



Address by Public Protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela during a Women in Leadership Breakfast Meeting in Windhoek, Namibia on Thursday, May 07, 2015.

Deputy Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia; Her Excellency Hon. Maureen Hinda;

Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Innovation, Hon. Becky Ndjoze-Ojo;

Deputy Minister of Sports, Youth and National Services; Hon. Agnes Tjongarero;

Higher Commissioner of the Republic of SA; Hon. Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini

CEO of Amambeko, Ms. Mia David;

Women leaders from the public and private sectors;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

I am honoured and delighted to join you this morning with as women in leadership.

I am grateful to Mia Davids for making it possible for me to engage you briefly on the question of *Leading with Courage and Integrity* within the broader theme of servant leadership. I would also like to thank Mia Davids, her team and colleagues in the integrity sector here, particularly the Ombudsman of Namibia, Adv John Walters, for the warm hospitality my team and I have enjoyed since our arrival in this beautiful country.

Congratulations to the people and leadership of Namibia on 25 years of constitutional democracy and on holding peaceful elections in November last year. As an equality activist I

must also congratulate Namibia on its steady and unwavering progress towards becoming an inclusive society particularly on the gender front. I've been advised by our High Commissioner, Ms Mavivi Myakayaka-Manzini that not only do you have a woman Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, the governing party has committed and is unequivocally implementing the principle of 50-50 regarding gender inclusivity.

The ideal of inclusive constitutional democracy founded on social justice, is one we share with you as the people of South Africa. Our constitutional democracy is a little younger than yours. We just achieved our 21st year milestone a few days ago on April 27. In fact we modelled aspects of Constitution on yours. This includes to some extent, my office, the Public Protector. Although the architects of our democracy went a little further in terms of powers and fortification of the Public Protector, its essential features approximate those of the Namibian Ombudsman. This is particularly the case regarding the fact that although we go under the universal title of Ombudsman, we are multi-mandate institutions, whose mandate includes fostering integrity and accountability in the public sector and helping our people exact accountability in the exercise of state power and control over public resources.

Our common destiny does not end with constitutional and public accountability similarities. Not only do you share borders with us through our Northern and Western Cape provinces, you also share a struggle history with the previously oppressed people of South Africa. As a result of our shared borders and shared history, including colonial ties, we share two official languages, Setswana and Afrikaans.

In my view there is a leader in all of us and all we have to do is find and unleash that leader. My assertion is based on a simple understanding of leadership being about influencing people to embrace and successfully pursue a vision.

I also believe that we are all called to lead regardless of our age or circumstances. I also firmly believe that you do not need a position or title to lead. In fact, if you are not leading without a position or title, you are not ready to lead in a position or with a title of leadership. It is also my considered view that you cannot lead others if you cannot lead yourself and that: if you cannot follow, you cannot lead.

It is my considered view that all of you in this room are leaders. Just coming to this seminar this morning required you to find and affirm the leader in you. Your choosing to come to a 0730 dialogue, when you had many options and excuses had nothing to do with your position, it was an exercise in self-leadership. In choosing to come here you followed Mia Davids' leadership whose vision brought us together today. I'm certain that you engage in various acts of leadership everyday.

I sense that the call made by Amambeko to us today is not really to lead as that's already happening in various degrees but rather that we take our leadership to the next level through courage and integrity.

The lessons I have learned from studying women trail blazers who paved the way for women to not only lead but occupy national and global leadership positions, include the realisation that every leader needs courage and integrity.

My daughter Wenzhi and I are in the process of finalising a book that examines the success factors of 21 women leaders who paved the way. Each of the 21 women has been chosen as the epitome of that success factor. For example, Mama Albertina Sisulu, who was the leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF) the most prominent anti-apartheid organisation after the banning of the liberation organisations in South Africa, is presented as the epitome of integrity. Phase 2 of the study will be looking at African women and we've already collected very inspiring profiles of African women

The title of book evolved from *no More Tea Makers* (Which was based on a story of women's revolt against tea making told to me as a young girl by Hellen Joseph, to *Our Time*, which is a call to women to appreciate that it's their time to lead at global and national level as they have led in families and communities over the years. The study also seeks to show that women have led successfully over the years and that they have short-changed themselves and society in believing the lie that their gender confines them to followership when it comes to national, corporate and global leadership and governance.

One thing I discovered about women from my experience and the study is that women tend not to seek a title or power but rather to serve. Whether we are talking about the days of Debora rising to lead, Esther stepping up to intercede to Princess Nzinga standing her ground or Gwamile standing in the gap when leadership was needed or Olive Schreiner standing up to the powerful Cecil John Rhodes or Charlotte Maxeke standing up to Paul Kruger, the pattern is similar, women tend to step in when service is required. When they feel something needs to be protected or saved they step up in courage, confidence and remarkable competence and get the problem solved.

But I want say to you women's characteristic approach to leadership is both a strength and weakness. Call it a service or a problem, they step up. Give it a name and position, they look around to find a man. Does this sound familiar. CEO Jesus is portrayed as a leader who led without a position.

Going back to theme of leading with courage and integrity, The lessons I've learned from studying the trail left by the giants on whose shoulders we stand is that there is an inextricable link between courage and integrity and the essence of courage is being in integrity with yourself. What makes you unwavering is the quest for being in integrity with yourself? A combination of the pursuit of service and authenticity.

Today I thought we should focus on a remarkable woman that all of you should be familiar with, a giant that came from humble beginnings to become one of the most inspirational leaders of her time.

She was born 74-years-ago in Fransfontein, a one horse town in the Kunene Region, North-East of here.

Coming from a disadvantaged background, this heroine defied the odds to become this country's first female medical doctor, having completed her medicinal studies abroad.

One cannot chronicle the story of this country's struggle for liberation from the shackles of both colonial and apartheid South Africa without acknowledging the role played by this woman of virtue, among other people.

Her selfless work as a health and education worker in Namibian refugee camps across Southern Africa during the struggle years is well documented.

Having spent some of her early years exiled in countries such as Tanzania, she returned home on the eve of independence in 1989.

She went on to serve the government of Namibia in several capacities before rising to the position of Deputy Prime Minister in 2005, a position she held until she retired from public life five years later.

Commenting on her memoirs, ***Making a Difference***, published in 2012, she said the following:

"I wanted to share my story with young women from Namibia, who want to do something but ... think that it is difficult or that it is only for boys ... I want to encourage them and tell them that all it needs is focus, determination, courage and discipline."

I am referring here, of course, to none other than Dr Libertina Amathila.

I am sure that there are many other women of her calibre in this room and elsewhere in this country, in our continent and indeed the world.

As women leaders living in an inherently patriarchal society, there is no doubt in my mind that we face massive challenges. We are still waging war on gender inequality and sexism as it is.

However, we must admit that things are much better today than they were in years gone by.

It had to take trailblazers such as Dr Amathila, who broke the cycle in the field of medicine.

Drawing lessons from their journey, we can lead with courage and integrity.

As I told delegates during a Women Leaders' conference as part of last year's commemorations of Women's Month back home, I am far from being the go-to person when it comes to leading with courage and integrity.

But what measures do I take in my quest to reach the level of the likes of Dr Amathila?

An IsiZulu proverb profoundly goes: *"Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili."* Loosely translated, it means we must always draw from the knowledge of those that came before us and that is exactly what I am going to ask of you.

With the likes of Dr Amathila still around, there is no reason for women leaders to struggle with issues of courage and integrity.

We should be proud that today we stand on the shoulders of giants such as her and as such we are able to see far ahead.

The story of Dr Amathila bears resonance with those of several South African women that I grew up looking up to. These include Charlotte Maxeke, Victoria Mxenge, Helen Joseph, Helen Suzman and Olive Schreiner, to mention but a few.

Yes, the challenges that they faced during their time as women leaders are a far cry from what we go through but I am certain that from their experiences, we can draw lessons that we can use to navigate the difficulties we go through.

The following are among a few important lessons we can learn from them and these are the same lessons I shared with attendees at the Women Leaders' conference I have just referred to, for they remain ever so relevant.

1. Walking the road less travelled

The trail-blazers have shown that they were never afraid to go into areas widely thought to be a "man's world." They knew very well that theirs and the fate of the equally oppressed men were interconnected. With this in mind, they boldly assumed those leadership roles to their full potential.

Some of us today stop when we see doors closed and assume they are locked. Many are not locked and even the locked ones, we often don't realise we have the keys to open them.

2. Sacrificing our comfort for the greater good

Many of the trailblazers disagreed with governments of the day when it was perilous to do so. They made tough decisions, often breaking ranks with their own in pursuit of what was right.

3. Bravery amid danger

In the midst of life-threatening intimidations, they stuck with what was right. They ignored the risks involved. In other words, they put their own interests and those of their families aside for the oppressed. They could not see their own freedom as separate from that of the oppressed.

4. Speaking truth to power

These leaders were not afraid to put their heads above the parapet. They would not shy away from making unpopular views and decisions. All that mattered to them was for what they said and did to be the right thing.

5. Paying the price

They were prepared to pay the ultimate price. Mxenge, for one, did that and Joseph miraculously survived several attempts on her life. All they cared about was the freedom we all enjoy today.

Today we don't have to pay such high prices. Leading with integrity and courage often simply means leading our companies or organisations ethically, ensuring there is no maladministration, corruption or malfeasance. Many women, including those in this room are doing just that.

I was looking for words of encouragement to leave you with, and buoyed by the fact that this event was opened by a Pastor, I settled for the following passage from the Book of Matthews 5: 14-16:

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Keep shining.

Thank you.

**Adv. Thuli Madonsela
Public Protector of South Africa**