

The Concept and Richness

UBUNTU

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THE CONCEPT AND RICHNESS OF

UBUNTU

Overview

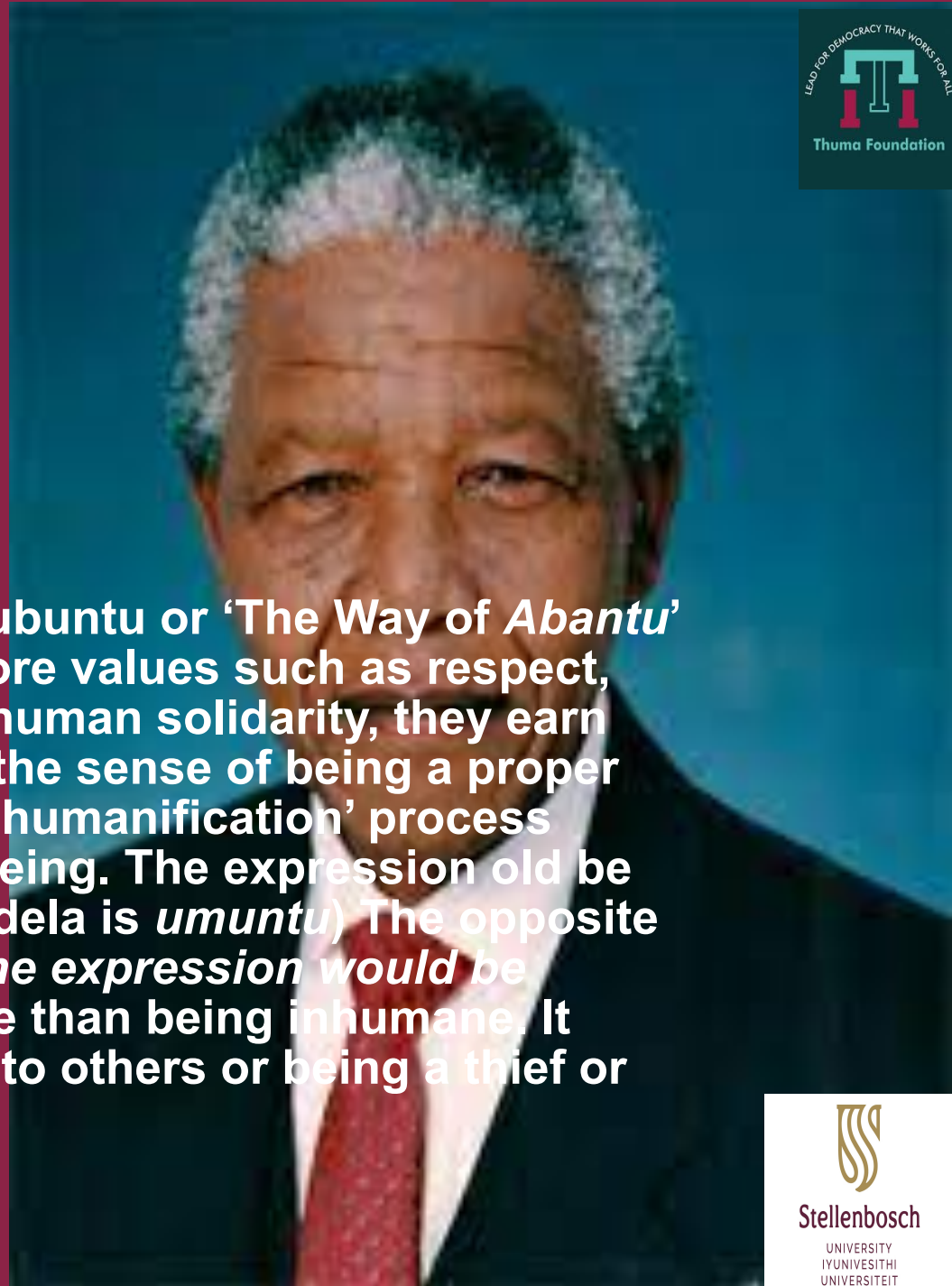
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WHAT I MEANT WHEN I SAID MANDELA WAS UMUNTU

There is a dimension of ubuntu that is earned

When a person's behavior epitomizes ubuntu or 'The Way of *Abantu*' through conduct that reflects ubuntu core values such as respect, fairness, humaneness, generosity and human solidarity, they earn the privilege of being called *umuntu* in the sense of being a proper human who is a model of a successful 'humanification' process (socialization) beyond being a human being. The expression could be "*Umandela ungumuntu* – meaning Mandela is *umuntu*) The opposite is being declared to be *not umuntu*. The expression would be *uGqugqugqu akasiye umuntu*. It is more than being inhumane. It might simply mean being disrespectful to others or being a thief or corrupt or dishonest in other ways .



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CENTRERING BUS PEOPLE

What can we learn about ubuntu modelling at the Rwanda Genocide Museum

Are there parallels with entering the Bus People – a group not the top of contemporary social food-chain and the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

•“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Eleanor Roosevelt



UBUNTU AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The concept [of Ubuntu] carries in it the ideas of humaneness, social justice and fairness.” Madala J in *S v Makwanyane* and Another 1995 (3) SA 391(CC) Para 237 (Beware of the misguided tendency to reduce ubuntu to a value or humaneness and communitarian considerations. It is far more than that.

In para para 224 of *Makwanyane*, Langa J quotes *DPP v Pete*, stating:

“The second important principle or characteristic to be borne in mind when interpreting our Constitution is a corollary of the reality of co-existence of the individual and society, and also the reality of co-existence of rights and duties of the individual on the one hand, and the collective of communitarian rights and duties of society on the other. In effect this co-existence means that the rights and duties of the individual are limited by the rights and duties of society, and vice versa.

THE RICHNES OF UBUNTU

- ❑ Ubuntu is a multidimensional concept communicating an intricate integrated system of beliefs and rules that define how to be human together. As may be noted in *Makwanyane* and *Pete*, at the core of the system of ubuntu are values beliefs and rules that define, entitlements and appropriate conduct for the equal good of society and individuals within it. Ubuntu, is rooted in the interconnected of humanity and all things .
- ❑ Others, such as Mbigi, observe that ubuntu beliefs and rules extend to what is owed to the environment, future generations and ancestors. Transmission, maintenance and enforcement, includes story telling, mainly fables, proverbs, idioms and aphorisms (exemplified in *Melo's Kingdom, 2020*) and a restorative justice grounded enforcement system with rewards that include earning the privilege of being called *umuntu*.



UBUNTU REQUIRES TREATING PEOPLE AS ABANTU

What does a person mean when they say “You made me *umuntu*”

Affirming another person’s humanity goes beyond what you say and particularly centres on treating people with the dignity and respect and/or standards of living that is fit for humans. Example of Dlamini residents’ response to Christmas Hampers – “*Usenze abantu*” Another saying, which incidentally anchors restorative justice, is “*Umuntu akalahlwa*” Ultimately, for me, ubuntu epitomizes excellence at the highest level of my 5 level theory of justice consciousness: (1)Justice or me, 2)Justice as Just Us, 3)Justice for All, 4)All about Justice and 5)All for Justice). It is a condition for human rights to thrive as Eleanor Roosevelt predicted 75 years ago.



IS UBUNTU DEAD?

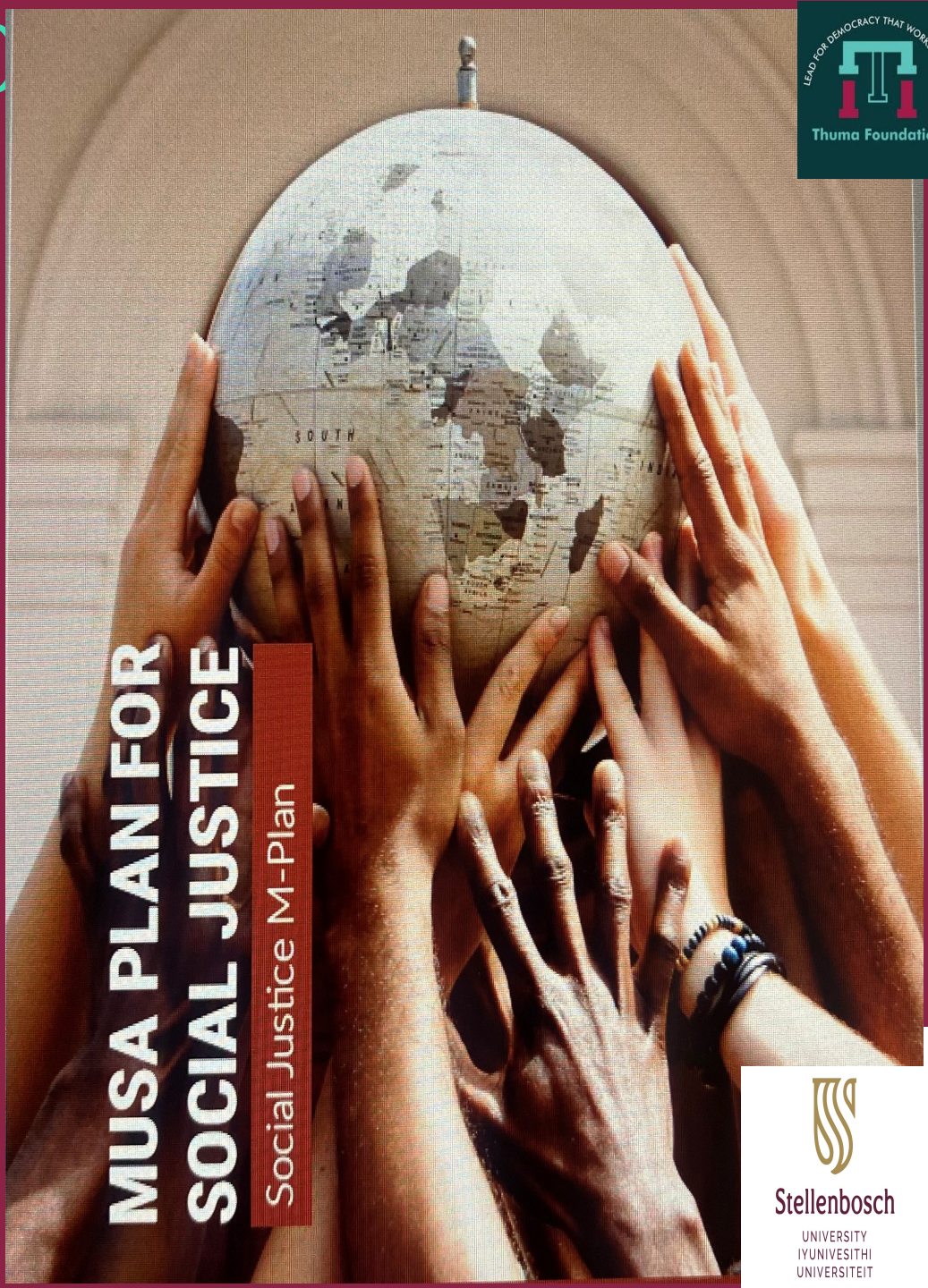
Like all philosophies (e.g. Hellenic and Eastern), ubuntu is dynamic, agile and resilient. Whereas there are signs of moral decay, there is also abundant evidence that reflects the enduring values and culture of Ubuntu across the African continent and beyond.

Ubuntu transcends transactional thinking and behaviour. As an expression of gratitude for eating fruits and enjoying shade from trees planted by those who came before us, knowing they would not enjoy such, we are required to pay it forward by planting trees for enjoyment by those who come after us.



OUR TURN TO GIVE LIFE TO PIXLEY KA SEME'S DREAM

In his 1906 Africa Regeneration essay while at Columbia University, Pixley Ka Seme foresaw Africa's contribution to the world being a regenerated sharing, with the world, her ancient civilization pearls that include but transcend science and technology at the heart of which being how to be human together. The essence of the essay, where upfront, Ka Seme declares "I am African" is the African renaissance whose contribution to the world would be universalization of the values of ubuntu at the core of which is affirming the humanity of all regardless of human diversity. Ka Seme's speech reverberated in Nkrumah's African Renaissance call in 1963 and much later in Steve Biko's prediction that Africa would gift the world a human face. The South African Constitutional Court, Rwanda Museum and the Black Management Forum, are examples of consciously regenerating the



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GRATITUDE

- Dankie!
- **Enkosi !**
- Thank you!
- **Asante Sana!**