



**MEANINGS OF MANDELA WORKSHOP**

Welcome and Opening Remarks  
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**13 April 2021**  
**10:00 - to enter online Waiting Room at 09:50**

Dear colleagues, friend and *friends*

Welcome to our much-awaited workshop on the meanings of Mandela for *Nelson Mandela University*.

I would like to start by acknowledging the presence of our friends from Nelson Mandela Foundation, led by our Adjunct Professor Verne Harris and, a warm welcome to Prof Crain Soudien who has been co-travelling many roads with us, including this one on *Mandela*, the social figure.

I also need to extend a hearty welcome to my university colleagues from across the faculties, divisions and entities who are all availing themselves today to help us grapple with how the university should respond now that we are carrying the *Mandela* name.

We are privileged to be the only higher education institution on the globe bearing the name of the iconic former president, Nelson Mandela. We remain cognisant of the honour and responsibility that this name bestowed on us, and we strive to bring to the fore his values and ideals.

Since the name change in 2017, we had the Mandela centenary programme from July 2018 to July 2019, closing it with two remarkable lectures from Prof Mangcu. We also hosted the Mandela Colloquium, various public lectures and formalized the relationship with the Nelson

Mandela Foundation via a Memorandum of Agreement under which various projects are being implemented.

One of these relates to the Mandela Scholarship imperative and our commitment to build an architecture around it. For this reason, Senate and Council approved the establishment of the Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies; and we are building a critical scholarly network that is orbiting TIMS.

When our University acquired the Mandela name, our Council reflected on this and tasked my predecessor and I to put a think piece together for the December 2017 Council meeting. In this piece we argued that the University should focus on four aspects:

- The **essence of Mandela**, particularly as this relates to his leadership, his notion of social justice and the value of education in changing the trajectory of the marginalised and the vulnerable in society. We should examine the alignment of our values, including student and staff attributes, to that of his ethos, his lifetime work and his legacy.
- Secondly, we evaluate the extent to which our **foundational scholarly mission** of the University - teaching and learning, research, as well as engagement - are aligned to the distinct iconic brand of Madiba, and more broadly, the vision and values of a free, equal and democratic world that he stood and fought for. This, we suggested, will also enable us to advance new directions of scholarship that are synchronised with our larger purpose as Nelson

Mandela University. This is in part one of the focus areas of this workshop.

- Thirdly, we reflect on **institutional culture, practices and the symbols** that will define our institution and help to break with the legacy of the past.
- Finally, and in keeping with the mandate of our Council, we place a spotlight on the **governance ethos** of our Council and related governance structures that are charged with good corporate governance, setting the ethical tone of the University and which represent our image in the public eye and which safeguard the reputation of the University.

Since then, we have worked consistently to formulate a productive academic expression of *Mandela* and as such we are working on six programmes in this regard.

- a. Revitalisation of the Humanities
- b. The intellectual 'Mandela' identity of the University
- c. Transdisciplinary Studies
- d. African Intellectual Traditions
- e. Our Institutional Research Themes
- f. African Footprint

This workshop, aimed at engaging with current Mandela-related scholarship and exploring fresh lines of enquiry, will distil critical questions which would be helpful for the processes related to configuring Critical Mandela Studies and inform the Mandela University identity and posture. In short, this workshop will go a long way in crafting our intellectual and social project and integrate these across our faculties and divisions in partnership with our external friends.

Please enjoy the workshop, and rest assured of Council's commitment to give intellectual and programmatic flesh to the University's name of *Mandela*