

SIYANDA NDLOVU

25 March 1982 – 5 April 2010

Introduction to Siyanda Ndlovu.

Siyanda Ndlovu, along with some friends and colleagues, had gone down to the coast (just south of Durban) for the easter weekend, to do some work and relaxing. The work that he was doing was writing a book review for **PINS** (the one that follows). He was intending to talk to me about the review when he got back to Durban, as it had got “somewhat unwieldy”. Our book reviews are usually in the 1 500 to 2 000 words range, and his was already over 4 000 words! What I would have told him is that he should either drastically cut his review to meet the 1 500 – 2 000 word limit, or else extend it as a *review article*, which would also entail submitting it for anonymous review.

Sadly our conversation never took place as on the last day of his weekend away with friends, tragedy struck, and Siyanda drowned in the sea that he loved swimming in. And so with his untimely death, we have lost a brilliant intellectual and an inspiring role model. Siyanda Ndlovu was on the brink of a promising career as an intellectual and academic, and as a tribute to him **PINS** decided to accept his unfinished, and “somewhat unwieldy” review for publication. Along with Kerry Frizelle, a close friend and colleague of Siyanda, I minimally edited his review article so as to prepare it for publication in this issue of **PINS**. It is clear from his review that he thought deeply and seriously about the issue of “race” and its impact on the politics and psyche of this country. It is only regretted that we won’t continue to have his input in debates regarding the politics and psychology of identity.

In an attempt to introduce readers to the “academic career” of Siyanda Ndlovu I offer a very brief intellectual biography. Mr Ndlovu joined the staff of the School of Psychology at Howard College as a lecturer at the beginning of 2009, as part of the LEAP programme. Prior to that Siyanda Ndlovu had had a distinguished career as a student in the School.

He joined the then University of Natal in 2000 as a first year student and from day one produced excellent results in most of his subjects. He achieved a string of first class passes, and quite a few certificates of merit. He double majored in Psychology and achieved four firsts in Psychology 3. Mr Ndlovu enrolled in the Honours course in Psychology in 2003, and was one of the top students in a large Honours class. His interests in Psychology were primarily of a social and political nature, and hence he opted for the critical research masters. He obtained his Masters degree *cum laude*, and his research topic was entitled, “Identities under threat” and had to do with the identities of homeless people in Durban, and was supervised by Anthony Collins (UKZN). The question of identity, or more accurately, identities, became an abiding interest for Siyanda, both intellectually and politically.

So having completed his Masters at the end of 2005, he registered for a PhD in 2006, and his topic was on making sense of what is constituted in the designation “black identity”, while at the same time being highly critical of any essentialist notion of an “African identity”. For his PhD he had been awarded the prestigious split-site Commonwealth scholarship, spending time at the University of East London (UEL) under the co-supervision of Professor Corinne Squire (UEL), and his University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) supervisor being Professor Jill Bradbury. He was intending to submit his PhD thesis by the end of this year. Running parallel with his PhD work Mr Ndlovu was also actively engaged in other intellectual activities, for instance, attending research seminars, giving conference papers, and writing for publication.

On a more personal note, Siyanda loved the university, not only the rigours of intellectual life, but the university as a place, its practices, its rituals, and its history. He also cared deeply about a specific university, UKZN and its Howard College campus, and was passionate about carving out a meaningful and critical contribution to the university’s vision of African scholarship. Indeed, Siyanda embodied the brightest possible hope of a future for a rigorous critical interpretation of this vision. He also loved the physical space of the university, the campus with its buildings, the indigenous gardens, and views of the bay and sea. And of course, he loved with his characteristic open-heartedness, the people of the university, engaging with all as equals, from fellow academic colleagues to cleaners.

South Africa can ill-afford to lose such talented intellectuals, and compassionate human beings. He will be deeply missed.

Grahame Hayes
PINS editor
Durban