

Announcing the Final Examination of Masibonge Ian L. Ngidi-Brown (LLC Cohort 13)

Date and Location: April 8, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.
LLC Conference Room, 422 Sherman Hall

Title: Through the Lens of uBuntu: Inclusive, Critically Diverse, and Locally Derived Transformation Efforts in a South African Bank

This dissertation focused on the insights, experiences and perceptions of senior managers and diversity facilitators working in South Africa on Mashubank's diversity program, Botho Pele. It explores the complexities associated with organizational transformation through the lens of uBuntu, which is understood as a philosophy, a methodology for living, a methodology for research, a theoretical framework for understanding the world, an object of inquiry, and an epistemology. I also examine language and language issues as an integral part of culture in Mashubank's transformation project.

My exploration of transformation, uBuntu, and language is a qualitative analysis of individuals' testimonies and stories of their lived experiences. Data included interviews of senior managers, Botho Pele facilitators, official Mashubank documents, and bank publications. Indigenous research methodologies and the epistemology of uBuntu informed the method of interviewing and undergirded this research project. My primary analytical tools were critical diversity theory to explore transformation and critical heritage scholarship to examine uBuntu. Language was explored borrowing from theoretical frameworks concerned with a multilingual landscape with a linguistic hierarchy.

Transformation has occurred at the individual level, within the bank, and as a South African national agenda. Individual transformation entailed reflective and healing work that necessitated a change in perception. For the bank, transformation was inextricably linked to the business agenda driven by remaining profitable and an opportunity to expand to new communities and open up new markets. Study participants were adamant that sustainable transformation began with leadership in order to change Mashubank's organizational culture to be more inclusive of diversity. Further, I found that views of transformation vary considerably among racial groups.

uBuntu practiced by participants enhanced interconnectedness between hierarchical levels as it commanded respect, empowered all people and held its practitioners accountable. uBuntu's dynamism was explained as evolving from its traditional place in households in the black communities into the wider Mashubank and South African societal sphere. I argue that uBuntu is integral to understanding how to create an inclusive environment, and I suggest that uBuntu is a powerful platform to build inclusive, critically diverse, and locally derived organizations in South Africa and to transform the society.

Dissertation Committee: Beverly Bickel, Chair
Omar Ka, Co-Chair
Jodi Crandall
James Early
Mvuselelo Ngcoya
Eric Singer
Cedric Herring

The public is welcome to observe.