

# THE DAY MANDELA DIED

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Today, 5th December 2015, South Africa and the rest of the world commemorate the second anniversary of the passing away of one, **Nelson R Mandela Madiba**. Arguably, the passing away of Madiba (memorial & burial), one of the greatest sons of Africa, can stand out as one of the most outstanding events of the decade so far.

I particularly remember the day Mandela died for a slightly different reason. Like many sons and daughters of the Barotse soil I was among the hundreds if not thousands of people who converged in Mongu to give a thunderous welcome to one of our own who in many ways and to many of us is a miniature Madiba among us, from a two months incarceration at Mwem beshi 'landlocked Island', one Clement Wainyae Sinyinda.

I was awakened that day by a phone call like many which followed it alerting me that Mongu Airstrip has become a hive of Zambia Police 'Force' activities since long before dawn. Swarms of policemen and women have been seen trooping in that direction possibly to seal off the place in an attempt to bar any Malozi enthusiasts from accessing it so as to give Rt Hon Sinyinda the fitting welcome he deserved.

The plane carrying Rt. Hon Sinyinda was scheduled to touch down at 14:55hrs but before midmorning the whole place was cordoned off by heavily armed police officers as if it was the scene of some hideous crime of the magnitude of the twin tower bombings in the USA. The Police mounted a serious road block near Mbikusita location (formerly known as Kapulanga, but popularly called Baghdad), stopping, questioning and blocking everyone who wanted to have access to the airstrip. By 14:30hrs when my colleagues and I successfully went through the road block because our vehicle was mistaken to be the one to pick Rt. Hon Sinyinda, a mammoth crowd was gathered by the road block chanting freedom songs and slogans as well as shouting unprintable obscenities to the Police who were largely perceived to be the symbol of oppression in Zambia-occupied Barotseland.

As soon as the sound of the aircraft carrying the Rt Hon was heard from a distance the uniformed men put up a strange and theatrical show as they ran to surround the airstrip as if the aircraft that was about to land was carrying a dangerous criminal who needed to be apprehended on touch down. For a moment I could see that Madam Sinyinda was gripped with fear that the husband was due for a dramatic re arrest. None of the handful people who had made it through the barriers to the airstrip were allowed to come anywhere close to the landing airplane except for about three to five very close relatives who included the wife and some members of the press also forced their way to the landing aircraft. The actual vehicle to carry Honourable Sinyinda had to be driven into the airstrip. The driver was given strict instruction to drive very fast and not to pass through Mongu town as was the programme of the organisers but to use the back street through Mbikusita to the Honourable's residence under very heavy police escort. After very few handshakes and hugs Honourable Sinyinda was ushered into the waiting vehicle and the marching orders were given as everyone else had to trot behind the convoy of Honourable Sinyinda sandwiched between vehicles carrying heavily armed men in uniforms while the rest of police officers were trotting on foot. The motorcade couldn't go through the point where the road block was mounted as the people would not b

udge and barricaded the road forcing the motorcade to stop as the people thronged the car carrying their beloved leader with some even climbing on top of the vehicle. It took police firing some gun shorts and teargas canisters to make the crowds scamper in all directions and allow the motorcade to continue on its fast and furious mission. The crowds soon realised the plot and made a turnaround making a chase of the convoy while others totally enraged by the police tactics responded by hitting back with missiles of stones as they chanted 'one man one stone'.

By the time my colleagues and I finally drove into the gate of the Honourable Sinyinda's residence, the place was already teeming with multitudes of people from literally all walks of life sloganeering and chanting freedom songs. One wonders how these people made it in such a short space of time racing with a cruising motorcade. All along the about 3km stretching, from Mungu airstrip to Honourable Sinyinda's residence, were hundreds of people all eager to get to the destination as those who had already made it. The uninvited police escort vehicles were packed all around the Honourable's residence.

Some youths went into the living room where the man of the day was trying to make himself comfortable in the midst of the confusion and grabbed him, taking him 'by air' as they say. They took him out of the house and even out of the wall-fence where the armed police officers were packed still in their full riot gear. The youths were chanting "Sinyinda ki wa luna"(Sinyinda is our man). What was very clear to me as I watched this spectacular event was the fact that the unarmed masses had no fear at all while the heavily armed cops were gripped with fear even as they clutched on to their weaponry. I kept thinking to myself through the formalities like the singing, welcoming remarks, prayers and speeches, could this be what the great Mandela meant when he said; "There comes a time when those whose rights are trodden upon have to choose between submission to the oppressors and fighting to regain their humanity." Or indeed when he said; "No people is perpetually too weak to stand up for its rights."

After a flamboyant introduction and invitation to the podium by Hon Mutungulu Wanga, the man of that moment rose to the occasion and delivered his prepared speech in Silozi, switching to English once in a while when he needed to emphasise a point that he wanted the media representatives present to get clearly. In hindsight, as I sit to reflect and go over the written speech that was delivered, I cannot but note some threads of sublime truths running through the entire speech, albeit so brief and to the point. He made constant and indeed generous reference to the wisdom of our forefathers as passed on to us from generation to generation through adages. The Hon Ngambela (as his supporters would love to refer to him other than 'former Ngambela') pledged continued commitment to the struggle when he said "... The matter that landed us in Mwembeshi Maximum Prison is a big and serious issue for which we are not ashamed, let alone regret. To the contrary it is one for which we are profoundly proud in accordance with one of our forefathers' adages that says "Mufanasaye ni muteeba; ta lyokwe ni mufa na mbuyuyu mukanwa .... In line with the wisdom embodied in these adages passed on to us by our forefathers, I wish to commit myself to continue without retreat even after my incarceration to fight for the rights of Barotseland and its peoples."

Even as I listened to these words and as I go over them again and again, these days, they strike a chord of resemblance to the famous words of Madiba at the famous trial when he said

at the conclusion of the Rivonia trial "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle for the African People. I have fought against White domination and I have 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"

As I took the long journey back home after the spectacular events of that memorable day and even as I tried to take some sleep at about midnight when I finally arrived at my humble home, the events of the day kept replaying themselves in my memory. Owing to that fact I had a terrible insomnia and no matter what trick I tried from the book I could not go to sleep. Finally I conceded defeat and pulled myself out of bed and made my way to the living room. I got the remote control and instinctively turned the TV on as I slumped into my sofa. My eyes immediately caught the words rolling at the bottom of the screen. "MANDELA IS DEAD!" "Oh no!" was my first reaction, but why not, the man had fought a good fight and finished his course; why not rest and await his crown?

I spent the rest of that night glued to my TV screen watching all kinds of tributes to the man the world loved; one who has been a living legend throughout his adult life. One who, though he is dead yet lives. The TV remained a great consolation to me through the next several days as the rest of the world joined me in grieving over my hero and a hero to many in the world including the world's most powerful man at the moment, Barrack Hussein Obama. The words of an Oceania saying were being vividly demonstrated; "A great Oak has fallen among us". Like they say when this happens it can spell doom to some smaller oaks growing nearby because the great oak may fall on them. But it also can mean that some smaller oaks could spring up and start their own journey of becoming the next great oak.

May the great soul of Madiba Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela forever rest in eternal peace (MHSRIEP) as they say but may what he stood for ever remain with us and may, many miniature Mandelas like our own Right Hon. Clement Wainyae Sinyinda stand up also to be counted among the great men of this continent – and the world, as the fight for a better and just world continues.