

Address by President Jacob Zuma, at the James Sebe Moroka Lecture, Northwest Province 22 August 2012

ANC provincial chairperson Comrade Supra Mahumapelo,  
ANC national chairperson Comrade Baleka Mbete and all ANC Officials,  
NEC members and provincial leadership,  
Leadership of the Tripartite Alliance;  
The Moroka Family;  
Esteemed guests;  
Dumelang!

We have gathered this afternoon, to reflect on the life and times of the seventh President-General of the African National Congress, Dr James Sebe Moroka, who led our organisation from December 1949 to 1952. Like all centenary lectures, the reflection on the life of one ANC President is in essence a review of the period during which they lived and led the ANC.

The Moroka presidency in particular was an eventful moment in the life of the ANC because that was when the militant Programme of Action was adopted which changed the character and operations of the movement. This was the phase that introduced activism and mass protests in the organisation, turning the ANC into a militant organisation, moving away from using deputations as a key strategy of engaging the enemy.

Before getting into the subject of the day, I would like to begin by paying tribute to a highly regarded leader in our continent, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, who sadly passed on yesterday after an illness.

His untimely death has robbed us of wisdom and leadership in many challenges that affect our continent. He conceptualised and led many AU programmes, and his passing is an immense loss for the continent.

It is a tragic year for the African Union, as we have lost three Heads of State in one year.

We also lost President Bingu waMutharika of Malawi and President Atta Mills of Ghana.

We extend our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Ethiopia and all our colleagues in the African Union.

Comrades, we also meet during the national period of mourning in our own country, in memory of the 44 compatriots who died violently in Marikana in Rustenburg between the 10th and the 26th of August.

We extend our deepest condolences to their families, and I will return to this point later.

Comrades and friends,

Dr James Moroka, the grandson of Kgosi Moroka of the Barolong in Thaba Nchu was born on 16 March 1892 in Thaba Nchu.

He was one of the early black South Africans to obtain a medical degree in South Africa, which he obtained in 1917.

After working briefly in England, he returned to South Africa in 1918, during the time of the devastating influenza epidemic and opened his first practice.

He was exceptional in providing medical care for his community, serving both black and white patients diligently. Sadly, he had to use separate entrances for his black and white patients.

It is reported that many of his white patients reportedly consulted him secretly and scratched the name of the doctor on their medicine bottles due to their prejudice.

Dr Moroka was so committed to his work that in 1923, he applied to the native commissioner for permission to extend his yard to erect a building to provide lodging for his patients who travelled long distances.

In some instances poor black patients did not even pay for consultations.

Dr Moroka also helped many young people financially, including two Afrikaner students, who qualified as medical doctors.

During the harsh times of limited land purchase by black people after 1913, Dr Moroka was one of the privileged few who were able to buy land considerably, gratifying his pastime of farming.

On family life, Dr Moroka first married Ms Princess Maggy Fenyang, who sadly passed away and later married Ms Susan Motshumi, with whom they were blessed with 10 children.

President Moroka began his political activism through joining the All African Convention, which was led by Dr AB Xuma and DDT Jabavu.

The AAC was formed to oppose the Hertzog Bills which were instituted to restrict land to Africans and remove Cape Coloured voters from the voter's roll.

His leadership skills stood out and he was elected treasurer of the AAC.

He later joined the Native Representative Council, a structure that was created in terms of the Bills, and the strategy was to expose it from within.

He was active in opposing government within the Native Representative Council around 1946, and ultimately the structure collapsed.

Dr Moroka had joined the ANC in 1942 and had dual membership of the organisation and the All African Convention.

His key contribution to the ANC at this time was membership of the Atlantic Charter Committee of the ANC which drew up the landmark African Claims document.

The committee also produced a Bill of Rights, one of the key achievements for the ANC. The movement produced a Bill of Rights even before that of the United Nations.

At this time, the ANC Youth League, which was formed in 1944, was promoting a change in strategy and tactics in 1948 after the coming into power of the National Party. The racist apartheid regime required a militant response. The Programme of Action was adopted at the 1949 conference.

Since then President AB Xuma did not appear willing to support the Programme of Action, youth leaders at the time, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, lobbied and succeeded to get Dr Moroka elected as President of the ANC in December 1949.

Dr. Moroka willingly supported the programme. He took part in the planning of the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and in the execution of the campaign itself.

He was a member of the Council of Action which included Oliver Tambo which was appointed in February 1950 to drive the implementation of the programme.

The Joint Planning Council called on the government to repeal the Suppression of Communism Act, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Representation of Voters Act, the Bantu Authorities Act, the pass laws and the stock limitation laws, and gave a deadline of 29 February 1952.

The then Prime Minister Malan, to whom they wrote, refused to comply and the Defiance Campaign went ahead in June that year.

On 30 July, 1952, 21 leaders of the ANC were arrested under the Suppression of Communism Act, including Dr Moroka, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, JB Marks, Dadoo, and Ahmed Kathrada.

Dr Moroka made the rest of the ANC leadership unhappy when he organized a separate defence for himself, as opposed to the ANC decision that all those arrested would make a common stand.

The accused were found guilty and were sentenced to nine months imprisonment suspended for two years.

By October 1952 more than 8000 volunteers had been arrested. At the 1952 conference, President Moroka was replaced as President by Chief Albert Luthuli.

When he left, the ANC membership had grown from around 7 000 to over 100 000 after the Defiance Campaign.

The rise of collective leadership also took shape under President Moroka's stewardship.

As a result, when many of the ANC leaders were banned in the early 1950s, another leadership collective emerged which steered the movement to the next level.

President Moroka also worked with the Communist Party and the South African Indian Congress, promoting Alliance politics.

In April this year, Dr James Sebe Moroka was awarded with the Order of Luthuli in Gold for his contribution to the struggle for freedom.

Comrades and Esteemed guests;

President Moroka and his peers fought for freedom, democracy and prosperity.

Incidentally we are acknowledging his contribution here in the North West, during a period of mourning.

The strike by workers at the Lonmin mine for better wages and working conditions has sadly been fraught with violence and the loss of 44 lives, ten people between the 10th and 12th of August and 34 on the 16th of the month.

A few months ago, workers at Impala Platinum in this area also engaged in strike action, which was also far from peaceful.

The tragic loss of life has caused untold pain to the families and the nation at large. We were shocked and deeply saddened by all the incidents and all the deaths of mineworkers, security guards and two police officials over a period of a week.

The life of every South African is important.

As you would be aware, we declared a week of mourning so that we can reflect and recommit ourselves to a violence-free society and the sanctity of human life.

An Inter-Ministerial committee was established and is assisting the families with the identification of relatives who have passed away and with preparations for funerals. I visited the area on the 17th and returned earlier today.

We are doing everything possible to assist families as almost all of them are very poor.

We have said that this is not a week to apportion blame or for finger-pointing. It is a week of unity as we come together as a nation to support the grieving families from all sides.

When I went to Marikana the first time when the incident had just happened, I met with the police and also met some of the injured miners in hospital.

Earlier today I again visited Marikana and obtained a report from the striking workers. I have now listened all sides.

But I will not prejudge the incidents.

The judicial commission of inquiry that we are in the process of establishing will uncover the truth about what happened in Marikana. It must tell us how the industrial dispute degenerated into such a tragedy.

We should be able to announce members of the Commission and other information before the end of the week.

Comrades and friends,

Through this tragedy we are also called upon to reflect on the rights that we enjoy that are enshrined in the Constitution and how we exercise them.

We have a Constitution with a Bill of Rights, which incorporates labour rights as well as freedom of association and expression.

Clause 17 of the Constitution of the Republic states as follows: "Everyone has the right, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions".

Clause 23 states that everyone has the right to fair labour practices. Every worker has the right -

- \* to form and join a trade union;
- \* to participate in the activities and programmes of a trade union; and
- \* to strike.

The ANC fought for these rights with our people over many decades. They should be exercised orderly and peacefully, without violence.

It is well understood that mine workers operate under difficult and risky conditions underground.

Many still live in unacceptable conditions in hostels of compounds where they share sleeping quarters and ablution facilities, as it used to happen during the period of colonial oppression and apartheid.

They remain amongst the poorest in our communities.

However, we need to look at how working with labour and business, we can make industrial action in this sector, over working conditions and conditions of service, to take place within the confines of the law.

We have seen too many violent strikes in recent years which is unnecessary as there is enough legal instruments that workers and employers can use to resolve disputes. Comrades

The Marikana tragedy has also reminded us of our responsibility of the ANC government to monitor the contribution of the mining sector to building democracy with a social content through agreed prescripts such as the Mining Charter.

Given that this industry is the backbone of our economy and has a long, bright future, we have to ensure that its growth also benefits workers and communities it operates in.

In terms of the Mining Charter, all mining companies are required to implement measures to improve the standard of housing and living conditions of mine workers.

They are supposed to do the following;

- \* to convert or upgrade hostels into family units;
- \* to attain the occupancy rate of one person per room; and
- \* to facilitate home ownership options for mine workers by the year 2014.

From 2010, we directed that every mining company must report annually on levels of compliance with the Mining Charter. The Department of Mineral Resources sends inspectors to verify the information.

Last year the ANC government conducted audits on compliance with the Mining Charter for all platinum mines in the North West region. In terms of the 2012 score card, the improvements of hostels to attain the one person per room upgrade and into family units is only 50%.

Some companies have plans in place and have achieved some of the targets such as housing for employees.

We commend those companies that are investing in improving the living conditions of employees and will continue to monitor progress in this regard.

At the same time, others are moving slowly on this question.

One company has a hostel block accommodating 166 employees, who have to share four toilets and four showers amongst them.

We urge the industry to take this matter seriously. Mine owners are aware that sanctions for non-compliance with the Charter include the cancellation of mining rights or licences.

We want to believe that we share with the business community, the goal of building a prosperous society and a better life for all. We must continue to work together towards this end.

We value the contribution of the mining sector to the economy. By 2009, the mining industry contributed more than 30% to the country's total export revenue.

It employed two point nine percent of the country's economically active population.

The mining assets in South Africa are currently valued at two point five trillion US dollars, excluding energy commodities such as coal and uranium.

Estimates suggest that our mineral resources are expected to be exploitable for over a century to come.

It is for this reason that the ANC will discuss mining at length at the national conference in December, to see how we can derive greater benefit from the sector.

Comrades and friends,

Let me reiterate that I am raising all these issues related to Marikana and the exercise of worker rights here because we are commemorating an ANC President whose presidency was characterised by the transformation of the ANC into a very militant organisation.

What we are seeing in our country is a continuation of a strong culture of freedom of expression which was nurtured and developed by the ANC. We just need to ensure that we go back to the basics, and promote peaceful protest, as it is more effective.

Comrades and friends,

This lecture has also taken place in August, women's month. It is a month on which we honour women and their contribution to the struggle and life in general in the country.

I am delighted therefore to join you in the province which has produced many selfless struggle stalwarts like Mme Sina Keitsing.

She was a veteran of the anti-pass campaigns in Lehurutse and Johannesburg. She provided passage to Botswana for many ANC cadres, including President Nelson Mandela.

She was awarded the national Order of Luthuli in bronze for her outstanding contribution to the struggle. We also celebrate mme Violet Sina Matlou of Welgeval, who together with Sina

Keitsing cared for our cadres in Botswana on their way to the various exile destinations. We also salute the women of Lehurutshe, who braved the might of the apartheid authorities and protested against passes in 1957.

Comrades, we also take this opportunity to recognise our Deputy Secretary General, Comrade Thandi Modise who is also the premier of this province.

She was one of the first MK women cadres and commander in the camps to be sent inside the country on missions.

We acknowledge and praise her bravery, dedication, commitment and sacrifice, under extremely repressive conditions including imprisonment.

We take pride in the contribution of many women to various pillars of our struggle, including other women in uMkhonto Wesizwe such as the Luthuli and other Detachments.

In this August month, we salute all women comrades and declare that the ANC remains strong and focused on its mission because of the contribution of all of us, men and women.

It is also a special delight to be in the province of struggle veterans like the late Moses Kotane and Peter Magano as well as national heroes such as the late Comrade Job Tabane, known in exile as Cassius Maake.

They were all following in the footsteps of our forebears, such as our President-General James Sebe Moroka.

Comrades,

By the time J.S. Moroka died on November 10, 1985, the struggle for liberation in South Africa had turned full swing.

The militant mass politics that they had started in the 1950s through the Defiance Campaign were back in the fold. Since 1983, the country had been going through protest politics reminiscent of the early 1950s.

By 1985 the country had reached levels of ungovernability on instruction from President Oliver Tambo.

It was in essence a second Defiance Campaign, with our people taking the struggle to new heights, and the dawn of freedom was imminent.

We thank President Moroka and his peers for the legacy of a vibrant ANC that was able to deliver freedom, justice and human dignity to our people.



I thank you.

Amandla!