

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
BY
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ON THE OCCASION OF CONFERMENT
OF A
DR OF LAWS HONORIS CAUSA -UNISA
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**VICE CHANCELLOR,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Pheko & Pakkies, & Tshabalala Family, Bakoena
Sons and Daughters Of Africa**

60 years ago when I applied to do my first degree at the University of South Africa; I never imagined that in my 90th year of life, I would be standing here receiving a Doctor of Laws Honorius Causa, at this prestigious institution of learning, which is recognised and respected internationally.

I am humbled, and accept this honour. It is not only for myself, but for the thousands of people who have worked with me, lifted me, shared their stories of injustice and trusted me in various positions of leadership to be a voice that speaks for millions living on the margins of our African societies. Thank you. Ke ya Leboha. Ndiyabulela, Ndiyabonga. Asante Sana.

In November 1963 I found myself in Swaziland as a refugee from the apartheid colonialist regime. I had continued my Second Year B.A. studies with the University of South Africa by correspondence. I ran into an unexpected problem. My wrist watch let me down. When I got into the examination room the invigilator told me that I was one and half hours late. I begged her to give me the prescribed three hours. She refused. That was a political science examination. I went ahead with the examination. I failed it because I could not finish writing the examination paper.

I did some of my UNISA studies while in the Krugersdorp Prison in South Africa and while in Khami Maximum Security Prison near Harare in the then Rhodesia –today’s Zimbabwe. From Rhodesia I was deported to Zambia. Would I continue with my studies with UNISA after this? Only time would tell. Anyway, I later completed my B.A. degree with the University of South Africa.

I have many obsessions. I contributed a research paper which expelled South Africa from the United Nations. One of my key passions today is the thorny and burning question of equitable redistribution of land in South Africa.

In 1961 a colonial apartheid Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd told an audience in London that “More than 300 years ago, two population groups equally foreign to South Africa, converged in rather small numbers on what was practically empty land. Neither group colonised or robbed the other.”

2. Eric Louw, an apartheid colonial foreign affairs minister too, told a London audience that “The Bantu (Africans) began to trickle from the North across the Limpopo when Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Table Bay in 1652.”

3. On South Africa being a “Whiteman’s country,” J.L. Shreizer a colonial M.P.(Tembuland) reminded however, that “Before we set foot here the natives (Africans)....aborigines were here. We did not bring it about. It was brought by a Higher Power, God. [House of Assembly Debates First Session, First Parliament 1910-1911 pages 18-to 19 clearly reveals this historical fact.]

This is not propaganda. Many respectable historians have exposed this perfidious falsehood. Sir Godfrey Lagden author of the Basutos has written, “The seizure by force or guise of lands actually in possession by the Africans was a political blunder of the first magnitude as well as an act of injustice.” (1919 Volume 11 page 642)

International Law has squashed colonialism. A prominent British

academic Prof. Shula Marks is in this category. G.F. Von Martens stated, “From the moment a nation has taken possession of a territory in right of first occupier, and with the desire to establish itself there, it becomes the absolute and sole proprietor of it and all that it contains; and has the right to exclude all other nations from it.

The long settlement of European colonialists in South Africa by force of arms never transferred any land title from Africans? That is why even today the constitution of so-called “New South Africa” is a dismal failure, especially economically for the indigenous African majority regarding the equitable distribution of land.

After the colonial settlers realised that Africans would not accept land dispossession; they distorted the history of African people as “*terra nullius*” (land belonging to nobody). This was incorrect.

We must never forget or ignore The Berlin General Act of 26 February 1885 instigated by King Leopold II partitioning Africa. This Act contributed to a false legal and political framework which to this day set the concept of an Africa that is *terra nullius*. This is a distortion of history.

Unfortunately, many institutions of higher learning misrepresent African history or discredit African epistemology. For instance, Prof. Hugh Trevor-Roger of Oxford University long said:

“Undergraduates are seduced as always that they be taught the history of Africa. Perhaps in future there will be one to teach, but at present there is none or very little. There is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness and darkness is not the subject of history.” Roger further stated that African history is “the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in irrelevant corners of the globe.”

The truth about the indigenous people by the white section of the

community reflects a clear colonial situation of international law. Even res nullius is not land belonging to nobody. That is why Cape Town which was occupied by the first settlers like Jan van Riebeeck never stopped being African land when the settlers seized it in 1652 by force of arms and ruled it by colonial means.

Many battles of national resistance against colonialism were later to be fought by Africans with spears against colonial guns: This is reflected in African history, jurisprudence and literature:

**“Uphaqa nje ngelanga.
Inyathi yase nhlakanhlakeni.
Unokuzila ukudla kwamagwala.
Amagwala adlu bubende.”**

This reflects the famous Battle of Isandlwana in February 1884. It was led by King Cetshwayo where African spears won against colonial guns.

Then there is the Battle of Amalinde in which King Hintsa was involved:

**“Unjonga ntshiyini bathi uqumbile.
Inkunzi abayikhuzu kuhlaba ingekahlabi.
Uzigodlwana zemazi endala.
Zingalala endleleni.
Yazini kunyembelekile.”**

Huge lands were seized from Africans by colonialists in what they called Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Transvaal and Natal. That is why there are war poems which also involved King Moshoeshoe I

**Mohale ya maleka Mphenene.
Thaka namane le Rantshadi.
Selekane se lefofo sa phakwe le leyeba.
Sa Maburu a ditshweneng.
Sa matsoha se kwenehile.
Poho ya khetha dithole**

**maroleng thotaneng ha Rantshadi.
Ha ba ha botsa Morena Letshowa.
A re o ne o le hokae mohale oa phoka mphene.
Ke ne ke le teng.
Rantsho Tshukudu yaboya kampejana.
Ya maboya ho le bohloko .
Ho le dibakhabiki di ipabatsa.
Banna ba heso ba tsota ditshehlo ho hlabo.
Ya re Sehlabaneng ha boyo ba lonya.
Ba nang le Mosetlane leleraropo.
Phatsa tsa majoe di re fahla mahlong.
Kulo di arola dihloho tsa batho. Marumo a khaola batho diphaka .
Kharenate di qhoma. Khabo di tuka.
Bongata bo re ke letsatsi la bofelo.
Ho bahale e le letsatsi la polao.
THE LAND IS OURS Proclaimed Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe and
the warriors of Africa! He and Muiziwakhe A. Lembede long
declared that the complete overthrow of colonialism; that white
man's privilege must be scrapped.”**

Izwe Lethu! END