

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS



DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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EULOGY BY ANC DEPUTY PRESIDENT, CDE. DAVID MABUZA AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE OF THE LATE ANC DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL, CDE YASMIN 'JESSIE' DUARTE HELD AT JOHANNESBURG CITY HALL ON 21 JULY 2022

Programme Director,
The Duarte, Dangor, and Whitley families,
Leadership of the African National Congress,
Leadership of the Tripartite Alliance,
Leaders of different formations present,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Comrades and friends.

The political life and times of Cde. Jessie Duarte

We have gathered here today to pay our last respects at this National Memorial Service for the fallen Cadre of our Movement, the late Deputy Secretary-General of the African National Congress, Cde. Jessie Duarte, whose name and legacy will forever remain synonymous with that of the African National Congress itself.

We are here to honour and pay tribute to Cde. Jessie Duarte, a revolutionary and freedom fighter who dedicated her entire life to the service of the people of South Africa and humanity in general.

On that fateful Sunday morning of the 17th of July 2022, South Africa and the world woke up in a darker place, as informed by the news of the passing of one of the most revered icons and stalwarts of our generation, Comrade Yasmin Jessie Duarte.

Her departure from this life came as a shock to us all, even after months of illness that saw her taking medical leave from her party position and responsibilities as incumbent Deputy Secretary-General of the ANC.

As the ANC and our friends in the Diaspora, we join her family, her friends and every other South African in mourning her passing as we grapple with adapting to a life without her leadership presence and contribution to resolving the challenges that confront us as a nation.

We are weaker without her sharp intellect, compassion, hard work, and effective mobilisation skills.

She held the second term of her elected position as Deputy Secretary-General faithfully and with integrity until her last breath. Her passing is therefore a great loss not only to her family and the African National Congress, but also to the whole country and the continent of Africa that continues to fight underdevelopment.

Her sad passing has left a void at Luthuli House, at every level of the African National Congress, and in the lives of countless South Africans who looked to her for guidance and solutions in these difficult and complex times.

She consistently had the appropriate words and attitude when addressing hard issues inside our movement and in society as a whole.

As a seasoned cadre who honed her political credentials in the African National Congress and the Mass Democratic Movement, she possessed vast knowledge, abilities, and insight into the complex organisational and developmental difficulties affecting our movement and society today.

She embodied the soul and spirit of the African National Congress - a caring, accomplished National Liberation Movement, and a leader of society. In her, many compatriots found a fellow Comrade, a sister and a mother. They found a social worker and a political leader for all seasons in one person.

One of her distinct traits as a leader was that she loved the people she was entrusted to lead, especially the poor and the vulnerable sectors of our society.

She mobilised and embedded herself within communities to advance the struggles for women, workers, the youth and all other marginalised sectors of society.

She diligently immersed herself in African National Congress structures at national, provincial, regional and branch levels in order to ensure that the ANC's values, organisational policies, practices and processes are strengthened.

Her uncompromising BUT comradely approach to tackling organisational challenges whenever deployed by the ANC in various provinces, has earned her much respect from ANC cadres.

PRESIDENT	DEPUTY PRESIDENT	NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON	SECRETARY GENERAL	DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL	TREASURER GENERAL
CM Ramaphosa	DD Mabuza	G Mantashe	ES Magashule	JY Duarte	P Mashatile

In the process, she ensured that young leaders are guided, and mentored on revolutionary discipline that is grounded on ANC values and ideology premised on the National Democratic Revolution. Her organisational and administrative skills will be sorely missed in ensuring that this glorious movement lives for generations to come.

Cde. Jessie's life embodied the values of servant leadership placing the people at the centre in the pursuit of the goals of building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and democratic society founded on equality and human rights for all.

In her numerous leadership capacities within the ANC and government, she functioned with utmost effort and dedication, demonstrating her warmth and humanity through an ever-present beaming smile that conveyed her brilliance and compassion.

Indeed, the country and the ANC have lost a true revolutionary!
A revolutionary who fought against racism!
A revolutionary who fought against injustice and inequalities!
A revolutionary who fought tribalism, sexism and patriarchy both within and outside the Movement!
A revolutionary who fought for the downtrodden and the marginalised.

Revered across the political spectrum, Cde. Jessie Duarte was direct and firm, BUT compassionate, respectful and humble.

She was brave, fierce and politically astute, BUT demonstrated a great sense of humanity and maturity towards political adversaries and those who held different views and ideological perspectives to hers.

She earned the respect of political actors and leaders from diverse political persuasions as a true patriot and servant of this nation in constant making.

As a patriot, she could differ in opinion and approach with many of us including in the media, BUT she always wanted what is best for South Africa and her people.

A relentless fighter for gender equality

In commemorating the life and times of Cde. Jessie Duarte as a feminist and internationalist, we are reminded of the struggles for women's rights throughout Africa and the world. We are inspired to quote Thomas Sankara, the revolutionary son of Africa, who declared:

"The revolution and women's liberation go together. We do not talk of women's emancipation as an act of charity or out of a surge of human compassion. It is a basic necessity for the revolution to triumph. Women hold up the other half of the sky."

Similarly, Oliver Tambo, the longest-serving president of the African National Congress, emphasised the importance of gender equality and women's participation in the liberation war. He said:

"The mobilisation of women is the task, not only of women alone, or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike, comrades in struggle. The mobilisation of the people into active resistance and struggle for liberation demands the energies of women no less than of men"

Cde. Jessie, a passionate revolutionary, devoted her leadership service to the cause of women's liberation, and until her death, she remained a crucial voice in furthering women's leadership within the ANC and in society as a whole. No one could take away Cde. Jessie's desire to recognise and promote the rights of all women.

In Cde. Jessie Duarte, the illuminating and empowering spirit of our heroines lived and lit the path of our revolutionary struggle to achieve gender equality, human rights, and women's leadership in our society.

She gallantly walked the path of great women leaders who inspired the cause of our liberation struggle and freedom.

She ran her race in the footsteps of great stalwarts such as Charlotte Maxeke, Lillian Ngoyi, Victoria Mxenge, Albertina Sisulu, Adelaide Tambo, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and countless other women leaders in the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement whose lives were dedicated to the liberation struggle and service to the people of South Africa.

Without a doubt, Cde. Jessie's name will be inducted and immortalised into the illustrious liberation history of women struggle heroines with all of the outstanding women leaders South Africa has produced over the years.

To honour her, we must continue the journey she began as a youth activist in the Westbury and Newclare neighbourhoods of Johannesburg, when she forsaken her career as a Management Accountant to enter the world of heroic activism and hard politics.

Since then, and throughout the rest of her adult life, Cde. Jessie has been a woman of strength and fortitude. She drew this strength from iconic leaders of our Movement such as Mama Albertina Sisulu, who recruited her back in 1979 to establish women's structures throughout the whole country.

In her memory, we must now run with the baton to deepen women's empowerment and broaden access to developmental opportunities for women, children, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI community, and all other marginalised sectors of our society.

The ANC will continue to elevate and foreground the critical leadership role of women at all levels. Despite progress made to date in the representation of women in ANC leadership, legislatures and government, there is no question that more work still needs to be done to advance gender equality.

Equally, we must win the war against Gender-Based Violence, and Femicide, child abuse and killings in our communities. Her relentless spirit must propel us to win the war against crime, corruption and social ills that beset our country.

It is her resilient spirit that must guide us in the fight to defeat poverty and unemployment, and build a better future for the youth in our country.

Building a stronger and united ANC

As part of the top leadership echelons of the African National Congress, Cde. Jessie Duarte was unwavering in the pursuit of organisational renewal and unity within the Movement to build a stronger organisation with requisite capabilities to lead society and improve the lives of ordinary people.

Cde. Jessie Duarte, like her hero Nelson Mandela, laboured to develop a unified ANC that is in touch with the people, compassionate, responsive, and capable of resolving societal concerns.

With her political acumen and composure, Cde. Jessie Duarte guided the Movement on a righteous path. She battled for the regeneration of the Movement to remain relevant, and in touch with the people and society in general. The ANC lived and was led by her.

Our task as the ANC volunteers and leadership, is to work hard to regain lost ground in order to restore the waning confidence of the people in the ANC as a leader of society. To re-emerge as a strong transformative and revolutionary force, we must eliminate destructive internal fractures that undermine organisational renewal and unity.

In her memory, we should never let the ANC crumble because of our selfish behaviour. We should never allow disagreements and preferences of leadership to tear our organisation into pieces. In Comrade Jessie's name, we must protect the unity of the ANC at all costs.

We must never relent, instead her departure calls upon all of us to go back to the basics, to the core principles of our Movement as entrenched in the Freedom Charter.

As leaders and members of the ANC, we must all understand that in all our work, the people are at the centre. Our mere existence is defined by our ability to serve the people with commitment and diligence.

It is not about our personal interests, leadership positions, and wanton accumulation of resources in the sea of poverty around us.

Strengthening the capacity of government

Comrades, there is no doubt that a stronger ANC will lead to enhancing government's capabilities to implement policy choices and socio-economic programmes that transform the lives of South Africans for the better.

Cde Jessie served in various government leadership roles with commitment and diligence to make her contribution towards improving the lives of communities. She distinguished herself as an accomplished, service delivery-orientated administrator within government.

In all of her deployments, she embodied the servant leadership philosophy that must continue to characterise all ANC deployees in all aspects of development. To develop and maintain a better life for all, we must ensure that public service delivery improves and satisfies community expectations.

Her relentless spirit of service to the people must drive all of us as leaders and public representatives at all levels to do better in serving communities.

Among the many leadership hats that Cde. Jessie wore in service to her people and government was that of South Africa's Ambassador to the Republic of Mozambique, where she exemplified a caring diplomat, ensuring that both of our countries enjoy cordial relations forged through the blood and iron of our respective liberation struggles.

She received and led many delegations on behalf of the democratic Republic of South Africa. It was through this role that she acquired more interest in international politics and the affairs of nations. Her desire for peace and unity were to become an inseparable part of her life.

She was an internationalist who stood in solidarity with the people of Palestine, Venezuela, Cuba, and all oppressed nations. For this, we honour her memory today as our nation's ambassador who built bridges of international solidarity with other nations of the world. All at times, she fought for freedom and international justice in defense of oppressed and marginalised nations.

To all comrades and friends, we reiterate that the spear has fallen. Ours is to pick it up and continue with the fight for a National Democratic Society envisaged in the NDR.

As we bid farewell to Cde. Jessie Duarte, we offer our gratitude once more to her family for sharing her with the ANC, the Mass Democratic Movement, and the entire nation.

Collectively, we can state with pride that she lived as a revolutionary, a community member, a sister, a mother, a grandmother, and a comrade we all strive to be. She has provided us with the narrative for a credible cadre to read.

Go well Cde. Jessie! Lala kahle Mkhonto!

END

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