



Keynote Address by Mayor Zandile Gumede

Durban City Hall

20 August 2018

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- General Major R Maphwanya,
 - SAPS Major General S Nxamagele,
 - Metro Police Deputy Head : Winnie Zama,
 - Road Traffic Inspectorate, Regional Commander – Thabani Mthembu,
 - Fire Department, Mr Enock Mchunu,
 - All protocol observed,
 - Men and women in uniform,
 - Imbokodo,
 - Ladies and gentlemen,
 - Sanibonani,

I am grateful to be invited to be part of the Women's Month celebration led by Imbokodo Security Cluster. This year's celebration coincides with the triple centenaries of the birth of Nelson Mandela, Albertina Sisulu and the formation of the Bantu Women's League.

The Bantu Women's League (BWL) was formed in 1918, as a branch of the ANC and it was led by Dr Charlotte Maxeke. It became involved in passive resistance and fought against passes for black women. The ANC only accepted women as members at the Congress's 1943 conference and in 1948, the ANC Women's League was formed.

In respect of the month, it is important that we touch on issues of women. Equally, this year has been declared as the year of Mama Albertina Sisulu. The only woman who was present at the launch of the ANCYL in 1944. She was part of the Nelson Mandela generation that laid the foundation for our freedom.

As we celebrate the women's in the year of Mama Sisulu, we are disappointed by news of women abuse, rape and violence. Earlier today, I visited Dube family in Thornwood, ward 14, whereby a 21-year-old son killed his mother, girlfriend and a three-month year old child. He stabbed

a two-year-old girl and fortunately she survived. He then hanged himself and died inside the house.

This incident tells us that women are not safe from their lovers, from their children and our young girls must hide from their father. This is sad and disappointing. Women are being killed and we are in war. The enemy has declared war against women. We have a legal and revolutionary obligation to defend women and this security cluster must go out and defend women. We need you to protect us.

You must ensure that the dockets or cases of women abuse and rape are kept safe. These dockets must never disappear otherwise more women will be killed. These cases or charges must never be dropped, don't allow women to drop such charges. You must investigate these cases so that they are treated with seriousness. Even if it means you arrest those women who lie and claim that they were abused. Women must not lie about abuse because it is a serious thing, when you open a case, the law must take over.

Mama Sisulu once said, when she was addressing UDF crowds, **“It can have many armies, but the time is up, the patience of the people has been exhausted now. We have mothers here, black and white, mothers who know what it is to bring a child into this world, mothers who know what hardships they have endured. Are we as mothers going to allow a government to plunge our country into a bloodbath?”**

As women in the security cluster, you must never allow this country to go back to apartheid era. You must refuse violence and crime. You must defend the defenceless especially women who are raped and abused.

You must defend young girls and children who are taken to countries as sex slaves and pushers of drugs. We have a problem of young girls who leave the country as slay queens but they end up being used for drugs. Some of them get raped by men who buy them alcohol and drugs in the club. Nobody has a right to sleep with women even if she is drunk.

As women of this city we are inspired by the likes of Mama Mxenge, Ruth First, Phila Ndwandwe and many other women revolutionaries. These are flowers of our revolution.

President OR Tambo referred to the women in MK as the Flowers of the Revolution and also as the Mighty Few, because women in the camps were few compared to their male counterparts. At the Women's Conference that was held in Luanda, Angola in September 1981, Cde O R had this to say about the role of women **"....women have a duty to liberate us men from antique concepts and attitudes about the place and role of women in society and in the development and direction of our revolutionary struggle"**.

Angolan women were shoulder to shoulder with the women of South Africa who were based in Angola. They opened their homes for the MK women and supported the South African women's struggle for liberation with moral and material support. Because of the presence of MK cadres in their country, many Angolan people fell victim of Apartheid forces attacks. The brave and determined Angolan women had addition to care for their maimed and butchered children and husbands. In all this, never did they object to the presence of MK in their country. They continued to provide shelter and a haven for the gallant heroines of the South African struggle You must learn from one of our young soldier of our liberation. Her name is Phila Ndwandwe. She is one of the young soldiers we are proud of as the city.

Phila Portia Ndwandwe (also known as Zandile or Zandi) was part of the Natal Machinery of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) operating from Swaziland. She was in the unit headed by Ayanda Dlodlo that was responsible for the infiltration of African National Congress (ANC) cadres into Natal.

Brave. Very, very brave.

That was how one of the men who murdered Phila Ndwandwe described the young Umkhonto we Sizwe fighter. She was a dental therapy student when she was recruited by the ANC in 1985. She was living in exile in Swaziland when apartheid police abducted her in 1988. They hoped they could torture Phila into becoming an informer. Akavumanga ukuba iMpimpi – Askari.

She had just had her first son and was still breastfeeding him when she was kidnapped by members of the Durban Security branch.

They stripped her naked and beat her, repeatedly. She made herself a pair of panties out of a plastic bag. Despite all the brutality she was subjected to, one of her killers later told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, she simply refused to talk.

Eventually, the security police officers who had torn Phila away from her baby gave up on trying to turn her against the ANC. They decided to kill her. They dug a grave in a field in Kwazulu-Natal and took her there, blindfolded. They hit her over the head and then, while she was unconscious and could not fight back, they shot her. She was buried naked. Her killers covered her body with lime and a plastic sheet.

Years later, after Phila's killers disclosed what they had done to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and received amnesty, her body was unearthed. Her parents were left broken by the realisation that they'd been living 10 kilometers from where their child was buried without knowing the horror of what had happened to her, believing the lies fed to them that she was alive and had eloped. Her son, at the age of nine, attended the funeral of a mother he never known. She was a shrewd vibrant brave young woman who would not be broken by violence or fear. An extraordinary human. Imbokodo.

Today, an artwork hangs on the walls of the Constitutional Court. It shows a beautiful blue dress, made of plastic, floating. It's a fragile and bitterly painful tribute to Phila Ndwandwe, who spent her last days naked and battered but unbroken.

It's a dress made of the plastic that she used to cover her body while enduring unspeakable torture. The plastic that covered her bones for nearly a decade.

Phila Ndwandwe was 23 years old when she was murdered. She remains an inspiration to many young women to take leadership and powerful position in society. Women you don't need anyone to affirm you. You are strong and imbokodo. Women at a tender age joined the struggle and were prepared to die.

Even today, they are equal to the task to lead our army, police or metro police. You as women are capable of leading our universities, business and parliament at any age. Age is just a number not a measure of wisdom or capacity.

Women are capable and strong enough to take any task. Let us be inspired.

Programme Director,

We are grateful to many women who contributed to our struggle and freedom. The women who resisted and mobilised across all races. We will continue to support women to rise. Let us continue to support one another as women because our struggle continues. We need each other and if we are together and united, we will achieve more.

Long live Mbokodo! Long live the spirit of Winnie Mandela and Mama Sisulu Long Live!!

Amandla!