



**INTRODUCTION OF THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER, MR JODY KOLLAPEN, CHAIRPERSON OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION BY THE SEDIDENG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY EXECUTIVE MAYOR, CLLR. MAHOLE SIMON MOFOKENG AT THE SEDIBENG ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS LECTURE**

19 March 2009, Vereeniging City Hall,

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please. They do not make it under circumstances chosen by them, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past”

- Mr. Jacob Khawe, Programme Director, and ANC Member of the Gauteng Province Legislature;
- Mr. Jody Kollapen, Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC);
- Fellow Councillors;
- Teachers and learners from E.D Mashabane, Botebo-Tsebo, Tharabollo, Thandukwazi, Dinokeng, Thuto-Lore, Shandu and Mothlodi Secondary and High Schools;
- Comrades, colleagues and friends;
- Representatives of various media institutions present;
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;
- The people of Sedibeng.

I stand here before you today, humbled, honored and proud of the historic role which the people of our region of the Vaal, have played in the relentless struggles against the apartheid government.

The people of this region, like the people of Gugulethu, Soweto, Parys have fought for the realization of the vision of the Freedom Charter,

which contains the minimum demands of our people and a road map to the envisaged non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and united South Africa.

This Lecture once more, serves as a reconfirmation of our commitment to celebrate our achievements as a people of South Africa against all forms of discrimination and human violations.

Our democratic constitution, which stands as an envy of Nations the world over, and which was signed right where we are assembled today, promotes and defends the rights of the people of South Africa, both black and white.

We have endured over 300 years, the hardships of an undemocratic, racist, repressive, and apartheid system that denied the majority of our people access to basic human rights such as health care, housing, education, water and so on.

It has denied black people basic human rights such as the rights to assemble, freedom of movement and of speech and to vote for a government of their choice.

This Memorial Lecture on human rights is an ongoing instrument through which we reflect on our past, and consolidate our resolve as we march to the creation of a better life for all.

It takes place just on the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, which doubles as our Human Rights Celebrations, and the 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup Tournament.

Our breakthrough in 1994 laid the basis for implementing the reconstruction and development in our country. Our task today is to continue uncompromisingly and rigorously on the path to transfer complete power to the majority of South Africans, so that we can attain our strategic objective of as outlined in the Freedom Charter, which is our heritage and must guide our efforts.

The partnership we have forged with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) means that we are prepared to defend, promote and advance our heritage – the human rights. Institutions such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) are a proud product of our struggle for freedom and democracy.

## **Programme Director,**

Today, we are honored to have in our presence one of the ambassadors of our human rights struggles, Mr. Jody Kollapen, Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission.

Comrade Kollapen is an activist in his own right and he practiced law in Pretoria, from 1981 to 1992 focusing on public interest law and during this period he represented a number of persons prosecuted in terms of apartheid laws, amongst which were Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Ambassador Moss Chikane, MEC Kgaogelo Lekgoro and many other activists and cadres in and around Tshwane.

He joined Lawyers for Human Rights, a leading human rights NGO in 1992 and served, as its National Director from 1994 until 1995.

He was appointed by President Mandela on the recommendation of Parliament and reappointed for second term by President Mbeki. He has a B.Proc degree and LLB degree from Wits.

The South African Human Rights Commission, is a constitutional body set up in terms of Chapter 9 of the South African Constitution to protect and promote human rights.

He was requested by President Mandela to be part of a panel entrusted with the task of interviewing and making recommendations on persons to be appointed to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

His areas of interest include human rights within the administration of justice, equality and the advancement of socio-economic rights. He is presently chairperson of the Equality Review Committee.

He currently serves on the boards of various national and international human rights bodies, including the Legal Resources Centre and the Human Rights Foundations. He has spoken and participated in numerous workshops and conferences on human rights issues both nationally and internationally and written extensively on human rights issues and on constitutionalism.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I present to you, one of our own Mr. Jody Kollapen, the Chairperson of the South African Human Rights Commission, who is our guest speaker tonight at this 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of our Human rights lecture.

We believe that his input will add value and will go a long way to make us appreciate and understand where we come from, how we got where we are and where we are going.

This will then assist us to appropriately position ourselves to continue with our struggle to make and write our history - our heritage, just like the great revolutionary thinker Karl Max in the 18<sup>th</sup> century said, *“That the history of a people, is a product of their struggles, as they navigate through the many challenges that confronts them”*.

Comrade Kollapen, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

Amandla,