

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe: To strive for the extraordinary

Recent events in Africa – the interpretation of which I will leave to history - bring to mind the popular uprising in Langa on 30 March 1960, where 30 000 strong marched from Langa township into the heart of Cape Town. I would like to acknowledge Nana Mahomo and Philip Kgosana who are here today.

We are gathered here today to honour Sobukwe through this exhibition, Remember Africa. During Robert Sobukwe's youth at Healdtown College and at the University of Fort Hare a popular slogan, which he inscribed in his books and letters and reiterated in his in his speeches, was 'Remember Africa.'

He was born of parents not educated but proud of their contribution and participation in their community. Sobukwe's concepts of self-worth and self-confidence were grounded in his family's participation in the church and the community of African traditions.

What he got to believe from growing up in Graaff-Reinet, marginalized by race and poverty;

What he got to learn from teachers and mentors;

Debate and engagement with friends and colleagues;

These crystallized his ideas – ideas he would stubbornly not compromise.

Sobukwe's idea of citizenship was that each had to be an active agent of change for the liberation of Africa. These ideas were not unique to him – they echoed voices of those before him and spoke to his generation of young men and women. Many of the people he inspired were of similar background but had not had the opportunity of higher education. He was able to speak their language, articulate their aspirations and convince them that whatever he asked of them he himself would do.

Sobukwe was a teacher, a platform he used to inspire young people to be greater than their circumstances. He said to us as children that it does not matter what

organization you became a member of but it was important to participate in the struggle for liberation.

As the history of the PAC is often a footnote to the Sharpeville tragedy, what is often forgotten is that under an oppressive state of 1960s apartheid South Africa a group of inspired young men and women, ignited a popular uprising.

They believed their cause was just and that they would have failed history and indeed themselves if they had not done their part in the fight against colonialism and apartheid. They could no longer stand by as their country was pillaged. They could no longer go cap in hand to the oppressor asking for their liberation. The oppressed must use their own resources to free themselves.

The lives of many talented youth were wasted to prison and exile. They had made it their duty to serve, sacrifice and suffer for our liberation. It is up to us who knew them to acknowledge their contributions.

What they desired was for Africans to chart their own course, build their own future and for Africa to take its rightful place in contributing to humanity. Sobukwe and his organization had overwhelming faith in Africa and Africans.

Though a humble man, Sobukwe had confidence in himself. In every community he lived his presence was felt. Through his contributions - which he saw as his duty - he was avowed. You affirm yourself through your duties to others.

As Pravin Gordham stated in his speech yesterday, it is all of our responsibility, in our families, our organisations, our churches and businesses to create the conditions which will enable the youth of South Africa to use their creativity, talents and intellect to build South Africa. And it is our duty as the custodians of Africa to ensure that our youth affirm Africa in their endeavors.

In taking Sobukwe's legacy forward, the Robert Sobukwe Trust aims to encourage youth to follow in the footsteps of Sobukwe and to strive for the

extraordinary. Currently we are working to establish a community museum and learning centre for the youth of Graaff-Reinet. Your contributions in assisting us to achieve our vision will be greatly appreciated.

It had been difficult for years for me to talk about Sobukwe. It has gradually been easier. I hope it gets easier for the rest of South African society to place him and his organization where they historically belong and to talk about them.

The Trust and the Sobukwe family thank Achmat Dangoor of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, as well as its founder President Nelson Mandela, and wish him good health. We thank Razia, Zanele, Sello, Verne, Lucia from the Mandela Foundation and Roger, Benny, Abie and Albaric from Oryx Media for their work towards the exhibition. Thanks to you the invited guests for your interest and attendance. We look forward to your participation tomorrow

Dini Sobukwe

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