

WHEN GLOBALIZATION TIES THE FATE OF THE MALUTI TO THAT OF THE ICE CAPS ON THE ALPS, WHAT DOES MORENA MOSHOESHOE TEACH US ABOUT LEADERSHIP TODAY?

The 2nd King Moshoeshoe Memorial Lecture

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As we sit here tonight, exactly 32 years ago a young man of 29 lay in urine-soaked blankets in a cell in Port Elizabeth's Sanlam building, the headquarters of the then-misnomered security police. Moves were afoot to fill the Land Rover with petrol and load him so he could be driven that long distance to Pretoria, where he would die in a cold cell from brain damage.

Bantu Steve Biko's crime, for which he was killed, was to love his people so much that he was not prepared to sit idly by and see racism and oppression continue. He raised his voice and his fist, he stood up, he fought back, he mobilized and cajoled. For when he and his comrades declared that black was beautiful, they were effectively saying blackness was a thing to be loved, not loathed, and he set about to make that happen.

The system that was to eventually kill him and many other patriots was based on the lie that whiteness was closer to godliness, that Africa was home to nothing of value prior to the arrival of these settlers. Biko spoke truth to that lie, and showed in his argument that Africa was a peaceful place that even God saw as the only place to hide his son from the marauding gangs of Herod.

One can almost see Biko arguing that the intellectual capital of Africa actually produced the famed mathematicians of Greece such as Pythagoras, who studied his maths in the Egypt of the Nubians. He would have shown that only great mathematicians could build the pyramids with their labyrinth of tunnels to the graves, or the symmetry of the great Zimbabwe buildings. He would have spoken with pride about the Timbuktu centres of learning that produced the manuscripts that predate colonialism. Biko would have shown that African leadership was not just about the caricatures of the Idi Amin and present-day Mugabe, but about honourable, honest leaders who loved their people and ruled over Africa many years ago.

Leaders such as Morena Moshoeshoe, whose life we gather here tonight to not only remember and to honour but to hopefully learn from. If, in victory, Morena Moshoeshoe could provide the defeated Mzilikazi with food for the road, what kind of leadership was he providing for his own people?

Leadership is the art of the possible. It is the ability to see a benefit that lies beyond the obvious and then take calculated risks which if successful, bring you the prize. But it is a risk all the same because

there are no guarantees. In the scenario of Morena Moshoeshoe supplying Mzilikazi with food for his way home, the possibility of Mzilikazi seeing this as a sign of weakness was always there.

In which case, Mzilikazi could have been encouraged to come back for more and more. After all, all he needed to do was to pretend to be going up Thaba Bosiu and he would be given some cattle. But Morena Moshoeshoe read the man's mind and was prepared to take his risks.

Or look at the case when Morena Moshoeshoe argued with his men who were intent on killing the men who had turned cannibals and had eaten his grandfather. Bringing the man eaters into the fold could not have been a walk-in-the-park argument by Morena Moshoeshoe, but he did it and won the day.

But he was not always like this. This out-of-the-box thinking was a new phenomenon for him, an acquired approach as it were. For indeed as extraordinary a man and leader that he was, he started off differently. Growing up with ambition to lead, he was a formidable foe to many small clans who fell victim to his cattle-raiding escapades. Until he went to see the philosopher and healer, Ntate or is it Professor, Mohlomi, at Modilwe near what is today known as Ficksburg. Ntate Mohlomi taught him that leadership is not about being feared but being respected and loved for what you are able to do, through peace not war.

Dr LBBJ Machobane, a historian at the University of Lesotho, feels Ntate Mohlomi is not given his due in history because the interaction between the two men represented Morena Moshoeshoe's own Damascus experience. Morena Moshoeshoe went into Ntate Mohlomi's academy a leader on the prowl, looking for better advice about how to perfect conquest, but came out, weeks later, a leader after peace.

Thus from this point on we see a leader who looks for the less violent way out of sticky situations but is not a pacifist all the same. For when he realized that the firepower of the settlers was superior to his, he courted the missionaries in the hope that through them he would gain access to guns. Which he did.

In this he reminds me of King Makhado Tshilwavhusiku tsha ha Ramabulana, the Lion of the North, who when faced with a similar problem from settlers in Venda, befriended them to a point where he became their lead hunter who would go out hunting elephants in the north with his own armed group of black assistants. And as many tusks as he brought back, as many were the days when he would return empty-handed, without even the rifles, reporting that elephants had chased them and they had lost everything.

The truth was in fact different. All the "lost" guns were stashed at Songozwi, Makhado's own Thaba Bosigo, and used effectively when the time was right, defeating the settlers and razing their settlement in Schoemansdaal outside what is today Louis Trichardt or Makhado town. But I digress.

Diplomats today speak of no "permanent friends" but "permanent interests". This means that a country should not mortgage its own interests to a perceived friendship with some country. You work with someone because your interests will be served at that time, not just because they are your friends.

Morena Moshoeshoe understood this clearly. Many a time we see him use this approach to good effect. When the descendants of Dutch settlers settled near the Caledon River and became a nuisance, Morena Moshoeshoe went into a pact with the British, who helped him repulse the new settlers.

But when the British became a problem themselves and attacked him, he fought them and defeated **the** army of Sir George Carthcart. Then again, we see the genius of Morena Moshoshoe: His magnanimity in victory was a message of apology for being “defeated” and asking the British not to ever punish his people again. The peace that followed led to a pact that eventually saw Britain taking full responsibility for the protection of Basotho from the Afrikaner settlers. He knew when to use diplomacy and when to fight.

Again, when he realized that King Shaka was a formidable opponent, he sent emissaries to say he wanted to pay homage to the great one but was being stopped by some upstart called Matiwane. King Shaka dealt with Matiwane to open the road for Morena Moshoeshoe to bring gifts.

The fact that Matiwane had until that time been terrorizing ban ba Morena through persistent raids was detail that Morena Moshoeshoe felt was unnecessary to bother King Shaka with. The story of homage and gifts was enough, he reckoned.

All of these acts and strategies were so that his people could have peace; for through peace came stability and progress. And it was peace not only as in the absence of war from without, but peace from within that he strived for. This latter aspect was a result of a genuine democratic order based on a belief in discussion and consensus. I am sure decisions in the dipitso were by what came to be known at the Kempton Park Codesa talks as “sufficient consensus”.

But the pitso were not just a one-day imbizo as we see present-day SA rulers do them with their trademark white tents and choreographed programmes. These pitso, according to Ntate Tsediso Ramakhula, a Lesotho historian and storyteller who spoke to Max du Preeze in the documentary Morena Moshoeshoe, were parliamentary sessions that went for days, where the deliberations resulted in law. Whatever was agreed to became the new laws of the land that guided how Basotho conducted their lives and how they related to each other.

And just as in our present-day Parliament, Parliamentary privilege and immunity from prosecution for whatever was said in the kgotla or pitso or parliament was enshrined. Thus we find the saying: *“Mowa kgotla ha a tsekiswe... Moro khotla ha o okolwe mafura.”* It is the clearest commitment to Freedom of Expression as a cornerstone of the rule of Morena Moshoeshoe: just as it is enshrined in our own constitution today.

Morena Moshoeshoe’s leadership approach was not merely for peace. All of his efforts were underpinned by an understanding that Basotho were part of a bigger humanity and that their fate and survival was intertwined with those of others, whether these be Mzilikazi, Shaka or the British and their Dutch friends.

It is called an internationalism of leadership or leadership in a globalised world. Today, the emissions of CFC and other chemicals throughout the industrialized world are affecting everyone. Global warming knows no boundaries. The weather patterns that see the melting of the ice on the Swiss Alps, are affecting the rain patterns of Maluti and Thaba Bosiu.

It is in these circumstances that we need the leadership qualities of Morena Moshoeshe. What would he do when so many in Lesotho today live in abject poverty and are reliant on a state that is itself dependent on Customs Union payouts for more than 50% of its internal revenue? To put it more succinctly, M 4 billion of the M 7 billion of total revenue is from SACU, and only 19,6% from Income Tax and 11,1 % from non tax revenues. (*Lesotho Ministry of Finance and Development Planning*)

Morena Moshoeshe, I assert, would argue that the Kyoto Agreement should be signed by all to ensure the major contributors of CFC are forced to cut back now, not in 50 years. He would argue that global financial institutions should assist less powerful nations to survive the global meltdown. He would call a pitso of world leaders to find consensus on what to do to save mankind. He would strive for self reliance not only of nations but of individual people and citizens.

It would effectively be the opposite of what we have in our country today, where the South African government prides itself in the fact that 12 million people or is it now 13 million now access social grants. And our leaders say this with pride, as if an inability by citizens to feed, house and clothe themselves and thus become reliant on state handouts, is a virtue?

Let me ask a few more pertinent questions to make my point.

- If Morena Moshoeshe's leadership was underpinned by love for others and for self, is our government displaying love when it builds houses for us and not with us? I am not even talking about the quality of the houses, just the principle.
- Is present government policy empowering people or disempowering them, if a lady in KZN who has a broken window on her RDP house suffers the pain of gusting winds in winter because she thinks the councilor who helped secure her the house must now come and fix her window?
- Have we internalized love for country and for that which is ours, if university students start by throwing stones before burning down buildings whenever there are arguments about whatever small an issue they may have with the administration?
- Closer to home, how is it that students who have spent time here at this university, this place of higher learning, can produce that video? Even if we were to accept that they are victims of family, community, and societal socialization which encouraged them to see black people as fair game for such treatment, did this university try and break that socialization when they arrived here? Or did it entrench it, even if unwittingly?
- But even more important for me, why did those Bo mme allow themselves to be treated like that? Would they have acquiesced if the students were black? Or would they have simply told them, *lata mmago o mo kope kgore a tlo matha*? Biko saw it all a long time ago, when he spoke about an inferiority complex inducing psychological and mental oppression. He asserted that unshackling the mind was a prerequisite for the physical, and that the latter was effectively

nothing if the mind was still in bondage. And so, even though Bo mme are physically free and probably even voted for the ANC, they remain in mental bondage to a point where they allowed those boys to humiliate them like that. How do we free and empower them to stand up for their rights? That's the bigger problem because the humiliator is only able to go as far as the humiliated allows him to go, as Biko taught us.

- Why do so many black people vandalise their own public utilities and behave in such irrational ways as to steal chairs from a school where their own children then have to sit on the floor? Why did the Balfour people in Mpumalanga burn that library? What are they using now? Should another library now be built and stocked, and wait for the next wave of anger?
- Why do so many white people feel hatred for the new order when it freed them from the yoke of institutionalized hatred of others that apartheid taught them to feel?
- How is it that black teachers who are members of Sadtu in almost all cases have their children taught in schools where they know the teachers are not union members? Put differently, are black teachers so unsure of their capacity to teach their own children that they have to ship them to so-called previously Model C schools? Indeed, how is it possible that teachers see the best time to strike as two or three weeks before exams? Would they do it if their own children were not at the ex-Model C schools?
- Why are our public hospitals dirty places where only the poor with no alternative go to die?
- Why is a country like ours arguing about whether someone like judge John Hlophe in all honesty stands a chance to be appointed to the highest court of the land, given what is known about him?
- Where is the magnanimity in victory displayed by Morena Moshoeshe when a war rages within the ANC to locate and dislocate all those ANC members seen as either unwilling or unable to sing "that" song, or who supported "that" other man in that other year?

I have no intention of answering any of these questions save to say that something is seriously wrong when we become a nation of whom these questions can be legitimately asked. It means we have become a nation that has stopped thinking and taking responsibility.

Morena Moshoeshe teaches us that leadership is about taking decisions and taking risks. Not only as leaders but more especially as members of the community who would in his time gather in the pitso and make their views heard. Today, many of us in the economically abled class shrug our shoulders and buy our way out of the common space with its common problems.

Our kids go to private and semi-private schools because we know public schools are dysfunctional and we have neither the energy nor the inclination to help correct them. The poorest of the poor and our affection for them extends only to public meetings where we mouth socialist slogans. But in reality we want nothing to do with them and they have to fend for themselves.

When our suburbs are overrun by crime we raise the walls and install cameras and more lights inside and outside the perimeter while increasing the number of panic buttons that will bring private security running.

As long as this is the attitude, we are doomed. For the abled class, of whatever race, need to link up with the previously and still presently disadvantaged to force the system to use resources to bring progress to the poor. Not for them, but with them.

In other words, leadership has to be more than just the power of a mayor, premier, MEC or minister to dish out tenders to friends for projects that never get completed. Projects whose real legacy is the fact that the friend of the leader now drives a Hummer. We must be in serious trouble as a nation if the biggest and most potent enemy of the party that is going to rule until Jesus comes back, is defined by no less a person than Zwelinzima Vavi as “The Tender”.

“ The tender is the new enemy of our movement, not the Congress of the People or Helen Zille’s Democratic Alliance. It is crass materialism which is the most formidable enemy that we must confront and defeat. If we don’t, the revolution is going.” (Vavi: Sunday Times 23/9/2009)

All the while as people wallow in misery. Our ministers buy Million Rand a piece of bling wheels. Leadership has to be about people but it won’t happen unless people themselves insist on this.

The Dinokeng Scenarios released recently, and of which I was a part, paint three pathways in the fork on our road today. We can choose to walk apart..... or walk behind..... or walk together.....

The WALK APART scenario, is one of “reshuffled elites”. It is triggered by the failure of leaders across all sectors to deal with our critical challenges. This failure is the result of political factionalism and weak, unaccountable leadership, weak capacity in government departments, and tightening economic constraints that are not dealt with realistically or inclusively. Civil society increasingly disengages as public trust in public institutions diminishes. The state is increasingly bypassed by citizens, resulting in unaccountable groupings assuming power over parts of society. The gap between the leaders and the led widens. Citizens eventually lose patience and erupt into protest and unrest. The government, driven by its inability to meet citizens’ demands and expectations, blames imaginary third forces, responds brutally, and a spiral of resistance and repression is unleashed.

In brief, this scenario postulates that South Africa faces critical social and economic challenges especially related to unemployment and poverty, safety and security, education, and health. These challenges are now exacerbated by a global economic crisis. If we fail to recognize the severity of our challenges, and if we fail to address them, we will experience rapid disintegration and decline.

In the WALK BEHIND scenario, : it is a scenario where the state assumes the role of leader and manager. State planning and co-ordination are seen as central mechanisms for accelerating development and delivery to citizens, especially poor, unemployed and vulnerable people. The ruling party argues that strong state intervention in the economy is in accordance with global trends, and the electorate, concerned about the impacts of the global economic crisis, gives the ruling party a powerful mandate. Strong state intervention crowds out private initiative by business and civil society. The risks of this scenario are twofold: one is that the country accumulates unsustainable debt; the other is that the state becomes increasingly authoritarian.

In brief, State-led development cannot succeed if state capacity is seriously lacking. In addition, pervasive state intervention, where the state is everything and all else is subordinate, breeds complacency and dependency among the citizenry (Remember the number of state grants and the window waiting to be repaired). Strong state intervention crowds out private initiative by business and civil society.

The third, WALK TOGETHER, is a scenario of active citizen engagement with a government that is effective and that listens. It requires the engagement of citizens who demand better service delivery and government accountability. It is dependent on both the will and ability of citizens to organise themselves and to engage the authorities, and also on the quality of political leadership and its willingness to engage citizens. It entails a common national vision that cuts across economic self-interest in the short-term. This is not an easy scenario. Its path is uneven – there is robust contestation over many issues and it requires strong leadership from all sectors, especially from citizens. In short, we can address our critical challenges only if citizens' groups, business, labour and broader civil society actively engage with the state to improve delivery and enforce an accountable government.

The point of this last scenario is that leaders and followers are all engaged with the issues of the day and in finding solutions to society's problems. This is about concern for others and for self. It is about compassion in leadership and in society, it is about caring beyond own concerns. It is about being involved and engaged. These are the attributes that I feel King Moshoeshoe left us as a legacy of leadership. Leadership not only of the leaders but of the led.

In other words, it is not about what nate Ace Magashule wants to do, but what we will allow him to do. The ball, now as in the time of Thaba Bosigo, is in our court as citizens. Are we ready and prepared to play our role or shall we wait for the apocalypse to hit before we stand up? How will we respond as leaders- will we be like Morena Moshoeshoe? Will we learn how peace and stability are created?

How do we respond as citizens - as worthy of the leadership of great leaders, or as chickens who follow the example of weak leaders? Will we provide leadership when it is lacking, as the boys in that video could have done, or bo mme could have done? Will we promote and follow only good leadership.

Will we insist on good leadership? On a pitso and not a choreographed dance of reticence in our own lives , will we engage with the poor and hear them, as individuals and groups, and link up with them to create a society of peace, progress and stability? Can we do that with people and individuals we talk to everyday?

Can we, like Morena Moshoeshoe give the defeated cattle so they can walk away, or do we opt for vengeance and the hounding of the walking wounded?

Can we, like Biko, take the chance that right has to conquer evil no matter the odds, and push for a life where ideals are worth more than deals or tenders?

The answers, I am afraid, lie with you, and not me.