

Eulogy by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo at the funeral services of the 4 Gasa family members at Matimatolo, Greytown

30 January 2016

Mndeni wakwa Gasa

Allow me to begin by extending our appreciation to KZN Transport, Community Safety and Liaison MEC, Hon Wilson Mchunu in his absence for all the logistic support he has given to lessen the pain we all feel.

Izinhliziyi zethu zibuhlungu ngokwenzeka kulelikhaya

Please accept my presence here not just as a mourner but a representative of the KwaZulu Natal Government. I am also here in my capacity as both the Health MEC as well as a father who committed to nurture one of this family's sons Mfanafuthi Brian until he fulfils his goal of becoming a doctor.

We are all deeply saddened by sorrow being felt in the whole area as a result of a tragic accident that resulted into an untimely death of so many members of one family.

On occasions like this, I normally say, it is somehow bearable to accept the death of a person who has been ill and hospitalized in front of us. In such situations we are able to say he or she has finally rested.

Losing one's beloved through an accident is always hard to stomach; how much more if you lose 4 of them in one day?

On hearing about this tragedy – I immediately directed my officials to do everything possible to ensure that Mfanafuthi Brian Gasas is brought back from Cuba to be able to attend this funeral.

Just less than 3 weeks ago, I was in Cuba and visited all the South African students studying in that country, that includes the University that Brian is attending; ELAM (Latin America School of Medicine).

Meeting with them there, one never knew that Brian was soon going to undertake this very long trip and follow us back home to bury almost all his family members.

I am glad and relieved that he persevered all the long hours of this journey – flying 10 hours from Cuba to France; waiting another 10 hours to connect for yet another 10 hour flight to Johannesburg. Indeed all our prayers were with you Brian. Glad to see you again strong and composed.

To the remaining members and relatives of the Gasas; we are also saying, our very presence here today is a demonstration of our sharing with you the grief and pain you are feeling. Today we are all here to support you as you lay to eternal rest:

- 51 year old Bongani Gasas, father to Brian Mfanafuthi and his seven other siblings.
- 31 year old Sdumo Gasas, son to Mr. Bongani Gasas and brother to Mfanafuthi. We also know that leaves behind 2 children.
- 47 year old Erick Nanto Gasas, who also leaves behind 2 children.

- 39 year old Sandile Richard Gasa, who has been one of our Nurses working at Escort Hospital. He sadly leaves behind his wife and 3 young children

Our comforting prayers are with all the 15 children who are now semi and fully orphaned. We trust and believe that the Almighty God has a plan for all of them.

We will also continue praying for the matriarch of this home; our 94 year old Gogo; hoping that this tragic episode is not going curtail her already long blessed and blissful life that the Lord has bestowed on her.

Mfanafuthi; all is not lost.

Ndoda, you will finish you studies and come back to pick up the Spear dropped by your father; brother and uncle. The hopes of this family and the community at large now rest squarely on your young shoulders.

As the Department of Health, we commit to continue supporting this young man in his dream to become a Doctor.

He is fortunate to be part of the initiative started in 1997, championed by former Presidents; Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro to produce Doctors for this country.

Indeed, this Government to Government agreement has assisted us to improve health services in the country and in this Province by expanding the training sites for medical students.

Mfanafuthi, for one, is part of over 800 students who will be starting 4th year in July 2016, which is a figure equivalent to an output of 3 Medical Schools combined in our country. In less than 2 years, he will be back right here at Matimatolo working as a Doctor for all of you.

As community members you may have heard that our trip to Cuba was triggered by challenges associated with the visit of a Pietermaritzburg based Pastor who was interfering with our students. In that visit we made it clear that we will make everything possible to ensure that our students there are not distracted from the programme's noble objectives. We went to an extent of making it known that we will also see to it that many more South Africans continue to benefit from it unhindered. The remaining off-springs of this Gasa home, if they work harder in their studies like Mfanafuthi – will also be supported.

May the good memories of Bongani Gasa; Sdumo Gasa; Erick Nanto Gasa and Sandile Richard Gasa surround this family with love and give it strength in the days ahead.

Akwehlanga lungehlanga

May the beautiful souls of all the departed rest in eternal peace

Released by Desmond Motha

083 295 3901

Pictures by Themba Mngomezulu

