

Ntate Adonis: My Father, My Hero

Distinguished Guests! Ladies and Gentlemen!

Good day! My name is Mohapi Motlotlo Makhobotloane. I am one of Elphus Mfana Adonis Motha's 5 children, the last but one of the 5. I was born on the 24th of March 1993, after my sisters Mbali and Nkululeko, and brother Njabulo. Buhle is the youngest among us.

I also have two younger brothers, the twins Reneiloe and Reabetsoe. Often they are asked what it feels like to be a twin, and I've noted in their responses that they are more often than not, puzzled by this question because they know nothing else... they only know life with each other)! I say this because in reading this profound book-- *Incomplete Without My Brother, Adonis* --I come to learn and realise that such was the case with Uncle Kaizer and Ntate Adonis. After the Brutal murder of Ntate Adonis, I can only imagine that nothing is the same for Uncle Kaizer.

I would like, first of all, to acknowledge the Motha and Makhobotloane Families, the joint roots of my being, and through whom I am here today to address you.

Secondly, I salute the Nkambule and Nyatumba Families, who have given the world and nurtured the one and only Kaizer Mabilidi Nyatumba: Uncle Kaizer, in my book! And in the same breath, my respect goes to the Nkambule and Motha Families, who had gifted the world with one **Elphus Mfana Adonis Motha**.

I am deeply humbled and profoundly honoured to have been asked by Uncle Kaizer, esteemed author of the subject of this **august** gathering today – *Incomplete Without My Brother, Adonis* – to speak, on behalf of the children of **Elphus Mfana Adonis Motha** at this grand occasion, about Ntate Adonis, as I fondly called him to the end of his days, and always will, to the end of my days.

I must admit, though, for me, this is not an easy book to read as it catapults me back to the very moments and time surrounding the passing of my father, and I remember every moment vividly, as though it were yesterday. So the book does touch a raw nerve, as does good books out there!

I feel it is important though that I mention that Ntate Adonis had not been there throughout my life. I got to learn of him and who he was to me around the age of 10, when I was in Grade 3. And since then he had been in and out of my life, though, as the years marched on, he was more in than anything else.

Back then I hardly paid great attention to his role in my life as I had become so accustomed to his absence in my life. It was only in the latter years of his

life that I started to somehow appreciate and participate in his attempts to bond and build a relationship with me... . I had become quite open and excited about the idea of having him around as a father figure. And so you can imagine how it felt when he suddenly got ripped out of our lives by faceless murderers. I lost him yet again in my life.

Again, back then when this tragedy happened I was less affected than those around me and came to terms with the situation sooner than I was comfortable with. And here is where it got interesting for me, because, since then I tend to catch myself - and more specifically in the recent years; thinking and wondering about him. I cannot help but wonder how things would have been had he still been around. It is only now in recent years that, along with the wondering and reflection, the pain of losing him seems to grow instead of recede with time.

What I have come to realise is that the older I grow, the more I tend to need him around. The more I tend to miss him. The more I tend to love him. I realise that the older one grows the more one needs that parental figures in one's life, and not just for financial assistance but more for the emotional support.

You know, sometimes there are things that you just want to tell one person and one person only... And what makes this even more painful is that we can all deal with the passing of loved ones, but it is the manner in which they are taken from us, as in Ntate Adonis's case, and the fact that those who took him away from us got away, as it were, with murder, that hurts the most. I have come to terms with this, though, like you, Uncle Kaizer, my life is *Incomplete Without Ntate Adonis* .

What I find amusing and most beautiful is that he has taught me so much since his passing – having to overcome and/or come to terms with certain things, coming to an understanding of challenging situations, and a lot more. And I am forever grateful for that.

In reading the book I have also come to realise that learning about who Ntate Adonis and uncle Kaizer were when they were growing up, I learned a lot about myself as well, and in learning about myself I got to understand better who my father was and why he was the way he was, and that is one the most fulfilling experience I've had yet. Uncle Kaizer I will forever be indebted to you. With the book, you have given me the opportunity, one more time, to have Ntate Adonis in my life. You have rekindled the spirit of the hero he was, and still is, to me.

I shall reflect briefly on **Ntate Adonis – The Father, The Hero**

Ah! Ntate Adonis! There has always been Ntate Adonis somewhere in my life, even as I did not always experience it directly or consciously. I remember him as a soft spoken person who was gentle and fun to be with. His quiet, soothing, gentle manner never ceased to amaze me! He was a man of very few words – to me at

least – but he had a reassuring manner that made me comfortable even in his silence. He had a way of just being there, not in the background, but there, somewhere. His presence in my life was unmistakable. As is his absence today!

Ntate Adonis – My Father, My Hero

One day, sometime after his demise, I asked my mom (who couldn't be here with us today, unfortunately) what his name, Adonis, means, and if she knew why he was called Adonis, and Wow! I was blown away by her response! She told me that he had told her that the name Adonis was lifted out of Wilfred D Best's *The Students' Companion*, during his time and Uncle Kaizer's high school days when they had been studying English together, and they came across the name, and the two of them decided that ,Yup! This is It! His name shall be Adonis! Amazing! But I'm sure Uncle Kaizer can tell us more about that!

I have highlighted that name in my own copy of *The Students' Companion*, and have kept a bookmark on the relevant page!

My mom also says his ever-youthful looks and beauty preceded his name! Which makes me wonder ... many people say I'm a splitting image of Ntate Adonis. Does that make me a mini-Adonis? Or maybe I'm just a fake version of him! Be that as it may, I love being his son, and I savour the legacy that comes with it!

I mean how often does a father write a poem about his son?

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to share with you the poem that Ntate Adonis, My Father, My Hero, wrote **about me**: (It makes me somewhat big headed, and rightfully so!!)

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One In A Million

Ntate Adonis – My Father, My Hero

I knew I have a hero when one day, as a Grade 9 schoolboy at Drakensberg Boys' Choir School, I got into trouble with the school authorities and, in utter panic, I called my mom for help. Before school started the following day Ntate Adonis and my mom had arrived, and by about ten o'clock that morning the rescue mission had been accomplished! It was magical!

I still don't know what went on in the office of the then school principal, Mr Maurice Dicks, that morning, but the result was that my father, a former school principal himself, had come to my rescue, and a true hero – my true hero – was in born in my eyes, and in my heart, that day! That was Ntate Adonis, My Father, My Hero!

Ntate Adonis – My Father, My Hero

The Gentleman who believed in me. I guess the most precious gift he left me was his unwavering support of my dreams, and unequivocal belief in me. And for that, I'm profoundly thankful to him. And so it was that when I was finishing high school and was preparing for tertiary education, some two years after his untimely death, and I steadfastly held onto my dream to study Sound Engineering (much to my mom's **chagrin!** – you see she wanted me study "law, journalism, the humanities ... or something respectable like that!", as she put it) – I had reason, one more time, to look over my shoulder and wish that you were there, Ntate Adonis, to back me up, and give me the nod that I needed so desperately then. Ntate Adonis, My Father, My Hero.

Ntate Adonis – My Father, My Hero

I haven't finished my Sound Engineering studies, or bought my first house, or walked down the aisle, or had my first child. But I know you would be there for me during those critical moments in my life. And more. And I will always love you for that. Ntate Adonis, My Father, My Hero.

Again, like you, Uncle Kaizer, my life is incomplete without Ntate Adonis! To the world, he was Adonis, to me, he was the world!

While we all share the pain of the unresolved murder of our father, Uncle Kaizer, We, the children of Ntate Adonis, congratulate and thank you profoundly for placing the story of your life and Ntate Adonis in the world of letters!

I must confess, I haven't finished reading the book, even as I tried to race against time to prepare for today. Be that as it may, as a descendant of the subject of the book, I stand at a point in my life where a book of this nature is not to be read in one big rushed session: I SAVOUR EVERY CHAPTER. EVERY PAGE. EVERY LITTLE DETAIL. EVERY WORD!

Reading it is a reconstruction and experience of the past, my past, as embodied in my forebears' past – that of Uncle Kaizer and Ntate Adonis.

Uncle Kaizer, I should like to recognise, with all due humility, your courage and strength to have been able to deal with what you do in the book, despite the pain of having lost your twin brother -- under the murky circumstances in which it happened, and where the matter remains to this day – and having had to live with the gaping wound that festers quietly where there is no closure, as is the case in the instance of the death of Ntate Adonis. The deep seated pain that the affected families and friends endure bravely is palpable in the book. But, we hope that reading the book, and talking about the contents thereof, will also assist us to heal. And for that we are deeply thankful.

Uncle Kaizer, We, the children of Ntate Adonis, and with us the Nkabule and Nyatsumba Families, the Motha Family, the people of Mganduzweni, of Mpumalanga, of South Africa, and the peoples of the world are indebted to you for casting the story of Kaizer and Adonis in stone, for the legacy you have given us in the book, *Incomplete Without My Brother, Adonis*.

And so on behalf of the children of Ntate Adonis, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to the author and every person, natural and juristic, who was involved, directly or indirectly, in the creation of and production of this book.

We also thank Aunt Gugu and members of the family for their love and support while the book was being written, and beyond.

We live in hope that those who murdered Ntate Adonis and their accomplices will, one fateful day, be identified and duly punished for their heinous deed, and that the family, in its extended width and breadth, shall have closure and peace. As Alfred Lord Tennyson says, and I quote: