



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

2014 PROTEA LIFE OF A LEGEND COIN SERIES COIN SET LAUNCH

“Nelson Mandela’s education years”

KGORONG BUILDING, UNISA

Good evening and a very warm welcome to the University of South Africa. It is a signal honour and pleasure to celebrate with you this evening, the official launch of the illustrious Coin Set entitled: *Mandela Life of a legend*.

This second edition of the SA Mint Protea coin series commemorates Nelson Mandela’s years of education through three coins:

- a R25 1oz 24ct gold coin;
- a R5 1/10oz 24ct gold coin;
- and a R1 sterling silver coin. (I am sure you will be hearing much more about that later on.)

The first Protea Mandela coins in 2013 began with the former president’s early childhood in Qunu heralding a 13-part journey themed on the life of Mandela and in 2014, his education

became the focus of the coins. This evening, the full launch set, with mint marks of Fort Hare and UNISA, will be revealed. Very exciting indeed!

You know as the VC of the largest University on the Continent, we deal with a lot of red tape and bureaucracy (and I see some looks of empathy and sympathy from fellow sufferers!). So, not surprisingly, I got to wondering what criteria were in place for an individual to have his or her face on a national coin. I must say that I was not able to find anything concrete in my brief internet exploration, but I will assume that, as is the case for any of the highest honours that are accorded by the State, having one's face or symbol on a coin speaks to the universality of the esteem and honour – even the reverence - in which the individual or the symbol is held.

This was borne out in the following paragraph which I found on the SA Mint's website:

It is said that one can tell the story of a country based on the designs depicted on its coins over the years, and this is certainly true for South Africa too. Since 1994 the focus of the Mint has been on depicting relevant and nation- building themes on our coins, aligned to our democracy. This includes featuring our national heritage as well as honouring outstanding individuals who have made a significant contribution in our society. Some of the people that have been featured on our coins include Chief Albert Luthuli, Bishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela, FW de Klerk and Mahatma Ghandi. Our Natura Series features wildlife and is very popular both locally and internationally. Some of the proceeds from these coins are ploughed back into initiatives that promote nature conservation. We believe that coins are meant to last a very long time, and that the coins we make today will become a treasure for tomorrow – hence our brand promise *of Timeless Value*.

Distinguished guests, the brand promise *Timeless Value* resonates very strongly with the University of South Africa's own commitment to quality education that similarly shapes futures. *Timeless Value* is built into our education process and finds its echoes in our 142 year old history. In fact, fundamental to our entire ethos is the notion of socio-economic development and of nation building through the education of our students. Since my incumbency, Unisa's understanding of education has been broadened to include the exposure of staff, students, stakeholders and indeed, the community at large, to the role that individuals have played in

influencing and shaping the course of our history and the attainment of our democracy. Of course, the most illustrious of those individuals is Nelson Mandela, a Unisa alumnus and our honoree this evening. We need to be reminded though, that South Africa has many more heroes and heroines and as a university we are cognizant of our responsibility to ensure that their stories and contributions are also written and heard. We believe that we are doing that.

What is perhaps the most special and significant feature for Unisa this evening, is the reaffirmation of the role that this university has played and continues to play, in providing opportunities for quality education to those who by dint of personal circumstance, could not or cannot, attend a full-time university. Unisa genuinely does offer hope and opportunity to those who seek it out, for both undergraduate and post graduate studies. Few other distance education institutions have nationally quality assured and subsidized offerings. We are quite unique in the world in that respect. I can tell you that we are the envy of many educators globally. The fact that Nelson Mandela and so many other illustrious (South) Africans knew this and utilized the opportunities that Unisa provides to acquire their university education has served to cement our status and reputation as a genuinely South African and African university that is firmly rooted in our country and continent.

Ladies and gentlemen Unisa's new, slightly adapted vision is to be *the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity*. Tonight we honour, through the striking of a new series of coins, our alumnus and former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, whose life exemplifies that vision - a highly appropriate and apposite gesture for an individual whose life has shaped other lives – and our collective history.

As a university we are thrilled to welcome you here and to play our part in this form of nation building.

I thank you.