

**Vice- Chancellor, I have the honour to present, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Literature, honoris causa, Martin Elgar West.**

There is a South African saying: "Umntu ngumntu ngabantu" which means: A person is a person through other people. It is about the essence of being human. It says: "I am what I am because of who we all are." This concept of Ubuntu is innate to Martin West's way of being. He is well known for his leadership abilities, his acumen and his insight, but his way of being is Ubuntu - his ability to engage at all levels, his ability to truly relate and connect.

Perhaps then, it's not surprising that his first training was as an anthropologist. "Traditionally", anthropologists are required to study societies and cultures. Fieldwork - long term contact- is its hallmark. But anthropologists are not expected to be there as note-taking spies, nor aloof academics, they are required to become truly integrated, weaving themselves into the fabric of the culture.

This is the philosophy and style that Martin West has brought to his 37 years of service to UCT. In fact, this has been his true anthropological fieldwork (a culture that is just as difficult and complex as that of any remote mountain tribe).

He started lecturing in the Social Anthropology department in 1971 and became a very young full professor in 1978. In the same year, he was propelled into the leadership role of Head of Department and clearly rose to the challenge. He showed the style that has become the feature of his leadership ever since. There was no sitting in his office firing off emails or memos, but rather visiting his colleagues, canvassing opinions, listening and synthesising.

In 1991, he was appointed a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and spent the next 17 years in that position. During that time, he worked with four very different Vice-Chancellors and also managed a range of (sometimes difficult) University portfolios, carrying the University through many stressful situations.

In the 1990s, he was responsible for student affairs. This was a time when many universities were burning with student anger and struggling with transformation. Martin West's role is legendary. His wisdom and skill enabled a smooth transition from the protest politics of the 1980s to a system of co-operative governance in the 1990s. In fact, during the workers strike of 93, it was Martin West who divested himself of his watch and wallet and went into New South Lecture Theatre to talk; when the Dean of Arts caught fire during a protest, it was Martin West who intervened; in the 80s, when the police basketball team came to play on campus, it was Martin West who was sent to politely negotiate.

In the 1990s as South Africa began to re-integrate into the international academic community, West played a key role. He was the driving force behind the formation of USHEPiA, which is a highly successful academic collaboration between Universities in Africa. In the current climate of mutual respect and regard, it's easy to forget what a pariah South Africa and its institutions were.

His conflict management skills range from being "infuriating" to "avuncular". He is well known for his skills as a chairperson, using his intellect and insight to steer anger into constructive solutions. He is also not averse to "confusing the opposition" and to using "low cunning" (although that is reserved for the slow left arm spin on the cricket pitch).

Martin Elgar West, with his many years of astute leadership and service, with his humanity and sense of connection, with his innate Ubuntu; Martin Elgar West is a true son of UCT.

**Vice-Chancellor, I have the honour to invite you to admit to the degree of Doctor of Literature, honoris causa, Martin Elgar West.**