

# **Report on my AILA experience, Nkululeko Mabandla**

First of all, I would like to thank AILA sincerely for granting me the Solidarity Award, which allowed me to attend AILA 2017 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It has been a great opportunity and a major contribution to my intellectual development.

It was a wonderful experience to attend AILA, to listen to diverse papers and interact with colleagues from across the world. In the following report I would like to comment on three intellectual highlights – the conference was so rich and expansive, it would be impossible to comment on everything. Also, since the report is already due on 28 July, I was not able to reflect on the last day of the conference (and my second presentation).

## **Highlight 1: Raciolinguistics, Language and Race**

This was a panel organized by Samy Alim from the US. Race is a major structuring principle in South African social life, and I was thus very excited to be able to attend this panel. The discussion focused on the situation in the US, and I was intrigued to notice parallels and differences in the ways in which race and racialization function.

Attending the panel also allowed me to network with the scholars at the panel, especially Samy Alim (whom I knew from his visit to South Africa), as well as Jonathan Rosa and Nelson Flores, two impressive scholars who I met for the first time at this conference.

## **Highlight 2: Southern Theory**

Given that the theme of the conference was on innovations and epistemological challenges, and also took place in the global south, it not surprising that southern theory featured quite strongly in various papers, panels and plenaries. Of particular interest for me were the plenaries by Moita-Lopes and Milani, two plenaries which directly spoke to the challenge of southern theory. I also attended the panel *Multilingual Frontiers: An Emerging Politics of Southern Linguistics*, organized by T.G. Wiley, K. Heugh, C. Stroud, and S. Bhalla. Papers by Wiley, Maseko, Bhalla and Macias inspired me to think more deeply about the idea of southern theory, an epistemological concept that I have been using in my own work, and also a concept that I am hoping to develop more thoroughly.

Again, establishing contacts with scholars has been important. I was delighted to meet Reynaldo Macias, whose paper was exceptional and of great importance for discourses and discussions that are happening in South Africa at the moment.

### **Highlight 3: My own presentation at the invited panel on *Queer Linguistics***

To be invited to the panel *Queer Linguistics: Innovations and Challenges to Applied Linguistics*, organized by Tommaso Milani and Erez Levon, was a great honour. The panel included a wide range of inspiring papers which articulated beautifully with one another – these synergies were brought out masterfully in the response by Branca Falabella Fabricio. Being part of the panel was a unique experience: there was a sense of solidarity and community, of working together in shaping new discourses, or reflecting together on the challenges we face as we are trying to formulate new ways of studying language-in-society.

My own presentation, which I delivered together with my colleague Ana Deumert, went very well and we received excellent feedback on our work.

In addition to the intellectual richness of AILA 2017, being able to explore Rio has been a wonderful experience. I also learned so much from talking to people, in the street, on the metro, in restaurants.

*Obrigado!*