

South Africa episode (Edited RW)

Sun, Jun 04, 2023 10:56PM • 1:16:17

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Community psychology, decolonial psychology, African psychology, critical feminist psychology, indigenous psychology, radical agendas, relevance, community psychology orientations,

SPEAKERS

Floretta Boonzaier, Peace Kiguwa, Kopano Ratele, Mohammed Seedat, Garth Stevens, Rejane Williams

Garth Stevens 00:09

Hi everybody, my name is Garth Stevens. I am a professor of psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. My enduring interests have really been in the area of critical race studies, critical violence studies, historical trauma and memory. And I suppose the way that one comes at this through the lens of both critical psychology, and community psychology. It's wonderful to be with all of you today.

Rejane 00:35

My name is Rejane Williams, I'm a PhD student at Wits University. My PhD is currently looking at the ways in which black individuals at the receiving end of racism, respond to it, experience it, and how they mediate its effects, the psychosocial impact of racism on their lives. So again, welcome to the South African podcast. In this podcast, we've decided that we really want to look at is the way in which community psychology has unfolded in South Africa, the different phases it's gone through, but also look at whether it is responding to contextual issues in South Africa. Whether it's responding to what that means in practice, and what orientations it's needing to respond to. And just to get an idea of what the critical challenges are, that are facing, particularly community psychology at the moment, and then also an idea of what we might need to do in terms of an agenda for resurgence.

Garth Stevens 01:43

So a warm welcome Kopano, Floretta, Peace and Mohammed. It's really great to have you participating in this critical community psychology podcast, the South African session, and I'm going to start by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves.

Kopano 02:01

My name is Kopano Ratele. I am based at the University of Stellenbosch, in the psychology department. I run a center at Stellenbosch, the Center for Critical and Creative thought.

Floretta 02:17

My name is Floretta Boonzaier. I work as a professor of psychology at the University of Cape Town. I consider myself as working kind of on the margins of psychology as a discipline. I work in critical feminist and decolonial psychology. And my work is on broadly speaking, identity, narrative and subjectivity and specifically I have been working for the past 20 years on gendered and sexual violence. And more recently working on a kind of critical interrogation of knowledge production, broadly, around the knowledge that we produce as a discipline in psychology, but then also specifically thinking about the knowledge of knowledge production, on gendered and sexual violence in particular,

Peace 03:10

My name is Peace Kiguwa, and I teach in psychology at Wits University, the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, and I teach in, in critical social psychology as well as research psychology. I think in terms of my research interests, I have a had broad interests, thinking about the dynamics of power and ideology, and thinking about these forms of these dynamics in terms of gender and sexuality, race, and racialization, social class migration, and thinking about the implications of all of these for social change and transformation.

Mohammed 03:56

My name is Mohammed Seedat, a professor in the college for Human Sciences at the University of South Africa, and I head the Institute for Social and Health Sciences, and was the former director of the national program called the Violence and Injury Research and Peace unit co funded by the South African Medical Research Council and University of South Africa.

Rejane 04:31

Thank you, everyone. Let's dive right in, Garth and I were wondering whether we could talk a little bit about the salient phases that South African community psychology has gone through, as that will give us a good background for the discussion to follow. Kopano, could we start with you perhaps.

Kopano 04:51

The beginning of community psychology in South Africa, might be dated just prior to the 1980s Yes, but one can have a genealogy a little earlier. But 1980's is really the beginning where people start to think and write and identify as community psychologists. Some of the people are still around or most of the people are still around, they're about to retire, I think I hope they will be part of this podcast. But at that time, people had a clear challenge, to think about and, and write against in practice again. And they're the people who really developed this thing in South Africa, what we call community psychology - they were writing against apartheid. They were also writing against colonialism. So apparently, it is an extension and instantiation of colonialism. And so in their writing, you see, you see a lot of mention of anti apartheid psychology, anti apartheid community psychology, that might be the, what might call the first phase of writing. And then around 1994, this is the advent of, of freedom in South Africa, something changes a little bit, because formal administrative and juridical apartheid ends, and so the new kinds of oppositional thinking have emerge. And you might say, this is really the face that has not, it's not quite well identified, and it's still extending into the present. So people start to think about, you know, now that apartheid is over. What is the challenge, the challenge really becomes a diffuse set of, of issues. Capitalism is one part of which is poverty. So neoliberal capitalism comes. You see a lot of writing

around that some writing around that, you see that a lot of thinking a lot more about what is community. So if community was clear, in the first phase, in this phase, we will start to see what is community? Can we also think about non black communities or areas as communities. So there's a bit of that. And then out of that emerges, this current phase, which is much more informed by the language, the vocabulary of decolonization, and decoloniality. So this is the phase in which we are and is much more exciting. It also makes connections between South Africa and the global south more generally, Latin America in particular. And, of course, a lot of talk, if not practice of connecting with continental Africa. So this is the phase we're in I think other people might, might part this, these fields in a different way, but I see it in that way.

Garth Stevens 07:44

Thanks, Kopana, for that overview. So community psychology in South Africa has responded to apartheid. It's responded to colonialism. It's responded to capitalism, neoliberalism, these are all global phenomena, of course, in some way or another. But I wonder if we can identify the ways in which South African community psychology has made a unique contribution to these global challenges? And Floretta, myou can share some of your thoughts.

Floretta 08:13

I think that South African community psychology has, importantly brought the notion of critique to community psychology globally. And I think this kind of stems from the questions that we were faced with in the country in the 90s. Right now being engaged in a democratic dispensation and reflecting on the relevance of psychology as a discipline, what's become known as the relevance debate, and questions about the relevance of psychology for meeting societal needs. And I think this relevance debate has allowed us to kind of turn the lens back on ourselves as researchers and practitioners in psychology and to kind of critique our theorizing and our practice, to ask about relevance of the discipline. I think this notion of critique has also been important for showing how psychology has as a discipline has been complicit with institutionalized and systemic forms of racism and discrimination in both historical and contemporary forms. And so, overall, I think South African discourses of liberation and resistance have been key contributions to community psychology globally, and to challenging capitalist patriarchal and racist practices in community psychology.

Rejane 09:36

Thank you Floretta for highlighting the ways in which community psychology in South Africa has engaged critical knowledge production in particular, and also the discourses around liberation and resistance. Kopano is there possibly anything you want to add, here?

Kopano 09:52

This is an exciting time. I mean, for South Africa. This is a really exciting time. I just heard something quite exciting. We always think of ourselves as on the margin, not just in community psychology, but also in psychology broadly and in knowledge production globally. But it turns out some people think community psychology, decolonial psychology, critical psychology is not perhaps they say dominated but that South Africa figures quite largely in this in this, which is really exciting in one sense, but also tells you that the way we see ourselves is not how other people see us. So right now, South Africa is contributing, making an oversized contribution to, to community psychology through this lens of

decolonial psychology, this decolonial attitude that people are writing about quite a lot in the colonial turn. So there are books being produced, that are conferences, symposia, papers, it's exciting if you're bearing witness to this moment. So this is currently what's happening right now, South Africa is coming up quite a lot when people talk about coloniality, decolonial psychology in particular, and decolonial community, community psychology even more specifically, South Africa, figures large on this horizon. But earlier on, of course, South African psychologists, community psychologists, contributed a certain vocabulary in contrast to American community psychology, which dominates, like other branches of psychology. The community psychologists in South Africa, have tended to weigh in on the side of the socio political, of the social, rather than the individual. So this is quite important as psychology is an individual science, even community psychology, looks at the individual within community. But community psychologists in South Africa have always said, You can't do it, you have to think about the folds, you have to think about the socio-political, the economic structure, and this is a constant theme. In South Africa, this is really important, I think I should underline this. So what they have tended to say, a certain generation that I pick up from, and that's taught in classes, many of the problems that we encounter as individuals emerge out of the structure of our society. And that's a really important thing. Because if you are going to help individuals and throw them back into the same community, you are not solving their problems. So solve the problems of the community, you solve the problems, to a large extent, if at least halfway you're there halfway. So don't just focus on the individual you have, don't just empower the individual, you have to empower the community and the individual. And sometimes, if you've fixed the problems in the communities, whatever kind of problems communities have, you will be solving problems of the individual.

Garth Stevens 13:10

So Kopano, you raise a number of issues about how South Africa's community psychology, has engaged with questions of decoloniality, in ways that contribute to a global dialogue of sorts. You've raised how it has strongly placed the individual and the psychological within the context of politics, economics, and of course, the social world in society. That is, our structure impacts the individual or collective experience. In some ways, if I may ask you Floretta, and Kopano, based on your understanding of South African community psychology, and its contribution globally, what do you think are the particular orientations that have shaped the discipline here thus far? And could we possibly speak about some of these orientations?

Floretta 14:01

Critical African and decolonial orientations are often noted, but the question about all the other relevant orientations that should be considered in relation to community psychology? And to what extent has Community Psychology embraced these respective orientations? I think that feminist forms of psychology and community psychology in particular should be given greater consideration and I think yes, especially about how forms of feminist community psychology has itself transformed or evolved from more traditional Western, if you will, traditional forms of thinking about women's empowerment and gender oppression, and evolved to kind of thinking or taking greater consideration or greater acknowledgement of Neo colonial and imperialist forms of power. And how that shapes understandings of women's oppression. I think there's also been a transformation in feminist forms of community psychology, to an acknowledgement of how community psychology must engage with questions of

decoloniality, to challenge ongoing forms of colonization and neocolonial modes of theorizing and practice. And I think there's been some embracing of these ideas in community psychology,

Rejane 15:32

Kopano, are there any additional orientations you may want to add?

Kopano 15:36

Well, these are the orientations. And all of them. Areas that I were in critical, African decolonial, I will put it differently, of course. I'll start with the African, which basically means we're situated in an African country, that it begins here. You have to locate yourself in the flow of community life, of social life, to understand how to think about the world, about people. And there are three, there are two that I want to mention, which come out of the work that I've been doing, perhaps three, but let me restrict it to two. This is what I call cultural orientation. Basically, another way to say it is a value based orientation. And under this, then I would include kind of, also a spiritual or even religious kinds of orientation. It is common cause that Africa is a country that comes in all surveys, as highly religious, or at least spiritual in contemporary global knowledge, an understanding about what how, what is important to us as humans. So Africans tend to indicate that they have religious affiliations, they go to church more than any other people on other continents. So if you are going to understand the problems in a community, you have to understand this, this affiliation with spirit. Even if you don't, you don't believe that people anchor their lives in spiritual things, whether these are traditional, or this is Christianity, Islam or independent churches. So this idea of value base that people put value on something like God, and spirits and ancestors. So you know, I know other people who do this work, what I see is, I noticed that this is important in thinking about community. So that's, that's one this cultural, then base, which includes the spiritual. Alongside this, what we don't mention are indigenous perspectives, and you see it in community psychology, people are talking about indigenous perspectives. Indigenous perspectives, again, is an attempt to see what you know, at least historically, if not in contemporary life, that the indigenous worldviews of the people in thinking about community, you have to think about it. And if Community Psychology tends to be much more urban, what the indigenous thing is, is you shouldn't forget that a large significant population in South Africa and African countries are still rural, and the rural means the practice of life. And by the way, this is fantastic right now we know that is becoming fantastic, because there's a relationship people have with the land, with the rivers, with the environment that preserves the environment. So in contemporary times, this idea of of we are part of the land is becoming much more important because it means sustainability,

Garth Stevens 18:40

Peace, maybe you can come in here and we'd really like to hear your views on the orientations you believe community psychology is, or should be adopting.

Peace

In terms of the kinds of orientations that I work with the critical African decolonial orientations and trying to think about that in relation to community psychology. I think there are several concerns that have been part of my work. But I think the kinds of concerns that we find in a critical community psychology more broadly. One of those is the dynamics of violence. I think violence has been such a significant part of the kind of ordering of many African states and many communities from the past and even into

the present moment. And I'm so I'm very interested in those dynamics to think about violence in all of its forms, in its physical forms, in its social form, you need structural forms, you need material forms, and also you need psychic forms. I think the other kinds of big concern in terms of thinking about critical community psychology work, has to also do the dynamics of power and ideology, how these operate in people's lives but more than that, how these operate within and outside of psychology as well. And I think, at the heart of all of this, is the kind of questions around identity and identity is, is an issue that has been part of my work and has been foremost in my kind of thinking through all of these different trends. How do identities get mobilized? When do they get mobilized? Or when is it effectively mobilized, sometimes by the state, sometimes as part of social justice activism, and the way that it gets mobilized as part of challenging the status quo, but also sometimes in defense of the status quo. And I think that is a niggling question that community psychology will need to grapple with as it tries to think about change and transformation. I'm also very interested in thinking about suffering. For now, our colleagues state that the kind of affective politics of suffering, but suffering more more broadly. So if you think in terms of our histories of colonialism, of apartheid, even current moments of racial patriarchal capitalism, thinking about systems, heteronormative systems of gender and sexuality and how these are entrenched in deeply toxic forms of masculinity, - this is the question that I think is very important for us to ask at this moment in time, not just the kind of structural and material and sometimes even the kind of discursive manifestations of violence, but also to start thinking about how these histories and these systems have impacted our lives, the in ways that they have impacted our lives in terms of their work, and on and through effect. And so part of my work is trying to bring affect and emotion back into the conversation to kind of think about what it means to live in the world, not just as beings who are impacted by social structures and our material conditions. But also thinking about the ways in which our intimate lives, our interior lives have been influenced by these conditions.

Rejane 22:13

Thank you Peace for alerting us to the issues of violence, identity and the affective politics of suffering in particular. All your responses have clearly shown us how South African contextual issues have shaped the trajectory, contributions and orientations of South African community psychology. And I'm wondering how this plays out in terms of the ways in which we engage community psychology in our teaching, and in practice in communities. Mohammed, could you please offer some insights about the ways in which community psychology has been implemented and mobilized at the Institute for Social and Health Sciences,

Mohammed 22:52

I want to keep it brief and perhaps say something about the work that I'm currently doing, do and have been doing ever since my entry into academia and what one would broadly call the helping sciences. The work I do, in many respects, is inseparable from the Institute for Social and Health Sciences, which have already indicated is located as a Department of the University of South Africa. Much of the work that I do together with colleagues in the institute, broadly speaking, has been and is about centering and preserving spaces of marginality. Perhaps a strange turn of phrase, let me explain. Yeah, I'm referring to the work from the borders, the from the edges of disciplinary knowledge, traditions, and from the borders of disciplines themselves - disciplines as we know them be they psychology, sociology, anthropology, public health. This work has really been about working from the margins, from the edges of formalized disciplines and from organized professions. Likewise, it's been about working

on the periphery of institutions, and in particular, the institution that I have been affiliated with. And one may think about this work as work of growing hybrid spaces and working in a hybrid space. It is contingent, is dependent on hegemonic, institutional, political and financial support. Located for more than three decades in this space, has meant mobilizing resources, political discursive and financial resources that are located in hegemonic spaces within establishment spaces. Yet this hybrid space derives its substance from the intellectual, emotional and scholarly work of refusal, resistance and recovery. And it's a space of inbetween. It is this in between space that has been the focus of the Institute. The Institute represents perhaps one of the longest standing community engaged activists scholarship programs in the country and if I may, perhaps on the continent. It started off as a modest initiative focused on making a case for the introduction of psychological services in primary health care. And so in its early days, it sought to disrupt the hegemony and the dominance of biomedical traditional traditions of health care. And since its inception, the Institute and colleagues that I've worked with, have moved between traditions of refusal, resistance and recovery, recovering, lost and marginalized ways of knowing, understanding of reality, as well as strategic cooperation and engagement with hegemonic knowledge crops and institutional prescriptions. Moving between these different ways of working, of making knowledge, of activism has been both tiresome and exhilarating, often messy, and yet illuminating. One cannot think about this work in binary terms. There are moments when one feels incredibly satisfied, understood, and one feels, and we have felt, we would be doing meaningful work. And at many points, we've felt exhausted and depleted. And this is the work of community engaged research work from the margins from the hybrid spaces. I guess this work is filled with many untold stories of emotional labor. Stories that I hope will be told among my colleagues and friends and peers someday.

Garth Stevens 28:00

On this question of the limitations and challenges in community psychology Peace, what would you say about some of these?

Peace 28:06

I think in terms of my work, and in terms of the conversation that we are having now, I think there are four questions that have primarily kind of steered the kind of work that I do. One of those is thinking about why and when it's possible to mobilize people for social change. How is it possible to do that? And of course, related to that is the question of why do people change to begin with? My second question focuses on thinking about the social arrangements that we have in society, why the social arrangements may be hard to shift. And so this is thinking again, in line with the idea of change and transformation. In fact, they're not just hard to shift but sometimes very stubborn in ways that do not make sense to us. And what I mean by that is that you can clearly see that change can be to the benefit of the person or to the community. And yet you have social arrangements that are quite hard to shift and change, even when they are to the detriment of the well being of the self or to the community. And so the question that I'm very interested in thinking through, tis the question of why? My third question that that has kind of steered my my work over the years, is thinking about social fragmentation in terms of Chabani Manganyi and his work. He kind of thought through four psycho-existential complexes trying to theorize what it means to be black in the world. And one of those complexes that he talks about is primarily alienation and the four forms or orientations that he thinks through fragmentation in terms of community. And so part of the questions that have kind of steered my work is trying to think about the

form that that fragmentation tends to take within community, in society more broadly and widely takes those forms. But I'm also interested in the kinds of interactions that happen across the different forms of alienation. So not just the alienation within community, but also alienation in terms of the self, in what he talks about alienation in terms of material objects, our relationship to material objects, but also thinking about alienation in a temporal kind of way, and what that means for how we then work in, think through future imaginations. And I think my last question, that really drives my work in critical psychology, in thinking about critical social and community psychologies, has to do with what are people's imaginations beyond their past, beyond their histories? How do people imagine themselves as more than their history and their past? That question is very important to me, because I think community psychologist emphasis on social and political lives in this moment, is a very important exploration. But I think it's also an exploration that needs to be imagining to the future. And so how are people imagining themselves beyond their histories? And what does that mean for social change and transformation?

Garth Stevens 31:24

As we move into the second half of this podcast, perhaps we can reflect on the issues of the efficacy of community psychology in South Africa, some of its limitations, challenges, and what an agenda for the resurgence and a strengthening of community psychology and a critical community psychology would entail. Floretta perhaps you could comment on some of the limitations and challenges.

Floretta 31:49

I think one of the key challenges for critical community psychology would be around demystifying What are critical approaches to community psychology. I think there are particular questions around accessibility of, for example, a decolonial discourse. And, you know, what does this mean for the practice of community psychology in particular? So I think the challenge is around translating what a decolonial approach to community psychology means. And what does this mean, for example, when we are talking about things like gender based violence, when we are talking about other forms of interpersonal violence, when we're talking about historical forms of trauma, contemporary and continuing forms of trauma? Okay, so that is I think where we kind of, in some senses, are so well versed. So in terms of theorizing around these things around decolonial approaches to violence, to some extent I would argue, to gender based violence, to thinking about trauma, perhaps, although we don't talk much about historical trauma in our context. But what does this mean for modes of working with communities? Right? What does it mean also for how we think about intervention and the possibilities for prevention efforts with communities. I think that's one of the key areas and issues that we would need to confront to maximize the potential and the relevance of critical community psychology in South Africa. And I also think it's quite interesting that we, again, return to this question as we should, I think we should always attend to the question of relevance, but in some ways, I think that we also potentially, I think, feminists decolonial modes of thinking about and doing community psychology possibly make the question of relevance, irrelevant, right, that if we think about ways of, of practicing community, a feminist decolonial community psychology, that is simultaneously conceptual and practical in terms of making real changes in the world, then perhaps this question of, of irrelevant or relevance becomes less relevant

Rejane 34:16

Kopano, is there anything that you might like to add with regard to limitations, and maybe you want to also think about the current tensions in community psychology?

Kopano 34:27

First, the limitations. It is precisely this idea that there is no alternative and liberal neoliberal capitalism, which is patriarchal, which is kind of what modernity, coloniality, which is a let me say psychologies in general. Psychology is part of war on people. Maybe even if we don't see it as psychologists, as individual psychologists, the war on people, it comes out of a certain way of thinking about the words. Modernity and coloniality, are built on a permanent war against people against communities, particularly those communities that are poor. So you want to extract as much as possible from them, you don't think their deaths matter that much. And we know this in South Africa, the poor diet, all the the excess. So that they are, in fact, excessive in living, you see it in insanity, if you're paying attention to thinking, I mean, kinds of life existence of the majority of people is bad. So the limitation is by, you know, fed by this idea that we are great. The world is making progress, but the world is making progress on the backs of a majority of people who do back breaking work. So communist psychology has to confront that it has to be doing this in South Africa, to be much more combative, as somebody says, must be much more combative. It has to be counter catastrophic. To use another phrase by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, it has to realize that there's an ongoing war against black bodies, against bodies of poor people here in South Africa, globally. So that's the limitation, the limitation comes directly out of neoliberal capitalism, which is capitalism that supports modernity, coloniality. So that's a big one. It must be anti-capitalist. To see clearly, Community Psychology has to be overtly manifestly anti-capitalist, it has to be counter-catastrophic. It has to be, again, another phrase, from people who are doing decolonial psychology, but it comes from a long time ago, counter psychological, I have used with others, it has to be anti-psychological. Now, that's a really interesting thing. To be a psychology psychologist who's anti psychological. What it means is you cannot just learn from the books in psychology, you have to learn from outside, you have to learn from ... you can not be so devoted, so blinded by the discipline, that a lot of stuff is happening outside of the discipline. I'm going to get up from here, shortly, I'm gonna walk to Salt River, going to the city because I need to meet people, I need to just walking looking at them how people live. So community psychologists have to do this. I have also pursued this slide, which might be thought unreasonable. We must find a way to live with the communities that we will be speaking about. That's it, that's an important thing. And there's a history to this. So the universities where we worked, tended to be far from the black community. You live too far, so you wanted to live closer to them. But also the market, quote, unquote, the market, wasn't stagnant in the townships. So you couldn't buy houses. So you needed to be in previously white neighborhoods, it basically means you could be a community psychologist, like counselors and stuff, we would live in a white neighborhood, while you're, you know, you're a counselor for something where your heart is, and that already talks to alienation. So I don't think most people want to move back to the townships. So I'm aware of this, we have to find a way to build these communities where we live in to persuade to be more persuasive. How could we reimagine these communities that are here right now. So that's the contradiction, a big tension that we have to live with, let me say this one small community psychology has to be counter catastrophic, anti psychological, it has to refuse to be decadent to use another phrase means it can't concentrate on itself, it must concentrate on communities. And that will make it really relevant if we, if we talk a lot more with people, if we're closer to them everyday in our practices, if our writing puts them at the center. If we're critical, using their language, we should have

the vocabulary of the psychologist, but we also have to learn from the vocabulary of the people who we're working with. And this is, at the simplest level, we have to learn the languages. That's it, we have to learn the languages. And these are these are the tensions and the limitations that community psychology have to confront today.

Garth Stevens 39:44

On this question of the limitations and challenges in community psychology, Peace, what would you say about some of these.

Peace 39:51

A Critical psychology orientation has been the primary lens from which I have worked and I think there are several questions that are important here. One of those is for us to take seriously questions about how knowledge is used. I think that's the work that we would need to take seriously even in our fight for social justice. How exactly does our knowledge get used and taking up the questions around the place of psychological explanations in making sense of power and ideology. And if we find that these explanations do not exist, or if they do exist in problematic ways, then to interrogate and to critique their use in psychology in particular. I think also trying to make sense of an analytics of power. And my feeling is that an analytics of power has a lot to gain, from questions of interiority, and not in a way that the proletariat, the politicizes interiority, interior lives, but to think about our interior lives, always in conversation with the social for me, then it also then becomes a question of practice, and how we do psychology, how to think about practice, and its implication in terms of these patterns of power and ideology. So, for me, what a critical psychology orientation does is, allows us or invites us to take seriously what it is that we think we know. But also what it is that we actually do, in terms of community psychology. And I want to say something a little bit, just briefly about relevance to put that in a kind of historical trajectory. I think community psychology is probably one of the few sub disciplines of psychology that, at the very least enjoys a reputation as a lot more politically attuned and socially aware to the kind of multiple and intersecting social issues, social and political issues in our society. And I think this is for a good reason, if you think about the way community psychology but perhaps South African community psychology in particular, came about as a kind of a response to mainstream psychology and critiquing, it's a-political stance. And so from the get go, community psychology has always had a kind of liberatory political agenda. But I think just like any other orientation, whether it's in terms of critical psychology, whether it's decolonial psychology, or whether it's African psychology, or any other kinds of critical responses to psychology, I think any orientation, we'll need to always be self reflexive, and think about its own blind spots, and to really grapple with some of its own tensions. So community psychology in particular, I think, needs to do that kind of work. So for example, what would it mean for us to interrogate our own conceptualizations of community, our own conceptualizations of empowerment and capacity building, power and ideology. Because if we don't do that, then we are in danger of downplaying the kind of harm that we may also bring to the discipline, to our work in the communities that we work in.

Rejane 43:24

I just want to offer Kopano an opportunity also, just to comment on some of the challenges he thinks community psychology is facing at this point in time.

Kopano 43:34

Some moments, while I really think your liberal capitalist democracy has won, I mean, I really think, Okay, do we still have to do this? I mean, you know, South Africa is one of the countries in the world that has the most malls. It's not a simple fact that malls are such an important part of our lives that and even so, per capita ... and malls everywhere. And we are proud that we build these gigantic malls. Malls kill community life, literally they, they just, they just evacuated life. So in Cape Town where I live, you will see something I'm just going to speak about right now. In Johannesburg out in the South. In Fordsburg, just outside Johannesburg, you see the same thing. There are small shops, independent shops that were there when black people in particular black of all kinds of colors. I like the black people of all colors. When we were trying to make a livelihood, they will build these cafes. They will build these small shops or the shoe repair and people go there not just to buy things but it was part of certain centers of a community. And if you have Malls, the shops lose out. They don't just lose out in custom but it also the community loses out Because this shop... Coca Cola was always there, they would have, you know, they paint the Coca Cola and be advertising. But people leave this and then they go and support the big businesses. And in that you're starting to kill that. So when I think about this, I'm thinking, we don't, as a society, we don't even realize how neoliberal capitalism is. In this democracy, that we can choose, we have this choice, and that the choice is, are we are making an order in the best interest of the community. So for us, if you go to the mall, for leisure, for not just for eating, but for leisure for hanging out, and you're not hanging out in the community, you're not just spending time you're also spending money elsewhere. But the most important, you are not, we are not contributing to the social life, this cultural life that needs reproduction. So people see each other in the community. So community psychology, the practice, the things that we that people who do community psychology, psychologists in the community are faced with immense challenge to convince people the importance of not losing buildings, not losing the importance of community, the sense of connectedness the important, that without vibrant convivial communities you're going to have this, what we have what your liberal democracy in your liberal capitalist democracies have done, that it's all about the individuals that you know if I can do this for myself and my little family in this bubble, everything is alright. I have this image always in my head I keep on repeating about sci-fi. Sci-fi helps you you'll see a world collapsing and then on in most sci-fi, and the people are in this bubble. This is a spaceship traveling through the galaxy. And everything is great in it but everything is falling apart around this is exactly what has happened. If you look at Johannesburg, if you take a walk in Johannesburg city, the centre is falling apart literally just falling apart the buildings are rotten. This is because something was lost there precisely because we think in profits which are more important than the social good. So you move to Sandton city, you build those banking centres. So the community with Johannesburg in the small shops, and shops on the streets has lost out and communist psychologies, but nobody really few people in government did come in, or community psychologists are saying the practices that it wanted to provoke to trigger to incite. So it's not being very efficacious. And I'm always wondering how best to do this, because the relevance is clear to some of us, that you can't have the psychology that doesn't take care enough of the community, doesn't think about the community, individuals as part of community. That me right there sitting in, I am a nexus of relations of histories that come into me that we are not just part of community, communities, as this relation this networks are what forms me, if you if you think about the individual standing outside the community, you're already buying into this neoliberalism, that the individual is the individual is not a problem, by the way. It's the individualism, the worship, that the individual is the hero of the story, rather than these networks that form us. Even if we

leave, we get to be great around the world. Literally, we bring back the gifts back to the communities. So the relevance is still clear. But whether we are effective or efficacious, are we winning the argument I think, I don't know. I think we have to find a way to do this to get back on television, I don't know make movies, make podcasts. So we convince people that without communities, we are the space bubble. I mean, individuals and the little families. If you have wonderful stuff around you, you have whatever stuff you have television, big television, you have nice cars outside, but you're in this bubble, and the bubble will not last and basically human life itself is in jeopardy.

Garth Stevens 49:24

Given the current challenges facing critical community psychology in South Africa, as well as its strengths and its assets. What would an agenda for the radical resurgence of critical community psychology look like in South Africa? Floretta your thoughts and then maybe followed by Peace?

Floretta 49:41

So I like setting agendas. So I was very excited by this question. It's probably where I will spend most of my time. My agenda stems from my work on gendered and sexual violence my feminist decolonial work on gender and sexual bias, as well as kind of interrogating the knowledge that we produce in that area. So I think that one part of the agenda is thinking, is taking this decolonial perspective, to think about "How does the past resonate, in visible and invisible forms, in South Africa? We tend, or have tended to be stuck in that apartheid- post- apartheid moment. But I think there's a shift now to opening up conversations about colonization, more and more. And I think that's where we need to continue going to think about apartheid as an ongoing form or kind of colonization, and to see how those continue to resonate in the present. I think that we need to open up more expansive conversations and understandings about violence and resistance, what constitutes violence and what constitutes resistance but, but not just violence. I think the expansiveness needs to relate to questions of power and oppression more broadly, and how they all are multiple and how they intersect. And I think there's been lots of us if we think about how intersectionality itself has traveled. I think there's been quite a few advancements in thinking about intersecting oppressions. I think that we also need to counter epistemic forms of violence and thinking, in particular, about some of the work I've been doing around thinking about the the kinds of knowledge that has been produced about gender and sexual violence, academic knowledge, and about who in that production of knowledge, who is represented, which particular communities are represented as violent, and what kinds of discourses about other kinds of violence that are silenced in those representations, and how the knowledge produced itself could be considered forms of epistemic violence. And to think about knowledge production, I think it's related to the question of epistemic violence to think about knowledge production, and how centuries of knowledge produced has worked in the service of coloniality. I think part of the agenda for a radical resurgence of critical community psychology is the issue of holding on to complexity. As researchers, for example, when thinking about the ways in which we do research, do we think about how complex lives or lived lives are, and thinking about us as researchers trying to somehow think about how we can represent those lives and identities and experiences in our work. And how much of the complexity is lost when we are attempting to do that. But how we also tend to fall back on quite, you know, dichotomous and binary understandings of people and their experiences. So I think that holding on to complexity is really important. It's a difficult thing to do. Holding on to complexity to contradiction, the ambiguity in terms of how we work with people, how we understand people and communities, but also reading from the

perspective of the most marginalized is important and related to the kind of complexity of people's lives. Another important part of the agenda is a humanizing effort. It's about humanizing and as part of the feminist decolonial agenda about humanizing the people we work with, yes, on the one hand, but also humanizing ourselves and finding ways to counter alienation. Right? So it's for some of us, who work as black women in academic spaces that are in the main white and male. How do we counter that alienation, and others will come with a whole host of intersecting marginalized identities. So it's about humanizing ourselves and giving due recognition to the knowledges that we bring right, to why it is we end up doing the work that we do. And it's not often that we reflect on that question. So bringing those knowledges with us, bringing our personal histories and traumas with us, and understanding how that shapes the work that we do. And to hold on to that both for ourselves and for the people that we work with. I think it's also important to think about research and writing as political acts, to think about the politics of research and the writing of research. And to think about how on the one hand it involves questions of representation, that, as a researcher, there's an important consideration into how the work that you write about what it will do when it goes out into the world. And we've had examples recently, of how papers that have been published, you know, have continued to kind of put forward representations, or negative representations of people who have long histories of oppression and ongoing forms of oppression. So when I talk about researcher as political, I'm talking about even the question being asked, is political. Right, so to think carefully about how we frame those questions. And then, of course, how we do the research whose interest is being represented, what perspective are we speaking from? Who are we writing for? And how will that knowledge go out into the world? And what will it do? I think, is a really, really important consideration. There's a question about ethical practice, right? What counts as ethical research? And so for me, the question about ethics is tied in to that question about research and writing as political. Right? How ethical is it to put out research that represents black women in particular ways? And so, of course, to think about ethics beyond the kind of regulatory framework that we have been disciplined into, by our institutions and above disciplines. So to think about ethics, also, in a more kind of expansive way, I guess. To close off as part of the agenda, and this is just like I would say, a quick agenda, I think there are many more things that recognize that the kind of Decolonial Project is an ongoing, evolving conversation and kind of unfinished business. But to close off, I want to talk about two things. On the one hand, it's the question of refusal, following Tuck and Yang, like, you know, thinking carefully about refusal, right? What knowledge is, what we know, what practices, what knowledge is, given the critique, given the ways in which we know that knowledge has been produced in the service of coloniality, like, what is our responsibility, and how we're going to be thinking about this idea of what it is really? But on the other hand, is also opening up space, right? In our practice, whether that be as researchers or practitioners, opening up space for desire for questions around resistance around pleasure, joy, and radical forms of help. I think those would be important aspects to an agenda that involves some kind of resurgence for critical community psychology.

Peace 58:03

I draw a lot on the traditions of Black and African feminist theorizing, to think through these different intersections. I'm very interested in exploring how emotion and affect can take critical community practice into new terrains of understanding. I think these would be understandings that help us to make better sense of social fragmentation. But to also make better sense of the kind of creative practices of resistance that do happen that do occur in our societies and in our communities. Part of this, for me would also then mean to, to not think through these different registers in ways that simply just reduced

them to the working of power. And what I mean by that is, I think one of the ways that we can understand the mechanisms by which the subject is constituted, is certainly trying to think through these kind of dominant registers of power, whether it's in terms of the material, structural or the discursive. But I think if we make room for thinking through these other mechanisms that include emotion and affect, it, in some sense, allows us to not treat subjectification in ways that just reduces it to the working of power. It allows us to think through subjectification beyond the material and beyond the discursive, and then to be able to think through creative forms of resistance. For example, the kind of work that I have done around rage, I'm very interested in thinking about rage's capacity to be both something that disrupts, but also something that disrupts power, but also something that can be an accomplice of power. So well, I kind of shift between a defense of rage, but also a critique of rage. Because I think, if we are able to think through rage's relationship to other kinds of affects - so if rage's relationship to hate, is to self hatred, then we realize that it is not always useful. And in fact, the affects of rage can be detrimental to our social justice fights, and kind of galvanizing. But then we can also think about the ways that rage has been and can be a galvanizing as a force for social change and transformation. So this kind of movement back and forth between a defense and a critique, trying to think about moments of disruption, but moments of being an accomplice is part of the kind of work that I've done in thinking through the affect of rage. More recently, I've been working through the politics of love, and wanting to reflect on communities of care in marginalized communities in particular. Once again, I kind of rely on African feminist theorizing to think through these traditions of communal care in these traditions of building communities. And so this politics of centering love as part of the work that community psychology needs to be focused on. And part of these tensions for me has to do with the kind of binary way that we have conceptualized transformation and what that looks like. I think transformation, whether we're talking about personal transformation, or social transformation, I think it's always a complex thing. It's complex. And sometimes it's very ambivalent. And so you can't have an easy theorizing of transformation in terms of kind of binary box of being a product of power versus resisting power. I think, somewhere in between all of that there is a complexity that we need to kind of get to grips with, and in many ways that complexity speaks to some of the stubbornness that I talked about that makes some social fragmentations hard to shift. And I think if Community Psychology remains inattentive to that, then what it can only offer us is a very limited account of the social world, it can only offer us a limited account of social change and transformation. So some of the kinds of lines of inquiry that I think we would need to bear in mind trying to think about actions and trajectories, is to think about this affective life, interaction with social and political life in terms of macro levels, if you will. So if we think about collective feeling, if we think about structural violence and wellbeing different kinds of mobilizations, affective investments, and sometimes even the kind of affective force of discourse itself, but to also think about the more micro levels of the encounters between people, the different kinds of formations about what it means to be in relation with others. My other kind of work that I do is in the kind of pedagogical space of teaching and learning, curriculum transformation in particular. And one question, kind of steers all of that. The question of how do we create pedagogical spaces and practices that recognize the politics of social and political life? How do we do that? And I think when we talk about transformation in these kinds of spaces, there's the obvious transformation that is more quantitative, what it means to change the demographics of an institution, what it means to change the curriculum that we prescribe, but I think that is only part of the conversation, there are other things that we would need to consider in thinking about our own contexts. In particular, I think that the education space is in many ways marked by ratios, but I think also by other other kinds of encounter, that in

many ways is part of subjectification as well. So that is also part of a reproduction of the racialized subject to the gendered subjects, the class the subject. And I think critical affect studies, again, has something useful to help us think through that. So part of my interest is trying to think through the racializing of affects. I think, by now we do really recognize that race is a social construct? And of course it is. But I think in many ways, if we leave the conversation there, then we are in danger of also thinking through how this social construct has very real felt affective life. And I think other markers of differences well, whether it's social class, or gender and sexuality, these embody material and structural conditions that are very real. But these material instructional conditions also have, or influence very felt, and real effective life. So some of my work explores this effective life within the education space, whether it's in terms of thinking through the relational encounters between different bodies within the institution. So some of the work I've done has tried to think through relational encounters between racially coded bodies, and how students but also members of staff are working with race, in their interactions with each other. Part of the question that I ask is, what is it exactly that holds race in place? That seems to sediment race, in these interactions in the institution, and part of what I kind of think through is the affective bonds, the kind of affective bonds and emotions that seem to sediment this, whether it's anxiety or shame, I'm also very interested in the material body of who teaches. So to really think about what gets enabled and what gets constrained relative to our embodiment. For example, some of my work has explored the dynamics of how knowledge gets shut down, but also how knowledge gets enabled, because of who teaches, what that body represents in the minds and imaginations of students. What the history is of meanings attached to that body. I'm also very interested in the kind of emotive work of disruptive texts, and how these have the potential to shift the ways that students think the way that students feel about the world that we live in. But I also think we don't talk enough about the ways that these also have the potential to shut down, how these have the potential to sediment, these ways of thinking and feeling. And ironically, I think part of that interaction is a kind of cyclical, affective investment and defensiveness. But here, the work of disruptive texts, and what they can do, in terms of enabling and constraining knowledge, I think decolonization of the curriculum and education more broadly, decolonization of the education space has to be more than just structural change has to be more than just structural measures or policy changes. I think we confront ourselves in text, I think we confront ourselves in our encounters with each other. And this confrontation inevitably evokes different feelings in us that circulates amongst us. And so paying attention to racialization, or to these different modes of subjectification, in terms of their affective life, is part of my my interest in thinking about embodiment within the education space, I think in in terms of where critical community psychology fits in, and all of the other orientations in terms of thinking about past and future trajectories. And also thinking about our current moment. In the early 90s. We used to talk about relevance in psychology. This is what's been called the relevance debate. And I think in many ways, this is a continuation of that conversation. Psychologists in the early 90s were asking questions about the relevance of psychology. Were asking questions about whether or not psychology was in fact, a discipline that was worth considering when we talk about mental wellness and wellbeing in light of its complicities in the kind of sustained oppression, but also marginalization of large majorities of the population. It's a very important question to still ask today. I think, the language of decolonization, the language of African psychology, the language of critical psychology is very important but might seduce us into thinking that we have begun to even think through this notion of relevance and so part of the conversation I think means that we need to think about what it would mean for us to step outside of the discipline, what kinds of conversations will need to be held so that we are better able to grapple with

social and political life. And that for me means that we take social and psychic fragmentation very seriously. And part of that means that we need to interrogate the ways that the very nature of psychology may, in fact, not enable us to do that. And this is not to dismiss psychology altogether. But to think about the ways that psychology needs to attend to other disciplines needs to think through the questions that those disciplines have been asking for a whole number of years. And to think seriously about what it would mean, to broaden the way that we think through dynamics of power and ideology, beyond the structure or beyond the material beyond it a discursive. And so if we take the affective life seriously, and its intersections with all of this, what can that look like? And that, for me, is part of the important trajectory that I think about when I can see the discipline but also thinking about the discipline in terms of its original agenda, liberatory political agenda. What conversations need to be had, that we're not having at the moment? What is it that we think we are doing and what it is that we are actually doing?

Rejane 1:11:35

Mohammed, we'd really be keen to hear your thoughts on what this resurgence would look like what the agenda and relevance of CP, or rather critical community psychology in South Africa should be,

Mohammed 1:11:49

To make these observations about what this work of community engaged activist research revolves around, revolves around many, many things. But yeah, for the purposes of this podcast, perhaps just to highlight, three. Firstly, it has revolved around participation in transnational companionship that is firmly rooted in one's immediate social realities of struggle, and aspirations for dignity, regarding sovereignty. This work of transnational companionship is finding solidarity, creating solidarity, finding friendship, and finding resonance with others who are engaged in this work of scholarship for humanity. At another level, this work has revolved around creating languages, creative languages, in innovative languages, languages that speak to the epistemology of the heart that speaks to the heart, and that breaks from the dislocating traditions and experiences in here in academia. This work of languaging builds connections with people who live in zones of silence and resistance, and ways of knowing that are not always accessible and easily measured. And then, I guess, thirdly, this work of operating from hybrid spaces, has been about facilitating zones to ignite humanizing imaginations and rebuild our planetary worlds as we are increasingly recognizing that as humans, we need to live alongside the environments in which we find ourselves the natural, built and unbuilt environments. All of the many natural disasters that we've been experiencing indicates that we haven't been doing a great job as humans, and that we need to rethink our space or place in our roles in this larger, larger planetary world. And this means shifting how we think about ourselves, how we make meaning of our worlds or our reality, and means rethinking the kinds of questions we ask. So in brief, it's really this work is revolved in summary around building and participating in transnational companionship, forging languages that connect with people who live in zones of silence and resistance and facilitating ways of igniting humanizing imaginations so that we can build a wholesome planetary world.

Garth Stevens 1:15:29

So we really had an opportunity today to listen to some key thinkers in South African community psychology, and the way that they've understood the evolution, the contribution, the limitations, the strengths, and the possible futures of a critical community psychology in South Africa, and the critical

community psychology from South Africa for the globe. So I want to take this opportunity to really just express my thanks to Rejane, to Kopano, to Floretta, to Peace and to Muhammed. It's been wonderful to have you here to engage with you to have a stimulating dialogue. And we thank you all for listening to this podcast.