

SPEECH DELIVERED BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS MR NTOPILE KGANYAGO,MP, TO THE REGIONAL OFFICE AND COMMUNITY TO MARK YOUTH MONTH

Venue: Regional Office, Heerengracht, Cape Town

Date: 15 June 2006

Theme: Youth Month Community Project

Regional Manager Mr. Frederick Johnson

Senior Managers of the Cape Town

Regional Office

Colleagues

Distinguished guests and children

We are gathered today to celebrate youth day, a day which I must say is in one sense not ours, but at the same time ours.

I say this because as the saying goes, the world is a place in which we live today so we can bequeath it to our children, so they can bequeath it to their children, who can bequeath to successive generations to come.

In recognizing the importance of this eternal link between ourselves and those who come before and after us, we have chosen to celebrate Youth Day through our own special brand of team-building.

We have decided to remind ourselves about where we as civil servants come from by spending the day giving something back to the community.

From our position of relative privilege we have decided to give one day of our time and energy to you, the future of this country. In this way we recognise the fact that without me there is no you and that there would be no Public Works without the community which we serve.

We do this realizing that one day is just that, only one day. But today we hope that this one day will make a difference not only in your lives, but also in ours.

As we conduct this exercise it is imperative that we seek to understand the historical basis of June 16 1976, the day our children took to the streets in protest against linguistic violence and oppression of the apartheid state.

We know that on June 16 1976 the children of Soweto took to the streets for the national liberation of all. We know that their actions on that day and subsequently during phases of the liberation struggle served to change the course of this country's history.

For this reason we today have the most progressive Constitution in the world which sets the basis for the achievement of a truly non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and a prosperous nation.

I am therefore here today to call on all of us to retrace the steps of the youth of June 16 1976. We may not be able to do this literally today, but I think the question is what key lessons of leadership can we draw today from those young people of Soweto and other townships?

I ask this question in the light of the fact that this is an exercise in team-building, between and among members of the community and the staff of the Regional Office.

Late US Economist and author of the famed book, “The Age of Uncertainty”, Kenneth Galbraith says of leadership and I quote: “All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership”.

Coco Chanel, the creator of a French-based fashion empire who stresses the need for identity as key to leadership says: “It is amazing how many cares disappear when you decide not to be something, but to be someone.”

Lewis H. Lapham says of the character of leadership: “Leadership consists not in degrees of technique but in traits of character; it requires moral rather than athletic or intellectual effort, and it imposes on both leader and follower alike the burdens of self-restraint”.

Finally, because nature does not allow a vacuum, according to Bishop Desmond Tutu that is why he became in his words a “leader by default”.

I challenge you to identify the categories which have been identified by these quotations. Are we leaders by default? Are we aware of the need for identity and the mental liberation of leadership? Do we have the moral rectitude to exercise constant restraint of emotion?

Today I want to leave a few lessons that I drew from June 16 1976. Here I use some of the paradigms employed by Phinda Madi in 10 Lessons from Shaka the great.

I believe that a leader:

1. Must build a sense of mission, be the first to know
2. Must lead from the front, go where angels fear to tread
3. Be obsessed with the best available technology, ever thrive for perfection and lastly,
4. Never believe in his/her own Public Relations

In conclusion, as President Thabo Mbeki reminds us, “At the height of the struggle against apartheid, we dared to hope that South Africa could achieve a peaceful transition to a non-racial democracy.

The President goes further: “Having achieved that miraculous objective, we must again dare to hope that Africa can seize the opportunity to build a new future of prosperity and renewal.

“The beacons of a brighter future are there across the continent, illuminating a new way. And so, we dare to hope for Africa's children. And we shall work together to turn our hopes into reality.

Enjoy Youth Day and Live for a Better South Africa.

I Thank You