






Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor











**Launch of the South African Law Reform Commission Legal Essay
Competition in Honour of Justice Pius Nkonzo Langa
Senate Hall, Theo van Wyk Building at Unisa**

Prof Mandla Makhanya

Principal and Vice Chancellor of Unisa

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-  Director of proceedings, Prof Sibanda
-  The Honourable Minister of Justice and Correctional Services,
Advocate Michael Masutha
-  The Chairperson of the South African Law Reform
Commission, Judge Jody Kollapen, together with your
colleagues

-  Our special guests, family members of the late Chief Justice Pius Langa
-  Leaders of the judiciary in your various portfolios
-  Jura law representatives
-  Academics from the legal fraternity
-  Leadership and representatives of the Chapter 9 Institutions
-  Chairpersons of Law Societies
-  Chairpersons of the Advocates Bar Councils
-  Government officials in your various positions
-  Students and community members
-  Esteemed audience, ladies and gentlemen

Let me first express my deep sense of gratitude for the invitation to speak at this important event of the launch of the South African Law Reform Commission Legal Essay Writing Competition in honour of Chief Justice Pius Nkonzo Langa.

It gives me a great pleasure to welcome you all to this great institution of higher learning especially when considering the fact that Justice Langa is one of our eminent and most distinguished alumnus. As we gather here today the fact that this is one of the most intriguing historical moment in our young democracy has not escaped my mind. We are in a

season of great expectations, uncertain future and hopeful horizon which offer many vistas for advancing our democracy and social justice that will make the promises of our democracy and liberation real and tangible.

This is the year which marks the 100th birthday of our immortalized iconic leaders, the late President Nelson Rolihlahla Dalibunga Mandela and Mrs Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu, who were the midwives of our Constitutional democracy. In the same context Justice Langa, in whose honour this Legal Essay Writing Competition is launched, was one of the prominent architects of our globally acclaimed constitution and the early establishment of our judicial system. When history of our democratic transition is written, the name of Justice Langa and his cohort of legal luminaries who led this process of establishing the legal cornerstones and pillars of our democracy will receive a special treatment as trailblazers and pathfinders of a system that has withstood the test of time.

As we all know, the last few years have presented some moments which have severely tested institutions of our constitutional democracy. The executive, parliament, state owned companies, law enforcement agencies, audit firms and corporate entities often buckled under these

political and governance pressures but the judiciary and many chapter 9 Institutions withstood the pressure and virtually became our last line of defense. For that, I honour our chapter 9 Institutions and the Judiciary as they saved our democracy and granted us a chance to recover and reflect on what we need to do in our journey to deepen our democracy and bring social justice. Under the most trying circumstances our judiciary gave the true meaning to its key values of applying and interpreting the law without “fear, favour or prejudice.” We shall forever be grateful for what you individually and collectively did and continue to do to save our democracy. Being principled and resolute in your application of justice is the best way of honouring this towering giant, Justice Langa.

It is commendable that you embarked on this conscious and concerted effort to prepare the next generation of legal minds in the form of legal essay writing competition. Collaboration between the academic and research institutions with the judiciary as well as other key stakeholders is the best way of optimizing our resources in developing legal human resources that will feed into the judiciary as well as academic fields as we expect that some of students participating in these programmes will take an interest in the academic and research fields to complement the work that our courts and legal institutions are doing.

You should also take pride in the fact that some of prominent liberation icons and world leaders come from the legal field. Here I can immediately think of Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, George Bizos, Arthur Chaskalson, Bram Fischer, Fidel Castro, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Barack and Michelle Obama, Pixley ka Isaka Seme who was the first black lawyer in South Africa and founding member of the ANC, Randal Robinson, John Adams, Christine Lagarde, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi as well as many others. Among the learners and participants in this competition we hope to see and inspire a new cohort of legal giants who will join the above-mentioned galaxy of stars with Justice Langa being the most immediate example of what legal scholars, activists and practitioners can be. In our quest for social justice and deepening of constitutionalism there is a lot of material to write about, in essence our democratic transition as it evolves has become a complex laboratory in which many legal issues have been tested. The issues of racial and gender transformation of the judiciary, social classes and access to justice, case flow management, fourth and fifth industrial revolution and its implications for the administration of justice as well as first and second generation of human rights in our constitutional democracy are some of prominent topical issues for consideration.

Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that this year Unisa will be marking its 145th anniversary as well as 100 years since its relocation from Cape Town to Pretoria or Tshwane. During this period Unisa evolved from the Oxford and Cambridge University system and it, in turn, gave birth to many South African universities which were initially established as its colleges before they assumed an autonomous status. Of great relevance here is the fact that Unisa has produced a number of great legal minds alongside Justice Langa. These include President Nelson Mandela, Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Judge Fikile Bam, Judge Selby Baqwa, Judge Edwin Cameron, Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo and many other prominent leaders who have and some still occupy key positions in our society. Nothing touched me more than the historic swearing in ceremony of our new president last week, 16th of February 2018, when we had to acknowledge the good news that both the president Cyril Ramaphosa and Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng, are our alumni. I could not stop reflecting on how our Vision Statement, “The African University Shaping Futures in the Service of Humanity”, captures the essence of the role our university is playing. It is for this reason that I will spare no effort in ensuring that any challenges that our College of Law may be currently facing will be resolved and this college will soar to higher heights as we take bold strides into the future. Let me also take this time to express our deep sense of gratitude for the additional

resources that government has committed to provide towards the realization of free and quality education for the needy and deserving students. This will certainly give students from the disadvantaged backgrounds a fighting chance to realize and actualize their academic and professional dreams.

I would like to close my remarks with this simple and yet profound remark directed at our learners by the great Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who proclaimed that “Where the needs of the world and your talents cross, there lies your vocation.”

Let the best essays rise to the level of making a great impact and inspire, but also let all participants know that they are winners for daring to dream.

I thank you