

ZWELINZIMA VAVI'S TRIBUTE TO MADIBA

December 6 2013

THE big tree under whose shade we have hidden for 67 years of service to human kind has fallen! For many months now we had been preparing for this unavoidable passing of the colossus. Yet, now that this moment has arrived we find out that we are not ready to let go of a man who was larger than life.

Nelson Mandela was a supernatural human being who epitomized the best of *ubuntu* and human spirit. He was a symbol of the finest values of our people and their movement - the African National Congress (ANC). A glittering example of the principle of selflessness, sacrifice, dedication, hard work, and forever putting our people ahead of everything else!

As we prepare to celebrate his illustrious life over the next week, I imagine that every South African is singing silently as we will do for as long as we shall live "Nelson Mandela - *akekho ofana nawe - ha hona a tshwanang le wena* - there is no one like you". This has become the song that best defines this unassuming giant of the African continent who was admired and immensely respected by all freedom loving people across the globe. Yet Madiba, as we called him, who knew that the ANC made him the symbol of the struggle against the apartheid system which would subsequently be declared a crime against human kind, never once sought to remind anyone about what an important icon he was. Always down to earth and self-effacing, and respecting both of his friends and those he had fundamental differences with, Mandela made everyone who came across him feel at ease despite his overwhelming stature.

Madiba was a man of the people. Everywhere he went in his native country South Africa and the whole democratic world he drew magnitudes of crowds ready to share from his fountain of love and warmth. He was a champion of reconciliation and peace who singlehandedly saved our country from an imminent civil war.

Madiba at times went against prevailing sentiments on the ground to advocate for peace. At the time when many of us had only one thing in mind to avenge the brutal killing of our hero Chris Hani, the leader of the SACP, he emerged as an indisputable leader even before the elections. Since that day Madiba was celebrated as a leader and a father of our land.

Tata Mandela was a special gift to South Africa and the world, a symbol of the human spirit, unity and reconciliation. Never will the world see a person so universally loved across the globe as Madiba!

Lala ngoxolo Sopitsho, Ngqolomsila, Yemyem! Gxibh'olude laseBathenjini!

Issued by **John Dlodlu, the Vavi family spokesman**

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