



EFF TRIBUTE ON THE PASSING OF MINISTER JACKSON MTHEMBU

Thursday, 21 January 2021

The EFF sends its deepest and sincere condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Cde Jackson Mthembu, the Minister in the Presidency who passed away on the 21st of January 2021. Cde Jackson Mthembu was amongst the very few dedicated, humble and principled leaders of government. Despite his access to power and influence, Cde Mthembu was never caught in scandals of influencing tenders and government contracts to benefit his friends and family. With decisiveness, he always provided logical and sound leadership which often transcended narrow partisan loyalties define parliamentary politics.

The dedication of Minister Jackson Mthembu was demonstrated through his principled participation in the struggle against the nonsensical apartheid regime, as a students' leader, a youth activist, as workers' leader, community leader and certainly without entitlement for individual benefits. He understood that his participation in the struggle was for a common good and for the people, not for individual benefits and glory. Cde Jackson Mthembu almost always rose above factional politics, and never felt entitled to any leadership responsibility. He was a true servant of the people.

Between 1995 and 1997, Cde Jackson Mthembu served in the Communications Team of President Nelson Mandela, yet never demanded to be in national government due to his access and proximity to President Mandela. He chose to go and serve the people of Mpumalanga as Legislature Speaker and thereafter MEC of Transport. After years of serving at Provincial level, Cde Jackson Mthembu served as a Spokesperson of the ruling party, a responsibility which does not come with the glamour, protection, influence and benefits associated with Ministerial positions.

During his tenure as Spokesperson the ruling party, Cde Jackson Mthembu refused to partake in carefully planned activities and reactionary programme to destroy the Congress Youth League generation which has set Economic Freedom in Our Lifetime as its generational mission. When factionalists called him to testify against leaders of the Youth League with the sole aim of convicting and thereafter banishing them from the organisation, Cde Mthembu went to testify in defence of the Youth League Leaders. Despite the ultimate destruction of the

Youth League, his voice will be counted as part of those who refused to suffocate the young generation of leaders who set as its agenda the revolutionary purpose to attain economic freedom in our lifetime.

As a Chief Whip of the Majority Party in the 5th Parliament, Minister Mthembu provided decisive, logical and principled leadership to the majority Parliamentary Caucus and always built sufficient consensus amongst all represented political parties. Chief Whip Mthembu treated all Members of Parliament with respect and robustly engaged Members of the Executive with robustness and respect despite the fact that majority were far junior to him as a political leader and Activist. He never once felt entitled to a leadership position in the Executive.

It was under his leadership that Parliament had to introduce a secret ballot as a means to hold a sitting President accountable. It was under Chief Whip Mthembu that Parliament commenced a closer and detailed inquiry into Guptas criminal syndicates' redirection of State assets and resources into their self-enrichment agenda. He understood the frustration of all Members of Parliament including from his benches on the growing arrogance of the Gupta criminal syndicate and its representatives who disregarded processes and undermined the legitimacy of State institutions.

Importantly, it was under Chief Whip Mthembu that Parliament passed a motion introduced by the Economic Freedom Fighters to commence amendment of section 25 of the Constitution to allow for expropriation of land without compensation. If Chief Whip Mthembu was trapped in narrow partisan politics, the EFF motion would have not been passed by Parliament and the biggest Parliamentary public hearings that happened as a result of this motion would have not happened. Cde Jackson Mthembu's legacy therefore include the fact that he steered a reluctant Parliamentary process to vote for a motion which will return the land and the property of dispossessed and conquered black people to their ownership and control. Cde Jackson Mthembu played an important role in the journey that will culminate in the ultimate historical justice, which is the return of the land to its original owners.

As Chief Whip, Cde Jackson Mthembu understood the terminative motion of no confidence brought by the EFF to remove ex-President Jacob Zuma as President of the Republic in 2018. Typical to his consultative self, he engaged all political parties to agree on the postponement of the re-opening of Parliament to allow the ruling party to internally deal with the Zuma conundrum which has bedevilled South Africa during the reign of the Gupta criminal syndicate.

What distinguished Cde Jackson Mthembu from majority of the unthinking partisan representatives, was his ability to listen and concede to logic, even when such did not necessarily coincide with his party's position. Cde Jackson Mthembu was not a political zombie, he always tried to develop, enhance and harness his ideological and political comprehension. May His Soul Rest in Peace and those of us who come after him should learn an important attribute that political struggle is not about self-enrichment and self-gratification, but service to humanity!

We must reiterate that Cde Mthembu was an internationalist to whom the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and Western Sahara were close to his heart. He knew that without the attainment of self-determination for the people of Palestine and Western Sahara, South Africa's own freedom is forever incomplete.

He understood that Cuba and its people must be affirmed in their right to pursue socialism. Hence he never relented to fight for the US economic embargo on Cuba to end.

In a time when politics are becoming trapped in narrow and reactionary nationalism, the loss of Cde Mthembu will leave a deficit to efforts in building progressive internationalism.

The EFF salutes Cde Mthembu and we vow that in his memory we shall complete the constitutional managements for land expropriation. We shall uphold progressive internationalism. Above all, we shall cherish the revolutionary value of selflessness which he emulated.

LALA NGOXOLO MVELASE!

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