



THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR AND HEAD OF THE
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES PROFESSOR NHLANHLA MKHIZE
CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO THE ANNUAL

JOHN LANGALIBALELE DUBE

MEMORIAL LECTURE 2025

THEME:

What went wrong with the Nation-Building or
Rainbow Nation Project? Race and Race Relations
in post-apartheid South Africa.

DATE

Thursday,
11 September 2025

VENUE

Colin Webb Hall,
PMB Campus, UKZN

TIME

17h30 onwards

RSVP ESSENTIAL:

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Enquiries:

Rakshika Sibrán | sibran@ukzn.ac.za

OVERVIEW:

The allegation of the existence of persecution and genocide of and against white people, specifically Afrikaners, in South Africa and the subsequent actions by the US government to grant Afrikaners refugee status have raised critical questions about racial unity and harmony in South Africa. After the 1994 elections, President Mandela championed the nation-building project. Archbishop Tutu even coined the term, Rainbow Nation, to acknowledge racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. The project was meant to bring all South Africans together as one nation after years of colonialism and Apartheid divisions, governed by progressive constitutional values. The concept of “unity in diversity” was often invoked as an acknowledgement of diversity and hope for harmonious co-existence. The new government created institutions to uphold human, linguistic, and cultural rights. Since the advent of democracy, crime, especially murder, has been a serious problem in the country. Successive administrations have not been able to deal with it effectively. Over the years, elements within the Afrikaner community started to present themselves as a persecuted minority. While South Africa continues to sail in its volatile socio-political waters, Dube’s contributions as a unifier offer sustainable lessons on the importance of racial unity. Dube had a transformative vision and leadership that aimed at unifying diverse South African communities in a complex socio-political landscape at the beginning of the 20th century. He defended inclusiveness and unity in a racially fractured society. His vision extended beyond simple coexistence; he aspired to build a shared identity that transcended racial boundaries. The 2025 JL Dube Memorial Lecture interrogates JL Dube’s contribution with the Afrikaner “refugees” narrative as a backdrop.

The Lecture:

Isitha Somuntu - The Black Man’s Enemy: John Langalibalele Dube and the Unfinished Project of Self-Help

In times of crisis, it is tempting to create an image of a ‘Golden Age’ in which everything was perfect and worked like clockwork. However, in times of crisis it is also pertinent that we revisit texts and ideas that may tell us why our ‘Utopias’ — with a capital ‘u’— have failed us. This lecture will be a reconsideration of Dube’s incendiary text *Isitha Somuntu* Nguye Uqobo Lwakhe (1928) [A Person’s Worst Enemy is Themselves]. The lecture will consider Dube’s disappointments with ‘Congress’ politics and how his book is a turning away from politics and an embrace of the philosophy of self-help.

Keynote Speaker:

Professor Hlonipha Mokoena

(University of the Witwatersrand)



Hlonipha Mokoena received her PhD from the University of Cape Town in 2005. She is currently the Director of WiSER (Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Her first book is on Magma M. Fuze, author of the *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (1922) / *The Black People and Whence They Came* (1979). Her biography of Fuze is titled *Magma Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual* (2011). She has just published a book on African men in military and police service in colonial South Africa. The book titled *The Nightwatchman: Representing Black Men in Colonial South Africa* (2025) has been published by Wits University Press. Twitter: @WitsWiSER