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Myth, memory, and political settlements in the city: compounded disadvantage and a path for plausible futures

Ndlovu, M.B.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mandipa Bongiwe Ndlovu (b. 1994) completed her secondary education at Arundel High School in Harare, Zimbabwe (2007-2012), before pursuing a Bachelor of Social Science at the University of Cape Town, specialising in International Relations, Business French, and Gender Studies. She graduated with distinction in Gender Studies and was placed on the Dean's Merit List for academic excellence (2015). She subsequently completed an Honours degree (2016) and a Master of Philosophy in Transitional Justice and Societal Transformation (2020) at the same institution, the latter awarded *summa cum laude* for her dissertation on the political economy of non-recurrence of national healing, militarisation, and institutional reform in Zimbabwe. Mandipa was awarded the 2017/2018 Mo Ibrahim Governance for Development in Africa Initiative Scholarship, through which she completed a Master of Science in Violence, Conflict, and Development at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Alongside her academic work, Mandipa has developed an active policy profile. She has worked with continental and international institutions, including the African Peer Review Mechanism, advising the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA) on integrating foresight into youth and governance reform processes adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, and has advised organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Afrobarometer, and International IDEA on governance, futures thinking, and institutional reform. She has also held advisory and leadership roles within the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, including as an Advisory Council Member for the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, and Senior Vice President of Advisory for the Now Generation Network. In 2024, she was awarded the African Women in Development Award.

Mandipa conducted her PhD research at the African Studies Centre Leiden in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh, and in 2024, spent part of her doctoral training as a visiting fellow at the Institute for Futures Research at Stellenbosch University to sharpen her skills in foresight and futures methodology. She also co-edited the volume *Urban Transitions in Africa: Opportunities and Complexities* (Springer Nature, 2026) with Prof.dr Shuaib Lwasa (International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam & ITC, University of Twente), amongst other individual outputs with Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan during her PhD tenure. Within the African Studies Centre, she served on the African Thesis Award Jury (2022-2026), the Dienstraat (2023-2024), the Graduate Programme's Steering Committee (2023-2024), as well as selection committees for the African Chair on Politics, Law and Governance (2023), and Assistant Professor in Gender Justice & Health Technology (2022). She also conducted regular briefings and technical training with the Netherlands Defence Academy and Ministry of Foreign Affairs on issues pertaining to Africa's governance and development. Additionally, she has been part of the collaborative working group Governance Entrepreneurship & Inclusive Development and the Southern African Working Group.

Mandipa continues to consult for governments and multinationals on strategic governance, political economy, institutional risk, and foresight, particularly in contexts of transition and policies for long-term structural reform across Africa.