



**VAAAL UNIVERSITY  
OF TECHNOLOGY**

*Inspiring thought. Shaping talent.*

**WELCOME ADDRESS**

*By Professor Khehla Ndlovu*

Vice Chancellor and Principal

Inaugural Walter Sisulu Memorial Lecture

12 June 2025 | Emerald Resort, Vanderbijlpark

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with deep humility and profound gratitude that I welcome you all to the inaugural Walter Sisulu Memorial Lecture, hosted in partnership with the Sisulu Foundation for Social Justice. Tonight, we are gathered not for ceremony, but for something far more enduring, a collective remembering that seeks to honour the past while shaping the path ahead.

Allow me first to observe protocol and acknowledge the presence of our honoured guests:

- The Sisulu family, with special recognition to Dr Lindiwe Nonceba Sisulu, Patron of the Foundation
- Mr Mphumzi Mdekazi, Chief Executive Officer of the Sisulu Foundation for Social Justice
- Our keynote speaker, the Reverend Dr Allan Boesak, a moral giant of our times
- Professor Malegapuru William Makgoba, former Vice Chancellor of UKZN and distinguished scholar
- Dr Pali Lehohla, Deputy Chairperson of the Sisulu Foundation for Social Justice
- Ambassadors and dignitaries from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Namibia
- My colleague, Dr Speech Nelana, Deputy Vice Chancellor: Research, Innovation, Commercialisation and Internationalisation
- All academic colleagues, members of Council, members of management, the Institutional Forum, partners, students, and invited guests

- If I have not mentioned you by name, please know that your presence is no less appreciated. All protocol observed, and every guest here is valued.

I greet you all with deep respect.

This afternoon, we gather not to simply honour a name, but to commune with a spirit, the quiet and resolute spirit of Walter Sisulu.

He was, as history reminds us, not a man of flamboyance, but of principle.

Not a man who sought the light, but one who carried it.

He understood, as few ever do, that leadership is not about command but about conscience.

He once said: *"We must treat our people with dignity and respect. We must listen to them and learn from them."* In those few words lies the very foundation of a just society, and indeed, the ethos we aspire to here at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT).

Through our collaboration with the Sisulu Foundation, we affirm our belief that universities are not ivory towers. They are instruments of social justice, designed not to isolate thought but to inspire action. This partnership is not symbolic. It is strategic, it is sincere, and it is urgent.

We are proud to become custodians of this memorial lecture, not merely as an event on a calendar, but as an annual call to conscience.

Tonight, we welcome not only a keynote address but a keystone in a legacy that must live on. We welcome a gathering of minds, but also a gathering of memory.

Walter Sisulu walked slowly, with quiet steps,

But the ground still shakes where he passed.

He was the kind of man whose voice never had to be raised

Because his integrity always spoke first.

So as we begin this evening's proceedings, let us open not just our minds, but our hearts.

Let us sit with the discomfort of injustice and rise with the conviction of transformation.

Let this be more than a lecture.

Let this be a moment of alignment with the ideals we dare not abandon.

In alignment with the enduring legacy of Walter Sisulu, I am pleased to announce that the university will soon launch a student essay competition, inviting our young thinkers to reflect on the values he stood for and how they resonate today. Further details of the competition will

be communicated in due course. This is our way of ensuring that his story continues to live through the voices of the next generation.

To each of you here, I say thank you for your presence.

May your spirits be stirred.

May your convictions be deepened.

And may Walter Sisulu's legacy continue to live, not just in memory, but in movement.

**Welcome, and thank you.**

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