Humanity's Imminent Crisis: An Urgent Call for the Restoration of Peace, Stability, and Well-Being

Mpsanyana Makgahlela
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4973-5692

Tholene Sodi
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7592-5145

Mahlapahlapana Themane
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2097-8538
Makgahlela, Tholene Sodi & Themane

The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1960. The Declaration was a conscious effort to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights while creating conditions of stability and wellbeing including peaceful and friendly relations between peoples of the world (United Nations 1960). While the colonial system has been abolished for violating basic human rights, it is its long-term impact that is still felt today especially in many countries that were colonised. Stunted economies, political decline, social tension, hunger, violence, substandard health care systems, and so forth, remain cause for concern 65 years later after the system was abolished. Some social analysts (e.g. Ashara & Obuah 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) have attributed the humanitarian crisis in former colonies to sustained hegemonies of colonial forces or neocolonial relational patterns. It is within this context that Africa has continued to battle the humanitarian crisis.

Realising that Africa has over the centuries been in a state of dis-ease due to human atrocities such as slavery, colonialism, apartheid in South

Africa, and the covert yet malignant neoliberal agenda, this collection of peer-reviewed *Alter*nation journal papers was put together. The articles emanated from the Biennial conference of the 2023 South African Deans Association (SAHUDA) funded by the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), co-hosted by the Universities of Limpopo and Venda. The conference theme was, 'Humanity's Imminent Crisis: An Urgent Call for the Restoration of Peace, Stability, and Well-Being'.

As was expected of participants in the conference, contributors to the volume, sought to answer the conference question,

> *What role can Africa play in maintaining global peace, stability, and wellbeing, especially considering the recent COVID-19 scare and the strained state of international relations?*

With this question in mind, contributors formulated the African crisis to be rooted in its colonial and imperial history while sustained through the neo-colonial agenda. The authors argue that if Africa is to realise its potential including being recognised as a key role player in the restoration of global peace, stability, and people's well-being, Africa must be released from the clutches of its former colonisers. Africa must awaken to the reality that while imperialism and colonialism might have ended, their traces are left on the continent still at play in the economies, politics, and people's collective imaginations. It is the colonisers' philosophies, cultural traditions, and laws which continue to inform the praxis across all sectors including in academia and business. We perceive the sustained African crisis as undesirable and likely to regress progressive forces who seek to restore all of humanity's peace, wellbeing, and prosperity. We see this volume as an opportunity to echo the voices of all people protesting the perpetuation of the African crisis including the Russia – Ukraine and Israel – Palestine conflicts owing to North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) expansionist ambition.

This volume is organised into three sections, with theme one, being, ***Colonisation and the Perennial Displacement of African Philosophies, Cultural Values, and Sacred Practices***. Papers presented under this theme represents research and elaborate on the trauma of colonialism, that is, they contend that African contact with colonisers has resulted in the loss of African philosophies, cultural practices, values and wisdoms.

In contrast, papers under theme two titled, ***Protestations against the Continued Inequalities and Suffering of the Marginalised African***

Communities, do not necessarily provide answers to the problems that confront humanity with special reference to the African continent. Instead, they stir us to open conversations on what humanities and social sciences should be offering to redress prevailing human injustices for the equal advancement of human development, peace and stability.

The last theme focuses on, *Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Healing in Modern Day (South) Africa,* and dovetails the previous theme, with the papers presented under this topic, just scratching the surface regarding mental health issues while offering some insights into psychosocial healing imperatives and practices in Modern day (South) Africa.

Colonisation and the Perennial Displacement of African Philosophies, Cultural Values, and Sacred Practices

In Africa, colonisation and human enslavement have come and gone, however, colonialism has persisted. While colonisation served to colonise African spaces, colonialism colonised peoples' 'beingness', that is, it has parasitically colonised them mentally and spiritually. Today, the subtle yet destructive operations of colonialism are discernible in how African philosophies and indigenous cultural practices have been expatriated while some decimated. A primary consequent of which has been African peoples who have become misoriented theologically and alienated culturally. Secondarily, Africans suffer perpetual losses of their ancestral wisdoms, including tangible and intangible cultural heritages. Identity confusions among Africans are commonplace owing it to the trauma of colonialism.

The two papers presented under this theme magnify the trauma of colonialism, that is, they contend the idea that African contact with colonisers has resulted in the loss of African philosophies, cultural practices, values and wisdoms. The first paper by *Reshoketswe Mokobane* and *Maletšema Ruth Emsley*, decries the loss African proverbs, which have over centuries been used as vehicles for carrying rich African wisdoms and teachings across generations. It was through the tradition of *Koma* that the Bapedi cultural group of South Africa transmitted wisdoms of adulthood into adolescent boys and girls. Koma is (-was) a custom of circumcision through which the naïve youth are schooled into manhood and womanhood. Upon graduation, they are conferred with the status of adulthood. In this paper, the authors argue that *Koma* as a cultural rite of passage has been obliterated while its proverbial status of being *kgororwane* or *khupamarama* (i.e., in literal terms, an oath of secrecy) has been lost with

colonial contact. It is within this context that the authors argue that while African proverbs have historically served as agents for the transition of oral traditions, cultural values and ethos, they have since been threatened by Western infiltration. The point in contention is that *Koma* was a culturally acclaimed sacred practice, however, in modern day Bapedi cultural context, it has lost its moral ground.

The second paper by ***Moffat Sebola*** presents a reminiscent and nostalgic picture of **'Venda of Yore'** through the lenses of three Vhavenda poets. This paper interrogates three Vhavenḓa poets, that is, Ralson Ramudzuli Matshili, Eddie Thinandavha Maumela and Tendamudzimu Robert Ratshiṱanga, and distinguishes their eight poems into two broad categories based on each poet's attitudes towards Venda: those who romanticise the Venda of yore and those who reject the romanticisation. Irrespective of each poet's analytical stance, the author arrives at an interrogative finding that these poets' works are revealing of the disruptions and losses brought by the conquest of Venda. The author maintains that the poets reconstructed from memory and imagination pre-colonial Venda history, revealing of the tragic consequences of colonisation and apartheid upon the psyche of Vhavenḓa people. This point is particularly revealing of the veracity of imprisonment of African minds by the parasitic colonial system. The article also points out that in their attempts to confront the oppressive powers which aimed to erase Venda people's selfhoods, the poets explore areas of overlap between the turbulent experience of Africans and the cataclysmic history of black Africans in unsettling colonial narratives to re-assert and re-create their own cultural mythologies and narratives.

The two papers presented under this theme serve to expose how colonisation particularly colonialism displaced African philosophies, values, and sacred cultural practices. The perennial displacement meant acceptance of defeat or continued protest of the injustices and inequalities. The latter is the stance taken by the works presented by authors of the papers presented under this theme. This is of course, if Africans are to emerge out of the colonial trauma and crisis that they have been battling since the 15th century onwards.

Protestations against the Continued Inequalities and Suffering of the Marginalised African Communities

With the advancement of science and technology, and progress made in human rights issues, it was hoped that the oppressed and the marginalised commu-

nities would eradicate inequalities. But this has so far remained a mirage in South Africa, as elsewhere in the world. The two papers on Youthful Fantasy and Plutocracy and Protest are illustrative of the dream that blew in our face. This failure is particularly felt by young people. Therefore, papers 1 and 2 under theme 2 by **Thabo Tšehloane** and **Bongani C. Thela** respectively, echo this cry loudly. Undoubtedly, these papers have succinctly expressed how young people feel betrayed and their identity crushed by this failed dream.

Specifically, paper 1 presents a beautiful literary work to paint a bleak picture of the state of South African young people's identity and place in contemporary African dilemma. Through Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010) and Sello K. Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000), this paper explores the themes of identity and self-discovery through the narrative perspective of two young Black men. The paper contends that Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Mzobe's *Young Blood* demonstrate and illustrate how through 'narrative and imagination the authors show how poetry becomes a crucial tool of capturing and eradicating the state of disenchantment of the black youth even in contemporary times.

Equally, paper 2, shows how South Africa has become one of the most unequal countries or societies in the world, with unconscionable levels of poverty and unemployment. It is within this context that this narrative, through the lenses of **Aubrey Sekhabi's** *Marikana the Musical* (2014), that the author explores the theme of fairness and equal distribution of resources in the ever-unequal South African economy. The paper argues that South Africa is a plutocracy, and examples to paint the picture for this argument are drawn from the primary text, Marikana the Musical. Thus, these two papers draw a vivid picture of a bleak future that young South Africans face, which constitute the human crises. They both offer a unique perspective of the failed post-apartheid South African liberation struggle for freedom and democracy that remains pipe dream for most of the youth. These papers undoubtedly capture the theme of this collection. There is no doubt that issues of redress, inclusivity, and transformation should be addressed as a matter of urgency if we are to restore the dignity of the marginalised and forgotten.

The transformative and restorative outcry are echoed in the other three papers, namely **'Becoming a Musician in Black South African Communities: Domains of Music Learning, Training and Apprenticeship Processes'** by *Madimabe Geoff Mapaya*, **'The Relationship Between Traditional Leadership and Local Government on Land Allocation: A Case Of Thulamela Local Municipality'**, **South Africa** by *Justice*

Makhanikhe, *Vhonani Olive Netshandama* and *Pfarelo Matshidze*, and **'Sign Language in the Multilingual Space: The Case of English First Additional Language for Deaf Learners in Limpopo Province'** by *Ndivhuwo Matshanisi* and *Berrington Ntombela*. These papers also point to the dire and urgent need for redress, inclusivity and transformation of higher education curriculum if the South African society is to grapple with the humanity crisis. The authors rightly argue that in the 30 years of democracy little has been done to decolonise the education system. Most of decolonial efforts concern bread and butter matters, that is, issues that have been raised are just a talk show with little or no practical benefits to the rank and file of those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the new dispensation

In paper three, the decry of the lack of musician access and success is more pronounced. To date, in South Africa, formal music education is still limited to a specific class, creating substantial barriers for disadvantaged aspiring musicians due to resource scarcity and high entry requirements. This makes it nearly impossible for individuals from poor backgrounds without prior school-level music education to enter university music programmes. This is despite the fact that young black musicians with impressive knowledge and skills are emerging in local communities.

The fourth paper also exposes the stark reality of the margination of certain minorities such as the deaf community, who even though sign language is now recognised as an official language remains in the periphery of the higher education curriculum. This is evidenced by the fact that teacher education programmes do not offer training in sign language and other African languages, despite impressive policy statements in the programme mix. There is a disconnect between what is happening in universities and colleges and what is their statutes.

Paper five also raises the same issue, but from a different but critical perspective, the issue of land restoration. The author rightly points out, the issue of land restoration remains a pipedream in South Africa. The failure of both academics and politicians to provide clear cut answers is pathetic. The failure to give guidance on the interface between traditional leadership and local governments is the case in point. Both the traditional leaders and the local government are expected to provide co-leadership in same areas of jurisdiction but without much guidance on how that should be done. The author poignantly points out that because of this weakness, there is constant tension in the relationship and questioning between the two centers of power; tensions, such as those that largely exist around issues of land allocation. The paper explores

the relationship between traditional leadership and local governments about land allocation in Thulamela Local Municipality. Why has it taken so long for the democratic government to address the issue of land dispossession may appear a simple question to answer, however, a cancer that has its roots deep penetrating the cells always clings on for its dear life. It is penetrative, deceptive, and forever mutating.

The five papers presented in this theme do not necessarily provide answers to the problems that confronts humanity with special reference to the African continent. Instead, they stir us to open conversations of what humanities and social sciences should be offering to redress prevailing human injustices for the equal advancement of human development, peace and stability.

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Healing in Modern Day (South) Africa

Dovetailing from the previous theme, papers presented under this theme scratch on the surface regarding mental health issues including offering some insightful perspectives towards healing of distressed Africans in modern day (South) Africa. The four chapters featured all point to the importance of this focus area which has received more attention in recent years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Guided by the African philosophical concept of *Moya Nare Masola, Mpsanyana Makgahlela* and **Tholene Sodi,** adopted a phenomenological approach to understand and describe the psychosocial and spiritual meanings embedded in the dreams of African indigenous healers (AIHs). Particularly, the authors were interested in understanding the notion that AIHs, through their dealings with the spiritual world, can '*dream on behalf of and for the benefit of their clients*'. The key question that the paper aimed to address was 'What is the nature and essence of the dream experience of AIHs in the context of the management of mental health conditions?' The study found that dreams form a bridge that provides for a spiritually mediated process that enables continual reciprocal interaction between ancestral spirits and AIHs for the benefit of their clients. In essence, the study underscores the role of ancestral spirits in the work of AIHs. It is a contribution to the existing African literature (e.g. Baloyi & Ramose *et al.* 2016; Moshabela *et al.* 2017; Nwoye 2015) that highlights the centrality of African spirituality and the critical role that AIHs play in health promotion in the context of African communities. It also points to the need for a dialogue on the options that should be considered

to foster collaboration between AIHs and Western trained mental health practitioners to service Africans in the modern age.

Guided by the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) theoretical framework as a lens, *Lesley Takalani Mauda* and *Mpsanyana Makgahlela* extend-the collaborative argument from the perspectives of Black Pentecostal pastors. Black Pentecostal pastors arguably play a crucial role in the delivery of mental health care services within African communities. In this regard Mauda and Makhgahlela's empirical study with 19 pastors found that most of the pastors viewed the prospects of working together with mental healthcare practitioners in a positive and favourable light - a finding which essentially replicates several previous studies (e.g. Kamanga *et al.* 2019; Burns & Tomita 2015). While this is the case, it may also be worth highlighting that documented collaborative studies between Black Indigenous Healers, Black Pentecostal pastors, and Black western trained mental health professionals always yielded an interesting picture. In hindsight, we intentionally use the social construct, Black, to help emphasise the three groupings' 'common ancestral heritage' as opposed to its historical usage, that is, as a derogation of African peoples based on skin colour, cultural background, and spoken language (Jones 2021). Black Pentecostal pastors and Black western trained health practitioners are always warm to the idea of working together in the service of health care users. While this is important, unfortunately, the two groupings often are reluctant or reject the idea of also collaborating with Black Indigenous Healers. The negative attitude and rejection of the idea is sustained, despite ample evidence suggesting that African clients have continued to rely on indigenous and western mental health care services to meet their physical, mental, and spiritual health needs. In our view, the anti-collaborative stance exposes the successes of colonial capture, wherein Africans initially were divided based on colonial lines, and today on the successes of the westernization and Christianisation projects. Instead of collaborating for a common purpose, which is harnessing Indigenous African and western healing methods for the benefit of the service user, a preferential attitude is still given to western methods. Returning to Mauda and Makgahlela's paper, the authors recommend a bidirectional referral pathway between Pentecostal pastors and western trained mental healthcare practitioners for the benefit of service users.

The third paper by *Edgar Malatji, Tebogo Lekota* and *Mamohlotlo Mothiba*, highlights on the possible positive and negative impact of social media in modern Africa. In particular, the authors investigated the perceptions of South African Instagram users on the effect that the posts on this commu-

nication platform have on their mental health. This is a timely contribution given the fact that most of the studies on this subject emanate from the United States of America, a high-income country which is a considerably different cultural environment when compared to other regions such as those in the global south. In their study, Malatji *et al.* used the Identity Social Theory, and the Uses and Gratification Theory to understand the effects of Instagram posts on mental health among users in the South African context. Using the qualitative methods of inquiry, the authors selected 20 participants through purposive sampling and used semi-structured interviews to collect the date from the selected Instagram users. Whilst suggesting that Instagram has some value as a common way of social expression and communication, the study also points to some negative impact that these lifestyle posts might have on the users. The authors make two useful recommendations on the actions that can be taken to mitigate the negative impact of Instagram on the mental health of users. These include the use of certain features such as filters and time restrictions, and professional help for some users. Importantly, the authors also highlight the need to inculcate the culture of digital literacy among the users of social media platforms.

The fourth and final paper covered under the mental health theme touches on rampant illicit drugs which have become one of the underlying causes of mental health problems in African societies today. In this paper, **Khutso Mabokela** and **Thabiso Muswede,** adopts a framing theory and a qualitative content analysis method to analyse how *The Sowetan*, *Daily Sun*, and *The Citizen* dominant local newspapers in South Africa frame their news report on the scourge of illicit drugs. To achieve this objective, the study identified and selected one hundred and sixteen (116) news reports from these three newspapers. Though the news reports demonstrate the seriousness of illicit drugs in South Africa, the author concludes by pointing to the lack of intervention from the media, communities, and government to arrest this scourge. The author highlights the need for these stakeholders to create awareness on the dangers and impact of illicit drugs on societies, more especially given the fact that public's attitudes and actions on how to prevent drug related problems is influenced by how this problem is portrayed in the media.

A running thread of the papers presented from theme 1 to 3 is the realisation that from the early days of slavery and now recently, Apartheid in South Africa, the exploitative globalist agenda has disrupted the normal developmental trajectory of Africa. The consequence of this unmitigated

onslaught has been an Africa that has perpetually failed to contribute meaningfully in all respects towards the advancement of its humanity including of diverse peoples of the world. Africa has remained a traumatised child who, like in the case of someone with a split ego personality, has half of its persona stuck in a dependent and clinging ego state, which displays an anxious, fearful and childlike character that yearns to continually identify with the aggressor. In contrast, her other ego-state, is driven by the need for restorative justice, redress, and the rejection of the colonial master's globalist agenda which today operates under the guise of neocolonialism. It is within this context, that the contributors collectively project a picture of an Africa whose humanity, humanism, and cultural heritages are on the brink of catastrophe. And like cancerous cells, those elements of African humanity and way of being that are infected by the cancer of colonialism continue to have the potency to destroy the soul of the entire continent. The papers presented in this volume contribute towards efforts aimed at restoring and healing the soul of Africa.

References

Ashara, D.U. & E.E. Obuah 2023. Africa's Humanitarian Crisis: An African Union's Diplomatic Management. *Journal of International Relations, Security, and Economic Studies* 2,3: 22 - 37. Available at: https://journals.rcmss.com/index.php/jirses/article/view/805

Baloyi, L. & M. Ramose 2016. Psychology and Psychotherapy Redefined from the Viewpoint of the African Experience. *Alter*nation Special Edition 18: 12 - 35. Available at: http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/23%20SpEd18/01%20Baloyi%2 0F.pdf; and https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/soa/article/view/1352

Burns, J.K. & A. Tomita 2015. Traditional and Religious Healers in the Pathway to Care for People with Mental Disorders in Africa: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 50,6: 867 – 877. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-014-0989-7 PMid:25515608; PMCid:PMC4442066

Kamanga C.N., H.K. Chilale, L.Z. Mugala & C.B. Maloya 2019. Exploring the Concept of Mental Health and Healing among Pastors in Mzuzu and Possible Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals. *International Journal of Internal Medical Geriatrics* 1,2: 46 - 53.

Moshabela, M., D. Bukenya, G. Darong, J. Wamoyi, E. McLean, M. Skovdal & A. Wringe 2017. Traditional Healers, Faith Healers and Medical Practitioners: The Contribution of Medical Pluralism to Bottlenecks along the Cascade of Care for HIV/AIDS in Eastern and Southern Africa. *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 93: 756 - 757. https://doi.org/10.1136/sextrans-2016-052974 PMid:28736393 PMCid:PMC5739844

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2018. The Dynamics of Epistemological Decolonisation in the 21st Century: Towards Epistemic Freedom. *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 40,1: 16 – 45. https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v40i1.268

Nwoye, A. 2015. African Psychology and the Africentric Paradigm to Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment. *South African Journal of Psychology* 45,3: 305 - 317. https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246315570960

United Nations, 14 December 1960. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. A/4684. - 1961. - p. 66-67. - (GAOR, 15th sess., Suppl. no. 16). https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-granting-independence-colonial-countries-and-peoples

Professor M. Makgahlela (PhD)
Certified Independent Clinical Psychologist
NIHSS Regional Mentor
Faculty of Humanities: Research and Postgraduate Office
University of Limpopo
Polokwane
Mpsanyana.Makgahlela@ul.ac.za

Professor Tholene Sodi
Registered Clinical Psychologist and
SAMRC-DSI/ NRF-UL SARChI Research Chair in
Mental Health and Society
University of Limpopo
Polokwane
tholene.sodi@ul.ac.za

Professor Mahlapahlapana Themane
DSI/NRF-UL SARChI Chair in
Schools as Enabling Environments
University of Limpopo
Polokwane
Mahlapahlapana.Themane@ul.ac.za