

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, THE HON Mme. MAPULA MOKABA-PHUKWANA AT THE DONATIONS HANDING OVER CEREMONY TO RETHUSHENG SPECIAL SCHOOL IN MAMEHLABE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SABC LIMPOPO; ON THE 30TH MARCH 2017.

In the family of humanity the world-over, Africans stand out so far as the culture of sharing and treating each other especially children as family. The culture of a people is what marks them out distinctively from other human societies.

Culture is, according to anthropological scholars: *“the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs”.*

Programme Director

I deliberately chose to define culture as we gather here today in the name of giving, because most of us here if not all are Africans and giving and sharing is what in our culture is not only a norm but our way of life. It is what as Africans we have cherished and always lived by.

Ka segagešo re re bana ba motho ba ngwathagana hlogo ya tšie.

The Honourable Mayor of Blouberg Local Municipality, Cllr. M.S Pheedi

His Majesty Kgoši Matlala

The Head of Department Mme R.J. Maisela;

Our Notable Partner in this endeavour, the SABC

The principal of Rethusheng Special School, Ms Letsoalo MP

Management and staff from the LDARD

Representatives from Department of Education;

Respectable representatives from the religious fraternity

All Our Stakeholders present here;

Our Beautiful Students;

Guests from various formations, comrades and friends;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Two days ago this country woke to the saddening news of the passing-on of one of the finest leaders of our liberation struggle, a Rivonia Trialist, a veteran and father to this freedom we enjoy today, Cde Ahmed Kathrada – “Uncle Kathy” – as he was affectionately known. May the soul of this gallant leader of our people rest in peace.

We must draw not only strength but compassion from the calibre of leadership that was provided by leaders like the Rivonia Trialist and their generation; Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Denis Goldberg, Nelson Mandela, Lionel "Rusty" Bernstein, James Kantor, Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni and Elias Motswaledi. These are leaders who fought to the bitter end for the love of their people. They stated it clearly through President Nelson Mandela at a very difficult moment of passing judgement during the Rivonia Trial in 1963 - 64 that they are prepared to die for the freedom of their people.

We ought to thank them by amongst others ensuring the delivery of services and by caring and empowering the youth and people such as the special students of Rethusheng, and that we must do up to infinity. We must stop at nothing but go beyond the call of duty in serving our people.

Programme Director

We are here to spend the day with our special students and re-assure them their place in the entire society. They totally belong, and we remain committed to ensuring that through the activities of the day and the continued support from the Department beyond today's event; they deserve dedicated support.

This is partly to heed the call of our first democratic president whose love for children, (the youth and people living with disabilities) was unparalleled, when he commanded the nation that:

“Let us reach out to the children. Let us do whatever we can to support their fight to rise above their pain and suffering.”

He further said:

“It always gives me great pleasure to be surrounded by the beautiful children of our land. Whenever I am with energetic young people such as yourselves I feel like a recharged battery, confident that our country can look forward to great things. You are the future of this country – you are the people who will lead us into the next century.”

Equally; when he addressed the conference for the disabled in April 2004 he said:

“It is not a question of patronising philanthropy towards disabled people. They do not need the patronage of the non-disabled. It is not for them to adapt to the dominant and dominating world of the so-called non-disabled. It is for us to adapt our understanding of a common humanity; to learn of the richness of how human life is diverse; to recognise the presence of disability in our human midst as an enrichment of our diversity.”

It would be at the detriment of our efforts for building a non-discriminatory prosperous society not to be here with our Rethusheng students today.

In synch with Mandela’s views about the youth and children are President OR Tambo’s assertions that a country that does not take care of the youth is not serious about its future. Whilst that is the case an African proverb says: “The old woman looks after the child to grow its teeth and the young one in turn looks after the old woman when she loses her teeth”.

Furthermore, in Africa we say; *‘A united family eats from the same plate’*.

Programme Director

I refer to the recipients of today’s donations as students being fully conscious of the fact that they are being characterised as ‘special’. To me they are human beings and so should they be to everybody. Last year in November I presided over a ceremony of honouring Farmers living with disabilities. These are people who are doing even greater than unchallenged people in life. I would like to repeat what I said during the tabling of the Departmental Budget that those farmers are a living proof of greatness against all odds.

The students of Rethusheng Special School I today say to you; I totally believe in you. You have received a garden from us as the Department

and that is a vote of confidence that you are capable. The Department will support you in various ways to grow and maintain your garden. I would like to see in the future this legacy we have created here today bearing accolades possibly through best farmers with disability or in other means.

The principal and staff your commitment and dedication doesn't go unnoticed and you are doing a great job. We urge you to continue in the work of appreciating the '*presence of disability in our human midst as an enrichment of our diversity.*'

The Department has ring-fenced money towards the support and empowerment of farmers living with disabilities, the youth and women in our province. We have made a clarion call to our people, especially in these strata's mentioned above to make farming fashionable again and take advantage of the assistance that the Department will be able to offer. We seek to sough a sense of self-sufficiency in our people and especially from a young age.

We have as the Department since re-opened out two agricultural colleges; Tompi Seleka in Sekhukhune district and Madzivhandila in Vhembe district. These colleges are strategic sites of struggle in heightening the production of agricultural knowledge farming activities in the province. I want to challenge the Rethusheng Special School to use the legacy of this school garden and the Departmental officials' expertise to prepare and produce student(s) who could be enrolled with these colleges at some point. It is possible, we must do it as we are committed to together move South Africa forward!

We thank you!

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