

Honorary Doctorate conferred by Utrecht University

Acceptance speech by Alcinda Honwana

Rector Magnificus

Members of the Executive Board

Members of the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees

Faculty

Students

I would like to thank Utrecht University for bestowing upon me this Honorary Doctorate. A very special thanks to my honorary supervisor, Professor Birgit Meyer.

I truly regret that I'm not able to join you all in the Domchurch today and experience first-hand the hospitality of Utrecht University, through its long tradition of awarding honorary doctorates which started in 1936.

I am delighted and grateful for this honor. Years ago, starting my career as a young female scholar from Mozambique, I only hoped that my research and work would have an impact on the world around me. Today, I see this recognition going beyond my own impact as a scholar and sending a powerful signal to young woman, in Mozambique, in Africa and the entire Global South that no matter where you come from, you too, can shape academic thinking, produce relevant work, and gain international recognition.

Humanities and the social sciences have a fundamental role in helping us gain insights and refine understandings to address the current fault lines in our societies: the growing socio-economic inequalities that are leaving millions behind; the environmental and climate crisis that is triggering devastating natural disasters and jeopardizing the future of the younger generations and our entire species; the need for inclusive politics, social justice, democracy and greater equity for all; as well as the health emergencies, like the Covid-19 pandemic that is severely disrupting social and economic life across the globe.

It is my fervent belief that there is importance to the themes and topics we, as academics, choose to research. We have a responsibility not only to our subjects, but to society, to ensure that our work can produce knowledge to better the lives of the people in the places we study. Thus, the importance of both rigorous academic research and effective policy development to help shape our tomorrow.

I am, once again, humbled by this honor and happy to join the community at Utrecht University, an institution at the forefront of bridging the gap between the worlds of academia, policy and beyond.