

Dikembe Mutombo to speak at Tulane Public Health Graduation

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NBA legend and global humanitarian Dikembe Mutombo will deliver the commencement address for the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

“Dikembe Mutombo was a natural choice to address our students at graduation,” said Dr. Thomas LaVeist, dean of the school. “Dikembe is a compassionate and talented individual who has made giving back a hallmark of his long professional career. Our graduates want to change the world and through his efforts, Dikembe has done just that.”

Mutombo was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and moved to the United States in 1987 at the age of 21 on an academic scholarship to enroll in college at Georgetown University. He was drafted to the NBA in 1991 by the Denver Nuggets and went on to play for six different basketball teams during his 18-year stand-out career. He played center and is widely regarded as one of the top inside defenders of all time.

In 1997, Mutombo started the [Dikembe Mutombo Foundation](#) to improve living conditions in his native country. Mutombo and his foundation were the driving force behind the Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital, the first modern medical facility built in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa in 40 years. It was named for Mutombo’s mother.

Mutombo’s humanitarian work has also extended to the Special Olympics and SportsUnited. He was the first Youth Emissary for the United Nations Development Program and served on the advisory board for the Fogarty International Center at the National Institutes of Health. He has been recognized with the NBA’s J. Walter Kennedy Citizenship Award (twice), the NCAA’s Silver Anniversary Award, and by

President George W. Bush in his 2007 State of the Union Address.

“I’m thrilled that the DRC’s native son Dikembe Mutombo will be at our school to inspire our graduates and commemorate their special day,” said Dr. Jane Bertrand, Neal A. and Mary Vanselow Endowed Chair and professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management. Bertrand leads a team of Tulane professors and public health professionals involved in the implementation and evaluation of family planning programs in the DRC.

The school’s graduation program will be held on Saturday, May 16, at 3:30pm at the Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts in New Orleans.