

# Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute

FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

15  
YEARS

2011 - 2026



RESPONSIBILITY CENTRE:  
DEAN OF STUDENTS  
CENTRE FOR STUDENT LIFE & LEARNING

Developing Africa's  
future leaders



Photo: Stefan Els.

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Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL) 2023, attended by more than 800 aspiring student leaders. | Photo: Henk Oets.

# Our FVZS Institute story:

## About the Institute

The Frederik van Zyl Slabbert (FVZS) Institute honours the legacy of the world-renowned South African academic and political leader **Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert**, who led the parliamentary opposition to the apartheid government for seven years and later became a key player in the negotiations to end the apartheid era, before becoming Chancellor of Stellenbosch University (SU).

The FVZS Institute forms part of the Centre for Student Life and Learning (CSLL) within the Responsibility Centre of the Dean of Students at SU. The Institute is aligned with the CSLL's focus on promoting student persistence, success and excellence through the development of graduate attributes that promote social good.

Our programme offering creates various platforms through which youth leaders can expand their learning experiences and leadership skills as active (and global) citizens.

## Our vision and mission

The FVZS Institute strives to support the **development of leadership in Africa**, with a view to cultivating active citizens who contribute to a socially just and sustainable society.

Our mission is to facilitate a transformative student experience by creating the following:

- ✓ Engaging platforms that are critical and constructive in addressing the leadership challenges and opportunities of the 21st century;
- ✓ Leadership offerings that are recognised on academic transcripts and are relevant in supporting sustainable leadership through a reflective and critical pedagogy; and
- ✓ A collaborative approach to reimagining the construct of leadership knowledge through collaborative engagement with youth leaders globally.

The FVZS Institute's programme offering is structured around the following pillars:

**LEADERSHIP AND  
ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP  
(CITIZEN LEADERSHIP)**

**1**

**SOCIAL JUSTICE  
(DEMOCRACY AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS)**

**2**

**CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT  
AND  
CRITICALITY**

**3**

# Our FVZS Institute story:

## Meeting the man

The Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development honours the legacy of a great South African leader, the late **Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert**.

Dr Slabbert (1940-2010) was known for his commitment to leading through **integrity, collaborative engagement** and **accountability**, and actively fostered critical engagement between diverse communities.

During his storied career, he worked as a sociology lecturer at Stellenbosch University, Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town; was Head of the Sociology Department at the University of the Witwatersrand; **led the opposition to the apartheid government in Parliament** (from 1979 to 1986); founded the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (Idasa); authored several books; led a delegation of mainly Afrikaans-speaking intellectuals to talks in Dakar, Senegal, that were instrumental in ending the apartheid era; and was **Chancellor of Stellenbosch University** from 2008 until his death on 14 May 2010.



| Photo: SCPS

In 2002, Dr Slabbert was tasked by **President Thabo Mbeki** with leading a team that would investigate the possibility of a new electoral system for South Africa. He also co-founded Khula, a black investment trust, in 1990. After his death, the office of **President Nelson Mandela** hailed him as "a leader who had the vision and foresight to recognise that our national interest was to be found in our common humanity".

Over the course of his life, honorary doctorates were conferred upon him by the universities of KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State, and Canada's Simon Fraser University. He was also a visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and received both the American Cultural Exchange and Abe Bailey Travel Scholarships.

Speaking at Dr Slabbert's inauguration as SU Chancellor in August 2008, then Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Russel Botman said, "When he was a student and lecturer here, Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert voiced his displeasure and dissatisfaction with a government and political order that he experienced as being unacceptable."

Prof Botman continued to highlight qualities that set Dr Slabbert apart, including "his outspokenness in the face of injustice", "his **unwavering belief in dialogue and honest discussion** between authentic partners" and "his conviction to not only do things right, but to do the right thing with integrity – at the expense of popularity".

The conclusion of Prof Botman's speech captures the essence of the FVZI Institute's vision and mission: "... one could say that he **lives the principle of critical citizenship**, and in that regard he embodies a cornerstone of the endeavour of Stellenbosch University to produce students that can serve our growing democracy and the challenges of our economy to the best of their abilities."

# A message from the Rector & Vice-Chancellor

Stellenbosch University is committed to ensuring that our students have a transformative experience in higher education, developing them not just academically in their chosen disciplinary fields, but also moulding them into well-rounded individuals who are critical citizens who go out into society with the skills, competencies and attributes that will enable them to have a positive impact. We are therefore especially proud to be associated with the Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert name through the FVZS Institute and the work that it does to realise our vision.

Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert was renowned for his unwavering commitment to democracy and social justice. As a politician, academic and businessman, his legacy is defined by his courageous opposition to apartheid and his vision for a free and democratic South Africa. He advocated for peaceful negotiation and reconciliation. In addition to his political achievements, Dr Slabbert made significant contributions to academia and civil society. His work emphasised the importance of dialogue and inclusivity in building a fair and just society. This ethos continues through the Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development, established to honour his legacy.

The FVZS Institute aims to cultivate future leaders who embody Dr Slabbert's values of ethical leadership, critical thinking and social responsibility. By providing students with opportunities for leadership training, community engagement and academic excellence, the FVZS Institute ensures that Dr Slabbert's vision for a more equitable South Africa lives on. His legacy is not only remembered through his contributions during his lifetime but also through the ongoing impact of the Institute that bears his name.

**Prof Deresh Ramjugernath**  
Rector & Vice-Chancellor



Photo: Stefan Els.

***“By providing students with critical leadership offerings and community engagement linked to academic excellence, the FVZS Institute ensures that Dr Slabbert's vision for a more equitable South Africa lives on.”***

# A message from Tania Slabbert



*“He would be thrilled to see how the Institute has evolved; the quality of the courses offered; the passion and commitment of the staff; and the impressive cohorts of student leaders who have passed through its doors.”*

The FVZS Institute was established in 2011 – the year after my father’s passing. As a family, we consider it to be a wonderful tribute to his legacy and to the values that he embodied – leading with integrity, critical reasoning, constructive debate, open dialogue and active citizenship.

He would be thrilled to see how the Institute has evolved; the quality of the courses offered; the passion and commitment of the staff; and the impressive cohorts of student leaders who have passed through its doors.

He would also be deeply touched by the many friends, academics, social justice activists, business leaders and others who have appeared as keynote speakers over the years for the annual Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Honorary Lecture, hosted at Stellenbosch University by the FVZS Institute.

Those close to him often say that Van Zyl had the remarkable ability to “cut through complexity” and get straight to the heart of a matter. In these increasingly turbulent and complex times, we miss the clarity of his insights.

The work of the FVZS Institute will no doubt continue to play an important role in assisting future leaders to make sense of such complexity – and so go on to be active and socially responsible citizens in our society.

**Tania Slabbert**  
Co-founder of Emunah Investments and  
daughter of Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert

# A message from the CSLL Director



***“The Frederik van Zyl Slabbert Institute is one of the places where ideas can ignite you, fill you with the excitement of connection, and illuminate new ways of understanding your role in building a society or world that functions better and is better.”***

Have you ever felt the excitement of a new idea that made you think, “Is that how it works?” or, “Now I understand it!”?

Have you ever wondered what others would think of your solutions to society’s intractable problems?

Have you ever thought: “If the leadership of an organisation or country could just unlock the potential of people...”?

Have you ever marvelled at the success of teamwork when you saw it come together?

Have you ever wondered how thinking from diverse backgrounds could enrich your own thinking?

Have you ever thought about how working in a leadership team with people from diverse backgrounds can make you feel part of something bigger than yourself?

If so, the FVZS Institute is one of the places where ideas can ignite you, fill you with the excitement of connection, and illuminate new ways of understanding your role in building a society or world that functions better and is better. Participate in the legacy of a visionary who dared to question, to listen and to lead. Whether you do it with boldness or whether you need to feel your way forward, you will be at home in FVZS Institute-led initiatives.

Now, it’s your turn. Through dynamic master-classes, thought-provoking symposiums and enlightening dialogues, you’ll uncover the strength of your voice and the power of your ideas. Dare a bit, let your thinking evolve, and experience what it means to lead.

Together, the FVZS Institute enriches leadership journeys.

**Mr Pieter Kloppers**  
CSLL Director

# A message from the Head of the FVZS Institute

When the FVZS Institute was launched in 2011, as one of Stellenbosch University's HOPE projects, the intention was to honour the legacy of the late Dr Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert by creating opportunities for South African youth to develop as thought leaders.

Thought leaders are often referred to as "authorities in their field", and that is exactly how one would describe Van Zyl – "a man of his time". It is, however, in his ability to influence others to find common ground and be comfortable with conflicting thoughts, where the FVZS Institute's work started to evolve over time.

Our engagements with students during our **10 year celebration in 2021** inspired the team to review, with students, the FVZS Institute's vision, mission and core pillars to reflect the diversity of leadership perspectives.

## A golden thread of key questions emerged through our leadership offerings:

1. How do we acknowledge our historical context as contributors to how leadership perceptions and practice have been shaped in South Africa?
2. How do we cultivate engaged citizens who are cognisant of the opportunities and complexities of the South African Constitution?
3. How do we challenge ourselves to critically engage with our student communities and the broader South African social context on matters such as human rights, democracy and social justice?
4. How does the FVZS Institute participate in the conversation on decolonisation, from a leadership perspective? For example, does our programme offering demonstrate the need to explore the knowledge gap in the leadership discipline regarding what African leadership refers to? How do we engage intergenerationally on our rich indigenous practices to respond to the needs of our continent?
5. How do we – staff and students – situate our identity(ies) in our leadership practice?

With the revival of national #movements and the inherited social justice challenges that our "born-free" generation are facing, we began to collectively dig deeper on what it takes to revolutionise social change. Our growing global network, through think tanks and summits, continues to offer opportunities to compare contexts and social construction influences. And, in our excavation for a deeper understanding of ourselves as leaders, the learning pathway of thousands of students could be expanded beyond their classroom, beyond their communities and countries, and beyond their leadership role.

## What's next for the FVZS Institute?

**Fifteen years later**, we reconfirm our Institute's commitment to South Africa's democracy through our engagement with youth across the world. We look forward to expanding our global footprint with our partners in creating opportunities for youth leadership development, and we remain critical of how our identity(ies) can collectively contribute to positive change for this generation . . . and the next.

Van Zyl, I would have loved to sit with you in the alluring discomfort of leadership and be inspired by "the passion for reason". I suspect you would have been proud to see how our youth are authoring South Africa's democracy story.

Thank you to our partners for believing in our vision and strategy and, most importantly, thank you to our students who inspire our collective vision. Thank you that I can grow with you!

**Dr Heidi October**  
Deputy Director (Leadership): CSLL & Head: FVZS Institute



Photo: Stefan Els.

# Timeline

# 2011 to 2016

- FVZS Institute launched as part of SU capital campaign The HOPE Project
- Institute launches annual SU Leads Conference (2011-2019), annually attended by 1000+ newly elected student leaders
- The Institute launches short courses recognised on transcripts, with new rollouts over the succeeding years:
  - Two faculty-specific courses (Law; Education)
  - Complementary Studies modules as part of the Engineering Faculty curriculum (fully embedded in the curriculum).
  - Leadership for Change (Medicine and Health Sciences Faculty)
  - Graduate Programme aimed at final-year students
  - 2DO Programme (in collaboration with the Centre for Student Communities)
  - Global Citizenship in partnership with Stellenbosch University International
  - Leadership through Community Interaction (in partnership with Maties Community Service)
  - African Leadership Development Programme (online platform with university partners across the continent)
  - Metanoia Leadership Course (residence-specific course)
  - Women in Leadership
  - Facilitative Leadership
  - Beyond Borders
  - Democracy & Citizenship
  - AcaLead (Academia Leadership Course)
  - Discourse Cafés were launched



Launch of the FVZS Institute: Ms Jane Slabbert (Dr Slabbert's widow) and author Breyten Breytenbach (Dr Slabbert's friend).



The late Prof Russel Botman (SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor at the time).

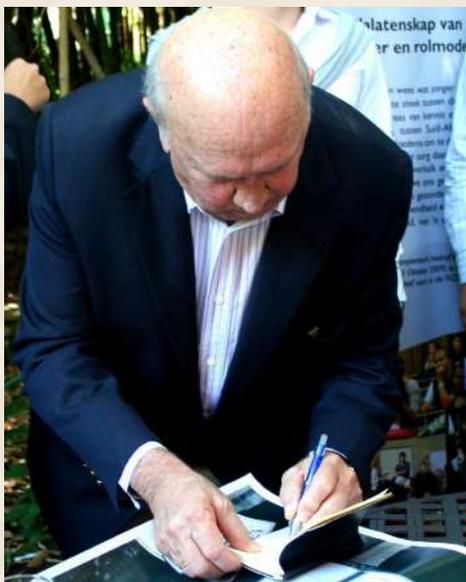
2011

2012

2013

- 1st FVZS Honorary Lecture: Mr Harald Pakendorf (Political analyst & friend of FVZS)

- 2nd FVZS Honorary Lecture: Ms Maria Ramos (ABSA Group Chief Executive & Barclays Chief Executive: Africa)



The late President FW de Klerk at a Discourse Café with student leaders.



Entrepreneur and philanthropist Ms Wendy Appelbaum at a FVZS Discourse Café.



The late Prof Russel Botman, Ms Tania Slabbert, Ms Maria Ramos.

The Institute's early years were defined by rapid growth, new partnerships, and the establishment of flagship programmes that shaped SU's emerging culture of student leadership, citizenship and social engagement.



Participants in the Community Development Summer School visited several organisations to explore best practices.



Launch of the Discourse Cafe book (a compilation of student essays)



FVZS team: Mr Ferdi van Dyk, Mr Folkers Williams, Dr Leslie van Rooi, Mr Brandon Como.

- 3rd FVZS Honorary Lecture: Mr Jay Naidoo (Chair, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition)

- Launch of Belgium Think Tank programme with SU International for top academic achievers (2015-2019)
- Collaboration with Western Cape Government on Year Beyond programmes
- 4th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Mr Isaac Shongwe (Non-executive director, Barlow World Logistics)
- Launch of Discourse Café book, a compilation of student essays

- 5th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Dr Adrian Enthoven (Executive Chairman, Yellowwood private investment group)



2014



2015



2016



SULeads 2015 – the annual leadership conference for newly elected leaders. | Photo: Henk Oets.

# Timeline

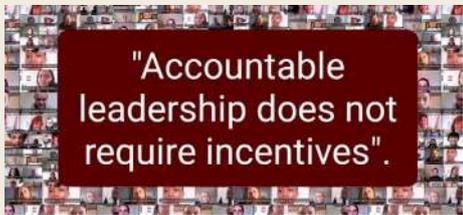
# 2017 to 2026



Doing Business in Africa tailored programme for international students.

- Leadership offerings expand
- 6th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Ms Judith February (Governance specialist & columnist)

- Leadership in Context (LiC) programme launched for Western Cape higher education institutions (HEIs)
- Blended learning piloted on short courses
- Health & Leadership short course piloted
- Midday Knowledge series expands on FVZS Monthly Book Club
- Institute co-hosts first Doha Debate in South Africa, with Doha Debates integrated into leadership offerings
- 8th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Ms Marianne Thamm (Assistant Editor, *Daily Maverick*)
- Hosted Oprah Winfrey Fellows from Morehouse College (Atlanta, USA) as part of their experiential learning visit to South Africa
- African Dynamics tailored programme for Leiden University, The Netherlands
- SU & KU Leuven Think Tank approved as first Academic Leadership programme for transcript recognition



COVID-19 couldn't stop the 2021 Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders as a fully online youth leadership summit.

- **10-year celebration:** critical review of strategy, vision and mission
- Launch of FVZS biography *Slabbert: Man on a Mission* by Albert Grundlingh
- LSAL offered in hybrid format for the first time
- LSAL Tracking Programme launched as peer-mentorship programme
- Launch of FVZS Midday Knowledge series
- Launch of igniteUS short course
- 9th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Judge Dennis Davis (Former High Court Judge)

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

- Launch of long-term programme renewal to align to strategic pillars, SU Graduate Attributes & SU Vision 2040
- FVZS African Leadership Development Programme becomes first online offering
- Leadership for Social Justice expands to global networks
- Collaboration with Transformation Office: nine youth leaders travel to Qunu in celebration of Mandela & SU centenaries
- Customised leadership offerings launched for specific student leadership teams, e.g. Tygerberg Postgraduate Council and the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences
- 7th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Dr Wendy Luhabe (Social entrepreneur)

- Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL) programme launched online
- Online offering of LiC programme enables rollout to regional and national HEIs
- All leadership programmes offered online amid COVID-19 pandemic
- Graduate Programme tailored for Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) bursary students



Dr Heidi October moderates the opening of a Think Tank with Prof Olav Njolstad (Director: Norwegian Nobel Institute), Mr Christian Fogelström (Deputy Head of Mission, Swedish Embassy), Prof Edward Kirumira (Director: STIAS) and Prof Deresh Ramjugernath (SU Rector & Vice-Chancellor).

Starting in 2017, strategic changes were implemented to enable stronger alignment with the then Centre for Student Leadership, Experiential Education & Citizenship (CSLEEC), and later the Centre for Student Life and Learning.



Leadership in Context programme with regional higher education partners.



Prof Njoki Wamai (STIAS Fellow) engages youth leaders at the 2024 International Youth Think Tank.



African Leadership Masterclass series, conceptualised by Ms Nosipiwo Matiwane.

- A record 800+ aspiring student leaders attend hybrid LSAL
- 11th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Ms Tsakani Maluleke (Auditor-General of South Africa)

- African Leadership Masterclass Series themed 'Pan-African Leadership'
- Democracy & Engaged Citizenship Masterclass Series themed 'From spectators to changemakers: Breaking the bystander effect in democracy'
- Launch of the *Vice-Chancellors Unplugged* podcast series
- UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competences FVZS Institute pre-conference for African youth leaders, Morocco
- 13th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Ms Busisiwe Mavuso (CEO: Business Leadership SA)

2022

2023

2024

2025

2026

- Launch of Collective Leadership short course
- Launch of FVZS Masterclass Series
- 10th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Adv. Shamila Batoyi (National Director: Public Prosecutions)

- African Leadership Masterclass Series themed 'Queering African Leadership'
- Democracy & Engaged Citizenship Masterclass Series themed 'Digital Democracy & Youth Advocacy'
- Institute co-hosts first International Youth Think Tank & Nobel Symposium in Africa, and first Midday Knowledge roundtable with focus on careers in student affairs
- 12th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Ms Tawakkol Karman (2012 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate)

- African Leadership Masterclass Series themed 'Decolonising African Leadership'
- Democracy & Engaged Citizenship Masterclass Series themed 'Welcome to Parliament'
- 14th FVZS Honorary Lecture: Prof Bonang Mohale (Chancellor: University of the Free State)
- Launch of *FVZS Unplugged* podcast series
- Launch of FVZS In-Between Worlds critical discourse series
- Launch of 'Long walk to Dakar – Celebrating 15 years of student leadership excellence' campaign
- FVZS Institute hosts African Youth Summit in collaboration with UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence, in Dakar, Senegal



FVZS tailored leadership programme for the Academic Affairs Council.

# Our leadership offerings:

From newcomer to postgraduate student, the FVZS Institute's leadership programmes challenge South Africa's youth to turn leadership theory into **citizen-leader action**.

The FVZS Institute's hybrid and online offerings are open to registered students at any institution of higher learning in South Africa, whether the applicant is in an elected student leadership position or contemplating how they could get involved in broader society as a citizen-leader. Below follows a summary of the **current short courses, masterclasses, tailored experiential learning, summits, international think tanks** and **honorary lectures** available from the Institute.

## FVZS Institute leadership short courses

*Our semester-long leadership short courses serve as a platform for student leaders to engage critically as citizens on Constitutional matters and current leadership challenges affecting our society. Upon successful completion, all courses are recognised on Stellenbosch University academic transcripts.*

### Facilitative Leadership

Students receive theoretical and practical exposure to facilitation as a process of learning and are equipped with the necessary skills to facilitate a wide range of conversations and discourses.

### Collective Leadership

We redefine leadership as a continued social process where change and goals are achieved through intentional interaction with others. The emphasis is on the skill of collaborating with others to create a shared vision.

### HealthyUS (health and leadership)

We aim to empower students with the knowledge and skills to navigate the complex health, healthcare and personal well-being landscape as an aspiring leader. They gain practical insights into their own health and well-being while learning about institutional support services to aid peers.

### Global Citizenship

Offered in collaboration with Stellenbosch University International (SUI), this course explores concepts relating to global citizenship – such as intercultural communication, global leadership, global education, gender and social and environmental justice – in a global and local context.

### Graduate Programme

This course prepares students in their final year or pre-final year for their roles as young professionals, ensuring that they are sought-after in work environments across the globe. Students explore systems change, the role of the individual in a team, team dynamics, financial management, personal branding and more.

### Leadership in Law (for law students)

This course exposes students to the theoretical and practical elements of legal and related professions, thus helping them to bridge the gap between knowledge obtained through degree programmes and the knowledge required of legal practitioners.

### Leadership in Education (for education students)

This course takes a critical look at the concept of education and the various challenges and opportunities – as well as the contexts – impacting education and schooling in South Africa.



# Our leadership offerings:

## Tailored experiential learning and critical dialogue

The FVZS Institute also offers a wide range of customised leadership programmes for student leaders and various societies and student organisations nationally, and at international universities, all aligned with social justice and citizen-leadership. This enables us to create leadership development programmes tailored to the needs of individuals and teams (faculties, residences and societies). The list below covers some of our tailored programmes and critical dialogue series.

### Academic Affairs Council Leadership Development Programme

This programme helps students develop a contextual understanding and framework for sustainable leadership. It also identifies and unpacks the contribution of each member of the Academic Affairs Council in developing and growing its objectives for the benefit of all students.

### Leadership for Social Justice

The Leadership for Social Justice Programme, a Global Education Programme (GEP) offered by the FVZS Institute, aims to introduce international students to the development of social justice in South Africa. Through this experiential learning programme, students analyse the development and progress of social justice through the experiences of South African citizens, with reference to the country's history, by exploring themes such as democracy, equity, justice in education, the media, visual arts, politics and more.

### FVZS podcast series

In 2025, the Institute launched *Vice-Chancellors Unplugged*, a unique podcast for staff and students across institutions to connect with five newly appointed Vice-Chancellors. Each episode featured a candid conversation between a Vice-Chancellor and a student representative from their institution, offering insight into their personal journeys, leadership philosophies and the values shaping their vision. As part of our 15th-anniversary celebrations in 2026, we launched the *FVZS Unplugged* podcast, expanding the platform to include staff, students, partners and alumni. The series creates space for storytelling, reflection and critical dialogue grounded in the Institute's core pillars of citizen-leadership, social justice and critical engagement.

Listen to the FVZS podcasts on Spotify by searching **FVZS Unplugged and Vice-Chancellors Unplugged**.

### In-Between Worlds conversation series

In 2026, the FVZS Institute launched In-Between Worlds a bi-monthly conversation series designed to explore the impact of national and global issues beyond the walls of Stellenbosch University. A defining feature of In-Between Worlds is its commitment to bridging the gap between staff and students. By taking conversations into diverse spaces across campus, the series fosters cross-faculty collaboration, strengthens student leadership and highlights the important role of student affairs practitioners in shaping democratic culture within the University. Each session brings together four invited guests, each offering a distinct lens on the chosen topic. In a dynamic three-minute opening reflection, speakers share their perspectives before the floor opens to participants. Aligned with the Democracy and Engaged Citizenship portfolio, the series nurtures curiosity, confidence and courageous conversation.



Students from Western Sydney University attended a tailored programme on 'Democracy and Citizenship' with comparative analysis to Australia's citizenship challenges and opportunities.



Rector & Vice-Chancellor Prof Deresh Ramjugernath (centre) welcomes the fifth student cohort of Christopher Newport University, Virginia, USA, attending the annual FVZS Leadership for Social Justice Programme, accompanied by faculty members Profs Molly Camioni and Sean Connable.

# Our leadership offerings: Masterclass Series

## Masterclass Series: African Leadership

The FVZS African Leadership Masterclass Series provides a platform to explore the resurgence of African leadership frameworks within the offerings of the FVZS Institute. Now in its fourth year, we look back at the African Leadership series offered so far and the 2026 series.

### 2023: The Diverse Roots of African Leadership

What does it mean when someone refers to 'African leadership'? This series explored the diverse roots of leadership on the continent, and its rich histories, to promote a new future. Discussions ranged from interrogating African identities to exploring how teachings of Ubuntu and Umoja can impact leadership journeys. Additionally, the series reframed leadership by foregrounding African contexts and perspectives. It explored how African identities are articulated through personal narratives of being and belonging, and through African people's varied understandings of Africanness. It also examined African philosophical frameworks as a way of translating indigenous knowledge systems into leadership practice.

### 2024: Queering African Leadership

To 'queer' African leadership is to generate a site for the potential to describe a politics of sexualities not based on a specific sexual practice but a critical relationship to existing sexual and social norms. Black queer feminist scholar Alexis Pauline Gumbs described 'queer' as that which fundamentally transforms our state of being, the possibilities for life, and does not reproduce the status quo. Thus, this series interrogated the silences and silencing of the margins of discourse and possibility for African leadership, by using queer theory to challenge and disrupt cisheteronormativity in leadership frameworks through an articulable intersectional practice that highlights race, genders, class, sexualities and ethnicities.

### 2025: Pan-African Leadership

As a theory, Pan-Africanism recognises, defines and interprets the current modern international system as a racially hierarchised, patriarchal, imperial, colonial, heteronormative and capitalist order. Pan-Africanism was intended as an oppositional ideology undergirded by a determined effort by black people to rediscover their shrines from the wreckage of history. This Masterclass Series sought to excavate the contradictions and dialectics of the political, social, intellectual and cultural architecture of African leadership within the African continent, using experience and history as generative insights which spoke to colonialism, empire, race, gender, class, nationalism, Pan-Africanism and decolonisation.

### 2026: Decolonising African Leadership

This Masterclass Series will draw on Argentine cultural theorist Walter Mignolo's idea of epistemic disobedience – challenging Eurocentric ways of thinking and centring African perspectives and ways of knowing. As Nigerian philosopher Kehinde Etieyibo, Zimbabwean political scientist Tinashe Katsaura and South African sociologist Rudo Musemwa have highlighted, Western analysis of African politics and society remains ethnocentric and often misrepresents the continent's realities. The series will encourage participants to question the dominance of Western knowledge, explore African philosophical frameworks and reflect critically on the social and political legacies of colonialism that continue to shape Africa today.

# Our leadership offerings: Masterclass Series

## Masterclass Series: Democracy and Engaged Citizenship

This series provides a dynamic platform for students from across South Africa to interrogate what it truly means to be a citizen-leader in today's world. Through experiential learning and critical dialogue, the series equips participants with a practical understanding of how democratic values can be upheld globally, nationally and within their own communities.

Since its inception, the Masterclass Series has engaged more than 1 800 students from diverse South African institutions, evolving each year to respond to the most pressing socio-political questions of our time.

The series has featured distinguished subject-matter experts from across the globe, each contributing unique insights that challenge perspectives and inspire meaningful engagement.

In an increasingly polarised socio-political landscape, the Democracy and Engaged Citizenship Masterclass Series stands as a vehicle for strengthening democracy. It cultivates leaders grounded in social justice, critical inquiry and active citizenship. Participants leave not only better informed, but empowered and equipped with the curiosity, confidence and practical tools to translate important conversations into tangible action.

Previous themes have included:

**2023: Youth Participation and Democracy**

**2024: Digital Democracy and Youth Advocacy**

**2025: Breaking the Bystander Effect in Democracy**

The **2026 theme is 'Welcome to Parliament'**, a topic that provides the opportunity for a focused exploration of the role of Parliament – by examining its critical function in representing the voice of the people, holding the executive accountable and safeguarding South Africa's democratic dispensation.



*More than 1 400 students sign up annually for the FVZS Masterclass Series, presented by leading international scholars. Student mentors offer guidance throughout the series, which aids peer-to-peer learning.*

# Our leadership offerings:

## MatiesLead:

### Grow. Rise. Lead Together.

Over the past decade, SU has offered a range of **large-scale student leadership programmes**. This has ranged from SULeads to the Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL), Prospective Leaders Training, the Newly Elected Leaders Conference (NELC), Specialist Training and more.

The need for an integrated approach to student leadership was evident, and a **long-term strategic initiative** kicked off in 2025, with multiple role-players from various student governance structures and staff members across faculties and key focus areas shaping the content and purpose.

This led to the launch of a brand-new multi-phase integrated leadership offering, **MatiesLead**, involving more than 1 800 students:

**Phase 1** focuses on aspiring student leaders. **(Grow)**

**Phase 2** focuses on elected student leaders. **(Rise)**

**Phase 3** focuses on a thematic approach to empowering the Self through working with others. **(Lead Together)**

Relational Leadership as an approach to student leadership at SU is utilised to find a common purpose for all student leadership structures through key dimensions. With ethical leadership and inclusivity as departure points, the programme empowers oneself and others in the process.

Grounded in the theoretical framework of **Relational Leadership**, the inaugural theme of the programme is 'Leading the Shift: Reimagining student leadership in times of transition'. The theme encourages participants to anchor equity, embrace change and help shape the future of student leadership at SU.

**MatiesLead** is offered in various formats (hybrid, in-person and online) and encourages students to take ownership of their own leadership learning pathway. It also allows those who complete specific self-paced activities in their chosen leadership context to receive recognition of attendance on their transcript, thus supporting one of the key student development principles of self-authorship.



MatiesLead Phase 2 – newly elected student leaders. | Photo: Henk Oets.

# Our leadership offerings:

## Global focus - extending our leadership footprint

The FVZS Institute regularly gathers student leaders, academics and prominent leaders across various fields to engage critically with current political and governance issues in South Africa.

Our summits and international think tanks provide platforms for students to reflect on their role as active citizens, and to apply their leadership learning to current societal matters.

The extensive range of offerings includes a **discourse series**, a **Think Tank with KU Leuven**, discourses aligned with our three FVZS pillars, the annual **Leadership Summit for Aspiring Leaders (LSAL)**, the **Leadership in Context (LiC) programme**, and our **Midday Knowledge** series of discussions with professionals across various fields who inspire the work of students and staff.

Through expansive global networks we offer additional engagement opportunities to students via **Doha Debates** and **Unite 2030** programmes.

## IYTT Youth Conference and Nobel Symposium

In 2024, the FVZS Institute hosted the first **International Youth Think Tank (IYTT)** and **Nobel Symposia in Africa**, supported by the **Norwegian Nobel Institute**. It was a significant milestone for the FVZS Institute as Ms Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Laureate 2011, was the first Nobel Laureate to deliver the FVZS Honorary Lecture during this event. Ms Namatai Kwekweza (2023 Kofi Annan NextGen Democracy Prize winner) was scheduled to deliver the lecture, but was detained in a Zimbabwean prison, together with other youth democracy activists. This demonstrated the **importance of youth participation in democracy matters**, specifically on the African continent – and while Ms Kwekweza's arrest was unfortunate, it was perhaps the best indication that she was indeed a suitable speaker on the complexity of democracy matters in Africa. What made the 2024 FVZS Honorary Lecture even more exceptional was the link with the International Youth Think Tank, with the theme 'African Youth Show the Way Towards Peace and Democracy', funded by the Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation.



*The 24 students from across Africa selected to attend the first IYTT held in Africa.*



# Our leadership offerings:

## Global focus - extending our leadership footprint

### Think Tank with KU Leuven

The KU Leuven/Stellenbosch University Think Tank was established in 2015 as part of a five-year partnership agreement between Belgium's KU Leuven and Stellenbosch University, and the FVZS Institute formed part of the steering committee. Each year, postgraduate students met frequently to engage with experts and share perspectives on the chosen topic. This engagement methodology used an interdisciplinary approach and enhanced the students' ability to critically reflect on their own views and constructively apply their knowledge.



*The 2018 KU Leuven/SU Think Tankers, who focused on the theme 'Vox Populi', visited the European Parliament and the South African Embassy in Brussels, Belgium.*

### UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence Conference

In 2025, the FVZS Institute was invited by the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence, Prof Darla Deardorff, to facilitate a full-day workshop on 'Identity and Pan-African Histories' at the 2026 UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competence Conference in Rabat, Morocco. Due to the FVZS Institute's reputation and the success of this workshop, the Institute will be hosting the African Youth Summit (pre-conference) at the 2026 UNESCO Intercultural Competence Conference in Dakar, Senegal. This will coincide with the FVZS Institute's 15th-year celebrations, honouring the strong ties the late Dr Van Zyl Slabbert had with Senegal's Gorée Institute.

# Our leadership offerings: Frederik van Zyl Slabbert Honorary Lecture

The **Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Honorary Lecture** is hosted annually at SU as a way of honouring Dr Slabbert's legacy by creating a platform for our student leaders, academics, leaders, academics, the public, and prominent leaders in various fields to engage critically with current South African political and governance issues. Since 2012, the FVZS Honorary Lecture has been delivered by respected leaders from the field, the National Director of Public Prosecutions, and respected leaders from fields as diverse as the media, law, governance, social entrepreneurship and business.

The FVZS Honorary Lecture is hosted with the financial support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.



*Dr Wendy Luhabe (2018 FVZS Honorary Lecture speaker). | Photo: Henk Oets.*

*Ms Tawakkol Karman, 2012 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, delivers the 12th FVZS Honorary Lecture in 2024. | Photo: Henk Oets.*



*The SU Vice-Chancellor's management team and other SU staff and students at the FVZS Honorary Lecture 2023, delivered by South Africa's Auditor-General, Ms Tsakani Maluleke (middle). | Photo: Henk Oets.*

# Our leadership offerings:

## FVZS Honorary Lecture keynote speakers

**2026**

Prof Bonang Mohale,  
Chancellor: University of the Free State

**2025**

Ms Busisiwe Mavuso, CEO: Business Leadership SA

**2024**

Ms Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Laureate 2011

**2023**

Ms Tsakani Maluleke, Auditor-General

**2022**

Advocate Shamila Batoyi,  
National Director of Public Prosecutions

**2021**

Judge Dennis Davis, former High Court Judge

**2019**

Ms Marianne Thamm, Assistant Editor of  
*Daily Maverick* and top-selling author

**2018**

Dr Wendy Luhabe, social entrepreneur

**2017**

Ms Judith February,  
governance specialist and columnist

**2016**

Dr Adrian Enthoven, Executive Chairman  
of private investment group Yellowwood

**2015**

Mr Isaac Shongwe, Non-Executive Director  
of Barlow World Logistics

**2014**

Mr Jay Naidoo, chairperson of the Global Alliance  
for Improved Nutrition (Gain) and former minister  
in Nelson Mandela's Cabinet

**2013**

Ms Maria Ramos, ABSA Group Executive Head  
& Barclays Africa Executive Head

**2012**

Mr Harald Pakendorf, political analyst and friend of FVZS



Ms Busisiwe Mavuso (HL Speaker 2025) and Ms Unopachido Mubaiwa (FVZS Citizenship Engagement Coordinator) | Photo: Henk Oets.



Ms Marianne Thamm (2019 FVZS Honorary Lecture speaker) engages with moderator Mr Mkululi Nompumza (FVZS Leadership in Education Coordinator at the time). | Photo: Henk Oets.



Ms Maria Ramos, 2013 keynote speaker.



Left to right: Dr Beryl Botman (widow of Prof Russel Botman), Ms Ellen Tise (Senior Director: Library Services), Dr Adrian Enthoven (2016 Honorary Lecture speaker), Ms Dominique Enthoven, Prof Wim de Villiers (SU Rector & Vice-Chancellor), Ms Jane Slabbert (widow of Dr Slabbert), and Dr Leslie van Rooi (previous Head: FVZS Institute).

# Our people:

## Students and alumni



*"I completed the Facilitative Leadership short course at the FVZS Institute. I was motivated to apply to strengthen my public-speaking skills and deepen my ability to hold space for meaningful and insight-driven conversations. The short course strengthened my adaptability, communication and emotional intelligence. Although I initially pursued a traditional accounting career path, this experience gave me a competitive edge and enabled a successful transition into a consulting role. Today, as an Application Consultant in the Netherlands, I apply these skills daily to engage stakeholders, lead impactful discussions and drive collaborative solutions."*

**Keneilwe Ximba**  
Application Consultant in the Netherlands



*"I was motivated to apply to the Women in Leadership & Globalization short courses because I have always been interested in how leadership operates within complex social and institutional environments. I was particularly drawn to the emphasis on critical engagement, ethical responsibility and dialogue across difference. My key takeaways were that leadership is less about positional authority and more about responsibility and influence. The short courses challenged me to think carefully about power, accountability and the importance of listening, especially in diverse and often contested spaces."*

**Dr Marguerite van Eeden-Harris**  
Actor and Photographer, PhD in Drama and Theatre Studies



*What stood out about the many courses I took at the FVZS during my undergraduate studies at SU was the commitment shown by the coordinators and participants to facilitate the courage to confront ourselves and our history, as well as the humility to embrace our responsibility for the present and our shared future in all walks of life."*

**Dr Gideon Basson**  
Mandela Rhodes Scholar, Oxford University

# Our people:

## Students and alumni



*"I was part of the team developing the Vice-Chancellors Unplugged podcast series. I was motivated to apply because of the FVZS Institute's reputation for fostering critical dialogue and ethical leadership among student leaders, and as a space where leadership is not only debated but practiced through honest and critical conversations. The programme enhanced my understanding of leadership's contribution to institutional stability and democratic cultures. It is highly relevant to my current work because it reinforces the centrality of dialogue and ethical leadership in shaping public institutions."*

**Dr David Kabwa**

Speechwriter to the Mayor of Tshwane and Southern Africa Representative on the African Union Youth for Transitional Justice platform



*"I participated in the Democracy and Engaged Citizenship Masterclasses as a student mentor. Being an engaged citizen requires that we do purposeful and meaningful work for ourselves and society. In my work, I have gained skills that allow me to be involved in ensuring proper planning and execution of clinical trials to impact patients' lives. The classes played a key role in preparing me for the project management aspect of my job, where posing certain questions and facilitating meetings with senior team members is one of the key components in ensuring a successful project."*

**Francisca Darkoh**

Proposal Developer at IQVIA Biotech and Co-founder and CEO of ShareBite SA



*"I participated in the FVZS Leadership in Law short course and was subsequently involved as a mentor, which allowed me to both benefit from and contribute to the FVZS Institute's leadership development objectives. I was motivated to apply because the short course emphasises the importance of cultivating leadership skills early, particularly in professional environments where leadership is often associated with seniority or age. A key takeaway from the short course is that leadership is dependent on self-awareness, ethical engagement, confidence and the ability to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics."*

**Aerin Kotzee**

Risk Specialist at Capitec Bank

# Our people:

## Students and alumni



*"In 2024, I participated in the International Youth Think Tank. The programme brought together young leaders to explore innovative ways in which young people can exercise agency in strengthening democratic systems. A significant element was the guided tour of Stellenbosch, which provided historical context about the town and broader region. This rooted our conversations in the realities of the space and reminded us that contemporary challenges cannot be separated from historical context. The systems-level thinking introduced have been applicable to my current work in venture creation and in developing solutions for marginalised communities."*

**Amonge Sinxoto**

Author, Entrepreneur and NPO Director for Blackboard Africa



*"In journalism, there's a responsibility to tell balanced stories and help people make sense of the world. As an International Youth Think Tank Fellow, I have come to see democracy and transformation as non-negotiables. Democracy should exist for, by and with the people, and transformation is rarely straightforward or linear. Participating in FVZS programmes reinforced the importance of being a well-rounded student and citizen – someone who values critical thinking, active citizenship and meaningful engagement with society. In my work I now try to centre stories that matter and contribute to conversations that move society forward."*

**Ishmael Mabena**

Journalist and Content Coordinator



*"I did the FVZS Institute's Global Citizenship and Facilitative Leadership courses. I enjoyed the opportunity to engage with other students, especially students studying in other faculties. My favourite content from the Global Citizenship course was Intercultural Communication, and I now deal with organisations around the world in the renewable energy and e-mobility industry. The courses allowed me to navigate cultural differences and hold space for diverse viewpoints. I make a conscious effort to learn from people who are different from me, whether culturally, professionally, or geographically."*

**Kamryn Smith**

Senior Stakeholder Manager for Zero Carbon Change

# Our people:

## Students and alumni



*"I am driven by the belief that leadership isn't just about leading others, but also about leading oneself effectively. Through participating in the FVZS programmes, I wanted to enhance my leadership skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on both my life and the lives of those I interact with. In addition, I recognised the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences with others. Through these programmes, I aimed not only to acquire leadership skills, but also to use them to benefit others. This motivation stemmed from my belief in the value of paying it forward and helping others grow."*

**Edward Keenan Jacobs**  
Programme Manager, Mandela Rhodes Foundation



*"I was privileged to meet and engage in debates with Dr Slabbert during my terms on the Student Representative Council in 2008 and 2009. He consistently challenged our perspectives on SA and the future of SU. Following his passing, I facilitated and coordinated the establishment of one of the first programmes for the FVZS Institute, the Emerging Young Leaders Programme. My involvement with the Institute significantly shaped my understanding of responsible leadership and reinforced my commitment to democratic principles. This experience continues to inform my vision for SU's future and its role in Africa's renaissance."*

**Brandon Como**  
SU Risk & Events Management, MBA Candidate



*"As someone who has always hoped to contribute to positive change, I thought a course that took on a global perspective was a great place to start. Throughout the course we delved into the idea of 'global citizenship' – to not view issues in silos, but rather through how they impact society. The course really highlighted and emphasised the idea of collective responsibility. As a young activist and feminist lawyer who needs to approach the work I do in a creative, multipronged way, it forced me out of my comfort zone and helped me interrogate how to work towards a just and equal society."*

**Senamile Madlala**  
Attorney of the High Court

# Our people:

## FVZS Institute team members

### FVZS Core Team

**Dr Heidi October**  
**Head: FVZS Institute & Deputy Director (Leadership) CSLL**  
 PhD in Leadership Studies (UP)

**Ms Aluwani Ramarumo**  
**Interim Leadership Programme Coordinator**  
 BA Honours in History (SU)

**Mr Monwabisi Petersen**  
**Interim Leadership Programme Coordinator**  
 BCom in Management Science (SU)

**Ms Unopachido Mubaiwa**  
**FVZS Citizenship Engagement Coordinator**  
 MA Research Psychology (cum laude) (SU)

**Ms Nosipiwo Matiwane**  
**Programme Coordinator**  
 BA Honours in Social Anthropology (cum laude) (SU)

**Mr Chulumanco Makapela**  
**Social Media Administrator**  
 BA Humanities (SU)

### CSLL Support

**Mr Pieter Schutte**  
**Finance Officer**  
 National Diploma: Financial Accounting  
 (CTU Training Solutions)

**Ms Nosikhumbuzo Mhlaba**  
**Administrative Officer**  
 National Diploma: Management Assistant  
 (South Cape College)

**Mr Annas Coetzee**  
**Administrative Officer Research Support**  
 M Librarianship and Information Science (UWC)

### Student Leadership Ambassadors

**Mx Zyblian Anders** – BA Humanities  
**Mr Aidan Fletcher** – MTh Pastoral Care  
**Mr Liam Gillesen** – BAccLLB  
**Mr Somila Kondlo** – B.Ed Intermediate Phase  
**Mr Wandile Mqadi** – B.Ed Intermediate Phase  
**Mr Lwandisile Mhlanga** – MEng(Industrial Engineering)  
**Mr Mathew Patience** – MA Psychology  
**Mr Hanru Kleinschmidt** – MBChB III  
**Ms Toluwani Adeboye** – MBChB V  
**Mr Stuart Reid** – LLB



**Back row:** Zyblian Anders, Unopachido Mubaiwa, Monwabisi Petersen, Heidi October, Aidan Fletcher, Annas Coetzee, Liam Gillesen, Chulumanco Makapela, Pieter Schutte, Aluwani Ramarumo.  
**Front row:** Nosikhumbuzo Mhlaba, Somila Kondlo, Wandile Mqadi, Lwandisile Mhlanga, Mathew Patience.

# Our partners



## **The Abe Bailey Trust**

Initially, the Abe Bailey Trust's support was aimed at helping to build a solid foundation for the launch of the FVZS Institute, but more recently we focused our funding on the extension of the Institute's learning opportunities to students at other higher education institutions in South Africa and beyond. The success of the FVZS Masterclass Series has been particularly gratifying for its local, national and international reach. The Trust wishes the Institute well as you prepare the next generation for the challenges of leadership, and extends our appreciation to Dr Heidi October for her excellent management and engagement with our Trust.



## **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung**

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) supports the work of the FVZS Institute due to a shared commitment to promoting democracy and good governance. The FVZS Institute's focus on developing ethical leadership and civic responsibility aligns with KAS's dedication to nurturing a society where freedom is balanced with responsibility, and individual initiative is encouraged within the frameworks of solidarity and subsidiarity.

THE  
NOBEL  
PEACE  
PRIZE

## **Norwegian Nobel Institute**

The Norwegian Nobel Institute provides scholarly and administrative support to the Norwegian Nobel Committee, which since 1901 has selected the winners of the Nobel Peace Prize. The Norwegian Nobel Institute is proud to take part in this year's collaborative Nobel Symposium and International Youth Think Tank (IYTT) annual conference together with the FVZS Institute and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

INTERNATIONAL  
YOUTH  
THINK TANK

## **International Youth Think Tank**

The International Youth Think Tank (IYTT) is honoured to partner with the FVZS Institute on hosting the 6th IYTT Youth Conference and Nobel Symposium in Africa. This collaboration with the Norwegian Nobel Institute, the FVZS Institute and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study aims to transform the activist instincts of young people into concrete proposals, allowing them to lead the way for a more democratic future.

# So, what is next for you?

**1. How do you view your role as a South African, African, and global citizen?**

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**2. Reflecting on your identity(ies) – how will your identities shape your identity as a leader?**

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**3. What will your legacy be as a leader?**

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# Moments and people from 15 years of the FVZS Institute





Photo: Stefan Els.

**RESPONSIBILITY CENTRE:  
DEAN OF STUDENTS  
CENTRE FOR STUDENT LIFE & LEARNING**

# **Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute**

**FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

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**15**  
YEARS

**2011 - 2026**

**Further information:**

[www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/student-leadership/fvzs](http://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/student-affairs/student-leadership/fvzs)

Email: [fvzs@sun.ac.za](mailto:fvzs@sun.ac.za)

**Follow us on social media:**

 FVZS Leadership Institute / Leierskapsinstituut

 @fvzs

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 Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development

 FVZS Institute

 FVZS Unplugged and Vice-Chancellors Unplugged



forward together  
sonke siya phambili  
saam vorentoe