

**THE ADDRESS BY THE INCOMING CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT
HARE, ADVOCATE DUMISA BUHLE NTSEBEZA SC, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS
INAUGURATION AND INVESTITURE AS SUCH ON WEDNESDAY THE 3RD MAY,
2017,UFH SPORTS CENTRE, ALICE**

[EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY!]

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, PROF SHOBER

CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL, ADVOCATE THANDI ORLEYN, AND ALL MEMBERS OF
COUNCIL PRESENT

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF BUHLUNGU, HIS DEPUTIES, PROFFS G MAYENDE
AND CL OBI

THE REGISTRAR AND HIS DEPUTY AND ALL EXECUTIVES IN THE MANAGEMENT
OF THE UNIVERSITY, DEANS, PROFESSORS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF, WORKERS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVE
UNIONS.

STUDENT LEADERS AND STUDENTS AS A WHOLE

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, DR BLADE NZIMANDE, OTHER
DIGNITARIES FROM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, THE PREMIER FOR THE

EASTERN CAPE, HONOURABLE MASUALLE, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PRESENT

ALL OF US IN ATTENDANCE, EACH ONE OF WHOM IS A DIGNITARY IN HIS OR
HER RIGHT.

ALL MY FAMILY MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE HERE, AND IN PARTICULAR MY
WIFE, DR NONANDI, "NANA" MAKAULA-NTSEBEZA, who gets particular
mention because she worked tirelessly more than a slave would have done, in
compiling the GUESTS LIST of those who come as my special guests, a list which
at one time went into a hundred PLUS names!

MLISELA NOMTHINJANA, ZIHLOBO, MAQABANE, NDIYABULISA KUNI NONKE,
NDINOVUYO NGOBUKHO BENU, NGOKUBA NIZE KUZIMASA LO MSITHO
OSULUNGEKE KANGAKANANA.

NDAKUBA NDIYILOZILE UKUBA ANDIKHANGE NDIBHEKISE NAKUNI
ZINZWAKAZI NEENZWANA KWIKWAYARA YALAPHA, OMCULO WAYO
OZUKILEYO, UDLWENGULE UMXHELO KUTHI THINA MANXIL' ENGOMA,
KWATSHO KWATHI NCO ngaphakathi, Kwanga awungeyeki lo mculo,
wanqanyulwa nje ngenxa yokuba umbhexeshi esazi ukuba okungapheliyo
kuyahlola.

Nabanye bethu, eneneni nezinye iindwalutho endishiywe lulwimi ndaziphosa ukuzikhankanya, mazazi ukuba andizishiyanga kuba ndinomkhethe, koko nje – kukuyiloziswa kukuba ndisazi ukuba ixesha lixhatshwe yinja.

Nolutho endiza kulubhekisa kuni nonke kulo msitho, alungakanani, andizukuba mde, ndiza kubetha nje komofu, ndigqagqanise, ndixele loo nto niyaziyo nonke, endingazi kuyibiza ngegama kule ngcwele yenkundla. Ndingalibazisanga, mandingene emxholweni.

I can think of very few ironies which would compete with what is signified by this occasion today.

FIFTY years ago, in 1967, I registered, at this University, as a student of HISTORY, AFRICAN LANGUAGES, ENGLISH, HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY AND LATIN. 1967 was relatively uneventful, and I passed.

1968 turned to be another kettle of fish. I became involved in serious student politics, which culminated, in October of that year, in a 7-men operation for painting slogans on the University walls at the FREEDOM SQUARE. One of the slogans was: ***“Go away, you Potchefstroom Scum!”*** I think I was designated to be the one to paint that particular slogan on the walls.

It was in reference to the University Principal, Prof De Wet, who had arrived in July of that year, and was known to have stated in an interview that he was coming to the UCFH [as it then was called], with aim of carrying out the Apartheid policy of creating an ethnic University out of Fort Hare, to its logical conclusion. In the end, the UCFH was destined to be an institution for only Xhosa speaking Africans, and he was hell bent to implement that policy.

Our act of nocturnal painting of the walls was dubbed by us as “**OPERATION CATWALK**”. It was intended, by us, to give Prof De Wet a wakeup call.

Details of this act of vandalism by the “**Magnificent SEVEN**” have been immortalised by me in a book authored by TERRY BELL, in the writing of which I collaborated actively with him for a period of three years. The book is entitled: **UNFINISHED BUSINESS: SOUTH AFRICA, APARTHEID AND TRUTH.**

By the way, in the book, we do reveal that Prof De Wet was a member of the Broederbond, something which will be significant in a moment.

Although the paperback version of the book is now out of print, it is available online, from **Amazon**, I believe.

THAT sales talk out of the way – I hope TERRY BELL will remember me in the royalties – let me conclude the story by stating that all 7 of us involved in **OPERATION CATWALK** were arrested, detained in terms of section 6 of the then Terrorism Act 83 of 1967, which provided, *inter alia*, for detention without trial for an indefinite period.

The Security Police, led by Mr. Donald Card, initially kept us in solitary confinement at various Police cells in Alice and in East London, in the belief that operation Catwalk was an act of sabotage, which could conceivably have attracted a jail term of 10 years or more.

However, after barely a month of investigation, Mr Donald Card and his team settled for the “damp squib” charge of malicious damage to property, in relation to which we paid fines of about R60, 00 each.

The University, however, sent us down – a euphemism for expulsion – and Prof De Wet made sure we were never going to be admitted to any residential university in South Africa, for a period of at least five years. In the end, I personally could not be admitted to any residential university at all, throughout the Apartheid era. I attribute that to Prof De Wet’s legacy.

I relate this story because the irony of the inauguration, today, of that vandaliser and “criminal”,--- Yours Truly---, who was here half a century ago, and who was sent down after **Operation Catwalk** was also not lost on Mr Donald Card, my erstwhile tormentor during our arrest, detention, solitary confinement and subsequent trial for malicious damage to property.

Let me interrupt myself here and recall that during our detention, Mr Donald Card used to taunt me by calling me, “**you Cala Scum**”. I did not think it was a complement, but I took it in my stride.

Recently, Mr Donald Card sent me an undated letter, through the UFH’s system. I will read a few lines from the letter. I am confident he will not mind me reading parts of it to you.

In relevant part, it reads as follows:-

“I had to smile this morning when I picked up the Daily Dispatch newspaper to see that you had been recognised as Fort Hare chancellor. Well done and congratulations. This took me back many years and in fact I did not connect

you with the writing on the walls until you wrote to me and I have been watching your progress ever since....

You have no idea how annoyed I was about being sent to investigate a malicious damage to property case just because the complainant was a member of the Broederbond, the guys who actually ruled the country at the time. I was busy with so much other work which I had to drop to satisfy a group I disliked...

Please accept my good wishes for the future and let us hope that a group of students don't get fed up with you one day and put your name on the walls of Fort Hare."

For once, I agree with Mr Donald Card. He also has a sense of humour, joking like that about what the students might do to me, here at the UFH, in these days of *#FEES MUST FALL!*

It is indeed an irony of life that I return to the UFH after half a century – as its Chancellor—very ironic indeed! Someone even referred to it as “Poetic justice”. I suppose I have no reason to disagree.

There is another reason why today's event is ironical, and that has to do with Prof Buhlungu.

Despite the barriers that were engineered by Prof De Wet, to thwart our further tertiary education, I managed to study through UNISA's distant learning programme. I obtained a BA degree from UNISA in 1971. However, I still could not be admitted to any residential University in South Africa. I therefore could not register for a teaching diploma.

I ended up teaching without a teacher's qualification. My earnings, as a consequence, were abysmally small—**R660 per annum: FIXED**, when I first taught in 1971.

Anyway.....

One of the schools I went to teach at was the Jongilizwe College for Sons of Chiefs and Headmen, and their Counsellors.

I can count among my products from that College, many military leaders of note who played very dramatic roles in the history of this country. I taught them Marxism, in the context of explaining the ideology that informed the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. I taught them that Marxism, as an ideology, inspired the watershed defeat in 1975, of the USA by the Vietnamese revolutionaries, under the leadership of **Ho Chi Minh**, leading to their shameful flight from Saigon. They learnt that it was Marxism that inspired the Long March to Power, by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, under Chairman Mao Ze Dung.

It was, after all, the prescribed History curriculum. I do not know, though, whether the zeal with which that history could be taught, was something that Apartheid Education anticipated.

I taught the sons of Chiefs and Headmen and their Counsellors about the wars of decolonisation of the Portuguese Empire in Africa, and how Marxism informed the revolutionary movements that were central to the revolutionary overthrow of colonialist rule in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea Bissau.

That history, was, after all, part of the syllabus!!

For my students to understand what Frelimo, the MPLA and the PAIGC were all about, it was necessary for them to understand the Marxist Socialist doctrine, or so I told them. They needed to appreciate, or so I told them, how that doctrine became the catalytic agent for the successful and revolutionary overthrow of the Portuguese Empire in Africa---like it had been in Cuba, and elsewhere, in the rapidly decolonising world of that day.

I, of course, had other designs in teaching Marxism to these sons of Chiefs and Headmen and their Counsellors. I wanted them to be leaders of society in ways Apartheid-Capitalism never even dreamt of. In many ways, I may have succeeded.

I, however, make no claim or credit for what Generals Bantu Holomisa, Temba "TT" Matanzima, who is an alumnus of this University, General Derrick Mgwebi, and many others, did in the Transkei, and the regime change that came about as a consequence, nor did I have anything with the hosting by the

Transkei Military Government of the MK and APLA cadres in the Transkei Defence Force, and many other ventures that, at a critical time, precipitated the eventual downfall of Apartheid..

What I do confess to remember, though, is that in 1976, there was one Sakhela Buhlungu, who was a student in the lower classes at Jongilizwe, which I did not teach. He had a reputation for being one of the brightest students in the Junior Certificate classes – Forms 1-3.

I then decided that on one Friday, I would hold a symposium on current events. I would host a debate between the Juniors and the Seniors about, for example, whether the South African Defence Force, had or had not unlawfully invaded Angola, in a bid to topple the MPLA Government of Dr Agostinho Neto.

Buhlungu was in my sights for a debate I meant to have on Friday, the 11th June, 1976.

It was not to be.

At about 13h00 on that day, two South African Security Policemen, with their Transkei colleagues, found me in the Dining Hall, having lunch. After lunch, the symposium was due to start. As I finished my meal, still in the dining hall, the Police told me that they were arresting me in terms of the Terrorism Act, and something called R400, operational mainly in the Bantustans.

The point here is that I was arrested and detained before we could begin the debate. I can therefore claim no credit for Buhlungu subsequent interest in the struggle of working class people. He probably was one of the students, who used to attend our trial in Mthatha, from October, 1976, to September, 1977. Throughout the trial, my erstwhile students, in numbers large or small, used to come to the Court room, and got educated.

In our defence at the trial, we had called experts to determine whether we were communists or not, as contemplated in the Communism Act, or whether we were just Marxists, --- or none of the above. Our expert, who had not been our first choice, ended up being Prof Andre Du Toit, an Afrikaner from Stellenbosch University, who mesmerized, not only us, but the judge presiding, the Independent Transkei's Chief's Justice Judge GGL Munnik.

It was Prof Du Toit's testimony that it was possible for one to be a Marxist without offending the provisions of the Communism Act, of 1950.

This was so, he argued, because whilst one could be a Marxist without being a Communist, one could never be a communist without being a Marxist. His view was that we were not communists in the Stalinist-Leninist tradition, which is what the Act was seeking to prohibit. He argued that whilst he would concede that if the evidence of the literature we were supposed to be reading was true, his conclusion would be that we were Marxists, he would nonetheless argue that we were not communists, and had therefore not offended the provisions of the Suppression of Communism Act, 1950.

I leave that to you to analyse.

My students were fascinated by it all, --- on those occasions they came to the Court. Some of them could not understand why I was being prosecuted for teaching what was in the syllabus—Marxism!

I was locked up, from that day, and only saw freedom on the 1st of September, 1981, after serving a sentence of 4 years in Apartheid jails, in Mthatha, which had since become an “independent” Transkei jail. Since Transkei’s so called independence, Mthatha even had a Condemned Section for males and females. We were kept in those cells, even though we were serving only 4 years. We were aware of those who were routinely executed, something that was halted, long after our release, under General Holomisa’s Military Council’s reign---and once again I claim no influence on him for his respect for the right to life, which is entrenched in our Constitution today.

One of my co-detainees and prison mates was Matthew Goniwe. One of them was my brother, Prof Lungisile Ntsebeza, who today is an NRF Research Chair in Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa and a Director and Holder of the *AC Jordan Chair in the Centre for African Studies* in the UCT. Proff Ntsebeza and Buhlungu, as sociologists of note, shared views about what African Studies should be about, especially whilst Prof Buhlungu was Dean of Humanities at UCT.

That brings me to what I think **this University** should be about. Universities by definition are institutions of learning and teaching, of research, of challenging **every** assumption the moment it pretends to be the last word on anything.

Those involved in the project of education must forever seek to know what the truth is on anything, I think.

When there is a ***Tweet*** that claims that colonialism was not all that bad, scholars at this University, with the pedigree it has, must not uncritically mouthe platitudes about their support or rejection of that statement. They should do very detailed research on colonialism, its impact on the colonized, and should locate the ***Tweet*** in question in the crucible of vigorous and robust debate and analysis. The aim should be to get to the bottom of things in order to establish the truth ----or otherwise--- of the claims made in the ***Tweet***.

When a former freedom fighter, now a leader of a political party, makes bold to claim that Africans did not have title deeds before the advent of Europeans, and when, by extension of his logic – or illogic – depending on who is making the critique – the political leader concludes that white people, therefore, did not steal the land, they just “bought it”, this university’s scholars must grab the opportunity to research these claims in order to find out whether there is any truth behind the claims.

The claim made by this political leader has all the pretensions to erudition. He is quoted, for example as having said –

“We, the so-called Bantu speaking South Africans, came from the North, from the Great lakes; we overran territory here, which was occupied by the Khoi and the San, There was no title. We just occupied that land.”

We were not even the original residents here. The people we call Baroa, the people of the South, it's the Khoi, the people we found here."

Really?

I will not even waste any time in trying to pretend that there is any merit in the prevalent cacophony around the slogan "*radical economic transformation*". It is a debasement of a concept that is, in and of itself, cogent, except that it is made largely by pretentious opportunists who clearly have other motives as they do no more than filling the air with a "*loud sounding nothing*". So far, the articulation of this catch phrase is no more than just that, ---the airing of a catch phrase.

That having been said, though, it is a slogan that should generate debate and analysis in a University like the UFH. Dissertations and theses for Masters and PhD programmes should easily be inspired by the slogan. Out of the noise, melody can come – intellectual melody that reveals the **truth** behind the slogan.

It is when this University understands its historical mission in this sub-continent,--indeed in the continent as a whole----, when it kick starts a **renaissance** of knowledge production, that it will richly deserve to have been the site of struggle and intellectual pursuit that created your African leaders of note – **AC Jordan, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe,, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Mda Mda, Phyllis Ntantala[AC Jordan's spouse), Livingstone Mqotsi, Barney Pityana**, the then Black Consciousness Movement student leader, to mention but a few across all political lines, and across the decades.

It is assuring that there is a renewed commitment at this University to make African Studies the relevant discipline it ought to be. On Prof Sakhela Buhlungu's watch, let us hope we will see more evidence of vigorous action from that quarter.

Whilst I have no function at this University other than to preside at ceremonies and look important, I have the opportunity, whilst I hold the podium, to preach to you, hopefully in an inoffensive manner. I really believe the UFH scholars must choose to hone their skills, in the search after *truth*, by taking the decolonisation of the curriculum discourse very seriously.

This University and the Department of Education and Training should assist this institution to be the University on the African Continent that will seek to reveal the *truth* about colonialism.

What, for example, were the true reasons behind the War of the Axe, which is associated with the very name after which this University was named. Is it still appropriate to call this University the UFH, against the backdrop of what the history of colonialist conquest is all about?

Scholars must tell us,---- and produce credible evidence to back their claims--- one way or the other, especially given that, in my respectful opinion, there are no "gospel" truths in academia.

When we were students here in the 60's, an anecdote went the rounds that a **Mister Makalima** had written a Master's dissertation on **NoNgqawuse**, which,

the legend went, his supervisor did not approve. What was the controversy between him and his supervisor all about, if the legend is true? Is there any evidence that that dissertation exists, and if so, where is the evidence?

Beyond the questions raised by and in Prof Jeff Peres's **THE DEAD WILL ARISE**, are there any other studies about where the truth lies about NONGQAUSE? Was that episode a national suicide, or a genocide, as Prof Jeff Peres provocatively debates in an article with that title?

These quests for truth require constant research, constant debate, more research and vigorous knowledge production. That, it seems to me, should be the essence of education in a University like this one, at the beginning of its next century of existence.

As I conclude, let me refer to one of the leading theorists of the African Revolution, Dr Amilcar Cabral. He led the PAIGC in the emancipation struggle for Guinea Bissau. I think he should be an inspiration to the UFH's Renaissance of knowledge production that I am calling for.

Dr Cabral had a clear view of what the decolonisation struggle was all about. The bulk of his revolutionary army came from peasant people. He always spoke in a simple language, a language his army of revolutionaries could, and did, understand. His enormous wisdom was always expressed in simple terms---no ***razzmatazz, no extravaganza, no there is a new sheriff in town.***

*“The colonists,” he said, “usually say it was they who brought us into history: they make us leave history, our history, right at the back, to follow them, to follow the progress of **their** history.”*

Against that analysis, he would then exalt his people by saying, *inter alia*, the following:

“[We should] educate ourselves, educate other people ... to fight fear and ignorance; to eliminate, little by little, the subjection to nature and natural forces, which our economy has not mastered. Tell no lies; claim no easy victories.”

I hope the purveyors of the “*radical economic transformation*” claptrap are listening.

Abo baneendlebe zokuva, mabeve.

Ncincilili!

ADV D B NTSEBEZA SC

Chambers

3 May 2017

