

FUNERAL OF MRS NOKUKHANYA LUTULI
FUNERAL ORATION
BY MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI, MP
GROUTVILLE - DECEMBER 22, 1996

We are gathered today, summoned here together by death and sorrow, to mourn the departure of a dear friend from among us. As we join our respective sorrows in mourning, we suddenly succumb to an overwhelming flow of memories and to the deep emotions which such memories evoke. However, for as long as we retain the memories of the great deeds of those who led us with the example of their valour and wisdom, the death of those we love will not succeed in taking them

completely away from us.

As long as our memories remain capable of producing in us a flow of emotions and a great compassion for the lives of those who are no longer, we can rise above our sorrow, rejoicing in the realisation that the dialogue with Mrs Nokukhanya Lutuli as well as with her husband Chief Albert Lutuli has not been completely broken by their death, but has been transmogrified into the more intimate venue of our souls. Because of our memories and emotions they remain with us ever-present until the day of the final Resurrection. As we keep alive our memories and with them the presence amongst us of those who have passed away, we indeed are offered by the Lord the most generous gift of them all, which is that of participating in a very small way in the overwhelming mystery of the Resurrection.

As I 'look back through many, many years of my association and friendship with the Lutuli family,

I recognise that Chief Albert Lutuli was not only my leader but he was my mentor. The death of his

wife brings back the memory of the many hours I spent with him in long conversations in the
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house, when he was banned, and I visited him and his wife here in Groutville.

Often Chief Albert Lutuli would visit me in my own house in KwaPindangene, brought there at
night

by the late Dr Wilson Conco for clandestine meetings in which throughout the night we held
the

discussions which formed our political vision for the future of South Africa. Those were my
formative years, as we were in the thick of the struggle for liberation and very much in ne
ed of the

type of wisdom that both Mrs Nokukhanya Lutuli and her husband would generously impart to m
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and others. I remember my late cousin, King Cyprian Bhekuzulu ka Solomon, once warning me t
hat

he had been informed through official channels that I had often been seen going to the Lutu
li' house

and I was for that reason under surveillance by the Security Branch. That type of intimidat
ion did

not stop me and I even conveyed to the late King that if I, as an Inkosi, were doing wrong
in visiting

the Lutuli family, the matter should have been reported to the Magisfrate in Mashlabatini f
or me to

deal with, and account to him for my actions, for this was not a matter that should have co
ncerned

or been reported to a King.

Very often I went to Groutville with Prince Gideon, who was a young man at the time, workin
g as

a clerk in the hospital at Eshowe. I used to pick him up in my car, which at times I would
leave in

Stanger so that an Indian friend could take me to Chief Lituli's place, where Chief Lituli
insisted that

we should walk and talk outside, pointing to the telephone which was bugged. During all the
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meetings, Mrs Lituli was there, not only extending to us her exquisite hospitality but most
importantly giving to all of us with her presence and her great serenity the strength requi
red to

endure the intimidations to which we were subjected.

There were occasions when Chief Albert Lutuli would come to KwaPhingandene; he would sometimes ask me in my official capacity as uNdunankulu ka Zulu, to arrange an audience for him with King Cyprian; he sometimes just visited me; escorted by the late Dr Wilson Conco and would

park his car in the garage and I would leave mine outside to disguise his presence there.

Chief Albert Lutuli and Mrs Lutuli would rest during the day and in the evening we would sit up and

talk. I valued those moments spend with them in my home and in theirs as they enriched my life

during my formative years at a time of critical decisions. I first met Chief Albert Lutuli as a young boy when I was living in the Palace where I grew up and where my uncle, Prince Mshiyeni was acting as regent during the interregnum. He used to come up with amaKhosi to attend the various

Imbizos called in those years.

When I was rusticated from Fort Hare and worked in Durban as a clerk, every afternoon I stopped at Lakhani Chambers where the ANC had offices and I would invariably find Chief Albert Lutuli there. I also attended the meetings he addressed in Nichol Square and other venues. During this stage | became extremely close to him. I remember consulting him when my later mother, Princess Constance Magogo Mantithi Sibilile Ngangezinye ka Dinuzulu insisted I should return instead of doing my articles as a lawyer. Chief Lutuli was among the ANC leaders who, along with Walter Sisulu, advised me to go back to my Clan. They told me that I should go and take up my position of Inkosi of the Buthelezi Clan because they saw that being more important for the struggle than

anything else I could do at the time. They recognised that, being my position the most senior in the hierarchy of amaKhosi, it was essential for the struggle that I filled it. I accepted the responsibility

cast upon me and the advice of Chief Lutuli and abandoned my legal studies.

There are things of those years which I shall never forget. In those years we were confronted by dramatic developments, such as the Bantu Authorities Act which the government wanted us to accept, and many other types of pressures and intimidations from Pretoria. I often came to seek advice from Chief Lutuli who would invariably say that he trusted my own manhood and the decision which in the end I would make. In this way I think he groomed me indirectly to be self-reliant when the time came for the crucial decisions that I have had to make throughout my life. At first, I was very disappointed when he left me on my own to make decisions. In retrospect, it was a wonderful way in which he taught me to be self-reliant. It was also a wonderful way of indirectly advising me, for since then and throughout my life I have always taken decisions also thinking how

Chief Albert Lutuli would have acted in my place.

During all the discussions Chief Albert Lutuli and I had, Mrs Lutuli was there actively participating in them. I will never forget her very solid contributions. In her own right, she helped in our discussions and contributed in them probably because strong of her own background, as she also came from ubukhosi of the Lutuli Clan and had in her background the Royal House of Bhengu. I especially remember that even during the formation of Inkatha, it was she, Mrs Lutuli, who gave me much of her wisdom. Many people in KwaZulu Natal will also remember occasions when she and I were together. One such occasion was when Inkatha held a commemoration ceremony at

Groutville in memory of the late Chief Albert Lutuli.

I recall other important events when both Mrs Lutuli and I had to carry together the responsibility of the relevant decisions. At the time of the death of her husband, during his burial I had the honour to deliver the oration on behalf of Black South Africa and at the request of the ANC . Also during the preparation for the unveiling of Chief Albert Lutuli's tombstone I was again asked by the Lutuli

Memorial Foundation Chairman, Dr Wilson Conco, to assist Mrs. Lutuli. I remember the visit that

I paid to Maseru accompanying Mrs Lutuli at her request, when she went to Maseru to receive the

OAU posthumous award from King Moshoeshoe II. On that occasion, I was asked by her to express

her thanks, and the thanks of her family and Black South Africa.

I have therefore come today to pay tribute not only just to her but to both of them because they are one person in theological terms, as they became one with God when they married. She was the firm column of strength, compassion and wisdom on which Chief Albert Lutuli relied, and the many achievements and contributions which honour her husband's memory are indeed rightfully also her own. Her strength of character and moral courage was a source of strength to her husband during the treason trial, and the many years when he was confined to Groutville. No-one could pay tribute to one of the two spouses without equally praising the other, and for this reason I feel that when I

recollect the memory of Chief Albert Lutuli I am also referring to that of his beloved wife .

This is a very unique occasion which I can never forget for what remains of my own life. I have come to pay tribute to an important part of my political family. However, given my association and

friendship with the Lutuli family, I feel that they are part of my own family. I recognise that I literally grew up with their children. When I went to Adams College in 1944, the elder son was there, Hugh Lutuli, the son of Chief Lutuli, and in later years, he was joined by his daughter, Albertina, the present Dr Albertina Lutuli. Whenever I went abroad, I would always get in touch with Atlanta where their daughter was with her husband Thulani Geabashe, and they would in fact entertain us.

Therefore, I thank Dr Albertina Lutuli for her telephone call when she informed me of her mother's death and told me that they, as a family, would really like me to be present today. I was very touched and grateful when she said that the family would welcome my presence, because feel that this is also my own family and could not avoid paying this tribute to one of the most important personalities in my own life. I thank God for her life and the life of her husband. While the whole of South Africa is grateful for their major contribution in the liberation struggle, I must render a very special thank to God for the fact that they both made such a major contribution in my political and personal upbringing.

Both of them were devout Christians. In the words of the Lord in John Chapter 11 when his friend Lazarus died: "I am the Resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." I sincerely believe therefore they will look after us where they are and their presence and memory will continue to guide us. May she rest in peace.

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