

11 - U L: T -â- y W THU 11: @ Â© C D M |Â£Â« T I O N A L

R . Â© 1

0TfbÂ°a[sÂ°aÂ«|3.

University of the Western Cape

' t.wmtm **+.1.-â- â- â- -

Univcrsiteit vail Wcs-Kaapland

COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE

Pr;v?.KJ Bt'>9

Bcllvnlc, 7535

\$- juth Alrica

Tctegoph UNIBF.U.

Tklck: M6&6l

Teleplww. <02l> 9ft^29ll

Privoalw" XI7

DcUvitle, 7535

Suk! Alrik.i

Ttltl^wm l JNiBRI l

I .lirks;Â«ut'i6l

Tclt'loon: (O/MHfWWII

fu'f /VViV.ys...

11 OCTOBER 1920

To: COMRADE O.R. TAMBO

PRESIDENT

ANC

Fax No: (0944) 818830629

Dear Comrade President

Please forgive me for not forwarding to you the requested information sooner.

The reason for this lapse is the fact that I had asked Prof. Gerwel to let me have a summary of the institution as he saw it, so that I could enable me to 1st YOU have the information.

I have at long last received a document entitled "Overview of the History of the University of the Western cape", I now enclose same herewith.

I have received a number of other booklets;; which I am putting in the post for you as well. I hope that these will reach you very soon.

We have also been discussing possible dates for the graduation. When I last spoke to your daughter, Tembi, I mentioned two alternative dates, namely 24 November or 28 November. She pointed out to me the difficulty, namely that if you were to come on 24th or 28th November for the graduation and travel back to London, it would place a tremendous burden upon you and your health, more particularly because you will have to travel back to South Africa for conference.

I told Tembi that; as I saw the matter, you should not return to London and then travel back to Capa Town. In other words, it should not be required of you that you make two trips within the space of less than a month.

I indicated that the desirable situation would be (subject to your views) for you to come for the graduation, for example on 24th or 28th and to remain in the country until

conference* The university will ensure that you are properly accommodated and also that all your medical and health needs are attended to at no expense to you. This means that if you remain on in Cape Town, the university will see to your accommodation and/or other needs. If you travel to Johannesburg and decide to remain in Johannesburg for a while until conference takes place, the university will similarly assist. Yesterday I spoke to Prof. Gerwel and he told me that the university would want you to be as comfortable as possible and would go out of its way to make your stay comfortable.

I understand that the Chancellor of the university, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, will be available on the 28th. The suggestion from the university is therefore that perhaps the 28th should be chosen as the graduation date. However, if you prefer the 24th, then arrangements could be made for that date as well, perhaps Tembani can telephone me again to inform me of the arrangements.

Now on to a more personal level. It was a great privilege for me and Farida to have been with you and to have spent time with you and Adelaide, we do hope that your health continues to improve and that you will regain a measure of fitness and health which will enable you not only to witness, but also to participate, in the unfolding events in our motherland. As I said, to you, our people

appreciate the gigantic role which you have played. They want to see you and look forward to your arrival. All of us wish that we would be able to benefit from your leadership and experience in the critical and challenging times which lie ahead. But above everything else, we wish you good health so that you may enjoy life- We also wish that you and your family would be able to share in the excitement of our times to bring some joy to you and those who are close to you.

With warmest comradely greetings from Farida, myself, the family and all friends.

Yours in the struggle

DULLAH OMAR

OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) was started in 1960. In reviewing the first thirty years of its existence one is most forcefully struck by the transformation of the institution from an agency of aid for apartheid to the powerful educational force within the democratic struggle which it is today.

This history of the institution is marked by development through phases of outright apartheid domination of the university, growing alienation on the part of those supposed to be served by the institution, the development of a pattern of protest and rejection, the shift towards organised resistance and finally a period of engagement and transformation. In many respects the developments at UWC mirrored the political processes in the nation at large.

The institution was created as the University College of the Western Cape, established under the notorious Extension of University Education Act of 1959. This Act enabled the government to establish separate university colleges for the black population on ethnic grounds. The University Colleges of the North, Zululand, Durban, Westville and the Western Cape were established in terms of this Act and the University of Fort Hare recreated to become an ethnic institution. The University College of the Western Cape was particularly established for the Coloured people.

Like all these ethnic universities or "bush colleges", as they came to be called, UWC was totally dominated by reactionary forces in the staff and administration. These institutions were extremely authoritarian, dictatorial on

the part of students or staff was not tolerated and intellectually they represented very restrictive environments.

From the beginning the community resented and objected to the idea of a racially separate university, quite apart from the fact that it was

academically and educationally inferior. The students who were forced to

attend, because they were legally precluded from going to other universities, were at the institution under protest. This sense of alienation from the institution would become the base for the later development of a tradition of protest and resistance at the university. The

UWC was situated within an urban area and the "non-collaborationist" culture

of much of Cape politics further fed that sense of alienation, with students generally not participating in any activity on campus other than attending to their formal academic responsibilities. This was the essence of being at the institution "under protest".

The first decade of the university's existence saw, like was the case in the

nation generally, passive or withdrawalist "protest" rather than overt or active demonstration of that protest. It was only during the early Seventies

and also with the development of the black consciousness movement amongst students - that open protest activity surfaced. The first significant protest activity at UWC occurred around the issue of dress: students burnt their ties in protest against the rule demanding formal dress at university*

The early 1970's saw a rapid increase in the frequency with which students

started challenging the university authorities through protest and boycott actions. This occurred also as part of the broader nation-wide student struggles taking place at the black campuses.

continue/.

" ~ -H __THU xi: 1 '2 c n s H ft T i o n a i.

2.

In 1973 the student protest led to the closure of the university and the de-registration of the entire student body. This gave rise to a nation-wide campaign by the students and some of the progressive black staff who had in the meantime started joining the staff of the institution. This combined mass action of students, staff and community forced the administration and the State to retract. One of the demands was that a black rector be appointed and because of these pressures Dr Dick van der Ross was appointed as the first black person to head up a South African university. The hopes of the State were, obviously, that he would fit in with their plans, but with his liberal anti-apartheid background, he started creating space for student dissent and protest as well as fighting the conservative forces in his staff and administration. The university continued to attract more progressive black as well as white staff, thereby strengthening the position of the Rector.

The growth of student militancy in the country during and after 1976 was also strongly reflected at UWC. The university, through its student body, in fact became one of the major growth points of protest and resistance politics in the Western Cape. The effect of this on the institution itself was that the original apartheid ethos was challenged and replaced by the counter-ethos of opposition to apartheid. The university governance started responding to the demands and aspirations articulated by its student body and leadership.

In 1978 the Rector initiated an investigation and planning exercise which four years later, in 1982, found expression in the UWC OBJECTIVES in which the institution committed itself to the anti-apartheid position and its educational activities to explicitly serving the disadvantaged. This policy document, adopted by Senate and Council, provided the space and basis for much of the later developments in the university. Progressives could now call upon the official and formal position of the institution.

In April 1984 the university obtained legal autonomy, i.e. the same legal status as the historically white universities. This essentially meant that the final governance of the institution now rested with the elected university council rather than the Minister. This development, coming a few months ahead of the introduction of the tricameral constitution which would

Id
have made the university directly answerable to an own affairs minister,
was
of major importance for the further transformation of the institution.

The politics of the period post-1984 had a very strong impact also at UW
C.
It heightened the political consciousness at the university and the
connection between education and politics, which UWC today emphasize
s so
much, was highlighted for the university in this period. The election of thft
present Rector - the election took place in September 198S for the post t
o
be taken up in January 1.987 - was undoubtedly influenced by the politics
of
that period.

The last four or five years saw the university responding most unambiguo
usly
to the political demands of the time, clearly aligning itself with the
democratic movement in the country. As the repression heightened the
university increasingly articulated it as a societal responsibility of a
university to come out in open defense of and partnership with the forces
of
democracy. It gained itself the labels of "intellectual home of the Left"
and "people's university" for the position it took on these and related
matters.

continue/.

r* Â© T H U

1 1: 1 -1 i_: n hi i'i T I O hi n L.

3

R

1

* â€¢

The university most decisively broke with its ethnic past, becoming a truly

national university. While in 1986 less than five percent of its students were African, the figure for 1990 stands at thirty percent, with its largest 'acuity having more than 54% of its new first year intakes being African students, ilie governance of the institution is continuously being democratised with students having participation and involvement in all decisions affecting them, and administration, axr.demics, workers and f- ^ being joined in man> decision-making forums. On important issues, nisiions policy, the organised community form*?ions are os â– , vOnsuHed and involved. Teaching and curricula* "">rm is get*!*Â© continues attention as the university responds to its <,;â– of a pcu^ic university"

i

i

; .â€¢* i>-V '

*