

# Peace Afrika

A Newsletter of the Umtapo Centre

Vol.17 No.1

April/May 2013

## Revival of Ubuntu



TRANSFORMATION, EMPOWERMENT & SOCIAL ACTIVISM

## CONTENTS

### **1. UMTAPO'S PROGRAMMATIC WORK 01**

BUILDING A TEACHING/LEARNING COMMUNITY USING UBUNTU 01

SCHOOLS AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS 07

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 23

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION 24

### **2. FEATURE ARTICLES: 29**

UMTAPO BOARD VISITS PROJECTS IN LIMPOPO 29

AFRICA AND THE LEGACY OF CHAVEZ 31

Published by Umtapo Centre and funded by the C S Mott Foundation.  
Articles, information and comments are welcome, and should be submitted to :  
The Director,  
P O Box 37674,  
Overport 4067,  
South Africa.

Design and layout: Crystal Clear Visual Communication  
nikhiel31@gmail.com  
crystalclear127@gmail.com  
0833246062

# UMTAPO'S PROGRAMMATIC WORK

## Building a Teaching and Learning Community Using Ubuntu/Botho

by

**Professor Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane**

*An edited version of a speech delivered to a school community in Henley-on-Klip, Gauteng*



*Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a Western language. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, "Yu unobuntu"; "Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu." Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have.*

*(Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu)*

The concept is, of course, enshrined in the expression:

*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu (Nguni)*

*Motho ke motho ka batho (Sotho)*

*Munhu i munhu hi van'wana vanhu (Tsonga)*

The point to bear in mind throughout this discussion is that the concept is not simply Nguni, although to avoid tedious repetition I shall use the Nguni expression. As educators, however, you should package the concept in terms with which every child can identify. That way it will be appropriated by most children at the school and assimilated by the rest, on their own terms. Ubuntu is a useful tool for building a teaching and learning community – indeed, for teaching and learning across the curriculum, as I intend to demonstrate.

But where do I begin to talk about a subject – being a human being, for that is what in the final analysis ubuntu means – in which each person present is an expert? How do I differentiate ubuntu from the common heritage of human beings the world over? Indeed, ubuntu finds parallels in other worldviews globally. The Maori have *manaakitanga*, the Wurrundjeri have *tandurrum*, and the Maldivian have *aog-gartherikan* to express one of the central tenets in ubuntu, which is generosity towards others, including and particularly complete strangers.

People who use ubuntu, therefore, to express cultural chauvinism propagate reverse cultural imperialism. They are as mistaken as those who dismiss ubuntu as an expression of the simplistic mind of the "Bantu" or as an exclusionary construct. Fear of a new form of cultural hegemony taking hold through the practice of ubuntu is not borne out by an examination of the concept in its unadulterated form. You can invoke ubuntu to break down the black/white/yellow/brown divide in our vastly polarised world. No one needs to feel left out among your staff and students. Ubuntu is colour blind – in fact, it reaches out more to those of other colours who may feel outsiders. It is a doctrine of universal acceptance based on common human traits; it breaks down barriers derived from the construction of self and otherness. But also if they manifest themselves, teach the differences – such as, for example, the fact that abantu would be taken aback to hear your charges sing: "Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all!" Among abantu love of self begins with love of others; it is conferred on you by others.

It is common to speak of ubuntu and traditional culture from which ubuntu springs as static and fixed, incapable of evolving and incorporating new forms of consciousness. That, too, is a mistaken notion.

No one can define ubuntu; one can only demonstrate its presence or absence in human affairs. What I propose to do, therefore, is to demonstrate expressions of ubuntu – or, indeed, its absence from the conduct of national affairs – by highlighting some significant events in the final fifty years of our long walk to freedom.

I am by no means suggesting, however, that ubuntu is an invention of the past fifty years. The concept is as old as the hills. Our people and their institutions are products of a resilient culture that withstood between three and five centuries of some of the most gruesome oppression ever conceived by one group of people against another. Ubuntu is at the heart of their culture that colonialism, segregation and apartheid could suppress and distort but never eradicate. Ubuntu stands at the polar end of apartheid culture.

Where apartheid culture was exclusive, unaccommodating, and life-denying; ubuntu is inclusive, accommodating, and life-giving. Whereas apartheid culture was incestuous and, therefore, moribund; ubuntu is capable of being transplanted from one era to the next to feed fruit to future generations. Nor can anyone understand the life-and-death preoccupation in this land with notions and structures of "accountability" and "transparency" and "fair play" – even if the beneficiaries

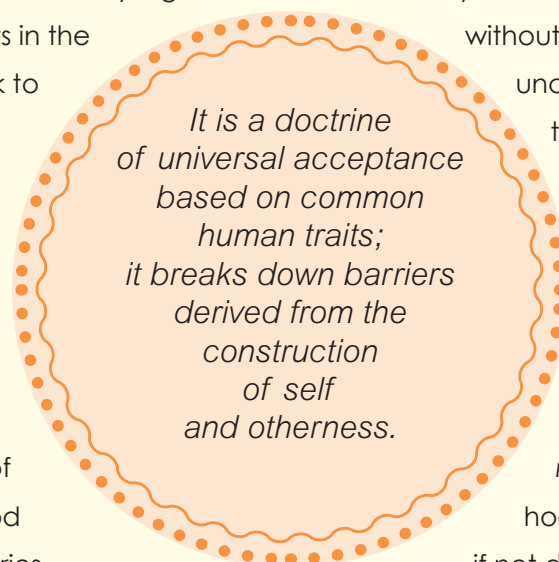
are likely to be a bunch of political thugs – without deeply appreciating people's understanding of the obligations that attach to leadership as passed down to them through the ages.

Ubuntu should be intrinsic, too, to the construction and expression of *ubufazi* or *isimame* (womanhood/motherhood) that is often misunderstood

if not demeaned, so I will begin my

illustrations with demonstrations of *ubufazi* ("spouse" to ubuntu) in the context of this nation's unfolding culture of liberation.

On August 9, we celebrate the anniversary of the Women's March to Pretoria, the seat of govern-



ment, to protest the extension to African women of horrible laws that were called the pass laws.

Until the 1950s passes were carried by African men only over the age of 16. A man could be stopped by a policeman and asked to show his pass. If he couldn't show it on the spot, even if he had forgotten it on the table as he walked out of his house, he could be arrested and sentenced to thirty days in prison or required to pay a fine of 30 British pounds (today that would be about R400). The pass showed where and for whom a man was allowed to work and controlled men's movements in and out of the city. If a man was stopped by the police in Henley-on-Klip, even if he was only in Henley-on-Klip for a day to reclaim his late cousin's corpse from the baas's small holding – but his pass said he lived in Thohoyandou, Mthatha, or Phutha-ditjaba – he could be arrested and sentenced to thirty days in prison or required to pay a fine of 30 British pounds.

When a new law was passed requiring African women also to carry passes, the women said “No!” It was gross intrusion on and violation of ubufazi or isimame as universally understood and honoured. From every corner of the country, between 20 000 and 30 000 black women – joined by white women, brown women and yellow women – marched to Pretoria to make their views known to Prime Minister Hans Strijdom. Those other women of colour acted in solidarity with black women, in the true spirit of ubuntu that teaches that “I am because you are”. As you know, “I am because you are” is one of several translations of ubuntu. An extension of the philosophy is, in Sesotho, khosi ke khosi ka batho. With these various sayings I come back to the obligations of leadership that I mentioned earlier among abantu and the precept that there can be no leadership without a people (democracy, consensus, collaborative

decision-making, etc.). Like teachers, leaders must be centred among the people and be intimate with those they lead. No leader was ever greater than the people s/he serves. Strijdom and his kind did not understand these assumptions about the nature of leadership embedded in ubuntu.

As the women marched to Pretoria, they sang the Song of the Women:

*Wathint' umfazi, wathint' imbhokodo*  
You touch a woman, you touch a pounding stone  
*Strijdom, uzokufa!*  
*Strijdom, you'll die!*

In case you think from their song that the women wanted to kill Strijdom, they didn't – although two years later Strijdom died suddenly. But it wasn't the fault of the women. Maybe Strijdom's cruel, uncaring heart turned into a ball of worms. Who knows? He certainly had a bad heart – intliziyo embhi, pelo empe – and the human parts in him were missing. People used to say of him “Sies, akanabuntu!” or “hana botho!”

The women's message, however, went beyond threatening to stone Strijdom. Imbhokodo is a stone women use traditionally to pound grain – such as corn (mmidi, umbhona) or sorghum (mabele, amazimbha). Without women, therefore, communities starve, shrivel (like Strijdom's heart) and die. That is because women are the mainstay of society and heroines of continuance, who sustain life, making sure life continues from one generation to the next. Black women, white women, brown women, yellow women, women of all colours were also reminding us that **a nation that destroys its women and children is a nation without a future**. A nation of strong women is a strong nation. A chain is as strong as the weakest link; undermine women's contribution to the well-being of society, you will surely shrivel (like Strijdom's heart) and die as a people.

Building a new society using ubuntu requires the kind of solidarity the women cultivated. Solidarity becomes the corner stone from which common purpose grows. Principle is another useful building block: without occupying the high moral ground the women occupied one's integrity and, therefore, one's efficacy are compromised. We also learn from the women that how we conduct national affairs must translate into how we conduct community and personal and, indeed, professional affairs.

***You cannot build a cohesive community of learners without building first a community of teachers on the foundations of ubuntu. You cannot build a community of effective educators either if your stock-in-trade is competition among yourselves rather than collaboration with one another.***

The on-going struggles of women and children in our land make all that manifestly clear. Their history is the gateway to making informed choices for themselves and their communities. Their history is also the measure of the spaces their people have traversed to get them where they are and the measure of how far society still needs to go on its unfinished quest for full emancipation. As celebrated poet and University of Cape Town Vice Chancellor Njabulo Ndebele puts it, "it is a blind progeny that acts without indebtedness to the past." Teach the children their history that they may cultivate a historical consciousness early for its absence debilitates for life. Reintegrate them to their history and culture founded on the timeless, universal, and humanising values of ubuntu. What else does that history tell us?

Upon Strijdom's death in 1958 another man who also failed to heed the message of the women and the lessons of ubuntu became prime minister. His name was Dr Hendrik Verwoerd. He had as little regard for ubuntu of other people as Hans

Strijdom. But you cannot fight to destroy ubuntu of other people – that of your colleagues or your students – without destroying yourself in the process. It is rather like the jailer who ends up being the jailed too!

Verwoerd tightened the chains of oppression even more than Strijdom. People again rose up in protest – this time men and women. They wanted to do away for good with passes that had become badges of slavery. On March 21 1960 in many parts of the country they did what the women had done in 1956 and marched to police stations in their neighbourhoods to say "No to passes!" A few kilometres from Henley-on-Klip, in a township called Sharpeville, the people surrounded the police station to protest passes. Police opened fire. This is how the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg Ambrose Reeves describes the gruesome episode:

Sixty-nine people were killed, including eight women and ten children, and of the 180 people who were wounded, thirty-one were women and nineteen were children. According to the evidence of medical practitioners it is clear that the police continued firing after the people began to flee: for, while thirty shots had entered the wounded or killed from the front of their bodies no less than 155 bullets had entered the bodies of the injured and killed from their backs. All this happened in forty seconds, during which time 705 rounds were fired from revolvers and stern guns. But whatever weapons were used the massacre was horrible. Visiting the wounded the next day in Baragwanath Hospital near Johannesburg, I discovered youngsters, women and elderly men among the injured. These could not be described as agitators by any stretch of the imagination. For the most part they were ordinary citizens who had merely gone to the Sharpeville police station to see what was going on. Talking with the wounded I found that everyone was stunned and mystified by what had taken place. They had certainly

not expected that anything like this would happen. All agreed that there was no provocation for such savage action by the police. Indeed, they insisted that the political organisers who had called for the demonstration had constantly insisted that there should be no violence or fighting.

Sipho Sepamla's evocation of the same events in a poem titled "I Remember Sharpeville" reads in part as follows:

*On the 21st March 1960  
on a wrath-wrecked  
ruined-raked morning  
a black sea surged forward  
its might ahead  
mind behind  
it had downed centuries-old containment...  
it sucked into its core  
the aged and the young...  
into a solid compound  
of black oozing  
energy*

*in a flash  
of the eye  
of gun-fire...  
they fled they fell...*

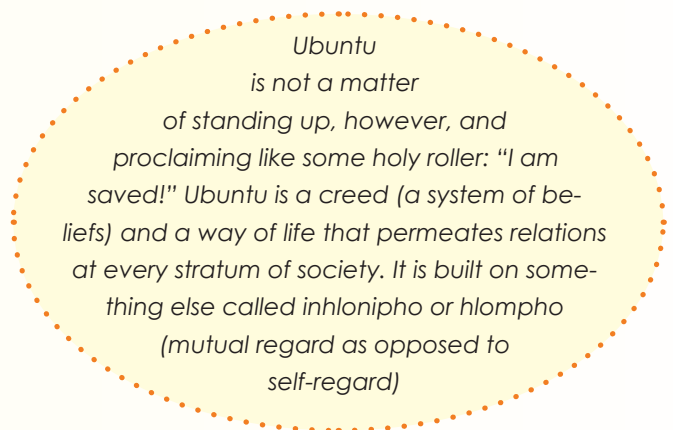
*our heads bowed  
our shame aflame  
our faith shaken  
we buried them for what they were  
our fallen heroes and our history*

My demonstrations on 21 March 1960 taken from one text that is polemic and another that is poetic exemplify teaching across the curriculum that reinforces points an instructor wishes to emphasise. Teaching from this perspective demystifies and brings any subject within the realm of life that can be made to measure the presence or absence of ubuntu in the conduct of personal, community and national affairs. There are thus pedagogical lessons, too, in the history I am telling of how some tried to subvert ubuntu of others.

member Sharpeville" reads in part as follows:

As educators we want to realise that injustice breeds resistance; and increasing injustice breeds mounting resistance. The worst malady that can afflict an educator is the incapacity to hear what colleagues and what students say. Teachers consciously craft and fine tune their listening skills the better to be responsive to their charges and to become effective team players.

Ubuntu as an instructional and learning device is a team thing and, like conflict resolution, teaching from the perspective of ubuntu is more facilitation than instruction. Furthermore, conflict resolution using principles of ubuntu is never dismissive; you can never resolve a problem a child has through detention. Ubuntu requires we engage our charges correctively and not punitively. Conflict resolution and problem solving using strategies of ubuntu are always about conciliation. Verwoerd had little understanding of any of that.



*Ubuntu  
is not a matter  
of standing up, however, and  
proclaiming like some holy roller: "I am  
saved!" Ubuntu is a creed (a system of be-  
liefs) and a way of life that permeates relations  
at every stratum of society. It is built on some-  
thing else called inhlonipho or hlomphe  
(mutual regard as opposed to  
self-regard)*

As teachers embedded in the values of ubuntu I also see you cultivating in your practice, and transmitting same to your charges, a pedagogy for liberation that is the polar opposite of domination and leads us to realise the ideals of a democratic and open society, finding exhilaration in free enquiry. These ideals transcend or rather inform every discipline and are therefore trans-disciplinary.

Building a teaching and learning community on ubuntu is about discarding chains of every description, including handcuffs of the mind!

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu says: "If Jesus had been born in South Africa he would have lived among abantu and taught the Gospel according to ubuntu!" You can never be sure what Archbishop Tutu means. Like Jesus he speaks in parables, except that his parables are more difficult to decipher. We can only guess at what he meant: Ubuntu offers a worldview that sometimes treasures the wisdom of the heart over that of the intellect. That is not to dismiss the intellect that is a valuable commodity for you to cultivate in yourself and in your young charges. But there is also wisdom that derives from the heart. Ubuntu is not a matter of standing up, however, and proclaiming like some holy roller: "I am saved!" Ubuntu is a creed (a system of beliefs) and a way of life that permeates relations at every stratum of society. It is built on something else called inhlonipho or hlomphe (mutual regard as opposed to self-regard) between administrators and teachers, administrators and supporting staff, administrators and students, teachers and their colleagues, teachers and students, the school and the community, etc.*

One of the sharpest reprimands among abantu is when you say of someone: "akacingelani" (s/he has no regard for ubuntu of others). That is the kind of self-love abantu reject outright; it is called narcissism.

If you do not behave like umuntu we say you are acting like isilwane (namane) – you are low life or, as Chinua Achebe would put it, a beast of no nation. Let me tell you another story, about the scorpion and the frog: The scorpion cannot swim so he asks the frog for a ride across the river. "But uyahlabana mos wena – you have a deadly sting!" the frog complains to the scorpion. To convince the frog of the reasonableness of the request, the scorpion says: "I will certainly not sting you because we will both perish if I do." Halfway across the river, however, the scorpion stings the frog. The dying frog asks: "Why?" The drowning scorpion replies: "Because I am like that!"

As a way of life ubuntu has been passed down from generation to generation. It is not codified and written on stone tablets like the Ten Commandments; it is implanted in your heart throughout life. It is a garden you tender with love and care to yield floral melodies.

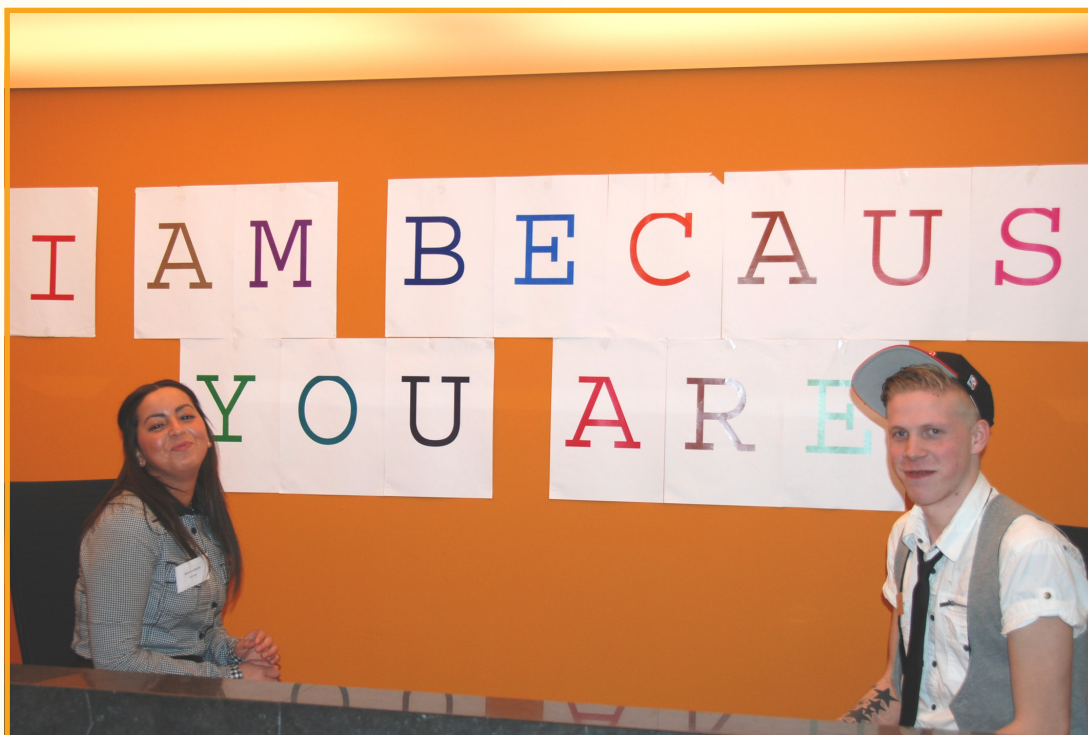
*Building a teaching and learning community on ubuntu is about discarding chains of every description, including handcuffs of the mind!*

When I was growing up no one spoke of teaching as a profession. Like being a nurse or a priest, as my parents were, being a teacher was a vocation – a calling. There was more disdain in those days for journalists than for teachers; and "reporters" were in the main high school drop-outs. Today the tables have been reversed.

Cynics say if you can't do anything, you teach! Teaching is reserved in the main for those with little talent for anything else. That is public perception. But you, my friends, are the disciples that will turn things round, using ubuntu whose custodians you have now become.

In addition, you are in this place as parents in locus. The upbringing of these cherubic children has been entrusted to you. You are conveyor belts. Henceforth your value system becomes their value system. But no one can give to another what they don't possess. Your urgent task and the challenge are to cultivate in each one of you ubuntu in theory and in practice. That requires profound understanding on your part of its core tenets; but it also requires conviction from you. You can only be convincing to your students and colleagues if you are convinced yourself. Cynicism from you will rub on to them, but so will any zeal that you bring to your mission.

I have tried to demonstrate (for I cannot define) a few things about ubuntu as *modus vivendi* (a way of life) and a creed (a system of beliefs): generosity, solidarity, mutual regard, compassion, concern, care, mercy, pity, peace, love, redemption, healing, cleansing/purging, restoration, justice, and service. Ubuntu is a total doctrine, however, and these are only some of its component elements.



## Schools And Tertiary Institutions

### Xolani Tamba Annual Memorial Workshop

Remembering an Umtapo youth activist in Western Cape

Umtapo Centre Board member, Dr. James Marsh, officially opened the workshop at the Fountains Hotel, Cape Town on 21st March, 2013.



Linda Yhukutwana, another UMTAPO Board member gave a summary of her experiences with Xolani Tamba whom she first met in 2000 during her teaching stint at Dr. Mandela High School in Crossroads. She regarded him as the Western Cape UMTAPO pioneer since he was the one who introduced Western Cape schools to UMTAPO.

"He was the kind of person who did not just talk about UMTAPO's values of self-reliance and Ubuntu but he lived them. He set up the Peace Afrika Youth Centre in Khayelitsha without any funds, the first of many in the country"

Linda Yhukutwana

While UMTAPO director, Deena Soliar facilitated the workshop, a presentation on What IS UMTAPO? was done by student, Ukho Dondashe, a Cape Peninsula University of Technology TPF member.

PHARE Educator from Thembelihle Senior Secondary School, Ms. Nombuyiselo Hlomela did a session about the history of Human Rights Day using a participatory approach.

For more interactive group sessions, participants were divided into two groups: Peace Clubs, and Tertiary Peace Forums, to enable them to engage in dialogue and problem-solving.



At the conclusion of the workshop, a Western Cape Coordinating Committee was elected, made up of representatives from the Peace Clubs, Tertiary Peace Forums, educators and provincial UMTAPO Board members. This committee was specifically set up following a request from the UMTAPO Western Cape group during the 21st March 2012 workshop.

#### Western Cape UMTAPO Coordinating Committee

Name	Structure
<b>1. Thozama Jojo</b> Thembelihle Senior Sec.School	<b>Peace Club</b>
<b>2. Khaya Nyatela</b> Thembelihle Senior Sec.School	
<b>3. Sihle Mthetho</b> Langa High School	
<b>4. Zukiswa Tshayinithi</b> Langa High School	
<b>5. Zandiswa Dyamtyeki</b> Philippi High School	
<b>6. Nombuyiselo Hlomela</b> Thembelihle Sec.School	<b>PHARE Educators</b>
<b>7. Tando Dyamara</b> Thembelihle Sec.School	
<b>8. Nombeko Ndlovu</b> Langa High School	
<b>9. Nolubabalo Kwayimani</b> University of Western Cape	<b>Tertiary Peace Forum</b>
<b>10. Ludwe Dyani</b> University of Western Cape	
<b>11. Ukho Dondashe</b> Cape Peninsula University of Technology	
<b>12. Linda Yhukutwana</b> Crawford College	<b>UMTAPO HOD</b>
<b>13. Dr. James Marsh</b>	

Purpose of the committee:

1. To act as a co-ordinating body in the province to ensure activities are taking place and information is shared amongst all members of the UMTAPO family in the Western Cape
2. To be the liaison between the province and the national office of UMTAPO since, unlike the other three provinces in which UMTAPO is focused, there is no full/part-time staff available in the Western Cape
3. To represent UMTAPO in the Western Cape whenever called upon to do

## PEACE CLUBS AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

In the over 300 Peace Clubs that exist in the four provinces that UMTAPO had targeted, an informal survey has revealed that approximately 8000 learners are directly involved and over 120 000 who are impacted upon by the Peace Club

movement.

The co-operation of the provincial Departments of Education are key to the growth of this movement as is witnessed in the Eastern Cape.

### Joint Meeting of UMTAPO and Eastern Cape Department of Education

Held at the Department's office in Zwelitsha, it was attended by UMTAPO Director, Deena Soliar; UMTAPO Schools Programme Co-ordinator, Ms Pumzile Yika, UMTAPO EC co-ordinator, Ms Zukiswa Mpayipeli, UMTAPO EC volunteer/facilitator, Khumbulani Yekani, and Mr Felix Mbetse and Mr Ntandazo Saphepha of the Department of Education.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the co-operation in 2013 and to review the best way of monitoring the Peace Clubs in the province. At the outset, the Department indicated a cut in the budget for the Safer Schools Project but reiterated its commitment to the development and growth of Peace Clubs and its co-operation with UMTAPO.



Some of the outcomes/agreements of the meeting were:

- Dates for activities/Leadership camps should be given to UMTAPO in advanced by the DOE
- The venue for the camps should be conducive for facilitators and participants
- A memo will be sent to District Co-ordinators to get access to the schools for field visits
- A monitoring time-frame will be drawn up by Zukiswa and Pumzile
- Local and neighbouring schools should be engaged in the programme
- SGB members should also participate in the camps where possible
- Constant workshops for Peace clubs are necessary as that keeps their spirit alive
- Community workshops for the CPEFs should be used as a platform for launching the Ubuntu Community Forum which must include local stakeholders, Peace Clubs, CPEFs and parents/SGBs

# PUMA Peace - UMTAPO SOCCER TOURNAMENT IN KWAZULU NATAL



Say No to Violence and  
Substance Abuse  
at Schools

In a unique partnership dating from the 2010 World Cup, UMTAPO hosted a PUMA Peace Soccer Tournament in Kwazulu Natal with the theme "Say No to Substance Abuse and Violence at Schools". The tournament took place at the Arena Park Secondary School soccer grounds in Chatsworth. The hosting Peace Club came prepared with different posters and banners relating to the theme. Since the event was not funded except for the soccer kits from PUMA, the Peace Clubs showed the value of self-reliance and commitment by organising their own transport to the venue and preparing posters and banners while the host Peace Club raised funds for some of the lunch.

The success of the tournament was in large measure due to the work of the Peace Clubs and hard work of UMTAPO school liaison educator, Ms Lynn Govender, Mr Morgan Moonsamy (sports educator at Arena Park) and the support of the Principal of the host school.

The tournament involved boys and girls teams with everyone being a winner at the end of the day.

Peace Clubs that participated in the tournament were:

1. Arena Park Secondary Peace Club
2. Chatsworth Secondary Peace Club
3. Thabela Secondary Peace Club
4. KwaNtebeni Secondary Peace Club
5. Reitvallei Secondary Peace Club
6. Siphesihle Secondary Peace Club
7. Masakhaneni Secondary Peace Club
8. Wentworth Secondary Peace Club
9. Umbilo Secondary Peace Club

Formal handover of the soccer kits at the school assembly was a follow-up to the tournament. Peace Clubs were handed the kit on behalf of the school.

**Top Right:** KwaNtebeni Secondary Peace Club and Girls Soccer team

**Middle:** Siphesihle Secondary Peace Club

**Right:** Puma Soccer Kit handed over by Umtapo Director to representatives of the Peace Club and the Principal, Mr Govender, of Arena Park Secondary School



## PUMA Peace - UMTAPO SOCCER TOURNAMENT IN LIMPOPO

Say No to Violence and Substance Abuse at Schools



UMTAPO Board members, Professor Mbulelo Mzamane (left) and Mrs Ntsiki Biko (right) handing out the PUMA soccer kits to Peace Club representatives from Mushaathonni and Tshiawelo Secondary Schools respectively.

The distribution of the PUMA Peace soccer kits in Limpopo was a difficult task given the large number of Peace Clubs in the region and the six kits that were supplied. A tournament as the one in Kwazulu Natal was not feasible unless additional resources were raised. To alleviate the dilemma,

the Peace Clubs entered an essay competition on the Role of Sports in the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights and the six winning entries were awarded the kits after a match played at the Samson Phophi Stadium in Vleifontein on 2nd February 2013.



The teams that played the match during the awards: Maneledzi Secondary School (blue) and Tshiawelo Secondary School (yellow )

## My Journey with Umtapo Centre

Niyanta Sookraj

Arena Park Secondary School Peace Club

My journey with Umtapo began just over two years ago. I remember my first camp in the Valley of a Thousand Hills like it was yesterday. I entered the camp expecting no more than an exciting sleep-over but what I left with changed my life forever.

Before I set foot into Umtapo I was oblivious to the controversies and injustices of society. I lived in a somewhat ignorant, unexposed and confined world. My first day at camp was interesting, I got to interact with youth from different social standings - this was new to me as I live in a predominantly Indian community. One of our first assignments was making a poster about ourselves, the things that influence our personalities, our likes and dislikes, the best moments of our lives and the worst. At the time, it seemed insignificant but actually doing the task made me question my values, what I consider important in the world, who I am and who I want to become. When it was completed, I looked at it and took it all in, embracing who I am and striving to be a better person. We then got the opportunity to look everyone else's post-

ers and it was amazing how similar yet diverse we were. I learned little but important things about people and related it to my own life. In our sessions, we listened to each other, spoke about our lives and supported each other like we were all one big family. It then became so easy to interact with each other - race and linguistic barriers disappeared. Learning about each other's personalities and cultures was so exciting that I clearly remember sitting up late at night with Kwuaru and Andiswa, sharing our life stories like best friends even though we met less than a day ago. It opened my eyes to a whole new world that I never expected to be a part of. Umtapo enlightened and empowered me so much that when I left that camp I viewed life differently. A girl that entered with a few friends left with a new family.



The change in me came from within. I felt calm yet more empowered and knowledgeable than ever. I learned to live by the principles of Ubuntu and to empower and mobilise others so that they could feel at peace with themselves, with each other and with the world. Umtapo taught me that instead of trying to change the world, the community, the school or my friends and family, I should try to change myself first and others will follow suit. Apart from making me aware of the

*Niyanta Sookraj (right) and friend as well as Peace Club member Deandra Nagiah (2013). Niyanta is currently the Head Prefect at the school and Deandra, the Deputy Head Prefect.*

various issues that society is suffering from, I became aware of the barriers that I had set for myself and began to break them. I became a better leader, learned to handle situations rationally with poise and became at peace with myself and my flaws. I learned to be grateful for everyday that I'm blessed with, for the air in my lungs, the food in my stomach and my education, for these are all things I need to make a better tomorrow. When Umtapo called me back to participate in the National Children's Dialogue, I was honoured and humbled to be part of a movement that would inevitably change lives. I was overwhelmed by how

much I learned in this forum. I met youth from all over South Africa who were also part of the Umtapo family that came together to do something about the injustices practiced on our children.

After working so closely with my family at Umtapo, changing lives and making a difference, I realised that helping people lead a better life made me happy. Knowing that I have contributed to a better tomorrow helps me sleep soundly at night. It is because of these things that I have decided to further my studies in the hope of one day becoming a successful doctor.

Today, I am the head girl at Arena Park Secondary and my goal is to leave behind a legacy that will echo through the corridors of my school long after I have left, to empower and mobilise young people to live by Ubuntu, in harmony with fellow citizens, to abolish racism and prejudice so that everyone can live up to their full potential. All different, all equal !



I know that wherever life may take me, in whatever path I choose, the values I have learned from Umtapo will always be an integral part of my life. The things that I have learned are invaluable and I will be eternally grateful to the Umtapo family for moulding me into the young lady I am today. My journey with Umtapo is an on-going one and I hope to spend many more years learning and growing with them.



*Peace Club picketing outside school on 28th February 2013 in response to Violence against Women and Children*

## Leadership Camps for Peace Clubs in the Eastern Cape

Umtapo's co-operation with the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape resulted in six successful Leadership camps for Peace Clubs, Liaison Educators and Department of Education representatives. The first three camps (conducted simultaneously, on 1st – 3rd February 2013, took place at the Coega Conference Centre in Port Elizabeth involving a total of 120 participants. The other three camps took place in East London on 8th – 10th March 2013, involving 135 participants. A feature of these camps from UMTAPO's perspective has been the extension of its group of trainers/facilitators to include some of the trained educators in the province as well as its next layer of young leadership from the tertiary institutions. These included: Educators, Ms Ntosh Bungane and Mr Lazola Rusi; TPF members, Ak Dondashe and Mdu Mzanywa.



Top left: Peace Club participants at the PE Camp; Top right: East London Leadership Camp  
Left: Participants from the East London Camp; Above right: Mr Felix Mbete with Umtapo facilitators

## CHILDREN'S PEACE & EMPOWERMENT FORUMS (CPEF's) AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

CPEFs are being established with the specific aims:

- To provide the space for children and young people to take on leadership roles on issues affecting them
- To link with UMTAPO's Ubuntu Community Forums that would identify and advocate for effective child protection strategies
- To lay the foundation for a national children's peace and empowerment movement



### Child Participation in Action

The development and implementation of this unique project with the support of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund has been an exciting and rewarding experience. It began with a group of young people from schools and tertiary institutions participating in a strategic planning workshop at the end of 2010 to draw up a guiding document for the way forward. This was followed by a series of local and provincial dialogues in 2011 by and for children between the ages of 12 – 18 years in the three provinces: Limpopo, Eastern Cape, and Kwazulu Natal. These dialogues which discussed and articulated common concerns of children, particularly by those from disadvantaged areas, included local stakeholders and culminated in a national dialogue in Durban at the end of 2011. In 2012, the project was taken a step further with leadership camps for the children, the establishment of CPEFs in primary schools, and community workshops to garner support from community stakeholders. The response from children, in particular, has been phenomenal! Not only were they displaying leadership potential against all odds, surprising even their educators, they have established 43 CPEFs in the first year as opposed to the envisaged target of 30.

The purpose of the CPEF Leadership Camps are:

- Providing greater understanding of the concept of Ubuntu and the need for it to be revived and practiced
- Equipping children with mobilizing skills/tools and networking against the abuse of children
- Promoting an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of children including information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Laying the foundation for the establishment of the CPEF in the school

## Towards the Children's Movement In South Africa

*Children, during the dialogues, articulated the following reasons for a children's movement:*

- To encourage children to speak-out and fight injustices.
- To educate and empower children for mass mobilization.
- To work with the media to expose violence aimed at children.
- To engage children in the democratic processes and provide them with relevant information.
- To instil the values and principles of Ubuntu, self-reliance, peace, love, etc.
- To defend and promote children's needs in society.
- To create a conducive environment to build leaders who will develop authentic responses to issues of children.
- To allow children space to be creative and innovative in dealing with their issues.
- To create space for an uprising that is led by children themselves.
- To identify campaigns with specific themes.
- To set clear goals and gather energy to realize it.
- To create space for networking within and amongst the children and other stakeholders.

### CHILDREN'S PEACE & EMPOWERMENT LEADERSHIP CAMP

12th-14th April 2013 , Koinonia Conference Centre, KZN

In the first quarter of 2013, six CPEF community workshops have been held in the Eastern Cape, and two CPEF Leadership Camps took place, one in Bothas Hill, Kwazulu Natal on 12th – 14th April 2013 and the other in Makhado, Limpopo on the same date.

The camp brought together 16 learners and 4 educators from the Wentworth and Chatsworth area. Participating schools were:

- Austerville Primary School,
- Durban East Primary
- Gitanjali Primary School

Children raised issues that affected them and the types of abuse that they suffer. They also identified some of the solutions as:

- Parents need to create a space for communication within the family where children are given a chance to speak about their feelings
- If a child is abused they need to talk to someone that they can trust

- Members of the community must work together in fighting child abuse
- Children's Peace and Empowerment Forums must be implemented globally so all children can take part



## CHILDREN'S PEACE & EMPOWERMENT LEADERSHIP CAMP

12th-14th April 2013, Manavhela Nature Reserve, Limpopo

Children who attended the camp were Grade 5 and 6 learners aged between 11-14 years old. A total number of 17 learners, 3 Educators, 1 SGB member and the Chairperson of the Makhado Children Advisory Council attended the camp.

Name of School	Community	Existing Peace Club in Area
Nthabalala Primary School	Ha-Mufunzi in Nthabalala area	Denga Peace Club
Madodonga Primary School	Madodonga	Songozwi Peace Club
Tshiozwi Primary School	Tshiozwi	Manaledzi Peace Club
Riverplaats Primary School	Riverplaats	Riverplaats Peace Club
Hlalelani Primary School	Watervaal	None

Issues raised by the children on the plight of children in South Africa:

- They are victims of kidnapping.
- Children die every day as a result of rape and child abuse.
- Children do not have access to quality healthcare.
- Children become vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.
- Homelessness
- Illiteracy
- Availability of weapons poses a threat to children in society.



## TERTIARY PEACE FORUMS (TPF)

The University of Western Cape (UWC) TPF set out a programme for the year which they are attempting to implement. They continue to be active on the campus and have produced their own TPF brochure and conducted leadership and team-building camps.

In Kwazulu Natal, a meeting took place on 9th February 2013 with representatives of the TPFs from:

- University of KZN (Westville)
- Durban University of Technology
- University of KZN (Howard College)
- University of South Africa (Durban)

This resulted in UMTAPO deciding to produce a pocket booklet on UMTAPO and all its structures and modus operandi for students who are new.

On 23rd February 2013, the UNISA Durban TPF held a meeting to plan the way forward and discuss the year's programme. Discussion around the political sphere at university level was initiated and several issues were identified as stumbling blocks and also opportunities to the structure on the campus and how the tertiary peace forum needed to be strategic.

UNISA is a correspondence institution so UNISA students do not have a culture of involvement in extracurricular activities therefore it is not about recruiting in this case, says chairperson, Hanna Kim, it is firstly about creating the climate for involvement in something other than academic work.

There is a plan to have a "soft dialogue" programme called Movie Fridays to start getting the students involved.

On 10th April 2013, the University of Fort Hare (Alice) Tertiary Peace Forum hosted its 1st event



in the form of a debate with the topic:

'Is Homosexuality Un-African'. The debate was well attended by different societies ranging from political, religious, academic and lifestyle societies. The panel was made up of speakers from 13 societies where each speaker gave a statement on their society's viewpoint about the topic.

The programme director and facilitator for the day was Aphiwe Mkhangelwa and the chairperson of the TPF, Mduduzi Mzanywa, welcomed the students and read the Umtapo Director's message of support which gave an outline of what we as peace activists believe and what our view is on the debate. The debate kicked off with the Rainbow blood which is a society advocating for LGBT rights at the institution and the speaker thanked the organisers of the event as he believed "it's an issue which is a challenge in our communities".

Mdu reported: "The debate heated up with the political and religious parties giving their views and some of which were conflicting with each other but as time went on the whole congregation were

in agreement with the human rights being the most important thing that we must look at"

Speakers from the TPF outlined the values of Ubuntu and the value of each person as a human being.

It was clear was that the student community needed such dialogues so as to empower and inform them of what is currently happening in the outside world. The TPF (Fort Hare University) has applied for structural recognition and was waiting feedback.

On 23rd February 2013, a meeting of the TPF UNISA (Johannesburg), the TPF (UJ), and the Umtapo secretariat took place at the UNISA Campus in Johannesburg. The SRC was also represented at the meeting. Some of the issues that arose were:

- The uniqueness of the TPF from other structures
- Interest and support from the SRC (UNISA)
- The University of Johannesburg is still facing a challenge to register their TPF and it makes it hard for them to conduct activities
- Fundraising need to be done (so to make banners and other material)
- Using social media to mobilise for the TPF
- Databases of people interested in the TPF should be kept
- The TPF needs to make itself more visible so more students would know about the structure

In the meanwhile, individual TPF members in various regions have been active in general UMTAPO activities, in many cases taking on leadership roles as part of their development as future leaders.

- The UKZN (Howard) Tertiary Peace Forum and UNISA (Durban) Tertiary Peace Forum assisted
- in the PUMA Peace –UMTAPO tournament, making sure that the programme was running smoothly.

- Kim Green of the TPF UNISA (Jhb) has participated with UMTAPO facilitators conducting the workshop for the Abu-Asvat Institute
- Silindile Meyiwa and Vukani Mzobe of TPF UKZN (Howard) have facilitated workshops in KZN and represent UMTAPO at the provincial KPACC meetings.

### **Message to the TPF (UFH) from the National Director of UMTAPO**

The Umtapo Centre congratulates the Tertiary Peace Forum (TPF) of the University of Fort Hare (Alice branch) on this "Big Debate" initiative. Not only is it the first such activity being hosted by the TPF but it has taken a bold and courageous step to tackle head-on a current and yet controversial issue.

Providing a platform for students, across the board, to discuss and debate such issues that affect the student population, and society at large, is what the TPF stands for and is what will distinguish it from more sectoral and sectarian student bodies. In such initiatives, the TPFs only agenda is and should be to encourage and facilitate open and transparent discourse that is conducive to the acquiring of new knowledge and skills that will lead to positive action towards a more just and peaceful world.

Whether homosexuality is un-African or not is the topic for debate and discussion but whatever the outcome, the TPF like its mother body, UMTAPO, does not make any pronouncements or judgement on people's choice of sexual orientation but rather respects people as members of the human race and their right to dignity, compassion and love as encompassed in the African (and universal) doctrine of Ubuntu.

We hope that this Big Debate will be the forerunner for many more such activities in promoting critical dialogue and contributing to an enlightened future leadership of our country. The TPF (Alice branch) must be applauded for this initiative and they can only grow from strength to strength.

## Community Development

### The Entlango Agricultural Co-operative (Qongqotha, Eastern Cape)

This co-operative (previously Velanani) which is run by the UMTAPO Peace Afrika Youth Centre (Qongqotha) has taken a couple of years of persistence and hard work, especially by co-ordinator Zukiswa Mpayipeli, to finally reach its current highly productive stage.

In 2012, cooperative members were trained by Department of Agriculture and Amatole Municipality in fruit and vegetable production. This was followed by the setting up of a high-tech Green House with the support of the Buffalo City Municipality. This Hydroponic Initiative uses computer-operated systems and can produce 300 000 tomatoes during harvest if properly treated and maintained.

Currently, the planting is divided into 3 bays each with 6000 seedlings which will yield approximately 240 000 tomatoes at harvest in May.

During harvest, about 15 unemployed youth from the community are employed to complement the eight full-time co-op members since it is very labour-intensive.



## Partnerships and Collaboration

### UMTAPO - RADAR Partnership

Old and young, professionals and volunteers, men and women, bosses and employees; all these people gathered in the Public Library of Rotterdam, The Netherlands, on this 21th March 2013.

A pitch dark theatre offered an unusual start of the program. All of a sudden, a woman in the audience started singing "brighten the corner where you are" and while doing so she put out a light. Suddenly a young boy joined in and after that another girl, and another, and another. In an instant the whole theatre was lit by lights and voices. Another voice welcomed everybody on board this special flight YPOP 2013 with destination Ubuntu. What a start to the afternoon!

The woman who started the singing turned out to be today's keynote speaker. Ms Arun Naicker from UMTAPO who had come especially for this event from Durban in South Africa. Her speech 'living together, are you ready to cross the bridge?' put forward the memory of Sharpeville and the need for understanding our interconnectedness as human beings. On 21 March 1960 in Sharpeville, 69 unarmed people were killed and 180 were injured while demonstrating for their rights under apartheid laws. The 21st March is now known as the international day against racism and discrimination all over the world.

It was a sharp speech in which listeners were challenged to critically reflect on issues concerned with power and control; the superior over the inferior; the powerful over the powerless; men over women. It was a speech in which she reminded the audience that the responsibility to act lies within everyone of us. She brought into memory the words of the late Paulo Freire who said: "washing one's hand off the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral".

Anita

van Ast reports:

**Welcome to AIR RADAR  
with destination Ubuntu- are you  
ready to board?**

*challenging everyday exclusion,  
discrimination & racism*



## 21st March 2013, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination



Being ready, therefore, means not to be neutral but to be prepared to take a stand, to be prepared to make a move towards a better world is what Ms. Naicker pointed out.

Crossing the bridge is not simply a physical act; it is a well-thought out life-changing moment that requires embracing of Ubuntu, in its entirety. Ubuntu, the African philosophy that helps us to understand our humanity in relation to the world we live in. In the city of Rotterdam crossing the bridge is symbolic for the differences between the North and the South of the City, connected by three bridges. Poverty, exclusion and unemployment occur predominantly in the southern area of the City, while people living in the North are generally-speaking better off in terms of their social economic position, employment rates and safety in their neighbourhood.

It urges humankind to value the common bond we have in our various relationships between human beings on earth. She pointed out that the true measure of our humanity is whether we can relate to and honour other human beings regardless of their station in life.

Director of RADAR, Cyriel Triesscheijn, thanked Ms. Arun Naicker for her speech: "we are so honored and pleased to have you here Arun, as a fellow traveler and guide in our mutual journey to Ubuntu". He thanked her as one of the people who brought the concept of Ubuntu to Rotterdam.

Young volunteers, working in the RADAR So Far (Serious Opportunities for Freedom And Respect) team showed how they are prepared to take a stand by organizing a dialogue with the participants on how to become active citizens working for inclusive societies. People met up with new people and discovered new connections; others deepened their links. This So Far team is a result of the intensive



exchange of trainers and knowledge between UMTAPO and RADAR last year under the E-motive program. Presently there are 4 So Far Teams in schools. Young people take action on themes like respect, dealing with prejudice, discrimination and bullying. They also motivate fellow students to take action themselves.

Later in the program Mr. Luc Opdebeeck from Formaat was awarded with the YPOP (Your Power Our Power) Award for his outstanding work on fighting social injustice and discrimination in Rotterdam. Clearly moved to have been awarded this prize, he talked about using the techniques of the theatre of the oppressed (TO) for entering into dialogue on the dehumanization of humanity and for helping people to fight all forms of oppression, racism, sexism and discrimination. He also referred to Paulo Freire's legacy when he said that the aims of the theatre of the oppressed is to humanize humanity.

Luc Opdebeeck and his colleagues are inspiring different groups to dramatize their daily problems, in order to understand them and look for alternative solutions through the dialogue with people, who experience similar problems or who can sensitize themselves about their existence. In this process, each participant discovers his or

her potential. The themes Formaat has worked on relate to discrimination, the oppression of women, youth, sexual diversity and mental health.

The YPOP Award 2013 itself was made by an outside-art-artist Belinda Thijssen. Ms.Thijssen is one of the outside-art-artists of Galery Herenplaats in Rotterdam which offers room for artists with a mental disability. Ubuntu not only encompasses the values of caring and sharing on an overt level but it requires that one practices it internally in daily life. The intrinsic value of making choices based on the greater good of humankind must become the essence of our being. Let's keep on challenging exclusion, discrimination and racism together and across the globe in order to humanize humanity.



In her opening remarks, Arun Naicker said:

“As I sat down to put my thoughts on paper I asked the question: What is the root cause of racial prejudice and discrimination or exclusion? Who gives us power to push those who don’t fit into a particular mould out of the way?”

The late Dr Neville Alexander said “The terribly simple fact is that “race is not real; it is racial prejudice and race thinking that are real”. He goes further to caution against the state/government compelling people to declare whether they belong to a particular race group as this “forces us into a racial mould whether we like it or not. In time this racial habitus takes hold of us so that we take it for granted that we belong to a so-called race and we assume the relevant racial identity that gives birth to stereotypes”.

Today, it is scientifically accepted that there is one human race and therefore the notion that there are many races with some superior to others is a superficial, social construction built on the notion that in a society there will always be a chosen few who think they are more equal than others. This, of course, lays the foundation for deciding who has the power and control”.

They know that they are diminished when others are diminished when others are oppressed and treated less than who they are. Ubuntu gives people a sense of self, enabling them to stay still human despite all attempts to dehumanize them

“Washing one’s hands off the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral” -Paulo Freire

Arun Naicker



## ANTI RACISM AND UBUNTU AS PART OF NATION BUILDING

After several discussions, UMTAPO has teamed up with the Abu Asvat Institute for Nation-building and the first initiative was a youth workshop that brought together participants from Lenasia, Soweto, Westbury, Orange Farm and Eldorado Park at the JISS Hall, Lenasia on 26th January 2013.

It was a unique workshop given that those communities are mostly in conflict with each other.

Anver Randera opened the workshop on behalf of the Abu Asvat Institute for Nation-building and welcomed participants quoting from the words of Abu Asvat. He gave a background to the Institute which included the cricket tournament and hosting of the Abu Asvat Lecture annually.

The objectives of the workshop was to ensure that by the end of the workshop participants would be able to:

- Define racism, elements of racism and different types of racism.
- Understand Anti-racism and Ubuntu in the context of nation building.
- Develop strategies to contribute to nation building.

The workshop was facilitated by UMTAPO's Nomiki Yekani and Lawrence Monyahi, using the participatory popular education approach. Group work and feedback, simulation exercises, and audio-visuals on Understanding Race and Racism and on Ubuntu were used as tools to provide knowledge and to stimulate discussion.

Follow-up with the communities involved will take place and the partnership with the institute is expected to become a long-term one.



## LIMPOPO: Makhado Municipality- Save the Children - UMTAPO

The Makhado Municipality in Limpopo has been involved in the CPEF programme with UMTAPO since 2011. Through their involvement, the municipality also formed a partnership with SAVE THE CHILDREN - Mussina. On 28th February 2013, UMTAPO was invited by the Makhado Municipality to form part of a strategic meeting to pilot and roll out a programme for children in Makhado and Mussina. The intention is to establish the Makhado Municipality Children's Committee and the Makhado Municipality Child Protection Committee. Tsepo Mahladi, UMTAPO field worker in Limpopo was elected onto the task team that will be responsible for the project.



## FEATURE ARTICLES

### Umtapo Leadership Visits Projects in Limpopo

Former vice chancellors, Professor Mbulelo Mzamane, first black vice chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, and Professor Ben Khoapa, first black head of Natal Technikon (now Steve Biko Campus of Durban University of Technology), together with Mrs Ntsiki Biko, widow of the late Steve Biko, visited schools and projects in the Makhado municipality on 1st – 3rd February 2013. They were accompanied by other UMTAPO Centre Board members, Dr James Marsh, Ms Asha Moodley, and Ms Linda Yhukutwana.



**Left:** Educator Prince Manenzhe with Umtapo Board members, Asha Moodley, Ntsiki Biko, and James Marsh. In the middle is Mr Eric Mafune, senior staff member, and one of the first educators trained by UMTAPO  
**Right:** Prof Ben Khoapa answering questions from learners at Mushaathon Secondary School.

At the end of any tunnel there is always light; and as Limpopo stepped out of the major educational scandals of 2012, a bright light was shining in a number of schools in the Vhembe District. The thirty-six (36) UMTAPO Centre-initiated Peace Clubs in high schools and CPEFs (Children's Peace and Empowerment Forums) in primary schools were transforming their schools into unique models of peace and excellence. On Friday, 1st February, the Mushaathoni Secondary School Peace Club hosted the key programme, displaying the enormous strides that have been made by learners who are in the Peace Clubs.

### Youth encouraged to treasure their Identity

*The widow of the late Steve Biko, Mrs. Ntsiki Biko, recently visited the Vhembe district to interact with young people on issues of self-identity, peace and human rights. She joined other board members of the UMTAPO Centre when she visited the region between 31st January and 2nd February.*

*The first leg of the visit started at the Mushathoni Secondary School at Sendedza in Nzhelele, where the team engaged the pupils in a mind-sharpening and self-consciousness dialogue. She told the pupils of her difficult, painful experiences as a mother who had to raise her two children alone after her husband was killed while in police detention in September 1977. "There was no-one to go for help, not even the government," she said. "When my husband died, we were only a few years into our marriage. He used to say to me 'At the age of 30, you will be a widow already'."*

*Mrs. Biko said it was a pity that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) failed to consult with the Steve Biko family. "We listened to the guys (those who are thought to have killed Biko) telling lies about his death," she said. We didn't know whom to forgive because nobody owned up."*

*Prof. Mbulelo Mzamane reminded the youth that not only people said to be prominent figures today had fought for liberation. "People from all walks of life in this country had a role to play to bring us where we are today," he stressed. "The youth of today need to be allowed a space to think for themselves, to define themselves and then they will be able to solve the problem of their identity crisis."*

*The representative of the chief, Mr. Edward Mafune, said that UMTAPO Centre had initiated peace clubs to help create a healthy environment in schools. "They promote peace and annihilate all forms of racism and waywardness among pupils," he said. "The chief's office would like to tell them to continue working with us."*

*UMTAPO Centre, in association with the Steve Biko foundation, gave the school a signed copy of Biko's book, *I Write What I Like*. Dr. James Marsh, a political activist and educationalist who was imprisoned on Robben Island for five years at the age of 17, encouraged the Mushaathoni Peace Club to start a study circle in the school, where they can discuss the contents of the book.*

*The Mirror, Makhado*

# Africa can Learn from the Legacy of Chavez

Dr Ama Biney

Acting Editor-in-Chief of Pambazuka News



Africa today needs five Hugo Chávez' - one for every region of Africa: North, South, Central, East and West to implement a similar level of socio-economic transformation that Hugo Chávez of Venezuela implemented in his country through peaceful constitutional means as well as in the region of Latin America during his 14 years in power.

Whilst Latin America underwent what was dubbed a 'pink' revolution in the 1990s and the decade of the noughties, Africa continued with its spineless neo-colonial leaders despite the crop of seeming charismatic and young leaders such as Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, Eritrea's Isaias Afewerki, Rwanda's Paul Kagame and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, who all initially emerged in the mid 1990s as a 'new generation' of leaders. As Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem expressed, they represented 'a fresh approach to leadership... They spoke with confidence and inspired many Africans and friends of Africa that an 'African solution to African problems' was indeed a reality.' Needless to say, false

hope dawned in Africa and these leaders did not quite live up to the expectations of some of us. The reality is that none of them – nor the rest of the African leaders in the remaining 51 states of the continent - have had the political audacity, will or vision to defy latter day manifestations of empire and savage neoliberalism in a similar manner to Commandante Hugo Chávez.

## LEARNING FROM PRAXIS

What can Africa's present generation of young people learn from Hugo Chávez and the achievements of 14 years of his government? By 'learn', it should not be parrot fashion learning, nor should

an exporting of revolutions be perceived as the intention, but a political praxis that seeks to look critically and pragmatically at African contexts. It should be a political praxis inspired by examples from other nations in the global South seeking to transform their realities towards the ideals of socio-economic and political justice, devising a theory and practice according to socio-cultural, economic and political realities of Africa. For some time Africa was encouraged to look to the Asian tiger economies as models of economic development which were deemed to be 'economic miracles.' They were clearly wedded to neo-liberal capitalist development and Africa has faithfully followed such models over the last 20-30 years with little wealth, if any, trickling down to the masses through the invisible hand of the market.

### **ABANDONING NEOLIBERALISM**

There are lessons Africa can learn from the reignited Bolívarian project of Chávez. He sought to advance and realise the vision of the 19th century revolutionary leader of Venezuela, Simón Bolívar who began the struggle to free Latin America from Spanish colonial rule and unite South and Central America and the Caribbean into what he called Greater Columbia at the time. Chávez sought to free Venezuela and Latin America from both the doctrines and practices of neoliberalism and imperialism in support of genuine autonomous socio-economic and political development for the peoples of Latin America. Therefore, Chávez turned his back on neoliberalism around the time when the doctrine of neoliberal hegemony was becoming discredited. Since the financial and economic crisis of 2008 this model has become even more questionable despite the fact that the world's minority oligarchy cling to a capitalist system that is in severe crisis. The government of Chávez decided to utilise the resources of society, that is, oil to redistribute

to the poor majority who had been socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalised in the society. Through state nationalisation the massive social welfare programmes he introduced in his country, that is, schools, new roads, literacy programmes, hospitals built, profoundly and positively changed his country. For example in eleven years Venezuela saw the construction of ten new universities. Currently the country has the least income inequality in South America. His government halved the poverty rate by two thirds during his 14 years in office.

His government by no means totally eradicated poverty in the country but remarkably it has made it a less unequal society through significant reductions in the income gap. Which African leader since the mid-1990s to date has been politically audacious to turn their back on the neoliberal capitalist model for a more people-orientated socio-economic system? With the enormous untapped mineral resources of many African countries and newfound oil in several, the reality is no African leader has had a similar ideological commitment to Chávez to utilize the resources of their nation for the interests of the poor. They have held fast to neo-colonial relationships and phallocratic ambitions such as joint military training exercises under the auspices of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) that have been carried out by several male African governments such as Zenawi, Museveni, Kagame and others. Chávez described the Bolívarian revolutionary process as an 'anti-neoliberal revolutionary project.' It was a 'humanist, self-governing, fundamentally endogenous economic model that is not isolationist, and that is able to satisfy its people's basic needs but where human development is more important than economic development.' During his short life, the radical leader of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara indicated

that he had 'the courage to turn [his] back' against conformity. He dared 'to invent the future', to 'carry out fundamental change,' but was not given the chance by neo-colonial forces who killed him. To date very few African governments, if any, have succeeded in satisfying the basic needs of the vast majority of their people.

#### RESTATING SOCIALISM AS AN ETHICAL SYSTEM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Second, Chavez put socialism as a word and project back on the trajectory of human possibility.

This is significant on account of the fact that since 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, detractors and imperialist neocons have vociferously and joyously declared TINA – 'There is No Alternative' to capitalism.

However, integral to Chávez' commitment to socialism and use of the word that had been hitherto malevolently tarnished was his distinguishing it from its Stalinist and Soviet deformed variants. He made this distinction by characterising it as '21st century socialism.' Yet, it was not a textbook socialism, for Chávez never defined himself as a Marxist but as a revolutionary and Bolívarian.

He demonstrated that another world is possible; that we can re-imagine human beings and seek to harness wealth and redistribute it in the interests

of the 99 per cent of society rather than the one per cent; that this is an ethical, just, humane system that strives to reorganise society around people and not profits.

**Chavez put socialism as a word and project back on the trajectory of human possibility. This is significant on account of the fact that since 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, detractors and imperialist neocons have vociferously and joyously declared TINA – 'There is No Alternative' to capitalism**

That system was to be avowedly socialist in definition, spirit and construction. As Chávez put it: 'For our part, we are trying to move slowly but surely toward an economic alternative to dehumanized capitalism.'

#### ANTI-IMPERIALIST STANCE

Third, his uncompromising anti-imperialism earned him contempt and demonization in Washington and other Western capitals. Similarly, which African leader or country has unequivocally taken an anti-imperialist stance using what many journalists and government officials in the West term as 'colourful' or 'undiplomatic language'? Such euphemisms conceal their discomfort and hostility to the Commandante. However, he was opposed to the military invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Chávez rejected the Bush-Obama doctrine of employing 'state terror to fight terror' for he believed in political solutions to problems. He condemned Israel's attack on Gaza.

In 2003, the year in which the US launched its invasion of Iraq, the American empire had 200,000 troops in 144 countries around the world. Today, America as leader of the imperialist triad (comprising the US, Europe and Japan) has the largest military spending in the world; has invaded more countries as William Blum records in his 'Rogue State' - all in the name of bringing democracy to those around the world that it

perceives as in need of democracy or 'regime change.' Simón Bolívar once observed: 'The US seems destined by providence to infest America with misery in the name of liberty.' It is evident that that dangerous and arrogant 'infestation' has spread to the rest of the world since Bolívar made such a prescient declaration. Neither did Chávez mince his words. For example, before the UN in September 2006, he famously referred to the then US President, George W. Bush as 'the devil.' With a gleam in his eye, Chávez said:

*'The Devil is right at home. The Devil himself is right in the house. ... And the Devil came here yesterday. ... Right here. [crosses himself] And it smells of sulphur still today. Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, from this rostrum, the president of the United States, the gentleman to whom I refer to as the Devil, came here, talking as if he owned the world. Truly. As the owner of the world.'*

Since 2006 the corridors of the UN continue to harbour the stench of sulphur.

## **REGIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRATION**

Four, Chávez took a very independent direction in regards to Venezuela's foreign policy, though the country continued to sell oil to America. He could not entirely 'de-link' Venezuela from the global capitalist economy. This independent direction drew ideological inspiration from Simón Bolívar in which the Liberator sought to form one political body including South and Central America as well as the Caribbean to negotiate and represent the region to the rest of the world in a powerful pole. Linked to this independent foreign policy was Chávez' fifth legacy of deepening regional unity within Latin America and extending it to encompass the Caribbean.

Chávez' establishment of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (or in Spanish: Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra

América, or ALBA) launched in 2004, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) formed in December 2011, and Venezuela's joining of Mercosur in December 2012 sought to forge greater self-determination in economic and political relations outside the scope of Washington's power in the FTAA. They are also in defiance of the Monroe doctrine of 1823 that served as a pretext for Washington's intervention in the region that continued in the twentieth century.

This spirit of a genuinely independent foreign policy stance was demonstrated in the response of Ecuadorian president, Rafael Correa, to the US administration seeking to renew their military base in his country. Correa responded that the US could lease a military base in Ecuador when America allowed Ecuador to lease a military base in Miami. This is the type of response that Djibouti's President Ismael Omar Guelleh could have given the American administration but instead he decided to allow his tiny yet geo-strategic country to host the only US military base in Africa at Camp Lemonnier in 2003. With approximately 2,500 military and civilian personnel and US Department Defense contractors, the camp is the base of operations for AFRICOM in the Horn of Africa. It continues to remain a dangerous military threat to the African continent.

Chávez' call for greater regional integration parallels that of one of Africa's illustrious champions of Pan-Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah, whose relentless and impassioned call for 'Africa Must Unite' into a continental union government of Africa in which Africans would coordinate their economic, human and technological resources for the betterment of its people rather than foreign interests remains an unfinished project for Africans committed to social and

economic transformation in Africa. Similarly Nkrumah called for Africa to unite militarily for he considered it senseless for Africa to have myriad armies. Hence, he envisioned Africans creating an 'African High Command' whose objectives were to defeat imperialism, neo-colonialism and the further balkanisation of the continent. Little known is the fact that Nkrumah also called for the creation of a body that he referred to as the 'Organisation of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America' (OSPAAAL) that would 'provide an organic link with the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America who are struggling against imperialism.' Nkrumah was consistently committed to a united Africa that comprised all her descendants. He stated that: 'All peoples of African descent, whether they live in North or South America, the Caribbean, or in any part of the world are Africans and belong to the African nation.' He was unequivocal in calling for 'the total liberation and unification of Africa under an All-African socialist government [to] be the primary objective of all Black revolutionaries throughout the world.' Like Chávez, Nkrumah was a committed internationalist and believed that 'the African revolutionary struggle is not an isolated one. It not only forms part of the world socialist revolution, but must be seen in the context of the Black Revolution as a whole.' Like Chávez he was committed to the ending of global injustice and socio-economic apartheid. It is the adoption and realisation of this vision by Africa's contemporary leaders that is lacking today. As Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem poignantly spelt out, the reality remains that 'the collective African experience is that we can only be ourselves and we need each other to counter the threat of marginalisation, rapacious globalisation and the consolidation of whatever little gains may have been accomplished in a number of African countries. No one [African] country can be a

sustainable miracle if its neighbours are in hell.'

## **GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN AFRICA, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA**

As Nkrumah reached out to Latin America, Chávez did likewise and reached out to Africa for a forging of closer links. This is his sixth legacy. Due to severe illness he was prevented from attending the February 2013 Third Africa-South America Summit (ASA) held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, which was attended by 63 countries. Two previous meetings were held in Nigeria in 2006 and Venezuela in 2009. In his open letter, read by his Foreign Minister, Elías Jaua Milano, Chávez called for both regions to unite in order to become a 'true pole of power.' Furthermore, he said:

'It's in our continents, where enough natural, political and historic resources are found...to save the planet from the chaos it's been driven towards [by the capitalist system].'

Chávez' reaching out to Africa is grounded in the fact that he is of mixed ancestry – African and indigenous blood. He stated in a radio interview with KPFA Pacifica Radio interviewer Margaret Prescod the following:

'When we were children we were told that we have a motherland and that motherland was Spain. However, we have discovered later in our lives as a matter of fact we have several motherlands. And one of the greatest motherlands of all is no doubt Africa. We love Africa. And every day we are much more aware of the roots we have in Africa. Also, America is our motherland... Bolivar use to say we are a new human race in Latin America, that we are not Europeans, nor Africans, nor North Americans. That we are a mixture of all these races. And that there is no doubt that Africa resounds with a pulse, like a thousand drums and happiness and joy, but also there is a lot of pain when we think of Africa.'

The Venezuelan elite in their racist views had

contempt for Chávez who was defined as a 'zambo' (of mixed ancestry). As they privately owned some of the TV networks they portrayed him as a monkey. Hence, the racial dynamic in Venezuela is only one aspect of the political opposition and personal animosity towards Chávez demonstrated by the Venezuelan oligarchy.

The strengthening of cultural, economic, social and political links between the continent of Africa and 'Afro-Latinos' in a similar manner to the existing strong ties (in terms of travel, businesses, etc) between African Americans and the motherland is necessary. The issue of linguistic imperialism, that is, of the colonial languages of the former colonial powers of Central and South America as well as Africa should be overcome in not only the importance of translation facilities but all human beings becoming multi-lingual to communicate in a globalised world.

### CONNECTION WITH THE MASSES

Chávez' positive leadership skills in terms of communication with ordinary people is a seventh positive legacy. As Oscar Guardiola-Rivera claims: 'He wrote, he read, and mostly he spoke... He spoke publicly an average of 40 hours per week. As president, he didn't hold regular cabinet meetings; he'd bring the many to a weekly meeting, broadcast live on radio and television. *Aló, Presidente*, the programme in which policies were outlined and discussed, had no time limits, no script and no teleprompter. One session included an open discussion of healthcare in the slums of Caracas, rap, a self-critical examination of Venezuelans being accustomed to the politics of oil money and expecting the president to be a magician, a friendly exchange with a delegation from Nicaragua and a less friendly one with a

foreign journalist.'

In short, Chávez walked the walk and certainly, like Fidel Castro, could talk the talk. He was a genuinely people-orientated leader and connected with the humblest sections of Venezuelan society by communicating in a mode ordinary Venezuelans understood.

He also possessed humility and realism as he recognised and accepted that inefficiency, corruption, shortages in the economy and the high crime rate were persistent problems that had yet to be eradicated in the society. As Marta Harnecker who interviewed Chávez writes: 'Chávez doesn't think he has clear and precise solutions for all the problems that trouble the global Left. He recognises he doesn't have all the answers, but he is convinced that some basic values should guide him and that he will develop many of his positions along the way.'

### BELIEF IN PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

His commitment as a teacher to creating a constitutional order that was responsive to the popular electorate is the eighth lesson. Therefore, he invited a continuous dialogue with the poor, the unemployed, and workers – those that the Venezuelan plutocrats despised. ***He considered that for radical transformation to take place, ordinary people needed to be organised and conscientized. To put it differently, he understood that for there to be a mobilisation of people, it required a mobilisation of the minds of ordinary people.*** He was relentless in calling for Venezuelan citizens to play an active role in the construction of a new society; to organise themselves through the initiatives of self-managed community spaces, workers' co-operatives, student councils and peasant councils in decentralized structures.

With the death of Chávez the challenge remains for these structures to maintain their autonomy and continue to organise towards the ideals of the Bolivarian revolution of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (in Spanish, the PSUV).

There are some on the political Left who have allegedly read and studied the humanities and social sciences but are devoid of humanness or the African philosophy of ubuntu towards others. Chávez connected with the humanity of ordinary people in the favelas and it was they who voted him into office on three occasions. Like Jean Bertrand-Aristide of Haiti who won two free and fair democratic elections, both leaders became the most vilified democratically elected presidents in world history. In both countries the rich minority (along with Western governments and corporate interests) loathed them on account of the fact they represented the interests of the feared majority of society and threatened the neoliberal system that enriched this small oligarchy. Both spoke truth to the power and the powerless. Both leaders faced coup d'etats orchestrated by Uncle Sam to the North.

### **CHÁVEZ' LEGACY MUST BE ADVANCED**

What does the death of Hugo Chávez mean for the global South? It heralds an intensification of the struggle against neoliberalism, new configurations of imperialism and domination in the form of global apartheid. It heralds a strengthening of South to South solidarity and practical economic and political alliances among ordinary people alongside their social movements. This will advance the realisation of another world is possible in the form of Bolivarianism alongside a future Pan-Africanism that delivers peace and socio-economic justice to African people. It heralds for struggling Africans and the dispossessed all over the global South to take inspiration from the achievements of Venezuela in the midst of capitalist economic crisis. Chávez not only represented that another world is possible. In his short life, he made an immense contribution to this realisation. However, the struggle in the global South must continue to keep alive and advance his tremendous legacy.



**Hugo Chavez (1954-2013)**



“The perks of a new government are not really appealing to me. Everybody would like to have a good job, a good salary... but for me that is not the be-all of struggle. What is important is the continuation of the struggle... the real problems of the country are not whether one is in cabinet... but what we do for the social upliftment of the working masses of our country”

Chris Hani, South Africa

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”

Martin Luther king, Jnr (US)



“Together we must dedicate ourselves to creating conditions that allow us to rescue our peoples from the maze they were thrown into, first by colonialism and then by the neoliberal capitalism of the twentieth century”

Hugo Chavez, Venezuela

