

College of Economic & Management Sciences

'Mr Fix It' receives honorary doctorate from Unisa

On 6 November 2020, Unisa conferred the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (*honoris causa*) on Mavuso Walter Msimang, who is widely recognised as a leader of change with varied experience in transforming institutions.

Msimang matriculated in 1960 and enrolled at the University of Fort Hare. On the instruction of the underground leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), he abandoned his studies and left the country with the view to further his education abroad. When the leadership of the ANC was arrested in Rivonia on 11 June 1963, Msimang, who was already in Francistown, Botswana, en route to Dar es Salaam, changed his mind and decided to undergo military training as an Umkhonto we Sizwe cadre. He was sent to Moscow, Russia, where he underwent a one-year programme in urban guerrilla warfare, specialising in high-frequency radio communication.



Prof Mandla Makhanya (Principal and VC, Unisa) (right) congratulates Mavuso Walter Msimang on the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (*honoris causa*) conferred on him by the university.

Msimang started his professional career with the UN World Food Programme as a UN volunteer assigned to health and refugee programmes in Zambia. He subsequently joined the World Food Programme in Kenya. He later took up a position with the World University Service/Canada (WUSC) in Ottawa, responding to the famine in Ethiopia that made world headlines. After his return to South Africa in 1993, he was appointed CEO of Umthombo Pride, an EU/Kagiso Trust-funded project that worked with community based rural organisations in KZN. In 1994, Msimang became the first black chief executive to head up South African Tourism, then SATOUR.

Taking the podium to accept his degree, Msimang spared a moment to talk about corruption and governance, and raised the need to address serious challenges that plague the society today. As a veteran of the ANC, Msimang is outspoken on issues of good governance and corruption, and currently chairs Corruption Watch.

During a career that saw him transform and improve the performance of state institutions, he earned himself the name of 'Mr Fix It'. Msimang is passionate about conservation and environmental management. He has been a member of the WWF South Africa board since February 2011 and chairs its social, ethics, and transformation committee. He is Deputy Chairperson of the African Parks Network, serves on the board of the Peace Parks Foundation and Community Conservation Africa, is a member of the Wildlife Environmental Service of South Africa (WESSA), and participates in many conservation colloquiums.

[Msimang's life](#) is a true definition of what service to humanity is about. Beginning from his willingness to volunteer military service for the liberation of his country, working as a UN volunteer, service in community organisations, and outstanding service at public service level, is more than ample justification for this recognition. Unisa is proud to honour him with this degree.

** By Tshimangadzo Mphaphuli, Senior Journalist, Department of Institutional Advancement*

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