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2011 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

OF THE IFP WOMEN'S BRIGADE

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THE WOMEN'S BRIGADE ~ CUSTODIANS OF THE IFP'S
ONE VISION, ONE MISSION, ONE PARTY

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY
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Emandleni-Matleng: 26 March 2011

On the 4th of September 2010, thousands upon thousands of IFP supporters gathered in Durban and marched through the streets, under the slogan 'One Vision, One Mission, One IFP'. It ignited a fire of hope within our Party, for we had been walking a dark road of treachery and discord for more than a year, and the illusion of defeat was steadily being engineered. The march was a triumph, not only because it was peaceful, but because it was a show of strength and unity when the Party needed it most. That march was organized by the IFP Women's Brigade.

I am proud to rise as the leader of the IFP and address the Women's Brigade today at this, 1st National Conference. I am proud because our women have proven themselves to be the custodians of the IFP's vision, mission and unity. We

meet under this theme, because it is the slogan developed by the women of the IFP to express your passion for your Party and your future. Through the march, you told me that the IFP Women's Brigade is not dead in the water. It is not defeated in spirit; but impassioned by the actions of those who dared to threaten the IFP.

On the day of the march, the then Chairperson of the Women's Brigade, Ms Thembi Nzuza, was not present, which spoke volumes about her commitment

to the Party. But the march was very capably led by Mrs kaMadlopa-Mthethwa, who spoke eloquently and truthfully about the IFP. There have been so many lies spread about our Party and our leadership, and the time had come for the IFP Women's Brigade to definitively refute the lies and expose the propaganda for what it was.

I have often said that our Women's Brigade is the backbone of the IFP. But I feel that today I need to explain what I mean by that. Not only would the IFP not exist without you, but we would be incapable of standing. Our women have always taken a stand at the most critical moments in our Party's history and our country's history. Because of our strong backbone of women, the IFP has been able to disrupt South Africa's slide towards political hegemony, corruption, misrule and a one-party state. We need our backbone, because South Africa needs the IFP.

Foremost among the many lies that have been told about the IFP since the last general election in 2009, is the vicious lie that our leadership somehow persecuted Ms Zanele kaMagwaza-Msibi. Let us put that lie to rest once and for all. Our former National Chairperson was given the position of Mayor of Zululand by the IFP because we believed she could carry out the IFP's directive of service delivery in that municipality. She was deployed by the Party and held that position at the behest of the Party. She was accountable to our leadership. Nothing she did in terms of service delivery was done in her individual capacity.

Because she fulfilled the IFP's mandate in the Zululand Municipality, the Party chose to promote her to the KwaZulu Natal Legislature, which is a higher level of government. But when we did this, some mischief-makers began spreading the lie that she had been demoted by the Party and that somehow we were persecuting and punishing her.

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But more than that she had after all been the Party's candidate for the position of Premier for the Province of KwaZulu Natal. I do not know how else the

Party could have shown confidence in her as a person and in the leadership of our women. Her proposal was our tribute to womanhood. bde B veon

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Even the ANC Women's League took up this lie. They disrupted a meeting of the Legislature to sing â\200\234Zanele is oursâ\200\235 and â\200\234What kind of a man is afraid of a

woman?â\200\235 The ANC's Minister of Human Settlements, Mr Tokyo Sexwale, publicly called on our National Chairperson to abandon the IFP because of its

alleged persecution of women, and join the ANC.

It is outrageous that people believed this lie, when the IFP has such an impeccable track record of empowering women in every sphere. Even at the negotiating table when all parties gathered to forge our new democratic dispensation, the IFPâ\200\231s delegation comprised more women than any other delegation. We have always believed that women are equal citizens and must have equal decision-making power.

So this story about us persecuting one of our women was despicable. | challenge anyone, even now, to point to any way in which we persecuted Ms kaMagwaza-Msibi. Did we persecute her when we recommended her as our premier candidate in the 2009 election? The IFP received less support than ever before when she was our candidate, which implies that the electorate rejected her. But we still supported her.

Did we persecute her when we promoted her to the Legislature? Or did we persecute her when we gave her the benefit of the doubt while she lied through her teeth for almost two years about having nothing to do with â\200\234The Friends of VZâ\200\235 who set out to destroy this Party? Ms kaMagwaza-Msibi misled us. She deceived us. She cheated us. This whole saga caused such chaos and confusion that we could not even meet as a Conference or as a Women's Brigade Conference since the 2009 elections.

When | spoke at the elective conference of the IFP Women'â\200\231s Brigade in KwaZulu Natal in June last year, we asked ourselves why the malcontents who called themselves â\200\234The Friends of VZ" continued to agitate for our former

National Chairperson to become the President, when she had made it clear that she would not stand for nomination for the presidency. At the time, we could only speculate and the tensions of suspicion ran high.

We were locked in this war of suspicion for more than four months before Ms kaMagwaza-Msibi finally painted herself into a corner and was forced to

reveal her hand. Qo v ccovieha. Yoo el baal Ut
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The disciplinary enquiry scheduled for the end of October last year would

have brought Ms kaMagwaza-Msibi face to face with her deception and she would have had to account to the leadership in the National Council about why she had done so much damage to our Party while claiming to be innocent - no, claiming to be persecuted. She balked at the idea of facing her demons and took the IFP to court to prevent us from holding the enquiry.

In her court papers, she pursued the stale lie that the leadership of our Party was persecuting her, and tried to strengthen her case by claiming that as a leadership we were illegitimate. She begged the court to force us to hold an elective conference, but first to make sure that we would not expel her before then. And finally she came clean and admitted that she wanted to become the President of the IFP.

How could anyone who had wreaked such havoc in our Party, who - through her supporters â\200\224 had disrupted meetings, dragged our name through the mud, trampled our Constitution, besmirched our legacy, lied to the electorate, lied to the media, lied to our members, and allowed people to die â\200\224 how could such a person dare set their sights on leading this Party? Clearly Ms kaMagwaza-Msibi had made up her mind that she would either take the reins of the IFP, or take it down. That is how little she cared for the IFP.

Despite her protestations that her heart belonged to the IFP and she would never leave us, she knew that the National Freedom Party had already been registered with the IEC, and she left within two weeks of telling that Jie for the last time. But it is not only her that deceived you. Her supporters misled you

and pretended to speak on your behalf. Ms Bongekile Gwala alias Bongekile Mtshali and Ms Angel Mthembu were expelled from the Party for giving themselves false titles as leaders of the Women's Brigade and making false statements to the media at Dalton Hostel in eThekweni. These were two among many whom the IFP was forced to expel or discipline since April 2009.

We have lost members to this treachery. Some were honestly misled; others willingly jumped ship because a lot of promises were made of high positions, jobs and money. We know now that the money came from some leaders in the ANC, who were bankrolling the destruction of their old opponent; the IFP. I approached both President Zuma and Deputy President Motlanthe to sort this out and avoid an escalation of old tensions between the ANC and IFP. But they chose to do nothing.

I then raised the issue in our national Parliament in February this year, tabling extensive evidence of the ANC's involvement in the VZ saga. I regret that the ANC continued to deny it, rather than stop it. The nexus between the ANC and the NFP is by now so entrenched that a vote for the NFP is the same as a vote for the ANC. They are two sides of the same coin.

When the NFP was finally launched, we lost more members and councillors. Some defected to the NFP, but some bypassed this small fish and went straight to the ANC. To be honest, many of the councillors who left had done very little for their constituencies and they were not a great loss to the IFP. But this loss of members took a toll on the IFP's image in the eyes of the electorate, and we will need to work hard and smart to replace the propaganda with the truth about the IFP.

Fortunately, the truth about the IFP is not some wishy-washy statement of goals and obscure policies. The truth about the IFP, the IFP's legacy, has been built over 35 years. It is a legacy of integrity, a legacy of service delivery and a legacy of which we all may be proud. When we campaign for the IFP in our areas it is not difficult for us to find a reason why people should vote for the IFP. There are endless examples of good governance and effective

leadership to point to. The strength of our Women's Brigade is but one good reason to vote IFP.

Our Women's Brigade showed its strength in the midst of our trials by refusing to allow despair to settle over you. In December last year, despite the fact that we could not hold our Women's Brigade Conference, the Women's Brigade held its annual exhibition, as you have been doing since inception. In August last year, in celebration of national Women's Month, the Women's Brigade in the Amajuba District organized a prayer meeting, which I had the privilege to address. There are many more examples of the Women's Brigade not giving

up.

Nevertheless, it pains me that the Women's Brigade was affected by the ructions in our Party and that it finds itself in a weaker state now than it was several years ago. It pains me because we need the strength of our Women's Brigade now more than ever. We are facing Local Government Elections on

the 18th of May and the battle is on for control of our municipalities. There is

no question that our opponents are using everything at their disposal to take power away from the IFP. We need to ensure that we do not lose more support. Indeed, we need to set our hearts on growing support and increasing our votes.

We were all disappointed by the results of the 2009 general election. I will not sweep that disappointment under the carpet. But I ask you to consider it as a challenge to the IFP Women's Brigade to work harder for this election and to be more vigilant against electoral fraud. We know that in every election since 1994 the ruling Party has engaged in fraud, particularly by registering voters in areas in which they do not live in order to sway the vote towards the ANC. We know about food parcels for votes, and even job offers for votes. We know our opponents play dirty.

But there is no use in us crying once the milk has been spilt. We need to do everything in our power to ensure that it doesn't happen in this election. We need to make sure that we are not cheated on the 18th of May. To do this, we

need members of the IFP Women's Brigade to volunteer to become Party Agents for the coming elections. We will train you in what this entails and teach you what to look out for. We must be vigilant, especially when it comes to the Special Vote.

I have voiced my concerns about the Special Vote before, for we have seen it abused in previous elections. The Special Vote enables ailing people, pregnant women, the disabled and the elderly to cast their vote before election day. In this election, the Special Vote will extend to anyone who cannot go to their polling station on voting day, for whatever reason. This leaves the Special Vote open to extensive fraud.

I urge you to begin immediately to look for people who would qualify for the Special Vote and assist them to register to use it. Registration will open on the 15th of April and close again on the 30th of May.

I now wish to speak to you very earnestly about the election that will take place within this Conference. Over this weekend, you will choose your leaders and those who will represent the IFP in the coming term. I urge you to choose wisely and carefully. Being a leader is not about ambition or the desire to be

seen and applauded. It's about a heart to serve and a desire to see people fed

and clothed, educated and living in dignity. Choose leaders who will put the interests of the Party and the people before their own interests, for service is not for the ambitious or the conceited.

I must confess to you that during the leadership of this brigade by both Mrs Zwane and Mrs Thembi Nzuza, the Women's Brigade deteriorated and they have both left it at its lowest ebb. It is not surprising that both of them decided to join the ANC. Before that we had been fortunate in having dedicated and

commitment as Chairpersons of this Women's Brigade. Fes Qadyyy weaate
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It is a pity that we have seen such bad examples of Leadership since the 2009 election. But let us take it as a warning for this elective conference.

When we last met in October 2008 for the Women's Brigade Conference, the then Chairperson Ms Thembi Nzuza spoke in definitive terms saying, "What we have today is a Government immersed in corruption." I was sorry to see Ms Nzuza leave the IFP recently to join the very Party that runs that Government, because her willingness to wade into the pool of corruption suggests that her own values have been compromised somewhere along the way. Or that she was pretending all along that she abhorred corruption in government. She has shown herself to be a political chameleon. At the issue

of the changing of the Mangosuthu Highway in Umlazi for which her strong

opposition to this agenda, earned her the admiration of so many people.

When asked about it now that she has defected to the ANC she is now singing a different song. She says that it is up to the ANC to decide to do whatever they decide on the changing of the road. She shows that she is not

a principled individual but a weathercock. People wonder whether your

We poured a lot of money and effort into training Ms Nzuza, even sending her to Sweden on a political education programme. But in the end, I would far rather work with people who are committed and available, than people who are double-minded - regardless of how well they are trained. Ms Nzuza's double-mindedness did some damage to the reputation of the Women's Brigade. People wondered whether your organization was worth its salt, if it was led by an unprincipled individual like her.

But I thank God that this structure is bigger than a single person or a single personality. We have survived the treachery of our former National Chairperson, and we have survived the indecision of our former Women's Brigade Chairperson, because the mission and vision of the IFP supersedes the ambition of individual members.

Our vision needs to be unshakable, because the needs of the people we serve are vast and overwhelming. The real issues we face are greater than who said what to whom, who is a VZ, and what the newspapers wrote about

