

COMMENT



HOSIA SITHOLE

An unsung hero who lived by Batho Pele principles

LEBOGANG MASEKO and ANDILE TSHONA

THERE are many unsung heroes and heroines among us, they work in the shadows, silently and they are often indispensable.

Authors Lim Lay Hsuan and Justin Ooi TY describe unsung heroes and heroines as invisible engines that keep the wheels turning in the organisations where we work or the communities that we live in.

They expand on this by characterising them as people with humility, empathy, committed to a cause, courage to do the right thing and consistent excellence and team work.

These attributes befit one departed soldier and a servant of government communications in Hosia Siphwe Sithole, whose ink never ran dry until his last moments at the Water and Sanitation Department.

He was besotted with his sharpened pen and wore his heart on his sleeve through his commitment to Batho Pele principles as any public servant worth his or her salt should, and as espoused by our forebears.

Sithole was a writer par excellence and communicated the government's messages meticulously with a sense of duty. His resolve, as expected from the government communicators, was to disseminate information to the public in a succinct manner to ensure empowered and informed communities.

Sithole, affectionately known to his colleagues as Jobe, worked silently but steadily among us with humility, empathy, committed to a cause of communication, with courage to do the right thing and he was consistently excellent in a team and individually.

He was not an official typical spokesperson that you would hear on radio and see on TV, but his work was in all the publications in the country, informative, persuasive, giving hope, enlightening and effectively and efficiently communicating the work of government to the public.

Sithole exhibited the highest standards with impeccable ethical behaviour that propelled him to do more than what was expected of him, an overachiever, if you like. As we forge ahead, we find ourselves limping with lacerating wounds felt by the loss of Sithole.

His death has left gaping holes in our hearts as colleagues, but more so to his family whom he adored and loved deeply. We can never thank his family enough for allowing us to know and experience Sithole's sheer brilliance and love for this country.

When work required him to be on his feet during weekends, Sithole would be a foot soldier, carrying out his duties with distinction.

He lived for and loved his wife deeply. "We are a family of Batho Pele principles," he would say. Never one to have a chip on his shoulders or speak down to others, Sithole will be missed for his quirky sense of humour and his ability to find laughter amid heartache.

"Colleagues, you must find a way to carry on without me. The government communications machinery must continue working," we imagine he would say this to us.

As a team, it is our greatest desire to aspire to be like a repository that he was by taking a leaf out of his book to empower communities with information and fulfil the social contract that government has with its people.

It is our intention to become torch bearers among our peers, like you were, Jobe. Government communications poorer without Sithole, but his wealth of work will safely be archived and used as a reference for years to come.

Maseko and Tshona are communicators at the Department of Water and Sanitation.