

Citation for Dr Kumi Naidoo
Tuesday 18 June 2019

Officiator: Ms Pauline Carr, Chancellor

Award being conferred: Doctor of the University (DUniv)

Citation delivered by: Professor Joanne Cys, Pro Vice Chancellor,
Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences

Chancellor, the University of South Australia awards the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University to a person of eminence who has made a distinguished contribution to public service, or a field of academic endeavour or artistic pursuit. It is my pleasure to present Dr Kumi Naidoo for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his distinguished service to the community.

Kumi Naidoo is an activist. He was just 15 when his anti-apartheid activities in his hometown of Durban South Africa got him expelled from school. He was involved in neighbourhood organising, community youth work and mass mobilisations against the apartheid regime which saw him arrested several times and charged with violating provisions under mass mobilisation, civil disobedience and for violating the state of emergency.

In 1986 while standing trial for violating that state of emergency and, in an effort to get him out of the country and out of trouble, progressive academics suggested he apply for a Rhodes Scholarship.

On the run for four months until that came through, he eventually found himself at Oxford University and woke that first morning to a knock at the door.

Years of activism led him to believe shackles and prison were about to be visited upon him. Instead it was a lady wondering whether he would like breakfast. Such are the twists of fate that have brought his life to this point.

Now Secretary General of Amnesty International, he has held multiple leadership roles all with social justice at their core:

In his fight against injustice of any kind he has been Chair of the Global Call for Climate Action; Founding Chair of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty; Co-

founder of Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity and Executive Director of Greenpeace International.

Kumi Naidoo is an alliance-builder and an agent of change. He says to move forward we must recognise the interconnection of rights. Climate change, he believes, is tied to inequality and race; civil and political rights are suppressed at the moment people demand basic economic justice; sex discrimination is bound up in the economic exclusion of women.

It is his belief that protecting rights can play a part in building a better, more inclusive world.

Chancellor: On behalf of the University of South Australia, I am pleased to present Dr Kumi Naidoo for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his distinguished service to the community.