

Speech by Gauteng MEC for Human Settlements, Urban Planning, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Lebogang Maile on the occasion of the Mashiloane funeral, 21 November 2021.

Upon hearing of the tragic passing away of Promise, Aubrey, Fortunate and Tiefhi, one was reminded of the scripture in Ecclesiastes 7:2, *"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart."* Hence, we are here today to support the Mashiloane family in this very difficult moment.

The passing on of these young people before they have even reached their prime is even more tragic because, in the ordinary course of life, parents should never have to bury their children. The hopes, aspirations and dreams of every family are best expressed and fulfilled in the lives and achievements of their children. The future has been stolen from you with the loss of these young lives, even before they had bloomed.

The words of the Village Pope(Tshepo Tshola) in his song Ho Lokile are most appropriate in this moment to give us some comfort, even though what has cannot be explained or rationalised in anyway, *"Ntate ha ke sa sepela Hole le lehae laheso.*

O nthuse ke tsebe hore,

"Ho lokile, ho lokile."

Seo O nkadimileng sona,

Ha ore ke se busetse,

Le teng ke sa leka hore,

"Ho lokile, ho lokile."

For the rest of us who are here to support the Mashiloane family in this very dark moment, this tragedy should remind us of the importance of solidarity and ubuntu as a people.

In 2006, South African journalistic legend Tim Modise interviewed former president Nelson Mandela and asked him specifically how he defines the concept of Ubuntu. Former president Mandela replied, *“In the old days when we were young, a traveller through a country would stop at a village, and he didn’t have to ask for food or water; once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not address themselves. The question therefore is, are you going to do so in order to empower the community around you, and enable it to improve? These are important things in life. And if you can do that, you have done something very important.”*

With all the challenges that we are faced with as families and communities in our times, it is important that we regain and prioritise the values of ubuntu as a people. The concept of Ubuntu has been used since our first democratic elections in 1994, as a founding principle in fact, in order to demonstrate the way, the country should operate and be run politically. The human ethics and moral scope that Ubuntu implies is seen to be an admirable compass for how society should be organised and for political decision-making.

As a country that we carry massive collective trauma. The political system of institutionalised racism, called apartheid, was devastating for the majority of the population. Yet, in spite of the painful, oppressive system, many of those most deeply affected by it rose up and remained resolute and united and a large part of the resilience that we have shown as a people can be attributed to the collective values of ubuntu that we hold so dearly.

Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself and the fact that you are all here today to grieve with the Mashiloane family is a sign of that collective spirit and resilience of ubuntu that we need to regather as a society in order to ensure that our lives are indeed bettered in this democratic dispensation.

Ubuntu is a concept that we should all strive to live by. As humans we are connected, whether socially, politically or otherwise - so too do our actions affect one another. Our actions today in being there for the Mashiloane family should give them hope in this very difficult moment, that they live in a society that is caring, that looks after its own, that overlooks no one and values every person.

May Promise, Aubrey, Fortunate and Tiefhi rest in eternal peace and may the Mashiloane family find comfort in their moment of extreme pain and hurt. We hope that the support that has been shown today in this community will continue after today, so that the family will know that their pain is not theirs to endure alone, but they have a community behind them that will carry them through whatever trying moments they go through.