

30 April 2013



To whom it may concern

It gives me much pleasure to support Prof Sarojini Nadar, a young, dynamic and world recognised African woman theologian and academic, for promotion to full professor. I know Prof Nadar in her capacity as the College Dean of Research and am familiar with her research focus and teaching abilities. I have been associated with universities for more than a decade and in my experience and opinion she represents a rare and special breed of academics: warm, inviting, and empathic and in equal measure, a sharp intellect, expert knowledge and a mature wisdom beyond that expected of someone so young. Every aspect of her work is a demonstration of excellence, commitment, service and quality. Her youth belies her sensibilities and smartness. She is the consummate expert, balancing her academic prowess with high levels of emotional intelligence; qualities that are prized in persons holding the status of full professor.

I have been in the fortunate situation to witness Prof Nadar in action as a teacher. She immerses herself in teaching, mentoring and supervising students and peers. I can vouch with confidence that the standards of all her teaching is of the highest calibre, with meticulous attention to detail. Working together in the doctoral cohort, it is quite apparent that Prof Nadar listens with intense concentration, irrespective of discipline or research approach, and is able to provide appropriate critique. I have been impressed by both the depth and breadth of feedback she gives to students. The comments are intellectual, supportive and enabling. Her students are indeed fortunate to have someone of her stature and intellect as their mentor and lecturer. Students talk endlessly about the ways in which she motivates and educates them. Not only are students in awe of her intellectual prowess, those of us who work with her are equally inspired. Her approach to teaching is theoretically grounded. Reflective practice, a democratic orientation, expert knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are markers of her professionalism in the classroom.

Prof Nadar has been in the forefront in mentoring postgraduate students to conduct research for publications. In 2009 she was the top woman researcher at UKZN and is a C2 NRF rated scientist. Many of her students are African women from many parts of Africa. Her yearly research output testifies to her great commitment to research and mentoring of postgraduate students. Since her last promotion she has graduated 7 PhDs and 9 Masters students. She also held the important position as coordinator of the International Network in Advanced Theological Education (INATE) and has been invited on numerous occasions as keynote speaker.

Besides editing *the Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, Prof Nadar has co-edited three books commissioned by the Circle of Concerned African women theologians and one book commissioned by the Council for World Mission. These books deal with gender and religion in Africa. The books have been prescribed for theology students in many theological institutions in South Africa, on the continent, in the USA and Europe. For example, *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Oduyoye* was prescribed in the School of Divinity at Yale University. The book won the University of Kwazulu-Natal book award in the category of edited books in 2006. The same book was also given an Award by Orbis Books Publishers, based in New York, USA. Through her books, and writings, Prof Nadar's thinking reaches those in faraway spaces, in a sense, she teaches through texts.

The importance and contribution of her work in the field of theology is the sharp focus on the critical role of women, and more importantly, creating a deep awareness of the way biblical texts should be examined and re-examined to liberate the minds of women. From Prof Nadar's perspective, irrespective of their context, geography, history and gender, women are intellectual beings capable

of taking charge of their lives and beliefs, capable of making decisions and agents of their own liberation. She does not preach liberation theology – instead it is a critical pedagogy so that the women can decide for themselves how and what they wish to be liberated from. The history of Africa, as is true of other parts of the former colonised and oppressed worlds, is testimony to the violence of philanthropic work which has its own agenda of what the “native” requires. Prof Nadar refuses to replicate and reproduce similar insidious and dangerous research endeavours and epistemologies. She is driven by an ethic of deep respect and reverence for the women with whom she works and those she researches. In coherence with this approach, her work celebrates the stories, challenges and accomplishments of African women, which coheres with UKZN’s vision for the primacy of excellent African scholarship.

I have no doubt that Prof Nadar is worthy of a full professorship. She has proven in a very short time that she has the expertise, integrity and competency of an intellectual who is both a knowledge producer and an exemplary teacher.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to verify any of the above.

Sincerely

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