



# ANC Whip

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## NELSON MANDELA DAY: A common national platform to serve humanity

by DR. MATHOLE MOTSHEKGA

In his message to the World Social Forum in Mumbai in 2004, President Nelson Mandela remarked that "We owe a huge debt to future generations in a form of a better world.

It has to be a better world, one in which the rights of every individual are respected, one that builds on past aspirations for a good life, and one that enables every individual to optimally develop their potential." It is therefore very fitting that our Parliament has decided to provide leadership on this celebration of our legacy of advancing humanist and moral values which Nelson Mandela as the leader of the ANC and our society has championed with distinction.

The Ubuntu values and principles embodied in the person of Nelson Mandela are rooted in our glorious past as African people who, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and many others, successfully fought for our freedom, independence and equality for all. Nelson Mandela joined the ANC at the height of World War II and banded together with other young people under the leadership of Anton Muziwakhe Lembede. These young people set themselves the formidable task of transforming the ANC into a mass movement deriving its strength from the unlettered millions of working people in towns and country side, peasants in the rural areas and professionals. Nelson Mandela and his comrades, like the founders of

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African democracy, notably W.E. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey espoused a radical African Nationalism grounded in the principle of national self-emancipation and self-determination.

Together with David Bopape, Walter Sisulu, OR Tambo and others, Nelson Mandela composed the ANC Youth League Sub-Committee which drew the 1949 Program of Action.

This program was aimed at the attainment of full citizenship as well as direct and democratic parliamentary representation for all South Africans.

In policy documents which were co-authored by Nelson Mandela, the ANC Youth League paid special attention to the redistribution of land, trade union rights, education and culture.

The ANC Youth League aspired to achieve free and compulsory education for all children as well as mass education for adults.

Having been admitted as attorneys who established a law practice, Tambo and Mandela rose to professional status in society. However, every case in court, every visit to prisons to consult with clients reminded them of the

humiliation and suffering experienced by their people. Mr Justice Ramsbottom refused to strike Nelson Mandela off the roll of practicing attorneys on the ground of his conviction under the suppression of Communism Act. The learned judge found that Mandela had been moved by a desire to serve his black fellow citizens and nothing he had done showed him to be unworthy to remain in the ranks of an honourable profession. During the early 50s, Nelson Mandela played an important part in leading the resistance against the western areas removals and introduction of Bantu Education. He also played a leading role in popularising the Freedom Charter adopted by the one and only Congress of the People in 1955. After the collapse of the Treason Trial in 1961, Nelson Mandela delivered a keynote address at an All Africa Conference in Pietermaritzburg. In his electrifying address that anticipated the Constitutional Assembly which gave birth to our current Constitution, Mandela challenged



the apartheid regime to convene a National Convention, representative of all South Africans to thrash out a New Constitution based on democratic values and principles.

Our icon believed in peace and development and only encouraged violent forms of political struggle when the regime left him with no other choice.

In his advancement of the struggle, our beloved icon appreciated the role of international solidarity. While in Ethiopia in 1962 he addressed the conference of the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa to solicit international support for the struggle for liberation and freedom in South Africa.

Mandela anticipated the transformation of the judiciary that President Zuma called for in Parliament and in his address to the top judges of our country on Monday. Answering a charge for leaving the country without a passport, Mandela replied that he considered the prosecution a trial of the aspirations of the African people.

Thereafter, Mandela decided to conduct his own defence and applied for the recusal of the magistrate on the ground that in such a prosecution, a judiciary controlled entirely by whites was an interested party and therefore could not be impartial.

He also argued that he owed no duty to obey the laws of a white parliament in which his people were not represented. Mandela prefaced his defence with the affirmation "I detest racialism because I regard it as a barbaric thing, whether it comes from a black man or a white man."

After his conviction for leaving the country illegally, Mandela made a historical anti-domination statement "I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination.

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hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Upon his release on 11 February 1990, Mandela devoted whole heartedly into his life and work, to strive to attain democratic values and principles which founding fathers and mothers of the ANC set out almost four decades earlier.

Mandela has never wavered in his devotion to democracy, equality and learning.

Despite terrible provocation, he has never answered racism with

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racism. His life has been an inspiration in South Africa and throughout the world to all who are oppressed and deprived and to all who are opposed to oppression and deprivation.

In a life that symbolises the triumph of the human spirit over man's inhumanity to man, Nelson Mandela accepted the 1993 Noble Peace Award on behalf of all South Africans who suffered and sacrificed much to bring peace to our land.

The progressive values and principles that Mandela embodied became abundantly evident in his 1993 Nobel Peace Lecture.

First and foremost he acknowledged other recipients of this award including Chief Albert Luthuli, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Martin Luther King Jnr and Frederick Willem De Klerk.

He pointed out in particular that Martin Luther King Jnr grappled and died in an effort to make a contribution to the just solution of the same great issues of the day which we have had to face as Africans.

Madiba summed up this issues in more definite and empathic way: "We speak here of the challenge of the dichotomies of war and peace, violence and non-violence, racism and human dignity, oppression and repression, liberty and human rights, poverty and freedom from want.

We stand here today as nothing more than as representatives of more the millions of our people who had to rise up against a social system whose very essence is war, violence, racism, oppression, repression and impoverishment of an entire people.

I am also here today as a representative of the millions of people across the globe, the anti-apartheid movement, the government and organisations that joined with us not to fight against apartheid South Africa as a country or any of its people, but to oppose an inhuman system and seek for a speedy end to the apartheid crime against humanity.

The countless human beings, both inside and outside the country had the nobility of spirit to stand in the path of tyranny and injustice without seeking selfish gain.

They recognised that an injury to one is an injury to all and therefore acted together in defence of justice and a common human decency.

Mandela believed that the triumph over the inhuman system of apartheid would finally bring to a close a history of five hundred years of African colonisation and mark a great step forward in history and also serve as a common pledge of the peoples of the world to fight racism wherever it occurs and whatever guise it assumes.

He honoured those who scarified everything for liberty, peace, human dignity and human upliftment.

Madiba made a call that we devote what remains of our life to the use of our country's unique and painful experience to demonstrate, in practice, that the normal condition for human existence is democracy, justice, peace, non-sexism, prosperity for everybody, healthy environment, equality and solidarity among the peoples.

He ensured that the 1993 Interim Constitution enshrined the spiritual philosophy of Ubuntu and its inherent principles of equality, freedom and justice for all which found further expression in our 1996 Constitution.

Nelson Mandela cherishes the hope that this 21st century, this African century would at last be the century of the triumph of world peace and global caring.

To that end, he calls on all of us to carry the flag of belief in our common humanity and to live out that belief in action even in conditions and circumstances where the opposite sentiment dominates.

In his State of the Nation Address, President Zuma reiterated Madiba's Ubuntu values and principles and made them an integral part of the agenda for this Parliament and his administration. He linked the legacy of his predecessors, in particular, Nelson Mandela, in the following terms: "Since 1994 we have sought to create a united cohesive society out of our fragmented past. We are called upon to continue this mission of promoting unity in diversity and to develop a shared

value system, based on the spirit of community solidarity and a caring society. Our shared value system should encourage us to become active citizens in the renewal of our country. We must build a common national identity and patriotism". In his response to the debate on the State of the Nation Address, President Zuma referred to the recovery of humanity of all people as a "guiding tenet of the ANC for the many decades of its existence. It will be a central feature of our shared efforts over the term of this government, because we know that working together we can do more to build a great South Africa. Decent work and a steadily improving quality of life are essential for the recovery of the humanity of all people.

So too is the empowerment through access to quality education and skills development, safe water, affordable energy, decent shelter, and cohesive and vibrant communities are similarly all important for the recovery of this humanity. To be treated with respect and dignity by one's fellow citizen and by those who have the responsibility of providing public

service is important for the recovery of our humanity.

Central to this recovery of our humanity is also the need for access to economic opportunities and to earn a living. That is why we are determined to lessen the impact of the economic downturn on the most vulnerable".

In this context, President Zuma not only made the legacy of the founders of democracy and Nelson Mandela in particular, the foundation of our value-centred society but also ably linked the priorities of his administration to Ubuntu values and principles. In this way, President Zuma succeeded in putting the legacy of Madiba on the agenda of both Parliament and his administration. We trust that the Nelson Mandela month in July will serve as a common national platform to serve humanity and to deepen and entrench the spiritual philosophy of Ubuntu and its inherent values of equality, freedom and justice for all.

■ *Dr. Motshekga is the Chief Whip of the ANC in Parliament*

## Let's preserve the prestige of the organisation' – ANC Deputy President

**A**NC public representatives need to continuously nurture their political consciousness in the course of fulfilling their political functions.

This was stressed by the Deputy President of the African National Congress, Kgalema Motlanthe, during his political input to the National Chief Whips Forum workshop held in Parliament on 2 July 2009.

The workshop was attended by Chief Whips and Whips from national and provincial parliaments.

These leaders serve as senior political managers of the organisation within these institutions.

The Deputy President told the workshop that without a clear political consciousness, living up to the rich and glorious legacy of the 97 year old liberation movement, a task that was naturally never easy, will be difficult to fulfil.

Difficult as it may, he said it was nevertheless expected of all of members of the ANC to live up to the high standards of its forebears. In their endeavour to live up to these high expectations, Whips particularly must guard against the cancer of ignorance.

"Ignorance will give us no advantage whatsoever.

As Parliamentary Whips, we are expected to whip Members of Parliament to conduct themselves

in line with the prestige of this institution. Many people in this country place their faith in the ANC because it is a prestigious organisation.

"Our role is to preserve that prestige, not to reduce it.

"As Whips, we have to strictly play the leadership role that we are tasked with – we ought to do what is expected of us.

"In this regard, discipline is important, not excuses".

The Deputy President also told the Whips that the ANC's previous role in the anti-apartheid struggle was much easier compared to the current one.

The current role of the organisation, he emphasised, was to solve all

the country's problems, which was not an easy thing to do. He remembered a profound observation once made by the late ANC stalwart, Raymond Mhlaba, during the struggle. Mhlaba remarked to his comrades that the notion that one is Marxist because of his prescription to the Marxist ideology was wrong. "He told us that we must not regard ourselves as Marxists, but as students of Marxism instead. You only become Marxist when you start using Marxism to solve the country's problems. The current role of the ANC is to solve problems". The Deputy President said it was necessary that political managers continue to improve their understanding of the various roles they play. This, he said, was essential in the course of providing much needed solutions to the complex challenges people face in their daily lives. "ANC is the governing party and therefore must have answers to all the problems that the society faces. If you are asked questions by a member of the public and you do not have that information at that time, you must commit yourself to go and find answers and revert back to that person. "If you fail to make effort to respond to those questions, the public will write you off, and that will do no good to the image of the ANC." How Members of Parliament conduct themselves during parliamentary debates was important in the preservation of the prestige of the organisation. The Deputy President said: "During the debate, you can deal viciously with the opposition without negatively effecting on the prestige of the organisation in Parliament. Whatever we do or say will always have consequences and it is upon us to ensure that those consequences are good. "The ANC must not use its majority to overwhelm its opponents and present itself as a bully. If it does that it stands to lose. It must instead provide superior

arguments, which will go a long way in enhancing its prestige" In stressing his point on engagement with the opposition, the Deputy President referred to a 'dog and postman' analogy that was once given by one of the ANC's struggle activists, Harry Gwala. Gwala had said that on several occasions he had witnessed an encounter between a postman and a dog. He said that although the dog will chase after the postman and bark at him whenever he delivered mail, the postman will never get off his bicycle and start barking back at the dog. "Comrade Gwala said if this was to happen, people will refer to that as a fight between dogs. "It is thus important that we do not allow ourselves to be seen in that light. "Our role is to solve the country's problems. If other parties make it their business to solve the problems of the ANC, we must not return the favour. "The less we talk about other parties the better". The Deputy President urged MPs to uphold Parliament's stature as the true tribune of the people. Referring to the relationship between the institution and the Executive, he said: "The portfolio committee must perform its function without fear or favour and the Minister must never be allowed to pull rank. "Respect must also be accorded to the Office of Chief Whip, whose incumbent is the only leader of the ANC in Parliament. "Parliament must also remain loyal to its decisions and act only in a principled manner. You are here to represent the interest of the people". He also stressed that ANC representatives must at all times ensure that in the course of their work they bring into operation the policies and programmes of the organisation. "The Freedom Charter has served as our political programme from 2002 and will continue to be until 2012. Only the ANC National Conference in 2012 will decide

whether we must continue with it or not. "We must ensure that we implement this programme fully to improve the quality of life of all our people. "We need to continue reminding ourselves that our programmes are informed by the Freedom Charter". The Deputy President urged MPs to continue refining their political consciousness. "Political consciousness is gained through disciplined political activeness. It is therefore important that you continue to play active role in the party structures and communities". He concluded by reminding the workshop that the ANC was more than just an organisation, but a family. "That is why it is capable of solving the problems of the society. That is why it is capable of uniting the people in line with its Strategy and Tactics."