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UCT mourns the passing of Dr Kathrada

The University of Cape Town mourns the passing of anti-apartheid struggle stalwart Dr Ahmed Kathrada, who was conferred with an honorary doctorate by the university in 2015.

The university community woke up along with the rest of the country to the sad news of Dr Kathrada's passing in the early hours on this morning (Tuesday, 28 March).

Dr Kathrada was a veteran of the South African liberation struggle, Rivonia trialist, long-serving political prisoner on Robben Island and Pollsmoor Maximum Prison, ANC leader and Member of Parliament.

UCT expresses sincere condolences to his partner, Barbara Hogan, as well as his family and friends following the death of a veteran who will be remembered for his unyielding commitment to a free, non-racial, democratic South Africa.

Dr Kathrada was awarded an honorary degree (Doctor of Law) by UCT in June 2015.

His oration, which was delivered by Dr Russell Ally, executive director of the Development and Alumni Department, read: "Kathy (as Dr Kathrada was affectionately known) left in his final year of school to become a full-time political activist. He finished his matric through part-time study and, but for a brief spell at Wits University, did not return to formal tertiary study until he was on Robben Island.

"But education has always being a critically important part of his life. He teases that he was probably one of the earliest proponents of the misguided doctrine of 'liberation before education' for dropping out of his formal studies to become a full-time political activist. If there is one thing in his life that he would do differently if he had the chance, he often tells the youth, is combine his activism with pursuing his studies. They are not mutually exclusive. If anything, they complement each other.

"On the island he embraced his studies with zeal and commitment. In his letters to his family, he told them to let his mother know that he was not actually in prison, but at university. He was the first Robben Island prisoner to complete a university degree. He went on to complete a second degree and two honours degrees. And, but for the advent

of television – which was made to available to him in his final years as a political prisoner – he jokingly says, he would have come gone on to do a master’s.”

Read the full citation [here](#).

At the age of 17, Dr Kathrada participated in the Passive Resistance Campaign of the South African Indian Congress and became one of 2 000 people who were arrested and imprisoned for defying a law that discriminated against Indians. This was followed by various arrests and charges until he was sentenced in the Rivonia Trial to life imprisonment with hard labour, along with former president Nelson Mandela and ANC stalwart Walter Sisulu. Dr Kathrada spent 26 years in prison, 18 of which were on Robben Island.

Dr Kathrada has received numerous awards, including Isithwalandwe/Seaparankoe, the highest award bestowed by the ANC, and also the Presidential Order for Meritorious Service, Class 1: Gold.

ENDS

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