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Students must draw lessons from the late Ahmed Kathrada, Universities SA states

At a time when there is so much concern about what is going on at our public universities, students would do well to take lessons from the life of the late liberation stalwart and political activist, Ahmed Kathrada. USAF's CEO, Professor Ahmed Bawa, stated this morning. He pointed to four important lessons that emanate from this extraordinary life.

Firstly, Kathrada's passion for education and his understanding of the importance of education as a fundamental requirement in understanding himself, his role as a political activist and in understanding society are important values to draw upon. **Once a learner, always a learner.** Even though the late stalwart embraced the ANC's doctrine of "*liberation before education*" during the earlier years of his activism, he did admit during his twilight years that, given a chance, he would have done things differently. Prof Bawa recalled that Dr Kathrada had left secondary school in his final year to focus on political activism. He ended up completing his matric through part-time study and went on to complete four degrees while incarcerated on Robben Island. Uncle Kathy, as he became affectionately known, often advised young people that education and political activism "are not mutually exclusive. If anything, they complement each other."

Secondly, Ahmed Kathrada's absolute commitment to service to society was hugely inspirational to all that he believed in: his undying commitment to doing what is best for ordinary people; placing people at the centre and understanding that the ethic of service should be at the heart of all we do as human beings.

The *third* lesson was his deep commitment to non-racialism and to understanding how to create a non-racial society a living reality. His constant reminder that we must understand that we are not isolated human beings in South Africa, that we are a part of a world, was a way to get us to buy into his commitment to internationalisation, his emphasis on supporting the struggles of people who are oppressed around the world.

The *fourth* lesson was his courage to speak truth to power, even if that meant criticising his beloved African National Congress and its leadership when he deemed it necessary. To the end, he was a strong critical voice of reason. "Youth must honour this legacy of deep humility by safeguarding the sanctity of learning across our university system", Prof Bawa concluded.

Dr Ahmed Kathrada was a recipient of countless honorary degrees from universities from as far afield as Canada, Britain and the United States. Numerous universities in South Africa also bestowed upon him honorary qualifications, the latest of which came from the University of Cape Town in June 2015, and the Durban University of Technology in April 2016.

Members of Universities SA's Board of Directors were among dignitaries attending the funeral of the late stalwart yesterday - ahead of their first Board of Directors meeting in 2017.

Hamba kahle Qhawe lama qhawe

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