

THE CENTRE FOR CREATIVE ARTS (UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL) PRESENTS

JOMBA! Masihambisane

(VIRTUAL)

Dialogues #6

27-29 May 2026

Choreographies
of Activism:
Moving Bodies
as Disruptive
Presencing

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS, PAPERS AND DIGITAL PARTICIPATION



INSPIRING GREATNESS

JOMBA! Masihambisane (VIRTUAL) *Dialogues #6* 27-29 May 2026

Across Global South contexts, dance has become a field of projection and a critical site of personal political action, carrying histories of resistance, survival, refusal, and futurity through the moving body.

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THIS JOMBA! MASIHAMBISANE DIALOGUES#6 -hosted by the Centre for Creative Arts (UKZN) and the **JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience** invites scholarly, practice-based, and artist-led contributions that examine dance not as metaphor, but as an embodied mode of activism - a means through which bodies appear, assemble, disrupt, and make claims to space, visibility, and justice under conditions shaped by (amongst other forces) colonial and postcolonial power.



WE ARE ASKING what activism might mean - and enact - today particularly (though not exclusively) in the Global South, which is still struggling with colonial legacies and the ongoing struggles to engage what decoloniality might look like in our everyday lived experiences and practices. This is set against an ongoing global geopolitics where transnational corporations and economic policies often impact more than political policies do. And all this backgrounded against political destructions as played out in places like Palestine, Sudan, Syria and DRC.

M Gardiner described 'cancellation' in the late 2010s and 2020s as 'algorithmic elite asset-stripping of populations' (2024/2025).

In Search of our Humanity (2025). JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience. SboNdaba Dance. Photo Val Adamson.

This has extended to exterminism where, in many places, whole populations have become extraneous, and the population itself has/ is being 'cancelled' - as also noted by Elaine Scarry (2014). We thus wish to provoke and ask;

- ➔ **HOW** might/has this affected the moving dancing body?
- ➔ **HOW** does dance, which in its very presencing, is active, and often signals and affirms humanity, respond to these extreme censoring and negations of others' humanities?
- ➔ **HOW** might collective rhythms, gestures, stillness, silences, il/legibilities of improvisation offer affective, somatic, and kinaesthetic alternatives to dominant social, spatial and temporal orders?

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WE ASK; what might we mean by moving bodies as disruptive presencing? What do we need to signal presence or absence? What roles do intention and bodily energy play in these processes? How might choreographic acts interrupt, or not interrupt, regimes of control, surveillance, extraction, and bodily regulation, while negotiating risk, precarity, care, and collective survival?

Further, we provoke brown's (2019) ideas of 'pleasure activism'. brown elaborates on how pleasure and the allowance to feel and explore pleasure, is an act of activism that she argues it is directly linked to freedom. How do the somatic practices of dance allow for this 'pleasure activism'?

This JMD26 foregrounds dance as a primary site of both personal and political knowledge production. Drawing on decolonial, feminist, queer, Indigenous, and critical Black studies frameworks, we ask how movement can generate ways of knowing that exceed textual, juridical, or institutional forms of politics (Mbembe, 2001; Moten, 2017; Taylor, 2003).

We are particularly interested in how Global South dance practices theorise politics from the body - through sensation, repetition, duration, exhaustion, joy, and communal presence.

We invite contributors to engage with, but not be limited to, the following framing questions:

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- ➔ **HOW** can dance operate as activism within Global South (and global north) contexts shaped by colonial and postcolonial, and unravelling global power relations?
- ➔ **WHAT** choreographic strategies (or negation of strategies) might enable dance to function as disruptive presencing under conditions of risk, surveillance, repression, or cancelling?
- ➔ **HOW** do Global South dance practices produce personal and political knowledge through embodied, relational, and collective forms of knowing, to what effect?
- ➔ **HOW** can scholarship and documentation attend to activist dance practices without reproducing extractive, colonial, or voyeuristic frameworks?

WE WELCOME explorations of choreographic strategies / negation of strategies such as stillness, endurance, repetition, excess, improvisation and refusal as modes of activist disruption (Lepecki, 2013; Foster, 2019).

Of particular interest are contributions that centre collective and communal dance practices, intergenerational transmission, and non-Western or non-individualised modes of authorship, leadership, and relationality. We also hope to focus on the intentional body, energies, ritual, and spirituality.

Papers and presentations may address dance practices situated in diverse spaces, including streets, campuses, townships, informal settlements, border zones, ritual and ceremonial spaces, protest sites, or digital platforms, attending closely to the postcolonial geographies that shape movement, assembly, and visibility.

We particularly welcome contributions that foreground Global South perspectives and sites, including work emerging from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and diasporic formations.

Submissions may take theoretical, historical, ethnographic, or practice-based forms, and we actively encourage experimental and embodied research formats. Possible formats include:

- academic and scholarly papers,
- lecture/digital-demonstrations,
- performance-lectures,
- artist talks,
- facilitated movement scores,
- curated panels,
- or other hybrid forms that reflect the embodied nature of the inquiry.

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BRINGING TOGETHER scholars, artists, activists, and choreographers, JMD26 seeks to collectively articulate how moving bodies can make claims, sustain or reframe struggles, and generate forms of knowledge that are sensorial, relational, and urgently situated in the Global South.



TOP: CHANT (2015). Nhlanhla Mahlangu. ABOVE: HEAD SPACE (2022) Tegan Peacock. JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience (both). Photos Val Adamson.

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brown, a.m. (2019) *Pleasure activism: The politics of feeling good*. Chico, CA: AK Press.

Foster, S.L. (2019) *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*. London: Routledge.

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Taylor, D. (2003) *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press.



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SUBMISSION OF
ABSTRACTS /
POSSIBILITIES

WE ARE CALLING for the submission of short abstracts/proposals for consideration for inclusion in the 2026 JOMBA! MASIHAMBISANE DIALOGUES #6.

As part of this event's ethos, we seek to open up the modes of contributions, and therefore we encourage the following formats:

- The presentation of papers and new scholarship
- The presentation of digital scholarship and praxis-led research
- Hybrid forms of presentation
- Proposal of a relevant panel
- Digital online workshops
- And any other unique formats that can be suggested for inclusion, including audio and video formats.

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ABSTRACT DETAILS

➔ ABSTRACT LENGTH

Maximum 450 words (or in the formats offered)

➔ SUBMISSION DEADLINE

16:00 THURSDAY 2 APRIL 2026

➔ SEND TO

THOBI MAPHANGA
2024jomba@gmail.com

➔ DETAILS REQUIRED

- Name of author/s and/or artist-scholars.
- Type of presentation (paper, film/ video, discussion panel etc).
- Short 200-word bio of author/s and/or presenter/s.
- Contact email address, and WhatsApp number of the corresponding author.
- If appropriate, affiliation to/with any academic or artistic institutions.

Final submissions (post colloquium) of papers/digital offerings must be a maximum of 2500 words or equivalent. Online delivery will be 10 minutes only for all mediums of delivery.

➔ We encourage excellent (emerging and established) scholarship without the trappings of long unwieldy papers.

➔ We generate a digital conference proceedings/publication that becomes part of our growing **JOMBA! MASIHAMBISANE DIALOGUES** digital archive of (Southern) dance scholarship and research, and all selected papers will go through an editorial process so that scholars can get research accreditation.

For more information visit:

jomba.ukzn.ac.za/masihambisane-dialogues

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