

Media Release

Thursday, June 05, 2003

18 years on Botswana remembers the raid on Gaborone

A CLEANSING and healing ceremony, to remember the victims of the 1985 raid on Gaborone takes place in that city on June 13. In that raid 12 people were killed, including a six-year old Mosotho boy, in an unprovoked attack on residential homes.

The ceremony is a joint initiative of a group of former South African political exiles who were based in Botswana and the Freedom Park Trust and will be one in a series of cleansing, healing and symbolic reparation ceremonies being planned for all countries in Southern Africa where people of South African origin died in the course of the liberation struggle. The ceremonies will acknowledge the seven areas of conflict in South Africa's past (genocide, slavery, the wars of resistance, the Anglo-Boer wars, the struggle for liberation and the first and second world wars) and will culminate, on December 16, in a national ceremony at the Freedom Park site. This is in line with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"Freedom Park will become a permanent reminder for us now and for future generations that South Africans did take a step forward to put closure to the past while not forgetting it," says Dr Wally Serote, Chairperson of Freedom Park Trust.

"By doing so we give ourselves a chance to address issues of the present and future and commit ourselves as a generation to handing over an intact, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic, prosperous and powerful nation to our children."

As with other cleansing, healing and symbolic reparation ceremonies taking place in the provinces in South Africa, soil from the graves of people who died will be collected and brought to the Freedom Park site in Pretoria to form a memorial to those who died in conflict in South Africa. Freedom Park Trust is compiling a list of people who died in the seven events. Their names will be inscribed on a boulder to be part of the Isivivane monument at Freedom Park in Salvokop, Pretoria.

The Freedom Park site is located at Salvokop, Pretoria. On July 20 the Freedom Park Trust will announce the names of the architects who have won the international competition to construct memorials and offices at Freedom Park. A national cleansing, healing and symbolic reparation ceremony will take place at the site on December 16 this year and the nation will celebrate its first ten years of democracy (on April 27, 2004) at Freedom Park.

The group of former exiles intend to pay homage to their comrades who fell in the course of struggle, and will go to Gaborone for the weekend. Their activities include an exhibition at the Art Gallery of the National Museum, a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of the people who were killed on June 14, 1985, and a musical concert.

Among the South Africans who were killed in the raid was well-known anti-apartheid artist Thami Mnye, and some of his work will be on display at the exhibition.

The Botswana cleansing and healing ceremony takes place at 18H00 at Plot 3032 Maphatswa Close, Gaborone.

For more information, please call Uriel Abrahamse on 011 376 1197 or uabraham@anc.org.za. Freedom Park appeals to people who have lost loved ones in any of the seven events of conflict in Botswana, to phone the Freedom Park offices (012-321-1401) and ensure that the names of their loved ones are included on the list of people who fell during the seven conflict of war.

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