



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

**PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**WELCOME: 2018 UNISA FOUNDERS LECTURE**

**SENATE HALL, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS**

**23 August 2018**

**18:30**

- ◆ Madame Programme Director, Dr Genevieve James
- Members of Council present
- ◆ Professor Zodwa Motsa-Madikane, Director in the Change Management Unit
- Members of Unisa's executive and extended management
- Our keynote speaker this evening, Professor Thuli Madonsela
- Representatives from Government, the Business Community and Institutions of Higher Learning
- Members of Unisa National Student Representative Council and other student and labour formations

- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Council, Management and staff of the University of South Africa, it is my honour and pleasure to bid you a very warm welcome to Unisa's 2018 Founders Lecture.

This year's Founders lecture comes at a time when, as a society and as a nation, we are standing on the threshold of a new dawn in our democracy – without any certainty at all about what that new dawn will bring, or the shape of our democracy, which just a few years ago, was a given – premised as it was on a seemingly iron-clad Constitution.

Nowadays, one is regularly reminded of the old joke around the 40 years spent by Moses and his people wandering in the wilderness; the reason being that when Moses came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments, the people deliberated on them and said: "Well, the way we see it these are only suggestions!" And so they wandered - and wandered - and wandered.

We all know the saying: "When all else fails, read the manual." I am speaking of course, of our Constitution. It is our "manual", and yet it cannot be denied that there is a growing sense that our Constitution

is seen by many as mere “suggestions”, even without appreciating fully its content, its undeniable *gravitas* and of course, its intention.

The first thing that goes when our politicians, our business people, our leaders and our citizens adopt this attitude is ethical leadership and governance. As a society we are now living the awful reality of that short-sightedness or even wilful ignorance. Nothing seems to be working, and underpinning it all is a crisis of ethical leadership.

Well, this evening we have in our midst a “voice in the wilderness” who has consistently proclaimed and practiced a message that for the longest time has been actively and passively rebutted and resisted by so many of our leaders. That message has consistently been “ethical leadership and governance for an ethical democracy” always, premised on our Constitution. I speak of course, of our keynote speaker this evening, Professor/Advocate Thuli Madonsela, who is clearly passionate about the rule of law and ethical democracy. This *iron lady* of South Africa – perhaps we should redub her our “*platinum lady*” – has always been a beacon of light and hope in our society, not to mention a consistent exemplar of ethical leadership and citizenship. As a University, we are proud to be associated with a leader of her calibre.

Professor Madonsela, you are most welcome. I know that you have a frantic schedule, so thank you for making the time to be with us this evening.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, a core part of that democracy is a healthy and flourishing higher education sector – not the least for its role in producing a critical citizenry. And so this evening's lecture is apposite. With so many HEIs going through untold turmoil, we are called to reformat our collective *harddrive*, and reclaim those values that informed the Bill of Rights and our Constitution *and* the vision for higher education post democracy. We seem to have become lost in the wilderness and forgotten who we are as a people and we are in desperate need of ethical leaders such as Professor Madonsela, to help guide us to the *promised land*. Prof Madonsela, with your hallmark courage and integrity you have consented to share your thoughts with us. For that we are most appreciative.

At a time of fierce debate and contestation around our democracy and our Constitution and their role and relevance in a society in transition, and as we try to maintain order in a higher education sector that offers few certainties, this evening's address will

undoubtedly contribute in a very meaningful way, to the level and quality of intellectual engagement that produces results.

Thank you for gracing us with your presence distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. In so doing, you have aligned yourselves with those public and private intellectuals who seek enlightenment and solutions through the time honoured and proven practice of sober intellectual engagement.

I thank you.