

Programme

Research and Innovation Week

25 - 29 May 2026
Muckleneuk and Science Campuses

Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair Presents:
Symposium on Reclaiming African Languages: Identity, Knowledge, and Educational Transformation
Date: 26 May 2026, Time: 8:30am-13:00pm, Venue: Bamboo, Kgorong, UNISA Main Campus

Time	Activity
08:30 – 09:00	Registration, tea and networking
09:00 – 09:10	Welcome and Opening Remarks — Prof Puleng Segalo (Chair, CALRC)
09:10 – 09:20	Symposium Reflection: Engaging the Annual Lecture — Mabafokeng Hoeane (Researcher, CALRC)
09:20 – 09:35	Publishing in African languages – Opportunities and Challenges Mrs Henrietta Pieterse (UNISA Press)
09:20 – 09:40	Language, Identity & Epistemic Justice— vangile gantsho (Poet, Healer, Writer, Publisher and Co-Founder of imphepho press)
09:40– 10:00	Policy, Curriculum & Institutional Transformation—Dr. Mlamli Diko (Senior Lecturer, African Languages, UNISA)
10:00– 10:20	Q & A
10:20-10:35	Comfort Break
10:35 – 10:55	Technology & Knowledge Production— Ms. Opelo Thole (Deputy Director of the Human Language Technology (DSAC)
10:55 – 11:15	Community, Youth & Activism— Mr. Sanele KaNtshingana (Lecturer, African Languages, University of Cape Town)
11:15 – 11:35	Q & A
11:35 – 11:45	Respondent: Towards an African Languages Action Framework — Prof Siyasanga Tyali (Director: School of Arts)
11:45 – 12:00	Closing Remarks
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch

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SPEAKER



Mr Sanele kaNtshingana: *Lecturer, Department of African Languages, UCT*

Sanele kaNtshingana is a lecturer in the African Languages section of the School of Languages and Literatures at the University of Cape Town. His PhD research traces how isiXhosa-speaking intellectuals, thinkers, and activists from 1838 to 1938 conceptualized political authority through vernacular concepts such as *umbuso* and *umthetho* during a period of intense transformation in the Eastern Cape. The research brings renewed attention to figures often dismissed as mere "informants" or "colonial collaborators" — such as Gciniswa Noyi and William Kekale Kaye — while reinterpreting more widely recognized thinkers like Tiyo Soga, William Wellington Gqoba, and John Tengo Jabavu not merely as Christian leaders but as significant political theorists. His work contributes to African political theory and epistemic decolonization by foregrounding African intellectual traditions on their own terms. KaNtshingana is a 2025–26 Mandela Fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University, and a Visiting Fellow Affiliate at the Center for African Studies at the same institution.

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SPEAKER



vangile gantsho is a poet, healer, teaching artist and co-founder of impepho press. she is the current editor of *New Coin Poetry Journal* and the author of poetry collections *red cotton* (2018) and *Undressing in Front of the Window* (2015). she holds an MA in creative writing from the University Currently Known as Rhodes and has taught at several tertiary institutions in South Africa and the USA. her work appears in various publications including small fisted poems (forthcoming), *The Creative Arts: On Practice, Making and Meaning* (2024), *Wild Imperfections: An Anthology of Womanist Poems* (2021), *New Daughters of Africa* (2019), *The Atlanta Review* (2018) and *Illuminations* (2017). Gantsho has performed her work on three continents and curated and co-curated literary events across the globe, both in-person and online. she is dedicated to initiatives that encourage black feminine visibility and healing, such as *Ukuthula*, a creative writing resistance to gender-based violence, and *smallgirl rising connecting the Divine Black Feminine*, an international poetry healing initiative.

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Opelo Keboneilwe Thole, *Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, Republic of South Africa*

Opelo Keboneilwe Thole is a language practitioner, technologist, and translator with extensive experience spanning classroom education, parliamentary language services, and national language policy implementation. A native of Mammutla village in the North West Province, she began her career as a teacher of Setswana and English at Galaletsang High School in Kuruman before joining the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa as a Language Practitioner specialising in Setswana translation.

She subsequently joined the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, where she served as Chief Language Practitioner (Editing) in the Terminology Development Section. She currently holds a position in the Department's Human Language Technologies (HLT) unit, where she manages a portfolio of projects at the intersection of language, technology, and national development. Her project responsibilities encompass the development of South African Sign Language (SASL) resources — including an online interpreting system and a corpus of signed place names — interactive educational platforms, the documentation and technological development of endangered indigenous languages including Namagowab and Njuu, the development of applications and systems for colloquial language varieties, and the construction of Large Language Models (LLMs) with a particular focus on SASL. She additionally trains translators in the use of OmegaT, a Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tool.

As a freelance English-to-Setswana translator, Thole works across a range of registers and sectors, translating school curricula, children's literature, university tutorial materials, technical manuals, and corporate documentation. Her work reflects a sustained commitment to the revitalisation, preservation, and technological advancement of South Africa's indigenous languages.

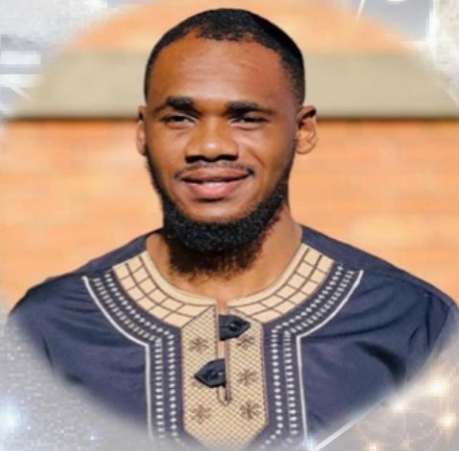
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Dr. Mlamli Diko (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa (UNISA), where he specialises in isiXhosa language and literature, positioning his scholarship at the intersection of linguistic inquiry and literary interpretation. His research trajectory, which integrates gender studies, general linguistics, and African literary traditions, is grounded in critical interaction with contemporary socio-cultural and political dynamics. With publications in various academic platforms, he serves as a supervisor to postgraduate students.

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Hetta Pieterse is a Commissioning Editor and Manager (Unisa Press), has completed an MA in Information Science (UNISA) and is currently enrolled for her PhD (UP). She is an Editorial Board Member of ANFASA (Academic and Non-fiction Authors Association of South Africa). She holds an Honours Degree in English, a Teaching degree (UP), Fine Arts Diploma (UJ) and two Marketing Diplomas (Unisa: International Marketing & The Basics of Business). She has delivered and published conference papers, have co-authored and authored articles and book chapters. She practices fine arts as a printmaker, of monographs and artists' books. She is involved in the Moot Community clean-up project series, where she regularly helps to design and paint large murals on bridges and walls in the Pretoria Moot region – apart from assisting with general cleaning up actions. Currently she is painting a bridge which is 45 meters wide – look out for it on CR Swart drive on your way to the Hardy Muller traffic circle, in Waverley, Pretoria..