

Thank you very much, program director, ntate John morapama

Amalunga omundeni, abafowabo nodadewabo, izingane zakhe, nabangani

Abafundisi

Detawu national leadership

Saftu Mpumalanga provincial convener cde Oupa Msiza and comrades from our sister Unions

Ubuholi bendawo obukhona ngaphakathi kwethu

Detawu officials, shop stewards, and members

Comrades from Satawu present here today.

Nawo wonke amalunga womphakathi akhona ahlanganyele kunye nathi namhla nje

Facebook and you tube livestream viewers

It is with the utmost respect to extend my humble greetings to you all in loving memory of comrade David Khambule.

I am honoured and privileged to deliver this eulogy in the name of our fallen hero comrade David Khambule.

Uwile umtho manzi, yalala inkomo isengwa madoda, wadubuka unojingo abantwana bedlala, angena amanzi endlini.

I am reminded of William Shakespeare's writings and remember Marc Antony when he was speaking at Julius Caesar's funeral, and I quote

"I come to bury Ceaser not to praise him, the evil that men do live after them, the good is oft interred with their bones. So let it be with bones."

I too, and my comrades we come here not to praise cde David but to heavy heartedly bury him and comfort his family, children, and friends.

It was on Friday 15 October at exactly 10h58 am when I missed a phone call from our Administrator in Ermelo comrade Promise Jele.

Out of desperation, she sent me a message breaking the sad news that comrade David Khambule has ceased to breathe.

I was at Detawu head office at the time preparing a meeting with the Union's auditors which was scheduled on the same day.

In a moment of disbelief, I called comrade Promise back to verify the message which was unfortunately confirmed to be true and for a moment I become disoriented with a sunken hollowness in my gut.

After the call, I thought to myself what a loss, why David? but at the same time, I took comfort that he had lived and we were lucky enough to have been part of his life.

In my state of loss and despair, I immediately called off the meeting with the auditors as I knew I could not cope.

I have known and worked with comrade David for more than 17 years, dating back from our time at our previous Union, SATAWU. I met him in his late twenties in 2004.

I am proud to say that I introduced comrade David to the Trade Union movement and mentored him as a shop steward at Command Security in Witbank.

I was immensely impressed by his boldness which bordered on arrogance and by his bravery. I said to myself this is a future leader, this is the type of trade unionist you need to effectively defend workers.

In 2005, he was elected as a local secretary of the Witbank local, I was still an organiser at that time. From then on, comrade David continued to prove himself as an up-and-coming leader till his last day.

In 2007, I employed him as a Union official at Satawu in Secunda. This was a further intent of demonstrating the trust and confidence in his potential and capabilities.

His employment in the Union was met with resistance and serious fight by those who held a view that his employment was irregular.

I on behalf of the province eventually won this fight because I demonstrated that his employment was proper.

Comrade David was then confirmed as an employee of the Union and the rest is history.

I must say that comrade David's untimely departure has greatly upset the Union leadership succession plans and I know that my president shares this sentiment with me if not the entire leadership.

Those who have interacted with comrade David would agree that comrade David liked finer things in life. He liked to look good and immaculate at all times. One could even call him fashionista of note - unlike most of us trade Unionists and I tried to learn one or two things from him but I just could not keep up with his pace. I used to call him Mr boyfriend.

Cde David was a jolly good fellow.

When I left the Satawu on 24 August 2015, ironically comrade David was put in to replace me as a Mpumalanga Provincial Secretary and when things did not work out for him politically, just like me his comrades ejected him from the Union, he followed me to join Detawu. We warmly welcome him in the Union.

I regarded this as a family reunion.

The reality is that given cde David's immense potential, he could have gone elsewhere than coming to a young and small Trade Union like Detawu. Instead, he chose to follow me and lend his hand in building Detawu in Mpumalanga for which we remain ever grateful.

In August 2018, comrade David requested to meet me, we met at the Union head office. He made a lot of confessions at that meeting and he apologised for his uncalculated judgments and misdemeanors.

I unequivocally forgave him as we both understood the context and epoch. We agreed to put everything behind us and unite to build Detawu.

I promised him that I would not divulge nor share our conversation with anyone else, and I am still committed to the promise, I will not take advantage now that comrade David has left before me, the envelope shall remain sealed for good.

However, our reconciliation caught many people by surprise because no one could have anticipated it. That is how much comrade David could trust me in particular, that is how much he had grown to appreciate the reality of the situation.

Comrade David did not have a static mindset plus he was scientific in approach.

The valuable meeting with cde David at Detawu head office helped me to understand certain things that I did not understand at that time, it gave me an insight into why some people were behaving in the manner they did. He brought peace to me.

Thereafter, comrade David and I discussed a lot of work-related issues including those that were at a personal level.

He used to share with me a lot of ideas on how we can best build DETAWU to be the Union of choice. Sadly, he died with our conversations and most of his views not tested.

We are not here to bury a saint nor an angel. We are here to bury a human being who had his mistakes, some of which were fundamental.

Comrade David remained a comrade through and through, he remained the architect of worker's struggles till the last gasp of his breath, he succumbed with his boots on.

He earned himself a rightful place in our hearts. We will forever refer to him as a comrade. He stayed true to the course till his last days of life. He did not cross the floor, nor did he commit class suicide.

As Detawu we are shuttered and in disbelief, we are struggling with the idea of bidding farewell to someone from whom so much was still expected. Ngempela baqinisile uma bethi isitsha esihle asidleli.

Detawu shall be poorer without comrade David and the knock-on effect organisationally, Mpumalanga will feel the ripple effect of his untimely departure.

We are clinging to the belief that leaders such as comrade David do not die, but they multiply. We, therefore, look into the horizon waiting for our David to arrive. Comrade David shall give us another David and if he does not, we will keep on reminding him.

We are here to bury comrade David not to praise him. We are not here to mourn for we know that if comrade David was amongst us, he would jokingly say, comrades, do not mourn for me but build the Union.

He would be disappointed to see us sobbing and mourning. He would softly whisper to me bakhuze nobhala.

We are here to comfort the family as they try to deal with this ordeal, more so when comrade David's departure was so sudden, all death is painful but this one cut deeper to the core.

We are here to comfort and remind the family that God gives at his pleasure and God takes at his moment.

We are here not to cry but celebrate comrade David's well-lived life and appreciate as well as express gratitude to comrade David for all the countless contributions he made towards building our Union.

He has gracefully handed over the button to us for he has run his race. In his honour, we call upon all in the Union to intensify our efforts to make operation khula Detawu a success.

It would be a betrayal of comrade David's soul, sacrifices, and hard work if we do not work hard to change the status quo. If we do not give more impetus on operation khula Detawu, we would not be hounering our comrade.

We need to up our game in defending and fighting for workers who are daily subjects of workplace abuse, exploitation, and underpayment.

Comrade David would not mind out of the blue to talk to me about the need to build a strong Union to build a solid worker's voice. I am convinced that comrade David was loyal and committed to workers' struggles and challenges because he would contact me out of the blue as he did on 01 May this year at 07h34 pm.

He sent me a detailed WhatsApp message and said

“ I have been observing a number of aspects in relation to the growth of the Union and I have discovered the following :

It is common that at a certain time we need to tell workers exactly what they want to hear we need to take a stand and have our own preferred minimum salaries in all sectors we organize to draw attention from workers i.e. Road freight R20 000 basic salary per month, security R10 000.00 basic salary per month, cleaning R8 000.00 basic salary per month, I know this may sound like a populist statement but the GS would know that AMCU succeeded on it, the whole mining and construction sectors bought in the idea and suddenly they had a sudden membership growth. Your previous interview with Sakina was a

massive step forward but we need to step up build from that hype. WHAT IS YOUR VIEW?"

Comrade David understood very well that it would take a strong Detawu to push back against these ills, that is why he was obsessed with recruitment and networking with comrades in various places to join forces and drive the project of building Detawu.

On 05 April this year, cde David and I were discussing challenges facing the Union, that same evening at 07h50, he sent me a Kelly Khumalo song titled Ngiyathemba Uyabona.

For the first time, I listened attentively to the lyrics right and I learned that the song goes on to say “

Ngiyethemba uyabona sofela khona empini

Ngeke basikhone

Lingashon' emini

Ahh awazi abantu abayifuni intwenhle

Bayamangaza bakulimaza bakbuke' emehlweni

Abanye abantu umgosi baphila ngawo

Ubezwe bethi awusinike amagqaba ntshintshi

After listening to the song, I called him and I asked he had chosen it, the answer is history.

His last WhatsApp message to me was on 03 October 2021 and this is what he said,

“Hi cde GS,

“Mandla Nkosi Satawu shop steward from Fidelity down in Mbombela has joined our forces, he is much known in Bohlabela region (Bushbuckridge) and he is requesting Detawu to assist with funds to move around these areas especially for recruitment. A formal request has been sent to your office amadla!!”

It is such acts and examples like these that make us hold comrade David in very high esteem that distinguishes him from all of us and make him a wise organiser.

Comrade David as you depart from this land to a place of those who departed before you, please guide us with a clear message on what to do to successfully build the strong DETAWU you wished for. We demand that you must give us a signal because we want to emulate you.

Less than a month ago, comrade David was hijacked on his way to CCM in Emalahleni to represent workers. He was locked in the boot of his car for more than 11 hours. He suffered severe trauma for the sake of rendering service to members. He did not wake up and quit, he stayed put till the end.

He sent me a message on Sunday 26 September 2021 and said;

“Hi cde GS.

I was hijacked and kidnapped Thursday on my way to CMM in Witbank, I lost my phone. Was kept in the boot of my car for almost 11 hours but I think I am ok now though still battling with trauma. Please be alert South African roads are not safe”

Less than 3 weeks later, comrade David died under the circumstance that is not easy to understand and explain.

We shall rightfully claim you as one of our ancestors as we pursue the task you left with us. We claimed you when you were alive and well, we shall rightfully claim you in your permanent resting place because we know you shall not forsake us, it is for these reasons, we shall forever commemorate the 14 October 2021 as an important day in our organisation.

We will carry to new battlefronts the faith and perseverance you taught us, to fight against all odds and to appear strong when we are weak and weak when we are strong to confuse the enemy. We are not naïve to believe that enemies exist only outside but they could be inside as well.

I have so much to say to you my comrade but words fail me for what has happened has happened.

I do not doubt that workers lost an ally, workers have lost a human shield, in cde David Detawu lost a soldier and a strategist. The wound is so deep.

Ernesto Cher Guevara, one of Cuba’s finest revolutionaries thought us that the revolution can only produce 2 things in life, a criminal or a selfless leader in society. I can confidently say in cde David the revolution produced a leader to the end.

We thank your family comrade David for permitting us to take charge of your last event.

Hamba kahle comrade David, ufike usikhonzele phambili and inform the other working-class leaders who departed before you that worker’s challenges are still not resolved instead the situation is worsening.

Tell them that the promise of a better life for all remains a dream deferred. Tell them that security workers are still way below the R10 000.00 pay you envisaged.

Tell them that cleaners are still earning far below a decent wage. Tell them that transport workers are still earning below the R20 000 you envisioned.

Tell them that Greyhound workers are unemployed due to unfair retrenchments because employers have become so emboldened under the current leadership.

Tell them that workers’ struggles have been severely dealt a blow because most Bargaining Councils are employer’s dominant and thus weakened to the lowest state.

Tell them that it took the metal Industry workers almost 3 weeks on the streets just to receive a 6% pay hike. Tell them that workers are still cramped in squalors, without water and electricity, depending on the bucket system.

Tell them that the idea of one industry one union, one country one federation has been completely taken off the ladder.

Tell them that workers' right to strike has been heavily bureaucratized.

Tell them that our leaders are assassinating each other to rearrange the deployment list and the eating order. Tell them that corruption has gotten so rife to appoint that it has become normal.

Tell them that working-class children are dying in pit toilets in schools.

Tell them that whites are still mistaking us baboons, they shoot us and get bail or get slapped on the wrist warnings.

Tell them that the party of Chriss Hani and Joe Slovo has taken off the red overalls and the red socks, it has been integrated into the gravy train.

Please tell them that workers are more bruised today than when they left us.

We mandate you cde David to please meet our founding president cde June Dube and brief him that his Union Detawu is still alive and well though not growing as he would like, make him aware that comrades are trying their best. Make him comfortable, put him at ease.

Ufike usho on our behalf ukuthi kubi, kunzima la, abasebenzi bayahlupheka.

As I bid my farewell to you, my comrade, I am still aggrieved that you left too soon before we could finalise your move to the people's team, Orlando pirates to save you from the torture your team puts you through weak in weak out.

Cde David had a very funny character, a few years ago, in 2005 cde David and myself travelled together to Durban to join the Cosatu 20th anniversary celebrations.

We slept at Blue waters hotel. In the morning we went down for breakfast together. He stood up to dish himself a yogurt and come back. He used a fork to eat yogurt instead of a spoon or a teaspoon.

I started laughing out loud and he asked me what is wrong comrade. I told him that chief you do not use a fork to eat yogurt.

He sincerely apologised and begged me not to tell the story because is embarrassing.

We went back to our rooms to fetch our luggage to check out. We agreed that we will meet at the foyer.

I got to the foyer first and waited a bit longer before he could show up. I confronted him, I said chief what caused the delay, he told me he was busy making up his bed. I laughed out loud and said to him, chief you are not required to make up your bed at

the hotel, there are people assigned for that. he answered arrogantly and said is fine cde but okusalaya the bed is mad up,

We joked about it all the way back to Witbank but I never told anyone as I promised except now as I bid farewell to him.

In conclusion, I pledge, we shall do our best to protect and improve on the legacy you left behind at your Union. We hope you shall give us courage, strength, and protection to do so.

Emndenini, siyazi lobuhlungu lobu banamhla nje buyezwela kakhulu, anithulanga nje, niyasho ngaphakathi eyinhlizweni zenu nithi asiphelelanga kushoda UDavid.

Sinifisela wonke amandla okubhekana nokudlula kalula kulesisimo.

Sithi duduzekani akwehlanga lungehlanga, Lalani ngenxeba bakwethu.

Kwangathi uNkulunkulu anganipha Amandla okuqina nenduduzo.

Siyabonga kakhulu ukusipha isikhathi no comrade David, siyethemba nizomkhulula ahambe ngokuthula, ngokukhulu ukuziqhenya nazi ukuth isikhathi esincane asicithe la emhlabeni uyibekile induku ebandla.

Sohlala njalo sikuthanda futhi sikukhumbula.

Long live the spirit of cde David Khambuke long live.

Long live DETAWU long live

Thank you very much, program director