

# CONFERENCE REPORT

## Reflections on the 1st International Congress of the Forum of African Psychology, 27 to 29 March 2014, Polokwane

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This forum provided an opportunity for different African scholars from all walks of life to gather and conceptualise what African Psychology means. The forum also provided an opportunity for both academics and traditional healers to have a conversation. It may be of benefit to also include different spiritual leaders such as pastors in the conversation, to also get a deeper understanding of what it means to be an African who does not consult traditional healers. The reason why I am saying this is because one of the speakers (a traditional healer) indicated that he had a young client who was a Christian, who never consulted a traditional healer but had a calling to become a sangoma. It was difficult for the child to comprehend and s/he felt confused, because this calling was in conflict with what the bible says.

In addition to being in conversation with spiritual leaders, it would also be interesting to hear from traditional leaders (chiefs, kings) because most communities have what in my culture is called Khoro, where the members come and discuss their problems with the Chief - for example a woman can report her husband for abusing her to the chief, and the Chief will have to intervene with relevant family members.

My final reflection is from attending the opening ceremony, where I realised that

maybe we should start defining what it means to be an African; the reason being that the rituals that were performed are only for black South Africans who believe in traditional healing practices. I then realised that there is a difference between African Psychology and Black psychology. For us to understand either Black psychology or African psychology we first need to understand our own cultures and their differences before conceptualising an African perspective.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**



**Vhuhwavho Nekhavhambe** is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Unisa. Her research interests include trauma, victim empowerment and community psychology.