

**MESSAGE DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER ZWELI MKHIZE AND PROVINCIAL
GOVERNMENT OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

EVENT: MEMORIAL SERVICE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

VENUE: DURBAN CITY HALL, KWAZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

DATE: 30 JANUARY 2010

Master of Ceremonies;

Consul General of India, His Excellency Anil K Sharan and your spouse;

Acting High Commissioner of India, Mr Kumaran;

eThekwinini Mayor, Cllr Obed Mlaba;

Ela Gandhi;

Trustees of Gandhi Development Trust;

Members of the Satyagraha – In Pursuit of Truth Management;

Other important guests;

I greet you all.

Good afternoon

I want to express my gratitude to the Gandhi Development Trust. Thank you for an excellent co ordination of this memorial service.

I particularly would like to thank everyone who devoted time to participate in the 12-hour prayer service which took place last night and culminated in the immersing of Mahatma Gandhi's remaining ashes at sea off Durban harbor.

I am really inspired when I see so many people devoting time to reflect on the work of this great man – Mahatma Gandhi.

His Excellency and Honored Guests

I am convinced that this afternoon's gathering has created an opportunity for all of us to speak with one voice on how we can build on the political progress navigated by this man of peace.

South Africa has probably emerged as a stronger nation capable of competing with other nations.

But as we all know, at one stage South Africa was a very tricky and difficult test but certain revolutionaries and leaders of the people's movement, the African National Congress, managed to pass this test.

There can be no argument that ANC leaders passed this difficult test because of the support and the guidance they received from Mahatma Gandhi.

Reverend John Langalibalele Dube, the first President of the ANC dedicated his time and energy for a revolution against colonialism and racism.

He was mentored by Mahatma Gandhi.

When the two leaders were called upon to lead, they upheld what was in the best interest for all people. They focused on the task at hand, and not on what they stood to gain from their positions.

As we gather here today, I remember them for their strength of character, discipline and patriotism.

Rev Dube was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's commitment to peace to such an extent that he himself became an advocate of non-racialism, a concept which was later adopted by the ruling party and is currently being used as a tool to unify all South Africans.

Rev Dube and Mahatma Gandhi were driven by nothing else but the desire to improve political and socio-economic conditions of their communities.

Quite notably, both leaders were involved in public work for their communities.

Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1894;

Dube helped found the Natal Native Congress in 1900;

Gandhi began publishing the Indian Opinion - a weekly in English, Gujarati, Hindi and Tamil - in June 1903.

Dube launched the Ilanga Lase Natal, an African weekly in English and Zulu, in the same year.

It was printed at the same press as the Indian Opinion until Dube acquired a press for the Ohlange Institute.

The two leaders respected one another, and as a result, they laid the foundation for what has become a rainbow nation.

I want to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the two leaders.

They are proof that indeed people from both countries can unite and rise against all odds to create a better life for future generations.

Honored guests

We have a rich history that we are all proud of and it is because of these two leaders.

The history of the people of South Africa and their struggle against colonization and oppression will be written by authors and researchers for centuries to come. Our story continues to inspire many people who find themselves under similar conditions and always gives hope to many who seek to improve the conditions under which they live.

Their hope is provided by the triumph of the most scorned, oppressed and downtrodden who challenged the most sophisticated and feared regime on the continent of Africa –and won!

Nelson Mandela touched the hearts of poorest and powerless through his compassion and quest for peace and reconciliation.

Madiba is one out of many leaders who drew inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi.

He suffered like Gandhi and endured pain and the yoke of oppression but he took responsibility for pioneering the path to a free and democratic state.

Together with his comrades they represented the will of our people and their desire to be free and walked the same path with many lesser known heroes whose contribution was nevertheless of equally significant proportion.

It is not possible to talk about Madiba and the revolution that took place in our country without remembering the contribution of his co-accused, leaders such as Ahmed Kathrada and others who were tried and sentenced with him.

Nor is it possible to leave out many who served our struggle and left an indelible mark during their lifetime, such as Helen Joseph, Ruth First, Joe Slovo, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Dr Monty Naicker whose 100th year birth anniversary is in September this year, Bram Fischer, Billy Nair and many more.

These heroes are not just names but are people whose lives represent chapters in the book about the people of our country and the struggle for human dignity.

They represent a long history of friendship between the people of South Africa and our brothers and sisters from India.

Collectively they ensured that the will of the people of South Africa prevails. They paved the way for the democracy we are enjoying today!

Make no mistake; this democracy belongs to all the people of South Africa. It is the democracy for future generations.

Our democracy is founded on the principles of equality. It is a democracy that enables all South Africans to participate equally in the reconstruction and development of this country.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As I conclude I have no doubt that this day will help us to continue to draw wisdom from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and all other forebears of democracy.

This day will serve as a motivation to all of us to continue to work hard to create a caring and compassionate society, characterized by love, respect and friendship amongst all races.

This is what Mahatma Gandhi stood for.

The Provincial Government will continue to promote a sustainable peace, mutual respect amongst leaders and people of this province. We are determined to banish the spirit of hostility amongst different political party supporters, making them understand that different opinions strengthen rather than weaken democracy.

Since the inauguration of the new provincial executive we have sought to ensure that government collaborates with religious leaders of different faiths.

This arises from our deep conviction that the leaders of different faiths, working together have a very solid contribution to make in the improvement of the lives of the people of our province.

This is an acknowledgement of the fact the government will not alone satisfy the needs of people without extending a hand of partnership to many other stakeholders in the broader civil society.

As we pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi - the provincial government would like to appeal to leaders of faith to continue your efforts to promote prosperity, peace and tolerance in this province.

Tolerance will only be achieved if we come together and work together as One Nation.

Linked to this is the importance of celebrating our cultures together.

This year we set aside a day to celebrate the diversity of South African cultures during Heritage Day. It is a day in which all South Africans celebrated who we are: ONE PEOPLE ONE NATION with many cultures. We celebrated our diversity as a source of our strength.

It is this diversity that makes us a unique nation, woven from the many cultures and ancestral history of our forefathers who descended from different continents. We celebrated the essence of our democracy – the essence of being different but yet being one nation.

The essence of this statement is the acceptance of diversity and the respect of different cultures and different religions and faiths. This essentially means embracing each other as brothers and sisters irrespective of the land of ancestral origin.

We need to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, Eid, Diwali, Umthayi, Day of Reconciliation, Shaka's Day and many other days of importance in our lives together in order to ensure unity.

We must preserve this wonderful tapestry of cultures and traditions making ours a rich tapestry of colours making ours the most cosmopolitan of societies – a fruit salad where each individual fruit maintains its unique taste whilst helping to make the salad tasty and nutritious.

I thank you all.