

## VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MEDAL MARIAN JACOBS

Marian Jacobs was born in 1947 at the close of the second World War, the daughter of Alfred and Eileen Jacobs who were teachers in Wynberg. “*Herstory*” is the warm earth that has birthed a journey of struggle, growth and an ascent befitting of this recognition. She is a true child of this country and a worthy recipient of her seat in this “*Place of the Stars*” (*iGamirodi 'Khais!*), the name given to this ground by its original peoples.

Now a furiously busy retiree and Emeritus Professor, at her core Marian is a lover of and fierce advocate for children, a paediatrician, an academic, the first and only black, female Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences to date, a mentor, a wife and a mother, a human rights activist, a supporter and defender of transformation and a nurturer of human relationships. She has had a rich and varied career, which has crossed child health and development from the laboratory to the bedside flowing to the community through health systems and policy innovation specifically aimed at protecting the rights of children, the vulnerable and the disenfranchised.

In her own words, Marian’s *privileged* experience has crossed the globe, east-to-west, from Bangladesh to Boston, and south-to-north, from Cape Town to Arusha. It has encompassed engagements with educators and learners, researchers and practitioners, advocates and leaders, and managers and policy-makers from local government, through post-apartheid South Africa and the African continent, to the halls of the World Health Organisation.

Marian has the common touch, she is unaffected by pomp and ceremony, she is warm, loving and accepting, she is interested and invested. She is the true embodiment of the human values which count most, and as such she sets the benchmark for the kind of humanity that the University of Cape Town seeks to inculcate in its staff and graduates.

As the Stella and Paul Loewenstein Professor of Child Health, Marian blazed a trail for children’s rights as the Director of the Child Health Unit from 1995-2006, contemporaneously as the Head of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health from 2004-2006, and then as the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences from 2006-2012, serving latterly as the custodian of the spectacular events which marked the faculty’s centenary in 2012.

As an academic Marian has published in excess of 50 peer-reviewed manuscripts, books and book chapters in her areas of expertise and has occupied innumerable positions of influence in global forums, the magnitude and importance of which are not easily matched by many of her cadre, most recently serving as the co-chair for the national Ministerial Advisory Committee for COVID-19.

However, more than all of her achievements, if you had to stop anyone at the faculty and ask who Marian is and how they feel about her, you will hear things like, “she danced with us in the quad”, “she remembered my name”, “she was kind to me when days were dark”, and “she bought me gifts for my dogs”.

Marian is as wonderfully unassuming, disarmingly forthright, unnervingly connected and blisteringly joyful, as she is extraordinary. Simply put, she is the *real* deal.