

**VIRTUAL ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO MR
CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE
PROVINCIAL FREEDOM DAY CELEBRATIONS.**

27 April 2021

Programme Director, MEC Thandi Moraka;

All MECs who have joined us virtually;

Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality, Cllr John
Mpe;

Executive Mayor of Polokwane Local Municipality, Cllr Thembi
Nkadimeng;

All Executive Mayors and Mayors of our Municipalities;

Our Esteemed Traditional Leaders;

Friends in the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

The people of Limpopo,

Good Day! Avuxeni, Thobela! Ndaa!

Thank you very much for joining us to celebrate and
commemorate the 2021 edition of our National Freedom Day.

Freedom Day celebrations are traditionally about mass rallies,
colourful displays, music and dance. However, today, because

of the unfolding Covid-19 situation, we are not able to celebrate this important day in a traditional manner.

We are however thankful for those who have joined us for this virtual celebration of our National Freedom Day. This is one of the most important days on our national calendar.

Today we mark 27 years of our freedom and democracy.

On this day we commemorate the first democratic elections in this country which were held on the 27 of April in 1994.

These were the elections which abolished apartheid and ushered in our new democracy.

On this day, the people of this country elected Nelson Mandela as the first Black President of South Africa.

Nelson Mandela is also the first democratic president of this country – because all other presidents before him were not elected through a democratic vote.

On this day we remember that apartheid was a very evil and brutal system which did not recognise Black people as equal citizens.

Apartheid government introduced many laws which made the life of a Black person painful and difficult to live.

Black children were only given the education which prepared them to work as servants of their White counterparts. This type of education was known as Bantu education.

When young people protested and rejected Bantu education, the apartheid government responded by sending the police to shoot and kill them.

One of the youngest victims who was killed by apartheid police for rejecting Bantu education was the 11 year old Hector Peterson.

Bantu education was designed to ensure that Black children do not get opportunities to be trained as medical specialists, scientists, accountants and other important professions.

The apartheid government wanted our kids to go to school only to be trained how to become a good garden boy or an effective kitchen girl.

In 1994, through President Mandela we said we were going to change things and they said we could not change a thing.

We said that we would create an equal education which would be accessible for all, they said it was impossible.

Programme Director

We celebrate this year's Freedom day under the theme: **'the year of Charlotte Maxeke: the meaning of freedom under Covid-19'**.

The ruling party, the ANC and our government have declared 2021 as the year of Charlotte Maxeke. This declaration is to observe the 150 years since the birth of Mama Charlotte Mmakgomo Mannya-Maxeke.

Mama Charlotte Maxeke was born in this province in the Ramokgopa area in Capricorn District. She is a daughter of the soil – one of our own.

Charlotte Maxeke was a pathfinder and a true trailblazer.

Charlotte Maxeke raised her hand to fight for freedom of the oppressed Black people at the time when fighting for freedom meant a real possibility of prison, torture, exile or death.

She remains a hero whose actions inspire us to this day.

Programme Director

We are commemorating this day under the conditions and restrictions imposed by Covid-19.

This pandemic has undermined many of the freedoms we have been enjoying since 1994.

Covid-19 imposed limitations on our freedom of association and freedom of movement amongst other freedoms.

However, even under this difficult conditions, we have a reason to be proud of our government.

When the government imposed lockdown restrictions, it was clear that the main issue was to protect the health and lives of South Africans.

Indeed, more lives were saved by the measures which were introduced by our government, led by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

As we speak, we are nearing completion of the Phase 1 of our Covid-19 vaccination campaign which was targeted at our frontline workers.

South Africa was able to secure vaccine doses under difficult conditions of vaccine nationalism and exorbitant pricing.

What most of us do not know is how difficult it has been for developing countries like South Africa to secure these vaccine doses.

As we speak today, our country has managed to secure about 50 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

This will go a long way in assisting us to secure what is known as herd immunity or population immunity.

We want this to be secured as soon as possible so that we all can return back to our normal lives.

However, it is important to reiterate the message that Covid-19 is still with us. The coronavirus has not been defeated as yet. It is important for all of us to continue wearing our face masks, sanitise and ensure sufficient social distance at all times.

Vaccines will only supplement our own practical efforts.

I want to take this opportunity to send our condolences to the families and relatives who lost loved ones to this pandemic.

We wish a speedy and full recovery to those who are sick from this virus.

Together we can defeat Covid-19.

Programme Director

As we remember Charlotte Maxeke, we also remember that she was particularly passionate about education.

Charlotte Maxeke was the first Black woman to graduate with a University Degree, a BSC degree for that matter.

Today we can say to Charlotte Maxeke that in South Africa education is no longer a preserve of White people only, as it was the case during her time.

In the past, only those who came from rich families were able to go to universities and colleges. Today that is a thing of the past, the government has ensured that each child who is working hard is able to access university or college education.

Even those who come from the poorest families are able to go to the university because we have a government that cares.

In this Province, the government has opened TVET Colleges in every region. Those who come from poor families receive free education in these colleges.

Our School Nutrition Programme, Scholar Transport and the No-Fee School policies remain amongst the best interventions by this ANC government.

To date, the Feeding Scheme programme in our schools feeds thousands of learners in almost 4 000 public schools. Through this feeding scheme, we have ensured that children do not miss school days simply because they do not have anything to eat at school.

This can only be done by a caring government.

Because of this freedom and democracy we have been able to introduce the Scholar Transport Programme in our schools.

This programme benefits learners in almost 380 schools. These are indeed the fruits of the freedom we are celebrating today.

It does not end there, this democratic government has introduced a No-Fee School Policy to ensure that children from poor families don't have to pay school fees. Today in Limpopo, over **1.6 Million** children do not pay school fees.

This is what democracy has brought to the people of Limpopo.

Programme Director

For many of our people, the struggle for freedom and democracy was also a struggle for access to basic services.

You know that in the past, piped water, electricity and tarred roads were things of the cities.

Black people in rural villages were not considered for these basic services.

Today as we speak Limpopo is no longer a dark province, there is electricity almost everywhere.

In 1994 there were only about 30% of houses which had electricity.

Today as we speak, almost 95% of houses in this province are connected to electricity. This is a massive development which should be celebrated.

In the coming five years the government will focus more attention and resources on ensuring that our people enjoy uninterrupted access to clean portable water.

We have already spent millions of Rands on water infrastructure. What is going to happen now is that we are going to ensure that the available infrastructure takes water to the homes of our people.

When President Mandela said that this ANC government was going to build houses for the poor, we were told that such a dream was not realisable.

Today I am proud to tell you that since 1994, Limpopo has built thousands of houses for the poor. These are the houses which have been given to our people free of charge.

These are the fruits of our hard earned democracy and freedom.

Programme Director

On this day, we also celebrate the protection and advancement of human rights which are entrenched in our constitution.

We celebrate the right to freedom of movement and association, freedom of expression, religious freedom, freedom of sexual orientation and the right to own property.

We celebrate the rights of workers to belong to a trade union, equal pay for equal work, health and safety at work and the right to strike.

Our Affirmative Action Policies have ensured that women take their rightful place in society as equal citizens before the law.

There is no doubt that the past 25 years have restored the dignity of women.

We have indeed travelled a long way since 1994. We have covered much ground.

We have built schools and hospitals. We have constructed bridges, dams and world-class power stations.

Even at the face of the many challenges we have as a nation, we know that our future is in good hands and that the future is indeed bright.

Let all of us be the defenders of our freedom and democracy. Let no one and nothing to reserve the gains of our freedom.

Before I conclude, I want to take this opportunity to say that, in the name of Charlotte Maxeke, we will defeat the scourge of Gender Based Violence.

Our freedom cannot be fully enjoyed when the women and children of our country walk everyday with the fear of rape, harassment and murder.

This pandemic of Gender Based Violence has to end.

In this important occasion, we wish to salute heroes and heroines of our liberation struggle, who have since passed on.

We dip our revolutionary banners as we salute Chief Albert Luthuli, Sefako Makgato, Pixley Ka Isaka Seme, Oliver Reginald Tambo, Steve Bantu Biko, Nelson Rolihlala Mandela, Peter Mokaba, Helen Joseph, Mohumagadi Madinoge, Winnie Madikizela Mandela.

We also remember our living legends Mama Sophia de Bruyn, Mama Lydia Komape and all the unsung heroes and heroines of our liberation struggle.

I want to conclude by wishing everyone a happy Freedom day.

Let us continue to work together to build the Limpopo we want.

I thank you!