**RHODES WORKS AHEAD**

**Graduation address by Prof Emeritus P T Mtuze**

Chancellor,

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my and my wife’s gratitude on being honoured in this way by my Alma Mater, Rhodes University. This gesture takes my thoughts back to the day I entered this illustrious institution as a very mature student, in 1978, and the excitement of graduating three years later with a BA (Translation) degree. I can imagine the joy experienced by graduates and post graduate students alike as they ready to receive rewards for their hard work. The joy is endless as the parents and guardians sigh sighs of relief as they spent sleepless nights calculating the needs of their beneficiaries. I make bold to add the joy of the lecturers on seeing their students come out of the university with all their ambitions fulfilled.

I took the topic of this address from a student orientation exhibition when I was Deputy Campus Director in the then East London campus of Rhodes University. I was No.2 to that exquisite gentleman, Dr Terry Marsh. Things got even tougher when Dr Marsh took his overdue sabbatical during the middle of the bilaterals between the two universities. We had to wade through stacks of documents with hitherto unheard of discourse – ‘due diligence’ being one of them. My administrative experience took a new turn when the Vice Chancellor, Dr David Woods, asked me if I did not want to return to Rhodes University, Grahamstown, as Deputy Registrar. I jumped at the offer and worked in that capacity, under my UNISA theology tutor, Dr Steve Fourie.

We come from a very divided past to a very tenuous present where everyone seems to be minding their own business, not bothered about our common destiny. We have tried to get together at the political level although, in some cases, it seems to be a marriage of convenience. It is at the social level where we are still fragmented. We, as the new graduate South Africans, mostly born-free, should do everything in our power to close the gap between the people of this country at all levels. We are better equipped to deal with the intricacies of a country that was brought to the brink of collapse, let alone war, by the cruel policies of past regimes.

If I can suggest anything to you as young, energetic and gifted graduands and graduates of this highly regarded institution it is unity, unity and unity. This has been repeated so many times that it has become cliché to many, but the truth is that this vital fact in our coexistence cannot be overemphasised. The opposite to this is too ghastly to contemplate. It will negate the great strides we have made to bring the country where it is today. We are known throughout the world for the strides we have made in constitutional justice, in electoral freedom and fairness, and for sticking to the Rule of Law in the face of all adversity. You as the new generation of leaders, can only improve on those standards to make this country a better place for all of us.

We need one another in order to secure the future of this beautiful country. We can learn from one another how to mould the country to make space even for our children’s children. The country has produced eminent icons from whom we can learn important lessons. Three isiXhosa expressions from our wisdom-lore, from the time of informal education and oral edification, show us how to work together in order to achieve our common goals. The first is from bird-lore: *Intaka yakha ngoboya benye* loosely translated as ‘a bird uses another bird’s feathers to build its nest’. The meaning is not exploitation as one might wrongly assume, but that you need help from another person to achieve your goals. The second expression is equally pertinent. It says *Akukho qili linokuzikhotha umhlana,* loosely translatled as ‘no genius can lick its back.’ Once again, the need for collaboration is highlighted. The third and last piece of advice from the olden days is ‘*Inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili,* loosely rendered as ‘you have to inquire from those who are ahead of you where the buffalo has been sighted.’ You cannot go it alone in all things. You need collective wisdom and experience.

Going back to my pilfered caption, Rhodes’ famous motto says it all – ‘where leaders learn.’ Leaders learn from others. They do not know everything. They do not learn from themselves. They learn from others, including ordinary people who are not necessarily leaders. We can all learn from one another.

Three simple stories illustrate this very poignantly. A professor was travelling on a boat paddled by an uneducated man whose skills were so outstanding they made the professor a little jealous. In the middle of the river the professor asked the boat man, “Tell me, Sir, do you know biology? The boat man said no. The professor asked, “Do you know geology?” The boat man answered in the negative. At that time the boat was hit by a strong current and it started taking in water. The boat man looked at the professor and inquired, “Prof, do you know swimology?”

The second story is from personal experience. There used to be picture framers at the back of the old Checkers business in the vicinity of the cathedral. One day I took my valuable certificates to them, like I used to do for many years. It was about nine o’clock in the morning. I found the place closed. I left thinking they are late or I am too early.

After an hour I went back to the business and still found it locked. As I turned away in frustration a man who was clearly schizophrenic and rummaged from the dustbins in the area, gave me a stern look and said in wonderful English, “Sir, you look like a learned man. Read the writing on the door.”

I did as told and discovered the notice that the business had moved to new premises elsewhere in town.

The third is very embarrassing because it exposed my own ignorance. I am a product of Bantu Education, a kind of education which was designed by Verwoerd to keep the black child down. My friend, Mr Stuurman, was luckier. He was in the last cohort of Cape Education students just ahead of us. He had a better education than me. He vowed that he could not compete with me in finding a job. In the heat of the argument I sold myself out by asking which *criterions* he used to arrive at that conclusion. He quickly corrected me by saying ‘criteria’. I quickly threw in my linguistics and said, “Point noted. I deliberately used the regular plural form. Is that the only basis for your assertion?” That ended the argument. Watch your grammar as you go on.

Remember, there is work to do ahead of you, but you cannot do it alone. Sometimes you have to listen to the schizophrenic voice. It may be helpful. And remember too, it is not how many “-ologies” you have picked up at varsity. It is what those “-ologies” have taught you to do.