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## **Statement on the passing of struggle stalwart Mrs Winnie Madikizela-Mandela**

The University of Cape Town (UCT) joins the nation and the international community in mourning the passing away of one of the greatest struggle stalwarts in the fight against apartheid, Mrs Nomzamo Winifred Madikizela-Mandela.

Madikizela-Mandela, affectionally known as the 'Mother of the Nation', was an example of outstanding courageous defiance, and a revolutionary who dedicated herself to the people. She endured extraordinary circumstances during the imprisonment of her then husband, the late former president Nelson Mandela, on Robben Island.

She distinguished herself as a fearless freedom fighter, in the face of perpetual harassment of her family by security forces, detentions, bannings, and banishments.

In 2003, during his tenure as vice-chancellor of UCT, my predecessor Professor Njabulo Ndebele penned his critically acclaimed first book, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. Professor Ndebele focused on four women at a specific period in the history of southern Africa who had spent time waiting for their men to return from imprisonment.

The book's subject is the "women who waited", hundreds of thousands of South Africans separated interminably from their men by the migrant labour system, political exile, activism and imprisonment. This "absence without duration" is explored through the women and their imagined conversations with Madikizela-Mandela, the "most unmarried married woman" and for 27 years the public embodiment of waiting wives.

With all her complexities the struggle icon will be remembered for her exceptional fighting spirit, activism and for being a symbol of promise for a liberatory future.

UCT conveys our condolences to her family and all those close to her. The nation has lost a mother and a legend. We will forever cherish her contribution to the liberation of his country.