**MAGGY’S DRAFT SPEECH**

The Chancellor of Rhodes University, the Hon Judge Lex Mpati;

The Vice Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela,

Chairperson of Council, Mr Vuyo Khahla,

Members of the Council of Rhodes University, the Executive Management and Senate of the University;

My fellow Graduands, and Family members;

Staff, Students and Friends of the University,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honoured to speak in front of graduated young people.

I myself will start by saying, if we break the borders in our hearts, and it is then that we will find the keys to open other borders.

To have these keys is an objective that all of the family of mankind should try to reach. Each one of us, in his or her own space, behind his or her door, can break borders. Borders are all around us. But above all, the young people that we educate. Teach them compassion and as citizens of the world. Teach them in love and hope.

The reason is simple: if we would like our world to be one where there is more chance of love, of tolerance, of unfaltering search for peace and settling conflicts, nobody can really better fill these conditions than youth. A generation who has been taught in love and has been taught the meaning of compromise. This youth is capable of spreading unconditional love, a youth where this folly called love lives inside them.

A need, a force, a folly to crush a wall built by egoism, by fear of the other. And this folly is simply faith.

Dear public, this folly that I am talking about, is not utopian, it is the life I have been living since I was 16 years old and which took a concrete form with the creation of Maison Shalom in 1993.

It is a folly which continues even now that I am far, that I am exiled from my mother – Burundi.

Indeed, in 1993, my country, Burundi was gripped by a terrible civil war.

Hutus and Tutsi killed each other, estimated then at 300,000 dead.

I was 36 years old when the civil war started and I had already adopted 7 Hutu and Tutsi children.

From that terrible day of 24 October 1993, the Burundi people began to flee. With my seven children, I found shelter in the church of Ruyigi, but the rebels forced their way even there. I had just enough time to hide the children in the cupboard of the sacristy, and to indicate to them to be silent, whatever they saw or heard.

Seventy-two people were massacred. The attackers, Tutsis, wanted to kill me, as I had saved children from the enemy ethnicity, but did not dare to do it, as I was their sister, I was from the same ethnicity.

The thugs tied me and beat me to know where the children were. I replied that I would rather die than tell them.

But I was able to save my children in exchange for food.

From this tragedy, I started to save others.

With friends, I then founded Maison Shalom. Children heard all the time on the radio “shalom” – peace. This is the reason for the name, Maison Shalom.

The main objective of Maison Shalom was not to welcome orphans, but to create the conditions to gather children who otherwise would grow up hating each other, who would grow up with prejudices. These children were fragile and hurt by civil wars and ethnic conflicts. It was to crush these borders of hate built by men. To give them the key to love and to compassion.

For this reason I set up an education system which teaches independence to the young, so that they can take back their lives and not have to depend on anyone, so that they can be free without the chains of hate, but can live with this folly inside, called love.

Through the Cinema des Anges at Maison Shalom, my children have been able to discover what is happening elsewhere in the world.

The children of Maison Shalom have, over the years, broken many borders. They have become doctors, scientists, musicians and are still united by love and compassion.

I continue my mission of unconditional love and education of young people so that they can live in dignity and in the spirit of freedom. This freedom which offers them the key to break borders. In spite of the exile, I want this youth to continue to know that life is to be celebrated and that God has not abandoned us.

I will continue to help a new generation that will carry the light of forgiveness when we will come back from exile.

I also call on all the young people who are listening, to put before everything else and without fear, their mission to break borders. Changes in our world will come from their hearts until the world becomes paradise, their paradise.

I will conclude by asking those gathered here to think of all those young people who have been left alone, raped, those who have fled, those who have died in civil war, a crisis like the one currently in Burundi, to open their hearts because we are all one big family, a family of mankind.

It is important to care for and educate young people in the world so that together we are guided by compassion, by generosity and by forgiveness, which are the keys to breaking the chains of all borders. So that we can continue to develop our spirit and human values. And, as I always say, LOVE WILL HAVE THE LAST WORD.

Thank you