Reimagining Space and Safety in the South African Writing Centre:

Keynote address from the 2022 CWCA/ACCR conference

# South Africa: A Contested Space

South Africa (SA) has almost always been an exploited and contested space. Having been first colonised by the Dutch and then the British, the site of numerous territorial and tribal wars, home to Indian indentured labourers and the land of milk and honey (Bandeira, Higson-Smith, & Polatin, 2010, p. 92) to refugee and asylum seekers from across the African continent, her history to date can only be described as turbulent. As a country, she and her people have been scarred deeply by the ravages of a system and its policies marked by racial discrimination and segregation, culminating in the ultimate act of oppression through its system of Apartheid, which spanned the years from 1948 to the early 1990s (Repeal of Population Registration Act, 1991, June 17). So, while the country is now twenty-seven years or so into democracy, and still called the Rainbow Nation, there has, unfort-unately been very little to celebrate. The ravages of Apartheid (1948 to 1994) still reverb-erate through every aspect of life, for especially the marginalised and especially within the educational sphere. The trauma of the Apartheid era brought with it unprecedented turbulence, and as the events of the past few years demonstrate, continued into even the rays of the rainbow nation.