

MEC VR Shongwe Speech on the celebration of Mandela Day in Dullstroom Nkangala Region on the 16th August 2012.

The Executive Mayor of Emakhazeni, Clr Hamza Ngwenya

Members of Mayoral Committee and councilors in our mist,

The General Manager, Ms Nonsundu Ndonga

The Management of Social Development

The Management from DCSSL,

Officials and Tourist Monitors,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

Former President Nelson Mandela was exactly 29 days old in 1918, in the small village of Mvezo in the Transkei. This courageous and wonderful human being was born on the 18th of July 1918 and at that time nobody thought that one day, he might be celebrated worldwide.

Madiba, a son of the soil, a man who dedicated his entire life in the upliftment of the oppressed and the less privileged, is the world icon that got all of us working and playing our part to celebrate his life today.

Those of us who have had the privilege to witness Mandela's Presidency and life during our lifetime have also witnessed that he fought for freedom or for a peaceful solution to the South African problem.

We know his great talent and can attest now that in this country there is both potential and untapped wisdom that he always wanted unlock from all South Africans, irrespective of race and gender. We also know very well, his extraordinary courage and intelligence as well as his capacity to assimilate the most complex problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are meeting here today to fulfill a commitment that we made, which was to visit this Centre during July as part of the Celebration of the "Nelson Mandela International Day" in recognition of the former South African President's contribution to the culture of peace and freedom.

This month is August and we are all aware that it is a Woman's Month. South Africans of all backgrounds, races and cultural groups celebrates National Women's Day every year on the 9th of August which is a public holiday to commemorates an eventful day in South Africa's history.

On 9th of August 1956, some 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings in the City of Pretoria to protest against proposed amendments to the pass laws.

The eventful march was led amongst others by Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Lilian Ngoyi, Rahima Moosa and Helen Joseph. We salute this stalwarts' and icons of the struggle for freedom and indeed it is still relevant today to say, "You touched the women, you have struck a rock". "Wathinta Abafazi, Wathinta Imbhokodo".

It is therefore, an honorable thing that we keep their spirit alive and celebrate with you, the Nelson Mandela International Day in August, a Month that is dedicated to Woman. Mandela day is not a once-off event because it is about doing good for humanity. That task is an everyday task.

For as long as there are people out there, who sleep with empty stomachs,

for as long as there are people out there, who are homeless,

for as long as there are destitute and poor children out there,

for as long as there are woman who are abused,

for as long as there children who are raped,

for as long as the all the social-ill that are ravaging our country and the world persist,

Then everyday must be a Mandela International Day.

We are celebrating a men chose a life of hardship so that we could live better. In doing so he taught us a very important lesson that real leaders must be prepared to sacrifice all for the freedom and wellbeing of their people.

We are coming here today with the Executive Mayor of Emakhazeni Cllr. Hamza Ngwenya to ensure that this centre is enabled to cater for your well-being. We do this because Madiba directed us to do so and we are the custodians of his ideals.

Madiba, a men who gave 67 precious years of his life to fight a noble battle for the freedom of an African child went through it all. He fought through thick and thin. The 67 years of active struggling was not eventless.

He sacrificed his private life and his youth for his people, and remains South Africa's best known and loved hero.

He said," The struggle is my life". This finds a precise expression in the life that he lived. A clear demonstration is that he held a number of very key and serious positions in the ANC:

He was ANCYL secretary (1948);
ANCYL president (1950);
ANC Transvaal president (1952);
Deputy national president (1952),
ANC president (1991) and the
President of the Republic of South Africa in 1994

This is so because he said, "The struggle is my life". He committed to the struggle to ensure that South Africa is a caring country for all its people, irrespective of race, status, gender or standing in society.

He fought against white domination in the same way that he fought against black domination.

The men whom the whole world is now celebrating left the country in 1962 for military training in Algeria and to arrange training for other MK members.

The decision to embark on an armed struggle must be understood in its entirety because it was a decision which led to some calling him a terrorist.

He clearly conceded that it was unrealistic and wrong for African leaders to continue preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the Government met their peaceful demands with force.

Absolute force for that matter.

The Manifesto of Umkhonto published on 16 December 1961, said:

"The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices - submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future, and our freedom."

This is a very sad and painful history of our country where people were forced to fight, not because there was a desire to do so, but solely because the Government had closed all doors and left them with no choice.

After 27 years in jail, Madiba came out more humble, more matured and forgiving and led the country into a new historic mission. He reconciled it. We are today reconciled as the people of South Africa and it was Madiba himself who again led from the front.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Madiba is an extra-ordinary men. On his return from Algeria to get military training, he was arrested for leaving the country illegally and for incitement to strike.

He was convicted and jailed for five years. While serving his sentence, he was charged, in the Rivonia trial, with sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment. Of that life sentence, he served 27 solid years. When he came out of jail, he was, as I said, more humble, more matured and more willing to reconcile the country.

Life was absolutely not a walk in the park for Madiba. He received news when he was in prison in 1969 serving a life sentence that his eldest son, Thembekile, had been killed in a road accident. What made matters worse is that, he was not allowed to attend his funeral because he was a prisoner serving a life sentence.

Still, Madida came out of prison to embrace and mobilize the whole world to do good for humanity, irrespective of race.

In a true Madiba style, he visited Dr Quartus de Wet, the former South African judge-president of Transvaal, who sentenced him to life in prison for daring to question apartheid and its jurisprudence.

They shaked hands, shared jokes, food and talked about what happened in 1964. This is the men, whom in his honor, we must make every day a little easier for those who vulnerable. All South Africans in particular, must dedicate each day to Mandela by doing good for humanity.

In honor of Madiba, a men who changed the cause of history, a men who was once a terrorist but is today the most loved and celebrated human being by the whole world. Allow me to appeal to all of you to make everyday a Mandela Day.

The legacy of Madiba finds perfect expression in the men and woman who are working for this centre.

You are the nerve centre and the lifeline of his ideals. You wake up every day to come here and do good for other people and I am sure that it makes him sleep peacefully every night.

The good work you are doing here brings little or no benefit to yourselves except a fulfillment in your hearts that you have done good for humanity. And that represent, describe and preserve Madiba's ideals. Through you, we see a united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa that Madiba fought for.

I have confidence in the intelligence of people South Africa and their Government under the leadership of the sitting President Jacob Zuma and Premier DD Mabuzaa in the Province.

I have confidence in the care workers of this centre and a continued support from Social Development to ensure that people are treated with humility.

I trust that you, distinguished representative of different stakeholders will appreciate what we have done and work jointly to secure a caring, humane and kind living conditions for all our people.

I am confident that you understand that this is not a matter of race, colour, personal income, or social category. Rather, it is for all of us who are sailing in the same boat, to persevere Madiba's legacy.

Let there be more generosity, more co-operation, and more humanity. Let this centre become a model of a more just and more humane future and secured living place for all.

Let's do it for Mandela.

Long live Mandela, Long Live.

Thank you.