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MRS FLORENCE MASILELA

a tribute.

I stand here before you deeply humbled and honored to speak about this lovely, loving lady, Sis Flo' whom I met in 1964 in Nairobi, Kenya with her late husband Boet Albert and their four sons.

Desmond, Aubrey, Godfrey and Siphon and your families, on my and my daughter Linda's behalf, I offer our deep condolences on the loss of your mother.

The Masilelas joined three South African families in Nairobi – Mbatha, Mpahlele and us Mvusi. We were later joined by Anna who married Aveling Abutti. They joined us at a time in Africa of doubt, hope, despair, a time of coups d'états, spies, South African Special Branch infiltrators, deportations, refugees and exile. Kenya had just become independent and we were part of this dream of independence. Those South Africans who arrived before the Commonwealth expelled South Africa had to choose between that umbrella body and friendly nations for travel documents.

Our responsibility as parents was not only to remain united regardless of political affiliations and mother all South African children as our own, but importantly to bring up our children to be responsible, educated and independent productive world citizens, to be true Africans strengthened by their South African identity, able to care about each other and look after one another as brothers and sisters anywhere in the world for as long as the struggle to liberate South Africa from Apartheid took.

When my husband Selby died 10th December 1967 from a car accident, it was Sis Flo and Anna who accompanied me to fetch his body from Nyeri Hospital.

A month later Boet Albert returned from Zambia terminally ill. Sis Flo immediately took leave off work to nurse her husband. She was by his side until he died a few weeks afterwards.

Bringing up four boys in exile as a widowed mother could not have been easy and today we see four, healthy, independent professionals brought up single handedly by their mother. Desmond, Aubrey, Godfrey and Siphso, you all owe it to your mother to continue this important legacy of looking after each other. Nibambane!

I left Kenya with my three children Easter 1964 for Zambia. Sis Flo and I met up thirty years later as neighbors in Randburg where she lived with Godfrey and Judy. My daughter and I enjoyed her company over four consecutive Christmas Days in our home in Randburg and Siphso & Renu's Pretoria home.

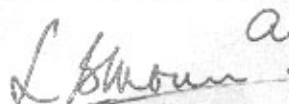
Few would have guessed Sis Flo was almost ninety as she walked upright without help or stick, showing just how well looked after she was up until she passed away. What was her secret? She was independent, active physically and mentally, occupying herself with gardening and looking after grandchildren. Unlike the 'kha' people – "*kha uvule icango, kha undenzele le na le*" – she kept herself busy.

We thank Sis Flo's sons, their wives and grandchildren for making Sis Flo's life and last days cheerful and comfortable.

Looking after old people is very demanding and it could not have been easy especially for Renu, a professional teacher, mother and jewelry designer to be housebound, ensuring Sis Flo was tended safely. Thank you Renu, thank you Siphso.

To the Mtshabe and Masilela families, we are grateful you opened your hearts once again to this lovely lady on her return from Exile. I am and remain most grateful to Sis Flo being there as 'big sister' throughout our journey in life.

Lala ngo xolo nothando, Sis wethu. Akuhlanga kungahlanga. Uwile umthi omkhulu.

 Aunt Nisa.

Aunt Nisa (nee Jolobe) Mvusi.