



## **Dr Banda: Public Lecture Welcoming Remarks**

Professor Sibongile Muthwa  
*Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University*  
15:00, 29 February 2020, Auditorium, South Campus

Dr Joyce Banda

Honourable Mvoko, MEC for Finance

Dr Siphokazi Magadla, our respondent this afternoon

Our distinguished guests from the Continent accompanying Dr Banda

Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans of Faculties, Senior Management

Academics, staff and students of Nelson Mandela University

Our neighbours from Rhodes University: Political and International Studies  
Department

Learners from VM Kwinana High School in Uitenhage

Our visitors from across the country who have travelled to be with us today,

The community of Nelson Mandela Bay

Our colleagues and friends watching us via live-streaming and interacting with  
us on different social media platforms.

I also wish to recognise Dr Babalwa Magoqwana, the Acting Director of the  
Center for Women and Gender Studies at Nelson Mandela University.

Molweni, Good afternoon, Goeie middag, Sanibonani. I am honoured and privileged to welcome you all to Nelson Mandela University. I thank you all for making time to be part of this special gathering on a Saturday afternoon. I also bring you the greetings of our Chancellor, Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, and our Chairperson of Council, Ambassador Nozipho January-Bardill, both of whom would have wished to be here in person, but due to prior commitments are following proceedings through live-streaming.

As our university seeks to define what an “engaged” dynamic African University means, it is our pleasure to welcome Dr Joyce Banda in our presence. Indeed this is historical and monumental event for the university.

Whilst recognising your contribution to the continent when serving as the President of Malawi, Dr Banda, I believe it is fitting to emphasize, that, as we know, your role stretches far beyond that. To us, we regard you as a living archive, an institution of knowledge. As a wisdom-keeper, you have your placing as an Elder Mother, which in scholarship is sociologically located and termed here in South Africa as uMakhulu<sup>1</sup> (Grandmother in IsiXhosa). As we know, the Elder Mother (uMakhulu) possesses power, authority and leadership in our own households and communities. From your life journey, you possess the experience and know-how of the stories and histories of this continent: those of leadership, governance, gendered power and international engagement of the continent with broader community. Yet, despite this, it is a well known fact that women in the archive have been presented as “wives”; “first ladies” and in many ways an extension of the “male leaders”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Magoqwana (2018)

It is our hope that Dr Banda's presence here will start challenging our students and scholars to begin to interrogate how these dominant archives have been constructed. It is our collective task to excavate, record and to retrieve the stories of the Elder Mother and record these social documentaries in a manner that centers the dignity of women as thinkers and leaders in their own right. It is therefore imperative for the scholars, students and learners present today, to soak in this moment and challenge ourselves to generate new archives from our living archives and their oral histories such as those that will be shared with us today by Dr Banda.

Dr Banda's presence today, reminds me of the speech by Kwame Nkruma in 1963, when he opened the Institute of African Studies in Ghana. Referring to the meanings of a "dynamic, African genius" he said "When I speak of African genius I speak of something different to Negritude, something not apologetic but dynamic"...And he continues to say..."I do not mean some vague 'brotherhood' based on a criterion of colour or on the idea that Africans have no reasoning but only a sensitivity. By African genius I mean something positive, our socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional state craft, our highly developed code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy".

Our very aim as this university, is to understand society as "dynamic and not static". In our intention to be a 'dynamic' African university that is purposeful in understanding a "dynamic" society we are required to refashion the tools of understanding our past and future to rid us of the violence against the poor, women, sexual minorities, young people and those who cannot speak a language familiar to our own. This must be what informs our scholarship, and we must be

continuously restless in our intellectual pursuits to produce the full story of our past.

Dr Banda, I am looking forward to you posing challenges to our scholars, students and learners to [re]think about how we engage the community, the continent and world in a “dynamic” manner. It is also a call for us to conceptualise a-new how we write about the complexity of occupying power as women from the global South. This will make a critical contribution to the task we have set for ourselves to reimagine engagement, particularly as this relates to engaging with the community and broader African societies. As a university, we then need to integrate these learnings into our curricula to make these relevant to both local and global contexts, drawing from the diversity of philosophical and ideological orientations and worldviews.

Through the Centre for Philosophy in Africa and Centre for Women and Gender Studies, we are purposefully foregrounding African Women intellectual histories in our gender discourse and internationalization agenda. Through this deliberate approach, we will begin to produce relevant and engaged archives that go beyond the gendering of our histories of the future. This work will take women’s complicated histories of occupying power on the continent on their own terms and make sure these are recorded and studied. This will be at the core of designing our curriculum and scholarship to produce graduates with ontological security, and who are dynamic and globally competitive.

The scholarship and research work of the Center for Women and Gender Studies will articulate with the university’s broader quest to explore the scholarship of

Mandela, our namesake. This emerging scholarship is one of the principal articulations of the university's ethical-intellectual endeavours and pragmatic manifestations regarding social justice, inequality, and transformative leadership; university transformation; non-racialism, equality, human rights and democracy. Through the deliberate excavation of African Women intellectual histories, Nelson Mandela University will generate new research and intellectual collaborations that vigorously engage with issues of social injustice and transformation, including leadership development. This is particularly pertinent in the current age in which social, political, economic and environmental challenges are accompanied by a local and global mistrust of democratic institutions, the attrition of human rights, the escalation and deepening of poverty, unemployment, human vulnerability, war and organised political violence and the amplification of global racism, sexism, fundamentalism, fascism, environmental degradation and climate change. Today's lecture is a corner-stone contribution to this critical [and long overdue] social quest.

Again, let me welcome all of you to this dynamic African University, Nelson Mandela.

Enkosi, Thank You, Dankie and Ngiyabonga.