



COMMUNIQUÉ TO THE CUT COMMUNITY

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

21 March 2021

2021 #4

Dear CUT Community

If the past year has taught us anything, it is the value of humanity towards our fellow humans. The only way that we could ever have gotten this far amidst the global Covid-19 pandemic, was by uniting our efforts. It compelled us to ask some difficult questions, understand the 21st century challenges facing the higher education sector, and devise inclusive solutions to the benefit of all. Most of us realise the value of freedom, as it was temporarily suspended – albeit for our own health and safety. As we grapple with the pandemic's effect on households, communities, and the sector, we hasten to join the call by government to foster social cohesion and nation-building.

This year, Human Rights Day is celebrated under the theme “The Year of Charlotte Maxeke: Promoting Human Rights in the Age of Covid-19”. We honour her as a religious leader, activist and community leader who boldly defied social limitations imposed on women at the time, becoming the first African woman to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in America more than 100 years ago.

Despite her social status at the time, she remained grounded amongst the marginalised communities, and stayed true to her convictions by championing for their advancement. As this is also the 150th anniversary of this struggle icon, it is only fitting to memorialise her legacy, which afforded women of today a pathway to fight injustices and gender violence. The university recognises her as an outstanding scholar and leader of note, having distinguished herself amongst her generation by defying norms. She epitomised a true symbol of social justice, equality and human rights for all humanity across the globe, and remains an inspiration to the CUT community for her critical role in uplifting women, regardless of their race, creed and background.

Human Rights Month also marks the 61st anniversary of the historic march of thousands of Sharpeville residents to the local police station. They were protesting the unjust pass laws that required Africans to carry a document permitting them entry to areas reserved for White people under the Apartheid system. In addition, Human Rights celebrations coincide with the 25th anniversary of the adoption of our Constitution, which is hailed as one of the most innovative and progressive in the world.

On behalf of Management, I urge our students and staff to join in the commemoration activities, and to appreciate the progress made in promoting and protecting human rights. Let us use this month and day to reflect on the meaning of human rights, and celebrate those who have fought for social justice, democracy, dignity, equality and freedom. As we do so, let us recognise the critical role we, too, can play in our communities by embracing these values, which are the hallmark of a free nation.

For the first time, and due to the pandemic, our generation can actively promote the rights of others by limiting the risk to their health. In the words of Charlotte Maxeke: “This work is not for yourselves – kill that spirit of ‘self’, and do not live above your people, but live with them”.

Kind regards / Ditumediso tse mofuthu / Vriendelike groete

Prof. Henk de Jager

Vice-Chancellor and Principal