

# Students to learn how to think like Madiba

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FIRST-year students at the Durban University of Technology will be taught to think and act like Nelson Mandela as part of a programme aimed at building better leaders for a future SA.

The worldwide launch of Nelson Mandela – The Champion Within youth course at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth was attended by more than 5 000 students this week.

Life College, the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and the Mandela Rhodes Foundation have joined forces to develop the programme designed to get young people not only to do like Mandela, but also to think like him.

This, said Life College founder Pat Pillai, would be aimed at waking up the youth's principle-centred consciousness, champion mentality and encourage them to make every day a Mandela day.

"There can be no better example than Madiba," said struggle veteran Ahmed Kathrada at the launch.

"It is a long time coming, but the most important thing today is to reach the youth... let's hope that all the universities will follow suit," he said.

Kathrada, Pillai and Professor Njabulo Ndebele, of the Nelson Mandela Founda-

tion, hoped that the programme would soon be introduced to schools, with teachers also taken through the course.

Ndebele, who recently became a Champion Within pioneer, said the aim was to expand the programme to all universities as soon as possible.

Besides the DUT, the University of Fort Hare has also indicated its students would complete the course soon.

Other institutions showing interest included the universities of Cape Town, North West, the Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal and Free State.

Ndebele found the programme, that involves students interacting with trainers while being shown examples of Nelson Mandela's achievements, "innovative".

"I think what is good about it is that the idea and the implementation of it are both very well thought through. The careful attention to detail, the selection of material – all designed to touch a particular aspect of Nelson Mandela's life. And the idea that comes through is not to deify the person, but to make visible what energised him, what brought him to the level of consciousness, which we are aware of and which made him so inspirational."

By doing this the students would learn the importance of a citizenship where there was not an over-reliance on the pow-

er of the state and those governing the nation. The course, he believed, would create a country of "better human beings".

"The thrust of the project is that everyone has the capability to lead in some area of their lives and that is a very important notion of self-awareness of inner capability," said Ndebele.

Pillai, a social entrepreneur and e.tv news anchor, said the idea for Life College and the course arose soon after the birth of his son and reading the writings of Steve Biko.

"I may have been qualified as a teacher, but I felt inept as a father... and I found an answer when I was standing in front of my class teaching (realising) that the problem wasn't the fact that children couldn't understand the curriculum."

He had found the real problem in the class to be the attitude of students. Many of them were disengaged and this determined their success or failure.

"If children don't get themselves on a path towards understanding themselves, confirming identity, detecting their purpose... you wring your hands later on and wonder what happened to this generation," he said.

Pillai said he and colleagues spent 25 years researching before developing and testing the programme.