

**EULOGY BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF SOUTH AFRICA, AMB. THAMI XN NGWEVELA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEMORIAL SERVICE IN HONOUR OF THE LATE MRS WINNIE MADIKIZELA-MANDELA HELD ON THE 12<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2018, AT THE OFFICES OF THE EMANCIPATION SUPPORT COMMITTEE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (ESCTT), IN MARAVAL, PORT OF SPAIN.**

Mistress of Ceremony,

Mr Khafra Kambon, Chairman,

Executive Director, Ms Zekiya and Members of the Emancipation Support Committee,

The Pan-Africanist Community, Invitees to this solemn occasion of INDABA of fellows who share a strong bond with Mrs Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela-Mandela - before I proceed, I would like to invite everyone to stand and reflect in a MINUTE OF SILENCE;

- I THANK YOU.

Firstly, the South African High Commission would like to thank the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago for heeding the call of the South African government to all nations and friends, by bringing us together here tonight, to pay tribute to someone near and dear to all of us, Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

Can I just say, it was a very pleasant surprise to learn that Winnie actually visited TT in 1998. I was watching your video collage of her visit here and I now know who have a much closer bond and a very personal one as a result of this visit.

Ladies and gentlemen, no one will argue with the fact that the South African people suffered immensely under apartheid. But then again, there is a scale in the sacrifices each and every one of us made in fighting a repressive regime. (elaborate)

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was a young woman from a rural village of Mbongweni, Mbizana who graduated at the top of her class in High School and went on to study as a Social Worker in the big city of Johannesburg. That is where she met and married an up and coming lawyer, by the name of Nelson Mandela. He was already a fire-brand who formed the ANC Youth League and a young leader in the African National Congress who was

changing the direction and political strategy of fighting the oppressive regime. For that reason, hers was to become a life of sacrifice, harassment, isolation and banishment. Political activities by the African majority were banned in 1961; Nelson Mandela and other leaders were imprisoned; political activists went into exile and from then onwards she remained in South African with her two young daughters and became a fighter in her own right. She was a thorn on the backside of the apartheid regime. She was fearless and no amount of intimidation and banishment could cow her down for the 27 years of incarceration of her then husband Nelson Mandela. We are all human beings, a life like that does take a toll on many families and, unfortunately, the marriage ended. The two still remained close to the end.

The passing on of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela is a great loss to the South African people. It is even a greater loss to the cause of women's emancipation. Winnie was not a feminist in the classical sense of the word, but she was a leader to all women by example. She showed the world of women that you can be a change agent, you can be a meaningful contributor to society, you can lead alongside men and do even better sometimes and at the same time you can be a mother, a nurturer and keep a family together in the most difficult of circumstances.

The President of SA, Cyril Ramaphosa, described her as "an abiding symbol of the desire of our people to be free. In the midst of repression, she was the voice of defiance and resistance".

In paying respect and tribute to Mam' uWinnie the Women's League of the ANC said; "THE BIGGEST TREE HAS FALLEN"; (elaborate)

The ANC Veterans League recalled her very fondly in their eulogies. One Leader of the Veterans League remembered a personal encounter in 1966 with the young Mrs Mandela at the time. He said; "I was introduced to the ANC when I was very young, angry and militant, by Winnie Mandela and worked with her when it was not fashionable to be associated with our glorious movement..."

The Veteran reminisced about talking to Winnie about the goings-on of the time; The ANC was banned, many of its members were banished or fled to exile. He said; "I remember vividly when I met her in down town Johannesburg where she was working as a secretary. We spoke quietly in hushed tones on how evil and atrocious the apartheid system was... the hated Bantu education system designed for black South Africans, the appalling and segregated living conditions, how workers' rights were

trampled upon on a daily basis, and the daily harassment and torture of those who dared raise their voices ...”

“It was only when she invited me to her home in Orlando West in Soweto that she spoke freely and we started planning on how we could mobilize and organize the youth to become active participants in the struggle against apartheid”. Many of you will remember the intensified repression of the 1960’s following the imprisonment of political leaders and banning of political parties, the voice of the African people of South Africa. The South African people could no longer gather free or even express their views. That would surely end you in prison.

Ladies and gentlemen, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela has battle scars of fighting for all her lifetime. She fought hard and long enough to live and enjoy the benefits of freedom. In the last 24 years of South Africa’s freedom, she continued to serve her people in Parliament. She has all these years been a leader in her own right and many shall remember her in a very personal way for the mentorship, the guidance and leadership they received from her in the darkest hour and in the new South Africa. For her remarkable sacrifices, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela is the recipient of the Highest National Award, the Order of Luthuli in Silver, for bravery.

International organisations, governmental and non-governmental, national political Parties and Parliaments from around the world, the African Union, to name but a few, have all paid their tribute to Mrs Madikizela-Mandela.

The South African government is honouring Winnie Madikizela-Mandela with an Official Memorial Service that took place this last Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 and a Special Official Funeral that will take place this coming Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2018. In line with this declaration, the National Flag is flying at half-mast at all flag stations countrywide and at South African diplomatic missions abroad. This will be done until her burial date on the evening of the 14 April 2018. The President has further declared 10 day of national mourning from the 03<sup>rd</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was 81 years when she passed on the 02<sup>nd</sup> April, 2018 (Easter Monday). She is now on her journey to her final resting place. I am sure you agree when I say that, we all say; MAY HER SOUL REST IN PEACE, HAMBA KAHLE MKHONTO, soldier of the people.

In concluding, I cannot thank the ESCTT enough for this special tribute. It is a historic moment in itself. The people of South Africa today will know that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are still with them in their loss and through the good times and the bad times.

On Tuesday, the ESC Chairman, Mr Kambon and Mrs Kambon came to the SAHC to sign the Book of Condolences shortly before the arrival of the Foreign Minister, His Excellency, the Senator Dennis Moses. Not only the diplomatic community and international organisations based in TT came to sign the Book, the people of TT came in their numbers to sign and we thank you most heartily for your solidarity.

Thank you.