

Opening Remarks by Ambassador Thulani Dlomo

Delivered at Asahi University

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It is my heartfelt honour and privilege to deliver a lecture on this august institution of higher learning. My lecture today is premised on the “life and legacy” of the former democratic President of the Republic of South Africa, It is, therefore, with great honour and a deep sense of pride that I stand before you today, to celebrate a life of a peace loving statesman of all times. Nelson Mandela and peace are identical.

Distinguish Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

This year, 2018 marks the centenary of Former President Nelson Mandela. Had Madiba, as he was affectionately known (by his clan name), been alive he would have been a hundred years old this year.

South Africa and the International community will be this year, be celebrating the life of this great icon, hence I am grateful in giving this lecture at this Prefecture known for its craftsmanship.

In a moving eulogy on the occasion of his memorial service, then President of the United States of America, President Barack Obama has the following to say:

Quote

“To the people of South Africa - people of every race and walk of life - the world thank you for sharing Nelson Mandela with us. His struggle was your struggle. His triumph was your triumph. Your dignity and hope found expression in his life, your freedom, and your democracy is his cherished legacy”.

“It is hard to eulogize any man - to capture in words not just the facts and the dates that make a life, but the essential truth of a person - their private joy and sorrows; the quiet moments and unique qualities that illuminate someone’s soul. How much harder to do so for a giant of history, who moved a nation toward justice, and in the process moved billions around the world”.

Unquote

Born during World War I, far from the corridors of power, a boy raised herding cattle and tutored by elders of his Thembu tribe- Madiba would emerge as the last great liberator of the 21st century.

President Nelson Mandela gave a potent voice to the claims of the oppressed, and the moral necessity of racial justice. This ultimately led to his incarceration in 1963. At his trial in 1964, Madiba had the following to say:

Quote

“I have fought against white domination and I have also fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die”

Unquote

Distinguish guests, ladies and gentleman,

President Mandela taught and inspired us about the power of action, but also ideas; the importance of reasoning and arguments; the need to study not only those you agree with, but those who you disagree with.

He understood that ideas cannot be contained by prison walls, or extinguished by a sniper's bullet. To validate the importance of education, Madiba said the following: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

Madiba turned his trial into an indictment of apartheid because of his eloquence and passion, but also his training as an advocate. He used decades in prison to sharpen his arguments, but also to spread his thirst for knowledge to others in the movement, the African National Congress (ANC). Madiba learned the language and customs

of his oppressor so that one day he might better convey to them how their freedom depended upon his.

Distinguish guests, ladies and gentleman,

As we celebrate the centenary of Madiba this year, we draw aspirations and lessons from his exemplary life and vision which accorded him the status of world icon, consummate diplomat and sportsman, to name a few.

The former and latter have played a key role in unifying South Africans from different historical background, colour or creed. Sports Diplomacy is an integral part of the South African society and has been recognised in the international community.

It was during 1995 and 1996 when Madiba enhanced unity in diversity through sport. It was for the first time in the history of South Africa that sport has achieved so much more than round table discussion.

Madiba's life tells us a story of a man who was willing to risk his own life for what he believed in, and who worked hard to lead the kind of life that would make the world a better place.

An Australian Scholar once said: "Sport endures as a powerful diplomatic tool that can sublimate conflict, promote comity between

old and new enemies, break down stereotypes and stimulate more tolerant attitudes. Working in tandem with traditional diplomacy, sport is therefore no longer a niche area 'below' government but an increasingly relevant soft power tool for modern diplomacy".

The value of sport cannot be over emphasised, particularly in peace building and nationhood.

Madiba faced those days as well. But even when little sunlight shined through into his prison cell on Robben Island, he could still see a better future - one worthy of sacrifice. Even when faced with the temptation to seek revenge, he saw the need for reconciliation, the triumph of principle over mere power. Even when he had earned his rest, he still inspires his fellow men and women to offer their service for the good course.

Ladies and gentleman

On a personal note, over the years I continued to watch Nelson Mandela with a sense of admiration and humility, inspired by the sense of possibility that his own life demonstrated and awed by the sacrifices necessary to achieve his dream of justice and equality.

Indeed, his life tells a story that stands in direct opposition to the cynicism and hopelessness that so often afflicts our world. A prisoner became a free man; a liberation figure became a passionate voice for

reconciliation; a party leader became a president who advanced democracy and development.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Madiba's as well as South Africa's history wouldn't be so poignant without the help and support of the international community.

It is for this reason that we extend our debt of gratitude to the Japanese people and the entire world for supporting us during the darkest days in the history our struggle for freedom and justice.

Having been incarcerated for 27 years on Robben Island, upon his release from prison, Madiba had this to say: "For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respect and enhances the freedom of others".

In closing, I wish to appeal to all, to please visit South Africa; we have a well-developed infrastructure, world class banking system, stunning weather, beautiful touristic attraction sites, and most importantly a warm hearted nation, with a diverse rich heritage and culture.

God bless South Africa and I thank you!!

Arigato Guzaimasu!