

Global Engagement, Human Rights, and Cognitive Justice

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TALK AND RECEPTION: INTERNATIONAL CENTER, 427 NORTH SHAW LANE, EAST LANSING, MI 48824

Part1:

Okay, I'm here. You welcomed me with all your heart isn't it thank you so much, so much. I've come here from far away far far away to share with you this thing that holds us together. In the spirit of Ubuntu, the philosophy of practice of Africa. I am because you are, not because I think like Des Cartes said. I am because you are. Think about it. It means that my problems are yours, your joys are mine also. In that spirit, I invite you to share with me both, my pains and joys, both my spirituals and my troubles. Okay, thank you. And now, okay, this is me. The South African Research Chairs Initiative is a strategically focused knowledge and human resource intervention into the South African higher education systems. That means that I'm not just a professor, No! No no no no. I deal with national questions, yes. I raise awareness and develop strategic codes which can make the Academy transform to the national question, you get me? So part of this strategic intervention, which is funded by the Parliament of South Africa through the Ministry of Science and Technology, the University of South Africa hosts me, but I'm not part of them, you get me? So you can read the mandate. Advance frontiers of knowledge and advance frontiers of knowledge. That means that I don't do not go around revolving the same things over and over and no no no no I'm supposed to advance the frontiers, you get me? So this is UNISA, the biggest university in Africa. What are my goals? 1) To make transdisciplinary a core facet in leadership building 2) Offer robust expositions of the constitutive, not regulatory rules unknowns that control current thinking and practice 3) It represents an epistemology of hope, hope that probes the future and thereby illuminates the possibilities of the present. Knowing that sometimes these entities that perform the functions and wield authority are not actually persons like pilots or doctors, but words. So I've gathered fellows of my chair, 40 of them, I told you about it in our conversations and combine them with circles of elders and the VCs of the universities into a discourse coalition to bring about change. So one (Part 1) The Context. As a people we know that no community is complete without the other. No society is complete in itself. The other opens us, enlargens us without the otherness of the other. The self is incomplete and even vulnerable. What is true of society is true of knowledge. No knowledge is complete in itself. No knowledge is complete without dreams of the other. Hospitality, reciprocity, generosity, plurality, without these, no commons of knowledge is possible. And yet, we know that the prevailing and dominating worldviews that surround us today and which we are all compelled to respond to is one that is: Narrow in its vision, Exclusive and detached in relating to the total environment, Analytical and deductive in its perception and thinking, Linear in its 'doing', Hierarchical

and competitive in its management of the field of activity. The painful facts in the name of Ubuntu, I ask you to share with me this painful facts. The era of the Empire, weak and strong at the same time, declared Africa to have nothing, its knowledge systems were irrelevant. We were unsuited for the modern world. The Imperial, twisted, parochial methodologies taught us in Africa that a handful of countries in Europe dominated all thoughts and actions and naturally set the pattern for the world. Really, really, really. They mangled Darwin's theories of evolution into a populist racist, political narrative of progress and race, and they used it to justify their untold violence on Africa. Saying all the while that it was a manifestation of scientific destiny. So they intentionally headed everything, everything, everything, everything, from table manners and dress codes to economic methods to political philosophy to governmental administration to notions of civilizational truth and destiny. Thanks to the pen of Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest", certainly public debate in Europe was full of scientific truisms that were neither scientific, nor true, nor true. We had social Darwinism, which helped to create more Empire mythologies than any other, from Europe to here. The combined narratives ruled Africa up to now. Europeans insisted that their principles, in particular, were universal. Hello, you know nothing! It is only as who known. Isn't it? Read it. There a narrative of history, cuisine, of civilization, of fashion, spread wide during the violence of colonialism, ALL apparently universal. Educational curricula were fill with these absurdities. They then went to mount attacks on indigenous cultures and people's all over the world and demean them by banning their languages, cultures, and written, living only the Western rituals, culture. It is not funny, it is not funny. Isn't it really? It is not funny in the name of Ubuntu, it is not funny.

Part 2:

Illegal and ethical acts followed... Myriad laws, and regulations and administrative structures were created and amended to install a legal infrastructure and punishment, both social and economic. So questions for the University in the 21st century. What does it mean to have universities in Africa actually? Noting what I've seen, what does it mean to have universities in Africa? What are the cultural and episystemic identities of the universities in Africa? What constitutes the ecology of a university in Africa? And how can this be reworked to respond to the human question in Africa? What is the moment of crisis in Africa? And how can African universities give academic and scientific dignity to third world problems without duress? What are the conceptions of Education that should underpin this new experience explorations? When we talk about supporting community outrage or engagement, the question arises as to how to determine the method for reaching that goal. What should this new social contract consist of in Africa actually? You can read it, if I keep quiet, just read. [Laughter] It is prudent to recognize that the university communities are more closed loops of discourse than we all imagine. Really. It is the university itself that decides on the quality, the usefulness, and integrity of its own service, not the communities being served. The university controls the discourses from start to finish. So seeds of change. Read it. The agenda for the transformation of the academic system that demands attention is to the default drive of the academic system itself. Here, Transformation is seen as distinct from Reform and Restructuring. In that, it draws attention to the basic cultural structures within which our systems of thought have been constructed all across the disciplinary domains, and goes beyond the 'regulatory rules' into what Howard Richards, my fellow, called the constitutive rules. Let us turn to voices. A voice is a sound made by a soul, therefore, the voice of Africa is saying liberation is not enough. Liberation might be a prelude to further oppression. Liberation needs reflexivity to become

emancipation. n emancipation is hard work. Emancipative knowledges know that any kind of knowledge can turn oppressive. They must seek to create a epistemologies that prevent knowledge from being exploitative, extractive, even violent. It is an attempt to confront injustice and oppression, both in the everyday sense and in terms of global regimes. In this vision, we have to picture the democratization of democracy itself through cognitive justice. I will come back later to cognitive justice, which is a new theory of non-violence. Therefore I take development and its antecedents and the acute lessons drawn from it as a pedagogic field and human development as the goal. I articulate the codes and pathways to systemic transformation of the Academy in this slide. And ask the question: what kinds of transformative actions must be brought to bear to enable both restorative action and sustainable human development to occur in Africa and elsewhere? How can key areas of disciplinary knowledge production, such as science, economics, education, and law be reconstituted in order to bring about a just and human centered development? The transformation that is called for requires to be located within an intellectual and political context. When South Africa got its political dispensation in 94, it silently articulated three sets of intellectual projects, which have global relevance. The first was the Truth Commission as a thought experiment in justice and healing. The second was the Corruption Commission, working on new notions of their relations between legality and responsibility. The third was the introduction of traditional institutions and traditional knowledge. Each of these initiatives is tied to an overall vision of the future of South Africa. This meeting point provides a crystal seed of a precious idea, an act of clear trusteeship that will carry South Africa into a future where alternatives are still possible. It means to be nurtured, celebrating, and expanded. It is the domain which gave Guerilla and the peace maker meet into a dialogue in the future. Therefore...the first level of the revolution that we are seeking is not a revolution in technology, machinery, techniques, software, or speed. No, it is a revolution in this in the way we think. Read it. So what is the pragmatic responses to this in practice? One is the need for ethical capacity building actually. Without routing what we do in deep ethics will not succeed. Questioning knowledge legitimation processes. We asked what type of knowledge is being generated in our universities actually? That omits these fundamental traumas. How can we heal if our universities doesn't bring this out sincerely? How? How? How? What type of research questions are being asked and what are the existing rules and regulations governing the legitimation and accreditations of science as it is practiced and as it should be practiced with this in mind? We have to rethink key areas of knowledge production, such as law, economics, science, and education.

Part 3:

I've written a book called "Rethinking thinking" more than it is other and the transformation of the university. It is about 80 pages only. But, I will skip it for now. We have to transform by enlargement. What do I mean? The integration of knowledge systems does not throw away modernity really because we are part of it. We are part of it, but we have to enlarge our thinking. Is it not calling for the throwing a way of modern, I mean, Western cultures, modern culture, no! But, we ask it to enlarge itself, now, here and now, enlarge it so that knowledges that were left out comes in. Knowledges that were deliberately left out should find their ways around this banquet table. We have to introduce notions and wisdom that comes from other knowledge systems into the Academe. All of you have spelled or mouth open too so many times, but what does Ubuntu really mean in practice, because your cultures negate Ubuntu absolutely. So we have to expand our thinking really. To appreciate the logic and the opportunities that come from other knowledge systems, to find its place around that banquet table that

we have all protected as if our life depended on it. No, no, no. We have to expand and invite others also in. We have to go beyond postcolonial theorizations to transformative interventions in knowledge production. In other words, being here during this last two or three days, I heard you have done a lot of projects all over, but what do the people projects mean in terms of rethinking how universities should behave in your cultures? You get me? Unless you think strategically about the genes of each of the projects and how they can compute to the rethinking of strategies governing universities and community engagement and so on. Okaym they will remain projects, but unless somebody is courageous and enough to talk to shave through these projects, what does the project really mean? What does it really mean in a nutshell? What does it really mean for our strategies? You will fail to recommend any sort of action in your country or government or something, yes. It will remain business as usual and you keep on financing and what could be called the thousands projects, but the implications and the imperative that grow that these projects grow even at a systemic level, it is not seen. The indigenization, which I use, is different from indigenization that encourage assimilation of black people into the game, that was used by the independence leaders in Africa. Oh, come I children the emperor has left a bed. Come, ooh, the beds are nice. Oh, they have, yes, they have cars, my children, learn to drive it. Now we are questioning the rules of the game and we are engaging the paradigmatic friends of the game itself. We are about to reach the constitutive rules of the game itself, rather than being assimilated into the game. Sorry, sorry. No, it is the 21st century. You can read. The Transformation of the academy requires creating space and ethical space imperatives and dialogues on a epistemological and cultural jurisdictions. The ethical space is that tension riddled enterprise of cultural border crossing. The West had monopolized without any ambition to dialogue, or reciprocity, or respect, or courtesy, or valorization, or recognition of the "other". You see, we have to bring this ethical space in public and discuss this epistemological and cultural jurisdictions at the point of entry into another culture. What am i doing actually? Really, what am i doing actually? Am I part of perpetrating what my ancestors did or have I rethought all this and it is going to be different? It is a space in which values, motivations, and assumptions are brought to bear and at last dialogue on issues of plurality and diversity of knowledges, as well as dialogue around ownership control and benefit of those knowledges can be undertaken. The last point is the Duress and Humiliation. They are the single most important weapons of mass destruction actually. When you humiliate somebody, they narrate it to their children over and over and over and you cannot extinguish what you have done several decades ago. They narrate it to their children and to their grandchildren and the truth will come not in your generation, but the generation of your children and your grandchildren. You're getting? So duress and humiliation, we should rethink it. You can read it. So in rethinking knowledge systems, cognitive justice stands out. Cognitive justice is the right of all forms and traditions of knowledge, to coexist in public without any form of duress. How is this possible when we have been brought up in this narrow Western knowledge? How can we embrace cognitive justice unless we expand our thinking throughout? That is what I do in South Africa now and you can ignore this, but it's imperatives like this. You can ignore this. Jackson caution that an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere and from Plato, justice will only exist where those not affected by the injustice are filled with the same amount of indignation is those affected by it. So by thinking and acting so, it means that we create a unique moment where the inner voice of disenfranchisement meets the outer voice of environment, where the inner cry for self-determination meets the warm embrace of co-determination. Thank you.