

TRIBUTE BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO CHUPU STANLEY MATHABATHA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF THE LATE  
PROFESSOR LILLIAN TENDANI MUOFHE.

14 May 2022

Programme Director;  
Members of the bereaved Muofhe family;  
Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;  
Members of the Executive Council;  
Members of parliament and our provincial Legislature;  
Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality;  
Our local Mayor and all other councillors present here today,  
Leadership of the ANC;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Friends from the Media;  
Comrades, friends and compatriots:

I greet you in the name of the people of Limpopo. Please receive condolences from the leadership and the entire government of Limpopo.

The sad news of the passing of Professor Lillian Tendani Muofhe have been received with heavy hearts by all of us.  
We have indeed lost a great daughter of the soil.  
Tshinada tsho edela!

Professor Muofhe was a great leader, a celebrated academic and a mentor to so many of our people.

We are indeed gathered here today to say our farewell to a mother and a social activist.

Before I could go any far with my remarks, I wish to take this opportunity to thank our President, Vho-Matamela Ramaphosa for approving our request to accord this giant a Special Provincial Official Funeral.

The President did not hesitate or require extra convincing to accord Prof Muofhe this befitting send off. This is indeed a befitting tribute to a deserving giant.

As we mourn, we remember to celebrate a life of a great human being, a social activist, a woman who dedicated her entire life to the search for knowledge.

Her academic credential speaks to her untamed search for knowledge and scientific solutions to our modern day challenges.

She believed and embraced the philosophy of academic excellence and life-long learning.

She pursued education not for self-decoration – she pursued education with understanding that, education is the most strategic tool for social development.

Her academic journey started from humble beginnings. In the 1950s, going beyond primary education was a luxury that many people did not care entertain, this was even more real for young women.

But this was not to be the case with the young Tendani, she was to go beyond just basic education, she proceeded to receive secondary education and later graduated with a Primary Teachers Diploma.

Even that was not to be the end of her academic journey, she later enrolled for a BA Degree with the then University of the North, which is today the University of Limpopo.

Programme Director

Like many of our activists of the time, the University of the North became her baptism for political consciousness.

By the time she joined the University of the Witwatersrand for her Master qualification, her outlook for the world was already shaped by politics at the University of the North.

She had accepted that the conditions of poverty and inequality of her people was a direct result of the oppressive policies of the government of the day.

She aligned herself with the progressive forces which were calling and campaigning for radical change in the country.

The most important thing for Muofhe was the knowledge that knowledge itself was a weapon for war.

She embraced the message from Steve Biko about the need to liberate the mind.

She understood that for as long as the mind is conquered, no real and mindful change can be achieved. It is for this reason that her journey for self-empowerment through education was a life-long journey.

Fellow Mourners

It was perhaps only logical that even when the time came for her to choose a life partner she chose someone who matched her appetite for education, the late Dr Tshifhiwa Isaac Muofhe.

Unfortunately, the apartheid government was not going to allow this great union to flourish without interruptions.

Her husband who was himself a fully-fledged political animal was arrested on wrongful charges of having killed a policeman. This was a carefully chosen charge because it carried a hefty penalty upon conviction.

The late Tshifhiwa Muofhe died mysteriously in police cells in the then notorious Matashe Prison.

This was supposed to have killed Prof Tendani Muofhe' spirit, but she soldiered on, more determined for justice, peace and friendship.

The brutalities of the regime should have made her to resort to hate and violence but she loved more. Her strong Christian beliefs prevailed above hate. She embraced even those who had positioned themselves as her enemies. She simply did not have a heart to hate.

Programme Directors

All the disruptions on her way did not deter her from pursuing her main love which was education, she was to later enrol at the Michigan State University for her PhD which she successfully completed.

Today we lay her to rest as Professor Lillian Tendani Muofhe because she earned that title.

Her love and pursuit for education should inspire all of us, particularly the younger generation.

Professor Muofhe will forever remain a true testament of ideals of the late Solomon Kalushi Mahlagu when he said and I quote:

"My blood shall nourish the tree which will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people I love them. Aluta Continua" close quote.

When our society was absolutely patriarchal, with women domination practiced and entrenched as a normal way of life by both white and black men, Prof. Muofhe said not in her name.

Indeed, we are here to celebrate the life well lived, and of course of an exemplary and distinguished individual.

Programme Director

Those of us who knew her closer, we have indeed lost a mentor and moral compass. For us, Prof Muofhe was reservoir of knowledge from which we drew words of counsel and wisdom.

This outstanding community leader is gone to join a galaxy of outstanding other leaders of her generation. The heroes and heroines of our struggle for liberation.

She is now with her beloved husband, Dr Tshifhiwa Muofhe. Today our world has lost one of its greatest daughter, but the heavens have gained a noble daughter.

As a Christian herself, she always knew that the end of life is death and then eternal life for those who belief. She is gone but she will never be forgotten.

Statues and monuments do not immortalise people, people immortalise themselves through their work and deeds. Prof Muofhe has immortalise her own name – her name will never die.

She joins the likes of Mama Charlotte Manny Maxeke, Mohumagadi Madinoge, Winnie Madikisela Mandela and many other heroines of the struggle for women emancipation.

Programme Director

Prof Muofhe spent the rest of her adult life fighting against injustices.

As government we salute Prof Muofhe as an outstanding patriot, a social activist and a life-long student.

We mourn her untimely passing and celebrate her life, which was a life well lived. We salute Prof Muofhe for her sterling contribution to our liberation struggle.

We pay tribute to this brave daughter of the soil, a martyr who has made unparalleled sacrifices in the service of her people and country.

Indeed, the democracy and freedom that we celebrate today did not come free. This democracy is paved on the blood, sweat and toil of many of the combatants, leaders such as the late Prof Muofhe.

Her death reminds us never to forget that this democracy and freedom was born out of the suffering, the service and sacrifices of many of our people.

During those toiling years, they said the struggle continue.

Fellow Mourners

Those who wish to forget this reality, do so simply because it serves their narrow ideological agenda to undermine the contribution of cadres such as Prof Muofhe to the democratic order we are enjoying today.

But for us who were in the struggle, we have always said that, our struggle is also a struggle against the memory of forgetting.

For as long as we live, martyrs and warriors such as Prof Muofhe will never be forgotten.

The success of our revolution required men and women of Prof Muofhe qualities. Our revolution demanded from us nothing less than honesty, integrity, commitment and absolute love for the people in whose names we are called revolutionaries.

As I always say, you can't be a revolutionary if you don't love the people. You can't be a revolutionary if you tolerate corruption or have a selective approach to fighting corruption, depending on who is involved. You can't be a revolutionary if you lack the attributes of honesty and personal integrity.

You cannot be a revolutionary if you have got a part-time commitment to our revolution.

Prof Muofhe was prepared to die for our freedom and democracy. She died fully engaged with the task of reconstruction and development of the post-apartheid South Africa.

We pay deserved tribute to this humble giant, outstanding daughter of the soil, and great patriot. She is a heroine of heroes and heroines who served our people to the best and the last of her energies.

Indeed the spear has fallen.

We shall pick up the spear and continue the noble fight to liberate our people from the clutches of socio-economic bondage.

In her name and honour, we shall continue the fight to:

- § Defeating the coronavirus pandemic;
- § Accelerate our economic recovery;
- § Fighting poverty and creating jobs;
- § Fighting the scourge of Gender Based Violence;
- § Fighting corruption and mismanagement; and,
- § Building the South Africa we all want.

May the soul of Professor Lillian Tendani Muofhe rest in peace!

Nda!  
Inkomu!  
Kea Leboga!  
I thank you.