

NOEL CHABANI MANGANYI

Professor Noel Chabani Manganyi has had a distinguished career in psychology, education and government. He is also a much-published author.

Professor Manganyi was born in the district of Louis Trichardt and, after his schooling, studied at the University of South Africa where he completed a BA in 1962 and received an Honours degree in Psychology in 1964, an MA in 1968 and a DLitt et Phil in Psychology in 1970. His doctoral thesis was on 'Body Image in Paraplegia'.

As part of his doctoral requirements he held an internship in clinical psychology at Baragwanath Hospital and, in 1970, he was appointed as a clinical psychologist there, a post he occupied for three years until he left to take up a post-doctoral fellowship at Yale, where he was attached to the School of Medicine from 1973 to 1975. He began publishing in the early 1970s.

In 1976 Professor Manganyi took up a professorship at the University of Transkei, where he established the Department of Psychology and served as its first chair. In 1980 he was appointed Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Professor at Wits' African Studies Institute. This was to be his home for ten years and the place where he produced two of his most important works and laid the foundation for his subsequent research. He also continued his clinical practice part time and spent 1985 back at Yale as a Visiting Fellow.

In 1990 he became Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the North. In 1993-1994 he was Executive Director of the Private Sector Initiative Joint Education Trust. When a fully democratic government was established in South Africa in 1994 Manganyi stepped into the office of Director General in the Department of Education, a position he held until 1999, when he became Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Pretoria. In 2003 he was appointed Vice-Principal of UP, an office he held until March 2006. He is currently a Council Professor at UP. He also serves on the Board of Wits University Press.

In the 1970s and early 1980s he published a series of monographs, the first of which was *Being-black-in-the-world* (1973), the last *Looking Through the Keyhole* (1981). In these works Manganyi examined incisively the effects of institutionalised racism on the internal worlds and external realities of South Africans. To this end, he explored a range of group and individual responses to the forms of institutionalised racism that characterised South Africa at the time, including alienation, distorted relations with the body, and the quest for freedom.

Central to these texts, too, was a concern with issues of identity development in oppressive social contexts such as apartheid South Africa. These early works were the first serious attempts by a South African psychologist to engage with the interface between the individual and society in the context of systematically asymmetrical relations of power and they were welcomed by many who were searching for a psychology better able to make sense of the internal and more explicitly social realities of the majority of South Africans. Significantly, too, the texts identified a number of critical imperatives for a more generative South African psychology. Arguably the most important of these was Manganyi's appeal, in *Being-black-in-the-world* and *Looking Through the Keyhole*, that mental health services be made more appropriate and accessible to all South Africans; a call that is still pertinent today.

Manganyi's examination of the effects of violence on individuals and groups, particularly in *Mashangu's Reverie*, published in 1977, in which he explores the place of the Black Consciousness Movement as the antithesis of the dominant and racist culture, is widely considered to be seminal in the field of psychology. The exploration of the phenomenon of violence is reprised and elaborated in his more recent publications. Manganyi's oeuvre has made a substantial contribution to South African psychology, a contribution which has still to be fully acknowledged.

When an in-depth history of the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s is written there is no doubt that Prof Chabani Manganyi will be seen as a significant participant and one of the few who, before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, took seriously the psychological effects of institutionalised racism, effects that still afflict our society profoundly.

The concept of identity creation and retrieval, the theme of *Mashangu's Reverie*, in part led to the second phase of Professor Manganyi's literary production, involving history and biography. Biography is, after all, as he has suggested, the 'stock-in-trade of a clinical psychologist' in the 'study and reconstruction of lives both in health and disease'. The first life he chose to study and write about was that of one of South Africa's best-known authors. In 1983 he published *Exiles and Homecomings: A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*. This was followed, a year later, by a second book, *Bury me at the Marketplace*, which was a selection of Mphahlele's letters written between 1943 and 1980.

Not only is the psychobiography of Mphahlele a model of captivating research and thoroughness, it is also a fascinating experiment in first-person narrative, and therefore something of a creative work in its own right.

The third phase of Chabani Manganyi's intellectual life, pursued while holding key offices in universities and government, involved a study of the painter Gerard Sekoto. When he started his research the artist was relatively unknown, now Sekoto's paintings are amongst the most sought-after in South Africa. In 1996 he published *A Black Man Called Sekoto* and in 2004 *Gerard Sekoto: I am an African*, hugely impressive studies.

In the best Wits intellectual tradition Noel Chabani Manganyi has achieved enormous output while remaining unassuming. The University, therefore, considers it fitting to award him its highest honour.