

9 February 2018

Media statement: A rose named 'Nelson Mandela'

Nelson Mandela 100, Press release



A bowl of "Nelson Mandela" roses. (Image: NMF)
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Date: 8 February 2018

In one of the first events in the year-long celebration of the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth, a rose named after him was launched in Johannesburg on Thursday 8 February.

Former President Mandela, who passed away on 5 December 2013, would have turned 100 on 18 July 2018. The Nelson Mandela rose was released to launch the Nelson Mandela Foundation's year-long centenary programme, just a week ahead of Valentine's Day on 14 February.

Foundation CE Sello Hatang said the Nelson Mandela 100 programme centres on the values embodied by Mandela, of resilience, service and care.

The values of service and care appeared to be diminishing in contemporary South Africa, but he hoped the Mandela rose would serve as a reminder "that we are because of others".

Gauteng Premier David Makhura told the gathering that there was "no better" way to honour Mandela's legacy than to return to the path he chose for South Africa, one of democracy, good governance, the continued battle against racism and poverty, and public service.

While the country stands "on the precipice of great uncertainty and anxiety", Mandela's centenary year is starting with renewed hope that there will be a return to "the path of Nelson Mandela", which had been "derailed" in recent years, he said.

"If roses are about love, public service is about service to the people," said Makhura. "We in government should be accountable; public service is about the love of our people, not about serving ourselves but about serving the people of South Africa." He said the death of more than 140 mentally ill patients after the Gauteng Department of Health ordered their transfer

from Life Esidimeni facilities to several unlicensed non-governmental organisations had left him with “a great deal of shame”. He stressed that as Premier he takes full responsibility for the tragedy. “As part of returning to the path of values and responsibility, the path of true love, I cannot pass the buck,” he said.

Horticulturist Keith Kirsten, who led the rose’s development, said the idea for the plant came to him in 2000, while on a flight to New York when he happened to be sitting next to Achmat Dangor, the then CEO of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. The idea was shelved for various reasons until 2014 when the Foundation approached him about it.



Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu dancing with joy at the launch of the "Nelson Mandela" rose in Johannesburg. (Image: NMF)

The disease-resilient rose is a tall, orange-vermillion, prolific floribunda that grows to more than a metre in good conditions and is suitable for “any sunny position”, Kirsten said. “I’d like to see us plant lots,” he said of the rose, which for him represents Mandela’s “vibrancy, stature and love”.

Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who attended the launch with his wife, Leah Tutu, danced as the Imilonji KaNtu Choral Society sang the couple’s favourite indigenous African hymn, *Ha kele tye kele mobi (Just as I am)*. South African singer Sibongile Khumalo earlier joined them in a rendition of *Amazing Grace*. The choir also sang at Mandela’s 1994 inauguration as South Africa’s first democratically elected president.

Other dignitaries who attended included Andrew Payne, chairperson of the Thornybush Luxury Game Lodge Collection which co-sponsored and co-hosted the event, author Mandla Langa, anti-apartheid activist Gertrude Shope and businesswoman Wendy Luhabe.

The rose is available for purchase from Ludwig’s Roses and Malanseuns Pleasure Plants.

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