

Speech notes for KZN ANC Deputy Chairperson Comrade Willies Mchunu at the memorial service for late comrade Kader Asmal at KwaDukuza on 7 July 2011.

Programme Director;
The Asmal family;
Comrades and friends;
Fellow Citizens;

Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank the Asmal family for allowing us as the ANC in the Preva Khumalo Region to organize this service in memory of our comrade, brother, friend and leader, Professor Kader Asmal who passed on recently.

This memorial service comes after numerous others that have been held throughout the country since the demise of comrade Kader on the 22nd of June 2011. His departure also came immediately after we had just laid to rest Mama Albertina Sisulu, another one of our heroes and heroines who have made huge sacrifices by setting themselves the task of reconstructing our nation.

We know that much has been said so far, from the presidency at a national level down to provincial level. But as a Region where Comrade Kader was born, I find it appreciable that you decided to conduct this service here.

As this Region, you owe it to him to celebrate the life of an iconic champion of freedom who was inspired to join the ANC by its President, Inkosi Albert Luthuli whose home was also in this area.

Comrade Kader`s immeasurable contribution in the liberation of South Africa ensured that the ANC earned respect from the international community and some progressive foreign governments. During his years of exile in Europe, Comrade Kader who was professor in institutions of higher learning, continued to raise the ANC flag high - deepening the understanding of the international community about the ANC and the South African struggle for freedom.

After the unbanning of the ANC in the 1990s, Comrade Kader returned to South Africa to continue with the struggle for liberation which led to constitutional talks that paved the way for the country`s first democratic elections and the birth of the first democratic Parliament in 1994. He became one of the founder members of that Parliament and later served as a Cabinet Minister - first in Water Affairs and Forestry and later in Education.

The ANC salutes the sacrifices made by Comrade Kader, his family and his generation for what they endured for us to enjoy democracy and freedom. Without sacrifices made by Comrade Kader`s generation, we would still be experiencing colonial and apartheid oppression.

Comrades, in Kader Asmal we have lost a great African patriot who embraced a vision that proclaimed that a better human society based on human rights and equality is possible in our lifetime.

As we celebrate the life of comrade Kader, it is now left with us to think beyond our individual interests and realise that our actions as a collective translate into the type of society we desire to be.

Coincidentally, this month we celebrate the life of a world icon Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, uMadiba. As we appreciate the history of leaders like Madiba and Asmal who stood against oppression and emerged as victors, we feel a great responsibility.

Their successes place a great burden precisely because of the enormity of the challenge they faced, the ability to forgive and propagate reconstruction and renewal in the quality of race relations, human rights and democracy for all.

Therefore today we stand on the shoulders of great men and the responsibility bestowed on us is tremendous. But 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 suffering, poverty and unemployment that cannot be tackled if we understand why Madiba and Asmal fought against injustice.

As an organisation, we walk tall today because our people, including KwaDukuza, have just proven us correct when we say we have a capacity to govern at a local government level in this province. There has never been an air of optimism of this nature since the establishment of local government in this province.

As the provincial leadership of the ANC, we would like to acknowledge the fact that the response we received from the ground was a direct gesture of gratitude to the sacrifices, struggles and triumphs of our members who are leading the national democratic revolution.

I now take this opportunity to urge all of you here that when we celebrate the historic day of Madiba on the 18th of July, please say thanks to Madiba by promoting community work, reaching out to the needy, as well as doing something constructive and useful, something that uplifts the underdog, the poor, the sick and the destitute.

Do that in memory of comrade Asmal and all other fallen heroes and heroines who would have been part of this charitable work.

Once again, to the leadership of the Region and all who made this service possible, we say this was essential. It was about renewal and rejuvenation of our values as an organisation.

I thank you.