

**LUNGISILE NTSEBEZA'S ACCEPTANCE TALK ON RECEIVING AN HONORARY
DOCTORATE AT LEIDEN UNIVERSITY ON 7 FEBRUARY 2020**

First and foremost, I want to thank Professors Jan-Bart Gewald, the Director of the African Studies Centre and his predecessor, Ton Dietz for having so much confidence in me, both as a person and for my work by nominating me for this substantial award. I must also thank, unreservedly the leadership of this esteemed institution for endorsing the motivation.

I am also extremely delighted that my wife, Zoleka, whose support has been and continues to be unwavering, is here with me to share this historical moment.

Finally, I want to acknowledge with excitement and thrill the presence among us of Professor John Dugard, a world renowned South African born jurist who is currently residing here in the Netherlands. I first met Professor Dugard February 1977 when a group of us were arrested in Transkei in June 1976 and later charged for studying literature that was considered to be subversive. In October 1976, the apartheid regime had granted independence to the Transkei bantustan. Our case started in November 1976. On 11 March 1977, we brought in Professor Dugard to argue for our discharge on the grounds that we were charged for offences against the personality of the State. Independence had granted Transkei a new personality and there was no evidence showing that we had committed offences against the Transkei as it existed after its independence. Sadly, the presiding judge refused the application but never gave any reasons.

I am singularly thrilled that almost 43 years later, I am meeting Professor Dugard in totally different circumstances, marking a recognition of not only my scholarship but African scholarship that the architects of apartheid sought to deny.

My scholarship revolves around three themes: democratisation in South Africa's countryside; land and equity in the context of the struggle against poverty, and social movements in the land sector.

The theme around democratization in the countryside is informed by the argument that the recognition by the South African constitution of the institution of traditional leadership, whose incumbents are unelected, coupled with the establishment of Traditional and most recently Khoi-san Councils, which are modelled along the lines of

the apartheid-era Tribal Authorities, compromise the post-1994 democratic project. These councils are, similar to Tribal Authorities, characterised by having a majority of unelected members, thus giving rise to questions around the meaning of democracy for people residing in rural areas that are under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities and Khoi-San councils.

I situate the issue of democratization in the countryside within the broad context of land dispossession in South Africa and how, following the Ugandan scholar, Mamdani and many intellectuals of the liberation movement before him, a tiny foreign minority ruled an indigenous majority. Divide and rule, mainly through coopted chiefs, was the tool that colonialists, particularly the British, used.

This takes me to my second theme, where I focus on the land question and how the ANC-led government has grappled and is grappling with it. My key argument is that the Property Clause in the South African Constitution poses a major hindrance to genuine land reform. My first major publication in this regard was in 2007, more than 10 years before the issue became a matter of public debate as is the case as I speak.

As is widely accepted, the South African land reform programme is a colossal failure, with less than 10 per cent of more than 80 per cent of agricultural land that was in white hands transferred to black hands. However, my research is not only looking at limitations of the South African land reform programme, I also focus on the broader question of whether or not access to land makes a difference in the livelihoods of South Africans, both rural and urban.

The third theme of my research is on agency where I specifically focus on the role of social movements in the struggle for land and livelihoods. Apart from limitations posed by the Property Clause to radical land reform in South Africa, I identified weak social movements in the land sector as another explanation of the slow pace of land reform in South Africa. However, the historic farm workers/dwellers revolt towards the end of 2012 into the beginning of 2013 compelled me to reconsider my position.

Although the main focus of my work is the land question in South Africa, I have since 2012 been doing comparative research with other African countries, notably, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of

Congo. This has been made possible through one of the Research Chairs I hold, the A.C. Jordan Chair in African Studies. I have also managed, through the Chairs I hold, to put together a research team involving some of my colleagues, post-doctoral fellows I guide and supervised, as well as my post-graduate students that makes it possible for us to explore the range of issues covered in the three themes outlined above.

Finally, this honour could not have come at a better time. On 20 November last year, the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa signed into law the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act. Some of the aims of the Act are:

- To provide for the recognition of traditional and Khoi-San communities, leadership positions and for the withdrawal of such recognition;
- To provide for the functions and roles of traditional and Khoi-San leaders;

The Act replaces the law I referred to earlier which I argue resuscitated apartheid era Tribal Authorities. What the Act does is to extend these structures to new territories, notably the Western and Northern Cape, with new actors, those identifying themselves as the Khoi-San. A feature of these areas is that they never had bantustans. The implication for my research is that I will have to pay more attention to the land question in the Western and Northern Cape, going back to the 17th century, when Dutch colonialists dispossessed the indigenous people of their land. Given that a significant amount of the archival material would have been in Dutch, I see opportunities of collaboration with my Dutch colleagues here at Leiden University, opportunities I have already begun exploring.

ENKOSI

DANKIE

THANK YOU