

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the
occasion of the ANTON LEMBEDE MEMORIAL LECTURE at
Centurion, Gauteng
25 June 2011**

Programme Director

Chairperson - Cde Osman Nkosi

Dr Nqaba Ngcobo

ANCYL Secretary – Cde Bheka Mkhondo

Comrades

Revolutionary greetings to all of you

I come here bearing the profound apologies of Comrade Dr Zweli Mkhize who when he realized that he wouldn't make it, asked me to come and share this wonderful moment with you as you pay tribute to one of our foremost revolutionary intellect.

Comrades, I am elated that here at Centurion, Anton Lembede has been given a home with the African National Congress Youth League Centurion Branch honouring him by creating an educational fund in his memory to help students whose families cannot afford to pay university tuition fees. Indeed there would have been no better way of honouring the man who is known to have highly believed in education: a brilliant scholar; a teacher; a lawyer and a committed freedom fighter.

Also allow me, as a boy from Umbumbulu, to bask in the glory of the fact that when Lembede was still a boy his family relocated to KwaMphepheta at Umbumbulu where he started his formal education. Also, that, we too, had a privilege and an insight to honour him by renaming his former school as Anton Lembede Primary School.

Today we are assembled here to reaffirm that the revered and respected Anton Lembede even in death still continues to touch and inspire many people; generations after his demise. His passing on was appropriately recorded by another struggle icon, our veteran, Govan Mbeki, who upon learning of his death described the moment as;

'a grievous national loss in which the African public has lost one of its most zealous and determined sons who dedicated his short span of life to the cause of his people. In his selfless struggle for the national cause he has built himself a monument in the hearts of his people.'

This branch without doubt, does qualify in participating and bestowing prestigious honors of Anton Lembede; Sol Plaatjie and Charlotte Maxeke Awards as it doesn't shy away from self introspection and rewarding efforts of excellence to those who breathe life in its existence, promoting the following necessary attributes:

- Comrade of the year

- Best attendance
- Politically inclined
- Best task team
- Most input
- Ms Congeniality, as well as,
- Mr Congeniality

If Anton Lembede was still alive, he would have been very proud of the successes and achievements of this branch. Comrades here continue to work harmoniously and productively in tackling issues that not only affect the general membership but also have a bearing on our country's ability in the attainment of the set Millennium Development Goals, for instance in:

- In your HCT campaign when you mobilised Health Professionals from The Aurum Institute, New Start, Soul City, Tembisa and Centurion Clinic in your quest to test as many people as possible.
- In organizing the Imbizo that involved Education District Office, Business Community, Principals, Parents and Educators to tackle Education Challenges in Centurion
- In being part of the organization of the **Centurion Youth Seminar** where all youth formations, political, civic and religious, were invited to address matters of youth regarding access to information, programs and opportunities.

- In your concern about youth economic development as evidenced by your invitation of the NYDA and Tshwane Youth Development Unit representatives to come and explain how the members can access and participate in the opportunities offered, as well as,
- In bringing to the fore women empowerment issues by organising information sharing sessions, making presentation on women's participation in infrastructure development and organising Health awareness campaigns where you involved CANSA; and informing of available programmes at National Parliament as well as the Gauteng Legislature aimed at supporting the all round development of women in our society.

Dear Comrades, the all round approach adopted in tackling the socio economic issues in this branch is adorable and does give meaning to Anton Lembede's call for outright commitment when he said:

"We are not called to peace, comfort and enjoyment, but to hard work, struggle and sweat. We need young men and women of high moral stamina and integrity; of courage and vision. In short, we need warriors. This means that we have to develop a new type of youth of stoical discipline, trained to endure suffering and difficulties. It is only this type of youth that will achieve the national liberation of the African people".

We must commend, a good start was made by our Young Lions last week in their 24th National Congress at Gallagher Convention Centre which they held with dignity and discipline. The founding fathers of the Youth League both living as well as the departed in the persona of Antony Lembede; AP Mda; Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu are surely proud and relaxed that the youth just like it happened in both 1944 and 1976 are again taking charge of their future. We are proud and relieved that the notion of unity was emphasized and that in their declaration they also made one profound pronounced that;

'the National Congress re-asserts the importance of Discipline as a weapon of the struggle and transformation, which does not exist for its own sake, but to safeguard the unity of the movement.'

As a country we are also heartened by the position taken at the Congress that the ANC youth League will be in the forefront of the struggles against crime, alcohol abuse and rapid spread of HIV/ AIDS.

This should be positive news to all of us as now we need to come forward with ways and means on how to assist. To be precise, our youth have a crucial role to play in tackling the quadruple burden of disease that South Africa is going through; namely:

- HIV and AIDS and TB

- The unacceptable high maternal and child mortality rates
- The alarming and ever increasing incidence of Non-Communicable Disease i.e. high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases; chronic respiratory disease and various forms of cancers, as well as,
- The pandemic of violence and injury.

Just to summarize the above, please understand that South Africa constitutes only 0.7% of the world population but that we account for 17% of the HIV and AIDS burden of the world.

We also have the highest TB infection rate per population and our TB and HIV co-infection rate at 73% is the highest in the world.

A total of 35% of child mortality and 43% of maternal mortality are attributable to HIV and AIDS with one in every three pregnant women presenting at our antenatal clinics testing HIV positive.

Comrades, if we really intend succeeding in our efforts of ensuring "A long and Healthy Life for all South Africans, we have to recognise the central role that needs to be played by of all the youth formations of our land.

We have to support by all means possible the resolution of the ANC Youth League Congress that calls for all males to be circumcised as means to curb the spread of HIV and AIDS.

We should agree also that it is high time we all should say multi-sexual relationships cannot continue to be fashionable as they have proven to perpetuate a situation whereby people do know how they got infected; when and by who.

All of us also need to work together and stand up against the deplorable Sugar Daddies who prey on young; poor and innocent young girls, enticing them with money and frivolous good life. In KwaZulu Natal just last year, 17 000 school going age teenagers, some of them at Primary School level, fell pregnant – their future destroyed; most of them infected and now roaming around to in turn infect boys of their age.

Creating an AIDS free generation has Antenatal care as a starting point, we thus have to make it a point that all, I mean all pregnant mothers visit clinics within weeks of their pregnancy.

Let us strive to be proud as a nation and live up to Anton Lembede's doctrine as he pronounced:

'I am one with Mother Africa's darkest soils

I am Africa's own child

My heart yearns for the glory of Africa that is gone

However, I shall work for the future Africa, free and great among the nations of the world'

Long live the spirit of Anton Lembede!