

**SPEECH NOTES FOR KZN TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON
MEC WILLIES MCHUNU TO CELEBRATE NELSON MANDELA'S BIRTHDAY
ON SUNDAY 18TH JULY 2010 AT THE ETHEKWINI CITY HALL.**

Protocol Observed.

Today we are celebrating history. Today we are gathered here to celebrate 92 years of the life of a world icon, Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela, uMadiba. Coincidentally, in the latter part of this year we will be commemorating 150 years of the arrival of Indians in South Africa. The arrival of the Indians in South Africa heralded the early beginnings of protest action against colonial tendencies that undermined and belittled the indigenous people, including Indians.

Madiba and Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi are leaders who have demonstrated the spirit of nation building. As we celebrate Madiba's birthday, let us unite as people of South Africa. Let us contribute to nation building. Madiba himself is on record as having openly recognized and applauded the exemplary role of as a leader who demonstrated to what was to become the leadership of the mass democratic movement in South Africa, how to take up a heavily-armed colonial administration and win peacefully and without weapons.

The first president of the African National Congress Albert Luthuli was influenced by the strategies of Gandhi when he adopted non-violence (or satyagraha) as the method his movement would use to fight against injustice and oppression. Even Madiba himself, who later became impatient with being non-violent against a regime that was bent on killing and arresting peaceful protesters, he did not order the slaughter of human life in the pursuit of justice. Weapons of destruction were never directed at ending human life.

It was rather targeted at property as a way of making statements, of demanding attention and action towards freedom and justice for all. What subsequently happened to Madiba and a number of other leaders who served life sentences on Robben Island is history.

As we appreciate this history of icon Madiba who defied evil and emerged as victor, we feel a great responsibility. There is a sense that his success and victory are a great burden to us as people who are running the race of leading a people in pain. His success places a great burden precisely because of enormity of the challenge he faced, the ability to forgive and propagate reconstruction and renewal in the quality of race relations, human rights and democracy for all. We stand on the shoulders of a great man and the responsibility bestowed on us is therefore tremendous.

Together we can achieve what is expected of us. When we come together as government, business, professionals and experts in various fields, NGOs, community members, the media, when we come together to face a challenge as one, we become a mighty force that cannot be stopped. There is no amount of human suffering, poverty and joblessness that cannot be tackled, if we understand why Madiba fought against injustice.

Our country's state president Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Mhlanganyelwa Zuma walks tall today because South Africans did not fail to prove to the world that this country has the capacity to be superb hosts of a prestigious world tournament.

There has never been an air of optimism and renewal about South Africa since the release of the world icon Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of political parties in this country. The Fifa World Cup that we hosted so successfully was like a replay of the day Mandela and his comrades in the ANC leadership walked out of prison.

The whole world is acknowledging the fact that the opportunity to host the world cup was a direct gesture of gratitude to the sacrifices, struggles and triumphs of Madiba and the mass democratic movement which he courageously led, in promoting human rights, peace, development, and democracy in our sub-continent.

The media is doing a good job in reiterating the notion that South Africans can achieve anything. Fortunately, we have role models and exemplary leaders in the likes of Madiba and we feel deep in our hearts that we owe him a great deal.

The whole world is in agreement that such leaders must be honored. That is why the whole country is remembering this historic day of the birth of Madiba today. Today we are saying thank you Madiba by promoting community work, reaching out to the needy, as well as doing something constructive and useful, something that uplifts and benefits the underdog, the poor and the sick. The main motive is to thank Madiba for the outstanding input he made as a leader. We are in agreement that let everyday be a Madiba day. In other words, this spirit of goodwill and charitable work must remain with us as a way of life, let it become embedded in our culture and lifestyle.

It is important to note that that today we are celebrating not just a leader but a lawyer who sacrificed what could have been a successful career in pursuit of justice and freedom for his people. Therefore to the Global Network of Christian Indian Leaders, we say organizing celebrations like this one is an inspiration, and it is essential. It is about renewal and rejuvenation of our values and purposes as leaders. Indeed we agree without fail that only if we follow in the footsteps of such honorable and exemplary leaders will we be fit to be called sons and daughters of Madiba and Gandhi.

I thank you.