

CITATION: PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA

Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka was born in Claremont in 1955 on the third of November. Her parents, Sabbath and Michael Mlambo, instilled a servant leadership ethos in their children from a young age. Her mother was a community health nurse who, through her quiet determination to make a tangible difference, unknowingly became young Phumzile's exposure to activism and a lasting source of inspiration.

After completing her Matriculation at Ohlange High School she went on to graduate from the University of Lesotho with a Bachelor's degree in Social Science and Education, which paved the way for her to start seeding knowledge as a lecturer at the Mpumalanga Teachers Training College between 1981 and 1983. She later moved to Geneva to work with the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) where she advocated for job creation opportunities for young people from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East within the United Nations system.

By 1988 she had also obtained a qualification in Gender Policy and Planning at the University College in London. It is evident that her academic interest was not only piqued by social problems that arise from the exclusion of women in social, economic, and other power structures, but equally by the levers that could be engaged to address these injustices. By 1993 she had obtained a Masters in Philosophy degree majoring in Educational Planning from the University of Cape Town. In the same year the Witwatersrand Technikon awarded her an honorary doctorate.

In 1993, as South Africa was birthing the democratic era, Mlambo-Ngcuka continued to serve the African National Congress whilst also ploughing her energy into race and gender organizational development as a management consultant at Phumelela Services in Cape Town. She extended this energy to serve on a number of boards at this time which included the Women's Development Foundation and the World University Services amongst others.

She was as a member of parliament from 1994 and in 1996 was called on to take up the service of Deputy Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, a post she held until 1999. Never far from the coalface, during this period she also founded the Gugulethu Community Development Corporation. She took up her service mantle once more in 1999 and filled the position of Minister of Minerals and Energy until 2005. It was under her tenure and leadership in this ministry that South Africa ushered in legislation and policies that would forever change the mining landscape in the country. During this time, she was the driving force behind the Mining Charter, a tentative step towards meaningful participation of black business in the mining industry, and a notable step towards an inclusive economy for all South Africans.

Mlambo-Ngcuka's appointment as the country's first female Deputy President was not only a win for women but it paved the way for sharper policies to unlock bottlenecks that

suppressed economic growth. Her time in office was characterized by a strong push towards an inclusive economy that allowed the investments into the first economy to trickle into and benefit the second or informal economy too. She championed the Accelerated Growth and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA), a targeted approach to unlock growth in high potential industries. Through her office, she also led the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), a national drive to accelerate the building up of skills and capacity to support the country's growth ambitions.

Following her resignation from office in 2008, she reconnected with her first love: education. She established the Umlambo Foundation, a non-profit organization that built a national network of academic, resource, and psychosocial support for principals leading rural and township based schools. The foundation continues to make a visible impact in the performance of rural schools in impoverished areas.

Never one to work only on project at a time, she completed her doctoral studies in Education and Technology at the University of Warwick.

Jim Rohn might have been thinking about Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka when he said, "All good men and women must take responsibility to create legacies that will take the next generation to a level we could only imagine." As the sitting Executive of UN Women, Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka, carries the responsibility of protecting and promoting the rights of four billion women around the world. Although she has held this position since 2013, those who have followed her journey, will attest and concur in the observation, that she has long exercised her responsibility in creating a future that many women have only dared to imagine. Her career has been an exemplary commitment to advancing human rights issues, standing up for equality and social justice, and relentlessly championing women's rights through grassroots activism as well as leadership at an international level.

This commitment has not only found expression in the number of organizations that she has worked for and supported, but also in her character and leadership. In her home country, South Africa, her silhouette is flanked by other great leaders who were at the frontline of ending apartheid and liberating the people with whom she shares her birth soil. She served the country as the first female Deputy President, defying any notions that the second citizen holds a ceremonial position, leading the country's economic growth plan, the Accelerated Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA). The seeds of the possibility of a female president in South Africa were planted during her term in the presidency between 2005 and 2008.

Her service to her country and to the almost 4 billion women around has us all believing in the goodness of humanity, in the hope that is cultivated and carried through

leadership, and in the comfort that future generations will enjoy a life we could only imagine.

For her commitment to the cause of women's empowerment nationally and globally, social justice more broadly, education and service to her country it is befitting that the University of the Witwatersrand bestow on Dr Phumzile Mlambo the degree of Dr of Literature Honoris Causa.