



**5 July 2024**

## **SOUTH AFRICANS CAN LEARN FROM AND EMBRACE PROFESSOR PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA'S PHILOSOPHY, SAYS PROFESSOR FRANCIS PETERSEN, CHAIRPERSON OF THE USAf BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors of Universities South Africa (USAf) has congratulated Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, the SARChI Chair for Violent Histories and Historical Trauma and the Founding Director of Stellenbosch University's Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ), for being the winner of the 2024 [Templeton Prize](#). The award was announced early in June by the John Templeton Foundation in Pennsylvania, in the United States.

According to the John Templeton Foundation's website, "The Templeton Prize honours individuals whose exemplary achievements advance Sir John Templeton's philanthropic vision: harnessing the power of the sciences to explore the deepest questions of the universe and humankind's place and purpose within it."

A date and place have yet to be set, to present the [Templeton Prize](#) to Gobodo-Madikizela, in person.

In the award media statement issued on 4 June, The John Templeton Foundation wrote of Gobodo-Madikizela: "Her career as a scholar and a public figure is distinguished by her effort to repair ruptures created by past violence and to build a path toward healing and restoration in an ongoing process she calls 'the reparative quest.'" The president of the John Templeton Foundation, Heather Templeton Dill, added: "Her achievements mark her as a leading figure in understanding and confronting the deeply rooted psychological scars borne by those who experienced unimaginable loss."

Professor Francis Petersen, Chairperson of the USAf Board says this award bears testimony to the magnificence of Gobodo-Madikizela's scholarship and contribution to Humanities and Social Sciences. "Her personal philosophy, values and spiritual wisdom go a long way towards influencing individual choices and responses to painful stimuli. We can all learn from that philosophy.

"In acknowledging Templeton's announcement of this distinguished prize in June, Gobodo-Madikizela said: 'Through the many encounters I had in my work when I served on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I learned that ordinary people, under certain circumstances, are capable of far greater evil than we could have imagined. But so are we, capable of far greater virtue than we might have thought. My research is based on this possibility of human transformation, on probing deeper to understand the conditions necessary to restore the values of what it means to be human -- to want to preserve the dignity and life of the other.'"

Professor Petersen says: "We, as the South African society, must draw from Gobodo-Madikizela's philosophy of believing in the possibility of genuine human transformation for the better – and for the good of our own society. Especially now, as we strive to move on from our tragic apartheid past, past our 30 years of democracy and beyond the elections of 29 May 2024, it is time we introspected and deeply considered accepting reconciliation as a necessary condition for restoring the promising economic growth we once saw early in the democratic dispensation after 1994, and are capable of regaining, for lasting peace in our nation.

“It all starts with embracing, like Gobodo-Madikizela, the spirit of Ubuntu, and believing, deep in the heart of every one of us, that we can live side by side in our diversity, and govern this nation together for a better and sustainable future for future generations.”

On behalf of the Board of Directors of USAf, Professor Petersen, who is also the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Free State, has extended gratitude to Professor Godobo-Madikizela for raising the South African flag high through her distinguished intellect. He has also commended her exemplary decision to share the proceeds of this prize with Stellenbosch University in the quest for research continuity and support for PhD candidates to graduate sooner.

He says it is exceptionally selfless of Gobodo-Madikizela to have pledged to donate R8million of her prize money to her institution, R5m of which will go toward an endowment scholarship in the name of her parents, Nobantu and Tukela Gobodo; R1m to the support of future professors at SU’s Research and Innovation Strategic Excellence (SUNRISE) programme, and R2m to AVReQ, her own school within Stellenbosch University.

- More information is available at [www.templetonprize.org/2024](http://www.templetonprize.org/2024)
- A full **press kit** with more photos and videos will be available at [www.templetonprize.org/2024presskit](http://www.templetonprize.org/2024presskit)
- 60 second announcement videos are available [here](#)

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