



SCHOOL OF
EDUCATION

**THE
NELSON MANDELA
EDUCATION LEGACY
LECTURE
31 JULY 2019**



**RETHINKING LEGACIES
IN THE MIDST OF THE WAR ON
WOMEN'S BODIES: A FEMINIST
'GHOST DANCE' WITH MANDELA**

Relebohile (Lebo) Moletsane is a Full Professor and the JL Dube Chair in Rural Education in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. As part of her Chair in rural education, she has worked in South African rural schools and communities, focusing on teacher development around such issues as poverty alleviation, gender inequality, GBV and HIV prevention as barriers to education and development. From 2009 – 2012, she was the South African PI of an HIV Prevention Leadership Fellowship led by Columbia University and UCLA and funded by the MACAIDS Foundation. The fellowship trained cohorts of young professionals in developing and implementing HIV prevention interventions in their organisations or communities. Part of the curriculum in the fellowship involved addressing the links among poverty, HIV and gender-based violence. Currently, her work focuses specifically on working with girls and young women to address sexual violence in rural communities. As part of this, she is co-PI with Claudia Mitchell, of an IPaSS grant: *Networks for change and well-being: Girl-led 'from the ground up' approaches to addressing sexual violence in Canada and South Africa*. Informed by the work of Claudia Mitchell in South Africa and other sub-Saharan countries, the project uses participatory visual methods to engage girls and young women in understanding sexual violence and developing strategies for addressing it. As recognition for her work on addressing poverty in rural communities, Moletsane was the 2012 winner of the Distinguished Women in Science (Humanities) Award presented by the National Department of Science and Technology. She was a 2014 Echidna Global Scholar at Brookings Institutions' Centre for Universal Education, where she completed a research report: *The Need for Quality Sexual and Reproductive Health Education to Address Barriers to Girls' Educational Outcomes in South Africa*. Washington, DC: Centre for Universal Education, The Brookings Institution.

In his inaugural State of the Nation Address after his election as the first president of South Africa in 1994, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela asserted, "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression... Our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child." This was followed by, among others, an increase in the appointment of women to parliament from 2.7% in the apartheid dispensation to 27% (just over a third) in Mandela's first parliament. A great legacy, some would say!

Yet, 25 years later, from the high rates of unemployment and related poverty, to the high crime rates and Xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals from other African countries, and the apparent reliance on and disappointment in government service delivery failures, South Africans find themselves at a crossroads. In particular, girls and women are besieged by unprecedented levels of gendered violence, including violent rape and femicide. Unless things change drastically and fast, our country is facing a disastrous future.

This presentation invites us to pause, in a sort of a 'ghost dance' with Mandela. The ghost dance is a Native American "ceremony for the regeneration of the earth, and, subsequently, the restoration of the earth's caretakers to their former life of bliss".¹ We do so to ponder the questions: What would Mandela say about the state of South Africa in 2019? What would he say about our lack of respect for women and girls and their continuing brutalisation and assault in families, communities and institutions? What does the scholarship on Mandela offer, if anything, to feminists/feminism? What are the gaps and silences in the critique of Nelson Mandela – the man and the social/political figure? How might feminists and other critical scholars utilise *Mandela* as a tool for feminist scholarship and for social change through our teaching, research, community engagement and our daily activities in our institutions and communities?

¹ <http://www.spiritalk.net/native-americans-nahealin.html>

Date: 31 July 2019
Time: 17:00 for 17:30
Venue: Hotel School Conference Centre
 Ritson Campus
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