



**Acceptance Address by the Executive Mayor, Cllr. Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the COSAS memorial Lecture held at the Mphatlalatsane Theatre, Sebokeng on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2011 in Sedibeng**

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Programme Director;

Member of Parliament and former COSAS President: Honourable Lulu Johnson;

Members of the COSAS National Executive Committee Present;

Provincial Chairperson: COSAS: Cde Ntsako Mogobe;

Provincial Secretary: South African Council of Churches: Rev Gift Moerane

Acting Regional Secretary: COSAS: Ms Maserame Phalodi;

Distinguished Guests

It is with great joy that I came here today. While it is very common to look to the stalwarts of the struggle, read about them, name a number of townships and sections of various area as well as streets. We very seldom consider the names of the student leaders who sacrificed the best times of their lives to bring us our hard won freedom in this country.

The history of COSAS is interlinked with the history and legacy of our struggle. We have streets named after former President Nelson Mandela, we have whole communities named after the former president of the ANC, the late Oliver Reginald Tambo, our municipalities in Gauteng have an annual jamboree in his honour, namely the Oliver Reginald Tambo Memorial Games.

The question then needs to be asked: was COSAS an addendum, an attachment, a footnote in the struggle for the liberation of our country? Why is it that we are not telling the nation of the rich history and heritage of this strong organization?

For those of us who were a bit older to be members of COSAS at the time took and derived great courage from the students under the banner of COSAS 31 year ago. It was at the time of great repression and the adults at the time were pushed into a serious sleep at the manner of repression. It was difficult to even go on a consumer boycott let alone join a Trade Union.

It took the energy of the youth and students under the banner of COSAS through their numerous campaigns to wake the communities up here in Sedibeng in particular and the entire country as a whole. Their campaign to have SRC's in the schools to remove the dreaded and reactionary prefect system, took the education department by the scruff of its neck.

Due to their relentless pressure here in Sedibeng, VAPTO, the Vaal Progressive Teacher Organization, a forerunner to SADTU was formed. Trade Unions were to be formed in great numbers, with FOSATU which later became COSATU enjoying great support from the energy generated by COSAS.

It was as a result of the militancy of COSAS that we were to see the rise of the Educational Crisis Committee. Under the principled leadership of COSAS, the powers that be at the time, deemed it fit to deploy armies into the townships, declare two State of Emergency in rapid succession. The first one covered a few areas in the country, when this did not work, a blanket State of Emergency was declared throughout the country.

As a result of this blanket State of Emergency, the jails in this country were filled with activists as young as fourteen years old. If anyone has any doubts as to the ruthlessness of apartheid, one had only to count the number of young kids who were made jailbirds at the time. It is for this reason that some of us find it difficult to understand why our youth take the right to vote for granted.

For the rich history and legacy of this great organization, whose great leaders are not heralded in the manner of stalwarts of the past, one does not have to look any further.

The firebrand and capable former President of COSAS, who at the time led from the trenches, Honourable MP Lulu Johnson, is still doing good work leading the nation from the parliament today. The former Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni and MMC, Honourable Ntombi Mekgwe, is still leading the province in the Health Portfolio.

Sedibeng District Municipality is ably led by the core of leaders from Sedibeng COSAS Region. They provide the firm footing from which to provide services to our communities. Who can forget the irrepressible Lebohang Mahata, who was to lead the transition of the local government to the Sedibeng District Municipality today.

Our failure to record and preserve this rich history and heritage will be a serious indictment on our part. I look forward to the day in which our learners here in Sedibeng and the country in general, will be studying this history in the manner that they are made to study the Dromedaris, Reiger and De Goode Hoop.

Sedibeng District Municipality, in recognition of the rich history and heritage of COSAS, continues to provide millions of rand every year towards the provision of bursaries to deserving students. Our commitment has seen to it that deserving students are able to further their studies in different educational disciplines.

**In conclusion**, I take this opportunity to welcome all our distinguished guests to this memorial lecture. I look forward to the time when this will be celebrated on a grand scale, in a much bigger venue, with all the learners of Sedibeng being offered an opportunity to attend as the history and heritage of COSAS will at the time form part of their curriculum.

I Thank You.