



23 April 2012

## **Sipho Mutsi Heritage Preservation: 5 – 6 May 2012**

### **The Bare Footed Comrade:**

Popularly known as the “Bare Footed Comrade”, Sipho Mutsi was at a very tender age a thorn in the flesh of the apartheid architects. Almost always walking barefooted, Sipho went about conducting his political activities in and around Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus as a young activist determined to fight the system of apartheid to the bitter end, like many of his fellow comrades across the country. He conducted his political work under the banner of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS).

On the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1985, at an age of 17 years, Sipho died in police custody during interrogation at the Odendaalsrus prison!! It was announced by the lawyer, Richard Spoor, that a state autopsy showed that Sipho Mutsi had died of brain hemorrhage caused by a blow on top of his head. The apartheid regime’s Minister of Law and Order Mr. Louis le Grange, ordered an urgent probe into Sipho Mutsi’ death. To this day, no one has been found guilty of his death. The young Sipho Mutsi, sacrificed his life for the freedom of South African people.

He was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1967 at King Edward VII Hospital in Durban and Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus became his home and, tragically, his death place.

### **Heritage Preservation:**

The legacy of this young political activist is to be preserved through a heritage project which encapsulates:

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- 1) A documentary film;
- 2) Declaration of Siphó's grave as a heritage site;
- 3) Construction of a sport precinct in Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus in Siphó's memory and
- 4) Planting of a tree at a spot where Siphó was last arrested before taken to Odendaalsrus police station where he met with his death.

### **1) The Documentary Film:**

The "Siphó Mutsi: Bare Footed Comrade" documentary film project was conceived by Mr. Jerry Tsie and adopted by LETSEMA LA TSELA NGO. A poetic and thought provoking 95 minutes documentary drama story is based on the life and times of a young South African political activist and icon, Siphó Mutsi. It traces his life from the time when his parents took him to the village of Mokhalinyana in Lesotho in the seventies until the early eighties, when he came back to Odendaalsrus to start his schooling. His involvement in the fight against the apartheid system, which caught the eye of the then Government, runs through the film. Because of his leadership qualities and intellect, he was elected to lead the COSAS branch in Kutlwanong Township, when he died at the age of 17 in police custody during the interrogation at the Odendaalsrus Police Station on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. Scenes of the Police Station where Siphó died are captured in the film.

In August 2010, during the documentary film 1<sup>st</sup> phase, the following people were interviewed and documented for the documentary film: Mr Kuwape Tlale (Ex-Mohahlaula Transport executive member and now a church leader); Mme Pulane Mutsi (Siphó's mother); Siphó Lentoór (Named after Siphó Mutsi); Mr Senzeni Sithole (Friend) and Mr Sello Dithebe (Friend).

In 2011, during the final shooting phase of the documentary film in Lesotho, Free State, Kwazulu Natal and Gauteng, some of Free State political leaders; Mr Ace

Magashula, Mr Dan Kgothule, community leaders, yester-years friends, etc were interviewed to reflect on Siphos contribution to South Africa's freedom.

The documentary is presented and narrated by the legendary Arts Icon; Mr. David Phetoe of Generation-TV Soapie fame and the presenter of FIFA 2010 Soccer promo dvd . The documentary film is produced by Kagiso Senkge, seasoned artist, writer and producer; Written and directed by Jerry Tsie, seasoned artist, writer and producer. The South African Internationally acclaimed Mr Cedric Sundstrom who directed American Ninja 3 and 4 in the 1990s was a mentoring director of the documentary film. The film will be previewed at different places and showcased at film festivals nationally and internationally.

## **2) Declaration of Grave as Heritage Site:**

As part of the Siphos Mutsi Heritage Preservation his grave is the process of being declared a heritage site. The process spearheaded by the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (PHRA) is at an advanced stage following the following steps that were undertaken, amongst others:

- Identification by community member of Siphos grave as a candidate for Heritage Site. A community member identified the grave of Siphos as having a profile befitting acknowledgement;
- An application/Nomination for the declaration was registered with PHRA;
- Consent was sought from and granted by the family before anything could start in the process;
- Research was then undertaken to gather information about Siphos to be used to argue for the declaration of his grave as the Heritage Site. The research process included interviews conducted with various contemporaries and people with knowledge on Siphos;
- The grave will be finally declared as Provincial Heritage Site before the end of this year (2012) after public participation has been completed.

### **3) The Sport Precinct**

A Sport Precinct to the value of about R27 million is to be built for the community of Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus. This massive infrastructure is to consist of a number of state of the art sport and recreation facilities which are in the process of being determined between the Department and the Matjhabeng Local Municipality. The precinct will serve as one of the befitting tribute to the memory of Siphon Mutsi who, together with his fellow freedom fighters, have given their all, including their lives, to the Freedom of all South Africans.

#### **Conclusion:**

The Siphon Mutsi Heritage Preservation project forms part of the broader programme of the Department to promote and preserve heritage of the Free State. It follows on the footsteps of the declaration of several areas as Heritage Sites in the province: Thomas Mtobi Mapikela's Grave; Reverend Zaccharious Mahabane's Grave; Wesleyan Church (ANC Founding Venue) etc.

It also serves as the stepping stone towards some other such projects that are happening and will continue to happen well into the future. The work on the declaration of Siphon Mutsi's grave as a Heritage Site was done simultaneously with work on Vuyo Charles; Zuka Baloyi; Itumeleng Mokobo; Ndooyisile Xhamfu and Martha Motlhakoana who are also some of the struggle icons in the Free State. There are intentions to broaden the heritage scope of the Free State with regard to graves. The Department, through, PHRA remains willing to respond to community identifications and nomination of such possible sites.

**The programme of the Siphon Mutsi Heritage Preservation project will unfold as follows:**

5 May 2012

11:00 Kutlwanong Old Grave yard (Siphon Mutsi Grave Heritage Site)

12:00 Kutlwanong Stadium (Sod Turning for Sport Precinct)

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16:00 Kutlwanong Taxi Rank (Planting of the Tree)

17:00 March to Odendaalsrus Police Station

18:00 Kutlwanong Stadium (Gala Dinner and Screening of the Documentary)

6 May 2012:

14:00 Kultwanong Stadium (Screening of the Documentary for the broader community)

Your media house is cordially invited.

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