

Zemk' iinkomo magwala ndini! Wake up! The cows are being stolen!

By Sipho Pityana

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An edited transcript of the speech that stirred South Africa, on the occasion of the late Makhenkesi Stofile's memorial service at Fort Hare on 25 August 2016

U Comrade Stofile, *ngumkhuluwam* (my big brother) and a great friend. Christians will tell you that, when you choose somebody to be a godparent to your child, you look for somebody who has certain values, certain character,

certain conduct, somebody who represents something. As a family we chose Stofile to be a godfather to our son, Zukisa, because he lived his Christian belief in his everyday life. He was a man of love, he loved his family. He had great humility and simplicity. He had no airs. *Ibingengomntu ugqemfezayo.*

He valued and respected ordinary people, particularly the poor. He was courageous, fearless, daring, principled and scrupulous. He stood for something, *ibingengodludla nazo* (he was not easily swayed). He understood education, sports and culture as tools for empowerment and development. Stofile was a development activist. These are the solid values that made the revolution an attractive project for him. He was destined to become a public servant in leadership, in government. A public servant.

So when I talk here about Stofile, a family friend, I want to reflect on the most recent conversations we had. And I hope, by the time I finish, you will have a sense of urgency.

A MOVEMENT IN DENIAL

Stofile is a revolutionary who died with his boots on, even when some thought they'd demobilised him to the margins. When we all sloganeer and cry "*amandla*", we all look the same. Our commitment and zeal for the

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revolution seem to be similar. But in our movement, there are different cadres. There are peacetime revolutionaries and there are true cadres who took risks when it was necessary.

Ikhona indoda eyathi apha, "*Zemk' iinkomo magwala ndini.*" (There was a man here who said, "Wake up, the cows are being stolen while you coward people are sitting doing nothing.") Rubusana said so. In 1906, that was his battle cry. [Walter] Rubusana, by the way, just in case you didn't know, was one of the founding fathers of the African National Congress. An intellectual. I guess in today's lingua: a "clever black". I'm not going to tell you the context in which he said *zemk' iinkomo magwala ndini*, but that book also talks about the wolves that wear sheep's skin. You who are sleeping: there are also wolves here who are wearing sheep's skin.



Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile

Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile (1944–2016) was premier of the Eastern Cape from 1997 to 2004, then national minister of sport and recreation from 2004 to 2010. At the time of his death, he was South Africa’s ambassador to Germany. Born in Adelaide in the Eastern Cape, Stofile joined the ANC in 1963. In 1986, he was convicted of terrorism under the Ciskeian Security Act and served three years of an 11-year prison sentence. Stofile was an ordained minister of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. Also a great sportsman, he played for the Border Rugby team and was a loud voice in the

campaign towards non-racial sports. (SA History Online)

“May his yearnings for the movement to return to its former glory be taken up by those amongst us who know what it took for us to be a free country.” – Sipho Pityana

arrogant. We say it is NGOs, who are agents of foreign interests.

But Comrade Stof would have none of it. He reminded me all the time that, remember, OR Tambo encouraged us to be cadres with unquestioned loyalty. But here’s an important qualification that Oliver Tambo made: we must also be cadres with *questioning loyalty*. We must be questioning, because answers come from asking difficult questions.

Stofile never failed to ask difficult questions. He went beyond these superficial postures. He was able to do so because he never sought to please. He had already made his credentials during the tough times. Because he didn’t join the ANC when it was fashionable to do so. He risked his life, the safety of his family, his career, to associate with the ANC at the time when it was possible to play the most dear price for doing so.

WHICH ANC IS THIS?

His prognosis for our crisis is that *ukufa kusembizeni, maqabane* (our setbacks are self-inflicted, comrades). We have ceded our moral high ground to the opponents. We say we are a party of the Constitution and we have a right to say so. But many doubt it, because we give them reason to do so. No less a person than the president of our movement and our country takes every opportunity to show nothing but disdain and contempt for our Constitution.

From the time I joined the movement as a young boy, the ANC respected and promoted the independence of the judiciary and the separation of powers. Which ANC is this, that – without any conference resolution – makes statements that attack judges as “counter-revolutionaries”? Which ANC is this?

We attack and undermine Chapter 9 institutions. I need to remind you that OR Tambo wrote, as a precursor to this country, a conceptualisation of the Chapter 9 institutions. If you >>

You must remember Rubusana’s words. You must ask yourself whether this great revolutionary movement is going to bite the dust, even when you are here. *That* our movement is in crisis is trite and it is beyond question. If you doubted it, look at what happened in the local government elections. The debate for us today, and the debate that we were having with Stofile, is *why* it is in a crisis. What can we do about it?

The conversations we had at General Gqiba’s house at the break of this year, with some of the few of his trusted comrades, were very painful. And soon thereafter, we watched, like all of you, the Constitutional [Court] judgement around the Nkandla saga. On the first of April, the president of the country made a statement in response to that judgement. We all congregated around the television in anticipation. It was like the “Rubicon” speech [of PW Botha]. He failed to rise to the occasion.



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Isingqala neenyembezi zikaThahla, maqabane zezingawi elulwalweni [The cries and tears of Thahla must not fall on the barren land]. Let Stofile’s cry for the restoration of our movement to its former glory not be in vain. I know we’re a movement in denial, for when we talk about why we are where we are, we say it is because of the negative and hostile media. Maybe it is. We say it is because Western governments are driving an agenda for regime change. Maybe it is. We say it is because of clever blacks who are ill-disciplined and

didn't know that, go and read the Harare Declaration. Who are these leaders of today who don't have a sense of that history?

We are an ANC that can rightly claim that we champion human rights, but not because it's a "Western" concept – we were among the first to adopt the African [Charter of] Human and Peoples' Rights. Nobody asked us to. That's why you have a Bill of Rights in our Constitution. But it must be a great shame, mustn't it, that under our own government, we kill workers – in cold blood, with horrific brutality – for going on strike. We murder, in full glare of international media, Andries Tatane for engaging in service delivery protest.

We say we are a party that is against corruption, and yet at every moment, we seem to be falling over each other to steal from the poor. All these things – *all these things!* – we do with absolute impunity. A movement like this prompts Desmond Tutu to take to the media and say, "You do not represent me". Comrades, we can't have that. We are ceding moral high ground. And then we look for scapegoats outside: there are people who do not like us, who are attacking us, who are reporting negatively about us!

ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPECT, HUMILITY

We must introspect and look at what it is we are doing wrong. That's what Bra Stof was arguing. But look at the example that he leaves us with. Unlike some, Bra Stof showed great respect for public office. He was burdened by the honour and responsibility that came with public office. As you drove here, Ngqele is on your right-hand side. It's a rural village. During his tenure as premier, he didn't give it any special treatment. Look at it again as you go out. You will not find a palace worth over R200 million, an extravaganza amidst a sea of poverty. You won't find it. [His family] homestead is a decent



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yet humble abode. Bra Stof knew that, as a leader, you start with the people, not with yourself.

But here is a very important chapter in Bra Stof's life: he was accused of corruption. A commission of inquiry was appointed. He submitted himself to public scrutiny. He didn't play avoidance games. He didn't mobilise politically. He didn't abuse state institutions to protect himself. He didn't try to block the inquiry. He didn't destabilise the National Prosecuting Authority, the police, intelligence and other security structures to defend himself. He humbled himself. He showed respect for the law and for the people who put him in a position of responsibility. He followed due process. When the commission of inquiry made an unfavourable finding against him, he didn't cast aspersions against it. He didn't insult the judiciary. He took the matter on judicial review and cleared his name. Anybody who says Stofile



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was corrupt today will be wrong, because a judge of the High Court found that the Pillay Commission was wrong. Stofile was not corrupt. That's what you do when you respect public office. He had an understanding of public office, respect for the people, and that thing called accountability.

Accountability is an important measure of respect you have for the people. It is an important measure of respect for public office. You don't, when you're called to account, plunge parliament into chaos. You don't, when you're called to account, call constitutional bodies like the [office of the] public protector "enemies of the people" when they are not. You don't compromise the hope of the downtrodden and the oppressed people with their own movement – mobilise the ANC into a machine to defend in your own transgressions. You don't do that. When the Constitutional Court finds that you broke your oath of office, it means is that you are honourable no longer. It means that you are untrustworthy. *Qhwabani* (Clap your hands), *zemk' iinkomo magwala ndini!*

THIEVES AND FRAUDSTERS

Zemk' iinkomo magwala ndini – because today we all call each other comrade, comrade, comrade, without distinction. Cadres of Stof's ilk were sidelined in favour of a different kind of cadre, a new cadre who sees an opportunity to get the benefit, because it is rewarding to be associated with the ANC these days. And the queue of the people who want to join is long. You don't have to work hard; ANC membership opens up opportunities. So the fight for leadership positions is not about giving but proximity to resources for yourself, for your family and for your cronies. Several secretary-general reports to various congresses and policy conferences of the ANC have

commented about this, but nothing is done. And so the reality of the matter is that some of the leaders have been co-opted to be among those who are eating at the trough.

We must ask a question: do we have leaders of a revolution or do we have fulltime thieves and looters? For there can be no doubt today. The balance of forces in the movement has changed in favour of the forces of corruption. *Sigutyungelwe ngamasela nabarhwaphilizi* (We are overrun with thieves and fraudsters). Our movement is captured and consequently the state is captured. Our revolutionary project is under threat. But here are the consequences as we abandon the robes that give us our identity, that define the ANC. There are many others who are prepared to pick them up and wear them with pride. Now when you hear Honorable Trollip¹ speaking, you think, “Is this not what has been said in our organisation?” It is because – *thina* (us) – we have abandoned our great positions, our great policies, in favour of things trivial.

Zemk’ iinkomo magwala ndini! In 2004, we had 69 percent of the electorate. In 2016, we are 54 [percent]. Comrades, I will say this to you. Unless drastic steps are taken today, in 2019 we will come down to less than 40 percent. All of us are enjoined to not speak in public but to engage the movement quietly. Many of us have tried. Comrade Stofile himself submitted many letters to the ANC. But guess what? His letters went unanswered.

NEW LEADERSHIP

We must ask ourselves about changing our movement’s mission. We have come down from where we were. Under this leadership, what we have experienced is a cataclysmic anti-climax. We are seeing nothing less than grotesque and unmitigated chaos. It’s time for new leadership. Comrades, leadership is not fun. Leadership



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is about responsibility. I am very disappointed that the president is not here, because I prepared this speech in anticipation of him being here. I would have asked him, as my leader, *bendizakumbongoza, ndimngxengxeze, ndithi “Mkhuluwa wam, Msholozzi, Nxamala, nikezela iintambo, kunyembelekile”* (I was going to beg and plead with him and say, “My big brother, Msholozzi, Nxamala, please release the reins of power, the situation is dire). The next battle cannot be led by a leader that has humiliated our organisation and undermined everything we represent.

Comrade SG [Gwede Mantashe], I appreciate your presence, and one of the things that I’m very excited about is the decision of the national executive committee at its last meeting. It said, “With the setback that we have suffered, we take



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collective responsibility.” But you see, Comrade SG, that falls short. That is not good enough. A person who takes responsibility falls on their sword. So the leadership that has got us to this crisis must also accept that it is not capable of launching us in the new battles to make sure the organisation survives. I join others who make the call that an elective conference of the ANC must be held. But that’s not enough.

I would also suggest that you please convene a committee or council of stalwarts and veterans of our movement. Comrade Thabo Mbeki, Comrade Kgalema Motlanthe, Comrade [Ahmed] Kathrada, Comrade Winnie Mandela, Comrade Dennis Goldberg, Comrade Sophia de Bruyn. Call all of them in as a special committee that will ensure that we convene a credible elective congress. I want to ask you to ask the leadership to please consider mandating the Integrity Committee of the ANC to ensure that all the delegates subject themselves to a lifestyle audit. We don’t want thieves who will elect other thieves to leadership.

I pray, comrades, that we find younger leaders. Those amongst us who are aged must spend time playing with our grandchildren. They need us. To those comrades who left the organisation to join COPE, EFF, United Front, and the disgruntled ones who did not vote: don’t give up, comrades. Please come back. This battle is not over.

If we really want Bra Stof *alale ngoxolo* (to sleep in peace), if we want his deathbed cries to not be in vain, we must do exactly these things. *Zemk’ iinkomo magwala ndini!* Rest in peace, *Thahla, Ndayeni*. Thank you very much.

NOTES

Pityana’s speech is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWA1R986iOc

1. Athol Trollip, leader of the opposition Democratic Alliance and newly elected mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, a traditional ANC stronghold.

