

Unveiling of the Tsietsi Mashinini statue

16 June 2010

Welcome address by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the 34th Anniversary of June 16 1976 commemoration and the unveiling of the Tsietsi Mashinini statue, Morris Isaacson High School, Jabulani, Soweto - Johannesburg

Programme Director and

MMC for Community Development: Clr Bafana Sithole

Premier Nomvula Mokonyane

The Executive Mayor of Tswane: Dr Gwen Ramokgopa

MEC for Infrastructure and Development: Ms Faith Mazibuko

Speaker of Council: Clr Nkele Ntingane

Chief Whip of Council: Clr Nonceba Molwele

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Chairpersons of Council Committees

Fellow Councillors

City Manager: Mavela Dlamini

SAFA President: Kirsten Nematandani

Local Organising Committee CEO: Danny Jordaan

The June 16 Foundation

The Mashinini Family Representatives

All the families who lost their loved ones

The National Youth Development Agency

Leaders of Political Parties

Leaders of various Civil Society Organisations

Community of the Greater Soweto

Comrades and Friends

Programme Director, on behalf of the City of Johannesburg and its residents and citizens, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 34th Anniversary of June 16 1976 student uprisings and the celebration of National Youth Day.

We will do well to remember what the President of the ANC, OR Tambo, said: "a nation that does not nurture its youth, does not deserve its future". We all have a responsibility to know where we come from. If we do, we can have a better understanding not only of the road that we have traveled thus far, we can indeed have a better grasp of where we are today. And if we know where we are today, there is a greater possibility of forecasting and shaping our own future. If the future is a place where our youth is going to spend most of the time, then we need to invest in that future. We need to help young people prepare themselves for this better tomorrow.

The 11th of June 2010 has come and gone, and Siphiwe Tshabalala was able to score that historic and memorable first goal of the World Cup in a match between our own Bafana Bafana and Mexico. Since then, many more games have been played. Many more football stars have shown us and the world what they are capable of doing inside and outside the field of play. What is the relationship between our celebration of the 2010 World Cup and this commemoration of June 16, 2010?

The 16th of June 2010 is a day on which we are called upon to reflect on how far we have come as a young democracy. It is a day when we are called upon to answer the question: what progress have we made to fundamentally transform our country and what has been our contribution as government, organisations of civil society and communities in the process of building South Africa and our nation?

Programme Director, today we are also celebrating the life of a man, Tsietshi Mashinini, who 34 years ago, together with a group of young revolutionaries, led a student uprising. Soon after this, many young people were to die a violent death, got imprisoned, went underground, or left for exile.

The nineteen-year-old Tsietshi Mashinini too, was forced into hiding from the apartheid state, soon went into exile, and died in foreign lands. His body was brought home to South Africa and was buried here, at Avalon cemetery.

Programme Director, having said that, please also allow me to say a few words about this work of public art we are unveiling today, and the person behind it.

The artist Johannes Phokela, creator of the Tsietshi Mashinini statue, also grew up in the vicinity of this historic school-yard. Born in Soweto in 1966, Phokela was a ten-year-old schoolboy at the time of the Soweto Uprising. I am told that Johannes remembers the day well and this is what I am told he had to say regarding June 16 1976: "I was at school, we started coughing and the teacher closed the windows. We were told to lie on the floor. We were kept at school until it was safe... It was a protest against Bantu Education",

Johannes Phokela studied at a number of institutions in South Africa and in Europe, including the Fuba Art Centre in Soweto, the Royal College of Art, Camberwell College of Art and St. Martin's College of Art, in England.

Programme Director, this statue that we are unveiling today is the second monument erected in this part of Soweto to specifically commemorate the contribution of Tsietsi Mashinini and the 1976 generation. Not far from here, is the June 16 Memorial Acre and the artwork done by Johannes Phokela that we unveiled in 2006, on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the uprising.

This statue will add more value to the June 16 Trail. It will add to our national consciousness. It now becomes part of the Hector Pieterse Memorial and the other plaques that have been unveiled along the route followed by the youth, 34 years ago.

Programme Director, I trust that the unveiling of this monument will inspire the youth of 2010 to, as per the theme of this National Youth Day, "Work together for youth development through action".

We are also grateful to the Mashinini family, the Trust and the Provincial Government for this work of art.

Comrades and Friends, it is my pleasure to once again welcome you all to the 34th anniversary of June 16, 1976 commemoration and the unveiling of the Tsietsi Mashinini statue.

May the courage and vision displayed by our youth, 34 years ago on 16 June 1976, serve to inspire and motivate all of us as we strive to deepen our democracy and build a more caring society.

Thank you.