



Race Awareness Week at the NWU is a distinctive cross-curricular opportunity to listen to a series of presentations, to participate in panel discussions, contribute to creative production opportunities offered by a cross-section of academics and experts within and beyond the NWU. The cross-sectionality of students and staff engagement takes the form of a series of dialogues about race.

Race (racism, racialisation) remains a critical contestation and focus in South Africa and beyond, lying at the intersection of other identity markers including class, language, gender, and power. Indeed, the asymmetry of power-relations arises from, contributes to the social constructs of race, language, gender and class and that these, in turn, affect access to justice, welfare, economic opportunity, political representation and support. Many important studies both nationally and beyond suggest to us, is that society in general, and higher education institutions in particular, benefits from structured opportunities to provide for a deeper level of engagement through scholarship, creative work and dialogue with important issues like race or gender, which serve still as powerful fractures or fissures in our collective attempts to create a socially just, cohesive, mindful and caring society, in which difference need not function as a precursor to dissension, division, powerlessness or marginalisation. This event, and others like it at the NWU, are offered to the whole University community annually and set up in consultation with the University's leadership (both staff and students) and in consultation with the broad academic community. In each year the race, gender and language events promoted and offered by the NWU are differently themed and hosted organisationally by different Faculties with a view to structuring differences of perspectives on the topics, brought to them by the fields within host faculty generally, but not exclusively so.

There is always a combination of scholarly and creative opportunities recognising that human identity is expressive, intellectual as well as and physical and by focusing energy on these themed weeks recognition is further lent to the fact that the issues themselves require trans, multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches to understanding, and further that the formal curriculum does not always provided for a focused engagement by students and staff of the University, outside of the prescribed nature of programmes (some of which are highly structured in terms of meeting the required of legislation, statutory or professional bodies). With the above in mind, I am pleased to invite our staff and students to Race Awareness Week, 2021 and thank in advance the team of academics, guest speakers from in and beyond the NWU, and student-team in the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, who made the programme possible for the NWU.

Professor Robert Balfour