

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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Old Mutual Tomorrow's Leaders Convention

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Programme Director, Mr. Jeremy Maggs • Chief Executive Officer of Old Mutual Wealth, Mr. Andrew Bradley • Fellow Speakers • Distinguished Guests • Ladies and Gentlemen • Good morning

Thank you for inviting me to share some thoughts with you on the important subject of leadership. I'd like to pay tribute to Old Mutual for the foresight of starting the *Tomorrow's Leaders Programme* which is currently in its 9th year. Investing in leadership development is as important today as it was when the programme was launched nine years ago.

The National Development Plan which charts the way towards our 2030 vision identifies leadership as one of the critical ingredients that will ensure that the promise of our Constitution becomes a lived experience for everyone. The basic requirement of the NDP is that leaders provide clear direction to ensure that by 2030 we

live in a South Africa that has progressed significantly from the one that we inherited in 1994 and where these changes are felt by every South African in equal measure. It sets a high standard of leadership.

The question that confronts us is, 'Will we have the kind of leaders that will ensure that all the goals set out in the various chapters of the plan are met?'

The subject of leadership is often contested and it is, in my view, best studied by discussing those who are recognised as great leaders. During this talk, I will advance a much broader view of leadership in the hope that we all recognise ourselves as leaders or in the absence of that, acknowledge the virtues we require to become great leaders.

Everybody agrees that leadership is important. We accept without questioning the proposition that good leadership is what makes societies function well and deliver benefits to populations. So strong is our belief in the centrality of leadership that when order breaks down and the situation that we are used to is disturbed, we blame it on poor leadership.

We all know of schools that are well run, produce good results and have disciplined learners and committed teachers. We know

of businesses that are both profitable and treat their workers and customers with respect. In many instances, what sets one school apart from another is not how much money it has but the quality of its leaders; and what makes companies win “Employer of Choice” awards is the calibre of leaders they have and the organisational culture they promote.

In history there are leaders who had a vision for the betterment of their countries and people and worked hard to realise it. Their conviction was so strong that they managed to convince others of their vision.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me cite a few examples.

The most obvious and world-renown leader is one that has inspired all of us, **President Mandela**. Together with his comrades he fought for liberation against the brutal apartheid regime and won. As we know, it was a bitter and protracted struggle with many setbacks but what kept them going was a strong sense of justice and a belief that a better, fairer and more equal society was the only acceptable outcome.

Deng Xiaoping was a Chinese revolutionary and statesman. He led his country through far-reaching market-economy reforms. He opened China to foreign investment and the global market, and encouraged private competition. He is regarded as the founding father of modern China, having pioneered reforms that made China the leading economy that it is today.

On the other side of the globe, we know of **Rosa Parks** who is a fascinating historical figure. An unlikely leader who was employed as a seamstress at a department store. When she refused to move to the back of the bus to give way to white passengers in Alabama, on the 1st of December 1955 she demonstrated leadership of a different kind. Her subsequent arrest by local police sparked a collective and sustained community response which led the U.S. Supreme Court to outlaw racial segregation on public buses in Alabama. The United States Congress called her "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement" The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 are among the laws that were enacted as a result of the civil rights movement of which she was an integral part and leader.

These are men and women who at a very young age forced themselves into the history books. They did not set out to be

leaders, their acts of courage were fuelled by the simple and strict adherence to their beliefs in a better and more just future for their fellow citizens. Today we look up to them.

There are many others like them who, unfortunately, did not live to see the fruit of their struggles. They include, revolutionaries such as:

Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu who was hanged by the apartheid government. When he was led to the gallows he said those famous words: *"My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight."* The other one is **Patrice Lumumba**, the Congolese independence leader who was deposed in a coup and later assassinated, to name but a few.

What is common about each of these political leaders and revolutionaries is that they were incredibly young when they undertook the actions that made them the famous figures that they are. They did not seek fame. They were ordinary folk driven by a very strong belief in justice. They had a vision of a better society.

At this point, it is appropriate to pause ask you to reflect: What drives you? What is your vision?

Ladies and Gentlemen

Great leaders are found in various disciplines. In sport, think of **Lucas “Rhoo” Radebe** who went to Leeds United FC in the United Kingdom from the then dusty streets of Diepkloof Soweto to play the game he so passionately loves. Ten years later he was the most loved and respected player by the whole community. He had captained the club, won the FIFA Fair Play Award in 2002 and was sought after by big European clubs including Manchester United, AC Milan and Roma.

Bruce Fordyce is the greatest long-distance runner of all times. Many in the audience would have grown up watching in awe as he ran up and down the flowing hills of the Natal Midlands and the Valley of a Thousand Hills. He holds the record of winning the most number of Comrades Marathons having won it nine times and is affectionately known as the King of the Comrades Marathon. For those here who participate in marathons, you will understand how gruelling that 90km race is and while just completing the race is an incredible feat, winning it nine times takes great determination.

By the time **Peter Magubane** took the picture of a white girl sitting on a bench written “Europeans Only” and her black minder sitting

on a rock behind her because they could not sit on the same bench, he had been practising with his camera for many years.

Reflecting on the years as a photographer in apartheid South Africa, Magubane said:

I did not want to leave the country to find another life. I was going to stay and fight with my camera as my gun. I did not want to kill anyone, though. I wanted to kill apartheid. "I was arrested many times and the police would beat the hell out of me. They fractured my nose once because I refused to expose my film and ruin my images. In 1974, they arrested me and I was put in solitary confinement for 586 days.

What stands out about these great men and women is that in order to reach the heights that they did, they persevered despite the obstacles that they faced and despite the effort required to achieve their goals. The lesson is that it is important to believe in what you do and to face disappointments without giving up. Whether in sport, literature or photography, it takes time to master the art and become a top achiever. Talent alone is not enough, you have to practice and refine your skill over time.

There is a book written by a man called Malcolm Gladwell titled 'Outliers' where he studied incredibly successful people who

reached the top of their field such as Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. What he found was that people who became leaders in their fields spent a great deal of time practicing their skills, about ten thousand hours, in fact.

Distinguished delegates

Closer to home, a young man from Umthatha called **Siyabulela Xuza** is South Africa's youngest innovator. He is an energy-engineer with Harvard University degree to his name that has a passion for harnessing the power of the sun for clean affordable energy. He conducted research geared towards making cheaper solar cells and assessed the commercial viability of solar technologies. Siya began experimenting with rocket fuels in his mother's kitchen, almost blowing it up at one point. His passion turned into a serious science project that culminated in him developing a cheaper and safer rocket fuel. The Nasa-affiliated Lincoln Laboratory, named a minor planet after him; planet 23182, discovered in 2000, is now known as Siyaxuza.

Whether we go back in history, or study the lives of contemporary leaders across sectors, a few lessons are obvious:

- ❖ Great leaders put the lives and interests of others above their own.

- ❖ Leadership requires sacrifice, commitment and conviction hence many hours and hard work.
- ❖ Being a good leader is not the same as being rich and famous, in fact those who became great leaders may have become famous along the way but that was not their intention.
- ❖ Many great leaders reached the heights they attained because they were very hard on themselves and did not expect others to do what they were not prepared to do themselves.
- ❖ They responded to the challenges of their time, in other words they sought to solve problems.
- ❖ Their passion started at a very young age, and got refined along the way with many hours of practice and exertion.

It is the last point that I would like to emphasise as I draw towards my conclusion:

- ❖ To be a leader who treats others with respect is something you have to practice over time.

- ❖ To be a leader who nurtures and supports others, is something you have to consciously think about and keep on doing repeatedly.
- ❖ To be a democratic leader is something you have to commit to and practice consciously.
- ❖ To be a great leader you have to be prepared to learn from your own successes and, especially, your failures as well as learn from the examples of others.

In conclusion, President Mandela's generations will always be remembered for fighting for freedom against the brutal and corrupt apartheid regime. Upon achieving this goal, they set about building strong institutions to ensure that the democratic gains are never reversed. It is important that we continue to take a conscious view to protect and solidify these institutions of democracy. This is the task of our current leaders as well the next generation such as those that the *Tomorrow's Leaders* programme aims to nurture.

I would like to challenge you as future leaders to think hard about what I have raised with you this morning. Are you up to the task of pursuing your vision and overcoming the obstacles in your path? Will you have the determination to put in the hours to hone your

talents to become the best? My appeal to you is that your focus includes the creation of a society in which there is shared prosperity. This challenge requires leaders whose focus extends beyond achieving good quarterly results and meeting their bonus targets. It requires leaders who are able to take a broad, long-term view and that can place the interests of others above their own. The vision in the National Development Plan is clear and it needs leaders who will make it achievable.

Thank you.