

Dr Tirhani Mabunda PhD Celebration Speaking Notes

- Program Director;
- To my wife Veronica, all my children, all my surviving siblings Alson, Gibson and Godfrey and their families.
- To my nephew Sthembiso. On a day like this, I wish my late father, sister and mother were here. May their souls rest in peace.
- To the extended Mabunda/Mafada family, va Mabunda, ni va ka Mabunda – nwina Vahlave;
- To all categories of my relatives, ngopfu-ngopfu va Kokwani va ka Mayimele;
- Eka vukosi lebyi hi kandziyeke haleno namutlha, ngopfu-ngopfu vukosi bya ka Chavalala/Homu vona vinyi va misava leyi hi nhlanganeke eka yona namutlha, ngopfu-ngopfu Ndhuna Mswazi mulanguteri wa muganga lowu xikolo xa Nyukani si simekiweke eka wona;
- To MEC Ishmael Kgetjipe and other government officials present here today, particularly Ms Kondi Machumele, the Circuit Manager of Klein Letaba Circuit;
- To the Mayor of Mopani District, the Mayor of Greater Giyani Municipality, other mayors present here and all councillors in our midst;
- To the NEC family, my co-shareholders Riyaz Hans, Hamza Cassim and Muneer Essa, the ED Eric Sambo, Interim Principal Nancy Mhlongo, Educators, Administrators, Support Staff, Learners and Parents;
- To all directors and staff members of TGH and subsidiaries; Dr Richard Chauke, TGH Corporate Services Director and currently Interim Managing Director of Rixaka Funerals; Vulani Mabunda, TGH Director of Research and Development; Vusi Sindane; TGH Director of Execution; Visham Naidoo; TGH Shareholder and CEO of the Taxi Scrapping Administrator; Ms Phathiswa Sefatsa; TGH Group Marketing Manager; Mrs Vutomi MabundaJones; TGH HR Chairperson and Director of Tirhani Construction, Tirhani Auctioneers and Fhufhani Aviation; Mr David Jones; Director of Tirhani Technologies and Akesa Technologies; Professor Richard Chinomona, Managing Director of the African Training Academy and School of Auctioneering; Dr Murunwa Makwarela, the Managing Director of African Wildlife Solutions; Eric Makhubele and Nato Ngobeni, Shareholders and Directors of Rixaka Funerals; Dr Anderson Nwuso, TGH's most recent recruit who is currently a Financial consultant; Habana Trading Shareholders Mohammed Paruk and Wesley Tendawupenyu.
- To all my international partners present here today, notably John Chan from Singapore, Benoit Bogaerts from United Arab Emirates and Abubaker Bangoma from Central African Republic in absentia. Abou was supposed to be with us here today, but his flight from Bangui was delayed and he couldn't make the connecting flight in Cameroon; and
- All my friends and business associates present here today.

I am humbled by your attendance in such big numbers today. Program Director, before I continue, allow me to pause for a moment in memory of my nephew Ndzalama Mabunda who passed on over the weekend and will be laid to rest tomorrow. L&G, Ndzalama's mother, Dr Tiyani Mabunda is my sister, and was supposed to represent our family at this function. Unfortunately, she and other members of our family could no longer be with us because of her son's tragic demise. May his soul rest in peace.

Program Director, it has been a very long day already, particularly for those who travelled with us to Makhasa Primary School this morning. So, I have no intention to deliver a long speech. In fact, I will not deliver a speech. Who would venture to deliver a speech after the thought provoking message from the guest speaker in his absentia? Instead, what I will break up my response into three (3) short parts.

- Firstly, I will respond to the wonderful tributes and congratulatory messages which the multitudes of speakers showered me with earlier in today's program.
- Secondly, I will give some commentary to the booklet distributed to each one of you; and
- Thirdly, I will pass a vote of thanks to the hardworking people who made this day possible.

[Section 1 – Response to tributes

- Elaborate on Vusi Sindane's life being a relay race analogy.
- Comment on Professor Bennie Anderson's unreasonable man narration.

[Section 2 – Commentary on Booklet

For the second part of my talk L&G, I would like you to turn to the booklet that was distributed to each one of you. The booklet contains life-principles that I picked up along the way. These include principles of hope, faith, encouragement, hard work, resilience, perseverance, and above all, an important message that was perfectly summed up by Zig Ziglar when he said: "It's not where you start – it's where you finish that counts".

1. Program Director, if you look at the visuals used in the booklet, specifically on pages 8 and 9, they are targeted at our learners (sitting behind me). The 16 years old boy on page 8 is the same age as most of our Grade 11 Nyukanites. So, the intention is for the Nyukanites to realize that Nyukani's Executive Chairperson was not born a big man. As Bob Marley says in his 'coming from the cold' song, "The biggest man you ever did see was once just a baby".
2. If you turn to page 10 you will see the amazing work that the Mayimeles and Shimanges did by inspiring me to see new possibilities. They essentially allowed me to "come in from the cold." It is for this reason that I have also committed my entire life to give other people a chance to come in from the cold. This include inspiring the Nyukanites amongst us today here to get a break in life. Nyukanites [turn to them slightly] role models are extremely important in life! As for me, apart from the Mayimeles and the Shimanges, one of my biggest role models is the man I have already quoted several times today – Bob Marley. People always give me strange looks when I talk about my love and admiration for Bob Marley. The expression I usually get is like: "Oh really, so you smoke weed?" For the record, I don't smoke weed. Don't be fooled by the red eyes on page 8 of the booklet. The red eyes are from reading across the night, which I am good at. For decades now, I work an average of 20 hours per day and sleep an average of 4 hours per night. Back to my role model, apart from his character, there are several reasons why Bob Marley is my role model and hero. By character I am referring to the fact that having taken more features from his white father, Bob Marley could easily have chosen to be white in Jamaica during his time. That way, he

would not have had to deal with the problems of inequality across the world. However, Bob Marley chose to be black. He proceeded to launch reggae as a new music genre and popularized it across the world during his short-lived life of 36 years. He gave a voice to the day-to-day struggles of the Jamaican people and the oppressed worldwide. His philosophical songs of faith, devotion and revolution created a legacy that continues to live on through his extended family and generations of artists the world over touched by his genius. Therefore, to the Nyukanites in our midst today, do yourself a big favour, if you don't have a role model by now, please find one. A positive one though. And don't copy everything they do. Every human being has flaws, so only copy the good things. Just like my role model and hero Bob Marley, he was great, but he smoked dagga as I said already, and had a roving eye when it came to women, if you know what I mean. But he was a great philosopher, hence I follow his teachings, not some of his doings.

3. Program Director, if you look at pages 12 and 13 of the booklet, the decade between 1982 and 1993 was indeed crazy. I must correct one error though. The 1st time my stubborn streak surfaced was not when I defied my elder brother Alson regarding taking a bond to buy a house in Giyani. In fact, the 1st time my stubborn streak reared its beautiful head was when I defied my late mother when she wanted me to ditch my first birth name Tirhani for my initiation name Gezani when me and my elder brother Godfrey Tinyiko went to take our identity documents at Malamulele magistrate in the late 70s. L&G, the matter of a name may sound trivial, but those of you who are old enough to have lived during Apartheid South Africa know that very few people, if any had the confidence to use what would even be derogatorily referred to as 'African names'. Anyway, I am sure you are all wondering why I am using 'stubbornness' and 'beautiful' in one sentence in my reference to the Malamulele magistrate 'African name' incident. It is interesting to note that before one succeeds, they are referred to as stubborn. However, once one succeeds, they are then referred to as having persevered – by the same people! Therefore, Stubbornness is not necessarily a bad virtue, particularly when it relates to steadfastness. I strongly believe that my stubbornness, or should I say steadfastness accounts for a great deal of success in many areas of my life, including business. Program Director, going back to the incident at Malamulele magistrate, I kept my name Tirhani and my brother lost his and became Risimati on that day. Needless to say, that my birth given name has since followed my deeds in life. And by the way, my brother Victor Mabunda who signed surety for me to buy the house which ultimately played such a catalytic role in launching my business career is present here as my guest of honour. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for helping me to take the tide Julius Ceaser talks about in the quote contained in page 9 of the booklet. Had I not bought the house, my life would certainly had taken a different direction. Who knows, I could even have lost all my ventures.

[Section 3 – Lifetime Acknowledgements

I would like to use the quote on page 14 of the booklet to introduce the final section of my talk. "Most people respond to the story of my life by saying that I am lucky. I always respond by saying that there is no such a thing called luck. In fact, luck is when opportunity meets preparation and determination".

A big component of being prepared depends on the company or friends you keep. If you connect the dots throughout the booklet, the Mayimeles and Shimanges shaped my life in a particular way.

My friend Meshack Makhubele introduced me into the taxi business. Businessman Mike Nkuna gave me great advice that opening a video shop would be a big mistake, compared to venturing into food, car parts or baby clothes. The list goes on. I would like to thank all the people who contributed to my life journey in one way or the other. Those mentioned in the booklet and the many who are not mentioned by name.

L&G, to this day, I continue to keep good company and good friends, both at a personal level and in business. Tirhani Group Holdings' Marketing Manager Phathiswa Sefatsa who is tasked with the responsibility of rebranding the group recently brought it to my attention that TGH and its subsidiary companies should celebrate the fact that there are 5 holders of PhDs and about 20 holders of Masters Degrees in their permanent employ. Notably, more than 12 of the Masters holders are employed by Plus 94 Research, a company I founded with Sifiso Falala in 1998 which has since grown into the biggest research company in South Africa and one of the leading top five research companies in South Africa.

Program Director, as I move towards the conclusion of my address, allow me to briefly talk about Tirhani Foundation's intervention at Makhasa Primary School. As indicated in the invitations, I attended Sub A to Standard 5 at Makhasa Primary School between 1970 and 1975.

MEC Kgetjepe, 42 years ago, I was a little 6 years old boy attending school in this village. I attended Sub A to Standard 5 here at Makhasa Primary School between 1970 and 1975. The conditions then were horrific. We had mud classrooms, and I can't even remember what we used for chairs and desks. Fast forward to 2017. I was so touched when I passed my PhD and remembered where it all started. I then decided to drive past here one weekend after attending an unveiling at Mashobye village.

By the way, I also visited Gidjana Secondary School at Magona village on the same day. That is where I attended Standard 6 to 8 between 1976 and 1988. The purpose of visiting my old schools was to reminisce about my formative years. The conditions at Gidjana Secondary School were reasonable. However, I was deeply touched by the conditions I found here, even though I didn't get into the school as it was weekend. I decided to do something about the situation. I asked my partner Eric Sambo and my brother Alson Mabunda to visit the school to determine the extent of the situation. The report they gave me was that the conditions were appalling. The roofs of two blocks of classes at the school were threatening to cave in. In fact, one of the blocks of classes was disused as it posed a safety hazard to the learners. To cut a long short, we went to Makhasa village today and handed the renovated block of classes to the school.

Our association with Makhasa Primary School didn't end today. Apart from more donations of infrastructure, we will establish a partnership between Makhasa Primary School and Nyukani Education Centre. The partnership will involve exchange programs whereby our teachers and students will collaborate.

Program Director, L&G, we didn't renovate the block of classes at Makhasa Primary School because we have a lot of money. Instead, we did so because of our belief that education is the only equalizer in the world, not the lotto, not tenders, not marriage, not welfare grants, nothing else. I can attest to the power of education, a positive attitude and hard work as equalizers. As a first-generation entrepreneur, I am living proof that education has the power to change people's lives. What more proof of that do you need if a rural boy from Nkovani village can address you as a PhD graduate here today, owning more than 15 companies employing more than 2000 people feeding more than 10k people.

Our intervention at Makhasa Primary School is akin to the choice we made to build Nyukani Education Centre here at Homu 14B. A friend of mine asked me why we built Nyukani in a rural area. Basically, the question was, "Why did you choose to invest in world class infrastructure and facilities in a rural area when I could have done so in urban areas where there is affordability to charge higher fees and earn more money?" In his Rat Race song, Bob Marley admonishes that: "Don't forget your history. Know your destiny". Our rural experience has taught us to return here to inspire others so that they too can also have the opportunity to conquer the world.

Program Director, L&G, the only regret regarding my life journey is that it has been one of struggle, self-discovery and self-taught learning. My life story, just like any other baby boomer growing in South Africa in the 60s to date has been one of struggle. Struggle to get education, struggle to get work, struggle to venture into business, struggle for everything. Do my achievements, both academic and business, make me an exceptional person? The answer is a resounding no. Anyone with my background can achieve what I did. The fact that the new South Africa has not created opportunities for ordinary children from rural backgrounds to get a chance to escape the vicious circle of poverty 22 years after the dawn of democracy is an indictment. - How is it possible that a child attending primary school at Makhasa Primary School in 2017 faces the same odds for success educationally and socio-economically as I did in the 70s? - How have we done so little, if anything to change the material conditions of people living in rural areas? - How is it that 22 years after the dawn of democracy in our country the people attending school in rural areas who get lucky to escape the vicious circle of underdevelopment and poverty are still a rarity and exceptions.

If a rural boy from Nkovani village can address you as a PhD graduate here today, what more the 560 Nyukanites in our midst who even have the privilege of world class facilities and quality educational instructions.

L&G, before I take my seat, let me take this opportunity to thank the people who made today possible.

- The invitation committee led by personal assistant Eunice Tolo and Kamohelo Moremi.
- The catering committee led by my wife Mrs Veronica Mabunda, My daughter Mrs Vutomi Mabunda-Jones, and Zodwa Mona.
- The logistics committee led by Vusi Sindane ☒ The security and accreditation committee led by Vulani Mabunda, Mmanape Letlalo and Nyeleti Sithole.
- Tracey Aldridge Dobrin of Gingermoon and Andrew Levine of Slyce for printing the programs, Nyukani brochures and Manifestos.
- My driver Abraham Mosia, for keeping me safe on the roads during our many long trips. ☒ Abraham's colleague Malvin Ndou who also doubles up as a bar man at all TGH functions and Mabunda family functions.
- Phaniel Ngobeni; Tirhani Auctioneers' truck driver. There is no function or move Phaniel has not catered for.
- Mr Eric Sambo, who dealt with the project of renovation the block of classes we handed over to Makhasa Primary School from start to finish.
- Ms HN Mhlongo, Nyukani Education Center's Interim Principal and her Educators and Support staff for assisting the committees.
- Once more, I would like to thank all the people acknowledged on page 24 of the booklet. This day would never have been possible without their assistance.
- There is a person in our midst who I won't mention by name today hear. I want to thank her heartily for her unwavering support.
- Finally, I would like to thank God for giving me life, and for giving me the intelligence and good health to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Program Director, let me close by repeating Peter Benenson's quote on page 13 to the effect that: **"It is better to light a candle of hope than to curse the darkness"**. Nyukani Education Centre is our candle of hope. Please join us in lighting many more candles of hope.

I thank you.