

Freedom

PARK TRUST

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The Freedom Park Trust and the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality Join Forces to Honour Struggle Heroes and Heroines

7 May 2008, Groblersdal On Thursday, 8 May 2008, The Freedom Park Trust and the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality (GSDM) formalise their joint effort to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the 1958 Sekhukhune Uprisings by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. The event takes at the Roshi Guest House, Greater Marble Hall in Groblersdal at 12:00 and will be attended by, amongst others, the Executive Mayor of the GSDM, Cllr. Namane Dickson Masemola and CEO of the Freedom Park Trust, Dr M.W. Serote.

Given the significance of the Sekhukhune uprisings in 1958, the GSDM joined hands with the Freedom Park Trust to host a commemoration ceremony. This celebration will take place on 23 May 2008 at The Freedom Park in Pretoria. A memorial lecture on 27 May 2008 will also take place at the Jane Furse Comprehensive School with Dr Mathole Motshekga, the Kara Institute Founding President as key note speaker. A second lecture is also scheduled for 31 May 2008 in Mofokeng.

During the 1950s, the Apartheid government heightened its grip on rural areas with the introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act that often encroached on chieftaincies. Various laws and policies, including Bantu education, enforcing livestock control and the re-demarcation of land, were also introduced during this period.

As a means of protest, inhabitants of the Sekhukhune area formed an ANC-linked movement called Sebatakgomo. This movement joined forces with traditional leaders in their protest of these policies and laws.

Sebatakgomo's nucleus comprised migrant workers from the Sekhukhune area who were based in Gauteng and provided direction and financial support to traditional leaders and their counterparts in the Sekhukhune area that allowed them to continue in the Struggle. The Gauteng-based members also acted as brokers between the rural communities and the ANC.

In 1958, Sebatakgomo staged a violent protest against the Apartheid government, which resulted in the arrest of more than 200 protestors, 16 of which were sentenced to life in prison.

Until 1958, protests and revolts against Apartheid were concentrated mainly in urban areas. The Sekhukhune uprising proved the catalyst for rural revolts across South Africa.

According to the CEO of the Freedom Park Trust, Dr M.W. Serote, the aim of the commemoration is to ensure that the people of Sekhukhune are recognised and honoured for the role they played in building a free and humane South Africa. "One of our objectives with The Freedom Park is to ensure that the stories of our heroes and heroines are told. Apart from educating the nation as to our history, we also aim to instil a sense of pride in our youth regarding the valour and dignity of their forbearers."

According to GSDM Executive Mayor Cllr. Namane Dickson Masemola, the 50th anniversary of the uprisings will be a celebration for the community, as they acted as pioneers in a movement that played a tremendous part in achieving freedom and liberation. "The actual wars of resistance were pioneered in Sekhukhune before they spread to other areas, such as Pondoland and KwaZulu-Natal. It is our honourable duty to commemorate the Sebatakomo members, both those migrant workers in Gauteng as well as those who remained in the rural villages, who took a stand at a time when such protests were mainly restricted to urban areas."

The Freedom Park is currently open for visits. At present, entrance is free. Tours take place daily at 9:00, 12:00 and 15:00. For more information on tours and visits, call 079 837 9092 or email tours@freedompark.co.za.

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