



*Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor*

## **PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA**

### **VICE CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL OF UNISA**

#### **WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS**

#### **The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture**

**14 September 2018, ZK Mathews Great Hall, Unisa**

- His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa
- Mrs Zanele Mbeki, former First Lady of the Republic of South Africa
- Minister Naledi Pandor, Minister of Higher Education and Training
- Nkosi Patekile Holomisa, Deputy Minister of Labour
- Mr Andries Nel, Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
- Ms Tembi Majola, Deputy Minister of Energy
- Mr Mondli Gungubele, Deputy Minister of Finance

- Mr Trevor Manuel, Chairman of old Mutual Limited and Former Minister of Finance and Ms Maria Ramos
  - Mr Sakhile Simelane, Chairperson of Unisa Council and Mrs Simelane all the Members of the University Council Present
  - Mrs Mandla Makhanya
  - Mrs Nontsikelelo Biko
  - Mr Nkosinathi Biko, Founder and Executive Trustee of the Steve Biko Foundation and Mrs Sello Biko and other Members of the Biko Family present
- Your Excellency, Ambassador Bene M'Poko, Ambassador of Democratic Republic of Congo and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps to South Africa
- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present

**Your Majesties:**

- **Nkosi Zanelizwe Dalindyebo**
- **Nkosi Xhanti Sigcawu**
- **Nkosi Ahlangene Sigcawu**
- **Nkosi Mziwoxolo Tyhali**
- **Princess Mandlakazi Sigcawu**
- **Nkosana Patrick Ntsobi**
- Mr Ishmael Mkhabela, Chairperson of the Steve Biko Foundation and other members of the Foundation present and Mrs Mkhabela
- Dr Brigalia Bam, Chairperson of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and other members of the Foundation present

- Members of the University Executive and extended Management present
- **Former University Office Bearers:**
  - Judge Bernard Ngoepe and Mrs Daphne Ngoepe, Former Unisa Chancellor and former Judge President of the North and South Gauteng High Courts and other members of Judiciary present here tonight
  - Prof Barney Pityana and Mrs Dimza Pityana, Former Unisa Principal and Vice Chancellor
  - Prof Neo Mathabe, Former Unisa Prof Vice Chancellor
- Representatives from National, Provincial, local Government and Chapter nine Institutions present
- Representatives from Various Educational Institutions, Organisations and Foundations present
- Members of the Ecclesiastical Community present
- Representatives from Various Political Parties in attendance
- Members of the Business Community present
- Members of the University Community present
- Representatives from Various students' bodies present
- Leaders of our National SRC and SRCs from our sister universities
- Leaders of Organised Labour from Unisa and our country
- Representatives from various Media houses present

- Distinguished members of the Audience
- Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the University of South Africa and our partner, the Steve Biko Foundation, I am pleased to welcome you to this historic 19<sup>th</sup> Steve Biko Annual Memorial Lecture this evening. We embrace you all in the spirit of African Ubuntu.

Each time we hold these flagship memorial lectures, the country and the world take notice and participate in one form or another in remembering this iconic intellectual and liberation struggle giant, Steve Biko. This tells us that he belonged to his family, his community, his organization – to all of us – a resounding testimony, if ever we needed such, that his legacy remains timely and timeless.

Steve Biko was one of the central figures struggle against the apartheid regime. His greatness is attested to by the fact that more than four decades after his murder, his voice still reverberates from generation to generation, informing conversations and debates in our country, our continent and the global community.

So you will understand when I say that it is an honour for me to thank the Biko family and the Steve Biko Foundation for the partnership that has seen this flagship memorial lecture growing from strength to

strength. Unisa is pleased to play our part in its growth and the promotion of Biko's Black Consciousness ideology and ethos to all corners of our society through community outreach and engagement programmes. To the Biko family and the Biko Foundation, the generosity of your spirit and deep commitment to this partnership is always appreciated and respected.

In saying that ladies and gentlemen, it would be remiss of me not to say that as we gather today to remember Steve Biko, forty-one years since his brutal murder by the apartheid regime, we are also reminded of the recently departed struggle stalwarts such as Mama Zondeka Sobukwe, Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Bra Hugh Masekela, Minister Zola Skweyiya, Prof Willie Kgositsile, Ambassador George Nene, the great photographer Ntate Sam Nzima and all of our struggle icons who departed from this earth this year. So many and so sad. It is also forty years since the death of Ntate Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe and ten years since that of Mama Miriam Makeba. Each one of these names and great personalities, should remind us forcefully, that freedom did not come cheaply. So many leaders suffered and were tortured: many of them paying the ultimate price, thus robbing their families of fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, sons and daughters.

As we gather here we are also reminded of the centenary marking remarkable lives of Mama Albertina Sisulu and President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela who would have celebrated their 100 year birthdays this year. Quite fittingly, this coincides with Unisa's celebration of its move from Cape Town to Pretoria in 1918. All of the great names and lives that I have just mentioned - and so many, many, others are honoured markers of the milestones of our epic journey and our unceasing quest for social justice.

As we gather tonight we are mindful of the immense socio-economic challenges that we are facing today and the volatile global context in which we find ourselves. We find ourselves at the crossroads as a country, mindful that the decisions that we take either individually or collectively will determine the trajectory of our country, and signal to the world whether or not we are willing and able to give true meaning to the promises of our liberation and democracy. The common theme and voices from our universities, cities, villages, townships, farms and informal settlements is that we cannot underrate social justice and overrate reconciliation; that in fact, the two go together. Ariel Dorfmann, delivering the Nelson Mandela Lecture in 2010, captured the essence of our quest for justice when he said "...we cannot undo the damage of the past but must strive instead to undo the damage to the

future. We must prove in our actions tomorrow that we have learned from the terrors and sins of yesteryear."

As we continue on our task of nation-building we should be reminded of the timeless relevance of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness ideology, which recognized the redemptive, humanizing and empowering value of human consciousness as the most potent tool in galvanizing society towards nation-building - by pricking our sense of agency as authors of our destiny and captains of our journey to that destiny.

Your Excellency, President Ramaphosa, you are at the helm of our Republic and we are all working with you as you chaperone us along the path we shall be taking to confront and overcome these challenges. It is, therefore, most appropriate that we hear from you this evening, especially since Black Consciousness was very much a part of your political heritage, especially in the early years of your political activism.

Having said that distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I invite all of us present here and those following this lecture via all our sophisticated means of communication to join me in welcoming His Excellency, President Ramaphosa to take us on a journey of reflection on this 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture. Let a festival of ideas begin and engagements flourish beyond this hall!

I thank you