

Walter Sisulu Award for
Phillip Tobias

22 March 2007

Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Clr Amos Masondo, at the Category II: Walter Sisulu (special contribution) Awards for Professor Phillip V Tobias, at the Council Chambers, Braamfontein - Johannesburg.

Madam Speaker - Councillor Nkele Ntingane
Professor Tobias, family and friends
Chief Whip of Council - Councillor Bafana Sithole
Members of the Mayoral Committee
Leaders of all Political Parties
Fellow Councillors
City Manager - Mavela Dlamini
Managers and Officials of Council
Distinguished guests
The media
Fellow citizens

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the City of Johannesburg, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this important occasion. I do so in honour of Professor Phillip Tobias.

On 27th to 30th May in 1974 NUSAS issued a flyer in Johannesburg which ended with these words: *"If pass raids are to end, if man are to live with their wives and children, if comfort is to replace poverty, if these are to be so, then Mandela, Sisulu and Mbeki and many other people who are in jail because of their fight against Apartheid must be released. Release all political prisoners"!*

Rusty Bernstein in his book, *Memory against Forgetting* says: *"I have lived through a time when people have been tortured and killed for their memories of names, places, times. Survival has required that memory be deliberately suppressed, and every written record burnt, shredded, flushed away or even swallowed. I have no records, no copies of anything I have written... lives depended on silence and forgetting"*.

This is a truly unique celebration. Tonight we evoke the spirits of all our heroes and mytres to honour a true son of South Africa. We meet to acknowledge his contribution. To credit and award his achievements. To see ourselves in him and to seek to emulate his example.

The City of Johannesburg has, since the 1st March 2006 Local Government Elections, re-committed itself to our vision: to build Johannesburg into a World-Class African City.

In order to realise this goal, the Growth and Development Summit, which was attended by more than 1500 delegates, held on 12th May 2006 at Nasrec, produced the Growth and Development Strategy Document. Its vision statement says:

- *"In future, Johannesburg will continue to lead as South Africa's primary business City, a dynamic centre of production, innovation, trade, finance and services. This will be a City of opportunity, where the benefits of balanced economic growth will be shared in a way that enables all residents to gain access to the ladder of prosperity, and where the poor,*

vulnerable and the excluded will be supported out of poverty to realise upward social mobility. The result will be a more equitable and spatially integrated City, very different from the divided City of the past. In this World-Class African City for all, everyone will be able to enjoy decent accommodation, excellent services, the highest standard and safety, access to participatory governance, and quality community life in sustainable neighbourhoods and vibrant urban spaces".

In addition, the City, through an intensive consultation process has developed a five year Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

Through these strategy documents, we are seeking to address the challenges of urbanisation and migration, economic development and job creation, service delivery, poverty, urban renewal and regeneration, globalisation, information technology, bridging the digital divide and other related challenges.

The Council/Mayoral awards not only recognise passion, commitment and innovative thinking, it also highlights the good news, convinces and encourages citizens and public officials to follow the example set by exceptional individuals. Council/Mayoral awards inspire citizens and public officials to break new ground, fostering a spirit of bold innovation and enhanced social responsibility.

The Council has approved a: "*City of Johannesburg council/Mayoral Awards policy*". This decision is also informed by, amongst others, the following broad principles:

- Fostering originality – advocating and advancing the spirit of innovation, encourage creative thinking, pioneering concepts and exceptional solutions to conventional challenges;
- Encouraging extraordinary effort – embracing a culture of dedication, commitment and performance, outstanding energy, endeavour and enterprise;
- Building a World Class African City – by walking in the footsteps of our ancestors and building the future for all our descendents by collectively applying our knowledge, skills, dedication and commitment as we forge a stable, just and vibrant City; and
- Promoting civic pride – bond, bridge and combine in a collective connection to ownership of and guardianship over the City of Johannesburg.

The awards categories include the following: Freedom of the City, the Walter Sisulu Award and the Free of Entry to Military Regiments and Units of the South African National Defence Force.

The Walter Sisulu Award recognises a person who has bravely contributed to the City of Johannesburg and her citizens. This could include selfless lifetime of multiple achievements. The decision to award the Walter Sisulu Award must be taken by the resolution of Council. The resolution ceremony is held at a special Council meeting.

Madam Speaker, the freedom of the City, since the establishment of a new democratic order in South Africa has been bestowed by way of a Council resolution to the Mr Walter Sisulu on 20th March 1997, Dr Beyers Naude on 30th September 2001 and Mr Mandela on 10th May 2004.

Madam Speaker, we gather here this evening to honour Professor Phillip V Tobias of the School of Anatomical Sciences at the university of the Witwatersrand as the City bestows him with Walter Sisulu special contribution award.

The contribution to research by Professor Tobias in the fields of genetics, through anatomical studies to palaeo-anthropology and human biology of African people is well known through out the country, in the continent as well as around the globe.

Professor Tobias is one of the outstanding leaders in the field of physical anthropology. His studies of human fossils, conducted mainly in South Africa, have greatly enriched the field's knowledge of the prehistoric development of mankind, from our early ancestors, Australopithecus, to homo habilis.

Madam Speaker, I think it is also proper to remind ourselves that although Professor Tobias is best known for his scientific achievements, he was also a passionate and outspoken critic of the apartheid regime. He campaigned actively throughout his adult life, and became a major figure in opposing the prejudices of the system. He is a worthy example of a true South African.

We are all proud of Professor Tobias. We remain aware that eminent scientists like him are highly sought after. We are grateful that he has, in spite of his international profile remained rooted on the South African soil. He has chosen to live and work in Johannesburg. He has done so for the past 61 years. We owe him and other great South African patriots a tireless fight to build a World Class African City.

Finally, please allow me on behalf of the Council, the citizens and residence of Johannesburg to conclude by congratulating Professor Tobias for having been awarded the Walter Sisulu award. To him we say, Professor Tobias, your work speaks for itself and we appreciate it.

Thank you.