

## 'It's a Very, Very New Old South Africa...': Exploring Some Race, Corruption and Protest Issues in Zakes Mda's 'Our Lady of Benoni'

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**Abstract :** It seems that theatre remains a practical method for mobilising people and their ideologies; and South African literature has strengthened over the years as a result of the events which took place during both the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid eras. Hence, the problem noted in this study is that, generally, many people seem to believe that the issues which were a concern during Apartheid times in South Africa no longer exist in Post-Apartheid South Africa, whereas, it seems that they still do. Post-Apartheid playwrights such as Zakes Mda among others, explore these issues in their works. There are common themes between the two periods, for this reason, distinction can only be drawn in terms of the context. Therefore, this study explores solutions offered by the themes of protest, corruption and race in Zakes Mda's Our Lady of Benoni. The study uses real events and Mda's play to reveal that there is a reinvention of Apartheid times' issues into Post-Apartheid times' issues. Moreover, the theme of race is explored with reference to class issues. Also, the study aims at highlighting some distinctions between the Apartheid period and Post-Apartheid period as shown by the playwright, Zakes Mda's fictitious version as seen in some of his characters in the play. Theatre in general has always protested, it is either against an issue or for an issue; therefore, this paper will also explore the various ways in which the theme of protest is undertaken in the study of theatre. Respectively, the paper looks in the literal protest found in Mda's Our Lady of Benoni in order to provide critical understanding with regard to the notion undertaken in this study. The paper goes on to provide an alternative discussion of the theme of protest; it critically evaluates issues such as corruption and race in terms of class that the playwright, Mda addresses in his play. In conclusion, this paper will use other relevant examples other than Mda's drama, Our Lady of Benoni, in order to prove that there is a reinvention of Apartheid issues in Post-Apartheid issues in South Africa.

**Keywords :** protest, corruption, race, class

**Conference Title :** ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

**Conference Location :** Chicago, United States

**Conference Dates :** December 12-13, 2020