

**OPENING REMARKS BY CLR MPHONG PARKS TAU, EXECUTIVE
MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG, AT HERMANUS LOOTS MEMORIAL
SERVICE, JOHANNESBURG, 3 FEBRUARY 2016**

Ma Josephine Loots and other members of the family

Ministers and Deputy Ministers present here today

Senior government officials

Members of the African National Congress

Members of Umkhonto we Sizwe

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon

I would like to thank the Presidency for the opportunity to speak and welcome you all on behalf of the City. Today we remember and pay special tribute to one of the finest members of the ANC, Hermanus Loots, whose *nom de guerre* was James Stuart.

Ladies and gentlemen, Loots was a tried and tested member of our movement and always responded positively when duty called. As a highly placed and trusted member of our military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, he served the movement with dedication and intelligence.

Comrades, you will remember that Loots was requested by President O.R Tambo to investigate the causes of a mutiny by MK members in Angola in 1984. This tragic incident was of great concern to the leadership of the ANC as it took place at a time when the movement was intensifying our struggle against apartheid. The mid 1980s were a time when we declared townships ungovernable – it was the time when the notorious apartheid leader, PW Botha, failed to cross the Rubicon and bring about the fundamental changes in our country that would have served as the building blocks of a liberated South Africa. Sadly, this was also a time when our movement was heavily infiltrated by apartheid agents.

In this highly charged environment in which apartheid agents were thought to be behind the Angola mutiny, President Tambo could have chosen any of the many capable cadres within the movement to lead the investigation of the Angola mutiny. However, he chose Loots, and that was no accident. In Hermanus Loots he had an impartial, honest and dignified member of the movement who he trusted to speak truth to power without fear or favour. Tambo knew he could count on such a man to bring him the whole truth and “nothing but the truth” of the mutiny. In what became known as the Stuart Commission, Loots emphasised in the report that the MK uprising in Angola was as a result of disillusionment within the rank and file of our military wing. This is the calibre of man that Loots was, unflinching and honest.

To his wife, Ma Josephine: your husband was a true symbol of non-racialism, who served our movement in different capacities: as a highly ranked MK officer, as a member of the movement's National Executive Committee and a member of parliament in the liberated South Africa. He thus goes down in history as one of the finest sons of this rainbow nation – a man of the people. We will remember him as the man who shelved his studies at Wits as a student in civil engineering in order to join MK in 1961 to fight the apartheid regime and the different forms of evil it represented. Surely Loots would have secured a lucrative job for himself and a remarkable career had he completed his studies at Wits. However, his decision to be in the MK trenches meant that he sacrificed all the comfort and the satisfactions that come with being a member of the educated elite. This was replaced by a life of danger and hardship in order to liberate our country from apartheid bondage.

To all of you present in this memorial service here today, we thank you for gracing this occasion. Let us all emulate Hermanus Loots especially in today's context as we try to establish the non-racial South Africa which he lived and died for. Let us use this particular moment to celebrate the life and times of comrade Loots and to say to him: you have done us proud. Farewell as you join other struggle stalwarts like Nelson Mandela, Charlotte Maxeke, Thabo Mofotsanyana, Joe Gqabi, Helen Joseph and Joe Slovo who have since been called to higher service. You are now in their glorious company.

Thank you

