



16 August 2021

Befitting Tribute to the Liberation Stalwart: Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela

An honour of having a town renamed after an individual is the highest honour that can ever be bestowed upon that individual. Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela is undoubtedly worthy of such an honour. The renaming of the Town known as Brandfort to Winnie Mandela is an idea whose time is long overdue.

Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was banished to House 802 in Brandfort on 16 May 1977 as a tactic of the apartheid's regime to silence her and diminish her spirit. However, true to her resilience and revolutionary conduct, she continued to fight the injustice of the regime and mobilised the community of Brandfort. During her banishment to Brandfort, Winnie Mandela defied orders given to her by the authorities and often mingled with local community, especially working women, and imparted political education on them.

Memorialization of Struggle:

Memory is a weapon! Post-Apartheid South African society owes it to the fallen martyrs who sacrificed their all for us to enjoy the fruits of freedom that we are enjoying today.

The memory of the sacrifices they paid, including the high and Supreme price they paid with their lives, should never be permitted to fade from memory and history. Current and future generations should have the memory of Albertina Sisulu, Ruth First, Lillian Ngoyi, Charlotte Maxeke, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, and many other liberation stalwarts indelibly imprinted in their minds into posterity. These and many

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other women of our country, being celebrated annually during this month of August, showed remarkable strength and tenacity when they waged struggles for equality, liberty and fraternity in our country.

Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela is being honored against this historical context of men and women who had to endure a lot of suffering and subjugation in their pursuit for freedom and justice.

The Journey to the Unveiling:

The Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation is mandated by the Constitution and various pieces of legislation, including the South African Geographical Names Act, as well as the National Development Plan (NDP) to ensure the transformation of our heritage landscape.

Following a journey of about two years since the process of renaming Brandfort to Winnie Mandela started, the journey has reached its desired crescendo.

Working through its agency called the Provincial Geographical Names Council (PGNC), the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation officially started the renaming process in 2018 by consulting with the local community as well as the Mandela family. The proposal for the renaming process was also widely communicated with the public through mediums such as newspaper adverts, loud-hailing and community meetings as part of the public participation process required by law. The PGNC spared no effort to ensure that public participation took place in an inclusive manner. The local community thereafter endorsed the renaming of the town to Winnie Mandela.

Having satisfied itself that the renaming process met all legal requirements, the PGNC then made a submission to the South African National Geographical Names Council (SAGNC) which, in turn, evaluated the proposal and submitted it to the national Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture for it to be gazetted. The Minister of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Mr Nathi Mthethwa officially gazetted the renaming of Brandfort to Winnie Mandela on Friday 06 August 2021.

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The Unveiling:

As we celebrate Women's Month during this month of August under the theme *“Generation Equality: Realizing Women’s Rights for an Equal Future”*, during this Year of Charlotte Maxeke, Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela will be bestowed the long outstanding honour when the unveiling of the new name of Brandfort will be conducted as follows:

Date: 20 August 2021

Time: 10:00

Venue: Local Sport Precinct (Next to Winnie Mandela Museum), Brandfort, Free State Province.

The event is expected to be graced by the honourable Premier of the Free State, Me Sisi Ntombela, the Mandela family, close associates of Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela who associated with her during her stay in Brandfort and other dignitaries.

This unveiling of Winnie Mandela Town also takes place against the backdrop of the finalisation of the restoration of the house she used to live in in Brandfort where she was expected to lead a solitary existence. The house has been restored and will serve as a museum. After the finalization of the restoration of the house the national Department of Sport, Arts and Culture is currently working on the content of the house as a museum for it to reflect the life and time of Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

Another milestone in the pipeline is the construction of a life size statue of Mama Mandela which the department is in the process of procurement. The statue will be unveiled in Brandfort (Winnie Mandela Town) after completion as an addition to the heritage landscape of this town.

These developments around Brandfort (Winnie Mandela Town) centering around this historical figure, is anticipated to contribute to the much-needed economic

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advancement of the town through tourism. This project is, therefore, not only intended to server the much essential purpose of preserving memory and heritage but also to ensure economic upliftment of towns such as this one with low revenue base.

“Women’s Month allows us to gauge how far we have come in transforming society, particularly the transformation of unequal power relations between women and men. While also focusing on and addressing gender oppression, patriarchy, sexism, racism, ageism, structural oppression, and creating a conducive environment which enables women to take control of their lives. What better way to celebrate this special historical moment of honouring Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in the context of Women’s Month celebration”, observed Mrs Limakatso Mahasa, Member of the Executive Council for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation.

END

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