

**Speech by Dr Zakes Kagiso Motene at the Walter Sisulu University
Graduation Ceremony, 15 May 2014 in Mthatha, Eastern Cape.**

Esteemed Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University, Dr Brigalia Bam

Members of the Walter Sisulu University Council

Interim Vice-Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University, Professor Khaya

Mfenyana

Members of the Institutional Management Committee

Chairperson of Convocation Ms Nomnikelo Puzi

Student Representative Council Presidents

Staff of Walter Sisulu University

Government Dignitaries from National, Provincial and Local Government

Invited Guests from the business sector and the many communities of

Walter Sisulu University

Graduands and your families and friends

Receive my humble warm greetings.

Molweni, ndi ya vuya gqithi ukuba apha,

It is quite a rare honor and privilege to be part of this auspicious

Graduation ceremony, let alone to share my thoughts and hopefully

energize and empower you as you take your wings to venture into the path of exploration.

You graduate at a very significant time in our country, when we are celebrating 20 years as a vibrant democracy and being celebrated as a beacon of hope for the rest of Africa and the world after running such successful Elections, demonstrating once again why we are hailed as a country of miracles. The very process was set in place by amongst others, The Chancellor of Walter Sisulu University, Dr Brigalia Bam. Don't worry Madam Chancellor, I have grown to appreciate that leaders of your generation do not expect any praise for selflessly doing what is good for our country. The point is that we are never in short supply of heroes and heroines, and also role models from whom we can draw inspiration.

It is always humbling to come to the Eastern Cape, a province of Heroes in all respects. South Africa stands very tall in the world today because of sons and daughters of this province. When you begin to travel around the world, which you must do as soon as possible, to broaden your outlook, you will realize that we are the most recognized people, you could be

struggling through customs in the USA or England or China but immediately they realize that you're South African, happy shouts of "Nelson Mandela" or "Bafana Bafana" follow. Despite their not so fantastic performance on the pitch, our team stands proudly amongst the most recognized brands in the world. I say this to remind you of just how fortunate we are.

Another factor is graduating from a University that carries the name of one of our stalwarts, uXhamela, Tata Walter Sisulu, the very man whose smooth persuasion ensured that Nelson Mandela saw the light to follow the fight for liberation. Having walked under the aura of such magnanimous qualities, how would you not succeed in any path that you will choose to follow? I believe you have it all to conquer not only South Africa and the continent, but the rest of the world.

Ours is merely to encourage you to follow it with gusto and renewed energy as your greatness is already defined.

Madam Chancellor, I take my hat off to the parents and relatives who sacrificed immensely to walk this path with our Graduands, with

tremendous patience when you called home crying when things went awry or jubilant when sunshine ensured warm rays in your direction. Take a bow dear Parents, for this is the results of your sacrifices. Pass our sincerest regards to extended family members who contributed to the development of these young lads and lassies. As our unique Philosophy of Ubuntu extends with dictums such as "it takes a village to grow a child"!

I encourage you on this day to go back on your journeys of the past few years to extend gratitude to that taxi driver who used to transport you from your home to varsity. Please go back to your residences and thank all those selfless men and women whose singular responsibility was your wellbeing while you were students, the cleaners, the cooks, security...just take a walk about and say thank you.

In the next few months when u drive around in your shiny German sedan...do not change your humble attitude to the taxi drivers.

Appreciate the little contributions by all on whose shoulders you stood to see beyond the horizon.

Your lecturers already feel immense pride to see you emerge today from a restless young man/lady that came here all scruffy and tactless a few years ago, now well polished, articulate, confident and clearly a gem for our country.

Some of you are 1st generation graduates in your families, some even in your villages, in your sections ko kasi etc. I was at University with Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo, who came from White City Jabavu in Soweto. He was the first ever person in his location to finish matric and go to University. I was always moved by his attitude to his development understanding very well that he carried the aspirations of an entire community.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, the birth of our miracle as the rainbow nation, we had a significant number of returning exiles with International qualifications and experience coming back to bring their global experience to the table in moving our country forward. Most had their primary qualifications as Educators, like most of you.

Indeed, by the mid 90's when globalization became a reality for the world, SA responded with renewed energy. It is not surprising at all that we weathered the storm of the global economic meltdown better than most, even though we shed significant jobs especially in industrial sectors.

These skills are unfortunately ageing and fast diminishing. What the country needs is youth who can brave the tides and go out there to earn those qualifications and the experience under different circumstances. It is said that adversity breeds champions but I have a strong belief that you have the wherewith-all to earn gold, you have the touch, the poise, and you are of the best pedigree.

It has been demonstrated the world over, that people with a grounding in Education, which primarily focuses on developing others to do better, achieve wonders if given the space to develop further.

All foreign missions in South Africa have information on scholarships for universities in their respective countries, knock on those doors as most expire without takers.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation will be offering 50 young graduates an opportunity through the Johnny Makhathini scholarship to spend learning and experiential time all over the world in an effort to further cultivate this necessary knowledge and a new brand of Diplomats.

I look forward to meeting some of you working at our embassies across the globe.

Please find time to google and learn who Johnny Makhathini was before going for the interview? Promise? I will give you a clue, he was the Head of the ANC Mission to the United Nations (UN) and also Head of the International Affairs for the ANC.

You have built lasting relationships with friends and importantly with the University itself. Do continue to nurture these relationships, participate in Alumni activities and find a small way to continue contributing to those still in their developmental path.

Once we graduate from an Institution, we walk away so fast as if our time at University was most traumatic, of which the opposite is true, you had the time of your life here, is that not so?

Let us build an alumni community and make sure that we follow and support each other's progress and growth through time.

I look forward to the day when we'll be celebrating an alumnus of Walter Sisulu University making waves locally and Internationally. Remember that our Universities are fairly young, most being younger than our democracy as we set out to chart a new path for higher education in the early 2000s.

You thus carry the torch for this institution that set you up on the grand path to prosperity along your chosen careers.

Institutions of higher learning are among the most complex ecosystems in any population group, hence at times you will find conflict between students and Management etc. I know very well that the Walter Sisulu University has had its share of these unfortunate events and most of you would have participated actively, fighting to uphold certain principles.

Understandably, this is all part and parcel of student years, I remember during my own heydays when after these events, we would organize a light event with Management, to further build bridges and appreciate that, these were our parents and guardians after all and we still needed their nurturing and tutelage.

As much as you have earned a primary qualification that defines a particular career path, do not forget that you are embedded with unique talents, your time at University would have afforded you an opportunity to define these, in effect knowing yourself in totality. We hear it always that not to work a day in your life, you have to find your passion and follow it.

Madam Chancellor, most leading people in the world live by 2 things, their passion for other people and passion for what they can contribute to this world. Those two elements are the common thread for which you should start striving in your youth, thereby turning the Maslow's hierarchy of needs on its head, you have to start making a contribution to society while in your youth, after all your path is that of nurturers in the Education sphere.

I grew up a on the doorstep of Sun City, the mega-casino and entertainment complex nestled in the Pilanesberg mountains. A few kilometers was the Pilanesberg Airport where guests, mostly from overseas used to land in the former homeland of Bophuthatswana. Sun-City was significant in a number of ways, one being that it drew revenue from South Africa as gambling was illegal in SA then, somewhat a reversal of fortunes for the homeland. The approach to the airport was just past my home in the village of Chaneng and I used to create mental pictures of the day I would be flying in those very aeroplanes.

Having been carrying mostly foreign tourists, the people who worked on the resort would tell us stories of these people from far-away lands, it stimulated another interest, to go to libraries and read about those far-away lands and picture myself visiting them someday. It reached a significant height in my high school years at HF Tlou in Tlhabane, as the school had a library. I would spend hours and hours reading about foreign lands. Lo and behold, I have travelled the length and breadth of the globe, having been to no less than 50 countries.

I say this specifically to demonstrate that dreams do indeed come true.

Those outlandish thoughts manifest in your mind and the more you chisel them into shape, the universe as well assists you in that path. Remember this simple equation that

Dreams + No Action = Zero ,while

Dreams + Action = Vision, which is a path that you can follow in your life.

So, dream big and write your goals down, review these every month or so and pour in all your energy into achieving them. After all, you have it in you.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” so said uTata Nelson Mandela.

I cannot tire to emphasize that SA is rich with heroes and heroines. Look around, celebrate achievements of other young people, and draw inspiration from their journeys. We live in a technological era such that it’s

much easier to google Siyabulela Xusa, a young man from this province who has a planet named after him.

Most advances and innovations are led by young people. Hence even most government programs, entrepreneurship etc. are aimed at youth. However, the impact is still minimal, we have to turn the corner. We need youth who have been through the higher education landscape to lead the innovation. I am so looking forward to seeing graduates from Walter Sisulu University taking a giant leap in leading these challenges. The Education Sector especially has achieved significant strides internationally which still have to be translated to our circumstances, and you have to lead that mileau.

I wish that all of you would manage to enter the employment sector, but for those who will not be attached, do volunteer in workplaces to gain the much needed experience or strive to explore available paths for young graduates. Knock on our doors, make sure that we don't sleep easy until you succeed somewhere.

Madam Chancellor, if one looks at the landscape of Education in our country, you will agree that there's a major ingredient that is missing. We have School Governing bodies, Parent Committees etc. but there's hardly any participation by those of us who benefitted from those very schools. Our distinguished Graduands, remember that these schools set you up on this very path.

I want to give you a challenge today, and I wish you had note books to take this down but I am most certain that after the good drubbing you received from our lectures here at WSU, your minds are sharp to record this challenge.

I need each and every-one of you, to go back to your high school, find 11 other former students and make up the magic number of 12. It must be those who have gone further to attain qualifications from Institutions of Higher Learning or those who have excelled in other fields.

Each of you should then commit to spend a day, just one day at the school for every month in the year. This concept will be submitted to the

Department of Basic Education in the new administration for endorsement and it will also put the Walter Sisulu University in the forefront of leading a new angle of activism by graduates, especially of the Faculty of Education. Imagine the impact.

Madam Chancellor, we have it in us to uplift our communities. I can only but plant the seed, its germination depends on each and every one of you. Imagine what we can achieve if we eventually rolled out this initiative to all schools in the country. Ensure that every child finds a role model they can relate with and not just an abstract from TV but a former learner of my very school, who experienced the same challenges.

Imagine the confidence it will achieve for our teachers, to see products of their hard work.

As the famous quote by Victor Hugo says: "nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come".

A few years ago in Washington, an investor in his 50s stood up to say that to invest in any country, part of his research was to scan the youth and middle age citizens. He would look at their attitudes, temperament, respect for authority etc. You would wonder why this is. Anyone?

The reason is that in 20 years' time, he would start to expect returns from his investment, those of you today in your 20s will be running major corporations in the country then, running all spheres of government and basically running the country.

So you should look at yourself seriously to know that you influence how investment flows into our country. A few years ago we had youth with militant and robust energy but it's always important that the energy is molded appropriately. Remember that you are integral to how this country develops.

Is any investment safe if entrusted in your hands?

Madam Chancellor, as youth, we have to strive for excellence in developing our craft as technocrats. Build on experience such that in later years, it

becomes second nature because once you reach that level, then you no longer need to put too much effort into achieving your goals.

A few weeks ago, a young Dr Bandile Masuku, recently the spokesperson of the National Task Team of the ANCYL was appointed to the Council of Tshwane University of Technology, even more elected its Chairperson. I actually suspect that he's the youngest person in the history of the country to hold such a mammoth responsibility. These are levels at which you should aim and to function. The bar is raised so high but definitely achievable.

To our Graduands, Dr Masuku says: "You have crossed the rubicon, you are heroes to many, and to be an accomplished hero you need to live by these values, sacrifice, selflessness and service to humanity. These are the values that will drive the development of our country, especially that you'll be involved at the coal face of people development. Guard yourself against the culture of entitlement that is so pervasive in our country. Go out there and conquer".

There's a story that inspires me greatly, told by Robin Sharma, author of "The monk who sold his Ferrari" and "The leaders who had no title" among others about Pablo Picasso, who was in a market and a lady walked up to him excitedly and said: "I'm so happy to see you, I'm a great fan". She then takes out a piece of paper and a pencil asking him for a drawing. He obliges and whips up a masterpiece which he then hands over to her. She looks at it amused and says: "Oh Mr Picasso, fantastic". She then turns to walk away and he stops her saying: "My dear lady, that will be a million dollars". She looks back quite astonished and says: "But Mr Picasso, that took you only 30 seconds", to which he then says "My Dear Lady, it took me 30 years to be able to do that in 30 seconds"...

You have to strive to achieve the pinnacle of mastering your chosen craft. People will say you are lucky, remember that it translates to: "the harder you work, the luckier you get".

Madam Chancellor, it has indeed been an immense honor and privilege to share my thoughts with all in attendance today, particularly our Graduands.

To the female Graduands, I say, opportunities for you are just as open as for your male counterparts, actually even better. South Africa is one of the few countries in the world where gender equality is not only a slogan but well-practiced and even legislated. In February last year, I visited the Black Caucus of the Texas Council in the USA. One of the panelists was the former Mayor of Atlanta, Ms Shirley Franklin, the first black African-American to be elected a Mayor in any Southern Town of the USA. The common theme among the American panelists was envy for what South African women were achieving locally and Internationally, citing their experiences of being token candidates in Corporate Boards as companies gained better scoring for appointing Black Female Executives, but with very little influence whatsoever. Some-time ago in the AU circles, one Minister remarked that: "We actually hailed Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as a tough cookie but this one is a tsunami - referring to Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane". Our Women are indeed ticking all over the world.

In closing, Madame Chancellor, please allow me to recite the poem I wrote in dedication to the memory of uTata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela following his passing. In that agonizing hour when nothing could console my raging

thoughts, I penned these words which have developed a life of their own.

It's one of the only two poems on the Nelson Mandela Website being shared with the entire world, the other is by world revered Dr Maya Angelou titled "His day is done".

This poem has already been translated to all SA languages + Portuguese as requested by Mama Graca Machel and Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela.

I will avail the ebook of the poem and my book "The Journey" to the University so that members can download it freely.

This poem's title is:

A Colossus has fallen!!!

Edited by Ms Dikeledi Shole : Parliament of South Africa

When the King of Kings – the One who wears the Leopard Skin

Made a connection with the African Ancestors

The earth quaked!

Tremors reverberated from the North to the South

As the week progressed, with greatest consternation abounding
The Ancestors lifted him up to cross the great river Jordan
The night tore people's hearts apart
From child to adult, inconsolable cries and utter exasperation became the
order of the times
The sun blatantly refused to show its face for days on end
Ashamed to appear at such a gravely sensitive time

A Hero has fallen, a Colossus has fallen, a mighty Giant has fallen
A mighty Warrior, The finest Warrior of them all

Cries of consternation reverberated from all corners of the globe
With everyone citing what and who Madiba was to each of them
Rivers of Love and warmest words of comfort flowing from all quarters
What we are seeing has never occurred on this, our planet!

Oh, just how blessed we are!

To have shared our time of life with this magnanimous Hero

Who, whenever he looked at a child, would exude such an exuberance of
Love,

That which only God has shown to each of us

Indeed, he was of the heavens

And yes, indeed, if one would ever ask

I would pound my chest and say: "I have seen an angel in my time of life!"

Indeed, you were not of this earth

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

You belonged to the heavens

Sleep, Sleep and peacefully sleep

Our most beloved child

As for all your lessons -

They will remain a pillar of strength for the entire world through to the end
of time

Send our warmest salutations to our Heroes in the land up yonder

May the stars sing for you their best melodies

Take your rest, guide us, give us strength and wisdom

To share widely all that you have bequeathed unto us

Rest In Peace dear Hero,

Rest In Peace dearest child of Africa

God Bless Africa

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika

Morena boloka sechaba sa heso

Good Luck, I thank you, Ndiyabulela,!!!

isiXhosa

**Translated by: Nobuntu Stengile – Parliament of the Republic of
South Africa**

Iwile ingxilimbela!

Xa iNkosi yeeNkosi – Lowo unxiba isikhumba sehlosi

Yanxibelelana nezinyanya ze-Afrika

Umhlaba wanyikima!

Inyikima yavakala ukususela emaNtla ukuya kumaZantsi

Ekuhambeni kweveki, kwabonakala elubala ukukhwankqiswa

Izinyanya zamnyusela phezulu ukuze awele umlambo iJordane

Ubusuku bazophula iintliziyo zabantu

Ukususela emntwaneni ukuya komdala, kwagquba izililo

ezingathuthuzelekiyo kunye nengqumbo

Nditsho nelanga lala ukuveza ubuso balo iintsuku eziliqela

Lalineentloni ukuvela ngexesha lentlungu nobuntununtunu

Liwile iqhawe, luwile ugxibha lomfo, iwile ingxilimbela

Igorha elikhulu, igorha lamagorha

Kuvakala isijwili sokumangaliswa kwihlabathi liphela

Elowo uchaza ukuba ebeyintoni ekwangubani kuye uMadiba

Imilambo yothando namazwi amnandi entuthuzelo ampompoza ephuma
mbombo zone

Esikubonayo akuzange kwenzeke kweli, nditsho kuwo wonke umhlaba.!

Owu, khangela indlela esisikeleleke ngayo!

Ukuba ngexesha lobomi bethu sabelane neli qhawe lamaqhawe

Ebelisithi lakujonga umntwana lizaliswe luThando,

Thando olo inguThixo kuphela owasibonisa lona

Ngenene, ngowasemazulwini

Ewe kakade, ngenene, ukuba ubani angandibuza

Ndakuzingomba isifuba ndithi "Ndiyibonile ingelosi ngexesha lokuphila
kwam!"

Ngenene, awunguye owalo mhlaba

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

Ungowasemazulwini.

Lala, Lala, ubuthongo obumyoli

Mntwana wethu oyintanda

Iimfundiso zakho zonke -

Ziza kuhlala ziyintsika yehlabathi liphela kude kuye ephakadeni

Uze usibulisele kumaqhawe ethu akwelo lizwe

Zanga iinkwenkwezi zingakuculela ezona ngoma zazo zimnandi

Phumla, sikhokele, usiphe amandla nobulumko

Bokwabelana ngokubanzi ngako konke osishiyele kona

Phumla ngoxolo qhawe elithandwayo

Phumla ngoxolo mntwana we-Afrika oyintanda