

**Speech by Minister Jeff Radebe, Minister of Energy, Member of the ANC NEC, SACP CEC and Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Centenaries of Mama Sisulu and President Mandela, on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mama Sisulu's birthday, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018, Soweto**

Church leaders

The Sisulu Family

Ministers and deputy Ministers Present here today

The ANC Deputy Secretary General: Hon. Jessie Duarte,

The ANC Women's League Stalwart: Ms Sophia De Bruyn

The Premier of Gauteng: Mr David Makhura

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me immense pleasure to be here today, on this historic occasion as we celebrate what would have been the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mama Sisulu had she been with us here today. She may not be with us in flesh but her heroic spirit is very much alive here today to inspire us to continue the path of the struggle for a better society for all.

Mama Sisulu was not just the wife of one of our leading struggle icon, Walter Sisulu, but was in her own right an activist for the total liberation of our people from the yoke of apartheid and the

concurrent emancipation of women as integral right to our political freedom and democracy.

The onset of colonialism was met by the fierce battles between the African kingdoms on the one hand and the invading colonial forces on the other, resulting in the triumph of the colonial powers. The defeat of African kingdoms was sealed with the defeat of the Bhambatha Rebellion at the beginning of the last century.

It was this defeat that that inspired Pixely Ka Isaka Seme to call for the unity of the African kingdoms. His contention was that part of the reason for their defeat, was that they were not united. Consequently the ANC was formed in 1912, and organisation through which Mama Sisulu was to wage a relentless struggle for political freedom and the emancipation of women.

Today is an important occasion to celebrate Mama Sisulu not only through the tail end of her life in a democratic society, but also remembering the travails she endured during the dark days of apartheid. When we say Mama Sisulu is a woman of fortitude, it is precisely because of the hardships that she endured to raise her voice against the apartheid tyranny.

Today is a beautiful occasion, because we are here in celebratory mood, to commemorate her legacy and gleaning from it the lessons that must inform our own roles in the relentless struggle towards a better society for all.

Our democracy has made important strides on women emancipation. But like all other areas of socio-economic transformation,, the backlogs still reflect the patterns of apartheid social, political and economic engineering.

Precisely for this reason that we still need women of fortitude to emulate Mama Sisulu, who saw a possibility for change against a tyrannical system that gave no hope at all. Today is an occasion for our youth, both male and female, to learn from the lifelong stewardship of Mama Sisulu and her generation who relentlessly fought for our freedom and democracy.

It is the duty of the youth to learn more about Mama Sisulu and possibly consider her historic role as part of their academic works, be it essays, thesis or dissertations. In this regard I was inspired by one young man, Dr Siphiso Mahala, who has recently qualified on his Phd, who wrote academic and playwright work on the role of Can Themba. The same can be done on Mama Sisulu and many other women of fortitude who fought for a better society for all. We must use the arts to engrave in the minds of the youth and posterity the importance of history and its bearing on current conditions.

We are here today because of the historic role of Mama Sisulu and her generation of valiant fighters. It is an important occasion because today we emphasis the point that we must know where we come from

to better understand where we are today and where we envisage to be tomorrow.

Today is a beautiful day because without distorting history on the political adversity that occasioned her struggle for freedom and democracy, Mama Sisulu succeeded in endearing herself to all our people as the pinnacle of virtue that unites our country. In Mama Sisulu is a reminder that in spite of all our differences we are one nation and one people.

Mama Sisulu's dedication to the health profession analogously gave us the lesson that without we cannot bandage the wound without first duly treating it for permanent healing. In as much as she was concerned about the health of children, like her contemporary Nelson Mandela, she was also concerned about the socio-economic health of our nation. It is to her tribute that we call on all young women to emulate her as women of fortitude.

Women of fortitude, taking cue from Mama Sisulu's lived experience, are women who do not despair at the face of enormous challenges. Imbokodo are women who marched to the Union Building in 1956 at the face of apartheid brutal repression. Women of fortitude, Imbokodo, are women who must fearlessly fight for the radical socio-economic transformation of our country.

Through the prism of Mama Sisulu's lived experience, women of fortitude must see solutions on the various challenges facing our

people and very importantly provide leadership towards their resolution. We must urge all our people not just to amplify the challenges we face but equally the solutions that must be taken by all and sundry to make South Africa a better country than it was in 1994.

Women of fortitude are not armchair critics but a people who get their strapped boots dirty in the mud at work to build a better society. It is on the basis of such solution oriented women that we can declare without any fear of self-contradiction that “working together we can do more!”

I did not take this brief moment I have to recount the many social and economic challenges we face because you know them very well. Only look down into your hearts and discover the Mama Sisulu in you and be the women of fortitude that our country so much needs.

I thank you!