

Minister Thoko Didiza addresses the ANC, North West Province - Festival of Ideas on Deepening South African Patriotism

Venue: Lekwa- Teemane Local Municipality Hall (Bloemhof)

Date: 28 September, 2007

- Programme Director
- Leaders and representatives of ANC structures in the Province
- Fellow patriots
- Comrades and friends
- Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to thank the African National Congress (ANC) in this province for hosting this festival of ideas - enabling an exchange of ideas on the many challenges we face. Deepening South African patriotism is certainly one of the challenges that remains high on the agenda of our organisation.

Just 5 years from now in 2012, we will celebrate 100 years of the life and struggle of the African National Congress. For nearly a hundred years, therefore, the ANC has sought to unite the peoples of our country and to forge a common South African patriotism.

Our patriotism should be inclusive. The struggle of the ANC has been a struggle to unite the peoples of our country against racism and oppression, for justice, democracy and equality. We can and do take great pride amongst, and with the nations of the world in the achievement of this struggle. It is our pride in unity, inclusiveness and common purpose that forms the central pillar of South African patriotism.

In the early years of its history, the ANC began to mobilise the national unity of the oppressed African peoples and to overcome the ethnic divisions fostered by colonialism and apartheid. But it always remained principled to alliance with all South Africans who were committed to the goals of freedom and nation building.

The early unity and patriotism of South Africans committed to liberation and democracy found expression in the Congress Alliance of the 1950's that enabled Coloureds, Indians and progressive Whites to organise behind the struggle led by the ANC. Our unique brand of patriotism builds on our pride in the struggles of the women, the youth, communists, trade unionists and combatants who sacrificed in the cause of our hard earned freedom.

And because we remained committed to inclusiveness and unity of purpose our movement created an inspirational current of revolutionary patriotism. When, in 1982, Dr Neil Aggett, like many others tortured and killed in detention, was carried shoulder-high to burial by the black youth of our country, he was embraced as a South African patriot.

Deepening South African patriotism draws on the rich fabric of our struggle that united the best in our people and inspired the democracy we have forged together. It is inextricably linked to the spirit of internationalism that has supported our struggle and enriched our understanding of patriotism.

Just as we believe that no South African can be free unless all are free, so we believe that no people can be free unless all peoples are free. Our patriotism therefore remains committed to the struggles of the peoples of Africa and the world for freedom and democracy, freedom from hunger and poverty. Equally there is no space in the spirit of South African patriotism for narrow nationalism or xenophobia.

Our commitment to unity embraces and respects our diversity and the many languages and cultures that define both our origins and our future as a nation. The South African flag and our national emblem express these aspects of our unique brand of patriotism. When President Nelson Mandela proudly donned the number 6 shirt at the 1996 Rugby World Cup, he took South Africans to a new level of pride and patriotism.

Comrades, ladies and gentlemen,
Deepening South African patriotism remains a leadership task of the African National Congress post democracy. We succeeded to unite our people in the struggle for democracy. The goal of “**a better life for all**” requires that we expand the understanding and commitment of our people to this relentless continuation of our struggle to build an equitable and caring society, collectively owned by all South Africans.

Going forward collective ownership is a key to national pride and patriotism. A clear understanding of our current challenges and the

way we tackle them is crucial to this goal of ownership. Today, for example, most leaders of our business community understand the imperatives of business transformation, empowerment, employment equity, job creation and building education and sport opportunities reaching out to disadvantaged communities. This is the fruit of a new South African patriotism. Many have taken ownership and have put in place a range of development programmes.

However, as the leading party of the country, we need to do much more to promote a broader understanding of many complex issues that we grapple with, including service delivery and the inevitable capacity constraints we face as we try to roll out service to a whole population. We are not always succeeding to meet our goals.

We certainly need to do more to support the media to better understand and interpret our efforts as well as our constraints. A lack of understanding on the ground often undermines our unity and our newfound sense of patriotism. Even when our decisions are correct, such as in the case of certain name changes, we need to ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to enable our people to own and defend these decisions in the name of a new common South African identity, rather than have them perceived as being in the interest of a particular group.

It is a reality that our struggle for ***a better life for all*** and ***a collective sense of patriotism*** unfolds within the capitalist system of ownership and production. Our efforts to promote the values of caring and the

ethos of service to the people are therefore continuously competing with the values of the market place, with the aspirations for individual wealth and instant gratification that are constantly promoted in the media. It is therefore incumbent on the ruling party to set the highest standards of service and leadership, and to continue to set the example for our youth.

In this context the National Youth Service has a critical role to play in shaping an ethos of service and deepening South African patriotism. With this objective the Department of Public Works at national and provincial level has responded to President Thabo Mbeki's call to boost the scope and impact of government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and to establish the EPWP Youth Service Programme in a joint initiative with the Umsobomvu Youth Fund and the Department of Labour.

We have therefore begun to shape a programme and a vision to support the growth and development of our youth, as well as their ability to contribute to South Africa's ongoing journey of transformation.

Our vision is about elevating the role and contribution of young people to the building of our new society. Both those that graduate, as well as those that are already established in the construction and built environment sectors will not just be the beneficiaries of this programme, but will also be called upon to lead and contribute to its implementation, expansion and further development.

Deepening South African patriotism must draw on the traditions of our movement, the sacrifices made during the struggle and the spirit of service we must instil for the future.

I thank you