

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, THE HON Mme. MAPULA MOKABA-PHUKWANA AT THE LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL LIBRARY WEEK HELD AT MADZIVANDILA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE (MAKHADO) VHEMBE DISTRICT ON 24 MARCH 2017.

Programme Director

I stand before you today as the people's servant trying harder to learn, emulate and if possible, walk in the footsteps of our great forefathers and leaders that broke the shackles of Colonialism, Apartheid and self-hate.

Though we all know that it will be challenging to walk into the footsteps of our late African heroes and heroines such as King Ansah of Ghana, Queen Nzingha of Angola and many more.

The Pan-Africanist writer, Edward Wilmot Blyden of the Ibo descendants from Nigeria urged us before his death in Sierra Leone in 1912 to go back to basics. He spoke about reinventing Africa and the African nation after years slavery, rule and divide, conquer, and honing in their European skills over four hundred years of imperialism and exploitation in Africa. The seed of his African consciousness movements touched Africa and diaspora with his speech that:

"It is sad to think that there are some Africans, especially among those who have enjoyed the advantages of foreign training, who are blind enough to the radical facts of humanity as to say, 'Let us do away with our African personality and be lost, if possible, in another race'. Preach this doctrine as much as you like, no one will do it, for no one can do it, for when you have done away with your personality, you have done away with yourselves. Your place has been assigned you in the universe as Africans, and there is no room for you as anything else"...

Coming back home we fondly remember our own tata Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela when he wrote that: *"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that a son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine that a child of farm worker can become the president of a country"*.

At no stage did our heroes and heroines advised to get knowledge and distance ourselves from our African heritage and struggles for a better life.

The Honourable Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Florence Radzilani;

**The Honourable Mayor of Thulamela Local Municipality Avhashoni Tshifhango ;
Their Majesties Khosi Vho Kutama and Khosi Vho Sinthumule;**

Our Honoured Traditional leaders le Mantona a rena;

**Our Hon Minister Faith Muthambi here today as the Chairperson of our
Agricultural College board.**

The Head of Department Mme R.J. Maisela;

**Respectable representatives from the religious fraternity
Management and staff from the LDARD**

Representatives from National and Provincial Departments;

Our Distinguished representatives from Academic Institutions;

The principal of Madzivhandila Agricultural College

Our Notable Partners and Stakeholders;

Our Officials and Students

Guests from various formations, comrades and friends;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ndi matseloni

We have, ***Program Director***, briefly remarked on the importance of knowledge and education in shaping the character of our forbearers and heroes. Thus, celebrating the 18th - 26th March 2017 as the South African National Library Week gives credence to the imperatives of reading. Knowledge acquired through mouth to mouth, experience and reading books and journals must be shared to change our communities for better.

During this all important Library week, I would like to take this opportunity to urge our scholars comprising of academics, researchers, professors, doctors, intellectuals, specialists, sages and dons to join the people servants as experts' advisors. We need you all today as much as you were instrumental in the battles against colonialism and in the dismantlement of the Apartheid regime.

The perception out there is that the educated and the wealthy tend to become arm chair critics without providing informed alternatives. They have a tendency to stay away from our struggles for bettering the lives of our fellow black South Africans. Such divisions weakens our hard worn nation state and leave us in the mercy of dishonest overnight politicians of modern times.

It is these realisations and the current divisions within our nation that prompted the African National Congress to declare the October 2016 to 2017 as the year of soul searching and renewal.

The significance of the appeal is based on the 27th October as the birthday of one of our most outstanding leaders to be produced by our country and the continent. President Oliver Reginald Kaizana Tambo would have turned 99 this year. This makes 2017 a crucial year for our movement as it marks the Centenary of OR and what he stood for.

We must therefore use the next seven months leading to the centenary of OR Tambo to draw the best lessons from his life and to understand his rare qualities that compelled our icon and former President Nelson Mandela to describe him as ***“a great giant that strode the globe like a colossus.”***

Through the leadership of Madiba and his cadres, education was to become a number one priority of this ANC-led government. It is through education that this country can move forward and fast-track the much needed human development. When we took such a decision as government, it was out of the realisation that education is one thing that can break the vicious circle poverty. Characterised by economic inequality, domination of one man by the other, unemployment, racism, crime and abuse of the vulnerable.

The understanding resonate well with one of our liberation struggle heroes and commander of uMkhonto weSizwe Chris Hani when he said:

“We need to create the pathways to give hope to our youth that they can have the opportunity through education and hard work to escape the trap of poverty”.

This for me epitomise the criticality of knowledge towards generating a better life for all. Furthermore, for any kind of development to be regarded as sustainable, knowledge of the environment is critical.

The fundamentality of education and information gathering was entrenched in our famous foundation, the Freedom Charter that declared that ***“The Doors of learning and Culture shall be opened to all.”*** This clause was not just a mere statement of historical coincidence, but a clarion call and a commitment made by our forbearers in 1955. That in the future democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united South Africa, the quest for knowledge, learning and education will be the centre piece. That knowledge shall serve to consolidate the freedoms that our people will enjoy to attain prosperity.

We have as part of this developmental trajectory worked hard to ensure that our people have access to libraries and other sources of knowledge.

Programme Director

We are equally saddened that whilst in some unfortunate incidents of violent protests in the country, including here at home, schools and libraries have been regrettably targeted, burned and vandalized. I will be a dishonest politician if I fail to condemn these acts of vandalism destroying our centres of knowledge.

As community leaders, we need to urgently dissuade the destruction of the pillars of knowledge and education. It is through learning that we could come up with alternative approaches of expressing our dissatisfactions. Let us not cut our noses to spite our faces.

The quest to transform the public service into a learning organization requires the exploration of a variety of innovative ways. As public servants we have to be creative and find innovative approaches to fulfil the needs of today’s sophisticated citizens who deserve quality services.

It is therefore rather heart-warming that our Department of Agriculture and Rural Development continues to highlight the role of libraries and knowledge towards sustainable development and food security.

Lack of information and knowledge kept in libraries and other institutions will see us experiencing further natural disasters. Some of which could have been avoided through an ongoing learning, research and patriotism.

Programme Director

This celebration is held during the month of March, which is the Human Rights Month. It is during this period that we pay fitting tributes to multitudes of our fallen heroes and heroines.

It is also the time when we observe the International Anti-Racism Week to highlight the urgent need to combat this scourge. Again in this month, we join hands at a global level to create awareness about the need to strive for gender equality as we just celebrated the International Women's Day on the 8th of March.

Our government has duly recognized the central role of libraries in the current Knowledge Economy. We have, through the National Library of South Africa and in collaboration with the Department of Arts and Culture throughout the nine provinces introduced a programme known as the **MZANSI Libraries On-line Project**.

This forms part of the Global Libraries Programmes, which has been implemented in about thirty developing countries. The objectives include empowering our communities through the provision of free access to information.

These include increasing access to Information and Communication Technology for the youth, unemployed, women, the elderly and people living with disabilities. The effort contributes towards increasing social and economic awareness to improve access to health, education and economic information to meet the needs of communities.

Programme Director

It is not only education that is afforded a pride of place in the Freedom Charter, but agriculture, land restitution and rural development are also addressed at length by the fourth (4th) clause, which states that:

"The land shall be shared among those who work it!"

There can never be any sustainable economic growth if we do not achieve food security. We must stop at nothing to plant what we eat and eat what we plant. Agriculture is just too important to be relegated to the lowest level in the list of our priorities.

Calling on the youth to join us in agriculture, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, who was elected the first President of the ANC Youth League, displayed a rare foresight in recognizing the role of agriculture when we paraphrase his statement as:

“Agriculture is of [prehistoric] significance in the progress of a nation. No man can accurately trace the origin of agriculture because when God, the great Agriculturalist created man, the Garden of Eden was planted first. So, the first job that was given to man by God was to work in the garden for survival. Thus the agricultural industry is holy and by default a blessed type of work”.

He was also of the idea that some educated people belittle manual work, they say it is too inferior for them. They prefer ‘white collar’ work. According to Lembede, such people do not do this because they have bottomless knowledge but because ignorance has got the upper hand on them.

We have, **Program Director**, as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development during our Budget Speech last Thursday, put aside a reasonable amount to attract young farmers into agriculture and thus rural development.

The allocation will assist the youth with implements, seed, tractors and other related resources to upgrade from subsistence farmers to commercial farmers. All these, ladies and gentlemen are what the Limpopo Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is doing on a daily basis. It is our work and we have cutting edge and specialized knowledge and information acquired through reading, learning and experiments from the libraries.

Some of the programmes in place to advance and accelerate our sustainable development include:

-  The Fetsa Tlala Food Security Programme,
-  The Revitalisation of Irrigation Schemes (RESIS), and
-  The Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP).

Programme Director

In conclusion, all these cannot be achieved if we neglect facilities that serve as centres of knowledge and information. We cannot successfully advance the critical role of agriculture in our efforts to achieve sustainable economic development and growth if we neglect our libraries.

Recently we are often reminded by those who claim to be social analytic experts that South Africans have become a non-reading nation. As recent as last week, the social media and newspapers quoted a social survey that regarded us a highly ignorant nation in the world.

Therefore, it is my humble plea that we all join hands to ensure that libraries are protected from dissidents that wreak havoc in our communities. I am equally aware that the Honourable mayors are talking to the issue. Hoping that every community leaders will soon join us to condemn such behaviours. Vhomsanda must take a lead in their communal lands.

Let each one teach one about how the knowledge and information in our libraries will make members of our communities increase agricultural production.

It is your libraries too, take care of them and jealously guard over them lest we suffer a vicious circle of poverty hunger, unemployment, despair, crime and incarcerations

Together Lets move South Africa Forward!

Ndi Kho Livhua, nga Maanda!

Inkomu

Re a leboga