

**Professor Nyameko Barney Pityana: Human Rights extraordinaire**

**Saturday 22nd April 2017**

**Degree: Doctor of Laws** (**LLD**)

Professor Nyameko Barney Pityana coined the phrase; “Black men you are own your own,” owing to the realities of the South African society leading to the establishment of the Black Consciousness Movement in the mid-1960s.

An outspoken champion for human rights, he has been vocal in South Africa’s fight for a true democracy to be enjoyed by all its citizens.

“If we are to overcome challenges of poverty, unemployment, health, education, land restitution, the economy, bitterness, anger, we need men and women full of goodness, faith, truth and love,” the University of Cape Town President of Convocation stated in a 2016 media interview.

Born in Uitenhage, Pityana is a University of Fort Hare graduate who co-founded the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) of the Black Consciousness Movement with Bantubonke Biko.

He was also a member of the African National Congress Youth League, but was later suspended for challenging the authority of Afrikaans teachers and the apartheid principles of Bantu education.

Pityana received a degree from the University of South Africa in 1976 and after he was barred from practicing law and any public activity in Port Elizabeth by the apartheid government.

He went into exile in 1978, and studied Theology at King's College, London and trained for the Ministry in Oxford. He went on to serve as an Anglican curate in Birmingham.From 1988 to 1992 he was the Director of the Programme to Combat Racism at the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

Pityana returned to South Africa in 1993, following the end of apartheid. He continued working in Theology and human rights, completing a PhD in Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1995.

He was appointed a member of the South African Human Rights Commission in 1995 and served as chair of the commission from 1995 to 2001.He also served on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights at the Organisation of African Unity in 1997.

Professor Pityana became Vice-Chancellor and Principal for the University of South Africa in 2001 and held the position for nine years. In August 2002 he was appointed as Professor ad hominem in UNISA’s Department of Constitutional, International and Indigenous Law.

His work in human rights has been widely recognised, and in December 2002, he was awarded an Honourable Mention at the 2002 UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education.

He was the rector of the College of the Transfiguration (Anglican) in Grahamstown from 2011 until 2014. He is the President of Convocation of the University of Cape Town, a vocal critic of the present ANC leadership under Jacob Zuma.

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**Issued on behalf of Rhodes University by Communications and Advancement Division.**

**For more information and interview opportunities, please contact:**

**Ms Veliswa Mhlope**

**Communications Manager**

**Tel: +27 46 603 8773**

**Mobile: +27 82 484 0161**

**Email:** [**v.mhlope@ru.ac.za**](mailto:v.mhlope@ru.ac.za)

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