



# University of Fort Hare

## EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION



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### AFRICA DAY CELEBRATION SPEECH 2020

On 25 May 1963, the leaders from 30 of the then 32 independent African Countries met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, hosted by Emperor Haile Selassie, and made history with the foundation of the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) the precursor to the African Union (AU). Africa Day (formerly known as African freedom day and African liberation day) is the annual commemoration of the foundation of the African Union on the 25 May. The day is intended to celebrate and acknowledge the successes of the organization of African Union from its creation on the 25 May 1963 in the fight against colonialism and apartheid, as well as the progress that Africa has made, while reflecting upon the common challenges that the continent face in a global environment.

Africa day celebration is an opportunity to celebrate African diversity and success, and to highlight the cultural and economic potential that exist on the African continent. Africa is an amazing continent that is unique among the seven continents. It is rich in cultural heritage and diversity, a wealth of natural resources, offers breathtaking tourist attractions, and contains some of the most intricate political systems.

Africa day continues to be celebrated by all its 55 member states both in Africa and around the world, mostly on 25 May although in some cases these periods of celebrations can be stretched out over a period of days or weeks. The day symbolizes the determination of the people of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation.

For us at the university of Fort Hare, the celebration of Africa day is important and central to our past, present and future endeavours and existence as we strive for academic excellence. In the 1960's various African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress aligned organisations emerged and were quickly suppressed. Subsequently, Fort Hare became a stronghold of the Black Consciousness oriented South African Students Organisation. The values and traditions of Fort Hare were embattled after 1960. The apartheid state made a determined attack upon the institution and did immense damage. However, some continuities of its unique and proud historical traditions of non-racism, critical debate and aspiration towards educational excellence were never eliminated and these are now being nurtured and developed.

The tradition of excellence survived at UFH, firstly amongst the students and also among a small but growing number of progressive academics. It survived in the creation of a new Pan-Africanism and internationalism, with students from most African countries and beyond, and staff from all over Africa and the world flocking to its doors. Many came because they knew of Fort Hare's historical reputation and wanted to contribute to its newfound opportunities towards renaissance. It survives in the remarkable archival records at Fort Hare, made up of the papers of the ANC and other liberation movements in exile.

Throughout its history, the university of Fort Hare has always maintained its status as the greatest centre of black higher education in Southern, Western and Eastern Africa. The university boost amongst its alumni six African heads of states and many prominent African Executives, Diplomats, Academic and personalities. No wonder others are of the assertion that if it were not because of Fort Hare, Africa would not have been liberated.

The celebration of Africa day could feature activities such as cultural parade, debate and panel discussion, arts, music, dance and fashion exhibition and Africa day official reception. **The focus of this year celebration is: "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive conditions for Africa's Development"**. It is important that every African individual, organization and institution takes this theme and brings it to life in their context. Let us all make an effort to educate our students, colleagues and neighbours on what Agenda 2063 is all about.

This year we celebrate Africa Day when the world is battling the Covid-19 Pandemic. Most countries in Africa and the world at large are in some form or levels of national lockdown as we attempt to contain the spread of the Corona virus. The presence of Covid-19 implies that Africa day is being celebrated differently this year. As we celebrate this historic and very important day virtually, let us observe the national lockdown regulations so that we can continue to contain the spread of the virus and in the process save the lives of our people.

Happy Africa Day.

**By Dr Hlulani Mabasa**  
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