



## WHY A NATIONAL UBUNTU DAY?

### Vision:

*A South-Africa with wonderful new possibilities and life transformed into an exquisite celebration of existence that humanity has forever long for it to be: free of racism, violence, crime, intolerance, dishonesty, and poverty. Happy people, free from selfishness and greed, in genuine community, who know who they really are; realizing the miracle of every moment. A South-Africa in which we live together as one human and cosmic family.*

Looking at society, the world out there, and then at the individual, we realize that even though we have reached astonishing technological heights and capabilities, we have not yet managed to live in love and peace with ourselves, others, and the environment. There is no doubt that we continue to destroy ourselves, others and nature. And we are mostly unconscious of this, and/or we think it is the responsibility of another to put things right. The time has come for humanity to wake up and to create a new world, one by one.

Here in South-Africa the desire for Ubuntu to be awakened is expressed on a daily basis by those who have come to know its true value. How Ubuntu makes an impact is portrayed in many stories and documentaries, projects and initiatives, and countless books have been written about it. More and more Ubuntu organisations are established. It is applied in many fields, including business, health, education, spirituality, and others. It is said to be the 'national philosophy of South-Africa,' and it is the core focus of the National Heritage Council. Many see it as the answer to humanity's surmounting and continuing problems, and many are dreaming of how this idea can contribute to the developing and globalizing world.

The time has come for Ubuntu to be recognized for ALL that it is, and to be awakened so that at last we see it making a tangible difference that it most definitely can.

**A National Ubuntu Day is also our first step towards taking Ubuntu global as we become the first country to declare a Oneness Day in support of a call to the United Nations for a global Oneness Day to be declared.**

### **How does Ubuntu Day help us solve our problems and create a better South-Africa and world?**

Ubuntu affirms: inter-connectedness, inter-relatedness, and inter-connection. It is about, unity, wholeness, comprehensiveness and universality, and it is beginning to resonate with people all over the world. Ubuntu encourages: reconciliation, mutual respect, forgiveness, compassion and justice. Ubuntu is our ancient spirituality and wisdom. Ubuntu is love in action. Ubuntu is universal and therefore found and expressed in all cultures.

**1. A shift from separateness to oneness. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu. I am because we are. We are all one.**

Through Ubuntu, everything hangs together in an inter-related, inter-dependent, and inter-connected whole. Nothing stands alone and everything exists because of something else. What is done to one is done to the other. **Ubuntu calls for the consideration of ‘the other’ through an open and expansive view on life.**

Even though we have been freed from Colonialism and Apartheid, it is clear that our wounds have not healed and that apartheid and many other manifestations of separateness are still alive and well. Racism and xenophobia are only two of the myriad examples of our ignorance of our common existence and destiny. This sense of separateness, away from thinking of life as an integrated whole, has been coming for thousands of years when we began to rely more and more on reason and observation, measurement, analysis and logic to explain the world, and using rational arguments to promote our views.

An ever-growing diversity of thought, culture, experience, beliefs, expression, and points of views that are often complex and contradictory; even irreconcilable, forces us to find common answers for our growing problems.

Ubuntu is not about sameness and about conformity, but rather a call for an attitude of openness, inclusion, expansion, cooperation, and understanding, amongst all people. It creates a space where differences of culture, religion, and conviction, can find common ground and co-exist through compassion, friendship, civility, hospitality, and especially love. And it forces us to let go of prejudice and fear of the unfamiliar.

***Ubuntu Day is an opportunity to focus on our issues of separateness such as racism, xenophobia, exclusivism, classism, gender-issues such as gay/lesbian rights, chauvinism, and patriarchy, freedom of choice of religion, minority rights, etc. etc. It is an opportunity to reflect on how we view ourselves and others and how this has an effect on all of life. And whilst our uniqueness is never known without knowing what it is that sets us apart, this day is also an opportunity to celebrate our diversity! It is an opportunity to celebrate the many colors that make our rainbow, to come together as one, and to focus on values such as unity, forgiveness, compassion, cooperation, collaboration, and co-creation. Ubuntu encourages us to instead of trying to figure out what is right and what is true, to rather seek to establish what works.***

**2. Ubuntu is the cornerstone of community,** where the needs of the one are the needs of many, and where the expression and enjoyment of unique individual gifts and talents is nurtured always in the interest of the flourishing of the whole community. **Ubuntu affirms the family as the nucleus of society,** and reminds us that its wellness and wholeness has an effect on the entire community.

In terms of Ubuntu a person does not represent himself but his/her entire family. And the individual's well-being (including all aspects of life such as health, wealth, success, interests, etc.) depends on that of his/her family members/community.

According to Ubuntu, an individual's status is bound up by that of his broader community, and this community includes those who have come before us (our ancestors). Through Ubuntu, everyone is recognized and respected. Ubuntu communalism focuses on the establishment and maintenance of relationships between people where values such as unity, responsibility, consensus, collaboration, sharing and caring play a big role.

**Humanity has a deep yearning to connect with and to relate to others**, whilst the individual retains his/her own identity and sense of uniqueness. Oneness is the one idea that makes it possible for humanity to enjoy both because not only does it remind us that we have lots in common, but it also very importantly tells us that we are all indeed unique and different. Ubuntu/oneness admits and celebrates both. It reminds us that polarity most definitely serves a purpose. It reminds humanity that everything in life has an opposite and is defined by its opposite. It is through 'the other' that we discover who we are.

***Ubuntu Day is an opportunity to shine the light on the wellness of our families and communities and to attend to the caring of our elderly, our children, the sick, the needy, and our environment, etc., in practical ways. It is an opportunity to make our fellow citizens feel respected, accepted and loved whilst engendering a deep sense of belonging that leads to a rich and meaningful life for all. On this day we embrace 'loving one another,' not because we should, but because we are parts of each other; part of a big global family.***

- 3. Ubuntu refers to the ongoingness and depth of life** which calls for the respect of those who have come before, and for taking responsibility for what we leave behind. It speaks to our human potential; where we come from and where we are going, how we define ourselves and what our purpose in life is. **This cosmic experience is referred to as Umthetho (The Law); reaching heights of excellence and one's full potential. Ubuntu is a holistic approach.**

***Ubuntu day is an opportunity for us to consider and respect the role of those who have come before us. It is also a powerful reminder that we too are ancestors in the making... and because we are inevitably leaving our imprints, we should be mindful of our thoughts and actions. Ubuntu day is an opportunity to consider the meaning and purpose of our own lives and to become the grandest version of the greatest vision we have ever held about who we are. This aspect also impacts on nature, and therefore, Ubuntu day is also an opportunity to consider where our daily food comes from and to respect nature that continues to provide.***

- 4. Ubuntu has a deep spiritual component.** The African root-word 'ntu' refers to the nameless beingness, godliness and oneness; to that which goes beyond. Umuntu stands for "God-man", with god and man belonging together and every man an expression of godliness. It is about treating one-another as such. It is in this sense that the Gandhian slogan; *Be the change you*

*wish to see in the world*, comes into play. Through this idea we come to realize that it only takes ONE person, thought, and action, to make a change. You are the one.

Ubuntu highlights our forgotten and more flexible indigenous wisdoms and is an inspiration to make them alive. These wisdoms, in contrast to a fundamentalistic and a literalist view on life which is usually driven by fear, realizes our common heritage of oneness and follows a holistic approach to the world and to existence. It permeates all aspects of life and penetrates all institutions. The people of our country are awakened to our ancient spirituality through which everyday life was always intimately intertwined with man's relationship with himself, his community, the cosmos, and Spirit. We are reminded that our very existence and spirituality is the same thing, and that religion, according to our indigenous wisdoms is not something out-there or other-worldly.

This spirituality that was once regarded as uncivilized and evil by the early missionaries who came to Africa to civilize and evangelize its people, and to negate our customs, history, identity, and traditional religious practice as a prerequisite for the new 'civil religion' regains its place and positive influence in society.

More than including all the religions and philosophies of the world, this worldview encourages an **open enquiry** into all of the current sacred teachings of the world; making its wisdom even more relevant to our present day and time.

And since religion is about our beliefs and perceptions about God, life and ourselves, Ubuntu which refuses to be placed in a box, offers the opportunity for us to challenge our beliefs and perceptions, and to discover that it is possible to re-write our story, re-claim our power, and to create a new world for ourselves and for everyone.

***Ubuntu day is an opportunity to challenge our beliefs and perceptions and to consider our 'beingness:' how we are as human beings. It is an opportunity for each and every individual to consider how he/she may instead of waiting for another, take personal responsibility for that which he/she would like to see changed. It is an opportunity for each and every person to reclaim their power and to realize that all change starts within. The world changes when each person does his/her bit and best. Ubuntu day is a wonderful opportunity to consider how personal transformation leads to social transformation, and how a personal renaissance leads to an African Renaissance.***

- 5. Ubuntu is a practical tool, applied in every-day life in all spheres of society.** It guides how we view our self, how we treat and what we teach our children, how we treat our parents and the elderly, how we do business, how we govern and lead, how we treat the environment and our own bodies, etc. etc.

**Humanity has a civil responsibility** and Ubuntu awakens, inspires, and supports this idea whilst it redefines the relationship between the individual and the collective. Humanity realizes more and more that social transformation happens through personal transformation and that we have to be the change we wish to see in the world. We come to realize that everything begins and ends with one.

Up to now, the idea of Ubuntu has mostly been lip-serviced. It is called for from many podiums and through many speeches, it is written about in many books and articles, it is the name of many a new business and part of many personal signatures. More and more Ubuntu organisations are being established. Yet – we have to come to the point in time where we begin to see Ubuntu making tangible differences in all spheres of life;

**Arts, Culture & Sports; Nature & the Environment; Mental Health, Personal Transformation & Relationships; Business & Economics, Science; Biology & Technology; Communication, Dialogue & the Media; Learning & Education; Social Welfare; Food, Energy & Water** (focusing on these as the resources that support human life); **Religion/Spirituality; Health & Wellness.**

*Ubuntu day is a wonderful opportunity to go out and make a practical and tangible difference: To do something special for the elderly, to raise funds for a favorite cause, to take care of our children, to do something for the sick, poor, disabled.... to bring **YOUR** gifts, talents and resources that will make things easier. It is an opportunity to share and show that you care. Ubuntu is Spirit/love in action, and therefore this day is marked by a lot of energy and activity.*

6. **Ubuntu refers to our cosmic connection**, and calls for the respect for nature and all of its **elements**; earth, air, fire, water, and energy/Spirit. It reminds us of the rhythm and cycles of life and the value of **ritual** and **sacred** space.

Early humans were dependent on their environment and were perfectly integrated with it. Their lives were regulated by the seasons and they were utterly dependent on the earth and the cosmos. Their connection with their environment helped them to connect with their inner wisdom and the natural rhythms of life. All aspects of earth and the universe were seen as sacred.

Because of urbanization and industrialization, humanity has lost touch with nature and this gift. We are hardly aware of the deeper cycles of life and the natural rhythm of the cosmos.

Since the beginning of time humans have been inclined to connect with natural phenomena, and traditionally people used to engage with the **elements** and came to understand their values and the interplay between them. They projected the characteristics of the elements onto their every-day lives and they applied their knowledge about them as a tool for self-reflection.

**Ritual** too has always been a way for humans to impose some order on their lives; it accounts for the birth of humanity and the creation of our universe, and it represents the cyclic rhythm of creation and destruction, with the world emerging out of chaos and eventually returning to it. In ancient times, ritual was an attempt to soothe, if not control, the forces that were perceived to be life-threatening.

More and more, as a result of our hectic life styles and urbanized living, humans experience increasing difficulty to find space where one can be still, to reflect and to heal like our

forefathers used to do. It has become more and more important that we value and create such (sacred) **space** for ourselves; a space of peace and quiet where we can meditate, contemplate; simply be. A place where we can find direction, peace, a sense of belonging, and where we can restore our connection with our inner wisdom and the Universe.

*Ubuntu day is an opportunity to re-connect with the cosmos and to revive our engagement with the elements, earth, air, fire, water, and spirit. It is an opportunity to discover and to find ways to create sacred space in our environment where we may gain a deeper understanding of our own character and our place in the universe. Ubuntu day is an opportunity to perform a ceremony (ritual) of a kind to strengthen the bond with one self and society, to get together with some friends, to show respect, saying out loud what one is grateful for, and what one intends.*

- 7. Ubuntu is rooted in the ancient Egyptian Ma'at principles that support indigenous basic values of humanness, compassion, fellow-feeling, caring and sharing, and others.** These values are who we are at the core of our being and are waiting to be expressed for the greater good of all.

Unfortunately, as we have come to learn, simply speaking about or knowing about values is not enough. For values to make a change one needs to understand it, be able to feel it, be emotionally committed to it, and one has to act/live the values. This allows one to experience discomfort when one behaves without it and when one sees others suffering as a result of the absence of it. It is essential that the head, heart, and hand is involved. Good character is the habit of knowing the good, desiring the good, and the habit of doing good.

Universal values transcend time, space, and culture, and they inform and direct our behaviour. They build character, which produces behaviour that is beneficial for the individual, others, and the community, and they enhance the wellbeing of all, prevent harm to both the individual and society, are the essence of healthy relationships, and are essential for the conduct and preservation of a democratic society. These include, but are not limited to, eight cornerstone values:

Compassion  
Gratitude  
Honesty and truthfulness  
Forgiveness  
Respect  
Courage  
Responsibility  
Generosity

The teaching of these and other values by parents and schools, is essential if communities are to restore and advance their social cohesion.

***Ubuntu day is an opportunity to re-consider our innate values and to focus more and more on how we may live them as an expression of who we are in our every-day lives; at home, in school, college/varsity, our communities, politics, law, economics... in all spheres of life. Ubuntu calls us to take pride and interest in our ancient history.***

- 8. Humanity's world is increasingly becoming more radical, violent and extreme.** We face many problems such as the continuing nuclear threat, predatory big business, rampant aids, political small-mindedness, religious bigotry, dire poverty, environmental catastrophe, insane wars, endemic stress, existential meaninglessness, divisive nationalism. These are combined with our increasing technical abilities through which our world is 'shrinking' and things happen at a greater speed and ease.

At this juncture in human history, urgent global crises challenge us all to learn to live sustainably, in harmony and gratitude with one another and with the living universe. The changes required of humanity are broad, deep, and far reaching. Only by acting swiftly and creatively can we birth a planetary culture that will bring well-being to every form of life in the Earth community.

These issues also have an influence on South-Africa.

***Ubuntu day is an opportunity to be mindful of how we re-act to violence, hurt, and injustice, and to help the world to respond differently and anew when the unfortunate opportunity presents itself.***

- 9. South-Africa (and the world) potentially stands at the threshold of a positive new era** in the unfolding evolution of our consciousness. A compelling new story of our potential as a whole human species is emerging: a story of collaboration, citizen action, dialogue, and new understandings propelled by unprecedented levels of democratic freedom, multicultural exchange, and access to communication technologies. It is nothing less than the story of our collective evolution towards conscious unity.

This moment has been a long time coming and we should embrace it wholeheartedly. It is the moment when humanity's crises are a birth of a new consciousness. This notion is expressed by a number of respected local and global thought leaders.

Through the consciousness of Ubuntu (oneness; the inter-relatedness, connectedness, and dependence of everything) one realizes how the different spheres and aspects of life impact on one another. Through the consciousness of Ubuntu we come to love, respect, and honor all of life. Ubuntu clearly speaks to the 'other', and as such – we can no longer say: "I do not recognize you." Everything must be considered and respected. This means: the other person, culture, religion, opinion, situation, context, needs, rights, etc. etc.

It is this respect and consideration for self and the other, together with a life lived as an expression of one's highest beliefs and values (referred to as Ubuntu values), that boundaries dissolve and wounds heal.

Our local issues of continuing racism, political intolerance, poor service delivery, poor leadership, violence, fraud and corruption, poverty, disrespect for nature and the environment, climate change, health and wellness, cultural difference, xenophobia, human rights, what we teach our children about God and about Life, are all addressed in another light through the spirit of Ubuntu (the golden rule of life.)

***Ubuntu day is an opportunity for us to consider this emerging consciousness and to make it ever more alive.***

## **10. Ever growing role of science and technology on the world.**

Because of the unique times we now find ourselves in, our boundaries are becoming less defined and our oneness is being experienced with a new level of clarity and urgency. New, awesome, and transformational perspectives on our inter-dependent, inter-related, and inter-connected existence are emerging through natural sciences such as mathematics, science and technology, physics, biology, economics and ecology.

This is especially evident in the virtual world we are becoming, and the idea of our 'oneness' is right now being exchanged and discussed by millions of web-users all over the world. The world we have created has become a global network and a space where humanity finds common ground across different histories, interests, languages and nationalities.

We know for a fact for example that pollution in Siberia can cause deserts in Africa, that trees communicate with one-another, that political decisions in one country bring death and destruction to countries on the other side of the world, and that dogmatic religion in one part of the world can bring tragedy in another. The recent economic meltdown speaks for itself. As a matter of fact, it has become possible to explain/illustrate how this idea makes a huge difference in all spheres of life, ranging from Nature and the Environment, Economics, Politics and Governance, Health, Education, right through to Spirituality.

***Ubuntu supports the now scientifically accepted fact that the universe is one inter-connected, inter-dependant and inter-related whole which defies our common sense idea that things are separated by time and space and which shows how quantum particles in one part of our cosmos commune with other particles vast distances away. As such the ancient science of Ubuntu can be revisited and highlighted for its contribution to society in these fields.***

**11. Humanity shares a common destiny.** We therefore can no longer avoid/deny/ignore another's problems. We ultimately need to understand that we share each other's problems and that we are responsible for co-creating a country and a world that works for all. No longer does it work for the strong to dominate the weak and for those with wealth to find manners of

justification for privileges in the face of poverty and injustice. Through Ubuntu, 'for the greater good of all' replaces self-interest.

**- Human beings need each other to survive on this planet.** Ubuntu helps us to recognize that we are all in this together and that community flourishes as we learn about each other, work, and struggle together.

It has become impossible for one person, religion, or nation to do it all alone. In order to survive, humanity has to find common answer to life's challenges and we must do so together, and the time is now.

**On Ubuntu day and beyond, 'for the greater good' replaces self-interest.**

**12. South-Africa is regarded as the cradle of mankind, and with this being so, it may be no coincidence that we will be the world leaders in establishing a national Ubuntu (global oneness day).**

The very fact that we are recognized to be the cradle of mankind places tremendous responsibility on us. If we have been here the longest, how can we show the way? How far back are we willing to go to discover and celebrate who we really are?

"It was also among the ancient kingdoms of Africa that we find the earliest examples of abstract human thought. Many African writings which have recently come to light have been recognized internationally as outstanding examples of scholarship in the sciences, astrology, medicine, speculative thought and theology. These fragile words that have immeasurable value as records of our achievements, and convey a host of intangible values interwoven into a rich tapestry of custom and tradition. Humanity would be the poorer if they were lost. **Z Pallo Jordan** (*launch of the African World Heritage Fund, 5th May 2006, Maropeng Exhibition Centre.*)

"From South-Africa to Ethiopia lie strewn ancient fossils, which in their stillness, speak still of the African origins of all humanity. Recorded history and the material things that time left behind also speak of Africa's historic contribution to the universe of philosophy, the natural sciences, human settlement and organization, and the creative arts. Being certain that not always were we the children of the abyss, we will do what we have to do to achieve our own Renaissance. We trust that what we will do will not only better our own condition as a people, but will also make a contribution, however small, to the success of Africa's Renaissance....

**President Thabo Mbeki** (*taken from inauguration speech*)

***Ubuntu day is an opportunity to take pride of our heritage and to celebrate our evolution. It is an opportunity to consider the responsibility that it carries and the role we play in creating a better life for all, locally and globally. It is an opportunity to live up to the promise we have made to ourselves: "Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another". Nelson Mandela.***

***Keeping our promise demands that we never forget, and especially become conscious of our own contributions; good and bad. We must let our memories live alongside the new memories we're creating everyday as we shape a new world and step into a new dawn.***

### **13. The absence of the feminine energy and the effect on the world.**

As with many other things in life, humanity has also come to accept fixed beliefs about gender roles, with many of these views and beliefs supported by mainstream religion and cultural practice.

These beliefs/perceptions continue to play a role in how men are considered superior to females which manifests as norms that do not allow females to go to school, to hold a job of authority or responsibility, to leave the home without being in the company of a blood male relative, or to permit any part of their body to be seen in public, and that requires them to dress in certain ways, and to have their female genitals mutilated.

We may say that here in SA we have mostly overcome this, but we are not there yet, and SA has an important role to play in setting an example for the rest of Africa and the world where-in many cultures woman still have a long way to go to go to attain their equal position to men in society.

It is important to note that according to ancient African history God did not have a gender, and that there are many other belief systems who do not follow the patriarchal view.

Many thought leaders believe that "the feminine is ready to give birth to the authentic feminine self with the feminine being ready to express herself in partnership with men; fully liberated to become the 'missing link of our species.' "

As we shift from maximum pro-creation to co-creation, the Feminine is liberated from her restrictive roles, as men and women begin to co-create in a balanced way for the good of the larger human family. The Masculine would be released from its long-standing roles of patriarch and protector to discover the peace and ease of true relationship and co-creation." *(Barbara Marx Hubbard)*

***Ubuntu day is a wonderful opportunity for male and female to discover the peace and ease of true relationship and co-creation.***

*Anna-Mari Pieterse*

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