



Freedom Park Admin  
Cnr Koch and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Pretoria  
South Africa

PO Box 2710  
Pretoria  
Salvokop  
0001

Tel:  
Fax:  
Toll-free

+27(0) 12 336 4000  
+27(0) 12 336 4021  
0800 470 740

[www.freedompark.co.za](http://www.freedompark.co.za)

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## Media release

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### **Freedom Park's Youth Month initiatives culminate in dialogue between military veterans and Alexandra youth**

Freedom Park's Youth Month initiatives culminate on Wednesday, 27 June 2012 at 10:00, with a dialogue between military veterans from various South African liberation movements and youth from the township of Alexandra. Entitled *Remembering June 16: Youth of Yesteryear in Dialogue with Youth of Today* and hosted in conjunction with the Human Sciences Research Council, the event will also include an address by Antoinette Sithole, Hector Pieterson's older sister.

Facilitated by award-winning artist and photographer as well as CEO of *South African History Online*, Mr Omar Badsha, this dialogue provides an opportunity for military veterans from South African liberation movements to share with the youth their experiences as well as the values that allowed them to triumph over the obstacles in their lives. These veterans will not only tell of their personal experiences fighting for freedom and liberation in South Africa in their youth, but the youth of today will also have an opportunity to ask questions as well as share their opinions and experiences.

Wednesday's dialogue is the fourth in a series initiated by the HSRC. The series is not only focussed on knowledge production and documenting the history of our heroes and heroines, but also on providing these veterans with a platform to share those values that made them heroic. In line with Youth Month, our audience for this dialogue represents the Alexandra youth and comes from the Vincent Tshabalala Education Trust, located in Alexandra.

The trust's namesake was himself a hero in the struggle for democracy and freedom in South Africa and died at the young age of 20 in a clash with the Apartheid police. His commitment to an equal and better education for all South Africans is today being realised in the work that the Vincent Tshabalala Education Trust does to uplift, empower and inspire the youth of Alexandra.

Primarily, the trust is aimed at assisting the youth of Alexandra who have the potential and talent to advance their education and social contribution to the community, but are hindered from doing so by financial restraints as well as lack of awareness of opportunities.

“At Freedom Park, we are fully aware of how crucial it is for us to embrace our history and our heritage before we can look to the future,” says Mr Fana Jiyane, CEO of Freedom Park. “Our history tells our youth of the tremendous character, strength, selfless perseverance and sacrificial strength of the generation before them. Their tales literally say: “look, this is the stock that you come from. If we could face and overcome the obstacles in our way, so can you. You have the same tremendous character, strength, selfless perseverance and sacrificial strength.”

“It is true that the youth of yesterday and the youth of today do not share the same lives, experiences or issues. What they do share is the presence of tremendous challenges in their way. Sometimes, all that is needed is someone to inspire, to cheer on or to act as a role model. This is essentially what today is about. We acknowledge the issues that the youth of today face, but we also believe that their circumstances are in no way a sentence of lifelong doom. After today, after hearing the stories of these military veterans, after hearing what they had to face and how they persevered, we hope that they will believe in the possibility of their future as well,” concludes Mr Jiyane.

For more information:

Ilse Posselt

+27 (0)12 336 4103

+27 (0)79 515 3371

[ilse@freedompark.co.za](mailto:ilse@freedompark.co.za)