

Prof Derrick Swartz speech

New name launch concert-20 July

We are officially rebranding from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to Nelson Mandela University, now many of you may think that's just about striping out the Metropolitan. It's a good thing that we are getting rid of the metropolitan part, because first of all the university is not only existing in the metro. The university also exists in George, Western Cape and there are also offices and satellite facilities in Cape Town, East London, Durban, and Johannesburg as well. So it's a national asset it's not only for the city and the province as well.

In fact all universities are national assets but they are allocated in a particular set of towns or cities and so on. Secondly the university is also one that speaks to the world not just to the city and so we wanted the university to resonate its influence, and its ideas across the world, continent and of course the greater world as well. But that's the easy bit, the most important part of this is not just striping out the name metropolitan. It's taking on board the name of Nelson Mandela, this incredible, legendary, giant, titan of our age and having the privilege of our institution like our own to own this name, to bequeath this name.

It is a huge privilege that I cannot over emphasize to all of you. And so today I ask you guys just to think for a few seconds as I am speaking what does the name Nelson Mandela University mean to you? To me as an individual what words come up in your mind and I was struck by the eloquence, how articulate our students and staff have been and saying what came into their minds about what it means to be called Nelson Mandela University and there were many things probably more than two or three dozen adjectives or verbs to describe or to characterize what they think what the name Nelson Mandela university means to them as individuals and all of them are true.

None of them are incorrect in other words as well may be the ideas in your minds. Because this titanic figure Nelson Mandela, in the sense represented all these things democracy, non-racialism, compassion, solidarity, Ubuntu, social justice, and a more equal society out there, Madiba reconciliation, justice . All of those things Madiba represented in different parts and different activities in his life span. You may have noticed earlier on they were showing pictures there of Madiba during different phases of his life as a young man. For example there's one picture he stands with a shovel.

I think it was taken in 1964, it was just when they were incarcerated on Robben Island with other political prisoners. The regime sent out the Sunday times and couple of other newspaper photographers to take pictures of the happy pictures of the happy prisoners. To give to the world this idea that they treated well and all that, so if you look at Madiba there he actually looks angry. So if you see that picture again later, you must just think about this. He was standing defiant to the shovel with his spectacles on and to show them that he doesn't buy that nonsense but then you are also shown pictures of Madiba when he came out of Pollsmoor prison and he addressed the nation on that amazing day as some of you may know.

He spoke in Cape Town at the big plaza that was a momentous moment, when he came out of prison and now becoming a political leader of society. There is another picture of him in a guerilla warfare that was taken in Algeria, and the guy on the right side was Ben Bella, he was a revolutionary in Algeria in the FNL. It was a revolutionary front like the ANC during the 1960's as well, so they show different parts of Madiba's life. He was a liberator, military strategist, political activists, reconciler, statesman, a husband, a father to his children, member of the community, became a philanthropist towards the end of his time. All these

things are true about this titan, so all of these thoughts that my students and staff expressed earlier on represented the spectrum of what Madiba stands for. So today the few comments that I want to make is in a form of a gentle but firm challenge to all of us to me and you guys and the other thousands of staff and students that couldn't make it today. What does Nelson Mandela mean to you and how are you going to live out to that what it means to you.

To me it means an unfinished journey, I can describe it in a number of different ways but today I prefer to use this as an unfinished journey. It's finished for Madiba the person but it's unfinished for us, the total emancipation of humanity of all our people. I use that phrase "unfinished journey" it means we started the journey, the university is no longer what it was in 2005 or 2008 or even last year. It has gone through transformation, major changes and it must still under go through revolutions as well. To live up to the ideals of a world in which all of us can have a place under the sun based on equality, social justice, democracy, Ubuntu, fairness and us living together as one nation in one world.

We are still far away from that journey, there's this famous book that Madiba wrote, about his life where he talks about climbing mountains in the rural Transkei and when you come up to a certain hill then you realize there's another hill. The journey never really ends, it's just different phases in the transitions of that journey as you go higher and higher you face challenges. He said this at the end of his life "I've lived my life and I am going to die a happy man but I know that the journey is not finished, the journey must go on". What is that unfinished journey that we have to complete? And you can describe in your own words.

What does that mean? It means if you go outside of this campus, the Missionvale campus you see the vast poverty, the informal settlements, high rate of unemployment and the desperation, levels of crime and people scraping by to make ends meet. Children going to school hungry, for me that is the journey that is unfinished, it is a journey that we have a duty to complete so that every child, man, woman in every town or city have the ability to live to the fullest of their dreams and not only have equal opportunities or are supported to fulfill their dreams in their life time so that they can be the best that lies within them.

That is for me a mark of a journey that we must still obtain. It's a march that we must continue and until the last person is poor we are not free. The dream of Madiba has not been fulfilled, and so for me the unfinished journey means that as Nelson Mandela University our challenge is to change the world out there. So, that in ten or twenty years from now when your children are going to be studying at this university when they stand on this hill and they look at this hill they won't see a shanty town or informal settlements. They will see a thriving township, residences, people working, the quality of living would have improved dramatically as well.

That will be the impact that we must make in the outside world. Because think about it guys, it is a paradox a contradiction that we can have a part of society that is so spectacularly wealthy and co-existing with large numbers and millions of people trapped in poverty. Poverty is not only within one generation; it is often multiple generations of people who are unable to escape out of that. The inheritance of the past, the deprivations of the past are passed on the next generation. They never escape this vicious cycle, none of that is made by God.

It is entirely made by human beings, our forbearers. Just like it was made three hundred years we can also unmake it, transform it. That is the commitment we must have, so that all of us men and women, black or white, whatever language we speak, all of you have a place under the sun. As long as we see inequality

out there, social injustice and poverty just outside this campus it means we are not completely free. He was fighting the political struggle in the 1930s and 1940s when he was in Wits University and Fort Hare and he completed his law degree and became quite a fine defense lawyer. Whatever course you do marketing, media, teaching, nursing whatever it might be.

Do the best of that which is handed down, remember the sacrifices that have gone to create these opportunities it's thanks to Tata Madiba that we all have the privilege to be here. If it had not been for him I would not have become the Vice chancellor of this university. I could never study at the predecessor of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, University of Port Elizabeth. In my time, we could never be allowed by law to study at a university. I had to go to another city to study like my generation as well, but thanks to him I am able to work as a servant of this university.

So for our students, I think you must equip yourself with the best of skills and knowledge that you may require to solve the problems out there. They could be in the field that you are involved in, to create a world that is more equal and that we banish poverty forever in the human imagination. With great conditions for all our people to enjoy the fruits of life and prosper so that the next generations become more prosperous and successful as well as free the entire African continent from its colonial bondage. That is a commitment that I think you need to make in your own ways as well.

It means of course our students must be activists, not necessarily in a political in a party political sense but must advocate for change, must work towards freeing up society so that we have a better world as well. It also means that we as a university must support our students with proper financial aid, food security. No student should go hungry at this university, we must not just give them hope and opportunity but also give them support and solidarity to make sure that that journey is finished.

Remember many people that come to the university come from schools that are not functioning well, backgrounds that are not optimized and they are thrown at this university as a complex world. We can't just create the opportunity to come and study we have to support throughout the journey as well. That is our commitment we need to make as well for our academics that are here today and the many that are not. The message for me of the unfinished journey is that transformation of this university in the curriculum.

We have to teach a curriculum that can equip our students with the best of tools and the knowledge to change the world. You cannot just pour old wine into new bottles, you can't just rename it. It has to be a radical transformation, and a call to that is the curriculum what happens in the classroom, what knowledge comes through your mind. If you are not challenged with new skills and knowledge you didn't even know alternatives to the world that has been handed by history to our society but power of education is to change the world.

That's what it means, just think about it. The curriculum must have a revolutionary impact on you, what I mean by revolution, is we must change the nature of our whole world to break prosperity and equality for all. That means our academics must work in all the professions, all the qualifications that we have and we must experiment with new curriculum and help our students to be able to tackle the problems that I have spoken about earlier and Dr Ntshongwana also mentioned earlier as well. It also means that the institutional culture of the university must change, you cannot have a new name and still function in ways that are discriminatory practices, sexism, racism, tribalism.

It also means that the workers that we are insourcing in the university must be treated from day one as equal to anybody else. We must create a culture in the institution where they completely embraced, they cannot be second class citizens in the university. I am glad that when they did their interviews, I saw my colleagues speaking from super care and other companies as well. We need to make sure that the institutional culture does not create insiders and outsiders, first and second class. All of my staff must have equal rights inside the institution, which means that we have to learn to know each other and we belong to the same family as well.

Like the support staff, the administrators and the academics must create an environment in which our students can thrive. They can be challenged to rise to the best that lies within them and then be engaged to go out there and change the world. The purpose for why we are educating ourselves is to prepare you for the world of tomorrow, to alter that landscape to change the world into a better place as well. To come back to the theme the unfinished journey, that this year's occasion suggests challenges us all students, academics, administrators, support staff to change the way in which we do things here at this institution.

I know I speak on behalf of all the deputy vice chancellors Dr Sibongile Muthwa and my other colleagues that are here that we give our sacred commitment to strive to live up to this name . It's not going to be easy, there are going to be difficult choices that we have to make because we are living in an economy that is depressed at the moment. We have to embrace these principles of social justice, inclusivity, and so on and at the same time ensure that the university doesn't collapse financially. These two things we must hold sacredly together we cannot do things recklessly on the one and forget the fact that we still have to make sure the university continues to function.

On the other hand we cannot only focus of financial sustainability and not looking at social justice issues as well. Social justice and democracy these things must come hand in hand with a sustainable future for our university. Which is why it is important for the government to fund our university as well. I hope when deputy president comes here on Thursday he will announce how government will address the whole question about free higher education for the poor and for the missing middle. I live in hope and I do believe that is the commitment that the state must make too sure that we create the right environment and on our university campus as well.

In the outside world, we must also alter the way in which Nelson Mandela University interacts with outside communities. We cannot have a university that is unwelcoming to our communities because you come from our communities and we are part of those communities and we must set up the universities in such a way that we can respond to the many challenges that our people face. In the northern areas, in the townships of course also in the suburbs and in George where the university also have a massive campus into the future. So today my message simply to you is to think about what Nelson Mandela University means to you as an individual and what commitment you are making today to live up to the ideals of that name .

So enjoy the rest of the celebration, it's a happy moment for us but at the back of your minds make a promise to yourself a commitment. Something sacred to yourself that today I pledge I am going to do the following things to change my life, to emulate the life of Tata Madiba. One day when you're wealthy and famous you must come back and plough back to the university for the next generation as well. I do love all of you and want you to remain the part of this university and be successful out there. I hope that we can help you be the best that lies within you.