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**5 September 2019**

## **Remembering Nene: Honouring the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence**

The University of Cape Town executive issued the below communication to the campus community on Thursday, 5 September.

This follows both the memorial service for Ms Uyinene Mrwetyana and the mass picket to Parliament, which took place on Wednesday, 4 September.

Other related communication is accessible as follows:

- [Full YouTube link for the memorial service.](#)
- [Some pictures from the memorial service.](#)
- [Some pictures from the mass picket to Parliament.](#)
- [VC Desk: Remembering Nene: rise against sexual and gender-based violence.](#)
- [VC Desk: Remembering Nene.](#)
- [Campus Announcement: Academic classes and tests suspended 5 and 6 September.](#)



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



## **Remembering Nene: Honouring the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence**

5 September 2019

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Dear students and colleagues

Yesterday, 4 September, was an intensely emotional day for the University of Cape Town (UCT) community, for students and staff on other campuses and also for wider South African society.

Many services were held to mourn and express grief about the incredibly sad loss of our student Uyinene 'Nene' Mrwetyana. At UCT there were many gatherings, separate vigils, prayer circles and small group meetings across campus.

A mass picket to Parliament yesterday morning by UCT staff and students swelled to over 3 000 people when members of the public joined them to rise together against sexual and gender-based violence. At midday, we gathered in front of the Sarah Baartman Hall as a community for Nene's memorial service. We were joined by the

family and many who knew Nene personally. Many other activities, led by students and in some cases staff, also happened across campus and in residences.

We had, as the Leadership Lekgotla, made a decision earlier in the week that no academic classes or tests would take place on Wednesday, 4 September, Thursday, 5 September and Friday, 6 September 2019. Exceptions are being made for activities that cannot be cancelled. Relevant faculties are managing this process. We have also agreed to assist a cohort of UCT students who were close to Nene to travel to the funeral service in her hometown on Saturday.

Many more activities mourning Nene and others that have suffered sexual and gender-based abuse will follow today, tomorrow and into the weekend.

We, as a community, were deeply touched and affected by the memorial and other activities that happened yesterday. Staff and students, many who are themselves survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, stood side by side, mourning for Nene, themselves and for others. No doubt, some were seething with anger, but they were there, trying to make a difference, showing solidarity, eager to find solutions to this scourge that has beset our nation. There was a dignity to it that was befitting the moment and spoke volumes about a shared humanity.

As we proceed with the activities over the next two days we need to build on this. We need to strengthen our commitment to prevent and deal with sexual and gender-based violence at all levels. We must arrive at meaningful interventions that will reach deep into our families, schools, places of worship, universities and the very fabric of our society.

Let us commit to do so with Nene and her family in our hearts. Let us as a community honour the survivors of the evils of violence by refraining from and refusing to engage in violence of any sort. Nene has been robbed of her life and her future. We can, as was said at the memorial, ensure that she lives on here on campus and in our hearts.

When we return to class on Monday, we can arrive at class on behalf of Nene. We can remember to live with each other and all our differences and use our anger in ways that do not advance violence in any form but work towards achieving justice and changing our society. We can, as the next days, months and years unfold, take action

and continue to say JUST NO! to any form of sexual and gender-based violence. We should and we will.

Thank you to all staff and students who participated in the events yesterday and who will continue reflections, gatherings, prayer circles, action discussion circles and so on over the next two days.

As an executive we are reflecting deeply and will communicate some of our thoughts and decisions soon.

Many survivors feel incredible anger and have been let down by a legal system that should support and protect them. It is understandable that they turn to naming and shaming. Yet, this act is not legal and is inefficient in prosecuting the alleged perpetrator and achieving justice. We urge students and staff to instead use the available channels to lay charges against alleged perpetrators so that due legal process is followed.

Please take care of yourselves in this sad time and support one another. Reach out to the available services if you feel you need support.

In appreciation and gratitude to all in our community.

Sincerely

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng and the UCT Executive

***ENDS***

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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