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UCT VC among Times Higher Education's 10 People of the Year

University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng has been named among the Times Higher Education (THE)'s 10 People of the Year.

Phakeng is among the people "who mattered in higher education in 2020", named by THE on 17 December. The list comprises "the academics and administrators who have shaped the debate in the past 12 months."

According to THE: "There is no doubt that higher education will need strong, transformational leadership as the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, and few people embody this more than Phakeng. Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town since 2018, she continued to speak out powerfully against inequality in South Africa and in academia globally over the past year..."

Speaking at this year's THE World Academic Summit, Phakeng said universities needed to show more "reflection and humility" around their own "complicity" in perpetuating racism and sexism, and called for the creation of more diverse leadership teams and an end to the exploitation of researchers from the Global South.

"If universities are to transform into more equal institutions, they will need leaders like Professor Phakeng who are not afraid to speak uncomfortable truths and hold the sector to account," wrote THE.

Phakeng is the only African named on the list. The others are:

- Patrisse Cullors (academic at Otis College of Art and Design, and Prescott College),
- Professor Sarah Gilbert (scientist at the University of Oxford),
- Professor Christian Drosten (head of the Institute of Virology at Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin),
- Professor Zhang Yongzhen (researcher at the Fudan University-affiliated Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center),

- Dr Jill Biden (long-time college teacher in the US),
- Professor Thomas Maschmeyer (chemist at University of Sydney),
- Professor Neil Ferguson (mathematical epidemiologist at Imperial College London),
- Dr Lauren Gardner (co-director at the Center for Systems Science and Engineering, Johns Hopkins University), and
- Dr Clare Wenham (assistant professor of global health policy at the London School of Economics).

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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