



THULISILE NOMKHOSI "THULI" MADONSELA CITATION

Truth, Integrity, Veracity, Honesty, Upright. These are the words that immediately come to mind the moment the name Thuli Madonsela is mentioned. These are values that unfortunately cannot be used to describe most public officials in South Africa today.

Advocate Madonsela's concern for human rights and social justice can be traced back to the anti-apartheid movement where she served in the ANC, the United Democratic Front and in the trade unions. Added to these struggle credentials, Adv Madonsela turned down a prestigious Harvard scholarship, opting instead to be part of the team that drafted South Africa's Constitution because it was more important at that time in her life to help draft the country's Constitution.

Her integrity is such that she cannot sacrifice her beliefs at the altar of political correctness. For that reason, she cannot accept a political office. She says holding political office would not be her best contribution as a human being. True to that, she declined the position of ANC MP in South Africa's first post-apartheid Parliament. In 2014, media reports indicated that some ANC leaders wanted her to be a candidate in the general elections. But she would have none of it.

In appointing her as third Public Protector of the Republic in 2009, President Jacob Zuma said Adv Madonsela "will need to ensure that this office continues to be accessible to ordinary citizens and undertakes its work without fear or favour." She has not disappointed.

Addressing the Diakonia family in this very hall some four years ago, Adv Madonsela likened her role as Public Protector to the Venda chief's paternal aunt known as *Makhadzi*, a non-political figure who 'gives the people a voice while giving the traditional leader a conscience.' She has lived up to that description.

In the Constitutional Court's Nkandla judgment Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng said of her: "She is the embodiment of a biblical David, that the public is, who fights the most powerful and very well-resourced Goliath, that impropriety and corruption by government officials are. The Public Protector is one of the true crusaders and champions of anti-corruption and clean governance."

Indeed that is what Adv Madonsela has been throughout her tenure as Public Protector. She is known for investigating allegations of corruption that hurt the most marginalised and vulnerable in South Africa. In the year 2013/14 alone, her office dealt with 39 817 complaints, 24 642 of which were finalised, in spite of limited

financial resources. In that way, she has taught South Africans what it means to do a lot with very little.

She has investigated claims of corruption at the very highest levels of government without fear or favour, earning her and her team the admiration of hundreds of millions at home and around the globe.

Few of the many high profile cases that quickly come to mind include the property leasing scandal which led to the sacking of Bheki Cele as police chief in 2011. Adv Madonsela and her team also investigated whether EFF leader, Julius Malema's Ratanang Family Trust and/or Malema himself improperly benefited from the tender awarded to On-Point. But the biggest of them all was investigation into the upgrades at President Zuma's Nkandla private homestead in which she boldly concluded that the President had benefited unduly from non security upgrades and recommended that he should apologise to the nation and pay back a reasonable portion of the money.

Her report on Nkandla was met with fierce criticism and opposition from the ANC, with its secretary general, Gwede Mantashe, calling it a 'political report'. His deputy, Jessie Duarte said Madonsela was being 'populist in her orientation'. The party's chief whip, Stone Sizani, said Madonsela had 'overstepped the mark' by making some 'disparaging remarks' with 'political overtones'. The Youth League and ANC-aligned Congress of South African Students made disparaging remarks about her and called for her resignation. The justice portfolio committee chairperson, Mathole Motshekga, suggested that the powers of the Public Protector be reviewed. Not to be outdone, deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Kebby Maphatsoe, publicly accused Madonsela of acting like a counter-revolutionary and working for the CIA.

Media reports also insinuated that police were poised to arrest Adv Madonsela on fraud and corruption charges.

Amid these attacks, some aimed at her person, Adv Madonsela remained steadfast in her resolve to clean up government. She simply would not allow the corrupt to get away with it.

Addressing Law students at the University of Pretoria, she was resolute in her defiance: " If they call you counter-revolutionary because you seek to play your part in protecting the legacy, wear that as a badge of honour knowing that true and selfless revolutionaries such as Che Guevara, Amilcar Cabral and Oliver Tambo would view counter revolutionaries as those that steal or enable the stealing of state resources meant to deliver the constitutional dream. People turn against you because you remind their consciences about values underpinning the South Africa we signed up to become."

Adv Madonsela, you have been a shining star to many South Africans. You have worked tirelessly, notwithstanding severe criticism, at times at the risk of your own life. Your courage, determination, integrity and ability to tirelessly pursue one of the world's toughest and most dangerous battles have made you a household name to millions of South Africans who have been longing for ethical and principled leadership. You have inspired hope among millions of citizens who are yet to benefit from the constitutional dream. You have become a breath of fresh air for a nation crying for accountability from public officials.

Makhadzi, you are a phenomenal woman, a true testament to the adage '*wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo*'. You are a wonderful example of the impact women can make in a world where patriarchy is often disempowering to women. You have raised the profile of the office of the Public Protector and made it the country's most trusted public institution. For this, we will forever be grateful to you.

You did not compromise your values for cheap gain as we see all over the place in our society today. In your unwavering commitment to a fairer and more just South Africa and to the delivery of the constitutional dream of a democratic society where every citizen's potential is freed and quality of life is improved, you have assured yourself a place in the history of this great nation. Indeed when the history of post-apartheid South Africa is written, your name will definitely feature on the front page.

A person of integrity with an impeccable professional record, with not even the hint of an ethical stain you have set a very high bar in the exercise of your duties and left a blameless template for your successor to adopt. For this we honour you, *Makhadzi*.

Your exemplary leadership and integrity, your concern for the wellbeing of others, especially for the poorest of the poor, your desire to see public officials manage state power and public resources in a manner that is accountable and responsive to the rights and needs of all, recommends you for the Diakonia Human Rights Award.

By conferring this award on you, we are in a way confessing that you have spoken truth to power at a time when the broader church has failed to do so.

The Diakonia family is honoured and overjoyed to recognise your extraordinary courage and patriotism. We applaud you for your steadfast opposition to injustice, corruption and maladministration. Yours is the best exemplification of progressive humanism. Thank you *Makhadzi*!

The Diakonia family, therefore, confers on you, *Makhadzi*, the 2016 Diakonia Human Rights Award.