

## 🎓 Summer School 2025: “Violent Histories and Repair”

📍 Cape Town, South Africa

1.-7. July 2025

Hosted by Stellenbosch University

Seven PhD students from European Wasatia Graduate School for Peace and Conflict Resolution joined together with the directors of the School the 2025 Summer School *Violent Histories and Repair*, coordinated by Prof. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela at Stellenbosch University/RSA. The course offered an immersive academic and experiential learning environment that allowed students to explore the ongoing impact of violent histories and the possibilities of repair. Through lectures, artistic engagement, site visits, and personal encounters,



students deepened their understanding of violent histories and their afterlives. The program emphasized the moral imperative of ethical listening, trauma-informed research, and reparative justice.

### Introduction

On June 28, 2025, the European Wasatia Graduate School for Peace and Conflict Resolution began its educational visit to South Africa for a summer course titled *Violent Histories and Repair*, hosted by Stellenbosch University. This multidisciplinary program examined the legacies of violent histories through decolonial and intersectional lenses, addressing the structural, symbolic, racial, and gendered dimensions of systemic violence. This report documents the key learnings and reflections of the Wasatia students throughout the program.

## Day 1: Understanding the Afterlife of Violence



The program opened with an introduction to the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ), founded in response to South Africa's apartheid legacy. In her opening lecture, Prof. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela emphasized that trauma is not a thing of the past but a persistent presence shaping individuals and institutions.

Her lecture focused on the language of violence and the limits of narration. Drawing from interdisciplinary scholarship, she explained how structural violence operates both visibly and invisibly and how trauma often resists linear storytelling. She emphasized the ethical imperative of listening with care, honoring silence, complexity, and survivor agency.

Later, students explored transgenerational trauma, learning how unprocessed trauma can be passed down through families and institutions. Prof. Pumla underscored the importance of restorative practices rooted in ethical memory and dignity.

In the final session, Dr. Mays Imad gave an illuminating lecture on the neuroscience of trauma. She described how trauma alters the brain's structure and affects cognitive and emotional function. Her approach emphasized the need for trauma-informed systems that uphold both scientific understanding and human compassion.



## **Day 2: Embodied Memory and Collective Repair through Art**

Prof. Pumla opened the second day with a lecture on the transformative power of art. When language fails, artistic expression—through sculpture, dance, mural, and narrative—can give form to embodied memory and collective pain. Art, she explained, offers a space where empathy, witnessing, and transformation become possible.

The next session focused on collective trauma and communal repair. Healing, she argued, requires validating memory, confronting historical injustice, and cultivating restorative relationships between communities, including perpetrators and victims.



Later in the day, the group engaged in a performance lecture by Gratia, a South African researcher and dancer. Through her work, she demonstrated how dance as a reparative practice reclaims bodily agency, reconnects participants to ancestral rhythms, and transforms trauma into resilience and communal strength.

## **Day 3: Historical Memory and Public Education through Excursion**

On July 3, the group embarked on a deeply meaningful excursion into Cape Town's layered and painful histories. The day offered firsthand engagement with sites that embody South Africa's ongoing struggle for justice and remembrance.

### **1. District Six Museum**

The visit began at the District Six Museum, which commemorates a once-vibrant, multicultural community that was forcibly destroyed under apartheid. In 1966, District Six was declared a "whites-only" area, leading to the displacement of over 60,000 residents and the demolition of their

homes. The museum preserves personal stories, maps, photographs, and testimonies that honor the memory of this displaced community.

After the museum tour, students walked through the surrounding streets of District Six and engaged with local community members who generously shared their lived experiences and reflections on the lingering impact of apartheid-era removals.

## 2. Iziko South African Museum

Next, the group visited the Iziko South African Museum, part of the national museum complex. This institution provided critical historical and anthropological context for understanding South Africa's colonial past. Exhibits explored the intersections of science, colonial narratives, and the construction of history. The visit raised important questions about how institutions shape memory, who tells history, and the ethical obligations of museums in the decolonial era.



## 3. Slave Lodge

The day concluded at the Slave Lodge, one of South Africa's oldest colonial buildings and a former site of enslaved labor. Today, it functions as a museum critically engaging with the legacy of slavery, apartheid, and racial injustice. Through personal stories, visual installations, and historical records, the visit invited students to reflect on the enduring social and psychological effects of slavery and systemic racism.

These excursions exemplified how public history and museums can become agents of ethical memory, challenging dominant narratives while promoting social reflection and collective responsibility.



## **Day 4: Symbolic Reparations and the Politics of Restitution**

In the morning, the group visited a local community school partnered with Stellenbosch University as part of its symbolic reparation and social outreach efforts. The school serves as a model of how universities can build meaningful relationships with historically marginalized communities.

In the afternoon, Anell Stacey and Dr. Wilhelm Verwoerd led sessions on the ethical and political challenges of restitution. Dr. Verwoerd—grandson of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid—shared a personal and reflective account of confronting historical responsibility. He argued that true restitution must be relational and transformative, rooted in humility, deep listening, and long-term justice—not merely material compensation.

## **Day 5: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

The final day centered on critical engagement with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Prof. Pumla and Dr. Verwoerd, both of whom were involved in the TRC process, offered powerful reflections on its intentions, successes, and limitations.

Students participated in group presentations, synthesizing their week-long learning. These reflections connected the themes of trauma, repair, memory, and justice with broader global challenges. They also offered critical insights into how transitional justice can be made more inclusive, restorative, and future-oriented.

## **Conclusion**

The 2025 Summer School at Stellenbosch University offered a profound educational journey for students from the European Wasatia Graduate School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. Through lectures, artistic engagement, site visits, and personal encounters, students deepened their understanding of violent histories and their afterlives. The program emphasized the moral imperative of ethical listening, trauma-informed research, and reparative justice.

Insights from South Africa's journey toward truth, memory, and healing—shared by those who shaped it—will continue to influence the academic and ethical commitments of the Wasatia students as they move forward in their scholarship and leadership.

