



**MEC SPEECH ON THE LAUNCH OF GREAT PETER NCHABELENG
@ THE NEW PETER MOKABA STADIUM ON 13 MARCH 2025**

**Honoured Guests,
Distinguished Authors,
Publishers,
Readers,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good evening

We meet here today at the book launch of the Great Peter Nchabeleng who fought injustices until his last day on earth. He died in the hands of police who assaulted him for his unwavering loyalty to the people of South Africa. We are happy that through his life the story of the struggle of the people of South Africa will be told.

Programme Director,

I allow me to talk about one of the heroes from the Sekhukhune region of our movement who was regarded as the lion of the North during his time, Peter Nchabeleng who actively participated in all the structures of the tripartite alliance and spearheaded their aims and objectives especially that of the UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT(UDF),as it formed the integral part of the STRUCTURES OF THE MASS DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MDM).

Nchabeleng began his political activities and journey in 1950's where he was employed by the government which was characterized by high levels of repressive laws, social stratification of our nation, the government which based everything on the colour of the skin rather than human skills and talents, those are some of the things triggered his political involvement and he portrayed his skills by defying the very same government which employed him in the printing section.

His bravery activated many sociopolitical and socioeconomic activities which manifested themselves in the emancipation of the blacks in general but the Africans in particular Sekhukhune Revolt was one of those struggles as young people of those times established a revolutionary song around his name (Mme mme wee mpulele ke a tsamaya ke ya LUSAKA ke yo joiner masole, ge ke gopola ka lehu la PETER NCHABELENG, pelo yaka e tlala mahlomola). This hot revolutionary song was released during his burial where mellow yellows, Hippos and

nyalas surrounded the graveyard where the body of this lion was laid to rest. The influential revolutionary spirit of NCHABELENG inspired those young people to fearlessly sang that song in the presence of those brutal law enforcers.

The above serves as a revolutionary guide into the youth league of the ANC, when you are fighting for your rights as long as is just cause that will benefit the black society and Africans in particular young people must do so fearlessly. Lenin argued that in every revolution youth must be at the forefront of that revolution irrespective of the nature of the revolution.

We are the children of Peter Nchabeleng and nothing will threaten us, his spirit must guide every member of the ANC and its leagues.

Programme Director,

The National Democratic Revolution is the process that seeks to transform society and it needs men and women who are in possession of the bravery of the late PETER NCHABELENG, for the struggle ahead as we look at the current political climate, international politics are at the center stage wherein Western and American forces are starting to become weaker and they want strong men and women to finish them.

Cde Peter was strong and remained a formidable force to face the enemy at its strongest form, let us peak up the spear and continue where Cde Peter left. Sepedi se re lerumu la mogale

ga le swe le mphatho Amandlaaaaa. You cannot separate the life of Peter Nchabeleng from the struggle of the people of South Africa and the ANC. He was valiant fighter and a true revolutionary who embodies what the ANC aspires its comrades to be like.

He was the inaugural chairperson of the United Democratic Front in the Northern Transvaal and head of the underground African National Congress (ANC) in the same region

Nchabeleng rose to political prominence in the 1950s in Pretoria, where he was active in the ANC, the South African Communist Party, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, and the Sebatakomo movement of his native Sekhukhuneland. He was imprisoned on Robben Island for eight years from 1964 to 1972 on charges related to his activism as an early recruit to Umkhonto we Sizwe. In the decade after his release, he was banished to his birthplace at Apel, Northern Transvaal, where he remained active in ANC networks and where he continued to face police attention. He died on 11 April 1986 after being severely beaten by police officers who had arrested him earlier the same day. His death attracted national attention, and he remains an iconic figure in the ANC.

While in Pretoria, in the early 1950s, Nchabeleng worked at the Government Printers and was secretary of the local branch of the African National Congress (ANC) in Atteridgeville. He was also a member of the South African

Communist Party, then an illegal organisation, and was active in the trade union movement, becoming regional secretary for the Allied Workers' Union, and later for the South African Congress of Trade Unions, in the Pretoria region. At the same time, Nchabeleng was a leading figure in Sebatakgomo, a resistance movement of Sekhukhune migrant workers, primarily in Johannesburg, who protested the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act and helped kindle the 1958 Sekhukhuneland revolt. He was also a key figure in efforts to aid those who were arrested in the revolt, acting as an interpreter for the detainees' lawyer, communist Joe Slovo.

Upon his release from Robben Island in 1972, Nchabeleng and his family were banished to Apel, his homeland, where he had not lived for some 25 years. The Nchabeleng home in Abel became a key hub for ANC-political activists as Nchabeleng, his sons, and some friends "kept alive something of an ANC tradition"; for example, Nchabeleng kept a collection of political documents, including an illegal copy of the Freedom Charter, buried under the goats' kraal behind his house.

Within years, in 1974, he faced another criminal conviction, this time for contravening the post-incarceration banning order against him – the state's evidence was based on intercepted communications between Nchabeleng and trade unionist Stephen Dlamini. His three-year prison sentence was suspended for all three years and he remained in Apel. However, more serious charges followed, this time after MK

operative Tokyo Sexwale wounded two police constables with a hand grenade. In subsequent weeks, the entirety of the Northern Transvaal ANC underground network, Nchabeleng included, were rounded up by police and prosecuted. Although most of the defendants – including one of Nchabeleng's sons, Elleck – received prison sentences, Nchabeleng was acquitted and released with Nelson Diale and (a close friend) Joe Gqabi. His banning order was renewed until 1983.

In 1983, after the United Democratic Front (UDF) was founded, Nchabeleng became an early member and was appointed to the coordinating committee established to prepare for the launch of the front's Northern Transvaal branch. When the regional branch was launched in 1985, Nchabeleng was elected as its inaugural chairperson, with Louis Mnguni as his deputy and Joyce Mabudafhasi as secretary.[6] At the same time, Nchabeleng remained active in the ANC underground; he was the overall head of the underground throughout the Northern Transvaal. As Ineke van Kessel later observed, the Northern Transvaal was one of the few regions in which the ANC's political and military activities were well integrated and well-coordinated.

Programme Director,

As the MEC for Sport, Arts and Culture responsible for promoting the culture of reading and writing, it is very encouraging to have books written about our struggle heroes,

as this will ensure that our history is never forgotten. I am also very happy to see that through words, we are immortalizing the life of one of my favorite struggle heroes. I can talk about him for days, but I will just encourage you to buy the book and read it.

Programme Director.

Another encouraging thing about today's gathering, reading has proven to be much better for our brain function than watching TV or videos on our phones. Reading is like exercise for the brain no matter what you read and it leads to better cognitive function as we age. Which makes perfect sense when you watch television or a documentary on laptop or phone you don't need to use your imagination everything is laid out for you all you have to do is absorb the images.

Reading on the contrary requires one to turn words into images thus exercising their brain. I will certainly be getting myself a copy of the book and will read with keen interest.

Reading is part of recreation. We therefore encourage communities, both young and old, to start getting into books, though not academic books but novels autobiographies and others and they will certainly be less susceptible to bad influences.

I think we should reconsider how we sell books and book reading to our young people because our young people do read but most of what they read is short snippets on social

media. We should make book reading interesting to attract young people to start engaging.

It's really an honour and privilege to be part of this august occasion presenting this speech to people who are interested in reading it very encouraging.

Thank you!