



Welcoming Address by the Sedibeng District Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr. Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the 26th Anniversary of the Vaal Uprising held at the Mphatlalatsane Theatre on the 03rd September 2010, in Sedibeng.

Programme Director:

Our Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today marks the 26th Anniversary of the Vaal Uprisings. On this day 26 years ago, the community of Sedibeng, then called the Vaal Triangle, woke up to take to the streets in protest of the increase in rates and taxes by the Councillors they did not elect.

From the length and breadth of the townships that today constitutes Emfuleni Local Municipality, the communities under the leadership of the Vaal Civic Association and the Congress of South African Students with support from the Vaal Ministers Solidarity Group went on what they thought would be a peaceful march to present their memorandum.

The regime, as it was used to at that time, opened fire randomly to kill 72 people in a very short period of time. The community responded by attacking businesses that the councillors had undeservingly allocated to themselves. By the end of the weekend, there was hardly a single shop standing in the township. Most of them had been burned down.

In the rich vein of the history making, the community of Sedibeng, then call the Vaal, rose like never before to make their mark on the long road to freedom for this country. Last year we s the Sedibeng District Municipality took a turn to say, "Our heroes-Our Legacy-Lest we forget" as our theme for this commemoration.

We committed ourselves to remember, painful as it may be to some of us who had lost family members and innocence in the face of the brutal onslaught by the government that cared less about African lives. This year we say as our theme proclaims: Together with our Communities- A final push towards reclaiming our Heritage"

To that end, we have from yesterday and today, called on some of the leaders of the community of the Vaal to come and share with us their profound experience of helping in bringing down the apartheid regime.

We are out to capture and record our history, the same heritage that makes Sedibeng the Cradle of Human Rights Struggles in South Africa.

The community of Sedibeng has a lot to be proud of. We have the South African Constitutional Square here in Vereeniging to mark the signing of the world's best Constitution in our District. The Constitutional Walk in Sharpeville is taking shape as a way to mark the signing of the Constitution into law at the George Thabe Stadium. This is the very same stadium that hosted Didier Drogba and the Ivory Coast football team, during the 2010 FIFA world Cup.

This very rich heritage cannot be allowed to disappear. We are who we are and are defined by our history. The time has come now for us to reclaim what rightfully belongs to us. Our history needs to be put in the spotlight. We are its custodians. It has to pass from generation to generation so that our children's children must know that Sedibeng is indeed the home of the brave.

As part of reclaiming this rich heritage, we in Sedibeng District Municipality will shortly call on a suitable service provider to assist in recording this rich history. It is important to do so. One has only to look at the most influential nation in the world, the Jews.

They have total ownership of their history going back to the time of Abraham in the Bible. They can trace their forefathers and their family history way back to five thousand years. This gave them the right to name the Vice President of the USA, the deputy to Barrack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden.

It is as we are reclaiming this heritage, that we will be looking to its creators, the activist of the day to come forward to lead us again in recording it accurately.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank the leaders of the 1984 era who have availed themselves for this occasion during this period. I look forward to hosting you as a group so that w may have the opportunity to hear your account sitting around an Imbawula or under a tree so that the oral history tradition is not lost.

It is with powers vested in me, I take this opportunity to welcome the communities of Sedibeng to this historical occasion and declare the proceedings open.

I Thank You.