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Why Most Africa is Poor? The Case of One Limpopo Province Village: Towards Empowerment

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Abstract. *The study offers preliminary findings on the research project that was undertaken at One village in Limpopo Province. It was investigating the impact of the mining activity at one village whose residents languish in abject poverty, notwithstanding that the mining sector in Limpopo Province is 108 and generates an annual revenue of R237,7 billion. Most villagers are victims of colonialism that created illusions such as that of education and the Christian church to stunt and de-inferioritise villagers into believing the absurdity that the reason they are poor is that they lack knowledge and faith that God will intervene, while the mining sector keeps eating away and contaminating their socio-ecological spaces. The results show that villagers are generationally stunted and de-inferioritised, leading to years of inactivity. Agricultural and animal husbandry activities are history. Naturally growing fruits such as bananas, mangoes, and avocados have been lost to a community that relies on social grants to survive. This has led to my new research, which is community-driven I call Vukuzakhe research method. This method consists of various workshops, of which the first two are dedicated to de-stunting and de-inferioritising the villagers.*

Keywords: Socio-ecological spaces, Mining Activity, Agricultural activity, Animal husbandry, education

JEL Codes: H10

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1. Introduction

This inquiry was started by asking the question: Why is there poverty in Africa? Are economic development initiatives failing, or is there a fundamental problem? Evidence shows that neoliberalism, the economic vehicle of colonialism, is at the heart of it and is the fundamental source of economic deprivation and marginalisation of the rightful owners of the minerals. Neoliberalism pursues ideals and narrow interests of avaricious oligarchic elite – private ownership, government austerity measures that place inflation controls and government budget cuts above any other considerations, even when it regulates people into chronic poverty. Neoliberalism promotes free market logics and places markets at the heart of economic functionality through fostering trickle-down economics. The trickle-down economics is the idea that government policies that are favourable to the elite would eventually benefit the entire society (Risch,

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2023). The key concept in this economic theory is "eventually" whose ends are left epiphanic, that is, cannot be outlined in advance. These epiphantic outcomes imply that governments are sold a false hope, the aura of mistaken optimism that is based on untested assumptions. Governments then transfer these untested economic assumptions to the general society in the form of the false narrative that narrowly focuses on increasing employment rates and foreign investments as the panacea for chronic poverty. We also need to determine why there are fewer African formal business ventures being produced in the 30 years of democracy in South Africa and why patterns of business ownership have not deracialised during this time. The increasing number of informal small businesses is owned by Africans. There is also the matter of 60% of poor African people and only 1% of European poverty, which remains unresolvable because of poor political choices (Terreblanche, 2012). African governments cannot implement policies that eliminate poverty because they are made to commit to the trickle-down economic theory that serves avaricious elites and leads to a high Gini Coefficient, the statistical measure of income inequality. Why African governments abandon ancestral wisdom and follow these trickle-down economic policies that place their own people into chronic poverty, and why they buy myths they clearly see are false, beats me. Unless they are nothing more than slave millionaires bought to sell their own people at the altar of political expediencies (are our own elected public representatives mdlwembe, unashamed collaborators with the colonial system?). Slave millionaires are held in bondage of personal monetary gain involving minimal personal effort, only allowing them to be othered and serve the interests of the Western elites. These parasitic slave millionaires in the sea of poverty and extreme deprivation are not to be respected, especially those who claim political power and use it to amass huge sums of money for personal gain at the expense of the very people that put them in power. These are essentially parasites not real entrepreneurs that Moeletsi Mbeki in his 2009 book Architects of Poverty suggests are created by elites pacts such as Black Economic Empowerment and its variants Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment both of which create economic leeches who have not launched any company yet have millions through these elites pacts meant to protect the narrow interests of extant elites at the expense of the real owners of these resources. In South Africa, these economic leeches were drawn from the former sellout liberators who have, as Sampie Terreblanche in his 2012 book called Lost in Transformation, referred to as betrayal of the struggle for social equity and principles that guided the struggle, such as the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) for social equity in exchange for a few million. These mdlwembes destroy the social contract and the struggle towards justice. Even more meaningful is the Latin origin of betrayal, which refers to handing over someone to the enemy. This is what happened when former liberators handed over the African majority to the avaricious oligarchic elites in exchange for a few millions making them the bribed hitmen of our times. John Perkins, in his book The New Confessions of an Economic Hitman: How America Really Took the World, describes in succinct detail how the neo-liberal exponents use bribes, distortions, killings and mass deception to protect, preserve and sustain their narrow interests. Another variant of these economic leeches is that of those who use political power and connections (kin and kith) with politicians to amass huge financial gain through dummy companies. Dummy companies serve as fronts with the appearance of being real but lack the capacity to operate and compete fairly and independently. Some are formed to gain tenders from the government or private sector, and most are formed by former purported liberators.

Most of the African governments rhetorically claim to be of the people and for the people yet evidence shows that these governments are actually there to safeguard the narrow, avaricious interests of the

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oligarchic elites. They serve and protect elites who are technically running oligarchic democracies (people voting every five years with little difference in their quality of life). Oligarchic democracies create the veneer of the majority of people being in charge when real power lies in the oligarchic elites. These democratic elections are intended to massively deceive the people and create the impression that they are in charge when the real government is run by the rich oligarchic regime. We just need to know who funds these political parties, then we would know who is really in charge.

With 77% poverty in areas such as Limpopo Province with 108 mines that generate a turnover revenue of R237,7 billion per annum, then South Africa is ripe for a peaceful revolution similar to the 1989 De Wende in Germany. People need to escape multiple stunting strategies used to render them powerless – mass deception, social grants, biased media, Christian menticide and formal education that alienate people through socially-empty trainability (Bernstein, 1990) and marginalising our empowering cognitive content such as learning from our ancestral wisdom things like letsema (collective work, shared obligations) and vukusenzele work ethic (active citizenry).

The truth is, poverty is deliberate in Africa and would not be solved by a decrease in unemployment foreign investments or sustainable economic development initiatives. In the co-edited 2021 book called Economic and Monetary Sovereignty in 21st Century Africa, Ben Ghada, Federal Kaboub, Ines Mahmoud and Ndonga Sylla identify three reasons why Africa is poor and would remain so unless there is a fundamental transformation of the global economic setup, the real task of the African Union: Incessant buying or looting of cheap African raw materials.

Tom Burgis, in his 2015 book The Looting Machine: Warlords, Oligarchs, Corporations, Smugglers and the Theft of Africa's Wealth, describes how the West incessantly steal Africa's wealth, leaving its own people in chronic poverty. In her review of Burgis 2015 book, Nkemjika Kalu has this to say: "*the author aims at defining, naming and shaming the beast called corruption as it marauds through Africa leaving in its wake thousands of corpses and malnourished innocents*" (Kalu, 2015: 160). I further argue that the West, with its chronic and persistent underdevelopment of African states, plus murderous looting, exhibits the egregious inhumane and malevolent cruelty wrought in what Plutarch (1304-1374) called 900 years of the European Dark Ages. Indeed, there are kind, benevolent Europeans who are seeing the injustice visited upon the real African owners of these mineral resources and land. Is it really fair to steal the resources of the real African resources, apply all sorts of shenanigans to hide the truth and marginalise the real owners of the resource? Why is it a problem when we share these resources in what I call relative equity, this idea that even if wealth collectively made is not shared equally but anchoring mechanisms ought to uplift everyone from chronic poverty (R59 or 3 USA dollars) and way above what is currently accepted as the poverty line something like R360 per day (20 USA Dollars) amounting to under R12 000 per household and there has to be a cap on what an individual can accrue so that if an individual accrues money that compromises the quality of life of the majority by law the above-the cap money ought to be legally and morally confiscated by the government and be used to develop the capabilities of the disadvantaged. This does not mean giving people money without doing anything, as is the case with social grants in South Africa. The strength of each province has to be harnessed so that most people in that province have something to contribute to the uplifting of the community and their livelihoods. For instance, Limpopo Province has mining and agriculture, so it has to have in abundance beneficiation and agro-processing companies that could employ

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most of the people who can work. Higher education in this province has to equip people from this province with the requisite skills aligned to mining and agriculture, as it helps with beneficiation and agro-processing.

The West has also reduced Africa into consumers of its technology and industrial outputs. It is high time Africa applied reverse innovation so it can produce its own technologies, cars and a good starting point is building high-tech companies. Our higher education has to extricate itself from the Commerce and Industry grip so it can lead the way towards helping Africa to generate its own technologies and cars.

Africa is the dumping ground of Western obsolete technologies and assembly line manufacturing on the pretext of economic development, technical assistance, and job creation, when in essence they lead to malnutrition, downright abuses of African people equal in human stature as the West. The issue is not even sustainable development because that is a misnomer and the indoctrination device intended, as it were, for mass deception and pretence that something is being done to resolve underdevelopment, malnutrition and high Gini Coefficient when the neo-liberal economic plinth that keeps Africa at the bottom of the global economic value-chain is maintained and sustained as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Why there is Poverty in Africa?, Why It Matters and What Needs to be Done?

Economic Segmentation	**Extent of Economic Segmentation**	**Causes of Economic Segmentation**	**Possible Solutions**
Continental	Macro-level	Global economic setup neo-liberal in its economic plinth, keeps Africa at the bottom-end of global economic value-chain plus the three reasons adduced above	African Union ought to unite Africa, sweep out corrupt political and business people, demand fair trade similar to pre-colonial trades
Regional	Meso-level	8 economic regions in one continent to purportedly serve different western demands. Divide-and rule principle.	African Union strive to build one or two interelated economic blocs
Countrywide	Micro-level	Political policy choices	Politicians that betray the genuine struggle of the people ought to be publicly named and shamed
Provincial	Local level	Political implementation choices	Same here. Those who do not serve the people ought to be

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			named and shamed. Revise Africa 2063 Agenda Goals.
Town level	Community, village level	Stunting by education, SASSA and religion	Stunting strategies ought to be exposed, people ought to know what vitiate their abilities to do things for themselves, get empowered through *letsema*, *vukusenzele* work ethic.

(Source: author's work)

It have been already outlined the three macro reasons that lock Africa at the bottom-end of global economic value-chain and the lip service paid to African beneficiation when very little is committed to developing our own technical infrastructure for beneficiation – technical ability and skill. The Africa 2063 Goals seem to be based on vague analysis of the real reasons why Africa is poor, and seem to fail to explicitly and clearly state what needs to be done. The following ought to be explicitly stated as they are central to Africa's econSSmic challenges and development:

- Tackling the use of a trickle-down economic theory in the African economic setup. It is not working for us or anyone in the world. It gets enriching the few avaricious oligarchic elites and African collaborators with such an inhumane system that stunts many to poverty and the indignity of having very little for livelihoods.
- Strategies to address the three issues identified by Ben Ghada, Federal Kaboub, Ines Mahmoud and Ndonga Sylla that keep Africa at the bottom-end of the global economic value-chain.
    - Selling Africa's raw materials cheaply to the west and the west selling them back to Africa expensively. The need for agro-processing and benefician in Africa has become urgent.
    - The west selling its outdated, obsolescent technologies to Africa.
    - The west selling its new technologies to Africa expensively and reducing Africa to its consumers. These last two on technology needs to be solved urgently. Some initiatives in, at least, two South African universities are underway. University of the Witwatersrand has established the Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute and collaborates already with a number of Institute to produce technologies for Africa by Africans. Vaal University of Technology in South Africa has also developed a new learning approach that seeks to address thef 15th century reliance on pedagogy with a new learning that focuses on transforming learning at three levels of Firstly, migrating learning into deep cyberspaces. This will happen by challenging the building-based universities with a telagogy app which is an iteration of 2019 emergency remote learning. Secondly, it offers a student-curated decolonised curriculum that will access online learning asynchronously. Thirdly, it breaks free from acquisition and domination-prone ambiences as it makes students relevant to their contexts by being based on practical problems of their own regional ontologies. More details on telagogy

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are available in Pitso (2023a); Pitso (2013b) and the book that is about to be launched around March called *Telagogy: New Learning in Society 5.0: Beyond Neo-Coloniality and Neo-Cyber-Coloniality.*

- Addressing the divide-and-rule strategy of the west. Africa has eight main economic regional blocs – Arab Maghreb Union of North Africa, Community of Sahel-Saharan States, East African Community, Economic Community of Central African States, Economic Community of Western African States, Inter-Governmental Authority for Development and Southern African Developmental Community. These regional blocs of Africa follow the Berlin Conference of 1884, where fourteen European countries and the USA met to discuss how to amicably partition Africa to loot its resources at the expense of its people on the pretext of bringing civilisation to Africa in the form of trade and Christianity (Craven, 2015). When it suits them, Europeans and the USA suspended armed conflicts and developed the General Act that "set out the conditions under which territory might be acquired on the coast of Africa" (Craven, 2015: 32). In the meantime, King Leopold of Belgium had already established the Congo as a free state that throve on the scientific and philanthropic activities of the Association of Internationale du Congo that emerged, according to Craven (2015), mysteriously. There is very little talk about how to reduce these regional blocs and create an economic bloc that serves the entire continent.

- Addressing the western-centred educational plinth of the 15th century pedagogy (paidagogos = education of elite male children up to 13 years by slaves) and 19th century western scientific thought. We need to determine whether it is fit-for-purpose or it alienates African students through socially-empty trainability (Bernstein, 1990) as earlier stated and mimetic epistemology that undergirds learning methods used to stunt our students into submission to the dictates of western-centred and controlled Commerce and Industry.

- Reviving the wisdom of our ancestral wisdom during ancient times, dispelling myths of a dark continent by revisiting the ancient spirit that led to the Islamic Golden Age where Africa and many other countries contributed immensely towards that civilisation, where difference was the source of strength, North African (ancient Egypt civilisation, Kush, Mali empire, Aksum, Mapungubwe, Dogon people). Almost all knowledge that founded Western civilisation comes from Ancient Egypt and the Islamic Golden Age (Strathern, 2000; Renima, Tliouine and Estes, 2016; Olmstead, 1948; David, 2003). The Kush civilisation (1069 BCE-400 CE), modern-day Sudan, intra-traded on gold, ivory, leopard skin with ancient Egypt, the Mediterranean, Red sea to Indian Ocean (Darnell, 2013; Klem and Klem, 2013; Budka, 2021). The ancient Kush also ruled ancient Egypt for over a century which provides grounds of the collective nature of Egyptian knowledge and culture. Archaeological evidence shows the interrelatedness of ancient Egypt as well as ancient Nubia (modern-day Sudan). Critical to the functioning of ancient African civilisations was this intra-trade and intra-beneficiation of gold. Ancient Aksum civilisation (modern-day Ethiopia, which includes the southern Red Sea) of the sixth century CE traded within Africa and internationally including Rome (Phillips, 2020). It traded on gold, emeralds, agricultural products and so on. The ancient wisdom here is that these Ethiopians traded on agricultural products not the produce. Limpopo Province is rich in natural agricultural produce such as avocado, mango, bananas, amarula but vey little money is made from selling these as produce as compared to when sold as processed agricultural products. In 2007, the Limpopo Province Department of Economic

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Development, Environment and Tourism conducted the study on the necessity of agro-processing and described in detail on how bananas, mangoes could be turned into agricultural products. While the study identified agro-processing as critical to provincial economy, the number of agro-processing plants and their strategic positioning in the province to solve unemployment crisis and reduce chronic poverty has not been made clear sixteen years since the study. Another issue that is poorly ventilated regards the dwindling socio-ecological space and ownership of land. Limpopo Province similar to ancient African civilisations boasts mining and agriculture as central to its economy but land ownership, mining revenue and agricultural products in the province that has such in plenty have not resolved the 77% poverty. At this level, implementation and stunting of locals to do things for themselves supported by the province appear vitiated. Ancient Mapungubwe (1200-1300) traded in gold and ivory as well as agricultural produce and products. Ancient Mapungubwe is situated in the confluence of Limpopo and Shashe rivers. The best that could happen is to draw lessons of how communal economics ensured that chronic poverty was a stranger in these pre-colonial African periods.

- Use our own 75000-years Southern African Calendar called Nzalo Yelanga and based on Southern Hemisphere ethno-astronomical knowledge, Dogon people, Ethiopian and Egyptian calendars to deal with the anomaly of resting when the weather patterns suggest we ought to be working the land for our livelihoods. Revert to our beginning of the year as either August 1 or September 1 whatever works for us. These circumstances of the neo-liberal global economic setup of 1884 remain intact and unchallenged to this day and that is the fundamental source of poverty, malnutrition and underdevelopment in Africa at large yet Africa 2063 Goals are silent on these issues or are couched in such terms as we fear offending whatever power. Unless this fundamental neo-liberal economic setup is eliminated then these atrocities in Africa will never be solved. The reasons for their insolvability is mass deception that comes in the form mainly Christianity which in 1706 immolated Kimpa Vita and her boy child in Kongo Republic because she refused to convert to Christianity rejecting its alienating nature (Bee-Ki-kilele, 2019). Prabhat Patnaik writing a Foreword for the 2021 book by Ghada et al, (2021) argues that neoliberalism has reached its dead-end because its 18th century infrastructure that sustained it are collapsing. Winlow and Winlow (2022) suggest the same thing except that Winlow and Winlow (2022) pin it down to Covid-19 pandemic effects that disrupted most of the neo-liberal capitalist system activities. It is not clear how an ANC government which had 30 years to address the question of 29 million citizens (almost half of the citizens on social grants in South Africa), that is, those living in dire circumstances of deprivation. Sampie Terreblanche and Moeletsi Mbeki in their respective books called Lost in Transformation: History of Inequality in South Africa since 1652-2002where their ability to resolve and meet their basic needs has been stunted. We need to examine carefully this stunting of our ability to do things on our own which we called letsema/ilima/mmea. The success of letsema depends on active citizenry (vukusenzele work ethic, doing things for ourselves and our livelihoods). Our stunting begins from how the global economic setup that keeps Africa at the bottom of the global economic value chain is structured. Africa is in this presumably permanent state for reasons I shall outline momentarily. This emanates from how the colonial system is organised to perpetuate macro-inequality, that is, global inequality. It is planned, deliberate and predictable. Firstly, through calculated logics, the west through their desire to gain raw materials from territories that it identified as vital for its progress such as Africa devised and hid a shrewd plan that accessed Africa's

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raw resources such as mineral resources such as diamonds, gold, coal and so on cheaply. This unfairness remains intact.

A question arrised: Who or what stunted the ability of Africans to do things for themselves and become self-reliant?

In response to this question, it is important to note that poverty is not homogeneous, there are citizens who are usually and always poor (chronic poverty), those citizens that move in and out of poverty due to loss of employment, casual labour, temporary labour such as being hired to serve short term needs of the business or involved in start-ups that collapse within a year (churning, transient poverty) and those who are occasionally poor. In response to the question of who or what stunt citizens ability to solve their poverty status, the study focused on chronic, quotidian poverty and in particular to those youth with tertiary education who are experiencing poverty everyday as part of their ordinary lives. I also differentiate between persistent, long-term poverty (chronic poverty) and inequality. Inequality deals with uneven distribution of resources in a particular society mainly because of lack of political will to challenge the undergirding primitive and ancient economic ideology of capitalism whose modern form can be traced from 18th century although its earlier version can be tracked from the 16th century. In South Africa, poverty is the results of bad political choices made to realise the democratic dispensation and those choices taken under the democratic dispensation to sustain and perpetuate both chronic poverty and inequality often assuming racial connotations. Terreblanche (2012) in his book Lost in Transformation: Africa's Search for a New Future since 1986, bemoans the bad political choices of the African National Congress which inclined towards creating few Middle class, fewer upper middle class and fewest superrich millionaires in order to cushion the already existing western-centred avaricious oligarchy feeding on entrenched capitalist system. Moeletsi Mbeki in his 2009 book, The Architects of Poverty: Why African Capitalism Needs Changing, argues that at the heart of poverty is the bad choices the ANC made pre-democracy and sustained them through the democratic dispensation through assimilationist programmes such as Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEC) as well as its variant Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBB-EE) which was hatched by the avaricious western oligarchy to protect its interest and safeguard its perpetuation into posterity. The creation of the middle, upper middle and superrich millionaires from the African folk drawn mainly from the former liberators as part of the elite pact of post-apartheid was deliberate and intended, as it were, to protect mainly white supremacy and its narrow interests. While poverty experts consider social grants as the panacea in alleviating poverty in South Africa (Patel et al, 2023; Armstrong and Burger, 2009; Lekezwa, 2011; Bhorat et al, 2001), my position is that social grants might temporarily alleviate poverty but they actually perpetuate and entrench it. They are also intended to avert a revolution and divert attention away from tackling the bad choices made in the pre-1994 negotiations which made the liberation parties such as the ANC to abandon its National Democratic Revolution (NDR) core which was about liberating all Africans from poverty particularly its motive forces and creating a non-racialised country free from poverty and inequality as Terreblanche suggests "the problem is more unsolvable" (Terreblanche, 2012: ix). Furthermore, social grants impugns the basic dignity of its beneficiaries and destroy their capacity for self-determination, intrinsic motivation, autonomy and take away their power to do things for themselves. They are disempowering and promote dependence to the state given that active citizenry and the power to organise themselves and solve their own economic

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issues (letsema) are suspended indefinitely. These are also impacts of elite pacts which perpetuate the economic marginalisation of the grassroots or motive forces who are rarely consulted in such negotiations. Elite pacts emanate from political pacts and are mostly undemocratic and conservative in nature to manage possible anarchy and public conflicts (Kotze, 1993). Kotze (1993) argues that such political pacts are necessary in democratisation of historically undemocratic societies such as the apartheid-era society and identifies three of these pacts as:

- Political pacts as driven by political elites from the broad spectrum of political affiliation who ought to compromise and come up with a workable solution that serves all interests.

- Cultural pacts: uses negotiated political power to resolve ethnic and narrow interests of the societal formations that could otherwise feel marginalised and left out, such as minority interests and rights.

- Policy pacts: uses political power to introduce policies that deal with socio-economic issues such as poverty, unemployment and inequality (PUI).

In ushering in the post-1994 society, there was a political settlement in the form of an elite pact which excluded the grassroots, what the ANC prefer to call the motive forces, which the ANC uses as a pretext on which its policies and those of government seem to hinge at a rhetorical level. Policy processes and positions are fiercely contested and in the case of South Africa, these contestations occur amongst dis-unified elites who have been there since the 1990 transitions and have been involved in shaping value consensus on substantial policy issues which today manifests in disagreements on policy positions such as the National Health Insurance (NHI) and the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) ACT 32 of 2024. For this study, the issue is how chronic poverty is dealt with in the democratic dispensation. In the useful longitudinal study, Mackett (2020) indicates how the government has designed social programmes, calling them social grants, to mitigate and reduce chronic poverty, particularly amongst Africans who are pensioned, disabled and working-age adults with children. Post-Covid-19, the government added another layer of social grants called Social Relief of Distress (SRD) for unemployed individuals to purportedly cushion them against the effects of Covid-19 pandemic. This has created the situation where 29 million South Africans, in particular Africans, are dependent on social grants, an infra dignitatem, below their dignity. This is part of the bad political choices made in the elite pact, primarily concerned with preserving the interests of the avaricious oligarchic elite and very little to do with addressing social inequity and poverty. Taking an educational perspective, I pose the question this way:

Is higher education implicated in perpetuating poverty?

This question enables me to critically analyse higher education and its mission in society and whether it empowers society. The study aims to make transparent the role of higher education in economic development and its role in bettering societies as part of its Community Engagement from the perspective of Community Engagement Scholarship, meaning the use of higher education experts to engage with non-academic communities so as to solve non-academic community problems. In the case of this study, Community Engagement Scholarship refers to the extent to which students that got educated in our

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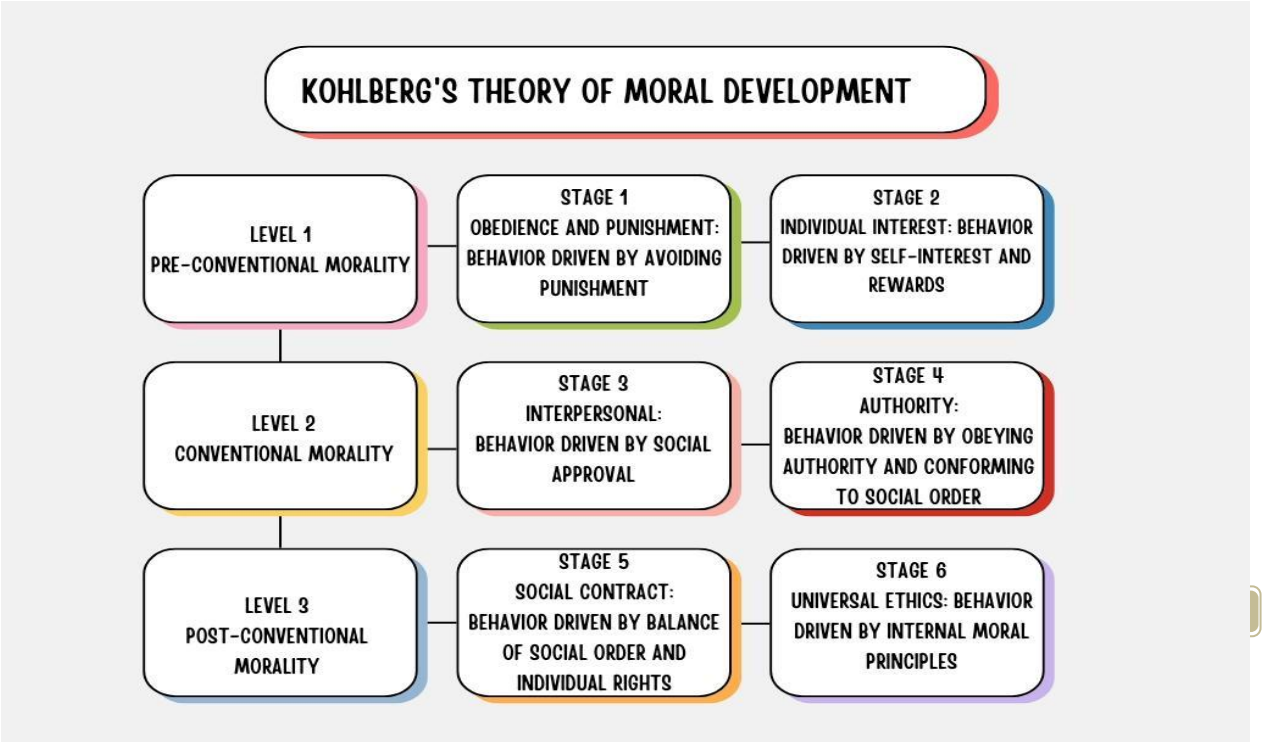
institution have been prepared to become social justice pioneers who can solve community problems drawn from their own regional realities. This approach to Community Engagement Scholarship zooms into and probe Programmes Qualifications Mix (PQM), curriculum and teaching of undergraduates to evaluate whether they graduate students to misery, that is, higher education fails to lift graduates from chronic poverty. SASSA shows that most of the beneficiaries of SRD have tertiary education, an indictment on higher education. I then suggest ways of transforming activities of higher education so it can better be positioned to contribute meaningfully in driving social equity.

- Letsema/ilima and Vukusenzele work ethic as African Empowerment Techniques

- I argue that formal education up to higher education level narrows us down to tools of industry and commerce, modern-day glorified slaves who are heavily exploited. Indeed, with chronic unemployment, not all of us can afford to be reduced to that level. This degradation level is based on Behavioural Psychology ratomorphistic experiments that reduce the complexity of human behaviour to extrapolated behaviours of rats and dogs, which is what commerce and industry demands. This is an infra dignitatem, below human dignity. In order to deepen our understanding of why commerce and industry prefer subservient employees, I use Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development, critiqued by Gibbs as based on Developmental Psychology, which compartmentalises moral development in neat stages when moral Development is a messy process. Diagram 1 below suffices:

Diagram 1: Kohlberg's Moral Development Model



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While humans are required to process morality at the post-conventional level and deal with issues of social contract and justice, there is a need to reduce humanity to a conventional level of morality to guarantee law and order, which commerce and industry require to function optimally and increase their profit margins. Politics exists to manage people down to conventional levels of morality, and religion takes humanity to the pre-conventional phase, hence the inculcation of heaven and hell mentality. Higher education continues to this day to use reward and incentives in the form of pass/fail to determine students' progress to the next level of learning until graduation, which is a meagre 17% (CODERA, 2024). This means a substantial number of students fail to be sufficiently indoctrinated into disciplinary knowledge and thus are considered to be incompetent by higher education standards. Higher education, since its 859 ACE inception in Africa as the University of Al-Qarawiyyin has been using pedagogy as the means of pursuing the acquisition of Eurocentric knowledge, which marginalised epistemes from other contexts. It unashamedly pursued this western knowledge as a doctrine understood also as savoir, meaning acquired knowledge consistent with the concept of indoctrination, which refers to instruct, to provide someone with knowledge, to teach a science (Momanu, 2012, 88). In many important ways, a doctrine is a set of principles intended, as it were, to be taught as presumed truths that guide human actions, as indoctrination refers to attempts to make humans adhere to a doctrine (Robert, 1957). Of course, there are extreme cases, such as brainwashing and propaganda, that have been modified in higher education to achieve similar goals. Burdeau (1985) positions indoctrination at an institutional level to describe conditions of work and learning that are organised hierarchically and depend on progression to a higher rung of the hierarchy in the form of promotions in the workplace and academic progression. Indoctrination involves an authority relationship(Momanu, 2012: 90). Marianna Momanu insists that “In education, he/she who teaches or indoctrinates others exercises a power that is considered more or less legitimate (Momanu, 2012: 90). She further argues that those who indoctrinate purport to teach yet in this relationship there is a strong relationship of authority (at a classroom level) and at an institutional level (departments, faculty, DVCs, top management and Council). Burdeau (1989) accentuates the polymorphism and universality of authority, which is a common feature of social life. While Burdeau (1989) identifies three basic forms of authority as anonymous authority based on the social pressures put on individuals to behave in a particular way, personal authority which is spontaneous within a social group, the authority that is relevant in this study is the functional authority which is bestowed to individuals within an institutional framework to exercise it within the limits of assigned institutional power. More relevant to education are the authority dimensions Bochenski (1974) describes and refers to as epistemic authority (experts, teachers, Professors, specialists), that is, the authority deriving from knowing and providing such knowledge to those who lack it. Another institutional authority is called the deontic authority of departments, faculty, DVCs, VC and council. These institutional epistemic and deontic authorities interact in a sophisticated way to make decisions that serve commerce and industry, and not the students whose voice is silent until students protest. As Hayes (2017) argues in the book he edited called Beyond McDonaldization: Visions of Higher Education, that higher education is captured by a McDonald’s Franchise .business model, which churns out quantity at a given time at the expense of quality. Quality in higher education focuses on curriculum outcomes such as curiosity, imagination, creativity and complex problem-solving skills, which Professor Ruha Benjamin of Princeton University argues are schooled out of us. The epistemic-deontic authority of higher education

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Volume 14, Issue 4, 2025

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institutions conspires to marginalise these skills and foster the indoctrination of disciplinary knowledge. Another thing about higher education functioning at a conventional level is that issues of social contract and justice take a backseat. There is a need to elevate higher education to a post-conventional moral state, as Kohlberg suggests in Diagram 1. In the subsequent sub-section, I demonstrate how an advanced undergraduate curriculum ought to look and pursue entirely different outcomes and allow students to learn in a self-determined and peer approach. This would involve many ways, extirpate the hierarchical nature of higher education institutions or, at least, moderating it.

2. Methodology

In this study, the pre-colonial African civilisations were tracked through desktop research and semi-structured interviews were used to collect preliminary data. An Invitational Dialogue is the preferred method of engaging research participants in deep conversations about their community conditions and finding ways of solving them. Invitational Dialogue derives from rhetorics butt moves away from rhetoric as persuasion and entails "*invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value and self-determination*" (Foss & Griffith, 1995).

Relationship of equality

The relationship of equality ensures that interactions that take place respect and guarantee that the interests and desires of the researcher and those of the research participants are taken care of. The researcher assumes an emic perspective, that is, becomes an insider who is deeply embedded in the culture and spirit of the research participants, so the artificial demarcations and distance between the two are eliminated to the point that the insider researcher is considered a community member. This relationship takes time and could take more than six weeks or until the research participants feel sufficiently comfortable to share their struggles and challenges with the researcher. It is a relationship of trust and rapport. Often, to reach a trust relationship takes at least four stages:

a. *The researcher has to find the phatic sweet spot.* During conversations, the researcher has to identify, relate to and accentuate a topic that is closest to the research participants or their community. It can be achieved by making first contact with one or fewer research participants who will provide basic information about the community including challenges and struggles of the community. This could take two or more visits to the community-of-interest. In the case of this study, two such visits took place. The first was intended to find the contact person. It involved initial talks with whoever you meet and finding out whether they are indigenous community members born there, whether a person played some role in community issues and whether the person can agree to participate in the study. The second time, the number ought to be more than one and the first contact serves as the recruiter of other people no more than five and conversations can be around struggles and challenges that beset the community from their perspectives and possible solutions. In my case, I made suggestions based on African cognitive content such as *letsema* and *vukusenzele* work ethic as central to finding possible solutions to community's challenges. This sharing substantially increased the sweet spot on which future discussions could be based. These contacts then recruited twenty more research participants based on the following criteria which was shared with them:

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Characteristics of research participants, age, gender, qualifications, birthplace and employment status. In the case of my study focus went to youth between the ages of twenty and thirty, non-gendered, post-matric qualifications, unemployed. The reason is that initial discussions with my first contacts revealed that the neighbouring mine bought a socio-ecological space used for farming and pastoral grazing for meagre R16 million, which was tantamount to selling the future of many generations to come from this village. There was also talk of further eroding the socio-ecological space of the village through possible relocation and payment. I raised concerns about selling the future of generations to come, replacing land owned by villages based on paper called money and that the farming and pastoral activities are non-existent. Trees of mango, avocado, pawpaw and so on were no longer growing, affecting weather patterns. The initial contacts were not even aware because they were blinded by the business they run of collecting borehole water from what they believe is clean water from the neighbouring village and selling it to the village whose water has been contaminated by the mine.

b. *Stay genuine*

While it was a tempting business to run and revealed their entrepreneurial spirit, it diverted attention from the mine and the local municipality, both of which have the responsibility to provide the village with clean water because the mine contaminated it and municipality benefits from mining taxes. When I raised this concern, I was genuine to myself and to my initial contacts. The creativity and entrepreneurship were appreciated, but I also indicated the real issues it obfuscated. This total truth made my contact trust me and created conditions for our next meetings.

c. *Listen more*

This part of the interaction and deep conversations is based on listening sincerely and closing the loop. In sincerely listening, create a conducive space where research participants can freely ask questions, but instead of answering the questions, apply the boomerang communication technique by repackaging the question so the questioner and other research participants can be given the opportunity to respond. That way, you avoid being the focus of inquiry or a sage with all the answers, which could dampen the spirit of equity conversations. Visual referencing is another communication technique that uses pictorial evidence and the sharing of previous research to direct the conversation to topics of interest. Closing the loop suggests that you provide an overview of the issues at hand, show that you thoughtfully considered all the views and perspectives of all the research participants as community issues. Follow up on issues raised but not clarified, leading to directing research participants to a specific course of action designed to achieve set objectives.

d. *Share experiences*

Sharing experiences with research participants breaks barriers, forges stronger bonds, and is the surest way of finding common ground. This is because research participants can relate to you as your experiences become familiar with their own. Shared experiences achieve the following, and this is based on my own insights gained over time when applying this method to collect data:

- They create strong, deep and meaningful bonds and a strong sense of belonging between the researcher and the research participants.
- These shared experiences validate the experiences of the research participants who relate to your experiences and create the impression that it can be done.

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Volume 14, Issue 4, 2025

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- They create the ambience of learning and growth.
- They create a mini-community with a built-in subculture.

Immanent value

Philosophically, the concept is about consciousness, difference as strength not the basis of partitioning humans in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation and its rejection of hierarchy and the possibility of Beyond (Spindler, 1994). Human consciousness refers to the awareness of the realities of the world around us, and how that can be violated by fellow humans to achieve narrow interests, thus its sovereignty can be harmed, leading to ruptured psyches. In this study, human consciousness refers to humans' maintenance of a state of alertness, paying attention and a sustained awareness of one's being in the environment, as well as the possibility that realities in his/her environment can be altered and even be replaced by manufactured realities to serve narrow interests. Mental alertness and awareness are about the protection of being from possible exploitation, manipulation and indoctrination. The western world is particularly adept at creating manufactured realities, turning myths into perceived truths and distorting history using menticide and mendaciloquence. All of these things are violations of the sovereignty of our consciousness, upon which our uniqueness of perspective is denied the right to claim its stake amongst the multiple planes of worldviews. Since the 15th century, when Portuguese Christian missionaries arrived in Africa, our consciousness of sovereignty as Africans has been constantly violated, and when we resisted, we were publicly humiliated. The ignominy would even take the form of immolation as is the case with Kimpa Vita, who essentially refused to buy into the manufactured lies of Christianity and defended her consciousness sovereignty against these violations and ultimately paid the ultimate price through her incineration with her son, which was done publicly to discourage those who protected their right to defend their unique African perspectives. Kimpa Vita's worldview was immanent and resisted Beyond (transcendence), which located the idea of God from outside the self. In the African worldview, God is in us and would always be determined by our behaviours towards others and nature as exercised via *ubuNtu* and *utu* in Swahili, referring largely to showing humanity to others and preserving nature. Surely, Christianity with its Beyond worldview would never cut it in Africa, as it is diametrically different from our philosophical outlook of imminence. It is also similar to colonialism, using difference as the source of prejudice and using it to discriminate against others. Politically, it is used to distribute resources and alienate others from their own resources bestowed upon them by nature. The African worldview does not recognise hierarchy as the basis of prosecuting our lives. It is very strong on equity relationships, hence it is at the heart of Invitational Dialogue.

Self-determination

Self-determination is the capability to make decisions without external influence. Ryan and Deci (2000) study on self-determination suggests that humans can either be proactive and engaged or can be passive and alienated, both as part of social conditioning exercised and functioning within their own environment. The self-determination theory posits that social contextual conditions either facilitate or forestall humans' natural inclination towards self-motivation (intrinsic), well-being and self-regulation. Self-determination essentially rejects hierarchy as the basis of prosecuting our social lives, for it takes away power from the people where it essentially belongs. Another significant point to consider and relevant to this study as

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raised by Ryan and Derci (2000) are the findings of their study, which they refer to as psychological needs – competence, autonomy and relatedness. One of the essential advantages of Western knowledge is its development of competence, referred to here as the technical ability to solve contemporary problems efficiently and successfully. Autonomy suggests the rights and capabilities of an agent to solve its own problems, while relatedness refers to the collective and combined capabilities of agents in a particular environment to solve their own problems efficiently and successfully. In ancient times, Africans used two concepts of *letsema/ilima/mmea* and *vukusenzele* work ethic to accumulate resources that would then be evenly shared in the spirit of *ubuNtu/utu* so that everyone had enough to survive. There was still private ownership of resources, but not absolute. It was relatively private ownership because it was not enforced according to the Western worldview that allows others to have nothing. In the spirit of *ubuNtu/utu*, no person was allowed to be poor so that avarice and poverty were frowned at (Pitso, 2023). Those who had a propensity towards avarice and own things privately were seen as functioning outside the cycle of *ubuNtu/utu* and needed to be rerouted into the cycle.

Letsema/ilima/mmea

It is an organisation of people into a voluntary cooperative practice intended to achieve specific objectives as set out by people within this cooperative. It is based on sharing, supporting one another, loving and caring for one another, so that it emerges from the broader philosophical concept of *ubuNtu/utu*. It is strong on collective autonomy and community self-determination. Quan-Baffour, Paku, and Lebeloane (2008) argue that this African concept, applied in formal education and economic development, could guide economic development projects of communities in very important ways. It would also develop in students the responsibility to first serve community interests and later the interests of an individual. It would also make formal learning to summon knowledge from its own regional realities, then supplement it with knowledge from other contexts, including western-centred episteme (Uljens, 2023).

Vukusenzele Work Ethic

Vukusenzele, as a philosophical concept applied in economic development, refers mostly to active citizenry. Active citizenry, in the contemporary African worldview, acknowledges all the other knowledges, such as ancient ideas of Aristotle's *polis,* referring to the Greek citizens' obligations to the city government. It further argues for active participation in activities designed to solve community problems in an autonomous and self-determined way as a community. It calls for all individuals in the community to lift themselves, be intrinsically motivated and actively engaged in activities intended to solve community problems efficiently and successfully. In its origin, it refers to being able to do things for oneself or as a collective. It demarcates the affiliation of a particular person to a specific community and associative obligations and rights that go with such affiliation, one of which is active engagement in projects intended to solve community problems efficiently and successfully. It is essentially the exercise of public self-determination and active participation in efforts that seek to clarify and solve public affairs in a particular demarcated area.

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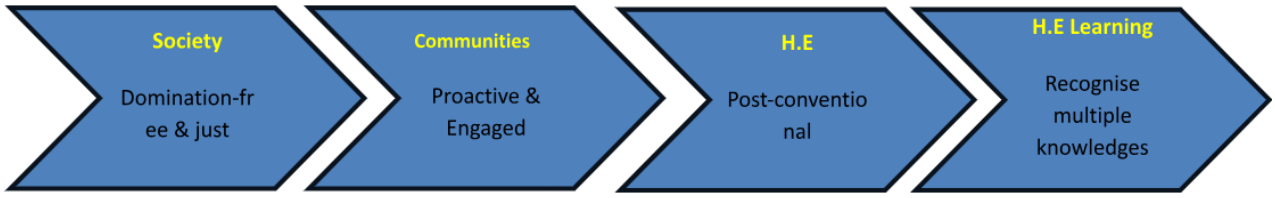
However, both letsema and vukusenzele work ethic thrive under a society that is domination-free and aspires to be just as well as equitable (see, Diagram 2 below). They also seek the kind of formal education that functions at a post-conventional moral state (see, Diagram 1), that is, the formal education that deals with complex issues of social contract and issues of justice in all its permutations, including social, economic and epistemic justice. Such formal education, particularly at a higher education level, ought to allow debates around the social contract and justice to ensue. Higher education is supposed to lead society and develop social justice pioneers who are equipped to deal effectively and successfully with community issues from their own regional realities. It is morally incomprehensible to provide students with education that alienates them from the challenges and struggles of their own regions and contexts. Such formal education is not driving economic development.

Diagram 2: Transformative Trajectories



Source: Author's work

The Engagement Process

1. *Making Initial Contact*

Invitational Dialogue involves identifying a community of interest, that is, one that has major struggles and challenges of a social, economic, educational and others nature that mostly emanates from human errors and the underlying plinth of the entrenched economic system. Once so identified, you identify one or five contact persons. In the case of the study, I set criteria to identify these possible research participants as follows:

- Must be born in the community of interest or have lived for more than thirty years.
- Must not be a politician or business person. These individuals often have interests to protect and would defend the *status quo*.
- Must be a respected member of the community. You first get his names then ask around to determine status and standing in the family.

2. *Follow-up*

You then use initial contact to organise more credible community members, not exceeding five. You verify their credentials in the community and use them for baseline research.

3. *Real engagement*

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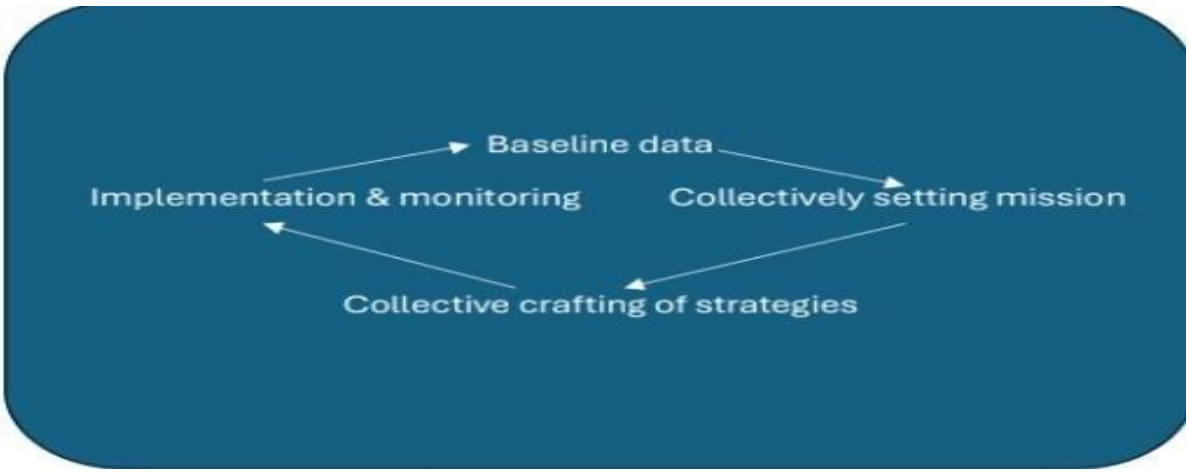
This is the essence of data collection where Invitational Dialogue is applied. The twenty or fewer research participants were collated by research assistants who also became part of the conversation, as they are members of the community of interest. The researcher ought to remember that he/she assumes the emic perspective and become immersed in the ensuing discussion as an insider. The discussions begin with identifying and defining the problems besetting a community so that the gap between the current state and the desirable state is made clear. Then follows the solution space where the desirable state is made clear and strategies are crafted for each desired state. The researcher takes notes in each of the processes of problem-solving until strategies are discussed, debated and settled.

Diagram 3: The Vukuzakhe research method
Source: author's work



Results

1. The Socio-ecological space of the villagers keeps dwindling to make way for the mining activity.
2. The villagers are generally stunted and de-inferioritised.
3. Agricultural and animal husbandry activities of the village are replaced by the mining activity, which has greatly impacted naturally growing fruits.
   Ancient African civilisations, as ancestral wisdom ought to guide our African trade to benefit all. Communal economics, *letsema*, *vukusenzele* work ethic ought to replace the trickle-down economics.
4. Three factors of access to cheap African raw materials, lack of real beneficiation, Africa as consumers of technology and industrial outputs, as well as a dumping site for obsolete Western technologies. These are the real reasons why Africa remains largely poor.
5. There are eight economic blocs in Africa, yet Africa remains largely poor, and looting, smuggling and theft of African wealth occur in their watch.

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6. The mining sector across South Africa seldom benefits the communities around it, which suffer major deprivation.
7. Communities around mines, mostly African, have been stunted by the alienating formal education with its socially-empty trainability and religion in particular Christianity that sells poor people false hope and milks their meagre resources, so it is implicated in chronic poverty.
8. There is a need for a new research method, part of which would be to de-stunt and de-inferioritise the villagers to restore their agency in matters of livelihoods and lifestyles.

Critical Discussions

Unless the real reasons are addressed, such as the political choice to embrace the egregious trickle-down economics in the entire African continent, sidelining of our ancestral ancient wisdom and failure to address factors that keep Africa at the bottom-end of the global economic value-chain, then chronic poverty would remain intact. Africans have to embrace their communal economics, ancient ancestral wisdom and challenge vehemently the three factors that keep it permanently down, and it begins with the African union, elimination of parasitic political *mdlwembe* and reclamation of our African sovereignty, African spirituality and African Identity in the form of protecting our intellectual sovereignty.

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