

SPEECH FOR THE VICE CHANCELLOR AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE
LATE PROF.MARGARET MACPHERSON,WEDNESDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2011
AT 2.30 PM IN ST. FRANCIS CHAPEL, MAKERERE UNIVERTY

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The Rt. Honourable Professor Apollo Nsibambi
Honourable Ministers and Representatives of Government present,
Members of Parliament,
Former Vice Chancellors of Makerere University and Vice Chancellors of sister universities,
Religious Leaders,
Colleagues in the University Management,
Friends of Macpherson,
Staff, alumni and students,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

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Moments like these are very humbling; they are a constant reminder of our destiny as mortals. But they also paradoxically revive the spirit of life in us, for they are opportunities to reflect on the purpose of life, and the value of living meaningfully. We gather here to celebrate the life and achievement of the Late Professor Margaret Macpherson. We are therefore reminded to reflect on what it is that would be celebrated about us, when our turn comes to be the subject of a memorial service.

Professor Margaret Macpherson, was a Professor of Literature about whom we have all heard so much that is good and inspiring. I did not have the privilege of interacting with her, but from the information in the University records, and from what the various colleagues who knew her have shared with me since her death was announced last month, she was a dedicated friend of Makerere, and a great achiever.

I have learnt for example, that she lived in Makerere for more than thirty years, and to my thinking, her personality is forceful summed up by the fact that she was able to live among a people for thirty years and remain so much cherished by them thirty years after her departure. I have been overwhelmed and inspired by the strong recollections of her life, and the dear memories held of her in the Department of Literature, and the rest of the University community. This is in addition to the intractable evidence in the records to the effect that her years at Makerere were very productive years, years of memorable achievements.

Makerere owes to Professor Macpherson a great debt of gratitude for all the service that she rendered to the institution. In particular, we shall always remember her for tracing, organizing and documenting Makerere's history with so much love and dedication in her authoritative work entitled: "*They Built for the Future: A Chronicle Of Makerere University College 1922-1962.*" By leaving this text on record, she has enriched Makerere with a proud and powerful sense of her history, as a basis for building the future. My colleagues in the Department of Literature have an even longer story to tell about the numerous creative and scholarly exploits of the Professor, which I am not able to enter into. Suffice it to mention however, that as University, we are great beneficiaries of the Macpherson legacy, when we think of the many great literary personalities that she helped to mentor, and who continue to boost Makerere's image at home and abroad. The names of Ngugi wa Thiongo, Robert Serumaga, Byron Kawadwa, Timothy Wangusa, Micere Mugo, and others, are international news-makers in the world of learning, and we are grateful for Professor Macpherson's part in mentoring these persons of fame.

The other quality of Professor Macpherson that stands out clearly in our records is her role in keeping the Makerere community world-wide together through the publication of *The Old Makererean Newsletter*, a task that she maintained until she grew too weak to continue with it.

In Prof. Macpherson's life, we have a shining example of what a University teacher in a developing community should be; for her work was not confined to the lecture room. She experimented with various exciting ventures, especially in the field of drama and theatre. In this connection, we associate with pride her legacy of writing one of the earliest plays in Uganda called "Kintu." Likewise, her work with Uganda National Theatre, and her efforts in starting the Department of Music Dance and Drama, as well as her contribution to the Makerere Traveling Theatre, are comprehensive contributions to the Ugandan society, for which Makerere continues to share the credit.

I would like, on behalf of the University, to join the family and friends of the late Professor Macpherson, as well as my colleagues in the Department of Literature, in celebrating the passing of this dear friend and mentor, and to pay glowing tribute to her memory. We are grateful to God for her life and achievements; and we are happy that she has not lived her life in vain. We commit her to the ALMIGHTY, and pray to HIM to grant her soul eternal rest.

Sincerely: Professor Venansius Baryamureeba, Ag. Vice Chancellor, Makerere University