

Welcoming address by Mayor Zandile Gumede at the Memorial Service for Mama Winnie Madikezela-Mandela, held at People's Park, Durban 12 April 2018

Programme Directors

Premier of KZN, Mr Willies Mchunu;

Former President of the Republic – Baba Msholzi,

MEC Zikalala and Leader of Government Business,

MECs and Members of Parliament,

District Mayors and Councillors,

Religious leaders,

Amakhosi,

African National Congress led by DSG –Mama Jessie Duarte,

ANCWL led by Nonhlanhla Khoza,

Political parties represented here,

Military Veterans from all formations,

Progressive Youth formations,

Members of the diplomatic corps,

Amalunga omphakathi,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sanibonani nonke eThekwini,

At the beginning of April our country heard the sad news of the passing of struggle stalwart and former Member of Parliament, Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. She was among the great icons of the liberation struggle who sacrificed everything in the fight against the brutal apartheid state.

This is the reason we have gathered here to mourn and celebrate the passing of Mama Winnie Nomzamo Mandela, the mother of the nation. This is a joint programme for all people of eThekweni.

On behalf of the people of eThekweni Municipality and its Council, I send my deepest condolences to the family of Mama Madikizela-Mandela and the entire Liberation Movement on the passing of this great stalwart.

Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela inspired many of us to face the unjust and brutal system of apartheid at the time when most of our leaders were in exile or jail. She kept the fire burning inside the country and fought until the system was finally defeated. She was our leader and very brave. She kept reminding us that Amandla, Awethu as the people.

Madikizela-Mandela became the heartbeat of the revolution for a just and free South Africa. As a young wife with two children she took on the huge responsibility of advancing the liberation struggle. Her courageous role in fighting the apartheid security apparatus came at immense personal sacrifice and cost to her family. Even though she was married and had a family, she never really knew what it is to have a married family life.

She has inspired many women inside and outside of politics, and as leaders we have learnt a lot from her character, braveness and contribution. At the time of her passing, we were still looking forward to her contribution in guiding us as women in leadership. Mama was one of those rare leaders who spoke the truth no matter how inconvenient it is.

It is unfortunate that we lost this Mama Winnie in the year that is dedicated to Nelson Mandela and Mama Albertina Sisulu; she was one of the leaders we had hoped was going to educate us as we were going to commemorate these leaders in separate occasions. It is impossible to celebrate the life of Mama Sisulu and Tata Madiba without mentioning Mama Winnie, these were the pillars of our resistance.

Her heroism in the face of police harassment, banishment and imprisonment; inspired many to continue with a struggle at the face of death.

She became a source of encouragement to all the other women whose husbands and children were either in prison, exile. She even gave strength to the women who were left alone in rural areas while their husbands toiled in the gold and diamond mines

We will remember Mama Winnie as the campaigner for women's rights, who understood the dialectical connection between women and the national oppression and the need to wage these struggles.

In memory of Mama Winnie, as women we must continue to fight for the rights of other women who are abused at home, work and in community. We must condemn the actions of leaders and some pastors who abuse women in church. I encourage women to speak out against such men who abuse them in the name of God.

Mama Winnie was not scared of pushing the agenda of women leadership inside and outside of the ANC. This is the reason we should support women in leadership in all sectors. Women in the ANC must stand behind the Mayor of Cape Town. She is brave and punished for attending a memorial service of mama Mandela. Her Party decided to only elect one Woman in its leadership but instead, it amended the constitution in order to deal with a woman. We must support her as women because our struggle is common.

We must not allow our current challenges to change our history. We remain inspired by many women from the generation of Mama Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela-Mandela. We are inspired by Mama Dorothy Nyembe, Margaret Mncadi, Mama Florence Mkhize, Mama Mbhoxela, Lilian Ngoyi, Fatima Meer, Ruth First, Phyllis Naidoo and many women who sacrificed for our struggle.

May her revolutionary flame continue to inspire all oppressed people of the world to rise up and fight against all forms of injustices.

In her memory, we commit to fight for a unity movement that is truly an instrument of liberation at the hands of the people of South Africa. In closing, I would like to pass my condolences to the family of Dr Zola Skweyiya. In the month of April when we celebrate our freedom and our struggle heroes such as Chris Hani and Solomon Mahlangu we will also celebrate Mama Winnie and Comrade Skweyiya.

Amandla!