

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC

During her first visit to Australia, the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred upon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC by Chancellor Ms Belinda Hutchinson AM at the ceremony held in the Concert Hall of the Opera House on 27 November 2013.

The Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology Sydney also conferred an honorary doctorate upon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the joint ceremony. The award was originally bestowed on her in 1997 and given to her late husband in her absence (she was unwilling to leave Myanmar for fear of being unable to return).

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi then spoke of her struggle for democracy, and described the honour as a sign that Australia and the world stand with her home country.



From left: University of Sydney Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence and Chancellor Ms Belinda Hutchinson, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and UTS Chancellor Professor Vicki Sara and Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Ross Milbourne, *photo, University of Sydney.*



From left: Chancellor Ms Belinda Hutchinson, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence, *photo, University of Sydney.*

Citation

Presented by Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence:

When members of the Burmese community suggested that I might stumble my way through some opening words in their mother tongue, I was inspired to do so by watching a You Tube video of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC accept the award of the Legion d'Honneur from the French government. She did so in impeccable French. But I was even more inspired by the proud words of a Burmese patriot in the comments underneath. "She sounds wonderful in any language", they wrote with pride. And the story of her life is an example to people of every tongue.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is fitting that we come to this unique and magnificent place to honour the work of a remarkable woman. That we do so jointly with the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) expresses the importance of the occasion to our two universities: the last time we held a joint degree ceremony was to honour another inspirational global leader, Nelson Mandela.

During her lifetime, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC has dedicated herself to the struggle of the Burmese people, standing resolutely through bitter detainment for the principles of equality and democracy. She has fought against domination. She has cherished the ideal of a society in which people live together in harmony and with equal opportunity.

Today we honour that ideal, and we honour the sacrifices that she has made in its pursuit. In doing so, we also honour those others who are not named here individually, but whose unshakable grasp of the ideals so simply expressed and so eloquently embodied by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC have helped us to keep believing that freedom will prevail.

Some of those people now live in Australia and are, as members of the Burmese-Australian community, committed to working with all Australians for the good of our two countries and to deepen the friendship between them. My friends in the Australian-Burmese community tell me it is difficult for them to express in words – either Burmese or English – how they feel about seeing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC in this country. Many of you have travelled from as far afield as Perth and Darwin to be with us today, to help us to honour a remarkable citizen of your country, and the world, and to celebrate your aspirations for the land of your heritage. Many of you have made your own sacrifices in supporting her cause for a Burma that is free of tyranny, for a Burma that can finally reach its enormous potential.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC, the University of Sydney is committed, with you, in working towards a more prosperous and happy Burma. Our Sydney Southeast Asia Centre has 220 academics working across 13 faculties, and represents one of the highest concentrations of regional expertise in the world. Its work with Burma covers fields as diverse as economic and social development; environment and resources; health; heritage and the arts; and state and society. In each of these areas we are, like you, keen to see Burma flourish and hope to be a small part of the exciting developments that are happening in your country.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC – the world knows the story of your father, Aung San, who negotiated Burma's independence from the British Empire in 1947, and who gave his life for a strong and free Burma.

In accepting your Nobel Prize last year, you said you were engaged in the struggle for your father. You said you were happy for everyone to see you as your father's daughter, but you were concerned that you may not prove worthy of him.

There can surely be little doubt that after an exemplary life thus far, lived in the service of others and in search of the highest ideals, you have proved yourself loyal and worthy, both to your father and to your people.

Chancellor, it is a great honour to present Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC, especially in the presence of many Burmese-Australians who have joined us to recognise and celebrate her achievements.

She has made enormous sacrifices for her country, enduring separation from her husband, her children, and other loved ones, and also being denied her freedom for 15 years.

Despite the efforts of those who sought to curtail her influence, she has had a profound impact on events in her homeland, she continues to make a positive contribution to political processes in Burma, and is an inspiration to those who love freedom around the world.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi AC to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.