

**INHULDIGINGSREDE AS NUWE KANSELIER VAN DIE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT TE BLOEMFONTEIN**

OP 7 FEBRUARIE 2003

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Geagte en geliefde oud-Pres Mandela, Minister Asmal, Premier, Dames en Here, bomme le bontate.

Hierdie luisterryke geleentheid staan in die teken van 'n trotse tradisie. Dit kom tot uiting in gebruiklike seremoniële vertoon; dit manifesteer in die waardigheid van elke handeling en weerspieël die trots van die Vrystaatse Universiteit op sy onmiskenbare en lang rekord van akademiese prestasie en intellektuele asook nougesette naspeuring van nuwe kennis, wetenskap beoefening, van kennis oordraging wat op hul beurt kennelik bygedra het tot die groei en ontwikkeling van Suid-Afrika tot 'n land van uitnemendheid waarmee die wêreld weldeeglik rekening moet hou.

Vir enige organisme om te oorleef moet hy sy lewenskrag put uit gevestigde en beproefde bestaansbronne, maar moet hy waak teen stagnasie en gevolglik homself lustig bereid verklaar tot verandering, aanpassing en transformasie. Die spanning tussen regverdigbare tradisie aan die een kant en progressiewe maar nie bandelose transformasie nie aan die anderkant moet deur die universiteit met oorleg en insig bestuur word.

Universiteite is inderdaad die kweekspek vir die balansering van ekstreme uitgangspunte maar terselfdertyd die skepping van behoudendheid vanuit die smeltkroes van radikale denke.

Rustige en kundige gematigheid is waar die klem van 'n gesonde volk setel en waar die totaliteit van sy aard vorm kry.

In this regard, I am reminded of a line from Pascal in Camus's RESISTANCE, REBELLION and DEATH, which gives expression to this notion:

“A man does not show his greatness by being at one extremity, but rather by touching both at once.”

Sound ideas, thought and the truth are never passive. They form the basis of inclusivity and the pulling in of people towards the creative centre where togetherness and unity find birth and where humanity is most comfortable. Ubuntu is the outflow of this contention.

In this regard our venerated former President Nelson Mandela is a monumental example. It is in the completeness of his beliefs, principles and example, that he finds personal and emotional comfort, which so inspires the world. Above all, he helps us to understand our humanity as well as our Africaness.

This is best expressed in his inaugural address in 1994, when Madiba reminded us that „we were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us and gave us the assurance that when we

are liberated from our own fear our presence automatically liberates us”.

In this regard Madiba, I want to give you the assurance that this university of which you are an alumnus, will pursue your philosophy and example vigorously and passionately.

The career of the immediate past Vice-Chancellor, Prof Stef Coetzee is albeit specifically located in University life a leaf from your book. The Council, Senate, Faculty, Students and Unions followed his bold transformational thrust, because you Madiba, created the confidence and context and convinced all that the worst is behind us and the best is yet to be.

The Council with Mr Justice R Hancke and Mr Dines Gihwala at the helm will do you, Sir, and all of us proud.

I am also proud and honoured to be stepping into the shoes of Premier Winky Direko, the outgoing Chancellor. I have for many years worked with Premier Direko in Teachers Unions and Community Organizations. Over the years, we have become good friends and her dedication and integrity, as well as her love of all people has always impressed me.

We are excited about change. This university will continue to embrace transformation, both on the campus as well as in the broader community and our country at large.

The ancient Greek cyclical theory of history portrays societal stability as the mark of constructive change, finding expression in the notion that the more things change, the more they remain the same. This interpretation of change is the opposite of stagnation mistaken for conservatism and anti-growth and development. Fear of the unknown is natural, but growth is inherent and intrinsic of nature. It is an inexorable force.

The search for truth is never neutral and abstract and managed transformation is the expression of our principles therefore, truth in action. We at the Free State University want to be reckoned as ready and geared to lead the way of transformation to a better future.

Allow me for a brief moment to turn to Prof. Frederick Fourie, the incoming Vice-Chancellor. I want to wish you everything of the best for a successful tenure as leader of this campus. The heart of your challenge is to take decisions. When you are confronted by decisions, do not ask what is easy, popular and expedient or what costs least, but what is right be courageous.

Pastarnak said in Dr Zhivago that,

“gregariousness is the refuge of the mediocre.”

Secondly, you will know by now that criticism will be a far greater part of your life as Rector than plaudits and approbation.

Thirdly, don't think you can do very much by yourself. There are too many of them and only one of you.

Fourthly, when an author in Renaissance Italy around the time of Machiavelli, wanted to write about the science of governance, he asked the best governor he knew – the Duke of Mantua, what the quality of most successful governor would be. The Duke quickly answered in two words “essere umano” – to be human. Be compassionate.

Finally your task as academic head will draw on your skills to create the space for the discovery and rediscovery of ideas and encouragement of the forums, where ideas will be contested. You have shown yourself to be more than up to the challenge and we wish you God’s blessing.

Now, let me say something about our University: This is a university of excellence in many faculties like Medicine and Agricultural Science etc. The Law and Administrative Faculties thrive in the surroundings of the Court of Appeal of South Africa. But, about universities generally and of this university in particular, I want to say this. The one aspect we today miss of certain Universities of old South Africa viz the robustness of the discourse. Academics were fearless in analysis and contestation. The discourse reflected a strong commitment to truth. Their voices were being heard. That voice is not the same anymore.

In this regard, Madiba’s fearless voice is often a lone one, but thank God, a powerful one. We must bring the weight of science and critical analysis and interpretation to bear in support of Madiba and

other moral giants in these very important social and survival matters.

John Milton described the world of the elect and the world of the damned as an incontrovertible hierarchy of ranks and orders. The idea of hierarchical natural inequality, predisposes the mind to a policy of fear guided by pessimism.

The approach to enormous challenges, like Poverty, AIDS and Iraq, may quite possibly be informed by this predisposition. To overcome the onset of pessimism, we must not only delve into what appears to be wrong, but commit ourselves to help find the answers.

The academic community must play its role of vigilance and not indifference. The University's disposition must be one of resolution and not equivocation. In this regard the student community is a force for change as well stability and growth and we appreciate that.

Universiteite, kan nie en moenie probeer om alles vir almal te wees nie, maar die blootlegging van die waarheid na afloop van intellektuele en empiriese ondersoek en beraadslaging, sowel as die verkondiging van ideë op vreeslose dog verantwoordelike wyse is integraal aan die aard van 'n moderne universiteit.

Laat my ten slotte toe om te sê dat die toekoms van die Afrikaner verseker is juis omdat hy besig is om op te gaan in 'n groter inklusiewe Afrikaanse gemeenskap waarin ras al minder tot geen

rol speel nie: Dit herinner ons aan die profetiese uitspraak van N P van Wyk Louw reeds in die sestigerjare van die vorige eeu: (wanneer) "n groot deel van ons volk in die gevaar sou kom om te meen dat ons nie in geregtigheid met ons medevolke in Suid-Afrika hoef saam te leef nie; sou ons kon meen dat blote voortbestaan die hoofsaak is, nie regverdige bestaan nie." Die breë Afrikaanse gemeenskap is onderweg na daardie regverdige bestaan; na die deelnaam aan die bou van 'n Nasie wat al die elemente van 'n goeie demokrasie bevat. Die Afrikaanse gemeenskap wil deel wees aan die groter nie-rassige volk wat geregtigheid en regverdigheid koester en wat ekonomiese groei en ontwikkeling voorop stel.

Wat in wese vandag hier gebeur is dat 'n belangrike historiese instelling van die Afrikaner afdoende besluit het dat voortbestaan in geregtigheid sy keuse is vir die pad van die toekoms en dat ons vandag opnuut hande vat op die pad wat NP van Wyk Louw die pad van geregtigheid noem.

Hierdie universiteit het homself klaarblyklik bevry. Hy is inklusief Suid-Afrikaans. Hy wil beide ten volle Suid-Afrikaans wees, maar terselfdertyd strewe om 'n trotse universiteit van Afrika te wees.

Madiba u teenwoordigheid verleen gevolglik nie bloot luister aan die dag nie, maar wil ons graag glo is 'n gebaar van vertrouwe, aanmoediging en endossering en simboliek. Ons sal ons volk nie teleurstel nie. Ons is Suid-Afrikaners wat die vertrouwe wat u in ons stel, opmerk en diep ter harte neem. Ons is Afrikaanse mense – inklusief en opgewonde – optimisties. Ons is mense van die

wordende nie-rassige Suid-Afrika; integraal, oop en bly. Ons is Afrikane. Ons ken geen ander plek nie.

Transformasie is gevolglik nie vir ons 'n las nie. Dit is 'n proses waartoe ons met oorgawe verbind is. Ons wil geken word as 'n universiteit van intellektuele, akademiese en wetenskaplike uitnemendheid. Ons is egter ook 'n universiteit wat nie terug sal deins van ons groter maatskaplike verantwoordelikheid. Ons stem sal gehoor word en ons daade sal sterker blyk altyd op verantwoordelike dog daadkragtige manier. Ek is gevolglik trots om op hierdie besondere manier deel te wees van die Universiteit van die Vrystaat.

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