

## **Second Enos Mabuza Memorial Lecture, Delivered by Kaizer Nyatumba**

**Date: Saturday, 2 October 2010**

**Venue: Penryn College, Nelspruit**

Thank you, Chairperson, for that kind introduction.

“East, West, home is best.”

I still remember vividly the very first time that I came across that saying. It was in 1980/1, in an article in Patrick Seeton’s *KaNgwane Times*, the very first newspaper that I wrote for, reporting on then KaNgwane Chief Minister Enos Mabuza’s return home from an overseas trip. As I recall, the article opened with those words, in quotation marks, reporting that **that** is what Mr Mabuza had said upon his return home.

Today it is a tremendous privilege for me to appropriate those words and echo Mr Mabuza: indeed, East, West, home is best. I, too, am delighted to be back home in the province of my birth and where I grew up until my teens. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Organising Committee of the Enos Mabuza Memorial Lecture, which extended the invitation to me, and I feel extremely privileged to be here. My thanks also go to the Mabuza family, not only for having graciously shared Mr Mabuza with all of us during his lifetime, but also for its presence here this morning.

To this day I have a vivid recollection of the very first time that I laid eyes on Mr Mabuza. In August 1980 one Mr JZM Sambo, who worked closely with Mr Mabuza as an organiser for the Inyandza National Movement, visited our school, Mshadza Secondary, and was given the platform to address us at the assembly. He was there to talk about the impending launch of the Inyandza Youth Movement and to recruit for the organisation. In the course of Mr Sambo’s address, one of our teachers, asked by our principal, Mr EG Shabangu, looked for me in the crowded assembly and headed towards me. He told me that I would have to deliver a vote of thanks at the end of Mr Sambo’s address.

Needless to say, I was woefully unprepared for such a task, and I felt ambushed. It was my first year at the school, which went onto Standard Eight at the time, and I was in Standard Seven, having arrived at the beginning of that year from Ngodwana Primary School (which went onto Standard Six at the time)! I felt punished for having excelled in debates at the school, with the demand just conveyed to me being a retribution for my having beaten Standard Eight students and teachers in the debates.

From then on I felt compelled to listen even more attentively to Mr Sambo's address so that I would be able to respond to it, on behalf of my fellow students, when he finished. Indeed, upon Mr Sambo's completion, I was duly summoned to the stage and asked – nay, **ordered** – to respond. Thinking on my feet, I improvised successfully and, when I finished my impromptu address, there was a rapturous applause led by Mr Sambo, Mr Shabangu and the teachers. I was about to head back to my place in the assembly when Mr Sambo pulled me by the arm and gave me R20. Mr Shabangu and the other teachers followed suit, and by the time I had resumed my place in the assembly I had more than R200 in my pocket. That money came as a blessing because, although there was the annual Lowveld Show that week, my brother, Elphus Mfana Adonis Motha and I (our mothers were sisters) were going to miss it that year because we did not have money. With the money from Mr Sambo, Mr Shabangu and the teachers, Adonis and I were able to attend the Lowveld Show, and I ended up paying for two friends to the Lowveld Show!

Some weeks later a number of us (I think it was 10 students per school) were picked up by bus from our respective schools on a Saturday morning and driven to Mlumati Technical College, where the Inyandza Youth Movement was officially launched. Again, as head of the Mshadza Secondary School delegation, I was asked to address the gathering, as did a few other students. It was when Mr EJ Mabuza, President of Inyandza National Movement and Chief Minister of KaNgwane, took the stage to address us that I had my first sight of him.

To say that I was impressed would be a gross understatement. Instead, I was positively awe struck. Here was a black man with such an impressive command of the English language, whose pronunciation was impeccable and whose knowledge was so vast. I remember, as though it were yesterday, that in his speech he made references to former University of the North student leader Abram Onkgopotse Tiro, quoting from his seminal address at a graduation ceremony at that university in 1972, and to Nigerian Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, that country's first post-independence Head of State. Until then, I had never heard of those people quoted in his speech. Over the next days, weeks and months I read and re-read his speech, which had been made available to us, many times, each time walking away from it even more impressed.

For years to come I remained grateful for the opportunity to have heard Mr Mabuza speak at Mlumati Technical College that day, and particularly for his having opened my eyes in the manner that he did in that speech. I left Mlumati with a different attitude, knowing that it was possible for a black person to embody the excellence that Mr Mabuza embodied, to be so knowledgeable and yet so humble.

Four years later, when I was already at university, my brother, Adonis, who was at Mgwanya College of Education at the time, was to become president of the Inyandza Youth Movement and, in that capacity, work more closely with Mr Mabuza.

The second time I met Mr Mabuza was in December 1995, when I came back home, in response to an invitation from the “Sunrise Committee”, made up of some members of then-Premier Matthews Phosa’s Provincial Cabinet, to deliver the main address at a function to mark the awarding of an Honorary Doctorate to Mr Phosa by the University of Boston in Massachusetts, USA. We sat at the same table with Mr Mabuza and I, now an adult and the Political Editor of *The Star*, was comfortable to exchange pleasantries with him.

My last meeting with him was a fleeting one: I was driving into the premises of South African Breweries in Braamfontein some time in 1996, where I was going to address the SAB Executive Committee on the political situation in the country at the time, and he was driving out of the premises. He was one of the company’s Non-Executive Directors. We waved at each other as we drove in different directions, and we were not to meet again.

I am certain that, in addition to his family, there are many people here who knew Mr Mabuza more closely and much better than I did. From the little that I know – and knew – of him, I can recall not a single whiff of scandal of any kind involving him. Indeed, even as I did my research for this speech today, still I could find not a trace of scandal. The only negative references to Enos Mabuza were those published, in the form of Letters to the Editor, in the *Lowvelder* by residents complaining about litter on Enos Mabuza Drive.

So, ladies and gentlemen, what do we know for a fact about Enos Mabuza and what can we learn from him? Well, we do know a few things about him:

- **Firstly, he was not born into the lap of luxury.** Like most of us, he was born to working-class parents in Barberton, with the first school he attended being the Sheba Mine School. Yet he did not allow his circumstances to define him. Over the years, he worked hard to acquire education, first obtaining a Primary Teachers’ Certificate before obtaining Matric, and then a BA degree in Zulu and Psychology. In the end he had a BA Honours degree and an MBA. Clearly, this was someone who subscribed to the view that education is a life-long undertaking.
- **Secondly, he was a business pioneer who cared about the general welfare of his country and his compatriots.** Were that not the case, then he would not have served on the boards of the many companies with which he was associated, giving so generously of his time. While some of these were commercial companies which would have paid for his services as a Director, many others were non-profit organisations like the Independent

Development Trust, Promat Colleges, New Era Schools, the National Parks Board, Trees for South Africa, the South African Nature Foundation and the National Botanical Society, to name but a few. He was a co-founder and board member of a number of the post-1990 organisations that sought to advance blacks' economic interests, such as FABCOS, Khula Investment Corporation and Thebe Investment, among others.

- **Thirdly, he suffered from no illusions of grandeur.** While he participated in apartheid's homeland structures, nevertheless he worked tirelessly to frustrate the National Party government's plans to incorporate some of the black areas of this province into Swaziland. More importantly, he accepted the authority of this country's oldest liberation movement, the African National Congress, and deferred to it. You will no doubt recall that in March 1986 he defied the PW Botha government and led his Cabinet to a meeting with the ANC in Lusaka, Zambia.
- **Finally, he knew when to pass on the baton.** Following the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of the country's liberation movements, Mr Mabuza stepped down as Chief Minister and President of Inyandza National Movement in 1991 and focused his efforts on business, thus serving his country in a different capacity. This was acknowledgement of the fact that the people's leaders had returned home, just as Archbishop Tutu had done by withdrawing from active politics and focusing on church matters.

I submit humbly, ladies and gentlemen, that, 16 years into our democracy, South Africa is in desperate need of patriots of Mabuza's stature. Today our beloved country is mired in various controversies, with some of the things that were dear to Mr Mabuza and other compatriots now far from being in a state of which we can justly be proud.

Education, to which Mr Mabuza devoted many years, rising to become Principal of Khumbula High School and subsequently to be an Inspector, is a case in point. Apart from the fact that, from an infrastructure point of view, most of the schools serving our black children are in no better state than they were when some of us were still at school many years ago, we now have the very disturbing pattern of widespread irresponsibility on the part of some teachers and learners at the schools. While one acknowledges readily that, like all of us, teachers have rights to belong to trade unions and to be paid fairly for their services, there can be no excuse whatsoever for some of the behaviour exhibited by some of the teachers during the recent strike. It is undeniable, too, that black children suffered far more as a result of the strike than their counterparts in suburban schools where white teacher predominate.

Should we not, as black people, ask ourselves why it is that, in a country where, for a whole host of reasons, black children generally fare worse than their white compatriots, black teachers take to the streets too readily and behave most

atrociously? Could it be that, 16 years into our democracy, black people might still be in psychological bondage, ever eager to harm themselves and those close to them? How, then, can we explain the fact that, while they have the same employer and earn the same salaries, white teachers generally continued to be available to their learners at their schools? I do not think that it would be an exaggeration to say that educationists like Mr Mabuza, Mr Sambo and Mr Shabangu, who did their best under difficult circumstances and for much less than teachers are paid now, would disapprove most strongly of the behaviour now routinely exhibited by those who came after them.

As one has indicated above, Mr Mabuza was not born into the lap of luxury, but he did not allow that reality to define him. Instead, he worked hard throughout his life and triumphed against all odds, ending up with an MBA degree at a time when there were not many with that premier business management qualification. Today South Africa has millions of people who depend on various grants from the State for survival, and there are no indications that we are preparing some of them for a life beyond dependence on the State. During each election since 1994, the ANC has repeatedly promised the people “a better life for all”, thus creating – or encouraging – the impression that the people themselves are incapable of doing anything to turn their fortunes around. Instead, they are to be provided for. Is it any wonder, then, that we have a growing number of discontented compatriots who run amok, thoughtlessly burning down anything they come across, including public institutions like libraries and schools, all in the name of demanding delivery on the promised “better life for all”?

One is not suggesting, by any means, that the State should shirk its responsibility to the citizenry. Not at all. Instead, one is making the argument that the State’s primary role should be the creation of conditions for people to pull themselves by their own boot straps and to escape poverty, while providing that much-needed safety net for those caught in the debilitating web of poverty. I submit that there is no contradiction whatsoever between looking after our indigent while simultaneously encouraging a can-do attitude and weaning off State support those who manage to stand on their own. Winning nations are those which create enabling environments for people to prosper, and which foster self-confidence among their people, and not those which encourage dependence among their people and forever treat them like children to be provided for.

We have argued earlier that Mr Mabuza suffered from no illusions of grandeur and that he knew when to pass the baton on. Not only was he an epitome of humility, but he also knew when to exit the political stage and to use his considerable talents to serve his country in a different pursuit. In other words, he was not wedded to politics for politics’ sake; nor did he use his position to enrich himself and his family. For him, politics was a means to an end, the frustration of apartheid’s grand design and the

liberation of our people, and not an opportunity to accumulate wealth for himself and those close to him. In fact, I dare say that, were he born in a normal society, chances are that he would not have gone into politics, but would rather have served his country through his academic and business pursuits.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me stress that there is nothing wrong with politics as a career for those who are that way inclined, and who possess the necessary political skill to bend the truth when it suits them. However, it is totally unacceptable for people to get into politics – or to remain in politics – with the sole purpose of enriching themselves at the expense of the general public. So determined have some people become to serve themselves that they now resort to waging running battles against their own comrades in order to ensure that they emerge at the top of the pile. Here, in the province of my birth, there have even been murders committed against those feared to be on the verge of blowing the whistle.

So, how do we, as a province and as a country, turn back from this course that is certain to lead us to being yet another “typical African country”, another Nigeria and another Zimbabwe? Well, we know, do we not, that the starting point is for our judiciary to remain truly independent and for our media to remain fearless, professional and non-partisan watchdogs over the political and business elite. We know, too, that that by itself is not enough, because if those two institutions were to be perceived to be the only ones that forever shine a spotlight on nefarious behaviour and repeatedly raise an alarm, while the general public appears to be unconcerned about the same behaviour, then the judiciary and the media will be seen as enemies by the powers-that-be. Both common sense and experience elsewhere tell us that those two vital institutions fare well in an environment where their own behaviour is impeccable and their impartiality beyond question. Otherwise, they run the risk of alienating everybody, including the general public, in the process becoming sitting ducks for the political elite.

It is important for us to accept that all of us, without exception, are the guardians of our democracy. It is important that we remain watchful and, whenever necessary, raise an alarm. It is vital that members of civil society, through institutions like churches and business organisations, should reassert their right, as co-watchdogs, to hold and express their views. Ultimately the best watchdog is the electorate, which has the power, every five years, to vote parties into or out of office. Therefore, if things go wrong in this country, we, as the electorate, will have to accept collective responsibility for that situation.

I would like to conclude with a few pertinent observations. Firstly, I am encouraged by the assertion of authority by the ANC leadership at the recent National General Council in Durban. For quite some time now many of us had been concerned about the apparent leadership vacuum in the country, where it appeared that the

leadership of President Jacob Zuma was reluctant – if not afraid – to assert itself and offer much-needed leadership at a time when the country was crying out for such leadership. Some of us were concerned that the Zuma leadership appeared to be overly concerned about maintaining general popularity within the ANC-led tripartite alliance, even at the risk of allowing things to drift away from our control.

As we all know, nature deplores a vacuum. It follows, therefore, that where there is no leadership offered, demagoguery will be on the ascendency as part of filling that void. So it is encouraging that finally there appears to be appreciation of the fact that leadership, by its very nature, is not a popularity contest. It is simply impossible to please all the people all the time. It is in the very nature of leadership that there will be times when some individuals or sections of society will be displeased with some decisions that are taken by a leadership, while other sections will be mightily pleased by them. The important thing, however, is that in considering issues and arriving at decisions, any leadership needs at all times to be guided by certain values and principles which would seek to advance the common good.

Finally, I would like to issue a heartfelt appeal to the leadership of this province to put the interests of the people first at all times. Ours is one of the most beautiful provinces in the country, with so much potential, and yet it has not yet been able to realise that potential fully because of a host of reasons. To the best of my knowledge, Mpumalanga, for instance, is the only province that has yet to produce a national Cabinet Minister since 1994, with the best that it has ever done being two Deputy Ministers in the Zuma Government now. This is despite the fact that repeatedly the ANC has obtained some of its highest majorities during elections in this province.

Why has that been the case? Could it be, for instance, that throughout these 16 years of our democracy Mpumalanga has been devoid of hard-working, wise men and women worthy of appointment into the national Cabinet? I don't think so. Instead, I would hazard a guess that the fact that the ANC leadership in this province has not been as united over the years as it should have been has meant that it could not speak with one voice on many issues, hence its influence nationally has been fairly minimal.

I am heartened by the fact that Mpumalanga, which has been one of two provinces in the country to have no tertiary institution of its own (except for the former colleges of education and the local branches of other universities), will soon have its own university. Such a development is long overdue. It is not possible for any province, region or country to reach its full potential of development if, as is the case here, it does not have an institution of higher learning of its own. It is my fervent hope that such a university, which featured in Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza's State-of-

the-Province address in February, will soon open its doors and attract high-calibre academics onto its staff.

While one welcomes the fact that Nelspruit now has an airport worthy of the name, one strongly shares the view that this city also desperately needs an International Conference Centre, which should serve Mpumalanga and the neighbouring Mozambique and Swaziland. The presence of these three things – a decent international airport, a university and an International Conference Centre – in addition to the beautiful Mbombela Stadium, should help propel the province towards full realisation of its social, human and economic potential.

Once again, I am grateful to the Organising Committee for its decision to invite me to pay homage to Nganani Enos John Mabuza, and to the Mabuza family for its indulgence.

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