



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Eulogy Delivered by the Minister of Basic Education Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, at the State Memorial Service of the late Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize**

**23 September 2021**

Programme Director

Members of the Mkhize family

Colleagues in the Cabinet

Senior Government Officials

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests

Comrades and Friends

Programme Director, fellow South Africans, comrades and friends, we meet today under the circumstances, not of our choosing.

We converge to clear the path for our Mbokodo, Cde, Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize, to be laid to rest on Saturday.

One of our own has lost the battle to ill-health.

She succumbed to her illness on Thursday last week.

She was 69 years old.

The next meeting of the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC), of which she was a loyal member, will convene and proceed without her.

Her metaphorical chair will be vacant, and her voice muted forever.

On behalf of our Government, the people of South Africa and the African National Congress, we send our deepest and most heartfelt condolences to the Mkhize family.

We hasten to whole-heartedly thank you for having lent us your finest daughter.

She was indeed one of a kind.

We are certainly poorer without her.

However, the Mkhize family must take solace in that your loss is shared across the length and breadth of our beautiful land.

Programme Director, the family shall also draw strength from the knowledge that Cde Hlengiwe served the people of South Africa with distinction.

She emptied herself for the downtrodden, women and girl children.

She served in the non-governmental sector, women's organisations and many anti-apartheid groups with aplomb sparing neither strength nor courage.

In the post-apartheid period, Cde Hlengiwe served as Ambassador to the Netherlands.

In 2009, she was elected to the National Assembly to represent the ANC.

In her career in the country's national executive (cabinet), she served as a deputy Minister of Correctional Services, Economic Development, Telecommunications and Postal Services.

She also had stints as Minister of Home Affairs and Higher Education and Training before her appointment to the Presidency as a Deputy Minister.

Nonetheless, apart from being an activist and leader, she was a scholar of repute, a wife, a mother, a friend, and a grandmother.

But most importantly, Cde Hlegiwe was an honest and humble soul.

In her, we have lost a consummate professional, warm individual and resilient politician who served our country with honour and dignity.

She carried herself despite all her outstanding struggle credentials and being in a way part of the aristocracy of the revolution, with grace and dignity.

In a true meaning of the Biblical parables, “she was always clothed with strength and dignity”.

Yes, without a doubt, she was a woman possessed with the fortitude of character.

She was always prudent in her dealings, fair inside the home and in her outside political interactions.

I will miss her beautiful mind.

As I said earlier, she was the intellectual par excellence, a scholar of repute, undeniably.

During our times in the ANC Women's League, I recall that she was at her zenith when we dealt with research and policy-related matters of the women's movement.

One period that stands out was when we were preparing for the ANCWL policy conference and ANCWL conference in 2015.

She was on top of her intellectual game – research, writing and policy development.

She coordinated research and the performed supervision of teams writing the policy papers.

It was no easy task considering that we were not full-time at Luthuli House but had to squeeze time preparing for the conferences between our many political engagements.

To you, Comrade Hlengiwe, I am glad to say that I am proud of the conference policy papers we presented at the ANC Women's League conferences.

As a scholar, you showed your intellectual dexterity in the matters of women's emancipation and issues relating to the liberty of the girl child.

As we recall, Cde Hlengiwe served as a commissioner in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) committee in recognition of her excellent work in the area of advocacy for children's rights.

As I said earlier, she has always been an outstanding advocate for both the rights of children and women.

Despite her intellectual contribution to the ANC Women's League, she was also a pillar of strength as we faced various hurdles, including financial difficulties.

In the face of us taking strain, Comrade Hlegiwe would calmly say, *"Cde President, don't worry, things will be fine, and we will get over all these challenges"*.

Of course, we did in the end.

Her positivity was infectious and rubbed off on all of us easily.

I shall miss her strong spirit and calm demeanour.

As a person, as I have alluded to earlier, Cde Hlegiwe was warm and affectionate yet fierce in the face of injustice visited upon the downtrodden.

In a nutshell, I am saying resilience and friendliness was a hallmark of her life.

In 2017, after her lung cancer diagnosis, although she was gravely ill, she still carried a brave face and continued with her political duties.

Today, we meet to say fare-thee-well to the soldier of fortune, our mother, confidante and a comrade.

It is difficult to pronounce the words that carry with them the force of finality, “she has run her race,” yet we are comforted in that she would forever be in our hearts.

It is indeed true that Cde Hlengiwe has shuffled off this mortal coil leaving behind her lovely family - husband Pat Mkhize, three daughters, a son and one grandson.

Nonetheless, her genuine, everlasting legacy isn't found in the tome of research papers she produced and various key positions she held, but in her humility, inner beauty and generosity of her spirit.

I am saddened by her untimely departure.

In her, I really had a real friend and honest comrade.

I can't begin to comprehend the void left in Cde Pat Mkhize's heart, the faith-full husband of Cde Hlengiwe who supported her till the end.

I must say their union was premised on friendship, companionship and a strong bond.

At all material times, Cde Pat always supported Cde Hlengiwe in her various organisational/life endeavours.

One can easily say Cde Pat and Cde Hlengiwe have always been the wind beneath each other's wings.



Programme Director, I have fond memories of our time in the anti-apartheid struggle, ANC Women's League, and our country's national executive (cabinet) careers.

Although we both suffered under the harsh realities of the apartheid oppression, we were lucky enough to live fruitful lives in a democratic SA.

Thus, in a sense, we were of a chosen generation, the aristocrats of the revolution.

Programme Director, I met Prof Hlengiwe in 1990 before the unbanning of the ANC and other anti-apartheid organisations.

We met during Botswana's children's conference led by the Sister Bernard Mncube Institute for contextual theology.

After the conference, we established a National Committee on the Rights of Children on home soil.

At the time, Prof Mkhize was running an NGO working to advance children's rights in Johannesburg.

Our paths were to cross several times in the years ahead until we became more than just comrades but friends.

After our election into the ANC NEC, we served together for the entire term of our office, and our bond grew stronger.

In the NEC engagements, Cde Hlengiwe's strength of character and resilience shone through, especially on matters she felt strongly about.

As the pundits would say, she would disagree with you without being disagreeable.

After Cde Hlengiwe's view emerged as that of the majority in the meeting, she would still extend a hand of friendship and move on not as adversaries but as comrades.

Programme Director; Cde Hlengiwe was unique in many ways.

She was even able to carry difficulties with great courage, including her relentless battle with lung cancer.

I recall that in 2017 when Cde Hlengiwe had been extremely ill, she carried a brave face and, in her usual line, “*Hayi kuzolunga President,*” mantra.

I shall miss our carefree chatter as we always exchanged notes about political challenges, families, children and health.

Like Cde Hlengiwe used to say, I want to speak to the Mkhize family and say: “*kuzolunga kukubi kanjalo*”.

*Kuzolunga babu Mkhize, kuzolunga bantwana bami, kanti nasemdenini, kanye nezihlobo, kanye nabobonke abantu abasebenze no Cde Hlengiwe, ngithi nje, kuzolunga.*

I take with me an image of Cde Hlengiwe: calm, firm, and unperturbed by all this fussing over her passing.

I can almost hear the echo of her voice bellowing, “*khona kunzima kodwa kuzolunga*”.

*Sohlala simkhumbula* of u Cde Hlengiwe.

*Alale ngoxolo, aphumule!*

Owakhe umsebenzi usufeziwe.

I thank you.