

# ICF Conference Program

## Panel Discussion

### Professor Zodwa Motsa

Zodwa Motsa is a professor of English Literature at the University of South Africa (Unisa) and has a particular interest that indigenous cultural and leadership practice can add to contemporary leading in Africa. She grew up in a society in Swaziland that saw learning as a way out of the quagmire of poverty and lifelessness. She attended missionary schools where teachers were very strict and clear about education. Professor Motsa was inspired by the pride and passion of her teachers but what inspired her the most was reading about people beyond her physical space and exploring the beauty of language.

This scholar of English Literature has explored her subject from the beginning of English Literature as oral literature (Old English) up to 20th century literature. And this liberated her immensely as an African woman in that it enabled her to speak knowledgeably and with authority about the subject. Furthermore, this enabled her to marry the two worlds in which she operated: being an African woman and a scholar of English literature.

Prof Motsa wondered what relevance English literature had to the African students she would teach afterwards. After a lot of careful thought and introspection, she found a link in oral literature.

"Oral literature liberated me. My own African literature liberated me to say that all societies begin with oral lore. All societies begin with this oral knowledge they cannot be where they are now without that base. They must always use that to get information about the present."

Prof Motsa was 20 years old when she was recruited to lecture English literature, and the reaction she received from her students was: "This child cannot teach me!" For Prof Motsa being a woman, black and a professor of English Literature has met its share of raised eyebrows.