

SPEECH OF THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT HON. MXOLISI
SOKATSHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE HUMNA RIGHT DAY
CELEBRATIONS IN COLEBERG-PIXLEY KA SEME DISTRICT ON 21
MARCH 2015 AT 11H00

Program Director

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Executive Mayor of the Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality

Mayor of Different Municipalities

Members of different political formations

Honourable Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Comrades and Compatriots

Ladies and Gentlemen;

This year 2015 marks the 60 years of a historic moment in our history, when South Africans from all walks of life adopted the freedom charter in 1955, in Kliptown, Soweto.

They declared amongst other things “that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities”.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen, was a powerful and visionary statement which in essence is finding expression here today.

It is indeed because of the strides made by our forefather’s African National Congress and other anti-apartheid formations that we are able to convene like this today to reflect and celebrate who we really are as

South Africans. This important national day affords us the opportunity to re-affirm who we are as a nation and what we stand for.

Ladies and gentlemen;

The 2015 Human Rights Day will be celebrated under the theme **“Celebrating the Freedom Charter, Enjoying Equal Human Rights For All”** The theme reaffirms that our country South Africa has become truly a better place where the governing party strives for a better life for all. Indeed South Africa has become a better place since 1994.

Fellow compatriots

Human Rights Day is a national day that is commemorated annually on 21st March to remind South Africans about the sacrifices that accompanied the struggle for the attainment of democracy in South Africa.

The apartheid state used declarations of Emergency to crack down against opponents at time of heightened resistance. Police could detain anyone for reasons of public safety, without any appeal to the courts. Also, meetings and gatherings could be banned.

The first state of Emergency was declared in 1960 right after the Sharpsville Massacre, when the ANC and PAC were declared illegal. In the wake of the 1976 student uprising, the government widened police powers of detention even without a State of Emergency.

By the mid-1980's, a popular uprising was underway, with militants calling for making black communities ungovernable.

Here in Coleberg, we saw the killing of four of our own, these were: Krakra Maciki, Funeka Siyonzana, Mongezi Juda and December Marumo.

South Africans worked tirelessly for the transformation of our country to an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law.

These killings as well as those in other parts of the country like Sharpeville and Langa continue to serve as a historical reminder to all of us to make effort towards protecting human rights and human dignity.

We must always remember the spirit of our fallen heroes and heroines such as Abraham Esau, Marcus Mbetha, Booi Mantyi, Sizakhele Mbekushe, Tau Tikane, Thabo Moorosi, Litre Monare, Patrick Mogotsi, Boitumelo Mabilo as well as Ulysis Gogi Modise amongst others.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As we just celebrated 20 years of democracy, the history of the liberation struggle in the Northern Cape can also not go unnoticed. We are talking here of the Mayibuye uprisings that saw the brutal killing of thirteen people and left seven others badly injured. It took place on Saturday, 8 November 1952 at Number Two Location Galeshewe. We must applaud men and women who were led by Dr. Arthur Letele at the time for being brave enough and joined in country-wide Defiance Campaigns of 1952. The Campaign was meant to protest against unjust laws used by the apartheid regime to oppress black people in South Africa.

On Friday, 7 November 1952, protesters led by Dr Arthur Alias Letele demonstrated against apartheid laws by occupying racially segregated public spaces in Kimberley. They blocked whites-only entrances to the

main post office and defiantly sat on whites-only benches at the railway station. Dr. Letele and seven other leaders were arrested and that fuelled further resentment and led to uprisings in Galeshewe Number Two Location where both public and private properties were destroyed.

The protest continued into the second day 8 November 1952, with more arrests. The police station and several other buildings including the crèche were burnt. Police, Municipal and private vehicles were set alight. When the protesters were marching towards town, they were stopped by the police who indiscriminately opened fire on them.

Executive Mayor;

Indeed we have a good story to tell. The story of the Uppington 26 is the story of one of Apartheid's great show trials. It showed the arrest and conviction of 26 individuals on the basis of the common purpose doctrine with the slimmest evidence. Their harassment continued through a protracted two-year long trial at the end of which 14 were sentenced to death. After that followed years on death row at Pretoria Central Prison during which appeals processes were followed which eventually succeeded in May 1991.

The trial, in a way that few other incidents of the 1980s were able to achieve, turned the media and international focus on the Liberation Struggle out of the big urban centres and showed the world and the apartheid regime that it was not only in large townships like Soweto, Langa and Kwamashu that there was resistance and that in a place far from the centres of government, people were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the liberation of our country.

If one looks at the ages of the people involved, the Uppington 26 trial blows the myth put out by the regime that the acts of resistance were

only perpetrated by uncontrolled youth and that the mass of older people were not interested in the political message of liberation. For example, Mr Gideon Madlongolwane, accused number 19, was born in 1928.

Honourable speaker, it is worth noting that it was more than a year after the unbanning of the liberation movements and release of the big name political prisoners that the Uppington 26 were released. Their judicial appeals process continued well into 1991 and whilst there was frustration at this, their victory was all the more sweet in the sense that it was not the result of a deal, but in effect an acknowledgement by the very same judicial system that had sentenced them in the first place, that their trial had been a political showpiece.

The important part of the whole saga is that they did not, like so many, fall in the Struggle, but actually lived to see their own triumph and the triumph of our people over the forces of darkness.

Today the Uppington 26 are heroes. They are acknowledged as such by their own community and they still contribute in many ways to its struggle against poverty and the social evils of the present day.

The construction and unveiling of the memorial in their honour is serving as a reminder of the Struggle of the 1980's and as example to the youth of today and succeeding generations of the self-sacrifice and as a reminder of the sacrifices made for liberation of our country.

Honourable speaker, South Africa has however become a better country since our first democratic elections. As we approach the 20 years landmark, South Africans must be afforded an opportunity to recall the momentous events leading up to 27 April 1994.

One of the symbolic moments of the exodus from the past was the raising of the new flag in 1994. This moment fittingly affirmed the pride and dignity of an unfolding country and a celebration of humanity. Another significant moment was the merger of *NkosiSikelel' iAfrika* and “*Die Stem*” to form one national anthem in 1997.

Also on 27 April 2000 the new Coat of Arms was launched embracing the collective historical essence of the people of the country. “*Indeed South Africa has a good story to tell*”

Program Director;

As we celebrate 60 years of the Freedom Charter, we would like to call on all communities across the province to join us in various districts to celebrate our milestones.

The restoration of the rights of the Khomani San when the former President Nelson Mandela bought members of that community a Platfontein farm outside Kimberley. The community’s basic human rights were being trampled upon when they were left living in squalor in army tents at Schmitsdrift. We can tell a good story of the finalisation of the very first land claim involving the Khomani San in the Kalahari.

Program Director;

Human Rights Day seeks to educate all South Africans about their human rights and obligations and make citizens aware of government services and programmes which give effect to ensuring that their human rights become a lived reality.

The Constitution places a requirement on the Government to give effect to the Bill of Rights through the enactment of relevant legislation. The

Constitution also creates various institutions for the protection of South Africa's constitutional democracy. These include the Office of the Public Protector, the Commission on Gender Equality, the Human Rights Commission and the Commission for the Protection of the rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Since the dawn of the new democratic society, government programmes have ensured that backlogs which were created as a result of apartheid are addressed and that access to basic service has become a priority. We can confidently tell a good story of multitudes of our people who now have access to clean running water decent sanitation and electricity.

Comrades and Compatriots;

As we are going into the third decade of our hard earned democracy, allow me to conclude my address by once again quoting from the famous words of our former President Nelson Mandela “*NEVER, NEVER AND NEVER AGAIN SHALL IT BE THAT THIS BEAUTIFUL LAND WILL AGAIN EXPERIENCE THE OPPRESSION OF ONE BY ANOTHER*” Dr Mandela also continued to say “THERE IS NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM ANYWHERE, AND MANY OF US WILL HAVE TO PASS THROUGH THE SHADOW OF VALLEY OF THE DEATH AGAIN AND AGAIN BEFORE WE REACH THE MOUNTAINTOP OF OUR DESIRES”

We thank you

Siyabulela

Ons is baie Dankbaar

Realeboga

END!!!