



NASW South Africa Membership Secretariat:  
Scatterlings Conference & Events

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Physical address: Somerset Office Park, 5 Libertas Road, Bryanston, JHB  
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## TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR DUMISANI THABEDE



'Man was designed for accomplishment,  
engineered for success, and endowed  
with the seeds of greatness'

**Source:** Zig Ziglar

The NEC joins the community of social workers in mourning the passing on of Prof. Thabede. Our heart-felt condolences go to the family, friends and the community of the University of Venda, especially his students.

Prof. Thabede was a committed soldier for social work. He spent his formative years in the profession as a member of a defunct South African Black Social Workers Association (SABSWA) where he was a social work activist for human rights. He extended his activism role into the classroom grooming and aspiring young people into the profession. This he did until he met his untimely death. Hundreds of social workers have passed through his hands, and his contribution in grooming social workers into the profession will be missed.

When great trees fall, the hurt and the pain is felt by everything else below them let alone those that benefited from the fruits, shade, shelter and leaves for nourishment. That is how the community of social workers remembers Prof. Thabede.

May his soul rest in peace, he shall be dearly missed. However we are not saddened, for we know for sure that his spirit will live on in his protégé and all those he positively touched, because they will instinctively take on the baton and forge ahead.

In closing I cannot help it, but remember a poem that got stuck in my mind recently which was cited by the President of the IFSW, Gary Bailey, in his tribute to Tata Nelson Mandela, written by one of the great American poet and writer of our times, Dr. Maya Angelou, entitled:

“Ailey, Baldwin, Floyd, Killens, and Mayfield”

When great trees fall,  
rocks on distant hills shudder,  
lions hunker down  
in tall grasses,  
and even elephants  
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall  
in forests,  
small things recoil into silence, their senses  
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,  
the air around us becomes



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light, rare, sterile.  
We breathe, briefly.

Our eyes, briefly,  
see with  
a hurtful clarity.  
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,  
examines,  
gnaws on kind words  
unsaid,  
promised walks  
never taken.

Great souls die and  
our reality, bound to  
them, takes leave of us.  
Our souls,  
dependent upon their  
nurture, now shrink, wizened.  
Our minds, formed  
and informed by their  
radiance, fall away.

We are not so much maddened  
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance  
of dark, cold caves.

And when great souls die,  
after a period, peace blooms,  
slowly and always irregularly. Spaces fill  
with a kind of soothing electric vibration.  
Our senses, restored, never to be the same, whisper to us.  
They existed. They existed.  
We can be. Be and be better.  
For they existed.

**Source: Maya Angelou, 5th October 2000**

Hamba kahle qhawe! Zofa izinsizwa, kosala izibongo.

Sibusiso Mcanyana  
NASW SA President

## **FUNERAL DETAILS:** **Saturday, 1 FEBRUARY 2014**

- 1. Service at Molapo Technical at 7am, Soweto**
- 2. Leaving for Lenasia Cemetery at 9am**