

**Opening and Welcoming Remark by Mayor Zandile Gumede at  
Memorial Lecture of Griffith and Victoria Mxenge at Umlazi  
Cinema – 18 August 2017**

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Programme Director,

Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Willies Mchunu,

MEC present today,

Councillors,

Government Officials,

Members of the Community,

Comrades and Friends,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Mxenge Family,

Sanibonani,

Thank you for inviting us to grace this important session dedicated to the lives of our liberation struggle giants. These were indeed freedom fighters who lived and died for our liberation. They sacrificed their lives and gave up everything for the struggle and the community of Umlazi. Even though they were born outside of Umlazi but they served and died for the people of this township and the country at large.

They have a clear and traceable track-record of the struggle. They were the product of the struggle not of factions. They united our people behind the vision of the freedom charter. Programme Director, we as eThekweni Municipality will continue to honour the memory of all of our struggle heroes. The profiling of the liberation heritage sites throughout the country is part of the process towards preserving national identity and memory for current and future generations.

We have named buildings and roads after our struggle heroes and heroines. We will be erecting more statues including the statue of President OR Tambo in front of the Durban City Hall.

The city of eThekweni has partnered with the National Heritage Council and other stakeholders involved in the project in profiling such potential liberation nodes within its confines and boundaries. To date

approximately 10 sites have been identified to form part of this project. One of these sites is the Mxenge House at uMlazi. The Mxenge Family played a very significant role in the struggle for the emancipation of all those who were oppressed under the demonic apartheid rule, hence its inclusion as part of the project as one of the important sites to be included in the National Liberation Heritage Route. It is also the site where Mrs Victoria Mxenge was murdered by agents of the apartheid government.

To give a bit of a background of who are these that we are honouring today:

Mlungisi Griffiths Mxenge was born in 1935 in King Williams Town. He was a member of the African National Congress (ANC) from the mid-1950s when he was a BA student at the University of Fort Hare. He later studied for an LLB degree at the University of Natal. His LLB studies were interrupted when he was convicted of being a member of the ANC (after it was banned in 1960) and sentenced to two years' imprisonment on Robben Island. He returned to complete his degree and went on to become a well-known civil rights lawyer who fearlessly defended the victims of the apartheid regime despite being harassed, detained and banned on frequent occasions. He was brutally murdered in Umlazi on 19 November 1981.

Mama Victoria Nonyamezelo Mxenge was born in Tamara Village in King William's Town in January 1942 to the late Wilmot Gosa and Nobantu Ntebe. After completing her primary education in Tamara, she proceeded to Ginsberg and later Fort Beaufort where she obtained a junior certificate at Forbes Grant Secondary School. She matriculated in 1959 at Healdtown High School. In 1964, she graduated as a nurse at

Victoria Hospital. In the same year, she moved to KwaZulu-Natal soon after she had married Mlungisi Griffiths Mxenge who was studying for a law Degree at the then University of Natal. After completing her midwifery studies at the King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban, she joined a local clinic in Umlazi as a nurse. In 1981, Mrs Mxenge obtained a law degree from UNISA and joined her husband's law firm in Durban. She was subsequently admitted as a lawyer during the same year. She

became a member of the Natal Organization for Women, an affiliate of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

Mrs Mxenge became heavily involved in the mass mobilization of people and also began to address political gatherings. Like her husband, Mrs Mxenge was brutally murdered in front of her children on the driveway of her home in Umlazi in 1985.

Programme Director,

In the name and memory of Mxenge let us unite the ANC. ANC is the only hope of the people, and we must defend its unity. For many years, parties have tried including the apartheid regime to destroy the ANC. They planted people inside us but all of them failed. They have been trying to break the tripartite Alliance but have failed. We must not allow them this time to break us.

As we celebrate the women's month, we need to appreciate the role that was played by Mrs Mxenge in the liberation and community. When she faced apartheid nobody told her to step aside because she was a widow or husband of Griffith. She was a leader in her own right. In the name and memory of Mama Victoria Mxenge we must refuse that women like Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela , Mama Nosiviwe Nqakula, Mama Albertina Sisulu , Mama Dlamini-Zuma and others, to be reduced to just wives. These were not just wives but revolutionaries. Some leaders were lucky to be married to women who were leaders and when we elect a woman president we will not be electing an x-wife but a revolutionary leader.

With those few words, I would like to welcome the family and thank you for ensuring that occasion happens. We will never forget the role of Mxenge in our lives.

In their memory we want to see peace and reconciliation in this city. We call for an end of blood shed in Glebelands stadium.

I thank you.