

**Eulogy from the University of KwaZulu-Natal memorial for Siyanda Ndlovu  
by Prof Jill Bradbury, Siyanda Ndlovu's PhD supervisor**

Let me first thank you all for being here today; it is so very important for us specifically as the university community to gather to commemorate Siyanda's life and together to grieve his loss. Siyanda loved the university ... not only the rigours of intellectual life in ways that I will speak about later, but the university as a place and its practices, its rituals and its history. He was the only person I know who would have gone to every graduation ceremony if he could have, even those where he didn't know a soul graduating – he loved the pomp and ceremony, the gowns and the mace and even the singing in latin, and simply laughed that wonderful laugh when I teased him about the colonial references of all these things. He also deeply cared about this specific university, UKZN and was passionate about carving out a meaningful and critical contribution to our 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 this particular space, the physical space, the campus with its buildings, indigenous gardens and views of the sea and this creative, energetic artistic space that we are gathered in today. And of course, he loved with his characteristic open-heartedness, the people of the university ... engaging with us all as equals: it is significant that there are in the audience today, members of the university hierarchy, academic peers from psychology and beyond, critical social science thinkers and artists, students, senior and junior, admin people from across the campus, cleaners, – we are his community and he would remind us of our connections and relations to one another.

With apologies to my many past and present students here today, but Siyanda was quite simply far and away the cleverest student I have ever taught in my life. He was a superb challenge to racist assumptions in the educational space, very sharp, demanding excellence of both himself and his students and indeed of his teachers, never taking the easy or polemical or crudely political route, always wrestling with ideas and contradictions to deepen his understanding and ours. He worked with enormous energy to apply theoretical ideas to contexts of practice. In particular, many of my abiding memories are of him working long days and late into the night with exhilarating energy

on the Fast Forward programme. He grappled together with the learners to think about questions of identity, of ourselves as men and women, of our place in Africa, of how to confront and harness our histories and heritage, how to create change and make our future worlds.

Siyanda's doctoral and current intellectual work focuses on the question of black identity. His thesis is entitled "There is no-one black" and explores the multiple ways of being black in the world. These questions are critical for our time and place and he was in the process of making extremely important contributions to both theoretical and practical struggles with issues of race. The irony that he was being supervised by me and Prof. Corinne Squire of the University East London in Britain caused him a great deal of amusement and I think this is indicative of the immense sophistication of the work that he was doing. Siyanda was both fervent about defining himself as black, as African, angry about racist and colonial oppression, but simultaneously hated crude forms of Afrocentric thought and sought the best of knowledge wherever he could find it, appropriating it and making it his own. This complexity of thinking was reflected not only in his work but also in the ways that he lived his life and formed his relationships, creating new synergies and dynamisms.

In all kinds of ways, Siyanda inverted the feminist slogan "the personal is political" making the political, personal, living a life that explored and pushed the boundaries. There are two images that I have of Siyanda dressed to assert these complexities: one, in the most English of English places, the Lake District in the UK, where he wore a swathe of African cloth draped over his head and flowing about his body, announcing his African-ness, his blackness, demanding that people see him and recognise him. The other, is of him dancing at my farewell party last week, in the Durban humidity, dressed in an authentic Scottish kilt that he bought in Edinburgh, mixing it up, making all the elements of the world his own. Siyanda crossed every boundary, was open to all horizons and never let us think of him or ourselves or others as mere categories rather than persons. He was a defiant advocate of black consciousness and solidarity but some of his closest friends were white, he loved men but embraced women, he believed in Madiba magic, was proudly and passionately South African but never to the exclusion

of fellow Africans, he loved the isiZulu language and spoke it whenever and wherever he could but this did not prevent him learning kiSwahili or writing and speaking meticulous sophisticated English. Siyanda's typical morning greetings to me did the mix-it: Goeie more Solwazi Bradbury, Habari za asa huri?

So, while this is an institutional event, a work event, we all know that for Siyanda the boundaries between work and play were very blurred! Working with him meant not only serious and difficult reading and writing (lots of both!) but also being jolted by his energy, excitement and sheer delight in ideas. Playing with him meant not only music and wine and dancing (again, lots of all!) but also long and rigorous arguments deep into the night across kitchen tables and on road trips and in restaurants and gardens, dialogues that provoked us all to think differently, to be different people. Siyanda was an exceptional intellect but more than this he was an exceptional human being, living life to the fullest and over-flowing, beautiful, full of laughter and love. He was my student, my work companion, my intellectual sparing partner, but so much more, he was my friend, my brother, my son. He had promised to bury me and speak at my funeral and it is unbearably painful to find myself instead doing this for him. I loved him very much and I will miss him deeply all the days of my life.