

**Tribute by Cllr Mpho Moerane on the occasion of the Council's Memorial Service for the late Executive Mayor, Cllr Geoffrey Makhubo**

29 July 2021

Madame Speaker, Councillor Nonceba Molwele

Chief Whip of Council, Councillor Solomon Mogase

Chair of Chairs, Councillor Salphina Mulaudzi

Chairpersons of Committees

Leaders of Political Parties

The family of Councillor Geoff Makhubo

Fellow Councillors

Comrades and Friends

The people of Johannesburg

It is just over two weeks since we laid our brother, our dear friend and comrade, our leader, our beloved Majoro, a dedicated servant of the people of Johannesburg; Councillor Geoffrey Moloantoa Makhubo to rest.

Although we are fervent believers in the old adage that: time heals, sadly at this hour, at this moment, time – precious time – has yet to heal our gaping wounds. It pains us still that our beloved Councillor Geoff Makhubo is no more.

It pains us still that today we are speaking of him in the past tense. It pains us still that he has left us too soon. And it pains us still that we will see him no more.

However, even in our deepest pain; even as our hearts are heavy, we consider ourselves privileged that, in him, we were in the company of so rare a jewel, who was simultaneously a genuine friend and comrade; a dependable colleague; an activist to the core; a servant leader; a patriot to the end; an internationalist; and a revolutionary.

On this day we, once again, extend a hand of comfort to the family of Councillor Makhubo – the wife Ousi Nono, the kids, Councillor Makhubo's mother and brothers, as well as the entire family, your relatives loved ones and friends. To all of you we say, once more: Gomotsegang! Your son, your brother, your father and your loved one is now resting in peace.

We know that Councillor Makhubo loved his family deeply. He adored them; and as far as possible he would always make time for them. His departure, therefore, has left a huge void in his family.

In Councillor Geoff Makhubo's passing, we have lost one of the eminent sons of the great City of Johannesburg. We have lost one of the front-line combatants in the struggle for a better City; a City that is more inclusive; and a City where no one is left behind. We have also lost a true revolutionary to whom many accolades are due.

Those of us who worked closely with Councillor Makhubo can attest that his was a life that has brought much good to the people of our City and the people of South Africa. His, were a very safe pair of hands that carried the agenda of thorough-going socio-economic transformation in our City.

Councillor Makhubo was an outstanding leader of our people – a leader who was always hands-on; who was forever ready to serve, who led from the front – a leader who lived in and among the people; who understood and spoke the language of the people – a leader whose hands were always on deck.

His activism was not limited to meeting halls and boardrooms. Like many of us who were born at the height of apartheid, Councillor Makhubo grew up under very difficult circumstances. This was at a time when apartheid was destroying families, communities and society in general – a time of untold brutality.

It is these harsh conditions that shaped Councillor Makhubo's consciousness. They taught him hard work. They instilled in him the spirit of solidarity. They made him resilient; and they infused in him a deep yearning for a better tomorrow.

With honour and dedication, Councillor Makhubo served in Council, among others as an MMC for Finance, then leader of the Opposition and Executive Mayor. At all times he remained laser-focused on the task at hand: the task of building a City that works for all – an inclusive City.

He served truthfully and was never the one to mask difficulty and failures. In this regard, we recall his own words that he penned in an article published in the Daily Maverick, only last month, where he wrote: "Johannesburg has challenges that must be faced head-on. This, however, cannot be done by conveniently choosing what to remember from our past. We owe it to ourselves and the future to avoid the deception brought by nostalgia.

"Those who say Johannesburg is in decline and falling apart hanker for a past when only those who were white had an absolute right to be there. Neighbourhoods, universities, schools and even places of worship were supposedly 'better' when they were exclusive privileges of white people."

Councillor Makhubo understood that Council was a terrain of struggle. He preferred constructive, yet robust engagement in the place of name calling and slander. He always carried himself with absolute dignity, humility and respect. He excelled in the art of gently persuading even those with whom he differed. He was a unifier!

He championed the interests of young people with the same zeal and vigour with which he championed the struggle for gender equality and the emancipation of women. He was a firm believer in worker unity and rights. He also believed strongly that the LGBTI+ community is entitled to all rights accorded to all South Africans.

Councillor Makhubo leaves us with an infinite legacy. His legacy was of hard work, simplicity and humility in the selfless service of others. He lived up to the words of Deng Xiaoping – the architect of modern China – who had the following to say about the tasks of a leader: "... to serve the people wholeheartedly and put the interests of the people first."

We have a responsibility to carry forward the weighty legacy Councillor Makhubo has left for us – to defend and to deepen it. We must pick up his fallen spear!

As the ANC Caucus in this Council, we must be unrelenting in the pursuit of Councillor Makhubo's vision; which in turn is the vision of the ANC. This is the vision for an inclusive city; where no one is left behind.

In honour of Councillor Makhubo, we must remain focused on the path towards rebuilding and recreating from the governance failures that characterized the first three years of the current political term. We must realize the freedom we promised the residents of our City, in our life-time. We must make it our mission to ensure that the lives of the residents of our City are richer because of us, and not despite us.

At all times let us keep our eyes focused on the 11 strategic priorities of our City. These are:

- Good governance;
- Financial sustainability;
- Integrated human settlements;
- Sustainable service delivery;
- Job opportunities and job creation;
- A safer city;
- Sustainable development;
- An active and engage citizenry;
- Economic development;
- Building a smart City;
- Minimising the impact of Covid-19 and future pandemics

Guided by the Growth and Development Strategy, (GDS 2040), we must accelerate the offensive on inequality, poverty and employment.

Not only must we imagine a post- Covid-19-pandemic reality for our City, but also and more profoundly, we must put in place the building blocks towards this reality. This is a reality where livelihoods are protected, jobs reinstated and re-created, poverty alleviated, the negative effects of urbanization controlled, and a reality where residents continue to feel safe in their City.

We must also focus on the struggle for women's emancipation, and fight gender based violence. GBV must fall.

Like Councillor Makhubo did, we must also fight for the rights of the LGBTI+ community, clear in our understanding that they too deserve the same rights as all South Africans.

Please allow me to single out one burning issue Councillor Makhubo asked me to fast track: the electricity distribution to the people of Soweto, Orange Farm, Finetown, Diepsloot and Ivory Park. These areas are currently under Eskom Supply but we are in a process to conclude a Memorandum of

Understanding between the City and Eskom to transfer these areas to be supplied by the City of Johannesburg through City Power.

With various forms of energy such as gas and solar available to households, independent power producers and as well as our initiative to use Waste to generate electricity, we will be able to supply uninterrupted electricity at an affordable rate.

This was Councillor Makhubo's vision, a vision that would transform City Power from an electricity distribution company to an energy company.

Among other important initiatives Councillor Geoffrey Makhubo had was accelerated service delivery, his passion was war on potholes, road resurfacing and markings, grass cutting, Kleenajoburg, street lighting, fixing blocked sewer, fixing burst water pipes, habitable parks, handing out tittle deeds and many others as highlighted on the 11 strategic priorities.

Madame Speaker, like a true soldier, Councillor Makhubo died with his boots on, in the fight against the invisible enemy: Covid-19. Front to front, he led the charge to save lives and livelihoods. He left us at a time when we needed his safe, capable hands to remain on deck as we continue to battle this pandemic. His death was a painful reminder that Covid-19 is still very much with us – we must remain vigilant.

Walking in the footsteps of Councillor Makhubo, we must continue to spread the message of wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, regular washing and sanitising of hands, and avoiding crowded spaces and places.

Let us also spread the message of compliance with Covid-19 restrictions; and the message of keeping safe during this challenging period. We are encouraged that the public vaccination campaign currently undertaken by our government, including in our City, has picked up momentum. We urge those who qualify for vaccination to visit vaccination sites so they can be vaccinated.

Madame Speaker, as I conclude, our country our City is seized with the task of responding to the damage caused by those who sought to create instability and chaos; by destroying property and key infrastructure; and thus threatening lives, livelihoods as well as our economy in general.

We take this opportunity to commend community members who worked with law enforcement agencies to stop the looting, violence and the destruction of property.

We also welcome the decisive interventions by our national government to ensure that peace and stability is maintained, to provide support and relief to poor households during this difficult period, and to help businesses to rebuild.

As a City we will do our part in ensuring that these interventions are successful and sustainable.

Madam Speaker, allow me to quote Psalm 147 verse 3 to the Makhubo family: "God heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. Lean on God and allow Him to continue the process of healing your broken heart. God loves you and will comfort you during hardships, and then place you in a place where you can use that enduring strength to comfort others."

On behalf of the ANC Branch 136 and Greater Joburg Region, I wish to say: Councillor Makhubo – our dear brother, comrade, friend and leader – thank you for the role you played in advancing the struggle for the betterment of the lives of the people of our City and the people of South Africa.

Thank you for your servant leadership. Thank you for being dependable. Thank you for caring. You are now resting in peace our dear brother; our beloved Majoro! You ran your race. You remained loyal to the end. We will continue to build the City of your dreams. We will pick up from where you left off.

We will miss you. 'Till we meet again. May your soul continue to rest in peace!