



Ujamaa Centre



## MZWANDILE R NUNES MEMORIAL LECTURE

This lecture falls within the theme of Bread Theology and Economic Justice

### Faith and development; a socio-economic journey from apartheid to liberation

**Rev Siphon Mtetwa**

26 November 2015

#### WELCOME REMARKS

Prof Simangiliso Kumalo welcomed all the delegates present to the seminar. In his introduction he emphasized that Mzwandile R Nunes was a man who loved liberation of the oppressed and people had come to celebrate the life of one of the pioneers in the struggle of economic justice. After his welcome remarks, the delegates sang one of the solidarity songs "Solidarity Forever" which was taught by Nunes.

#### HISTORY OF THE LECTURE AND INTRODUCTION TO GUEST SPEAKER: Prof Gerald West

When UJAMAA was formed in 1989, the key issue was racial capitalism which was grounded in apartheid. Only the privileged whites would go to school because they had resources. The blacks could not go because they were blacks and they had no resources. Prof West gave his fascinating experience when he expressed that the resources spent on him as a white child were twenty times his fellow black friend. This situation was defined by the system structure and UJAMAA analysed this system structure using the bible as the way of engaging the system.

In the 1990s, UJAMAA Centre met an organization called HOUSE OF STUDY FOR WORKER MINISTRY, a project which was based in Pietermaritzburg. The project was helping the trade unions to organize and think theologically about the struggle. The leaders of this organization was Mzwandile R Nunes. Prof West emphasized that Nunes was the best leader of that organization because he had come from a poor white background. During that time, very few whites identified with the black but Nunes did that because he knew what it meant to be poor and to work. He identified himself with millions of black workers. Nunes studied why blacks were being oppressed by the whites and it had an impact in his thinking. His organization and UJAMAA then came together for the benefit of the community. Prof West further argues that the name Mzwandile was given to him by a Xhosa family in the Eastern KwaZulu Natal in honor of his contribution in the community development. Mzwandile was a comic activist. He tried to improve the lives of the South Africans using theological resources. He also used the social movements of his time. Mzwandile loved seeing young people growing to work and above all to be employers. His motto was see, judge and act. He was concerned about people, having decent jobs. Prof West bemoaned casually workers as people without decent work because their job does not have pensions or job security.

Since the beginning of the public lecture the following themes had been done:

Decency and decent work

Palestinians South Africans: lesson for South Africa

From the RDP of the economy to the RDP of the soul

Challenging the economic empire

Luthuli and Mandela as two examples of just brave men - presented by Prof A.A Boesak in 2014

In his introduction of the guest speaker, Prof West states that of Rev Siphon Mtetwa is an ordained Presbyterian minister. He is one of the pioneer students of the Leadership and Development program which is now Theology of Development. Currently he is the Provincial Faith asked Manager in the office of KZN Premier.

**Ujamaa Centre, School of Religion and Theology**

**Postal address:** Private Bag X01, Scottsville 3209, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

**Telephone:** +27 (0)33 260 6295 **Facsimile:** +27 (0)33 260 6294 **Email:** kumalor@ukzn.ac.za **Website:** <http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za>

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#### THE LECTURE BY REV S MTETWA

He started by citing a Zulu saying which state that "Young man shall pass on, but their clan shall tell their stories." The saying came from the background of 16 days of activism against gender based violence against women and children. The saying is expressed when a man who occupies a social, spiritual and cultural position in the society has passed on in combat. It was an accolade given to any man who have left a legacy and Mzwandile is such a man. The gender is not confused because only men could go to war. Mzwandile was a Portuguese South African. A worker for Mzwandile was a peasant, something that you could walk on. It means to be a builder, a mine worker, a tea marker, gardener, farm worker among people of the very low level in the society. There would not be justice without Mzwandile and no Mzwandile without justice. For Mzwandile, the struggle should be led by workers. He was convened about the worker and he did not care about whether white or black. For him it was not about the colour but about the class of people. He believed that activism is getting your hands dirty and not smart as an activist. He believed that struggle is my life.

Faith does not need to be proved because it just express someone's belief. Faith should be shared and this is development. Development is not one thing to everyone. It means different things to different people at different times. Development is papered with a lot of theories which contradict each other, it is measured according to the standards of the community and their perceptions. Development is economics because all, those who needed development would do economics. Development starts with sustainability. It is sad to have people in squatter camps in South Africa. Worse demonstrations because there is poor service delivery. Development fails when people, are taken as subject. Today we are talking about sustainable development because globalization has failed. Development without people at the center of it. There is no service development and South Africa is going far backwards to where it was before. Development is people first. When development was adopted in South Africa, it was accepted selfish reasons because people where coming from a life of wanting and now they are stealing every time because there is an opportunity to do that.

#### ENGAGEMENTS

Participants expressed concern over the socioeconomic challenges, high level of unemployment and suffering. When the youth are going to have a political autonomy. People are still oppressed and marginalized. They also expressed that it doesn't work to boast by saying Africa is my pride without land. The issue of "*#feesmustfall*" slogan is cause of concern. People also expressed concern about the South Africa has never changed the apartheid system. Where the white oppressor was, is being seated by a black man. As such, corruption is rampant.

#### RESPONSES

Our background should not hinder us. We need to work out our mind first to be positive about what we want to do. More people in big positions are suspended every day because as a nation we lost God and replace Him with selfishness and greedy. As a people, we lost Ubuntu, we lost our integrity and have adopted selfish tendencies. The youth should think of what they want ask the government not help. The church today has become silent because in the older days there where prophets who could be sent by the message with God. The new era is an era of apostles who are materialistic and selfish. As a people, we should know what we want.

The session ended by the national anthem and agape fellowship.

Notes taken by Martin Mujinga.

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