

Celebrating  
the life and work of



# Prof Charles NGWENYA

Date: 6 February 2025 | Time: 11:00 – 13:00 SAST

Venue: Chapel, Hatfield Campus, UP



Centre for  
Human Rights  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

# Programme

**Programme Director:**  
**Dr Dianah Msipa**  
*Centre for Human Rights, UP*

**Reading**

**Lloyd Kuveya**  
*Assistant Director, Centre for Human Rights, UP*

**Singing of hymn (Amazing Grace)(all)**

**Family member**  
**Sekuru Molai**

**Tribute**

**Prof Andre Boraine**  
*Former Dean, on behalf of the Dean Faculty of Law, UP*

**Prof Nkatha Murungi**  
*Acting Director, Centre for Human Rights, UP*

**Prof Kate O'Regan**  
*Director, Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, University of Oxford  
(via ZOOM)*

**Dr Mindy Roseman**  
*Director, International Law Programs, Director, Gruber  
Program for Global Justice and Women's Rights, Yale Law School, USA;  
and*

**Prof Ali Miller**  
*Co-director of the Global Health Justice Partnership, Yale Law School  
(recording)*

**Prof Serges Kamga**  
*Dean, Faculty of Law, University of the Free State*

**Prof Rebecca Cook**  
*University of Toronto (recording)*

**Prof Ebenezer Durojaye**  
*Centre for Human Rights, UP*

**Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng**  
*UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the  
enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (via ZOOM)*

**Prof Frans Viljoen**  
*Centre for Human Rights, UP*

**Dr Satang Nabaneng**  
*Centre for Human Rights, University of Dayton, USA (via ZOOM)*

**Singing of hymn**  
**led by Charles family choir**

**A letter to Grandpa**  
**Owami & Nkanyezi**

**Eulogy**  
**Khosi, Gideon, Claudia**

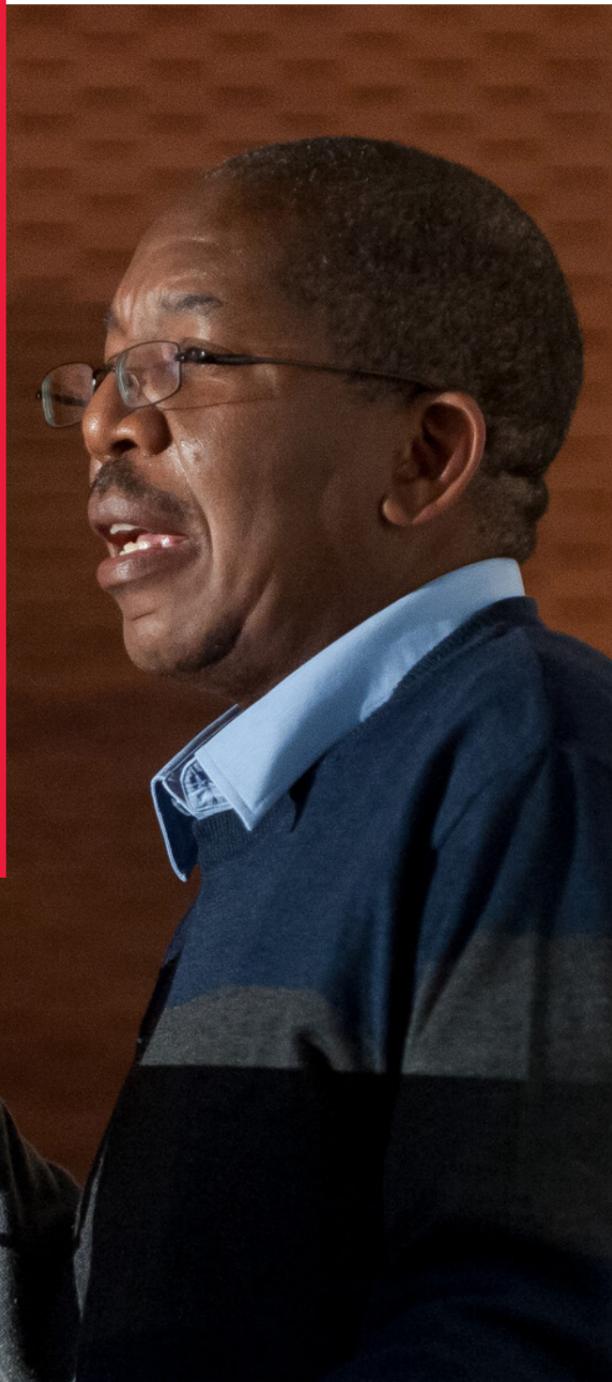
**The Blessing**  
**Prof Graham Duncan**

**Closing hymn (Abide with me) (all)**

Our ethical  
responsibility to  
Africanness is not to  
deny agency but instead  
to keep the door open  
for social reflexivity  
and ever-transforming  
Africanness.

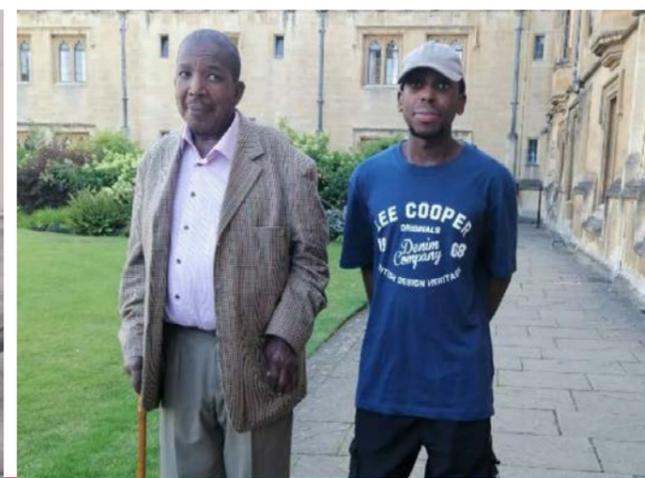
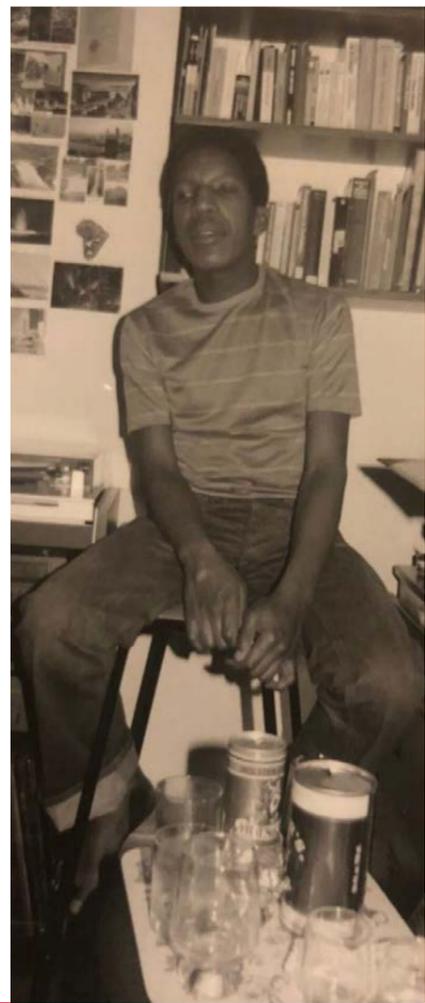
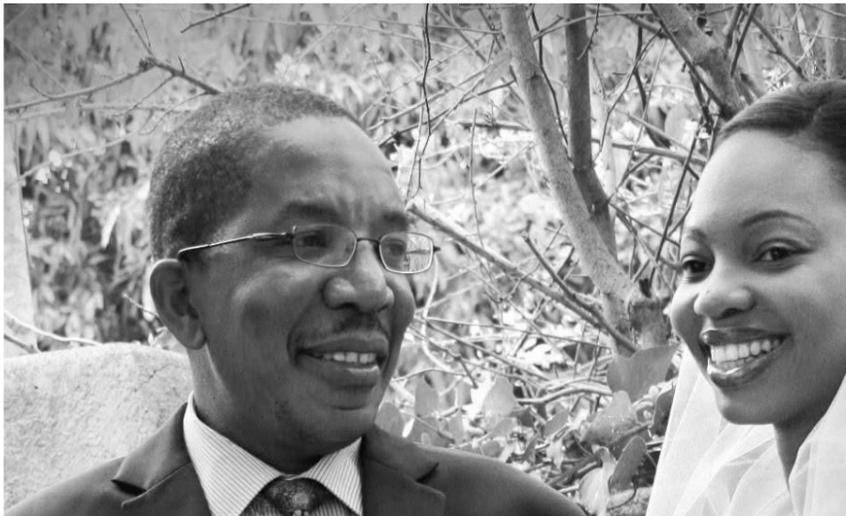
-Prof Charles Ngwena

*What is Africanness? Contesting  
nativism in race, culture and  
sexualities (2018)*



**SCAN TO  
DOWNLOAD**

*What is Africanness?  
Contesting nativism  
in race, culture and  
sexualities (2018)*



# Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch; like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

The Lord hath promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

# Abide with me

Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings;  
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings:  
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea;  
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour:  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless:  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness:  
Where is death's sting? where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

# Prof Charles NGWENA

*A stalwart  
has bowed out*

**T**he Centre for Human Rights is saddened to announce the death of our own, Professor Charles Ngwena. Prof. Ngwena passed away in Pretoria on the 31st of January 2025.

Prof. Ngwena (fondly known to us as 'Charles') was a towering intellectual, academic, an astute scholar, and a wonderful colleague by any measure. His death is a deep loss to the human rights field, especially in the fields of sexual and reproductive, as well as disability rights.

Prof. Ngwena joined the Centre for Human Rights in 2012 from the University of the Free State where he had worked as a Professor of Law for many years. Since he joined the Centre, and he led the development of the Centre's academic and programmatic work in the areas of disability, and sexual and reproductive rights. Through his intellectual leadership, the Centre launched the Masters in Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Africa, and the Disability Rights in Africa Programmes. Since 2023, he has been with the Centre on a post-retirement contract. On 13 and 14 November 2023, the Centre brought together over 50 scholars, researchers and activists from all over the world to commemorate his exceptional contributions to human rights and to highlight his pioneering work in advancing SRHR in Africa.

These academic programmes that Charles initiated have been transformative for human rights efforts in Africa, yielding a new generation of advocates for SRHR and Disability Rights, and amplifying Africa's voice in the global human rights discourse. Charles has been a pillar resource for the programmes, serving both as a faculty member, but also a valuable guide and mentor for those who have come after to support the work.

Charles' extensive research and publication are ground breaking, and an unmatched contribution to scholarship and knowledge. He added his unique voice to debates on contentious topics of contemporary concern such as the right to abortion,

access to gender-affirming care and the intersectional between various rights. His recent 2018 monograph titled "What is Africanness? Contesting nativism and race, culture and sexualities" published in 2018 was awarded the University of Pretoria Vice Chancellor's Award for Scholarly Books. His expertise was global, and recognised across the world. Most recently, Charles was a Research Scholar for 2022 - 2024 at the Gruber Program for Global Justice and Women's Rights at Yale University. He was also the Convening Editor of the Disability Rights in Africa Yearbook, published by the Pretoria University Law Press.

Until his death, Charles was a supervisor for a number masters and doctoral students, as well as postdoctoral fellows at the Centre. He was also actively engaged in numerous other initiatives in the Centre, including our work on race and common citizenships, and support to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health.

Charles was a gentleman, in manner and form. He gave his time and wisdom without reservation. He valued everyone equally. He loved his family dearly. He will be sorely missed.

As we continue mourn this loss, we also extend our deepest condolences to his wife Patricia, and his whole family that he so dearly loved, friends, colleagues, and students the world over.

# May his soul rest in eternal peace!