



Member of Executive Council
for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation
FREE STATE PROVINCE

THE SPEECH OF THE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR DAN KGOHULE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIPHO MUTSI HERITAGE REMEMBRANCE DOCUMENTARY LAUNCH, 5 MAY 2012, WELKOM.

Programme Director
Motswadi le Baleloko la Siphon Mutshi
Mayors and Councilors Present
Head of the Department, Advocate Tsoarelo Malakoane
Mr Jerry Tsie and the Production Team of Siphon Mutshi Documentary
Representatives of Letsema La Tsela
Honoured Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
Comrades

It gives me great pleasure to be part of this occasion which honours the life of a young and vibrant cadre of the struggle. The road to our freedom is one that is cumbersome. This is a road paved with the blood, sweat, tears and lives of countless gallant and selfless individuals whose contribution to the struggle is beyond reproach. Needless to say, the sacrifice that many of our brothers and sisters made in pursuit of freedom and the prevalence of democracy in this country should be recognized and acknowledged.

We gather today to pay homage to an individual who at a very young age realized the injustice that was imposed on the majority of our people. Today we continue to immortalize the life of a comrade who, together with others of his generation, opposed the marginalization and segregation of our people by the apartheid regime.

Affectionately known as “The Bare Footed Comrade” Siphon Mutsi was one of the most prolific student leaders ever to emerge from the Free State and he played a crucial role as an activist in advancing the course of the liberation struggle in and around Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus.

Comrade Siphon Mutsi and others of his generation were instrumental in entrenching the spirit of defiance and in mobilising our people to resist the oppressive apartheid government and its unjust policies. These young people earned their accolades and respect in society because of their tenacity, foresight and belief in a just course. They were decisive in facing the challenge posed by apartheid. They were responsible in their actions against the regime. In deed their sacrifice and commitment to the struggle should not and cannot be underrated.

It is befitting that we honor this activist, who at the age of 18 was the leader of the Congress of South African Students in Kutlwanong in the eighties. It is indeed sad that Siphon Mutsi became a victim of the ruthless regime at such an early age. The then state security agents may have thought that they were permanently silencing him, their actions had an opposite effect by turning him into a martyr who continues to inspire us, lighting our path towards total emancipation.

The vision and commitment of Siphon Mutsi and the likes of Mr. Senzi Sithole, Mr. Sello Dithube and others has paved the way for our people to have access to a better life in this dispensation. As leaders of the Congress of South African Students they were resilient in opposing the Bantu Education System and this fueled the wrath of the apartheid government against them.

Needless to say, Bantu Education was designed to inculcate a sense of inferiority amongst our people. It was a weapon through which the previous regime wanted to deprive the majority of a right to universal educational practices while also entrenching a sense of supremacy in the socio-economic dynamics of the country.

To this end, comrade Siphon Mutsi and his peers heeded the call made by the ANC on its 75th anniversary that the youth had to ‘proceed from the position that our task is to win a revolution’, and that accordingly we had to “fight the enemy for the right to be at our respective institutions of learning, within which we should build and organize our democratic structures and within which we should introduce the system of people’s education which is a decisive element in the future of our country and people”

It is befitting that we honour the memory of Siphon Mutsi through programmes such as this one in order to preserve and immortalize the fundamental principles for which he lived and died. As the Free State Provincial Government, through the Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation, we are pleased to preserve and honour the legacy of this gallant political activist through this heritage project which will encapsulate:

- A documentary Film
- The declaration of Siphon Mutsi’s grave as a heritage site
- The construction of a sport precinct in Kutlwanong/Odendaalsru in Siphon’s memory and
- Planting a tree at the spot where Siphon was incarcerated before his untimely death.

This preservation project forms part of a continuing and broader programme by the Department which aims to identify, promote and preserve the inherent heritage of the Free State. It also serves as a precursor to other similar projects that will continue to be implemented in the future.

Tonight we launch a documentary film titled “Sipho Mutsi: Bare footed Comrade” in an effort to relate the story of this courageous and selfless comrade. This 95 minute documentary, which was conceived by Jerry Tsie, gives a detailed account of Sipho’s life from the time he spent with his parents in Lesotho to his involvement in student politics in Odendaalsrus.

A number of prominent people, including family, friends, community leaders and politicians, were interviewed during the production of this documentary. We are grateful that the completion of the documentary involved some of the illustrious and well established people in the film industry. These include director, Jerry Tsie, producers Kakgiso Senkge and internationally acclaimed Cedric Sundstrom, narrator David Phetoe as well as other people who made the film a success. We hope that this documentary film will educate young people today about the sacrifices made by previous generations and that it will inspire them to pursue a new form of struggle that of progressiveness and socio-economic transformation.

I am also pleased that the process of declaring Sipho’s grave as a heritage site is nearing completion. The Provincial Heritage Resources Authority has done a sterling job in ensuring that all processes are followed in this regard and for that we are grateful.

Part of our mandate as a department is the promotion of sport and recreation in the province. This of course entails proper sport administration as well as the provision of sport facilities and equipment to our communities. As part of the Siphon Mutsi Heritage Preservation Programme, the department has identified the construction of a sport precinct in Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus in an effort to fulfill our mandate while also honouring Siphon's legacy. This sport precinct will comprise state of the art sport and recreation facilities and will serve as vehicle to unearth talented athletes that will represent our province and the country in respective sporting codes while carrying the memory and legacy of people like Siphon Mutsi.

Let me hasten to add that we have also been staging the Siphon Mutsi Games here in Matjhabeng as one of the vehicles through which we honour the legacy of this giant of our struggle.

I wish to emphasize that this heritage preservation Programme is part of our overall plan to conserve our rich heritage in the province. Various areas have already been declared heritage sites in the province these include Thomas Mtobi Mapikela's grave, Rev. Zacharius Mahabane's grave and the Wesleyan church in Bloemfontein which is founding venue of the ANC. Our gathering here today is therefore a continuation of this process. We will, in partnership with the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority, work towards honouring other struggle icons of this province in an effort to broaden our scope of heritage.

As we celebrate 100 years of our Liberation Heritage, as marked by the formation of the oldest liberation movement on the continent of Africa, the African National Congress, the honouring of struggle icons such as

Sipho Mutsi through these projects, could not be happening at a better time.

It is my wish that the young people today will celebrate the enormous contributions made by past and fallen heroes of the struggle. We have to ensure that our inherent historical and cultural foundation remains intact. This will allow future generations to appreciate our nation building initiatives and to live together as a progressive society.

I thank you.