



Invitation

Inaugural address

30/05/2018



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

**The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities,
Prof Vasu Reddy, cordially invites you to the
inaugural address of**

Prof Nompumelelo (Mpume) Zondi

BA (Hons), MA (Natal), PhD (UKZN)

Head of the Department of African Languages

Titled

Revisiting the poetry of Benedict Wallet Vilakazi:
The utility and meaning of African Languages and
Literatures in Higher Education

Date	30 May 2018
Time	17:30 for 18:00
Venue	Merensky Library Auditorium, Hatfield Campus, Lynnwood Road, Pretoria
RSVP	penelope.mdluli@up.ac.za by 24 May 2018
Dress code	Business or traditional attire
Access to UP	Entrance at Roper Street or University Road Bring invitation and ID
Parking	H2
GPS	S25° 45' 21" E28° 13' 51"
Enquiries	Penelope Mdluli (012 420 3771)

ABSTRACT

Although viewed (and dismissed) by many as primarily a tool for communication, language and literature cannot be understood only in relation to what it communicates. A study of how it is shaped uncovers the social forces that provide its broad and complex template in the acts of reading and writing.

Singling out the importance of the humanities and of African languages, the DHET, in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013:37-41), advances an understanding of the seminal relationship between language, literature, context and society. The National Development Plan (2011), another founding document shaping the developmental agenda for South Africa, acknowledges that 'major humanist projects which link our heritage and our future as a society' are encompassed by the humanities in general and African languages in particular, and advises that our education from basic to tertiary and through the science and innovation system should invest and build capacity and high level expertise in these (in White Paper 2013: 37). The

'demise' of African languages in the academic sphere poses a serious threat to linguistic diversity in South Africa' (White Paper 2013:38) and must be reversed. The DHET White Paper commits itself to a set of key ideas and strategies to ensure the rejuvenation of African languages through a 'cross-disciplinary approach' (White Paper 2013: 38).

In this context, this lecture argues for the utility and meaning of the poetry of Benedict Wallet Vilakazi (1906–1947), offering perspectives on the saliency of his work for inter alia the meanings and location of African languages and literatures with regard to epistemic diversity, the 'transformation' of curricula, tradition versus modernity, gender, the meaning of identity, and the broader humanist project.