

JIAS



The Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study cordially invites you to a webinar titled

Booty on Fire: Looking at *Izikhothane* with Thorstein Veblen

Thorstein Veblen's (2003 [1899]) critique of the nineteenth-century American leisure class makes it apparent that their costly, wasteful and showy expenditure was, while somewhat distasteful, in keeping with class expectations of normal behavior. While he did not focus on the so-called lower classes, he asserted that they did not stand outside the matrix of 'honour' mediated by conspicuous consumption. Although their consumption was constrained by meagre incomes, they emulated the higher classes as they too vied for status (Veblen 2003: 58). The poor were marginal to Veblen's original thesis, as was a form of consumption that was virtually unknown in Veblen's time, namely the spectacular total destruction of expensive commodities by poor people in front of an assembled audience. The South African township youth subculture of *ukukhothana* (literally, 'to lick', figuratively in this context, 'to boast') involves groups of youths from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds theatrically destroying expensive consumer items in competitive dance-offs. The destructive conspicuous consumption of *izikhothane* (participants in *ukukhothana*) represents a fascinating case study of people who consume well beyond what they can comfortably afford, a possibility that Veblen did not explore.

DATE ▪ 13 September 2021

TIME ▪ 10:00-12:00 (SAST)

SPEAKER ▪ Dr Sifiso Mnisi (Writing Fellow, JIAS)

RSVP on <https://forms.gle/mq8YBSjSSy8zc6fT7> to receive the Zoom details.