



Subject: SMU wishes all women a very happy Women's Day

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Women of 1956, who defied all odds and confronted the erstwhile Apartheid regime. Through a peaceful and organized protest, over 20 000 women from all races staged a historic march to the Union Buildings as a sign of defiance to the unjust pass laws that were extended to women in the country. Led by Lillian Ngoyi, Albertina Sisulu, Sophia De Bruyn and Helen Joseph amongst others, these women challenged the state in a manner unparalleled and their valiant deeds continue to inspire many across the globe.

The 2020 commemoration of Women's Day however, takes place under very difficult circumstances as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected the whole world. In our country it is also important to mention that we are still under a government imposed lockdown with clear restrictions on some activities.

We also sadly are aware about the current challenges still confronting our women even during this period of the lockdown. Many women continue to face the menace of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and femicide. Sadly, it is also widely reported that members of the LGBTQI community are still subjected to serious levels of abuse as well. The rural women, the young girls, women with disabilities and elderly women continue to bear the brunt of poverty, inequality and in some cases perennial abuse.

It is for this reason that we all need to stand up and support these women and play our part by acting in a manner that is consistent with respecting their rights. In line with the 2020 Theme "Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future", we call upon Women to reclaim their space and determine their own future like the 1956 generation did.

At Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, it has to be part of our organizational culture that Women are treated equally and with the respect they deserve. As part of celebrating our women in the university, we pause and recognize those who have been given leadership and management responsibilities and hope that they will inspire more women to develop themselves and also take up huge responsibilities. We celebrate all academic and administrative support staff at all levels, our message of gratitude also goes to the cleaners, the security personnel and all our female students. We salute these female students and urge them to continue to fight for equal education opportunities and equal representation.

How can we also forget the fallen heroines - the SMU Alumni who passed on? They have made a meaningful contribution in the lives of the people.

In order to give meaningful impetus to the call for the realization of this year's Theme, our policies in the university should continue to speak to the emancipation, protection and recognition of women as part of addressing the inequalities that women are subjected to.

We join the rest of the country in wishing everyone a very happy Women's Day.

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