

Invitation to documentary screening and lecture hosted by IBAR/MIDEX

[Milisuthando](#) (2023) by Milisuthando Bongela-Davis

Tuesday **3 November 2026** at 4:00pm

Screening Cinema ME204 in the Media Factory

Email Raphael Hoermann to book: rhoermann@lancashire.ac.uk

“‘The Native Question’: Unsettled Colonialism(s), Unsettling Blackness’ by [Dr Aretha Phiri](#)

Wednesday **4 November 2026** at 2:30pm to 4:00pm

Darwin Building DB254 and MS Teams ([here](#))



Director Milisuthando Bongela-Davis

These two related events engage with the documentary [Milisuthando](#) (South Africa, 2023) by **Milisuthando Bongela-Davis**.

‘Set in past, present, and future South Africa. An invitation into a poetic, memory-driven exploration of love, intimacy, race, and belonging by the filmmaker, who grew up during apartheid but didn't know it was happening until it was over’ ([IMDb](#)).

After a short introduction by **Dr Aretha Phiri**, Associate Professor in English Literary Studies from Rhodes University, the film will be screened followed by a Q&A.

The next day, Dr Phiri will also give a hybrid presentation that engages with the film, entitled “‘**The Native Question’: Unsettled Colonialism(s), Unsettling Blackness’**”

Abstract: Traditional scholarship on South Africa’s formation into a (settler) republic is typically occupied with its hierarchized racial, gendered, ethnic, economic and spatial impressions which have extended from settler colonialism and endured post-apartheid. Guided by the centrality of ‘The Native Question’ herein as the purposeful and strategic administration of indigenous black life and bodies, this presentation moves away from a reductive framing to a consideration of its residual, material and existential implications for black citizenship. Focusing on the Apartheid state’s formal implementation of separate development through the creation, from 1951 onward, of Bantustans – so-called independent black republics, or homelands which were extensions of previous, colonial articulations of legislated native dispossession and servitude, the presentation moves away from a reductive framing to a consideration of its residual, material and existential implications for black citizenship. Subverting the largely patriarchal,



Research
Centre for
Migration,
Diaspora and
Exile



University of
Lancashire



INSTITUTE FOR BLACK
ATLANTIC RESEARCH

androcentric character of established literature on black South African life (e.g. Plaatje 1916, Mandela 1994), this presentation focuses on the critically acclaimed self-titled documentary, *Milisuthando* (2023), by filmmaker and writer, Milisuthando Bongela. It explores the ways in which conventional, enduring settler-colonial paradigms are unsettled in the film, not just through deviations demonstrated in its woman-centered narrative and content but also in a formal composition and aesthetic register that further



illustrate life lived in and outside the (former) Bantustan Republic of Transkei (1976-1994). Interested in black being that operates at the periphery of, and in turn queries, established history, the presentation reflects on South Africa's entangled, relational nation-building project and considers the prospects for reimagining and reinterpreting blackness outside of and beyond its accepted "logics and economies" (Walcott 2021).

This presentation forms part of a broader research project, "(Thinking) The Unthought of Blackness" (CSRP240416216214384), funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa.

Dr Aretha Phiri is an associate professor in the Department of Literary Studies in English, Rhodes University, South Africa. Her research, which focuses on American, African American, South African and contemporary African diasporic literature, examines the intersections of race, culture, gender and sexualities in comparative, transnational considerations of identity and subjectivity.



Research
Centre for
Migration,
Diaspora and
Exile



University of
Lancashire



INSTITUTE FOR BLACK
ATLANTIC RESEARCH