

REMARKS BY PREMIER MAKWETLA AT THE DINNER TO HONOUR SIPHO NGOMANE AND SIBUSISO VILANE

Mpumalanga Tourism and Hospitality Academy, Tekwane

26 JULY 2005

Program Director

Honourable MEC's present

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is said that, “ *The only place in the world where you will find success before hard work is in the dictionary* ”. Generally speaking, the word success is associated with hard work.

It is a marvelous opportunity to be here with you today as we salute two outstanding citizens of our province whose achievements have brought us enormous pride and jubilation amongst the people of Mpumalanga and our country as a whole.

Allow me to begin by evoking the words of one of Africa's finest writers of the postcolonial tradition, Ben Okri, when he writes in a collection titled ‘An African Elegy’:

“We are the miracles that God made

To taste the bitter fruit of Time.

We are precious.

And one day our suffering

Will turn into the wonders of the earth”

We are gathered here to celebrate inspirational achievement, to celebrate homegrown talent, indeed, quite correctly, to celebrate the resilience of the human spirit.

We all agree that there is little one can learn from doing nothing, so we create challenges and we find people who are prepared to accept them.

Sipho Ngomane and Sibusiso Vilane have done us all proud and in their example we are able to see that it's possible, as in Ben Okri's words, that “ *one day our suffering will turn into the wonders of the earth* ”.

We are gathered here to salute two young men whose success enables us to have confidence in the future of our province, our country.

Sibusiso and Sipho have both shown that young people are able to excel when given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Indeed our faith and optimism in our young people is not misplaced. The significance of their success is further amplified by the fact that not only are they from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, which made it so much more likely for them to face numerous obstacles on their way to success, but that they have become established as champions and conquerors in a harsh and highly competitive environment. Their achievements are worthy of recognition even at the global level.

Sipho Ngomane, we salute you for your success in long distance running. You showed us your abilities when you came second in the SA Marathon in February. Your efforts also bore fruit as you excelled in the Two Oceans, again coming second. Yet none of us could have expected that you would go even further, becoming the youngest ever winner of the Comrades behind the legendary Bruce Fordyce.

To you Mpumalanga owes a fortune as your success has once again brought the world's attention to our humble province. We are undoubtedly slowly becoming a winning province, despite the host of challenges we face.

Sibusiso Vilane, we salute you for your humility and outstanding courage and endurance. The first time you conquered Mount Everest, we all knew you did it for the African Renaissance, for the renewal of our continent. It was no coincidence that you achieved your fame, as the first black African to reach the top of Mount Everest, during the same year that the entire continent was celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Organization of African Union (OAU) and the birth of the African Union (AU).

Tonight, we are honouring Sibusiso Vilane's achievement as the first black man to climb the world's highest peak twice and by different routes. We wish to commend him also for turning the second assault on Mount Everest into an event that would profile various charities dedicated to children, both in our country and in Swaziland.

The achievements of Sibusiso Vilane and Sipho Ngomane will be recorded as important milestones that were to inspire the youth of our province to claw heroically onto the center stage of our country's sporting exploits.

We are confident that they will become role models to thousands of our youth and encourage them to be always aware that their immediate adverse conditions should not be an obstacle to success.

“Success is speaking words of praise,

In cheering other people's ways,

In doing just the best you can,

With every task and every plan,

It's silence when your speech would hurt,

Politeness when your neighbour's curt,

It's loyalty when duty calls,

It's courage when disaster falls,

It's patience when the hours are long,

It's found in laughter and in song,

It's in the silent time of prayer,

In happiness and in despair,

In all of life and nothing less,

*We find the thing we call **success** .”*

(Author Unknown)

Programmed Director, our province is endowed with an abundance of human talent, yet we have notably fallen behind with regard to competitive sports on the national scene in recent years.

This state of affairs is indeed not permissible, however there shall be no improvement for as long as we don't pay special attention to this matter.

I wish to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to the sponsors of the two champions, Harmony Mines and Bongani Lodge for Siphso and Sibusiso respectively, and to congratulate them for their spirit of social responsibility.

On our part as government we are fully conscious of the responsibility we carry to turn this challenging situation around. Our programme to roll-out sports and culture infrastructure in the province is an important component of our macro-social impact programmed, in spite of the ever competing interests in government resource allocation.

This aggression and enthusiasm must be collectively shared by both the provincial government and our municipalities. In this regard we cannot over-emphasise the need for all our municipalities to take serious the maintenance of our sporting facilities in all our councils, especially the infrastructure in the former white areas.

This must be accompanied by a comprehensive and concerted plan to improve access. No sporting facility in the province must be allowed to lie fallow and rot from under-utilisation.

In closing, I must urge you to continue in your sporting endeavours, don't give up! Go out and conquer the world. Success comes to those who keep on keeping on.

We must take courage from the great artists of the past, such as August Rodin who grew up in absolute poverty, three times his application to be admitted as a student in sculpture was turned down. This exalted artist spent many years earning a meager living, making ornamental decorations for buildings. Leonardo da Vinci, the illegitimate child of a peasant girl was poor, hungry and homeless, yet he became one of the greatest artists that ever lived.

Johann Sebastian Bach, again, as poor as a church mouse and without education, developed into one of the principal composers in the world. Ludwig von Beethoven left school at the age of 13 to become the family's breadwinner because his father was an alcoholic. Today their music is enjoyed by multitudes, their talents arguably define the ultimate in artistic expression in music for all humankind.

What all these artists had in common was their unwavering belief in themselves and their professional skills. Ultimately their integrity towards their work gave them fame and fortune. When people of character have their back to the wall, they fight.

Everyone of us is an artist in his own way and has experienced difficult times. This calls for dedication, integrity, the same enthusiasm and the same creativity. So let's get on with it. Let our province experience the bourgeoning of eminent young persons in the fields of culture, the arts and sport. Let opportunities for learning, culture and sport be open to all.

Forward to 2010 forward.

I thank you