

Autumn Graduation Doctoral Dinner

Welcome: Professor Sibongile Muthwa

Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University

5 April 2019

Greetings

*Madam Chancellor
Chairperson of Council
Deputy Chairperson of Council and Council Members
Our four honorary doctorates and their guests
Dr Bongji Mkhabela
Dr Vuyo Mahlali
Reverend Frank Chikane
Prof Morgan Chetty
Deputy Vice-Chancellors
Executive Deans
Academics and University staff
Our honoured guests, family and friends*

And our apex achievers – our doctoral graduates

It is indeed my singular honour and privilege to welcome all of you to Nelson Mandela University on this celebratory evening, which marks a pinnacle point in the university calendar.

In this room tonight is a gathering of scholars whose collective repository of new and accumulated knowledge, wisdom, innovation, ideas and thought-leadership is vast, deep and indelible. All our doctoral graduates have shown determination, commitment and perseverance to have completed the arduous journey to achieve the zenith of academic achievement.

And so it is quite fitting that we are joined in our celebrations tonight by the four towering South Africans who are recipients of honorary doctorates bestowed by the university in the graduation ceremonies held today. I feel extra-ordinarily privileged to have worked together in different spaces and times with three of our recipients. And Professor Chetty, though my acquaintance with you is more recent, your

contribution to society is steeped in the same values and qualities that are the hallmarks of the contributions of Dr Mahlati, Dr Mkhabela and Reverend Chikane.

It is extra-ordinary how each of you have deployed your talents in service of society and in particular to change the circumstances of those marginalized by poverty, hardship and inequality. Your compassion for others has driven each of you to take on big, complex projects; to rally others to heed the call and join their energy with yours in driving deep social change; to fashion and build your own initiatives - all have which have impacted on the well-being of others. Instilled in each of you, is ethos of service, public accountability, rectitude, discernment, excellence and I dare say, the ability to take risks and tackle the unknown. Your courage and will to lead is an embodiment of the values Madiba lived by, and which you all emulate in your contributions to communities, the country, the continent and beyond. Through your selfless contributions, you lift as you rise. You bring inspiration to our students and staff about how each of us can become the best that lies in each of us.

At Mandela University, we have embarked on a purposeful journey to seek out and excavate the scholarly expression of Mandela. Much has been written about Mandela the man, the leader, the statesman. But little incisive work on the scholarship of Mandela has been embarked upon. The work we are pursuing is positioned as an exploration of the social figure of Mandela with a view to formulating a Critical Mandela Studies Programme with real, pragmatic import to engage with the grand challenges of our time. This is centred on conceptualising what it might mean for a university to be named after Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Our intention is to catalyse this within a Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies [TIMS].

And so as you continue your intellectual work in your respective fields, I wish to invite you to think about how your endeavours can contribute to conceptualising, generating, fleshing out, and exploring the scholarship of Mandela.

Working collectively, and in conversation with each other and with our communities, I know that we can discover what is as yet unknown. We can build on and expand the work of social change agents such as our honorary doctorates are courageously pursuing.

Together, we can change the world.

You are all most welcome here this evening. I thank you.