



**Ministry Justice and Correctional Services  
Republic of South Africa**

**Tribute by Minister of Justice and Correctional Services Mr. R.O Lamola delivered  
at Memorial Service of the Late Minister in the Presidency Mr. J.M Mthembu  
25 January 2021**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**The Mthembu Family**

**Programme Director**

**Humanity is confronted by the biggest existential challenge since the Spanish flu, we are no longer at ease, as the song of the departed legendary Jazz Musician Jonas Gwangwa, may his soul rest in peace, says ulibambe lingashoni, our lives are uncertain, it is clear for humanity to survive we need to stand and fight together against the virus and this is the message Minister Mthembu communicated till the end of his life.**

**sibuhlungu wukulahlekelwa tihlobo, bangani, namacomrades. Our lives have been turned upside down, what used to be normal is no longer normal, what used to be legal is now illegal, Mvelase was at the centre of communicating this new normal. He helped us do so with ease.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has truly ripped through society at an unprecedented scale. Every aspect of our lives has been touched by this pandemic and it has caused irreparable harm. Perhaps the most striking feature of this harm is the manner, in which it has removed our loved ones permanently from society.

But our generation had a privilege to have a role model in Mvelase, who was a guiding light to youngsters like myself as we were growing up in the youth structures of the ANC. We had a role model to look up to, his art of communicating complex government policies with ease, of breaking down political lingo into easy and accessible language was unparalleled. He could start a hashtag with ease.

He was firm, robust and yet could yield to a voice of reason.

His ability to educate while calling you to order was always at display when were in the leadership of the YL. I can still vividly remember Mvelase saying the ANC is flabbergasted and disgusted by the conduct of the YL. He could frown at us yet educational, and you could not miss the position of love at from which he was calling you to order from. He understood that you can be militant but remain disciplined.

For the 6<sup>th</sup> administration he digested and simplified scientific experts information on COVID 19 into simple and accessible language to everyone in SA. This ability will be solely missed in government communication. He had the skill of breaking complex and complicated discussions through humour. This skill maybe could be equalled by another departed soul like Collins Chabane. His jokes could help ease a tense conversation. I will miss your jokes Mvelase to defuse a tense environment in the room.

As President Cyril Ramaphosa said yesterday, Minister Mthembu was a **“lover of truth, and hater of injustice, falsehood and disunity”**

Final Draft

The community of Emalahleni in their own volition through the guard of honour demonstrated during his funeral that he was a leader of the people.

Mvelase your legacy will speak for itself for years to come.

Siyabonga Mvelase, hem hem.