

## 6<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY 2016

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In May 2016 I attended the International Conference on Community Psychology at the Durban International Convention Centre and what an exhilarating experience it was. As much as there were several outstanding highlights, however, one that stood out for me was the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Peace, Safety and Human Rights Memorial Lecture delivered by Professor Paulus Zulu. At first, when Professor Fourie invited me and wanted to know whether I would be interested in attending the lecture, I was unsure because both South African history and its politics are the least of my interests.

Nonetheless, despite my naivety, I continued to feel somehow compelled to honour the invitation, plus I kept on feeling this relentless need and the urge to attend. So, as I sat there in the company of all those distinguished guests, I became immediately aware of my surroundings and I guess this is where it began occurring to me that I was actually privileged to have been invited. For the better part of the evening, different speakers came and went narrating their various experiences – these included Dullah Omar and Joe Moabi.

Then came along my game-changer: Professor Paulus Zulu whom I'd like to identify as the one person responsible for the paradigm shift that I'm currently experiencing. You see, I do not regard myself as a person who waivers very easily, but there was something distinct and moving about that lecture, whether it was Prof Zulu's tone, or the manner in which he seemed to have carefully chosen his words I could not figure out. He started off by giving an account of where South Africa as a country came from and spoke at length about why we had the formation of revolutionary groups like the ANC. The contributions made by past leaders and stalwarts of this country were also acknowledged. But more importantly, critical reflections of where we are and heading as a country were also explored in greater detail. The lecture was so informative that I felt so insignificant with the little knowledge I possessed. So much so that it would have

required the services of a magnifying glass to try and locate where I was seated. For instance, although I was informed about the Inkandla debacle, Professor Zulu made me realise how little knowledge I possessed as a student at Master's level. I came out dizzy and light-headed at the end of the lecture, almost in a trauma-like state. The solution? I hear you ask. Well, from now on, I guess openness and receptivity to all kinds of information certainly proves to be worthwhile in this regard.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



**MBONGISENI MDAKANE** has background training in education but is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Research Consultation. His interests are deeply rooted in Psychology of imprisonment as well as Social and Community Psychology.