the IMF, World Bank and African Union carried this to the global level, showing how institutions presented as technical encode creditor interests and Global North dominance. Nkrumah's warning about neo-colonialism, one student wrote, now reads less like rhetoric and more like a prediction that came true.

The quiet machinery of complicity

The story of SASOL gave students a third way to see colonial history. When oil-producing states cut off South Africa's supply in 1973, the apartheid government built a state-protected oil-from-coal industry, while



companies that publicly condemned apartheid kept trading with it privately. One student wrote that the system survived not because it was strong, but because enough people elsewhere found it profitable not to look too closely. Colonial history, in this reading, is not only violence and resistance; it is also ordinary economic decisions made by people who knew better. The course asked us to carry that question into the present: in today's investment in Africa, who benefits and who bears the cost?

South Africans as agents, not subjects

The final sessions turned to communities. In Waterdal, near Johannesburg, Serapeng sa Ditlhare and Environment built its own machine to shred polystyrene, a plastic South Africa's waste hierarchy does not list as recyclable, and trained residents, including more than 500 women, to turn it into insulated cooking bags and eco-bricks. In Khayelitsha, the Ujamaa Collective turned unused public land into an unfenced communal garden with a bakery, an amphitheatre and a children's gardening competition.

These cases corrected an assumption several students had not noticed they held: that poor communities wait to be developed. One student who had read the informal economy through GDP and employment figures realised that informality in South Africa is not a gap in development but a product of colonial and apartheid exclusion, and that the ingenuity in Waterdal was a response to that history. Another, writing about Ujamaa, was struck by its dignity: *"not charity, not aid, but self-reliance built through cooperation."* Hearing directly from the organisers who do this work gave present-day South Africa a human face that no textbook could.

What Iziko Lamaqabane made possible

Iziko Lamaqabane grounds its teaching in Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed: conscientisation, coming into critical awareness of social and economic contradictions, and praxis, keeping theory and action in conversation. In practice, that meant South African scholars and

practitioners as facilitators rather than outside commentators, games and debates alongside lectures, and an arc that moved from history to theory to policy to community.

The course also built bridges to China. One session traced Maoism's influence on African liberation movements such as FRELIMO and ZANU; another asked whether China–Africa cooperation breaks from IMF-style conditionality or represents a new form of integration into global capital. For Chinese students, these were not abstract comparisons. They placed our own country inside the story.

Where students go from here

The clearest evidence of the course's impact is in what students now want to study. One wants to examine how economic narratives get built and whose interests survive inside the word "successful." Another wants to ask whether regulation can recognise informal livelihoods instead of criminalising them. Others want to understand how genuine developmental sovereignty becomes possible, how moral systems make room for injustice, and how to decolonise an economy when the coloniser left the machinery behind.

GMGI did not hand students conclusions about South Africa. It taught them to read an economy twice, once as it describes itself and once with the people put back in, and to bring that habit to every economy they study, including their own.





REFLECTIVE EASSAY

IZIKO LAMAQBANE'S POLITICAL ECONOMIES & DEVELOPMENT SERIES: SETTLER COLONIAL ECONOMIES & IMPERIAL HISTORIES, SESSIONS 1 & 2

Precious Sharon Sinovuyo Bikitsha

Sisonke Msimang's TED Talk, I***f A Story Moves You, Act On It,*** has stayed with me since I first encountered it. Her central provocation- that stories are necessary but not sufficient, that listening must become action- shaped how I approached both sessions of this course. I did not want to tell a compelling story about South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. I wanted the students to leave with a framework for seeing clearly, and the courage to act on what they saw.

Returning to Economic History was itself an act of archival reckoning. I studied the subject at the undergraduate level, and re-entering the material meant drawing on research, reassembling arguments, and asking an unfamiliar question: how do you make this history legible, meaningful, and urgent for a group of Chinese students who had just completed high school? The answer, I discovered across both sessions, was to resist the temptation to simplify and instead to insist on storytelling and connection.

Session 1: The Labour Machine

The first session was built around a single governing question: How did South Africa become one of the most unequal societies in the world? I structured the answer as a six-chapter arc — from the pre-mineral societies through to democracy in 1994 and the persistence of inequality today. The pedagogical decision I am most proud of was the use of anchor stories: Erasmus Jacobs picking up a diamond at the Orange River in 1867; Sipho's family, farmers for three generations, forced by the Hut Tax of 1894 to

seek wages in the mines. These were not illustrations. They were entry points into structural analysis, the kind of analysis Msimang argues stories can enable if we resist sentimentality and demand understanding.

The videos I selected reinforced this method. I played a BBC documentary clip on the mechanisms of the labour machine: the pass laws, migrant labour, and compound system. After I also played a clip of Professor Thula Simpson speaking to the long economic shadow of apartheid into the present. Both clips brought into the classroom voices and visual evidence that lecture slides alone could not carry.

What I did not anticipate was how generative the students would be. On a Saturday evening, on Zoom, they were not passive recipients. Yanqi drew connections between land, lineage, and belonging that went beyond anything in my slides. Lane challenged the premises of the free market with a directness that briefly unmade the lecture and made it better. Mzi asked the question that neither I nor anyone else could fully answer in the time available: *can a worker be oppressed and an oppressor at the same time?*

One of the things I learned across both sessions was that there are profound structural parallels between South African and Chinese history and that teaching South African history to this particular cohort was, implicitly, always already world history. The Hut Tax and the hukou system. Migrant labour compounds and the suppression of internal migration rights. Industrial economies built on racialised hierarchies of mobility and personhood. The comparison is not perfect, but its imperfection is also instructive; what differs between the two cases tells us as much as what rhymes.

Session 2: Who Kept the Apartheid Economy Running?

Session 2 sharpened the lens. Where Session 1 asked how South Africa became unequal, Session 2 asked who kept that inequality running and who profited. The seminar presentation moved through SASOL and the 1973 oil embargo, corporate complicity under sanctions (Shell, BP, Barclays), the MK bombing of SASOL in 1980, and the contemporary spatial legacy of Secunda in the community of Zamdela. The closing frame



four questions to carry into every encounter with any policy, project, or financial model: W*ho benefits? Who pays? Who decides? What was foreclosed?*

I played two videos in this session to anchor the discussion. I played a documentary on the SASOL story and the Fischer-Tropsch process, engineering genius in service of a criminal state. I also used footage from Zamdela itself, giving students a spatial and human anchor for everything the slides had described abstractly.

The students again surprised me. The discussion on accountability versus charity was among the most sophisticated I have facilitated. They were not moved to pity. They were moved to analysis. That is exactly what Msimang is asking for.

What I Am Taking Forward

Teaching this course has clarified something I have long believed but rarely articulated so plainly: South Africa's history is not a local story with global implications. It is a global story that happens to be set here. The Chinese students in this cohort brought that truth into sharp relief with every question they asked. Their presence in the virtual room on a Saturday evening, on Zoom, from a different hemisphere was itself an argument for the course's premise: that economic history, colonial history, and the history of resistance are always transnational, always relational, always unfinished.

Msimang warns us that stories can become a substitute for justice. These two sessions were an attempt to hold both: to tell the story well, and to build into its telling the demand for something more than feeling. I leave with new questions, better ones than I started with, and that is the only honest measure of a course that is working.



EULOGY, A TRIBUTE TO JOHN SESO FUMANA OF AIMM

Mziwandile Nkutha

"We looped the temporality of grief backward in time
and brought it forward to merge with the present" (1)

- Tina M. Campt

How do we describe the indescribable opacity of grief in this profound year of loss? This is a question posed by Tina M. Campt in her piece, "The Opacity of Grief" (2022). Yet, it was a similar question I had indirectly asked myself on the passing of my mother in 2021 and continue to ask every now and then when there is loss of life, either with relatives or close family members. Loss of life or death, it seems "loops the temporality of grief backward in time and brings it forward to merge with the present," we thus live in the presence of grieving death or loss of lives daily.

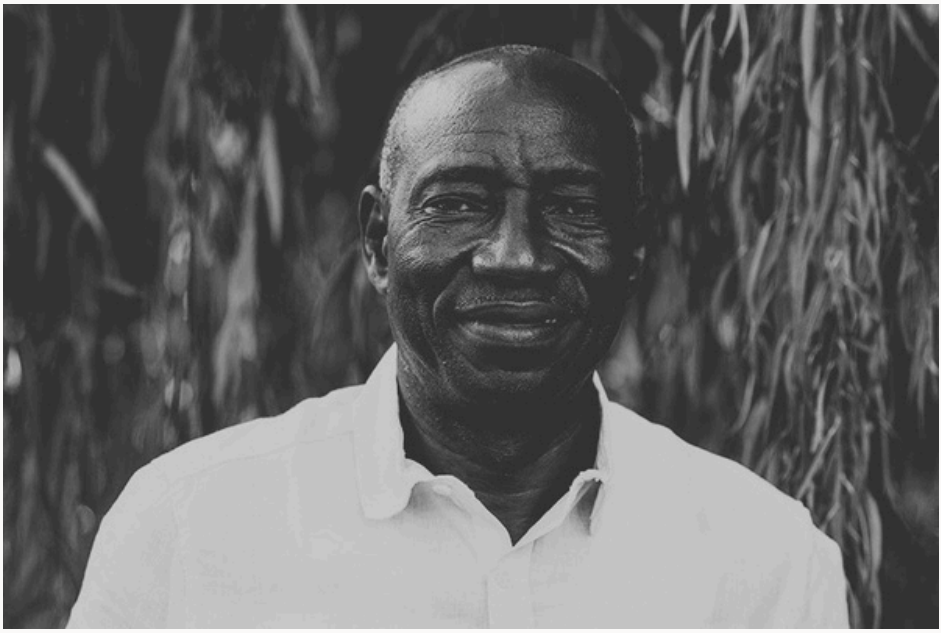
In May this year, amidst the cold morning of South African winter, I received a note from my dear friend, Robert Irundu from the Democratic Republic of Congo, informing me of the sudden and expected passing of John Seso Fumana. We often speak of death as unexpected, yet it seats with us, always present around us. The (un)expectedness of death always register surreality, that is to say, the silent presence of death and grief is always with us. I sat in silence most of that Saturday morning after hearing the news of the passing of our beloved brother, John. Loss has the incapability to be grasp or held. In other words, how does one hold on to what has been lost? To speak of loss is to attempt to hold the void, to linger in the ungraspable, in the realm of memories and meaningful encounters that loss might not erase. This incapability to grasp the void in the presence of loss could be described as opacity. Opacity in this case might not necessarily mean obscurity, vagueness or lack of clarity rather

that which could be (un)announced as a grammar of silence in an attempt to grasp the void of loss. Indeed, it is to ground opacity rather than grasp its enormous meaning of loss that is registered in silence and in poetic annotations. John's death has created a chasm too wide to comprehend but more so an interminable void that wraps us in silence. Loss, void, opacity and silence are a poetic of unsayable melodic aphorism of grief for me.

Grief continues to seat with us as we grieve the loss of the precious life of our dear brother, John. Your devotion and love for God, your family, your vocation with the AIMM community and your love for the people of our continent (Africa) will always be with us. I recall our time together in Cape Town last year, we shared wine, laughter and wonderful stories. I look forward to sharing a matured and palatable glass of wine with you again. Salute!

In solidarity and love.

Mziwandile (Mzi) Nkutha



(1) Tina M. Campt, "The Opacity of Grief," January 26, 2022, https://bombmagazine.org/articles/the-opacity-of-grief/

THIRTY YEARS LATER, WHOSE CITY ARE WE BUILDING?

REFLECTIONS ON THE 16TH BIENNIAL URBAN CONSULTATION

Zenzile Molo

Thirty years is a significant period to sustain conversations about justice, liberation and the transformation of our cities, particularly when many of the conditions that gave rise to these conversations remain painfully familiar. The 16th Biennial Urban Consultation, held in Pretoria under the theme Reset, Organise, Rise: 30 Years Later!, brought together faith-based practitioners, theologians, activists and community organisers to reflect on the unfinished work of urban transformation. I appreciated the commitment of those who have sustained this gathering since 1996, creating spaces for theological reflection and collective discernment. Yet this anniversary also invited an uncomfortable question: what have thirty years of gathering, theologising and organising actually changed for Black communities who continue to experience the city through dispossession, inequality and exclusion?

I ask this question not to diminish the contributions of people who have remained committed to justice, often under difficult conditions, but because honouring their work requires us to examine the distance between our theological commitments and the material realities we seek to transform. The contributions of Tsakani Sibanda and Professor Allan Boesak, alongside reflections on the negotiated settlement of 1994 and its consequences, offered important provocations that connected with questions I have been wrestling with through Black Theology of Liberation and decolonial thought.

Boesak's theological engagement with Jesus entering Jerusalem reminded us that cities are not neutral spaces. They are political and



economic arrangements through which power is exercised, resources are distributed and belonging is determined. This brought to mind Frantz Fanon's observation in The Wretched of the Earth (1961) that the colonial world is divided into compartments. Fanon understood that colonial domination was not only political or psychological, but also spatial, organising where people could live, move and exercise power. Our South African cities remain uncomfortable evidence of this arrangement.

The negotiated settlement formally ended legislated apartheid, but it left much of the geography of colonial dispossession and racial capitalism intact. I have increasingly come to understand this contradiction as post-apartheid apartheid, a condition in which apartheid has formally ended while its spatial, economic and social arrangements continue to structure Black life. People may now move through spaces from which they were legally excluded, but movement should not be confused with belonging, nor political representation with economic liberation. The Black majority continues to experience cities largely organised around inherited patterns of ownership, labour extraction and exclusion.

I thought about Cape Town, where working-class communities continue to travel considerable distances to places where they work but cannot afford to live. I also thought about the contested N2 wall, where demands for housing and dignity have challenged an approach to development centred on security infrastructure. Aníbal Quijano's concept of the coloniality of power sharpens this contradiction, reminding us that colonial hierarchies can continue operating long after formal colonial rule has ended. In this sense, the negotiated settlement changed the political administration of South Africa without fundamentally redistributing the economic power and spatial privileges accumulated through centuries of dispossession.

Tsakani Sibanda's engagement with the Exodus narrative offered another way of understanding this unfinished liberation. Leaving Egypt did not automatically transform the relationships, fears and assumptions produced through bondage. Similarly, the negotiated settlement secured important political rights, but these gains did not amount to the full liberation envisioned by generations of people who struggled against colonialism and apartheid.

Her reflection on the golden calf challenged me to consider the idols shaping our public imagination. Have economic growth, investment, property ownership and security become unquestioned measures of progress, even when their benefits remain inaccessible to many? More uncomfortably, what happens when liberation movements inherit political power? Do they transform oppressive arrangements, or gradually become responsible for administering them? These questions matter because liberation cannot be reduced to changing those who govern while leaving the organisation of wealth, land and power largely untouched.

Boesak's contribution also invited us to revisit the prophetic responsibility of the church. James Cone, in A Black Theology of Liberation (1970), insisted that Christian theology must be understood through God's liberating activity among oppressed people. His argument challenges the possibility of a neutral Christianity that speaks about human dignity while remaining indifferent to the structures that deny it.

According to Boesak the Kairos Document of 1985 made a similar challenge within South Africa, exposing forms of Church Theology that condemned injustice without confronting the political arrangements sustaining it. More than forty years later, we must ask whether churches have developed new ways of appearing prophetic while remaining disconnected from struggles for structural change. A church can preach reconciliation without confronting land dispossession, or practise charity without questioning the conditions producing poverty. I do not dismiss pastoral care, feeding programmes or community accompaniment, because these practices sustain life. However, there is a difference between helping people survive injustice and organising with them to transform its causes.

This tension also connects with the work of the late Professor Vuyani Vellem, whose theological contributions continue to shape my understanding of liberation. In Un-thinking the West (2017), Vellem challenged Black Theology of Liberation to move beyond repeatedly responding to Black suffering within intellectual arrangements that continue to privilege Western knowledge. His contribution raises an uncomfortable question about whether our theological conversations have become more of a pipeline that feed white epistemes with black pain as means to legitimise Ivory Towers.



I find this particularly important when considering who produces theology within our consultations. Through eKasi Theologies, I have become increasingly concerned about the tendency to position academics, clergy and professional practitioners as interpreters of township experiences, while ordinary people are invited primarily to provide testimonies of suffering. Black township communities have always produced theological knowledge through their struggles, questions, resistance and everyday practices of survival. Resetting urban theology must therefore involve reconsidering who shapes our conversations, whose knowledge carries authority and how institutional power is shared.

These ideas challenge my own practice of Contextual Bible Study, city pilgrimages and community formation. Such spaces allow people to connect scripture, history and their lived realities, but their significance should extend beyond the immediate learning experience. If a pilgrimage exposes the relationship between apartheid spatial planning and contemporary inequality, how does that understanding strengthen collective organising? If a Bible study helps communities name oppressive structures, what relationships and possibilities for action emerge afterwards? Reflection matters, but we must remain attentive to whether it strengthens people's capacity to change their material circumstances.

As we imagine the next Biennial Urban Consultation, I believe we should build on the theological contributions and relationships sustained over these thirty years while becoming more intentional about accountability and collective action. Rather than simply introducing new themes, perhaps we should examine what has changed since previous gatherings, what our interventions have achieved and where they have fallen short. We should create space for honest reflection on unsuccessful initiatives, difficult partnerships and the limitations of our approaches, without treating such conversations as institutional failure.

I would also value greater participation by community organisers, young people, informal traders, migrants and residents confronting displacement, not merely as speakers describing their struggles, but as people shaping the consultation itself. Pretoria could become an intentional classroom where theological reflection encounters the political

economy of the city through relationships with communities already organising for change. Between consultations, existing networks could strengthen collaboration across cities rather than creating additional structures that compete with organisations already doing important work.

I left the consultation appreciating its theological depth, the generosity of those who shared their knowledge and the commitment that has sustained this space. Yet I also left convinced that longevity must be accompanied by accountability. Resetting requires us to question what we have normalised, organising demands relationships capable of confronting power, and rising must mean more than renewed enthusiasm for another programme.

Perhaps the question for the next gathering should not simply be what we intend to discuss, but what we are prepared to change. Thirty years later, the credibility of our urban theology must also be measured by whether communities excluded from the resources and decisions shaping their cities are gaining greater power over their futures. If post-apartheid apartheid continues to define the spatial and material experiences of Black people, then our theological task cannot be limited to interpreting its consequences. We must also question the political and economic compromises that have allowed these arrangements to persist.

Honouring this consultation means carrying forward not only its theological insights, but also stronger relationships, deeper accountability and more effective forms of collective organising. Otherwise, another generation may gather thirty years from now, asking why so much of the city still looks the same.





IZIKO LAMAQABANE

CULTIVATING SOLIDARITY AT THE SITE OF STRUGGLE

GROWING FROM THE GRASSROOTS A HARVEST OF JUSTICE

Steve Schallert

The past few years have seen a dramatic rise in global consciousness and international working-class solidarity, particularly amongst young people. There is a resurgence, perhaps pressed upon us by the live-streamed genocide in Palestine, of collectivism and intersectional politics from the grassroots. Boundary lines and movement spaces are opening up as new networks of material and relational solidarity are forming the world over. It's a profound happening for those paying attention amid all that is worth despairing.

Among these resurgent wirings our own patchwork of global cooperation are firing on all fronts. We have strengthened old relationships in the past. year and grown many new ones in the work of mutual solidarity and support. One worth giving particular attention to is our freshly formed bond with Peace Catalyst International. PCI is a global network of peace practitioners and justice organisations mutually supporting one another in the work of equipping and mobilizing faith communities for collaborative peacebuilding across line of difference.

After a significant discernment period invited by PCI we have moved forward in becoming an official "peacebuilding parthner" with Peace Catalyst and has enjoyed the initial season of relational connection and cooperative work.

One particular gift for Iziko Lamaqabane has been PCI's willingness to undertake the infrastructural support required for fundraising. As a US based NGO, this partnership now makes direct support and mutual aid for Iziko Lamaqabane a much simpler and process, particularly for our US & Canadian based partners. Those wishing to offer direct financial support to the work of Iziko Lamaqabane can n ow do so through the PCI network. We're grateful for the institutional solidarity, the wide network of new and old comrades we have met this past year and we look forward to a

deepening bond in justice as our various efforts connect, offer wisdom and solidarity.

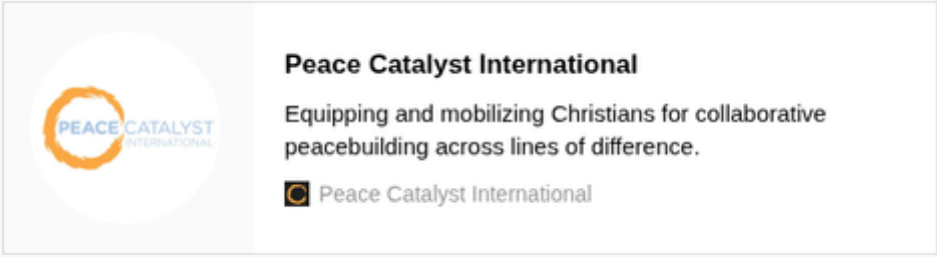
For those interested in partnering with the ongoing work of Iziko Lamaqabane, we welcome you to visit our "Peace-Partners" page on the Peace Catalyst website (below). Iziko's ongoing work, much of which is represented in this praxis journal, is completely funded through networks of mutual aid and community support. It's been a joy to walk together in this work.

PEACECATALYST.ORG/IZIKO-LAMAQABANE

Iziko Lamaqabane cultivates relational solidarity among peace and justice practitioners through pilgrimages, retreats, online networks, and thematic gatherings. Each program creates space for accompaniment, critical reflection, spiritual grounding, and collective learning at the site of struggle — strengthening the wisdom, resilience, and capacity of those working for justice across South Africa and beyond.

Peace Catalyst International serves as Iziko's U.S.-based solidarity partner. Donations made through ***peacecatalyst.org/iziko-lamaqabane*** are designated for Iziko's programs and transferred in alignment with our partnership agreements and financial accountability standards. PCI provides administrative infrastructure while honoring Iziko's leadership and local vision.

Visit **peacecatalyst.org** to learn more about the movement and to access their significant archive of peacemaking resources.



IZIKO'S PEDAGOGY

Iziko Lamaqabane, meaning ***"the gathering space of comradeship,"*** highlights our pedagogical approach to accompaniment on the pilgrimage of liberation. As a faith informed support centre for peace and justice practitioners, it is our conviction that the more we can walk together, sharing stories, friendship and knowledgies, the more our wisdom, longevity and capacity to disrupt violence and oppression will grow. Our practices at Iziko emerge from this desire to serve practitioners by exchanging and practicing our ***'Four R's'*** together: ***research, resource, remember,*** and ***retreat.***

RE-SEARCH

The practice of thinking has often been denied to Black people. As such, our posture at Iziko is to explore new ways of knowing and being within Black communities and to resurface historically maligned knowledgies and experiences. This epistemic understanding seeks to place blackness and black lived-experience as a space we draw learning and thinking from for the work of healing colonial wounds.

Iziko's research posture, therefore, explicitly centers urban African con(texts) and blackness at large. Our methodological premise, or assumption, is that black people have always used trans/inter/disciplinary methods to explain, explore, and story the world, because thinking and writing and imaging across a range of texts, disciplines, histories, and genres unsettles dismal and insular racial logics and praxis. The aim of Iziko's knowledge production is to understand and construct contextual urban peace and justice theologies. To learn with and within black and disenfranchised communities as a means of interpreting urban con(texts) in Africa.

RE-SOURCE

The space of resource connects together diverse urban peace and justice practitioners to co-create the meaning of communal learning, publishing and archival space. For Iziko, resource is a means to explore and express practitioners' individual experiences alongside urban hermeneutical imaginations. Our 'Programs of Solidarity' exist to provide places where resources are given, extracted, invited and presented for the collective pursuit of peace and justice in our various contexts.

We seek to walk alongside practitioners through the curation and facilitation of an ever expanding inventory of knowledgies expressed across a range of disciplines (writing, storying, music, art, poetry, audio archiving, etc). Iziko has already established a Peace Library in conjunction with St. Augustine College of South Africa and will soon be establishing the 'Iziko Journal,' a peace and justice theological journal which will publish work researched by participants and scholars working with and alongside Iziko.

RE-TREAT

The practice of retreat is anchored in a spiritual accompaniment that fosters a nexus between contemplation and action. It enables weary practitioners to rest, unlearn urgency and explore the contemplative practices of silence, prayer, and meditation; to literally retreat from the front lines of sites of struggle and unburden. Iziko recognizes the dehumanizing demands our societies often place upon our bodies; the ways in which labour practices exploit and reduce people to surplus value. Thus we also recognize and practice retreat as a subversive act.

Retreat as resistance engenders the practices of refusal, one that begins with the right to refuse what has been denied to the disenfranchised. Iziko seeks to put these aspects of retreating together to present a certain kind of spirituality predicated on a claim that blackness is a disruption of modernity's social logic and organization.

RE-MEMBER

The practice of re-membering does not only signify memory or remembrance but also an invitation to be part of the Body of Christ. As William Cavanaugh frames it, the Eucharist is an anamnesis of the past; Jesus commands his followers, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk.22:19). If we understand this command properly, however, the Eucharist is much more than a ritual repetition of the past.

It is rather a literal re-membering of Christ's body, a knitting together by the participation of many in God's sacrifice. To re-member is thus the political work of putting the pieces back together again. Forging new ways of being and belonging in fragmented communities. Iziko recognizes that in most African contexts there is so much dismemberment from community, land (spatiality), self and history caused by the scourge of coloniality and oppression. The Scramble for Africa has produced a wounded and fractured continent yearning for remembrance. Remembering is, therefore, an ongoing reflective and negotiated process of healing justice.

Finally, this practice also recognizes that we are a forgetful people and we ought to be intentional in narrating the complexity and meaning of truth to advance God's vision of shalom.



IZIKO'S PROGRAMS OF SOLIDARITY

PRACTITIONER RETREATS

The pursuit for peace and justice within sites of struggle is arduous and demanding work, often exposing practitioners to significant personal, social, colonial and secondary traumas. We recognize the constant state of stress, fear and violence that black bodies in particular are systematically exposed to and expected to endure. Therefore Iziko's practitioner retreats seek to provide regular opportunities for those who work on the front lines to rest, recuperate and reclaim. Offering both short (2-3 day) and long term (a week or more) guided residential retreats, we collaborate with practitioners to facilitate spacious programming incorporating mindfulness practice, contemplation, silence, group sharing, short input times and shared meals.

While each retreat is cultivated for participants' particular needs, we formulate our offerings around ***Iziko's "Three Pillars of Retreat" -***

1. The Body as Labour (we are more than surplus value)
2. Reclaiming Our Bodies (the inner transformation of practitioners)
3. Sabbath as Resistance (retreat as refusal and subversive action)

LIBERATION LEARNING PILGRIMAGES

One of Iziko's primary programs of solidarity is the ongoing facilitation of pilgrimage to and from ***sites of struggle*** for the cultivation of relational solidarity and mutual support. We believe that pilgrimage is holy work, a long stride toward both personal and collective transformation and believe that sites of struggle, past and present, are sacred grounds where the most fundamental truths are able to surface.

Truths often unheard, ignored or deliberately silenced. Truths which cry out, disrupt and demand to be heard. Truths, which if allowed to speak, can be metabolised for the healing of colonial wounding. Solidarity at the site of struggle is at the very heart of Ubuqabane (Comradeship), to allow the pain of others to become our pain. So while tourists simply pass through a place, pilgrims, in contrast, allow a place to pass through them, making the labour for liberation one which we carry together.

Iziko's program of 'pilgrimage as solidarity' is expressed and facilitated in three primary ways:

BRIDGING SITES OF STRUGGLE

First and foremost, we desire to use pilgrimage as a bridging point for peace and justice practitioners engaged in diverse glocal struggles. Whether across the city or across the world, there is deep sustaining value in providing opportunities for practitioners to sojourn with others who are also experiencing violence and oppression in different geographical contexts. These pilgrimages allow for the mutual exchange of experience, resources and story which is transformative both for individuals witnessing another's context of struggle, but also for peace and justice work at large to develop deeper bonds, knowledgies, sustainability and integrated witness.

AMAQABANE ONLINE NETWORKS

While the opportunity for physical pilgrimage between sites of struggle isn't always possible, Iziko also works to cultivate regular online gathering spaces where global peace and justice practitioners can meet, learn, connect and share together. These connection points are often a starting place from which deeper works of solidarity can be formed and mutual support can grow.

IMMERSIVE LEARNING JOURNEYS

Finally, Iziko also provides opportunities for individuals, faith communities, organisations and universities to participate in curated 'Liberation Learning Pilgrimages.' We invite pilgrims to walk with and listen deeply to current and historic sites of struggle as a means of collective learning and for the cultivation of global and inter-organizational solidarity.

While every pilgrimage hosted on behalf of groups are organized for specific outcomes, our offerings follow a cycle of praxis for pilgrimage:

IZIKO'S "CYCLE OF PRAXIS FOR PILGRIMAGES"

Immersion *- you are in a context*
Reflect *- what is happening in the context?*
Analysis *- why is it happening?*
Theologise *- what should be happening?*
Cultivate Praxis *- what is the gap between what is and what should happen?*



IZIKO'S CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Iziko is currently in development of an accredited certificate program in partnership with the ***Centre for Faith & Community at the University of Pretoria***. As a longer-term residential program for active peace and justice practitioners which integrates all of our other programs of solidarity, this course will become a unique opportunity for Iziko to walk a long journey of mutual learning and development with practitioners. Our current goal is to begin offering our certificate program in 2026 dependent upon funding and accreditation.

THE IZIKO JOURNAL

The Iziko Journal is the archival hub for the knowledge production which emerges from our solidarity work. While still in development, we hope the journal will serve a wide audience of scholars and practitioners with fresh insights into emerging peace, justice and liberation theologies and decolonial practices.

WORKSHOPS & GATHERINGS

Iziko hosts regular rhythms of thematic gatherings across South Africa to help cultivate critical consciousness with peace and justice practitioners. Facilitated in partnership with a broad network of organizations and covering a wide spectrum of topics, our gatherings serve as a catalyst for peace and justice witness by deepening knowledgies, broadening relationships, and encouraging personal transformation for practitioners.

These gatherings also provide opportunities for Iziko to gain traction for more substantive solidarity work.

IZIKO'S DIRECTORS & PARTNERS



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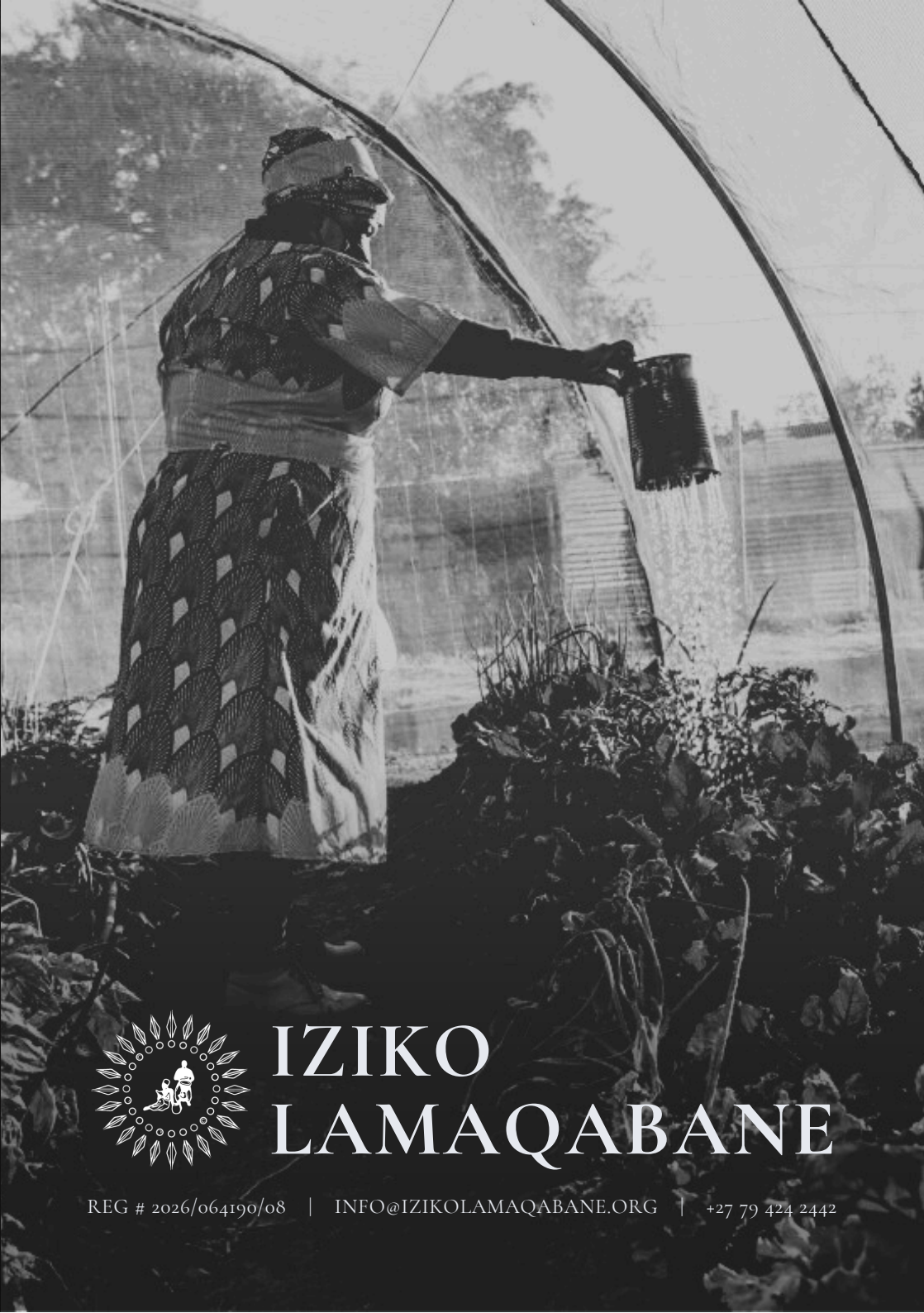
NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Mennonite Missions Network, USA (MMN)
Eastern Mennonite University, USA (EMU)
Africa-Inter Mennonite Mission (AIMM)
Mennonite Church Canada
Africa Reconciled, DR Congo
Church Land Programme, South Africa (CLP)
The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Pan Africa
Centre for Faith & Community at the University of Pretoria, South Africa (CFC)
South African Development & Reconstruction Agency (SADRA)
Women in Agricultural Rural Movement, South Africa (WiARM)
St. Stephen's University, New Brunswick (Canada)
Misingi Trust, Kenya
ACT Ubumbano, South Africa
The Warehouse Trust, South Africa
Saint Augustine College, South Africa
Peace Catalyst International, USA
Bethlehem Bible College, Palestine (BBC)





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