

UKUTHWASA: A Journey of Spiritual Resistance, Identity, and Culture in South Africa

UKUTHWASA: Uma Jornada de Resistência Espiritual, Identidade e Cultural na África do Sul

UKUTHWASA: Uhambo Lokumelana Nenkolo, Ubuqaba, kanye Namasiko eNingizimu Afrika

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Abstract

This article examines ukuthwasa, a spiritual and cultural practice of the Nguni peoples of South Africa, situating it within the historical context of colonization, the marginalization of African religiosity, and the imposition of Christianity. The research combines participant ethnography, dialogue with practitioners, and intercultural interpretation to understand the initiation process, which involves the ancestral call (ubizo), purification rituals, learning about herbs, dreams, and communal practices, resulting in the formation of traditional healers (sangomas and inyangas). The study highlights the formative and identity-building nature of ukuthwasa, emphasizing its role as a rite of passage, a means of transmitting ancestral knowledge, and a practice for strengthening social cohesion. It also addresses contemporary challenges, including tensions between tradition and modernity, legal and labor restrictions, stigmatization, and the commodification of livestock, which conditions the performance of rituals and exposes social inequalities. The analysis reveals ukuthwasa as a complex process that articulates spirituality, identity, cultural resistance, and adaptation in the face of current economic and political pressures.

Keywords: Ukuthwasa; Sangoma; Spiritual Initiation; Xhosa; Zulu; Tradition and Modernity; South Africa; Anthropology of Religion.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa o ukuthwasa, prática espiritual e cultural dos povos Nguni da África do Sul, situando-o no contexto histórico da colonização, da marginalização da religiosidade africana e da imposição do cristianismo. A pesquisa combina etnografia participante, diálogo com praticantes e interpretação intercultural para compreender o processo de iniciação, que envolve o chamado ancestral (ubizo), rituais de purificação, aprendizado sobre ervas, sonhos e práticas comunitárias, resultando na formação de curandeiros tradicionais (sangomas e inyangas). O estudo destaca o caráter formativo e identitário do ukuthwasa, enfatizando seu papel como rito de passagem, como meio de transmissão de conhecimento ancestral e como prática de fortalecimento da coesão social. Também aborda os desafios contemporâneos, incluindo tensões entre tradição e modernidade, restrições legais e trabalhistas, estigmatização e a mercantilização do gado, que condiciona a realização de rituais e expõe desigualdades sociais. A análise evidencia o ukuthwasa como um processo complexo que articula espiritualidade, identidade, resistência cultural e adaptação diante das pressões econômicas e políticas atuais.

Palavras-chave: Ukuthwasa; Sangoma; Iniciação Espiritual; Xhosa; Zulu; Tradição e Modernidade; África do Sul; Antropologia da Religião.

Isifinyezo

Leli phepha licubungula ukuthwasa, umkhuba wokukhonza nenkolo yabantu bakwaNguni baseNingizimu Afrika, lubeka wona emlandweni wokubusa ngamakoloni, ukucindezelwa kwenkolo yasendulo yase-Afrika kanye nokuphoqeletwa kwenkolo yamaKrestu. Ucwangingo luhlanganisa ukuzibandakanya kwendabuko, izingxoxo nabakhonzeli kanye nencazelo yamasiko ahlukene ukuze kuqondwe inqubo yokuthomba, efaka phakathi ukubizwa amadlozi (ubizo), imikhuba yokuhlazwa, ukufunda ngezihlahla zokwelapha, amaphupho kanye nemikhuba yomphakathi, okuholela ekwenzeni izangoma nezinyanga. Ucwangingo lugqamisa ukuthi ukuthwasa kwakha umuntu ngokwenkolo nesiko, ligcizelela iqhaza lako njengomkhuba wokudlula ebukhosini, njengendlela yokudlulisa ulwazi lwendabuko kanye nomkhuba wokuqinisa ubumbano lomphakathi. Luphinde lubheke nezinselele zesimanje, okubalwa phakathi ukungqubuzana phakathi kwendabuko nesimanje, imikhawulo yomthetho neyabasebenzi, ukucwaswa kanye nokuthengiswa kwezinkomo okubangela ukuthi imikhuba ethile ingenziwi futhi kuveze ukungalingani emiphakathini. Ucwangingo luveza ukuthwasa njengenqubo eyinkimbinkimbi ehlanganisa inkolo, ubunikazi, ukumelana namasiko nokujwayela izinkinga zezomnotho nezipolitiko zanamuhla.

Amagama abalulekile: Ukuthwasa; iSangoma; Ukuthomba Kwenkolo; amaXhosa; amaZulu; iNkambiso NeSimanje; iNingizimu Afrika; i-Anthropology Yenkolo.

Introduction

South Africa was colonized by the Dutch and later by the British in 1652, who introduced and reinforced missionary education and Christianity as the predominant religion. Prior to the colonization and colonialism of Africa, particularly South Africa, Africans practiced African Indigenous Religion, centered on the veneration of ancestors (amadlozi / badimo) and belief in a supreme being known as Nkulunkulu, Modimo, or Umvelinqangi. Healing, rituals, and spirituality were facilitated by inyanga and/or Sangoma, and religion was central to daily life, including marriages, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, food preparation, and more. The spiritual was deeply intertwined with the physical realm of everyday existence.

However, with the onset of colonization and colonialism, the colonizers claimed that Africans had no religion. Christianity took hold, and Indigenous peoples began adopting Christianity as part of their religious practices. Thus began the process of marginalizing African Indigenous religious practices, suppressing and demonizing them. Those who practiced African spirituality were viewed as demonic or as practitioners of witchcraft. This not only attempted to forcibly abolish African spirituality and Indigenous religion but also marginalized, erased, and contributed to the erosion of African spiritual traditions. It further contributed to the fragmentation of Black South Africans, as some began to believe in and adopt Christianity, while others continued to practice African spirituality in secret.

Therefore, Ukuthwasa is much more than a training path for South African traditional healers, it is a spiritual journey deeply rooted in the worldview of the Nguni peoples, articulating ancestral knowledge, cultural identity, and community healing. This

article emerges from a unique encounter between two complementary perspectives, that of the participant observer, a Brazilian researcher immersed in initiation rituals during his doctoral studies in South Africa, and that of the cultural heir, a South African granddaughter of a Sangoma, bearer of a family legacy that informs and validates every interpretation presented here.

Together, we aim to unveil not only the ritual mechanisms of ukuthwasa but also its profound significance as a process of identity transformation and cultural resistance. From the ancestral call (ubizo), which imposes itself as an inexorable destiny, to the complex purification rituals and the social role of the healer, we analyze how this tradition perpetuates ways of knowing and being that challenge Western frameworks.

Furthermore, we confront the vitality of Ukuthwasa with the challenges of the contemporary world, where labor policies, prejudices, and colonial legacy continue to push these practices to the margins of social and legal recognition. This is not, therefore, merely an academic analysis; it is a dialogical testimony to the resilience of a knowledge system that continues to nurture the body and soul of entire communities.

Through a hybrid methodological approach, combining participant observation, dialogue with practitioners, and the authority of cultural heritage, we offer a multidimensional portrait of ukuthwasa, affirming it as an indispensable pillar of African spiritual heritage and a beacon of meaning in a rapidly changing world.

Methodological Pathways

The methodological architecture underpinning this work has been carefully woven from a plural and sensitive approach, one that acknowledges the complexity of Ukuthwasa as a deeply rooted spiritual, cultural, and social practice. A qualitative, interpretative, and phenomenologically oriented research design was chosen, prioritizing depth over breadth and understanding over mere description. Our approach is based on three fundamental axes, which interact dynamically and reflexively throughout the process.

First, observation and ethnographic immersion were central to the gathering of information that we would later transform into data. One of the authors of this work, during a sandwich doctorate period in South Africa, was integrated into a specific ritual context and directly experienced initiation ceremonies. This immersion, which lasted thirty days and continued thereafter, was not passive; on the contrary, it assumed a character of attentive and respectful participation, guided by a rigorous ethical protocol

that prioritized informed consent and absolute respect for the cultural and spiritual codes of the community. Everyone involved was aware and informed that they were engaging with a researcher, not merely a visitor. This experience allowed for privileged access to the sensory, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of ukuthwasa, capturing nuances from the aromas of medicinal herbs (muthi) to the cadence of songs (umgidi), from the intensity of purification rituals to the atmosphere of communion, which escape any attempt at a purely textual or detached analysis.

Second, the methodology was enriched by intensive dialogical and relational work. Open conversations and narratives were conducted with spiritual mentors (Gobela) and initiates (Ithwasana), as well as with key family and community figures. These interactions, which took place in an informal and contextual register, followed a logic of conversation, allowing meanings and interpretations to emerge naturally from the sharing of experiences. This ongoing dialogue functioned as a process of cross-validation and co-construction of meaning, where the researcher's perceptions were constantly confronted and refined by the explanations and frameworks offered by the practitioners themselves.

The third methodological pillar lies in the triangulation of knowledge and intercultural hermeneutics. The uniqueness of this investigation stems from the integration of two distinct positionalities, that of the external researcher, who brings the perspective of anthropology and analytical distance, and that of the internal co-author, a bearer of hereditary and community knowledge as a direct heir of this tradition, who also contributes her sociological expertise. This collaboration enabled an analysis that constantly navigated between the lived experience *in loco* and the interpretive authority of one who carries this knowledge in her own family history. Furthermore, the entire process was nourished by continuous review and dialogue with existing academic literature, from classics in ethnography to contemporary debates on post-colonialism and spirituality. This triangulation between field experience, ancestral knowledge, and theoretical frameworks helped us construct a robust interpretation.

It is important to emphasize, however, that the choice not to directly quote interlocutors, instead presenting a synthetic interpretive framework, stems from a conscious ethical and epistemological decision. The sacred and sometimes reserved nature of ancestral knowledge was thus respected, privileging the construction of an analytical narrative that honors the spirit of Ukuthwasa without exposing or instrumentalizing the individual voices that generously shared it.

Thus, having outlined the methodological pathways that guided this investigation,

we now delve into the core of our analysis, the journey of Ukuthwasa in its ritual, symbolic, and transformative depth. Building upon the experiential and dialogical foundation that guided us, the following topics unveil the intrinsic mechanisms of this spiritual practice, exploring from the inevitable ancestral call to the complex web of knowledge and rituals that forges not only a healer but also a new link between the community, nature, and the world of the ancestors.

O Ukuthwasa

Ukuthwasa, a spiritual practice rooted in the traditions of the Indigenous peoples of Southern Africa, transcends its definition as training for traditional healers (Sangomas or Inyangas). It represents a spiritual and identity-forming journey, anchored in the connection with ancestors and the preservation of community cohesion (Milsa 2019). Through rituals, symbols, and teachings, Ukuthwasa reaffirms the cultural and spiritual values that structure the relationship between the individual and their community, and it is also a response to the ancestral call that shapes the identity of those who experience it.

This process, which begins with the ancestral call (ubizo), is rich in symbolism and carries its own pedagogy. Marked by dreams, visions, and rituals interpreted by spiritual mentors (Gobela), Ukuthwasa combines practical learning with emotional and psychological transformation. More than a path to becoming a healer, it is a rite of passage that reconfigures and anchors the individual's relationship with their community and ancestry.

Throughout the training, initiates (Ithwasana) undergo phases that include the interpretation of spiritual signs, learning about different indigenous plants and herbs, consultation with mentors, purification practices, and the performance of complex rituals, such as communication with **abaphansi** (ancestors). These steps not only reinforce spiritual preparation but also promote a profound identity transformation. Thus, the process not only forms qualified healers but also spiritual leaders capable of promoting healing, guidance, and social stability within their communities.

Beyond its spiritual and cultural value, ukuthwasa faces challenges in the contemporary context. Conflicts between modern demands, the colonial legacy of religion, the time required for training, as well as issues related to the legal recognition of this practice, reflect the tensions between tradition and modernity. These challenges, however, do not diminish the importance of this practice as a pillar of cultural resistance and collective identity among the peoples of Southern Africa.

This text seeks to explore the dimensions of ukuthwasa, from its symbolic and

spiritual foundations to the challenges faced in the contemporary world. The analysis ranges from the ancestral call and the first steps of the initiate to the rituals and transformations that consolidate their identity as a traditional healer. By situating this practice within the cultural and social context of the Nguni peoples, this study highlights the vital role of Ukuthwasa in preserving traditions and constructing feelings of belonging and spirituality.

A Path of Spiritual Calling

Ukuthwasa is a spiritual and cultural practice deeply rooted in the traditions of the Nguni peoples, such as the Zulus, Xhosas, and Swatis, of South Africa. Lately, this tradition has expanded across different cultures throughout South Africa. More than training to become a traditional healer (Sangoma or Inyanga), Ukuthwasa represents a process of learning, identity formation, and connection with ancestors, playing a vital role in the physical and spiritual health of the community.

The initial process of Ukuthwasa is filled with symbolism, practices, and meanings that intertwine in a spiritual and pedagogical journey deeply rooted in Nguni traditions. In its initial phase, it can be understood through a detailed framework that articulates the ancestral call, the signs and visions, the search for guidance, the emotional and psychological preparations, as well as the rituals and practices that precede formal initiation.

The Ancestral Call (Ubizo)

Ukuthwasa begins with the recognition of a spiritual call from the ancestors (Abaphansi), known as **ubizo**. This call is considered an inevitable event, where the ancestors choose an individual to become a traditional healer (Inyanga or Sangoma). Bogopa (2014) emphasizes that this call is not a personal choice but a duty presented by ancestry so that the chosen one may serve the community and fulfill the role of spiritual mediator and healer. The signs of this call can range from recurring dreams and visions to physical symptoms unexplained by conventional medical diagnoses, such as persistent pain or a profound spiritual malaise. These events are understood as encoded messages from the ancestors, leading the individual to recognize their spiritual vocation and begin the journey of ukuthwasa. Mokgethi (2018) described these dreams as a "spiritual curriculum," guiding the steps the initiate must follow and the challenges they will encounter. Thus, the signs not only announce the call but also provide clear guidance on the training, practices, and knowledge the initiate must acquire.

Signs, Visions, and Interpretation

The initial indications of Ukuthwasa often manifest in the form of symbolic dreams, visions, and spiritual events. These signs can be confusing to the individual and require interpretation by an experienced healer (Gobela). Thus, the signs not only announce the call but also provide guidance on where and how the training process should occur. It is often said that the call would awaken the chosen person at night, and they would walk to the place of initiation, where they would find a Gobela who is ready to receive and teach (thwasisa) them what they need to know. Dreams and visions guide the initiates and function as a direct channel with the ancestors. Some initiates inherit the gift of ubungoma or ubunyanga through their deceased relatives who were Sangomas or Inyangas. They often refer to this as **ukushiya nezikhwama**, which can be loosely translated as 'being given the bag of bones'. These moments are crucial for interpreting the transmitted knowledge, as well as for guiding or initiating the practical application of their skills. These dreams, often considered prophetic, offer planned instructions regarding the next steps of the journey.

Seeking Guidance

After recognizing, acknowledging, and accepting the **ubizo**, the individual typically seeks guidance from a Gobela or from community members who have already undergone the ukuthwasa process. This search may include consultations with family members, spiritual leaders, or even trained healers. This moment is crucial, as the chosen mentor will play a central role in guiding the training and interpreting the ancestral messages. The choice of Gobela or training school (**ephehlweni**) must align with the nature of the ancestral call, as different schools have different specializations. Mokgethi (2018) emphasizes that the training not only prepares the initiate for their future role as a healer but also fosters a spiritual transformation that redefines their relationship with themselves and their community.

Psychological and Emotional Preparation

The Ukuthwasa journey requires the initiates, known as Ithwasana, to be emotionally and psychologically prepared. This preparation involves accepting the call and being willing to face the spiritual, physical, and social challenges that the training entails. Mokgethi (2018) stresses that this is a time of reflection, where the individual assesses their life, their personal challenges, and the transformative impact that Ukuthwasa will have on their identity and relationship with the community. Practices such as meditation, connection with nature, and purification rituals are often adopted to

strengthen the relationship with the ancestors and prepare the initiate's spirit. These steps are essential to ensure that the Ithwasana is ready to absorb the knowledge and practices transmitted during the training.

Purification and Consecration Rituals

The commencement of training is marked by purification rituals, which symbolize spiritual cleansing and preparation for the bond with the ancestors. Practices such as the use of goat skins (**ukungqwamba**) and beads (**ubuhlalo**) represent both a purification and the freedom of the initiated role. Fiona Simmons (2018) observes that these rituals not only reinforce ancestral identity but also express culture and status within the community.

Experiences

Many initiates begin exploring the foundations of traditional healing even before formal initiation. This learning may include reading texts, observing rituals, and participating in discussions with other practitioners. Although informal, this stage helps the initiate build a foundational understanding of the traditional healer's role and the expectations associated with ukuthwasa.

When I was young, I grew up watching my maternal grandmother practice **ubungoma**. She was a sangoma, and many people came to her for consultations. I remember entering her room where she had an **umsamo** (prayer area), and my siblings and I were not allowed to go near it. It was the most respected area of the house, and whenever we approached it, we had to remove our shoes. I remember the smell of **impepho** that she used to connect with the **amadlozi** (ancestors). I also recall a ceremony she organized. Although I do not remember the specific purpose of the ceremony, I vividly remember witnessing the slaughter of a goat, cooking, and seeing money placed alongside **umqombothi** (traditional beer) in the **umsamo**.

This embodied interaction and memory lead us to confront the practice of ukuthwasa, ubungoma, and African Indigenous spirituality in two ways. First, how modern interactions might view animal slaughter as barbaric and cruel. Second, it prompts me to think and reflect on how capitalism has always found a way to infiltrate our cultures, our traditions, and our most privileged spaces through subtle entanglements in everyday life.

With the rise of campaigns for animal protection, some form of pressure has been placed on slaughter practices as a means of ancestral veneration, as seen in discussions

that became more incisive in Brazil in 2018, when the Supreme Federal Court (STF) ruled that animal sacrifice was constitutional. For decades, Africans have slaughtered a cow, sheep, goat, or chicken as a way to negotiate good fortune with the **amadlozi** (Horsthemke 2015). This tradition is well-known and used intergenerationally. However, it has been scrutinized and labeled as "sacrifice" because it did not meet Western standards.

During **umgidi wokuthwasa** (Initiation Ceremony), several animals are slaughtered. This is done not only to feed the attendees but also as an offering to the ancestors. It is believed that the ancestors can also enjoy the slaughtered animal, though not in the physical sense as we would in the physical realm.

Furthermore, the commodification of livestock has left some individuals who wish to practice slaughter for ceremonies and celebrations unable to do so. I recall speaking with my mother recently when she wanted to perform **itiye labaphansi / amadlozi** (a small celebration for the ancestors). She intended to buy a goat, which would have cost between R2,300 and R14,000. She ultimately opted for two chickens, which cost her R200 each. Livestock prices are high and often make it difficult for the working class to afford them. This once again demonstrates how capitalism has infused itself with African culture, tradition, and religion, thereby controlling how culture, tradition, and religion are practiced.

The rising prices of livestock, which hold central symbolic density in many ritual contexts of ukuthwasa and ancestral celebrations, reveal the interpenetration between market economics and African religious practices. This demonstrates how the performance of rituals becomes mediated by the material conditions imposed by capitalism. The sacrifice of livestock, traditionally associated with prestige, spiritual recognition, and the power to communicate with ancestors, is increasingly restricted to those with greater purchasing power, while low-income workers resort to more affordable alternatives such as poultry. This ensures the continuity of the practice but implies symbolic reconfigurations and potential disputes over legitimacy. Although this substitution allows the rite to occur, it exposes a forced adaptation due to market logic, wherein capital interferes with the intensity, form, and social recognition of spiritual practice. Anthropologically, it is observed that tradition does not remain static but is tensioned by the need for reinterpretation in the face of concrete economic constraints. Sociologically, it evidences a process of stratification where the ability to offer an animal of higher value differentiates groups and individuals both socially and religiously,

creating hierarchies within the very experience of the sacred. In this sense, ritual practice becomes a space where both the persistence of religiosity and the effects of commodification, which condition the possibilities of its execution, are revealed.

Community and Spiritual Connection

Prior to initiation, the Ithwasana is also encouraged to interact with others who share the same journey. This interaction fosters a sense of community and mutual support, which is essential for navigating the uncertainties and challenges of the process. Furthermore, pre-initiation rituals reinforce the initiate's spiritual connection with their ancestors, establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent stages of the journey. Throughout the process, the Ithwasana is evaluated both individually and in relation to their family and community. These assessments help define the role they will fulfill as a healer and strengthen their connection to the values and expectations of their community. Some evaluations involve assisting individuals present for consultations. Interaction with other initiates cultivates a sense of belonging, promoting mutual support in navigating the uncertainties and challenges of the training.

Purification and Consecration Rituals

Finally, the initial process is marked by purification rituals, sacrifices, and other spiritual practices that prepare the initiate for training. These rituals aim to eliminate any spiritual impurities and strengthen the bond with the ancestors. During these times, the Ithwasana are guided by their Gobela, who ensures that each step is performed in accordance with ancestral requirements. It is customary for a goat or cow to be slaughtered during this purification ceremony. The initiate is then expected to bathe in water containing the bile of the slaughtered animal.

Ancestral Call and Beginning of the Journey

As noted by David Bogopa (2014), Ukuthwasa is not a personal choice but an "ancestral call" received through dreams, visions, or spiritual signs. These signs indicate that the individual has been chosen to serve as a healer, a role essential for the well-being of the community and the preservation of cultural traditions. The likelihood of receiving such a call is higher if a family member was a traditional healer.

The process begins when the person acknowledges the call (ubizo). This stage is crucial, as it is believed that neglecting the call can lead to unexplained illnesses, misfortune, and isolation. Healing and spiritual alignment commence only when the individual accepts and begins training under the guidance of a Gobela (spiritual mentor)

at a training school known as ephehlweni. This environment provides the theoretical and practical foundations for learning traditional healing, including the use of medicinal herbs and the performance of rituals.

The Ukuthwasa Curriculum - Dreams, Rituals, and Ancestral Wisdom

Ukuthwasa is structured by a unique curriculum, guided by the dreams and spiritual instructions received by the initiates (Ithwasana). As Mokgethi (2018) asserts, dreams function as a channel of communication between the initiate and their ancestors (abaphansi), establishing the necessary steps for their formation. These dreams are shared with the Gobela, who interprets them and assists the initiate in following the ancestral guidelines. For example, a dream involving large bodies of water, such as rivers and oceans, would often be interpreted as the ithwasana having a calling from the water deities and therefore needing to perform spiritual work near a river or ocean.

Rituals play a central role, marking the transitions and progress of the initiate. Among these are purification, the use of herbs (muthi), singing and dancing (umgidi), which reinforce spiritual connection and promote social cohesion. Through these practices, Ithwasana develops practical skills, such as spiritual diagnostics and treatment of illnesses, and learns to connect with nature and the spiritual world.

It is also a rite of passage, transforming the individual from one who is called to a spiritual leader. According to Mokgethi (2018), this process can be understood as a critical pedagogy, in which learning is deeply interactive and based on the exchange of knowledge between the initiate and the mentor. This approach reflects Paulo Freire's ideas on critical consciousness, where learning is both a practice of liberation and a formation of individual identity.

Furthermore, it also promotes social cohesion by strengthening community bonds. Healers are often sought not only for physical healing but also for spiritual mediation and conflict resolution, assuming a leadership role within the community. This reflects the integration between the individual and the collective, highlighting the cultural and social relevance of the process.

Despite its importance, Ukuthwasa faces significant challenges in contemporary contexts. In work and school environments, for example, leave policies often do not accommodate the time required to complete the process, leading many to conflicts with employers. Additionally, rigid dress codes frequently prevent ithwasa from wearing headscarves, beads, and isiphandla (a bracelet made from goat skin). Although the South African Constitution guarantees cultural freedom, the practical implementation of this

recognition remains limited, as pointed out by Bogopa (2014).

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Is an emerging scholar and social researcher with a passion for understanding underexplored social phenomena. My curiosity for research began at a young age, constantly searching and learning about different topics. I hold an undergraduate degree in Psychology, which has shaped my understanding of individuals and deepened my desire to help others. My Honours degree in Sociology opened the door to academic research, reigniting my passion for exploring what shapes our social world. I recently completed my Master's degree in Sociology, which further fuelled my love for research and sparked a keen interest in addressing issues that are often overlooked or underexplored. For my Master's research, I focused on father involvement—an issue I'm deeply passionate about, particularly in understanding fatherhood and family dynamics within South African townships. Beyond academics, I have co-authored opinion editorials on pressing societal issues in South Africa, including gender-based violence, Eskom, and the challenges within the Home Affairs system. As I look ahead, I'm excited to embark on my PhD journey, where I hope to produce impactful research focused on the township family and its unique dynamics.

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