

Public Time Travel at Walter Sisulu Square/ Freedom Square, Kliptown Freedom Charter 1955/ 2015, 25 June 2015

Goal

To make South African citizens of all races to reflect on the importance and meaning of the Freedom Charter document, then and now.

To express the Freedom Charter today, how do we make South Africa an inclusive country for everybody?

The first part is a historical event, giving the atmosphere of the Congress of the People in 1955. The second part is the interpretation of the Freedom Charter 2015. What do the ten clauses mean in today's South Africa?

Historical facts

The idea of the Freedom Charter was first proposed by Prof. Z.K. Matthews at the Cape annual conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in Cradock in August, 1953. As the President of the ANC in the Cape, Matthews in his presidential address proposed convening a Congress of the People to draw up a Freedom Charter. At the meeting of the National Executive of the ANC held in Natal in March 1954, which Matthews was part of, it was resolved that action should be taken to introduce the concept of the Congress of the People to the National Executives of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), South African Coloured's People's Organization (SACPO), and the South African Congress of Democrats (COD). Later in the same month, a joint meeting of the national executives of the above-mentioned organization was held in Natal. This non-racial united front was known as the Congress Alliance, and in this forum it was decided that a National Action Council should be established, and its responsibility was to ensure the implementation of the idea of the Congress of the People. The newly established National Action Council comprised of Chief Albert Luthuli (chairman), and the secretariat consisted of Stanley Lollan (SACPO), Lionel Bernstein (COD), Yusuf Cachalia (SAIC) and Walter Sisulu (ANC), however Sisulu was later replaced by Oliver Tambo due to banning orders which forced him to resign.

A series of rallies and campaigns, big, small and secret meetings were held in houses, flats, factories, kraals, on farms and outdoors in many parts of the country. In 1955 the ANC sent fifty thousand volunteers countrywide to collect freedom demands from the masses of South Africa. These demands were written on all sorts of things that people could write on including, discarded pieces of corrugated cardboards.

Delegates for the Congress of the People were elected at public meetings; slogan: "delegates from every town, every suburb and every village"

In April and May 1955 the documents arrived in Kliptown. A committee of the National Action Council sorted the demands and suggestions into various categories. The practical preparations for receiving all the people in Kliptown were made by many, many foot soldiers in the volunteer corps.

25-26 June the Freedom Charter was read and adopted by three thousand people at an open field in Kliptown, probably the most representative gathering in the history of South Africa. The police stopped thousands of people to arrive at the meeting and finally dispersed the crowd on the second day.

The Freedom Charter is one of the most important documents demonstrating an equal and democratic society. It is the basis for the constitution of South Africa today.

Historical event, Kliptown 1955

Scenario, The Congress of the People, 25-26th June 1955

Thousands of people have arrived at the dusty sports field in Kliptown. There are people of all races, social background, ages, men and women, from all over the country. They have been elected as representatives to go to this meeting in Kliptown. They are well prepared what to say and anybody can motivate and present their demands of a new South Africa, an inclusive country for all.

Many “Freedom volunteers” have worked hard to collect all the requests and desires from suburbs, work places and villages. They have given an oath to show their commitment. But the work is still not over. The volunteers now give all the practical support that is needed to organize this big meeting.

The visitors from all over the country, and from Kliptown, have received their rosettes. Some of them sit down on the stones. Everybody is waiting for the Congress of the People to start. It is an excited atmosphere with a lot of expectations.

Today the Freedom Charter will be finalized, the dreams for a new South Africa will be discussed and expressed in words, illustrations, slogans, poems and songs and finally adopted by the crowd. This is the country we want to live in!

Roles

The participants are the people who have arrived in Kliptown for the Congress of the People, in 1955, from all over the country and from the neighbourhood

Local people who help and serve, “Freedom Volunteers”

Leaders of the time

1950s clothing if possible

Schedule (10.00-10.45)

Rosettes are handed out

Welcome, Presentation of the event, Initiation

Nkosi Sikelel’, prayer by Rev. Gawe

Leaders of 1955 address

Oath

Songs, music and slogans from 1950s

Reading the clauses/ Interruption by the police

The crowd comes together again singing and dancing

Ending of the historical event

Recognising participants of 1955 event

Instruction for Freedom Charter 2015

The Freedom Charter 2015

The aim is to interpret the Freedom Charter 2015. What does each of the ten clauses mean in today's South Africa?

Key Questions

- “How do we make South Africa a happy place for all?” An inclusive country for everybody, regardless the colour of skin, income, social position or country of origin? How do we reach social cohesion? Is it possible?
- What does Freedom mean? What is the kind of country we want to live in? What are our dreams of today? How do we express it within the ten clauses of the Freedom Charter?

Activities (11.00-12.30)

There are ten groups, one for each clause. In each group the purpose is to express the clause and how it contributes to social cohesion, a country for all, dreams of today. This is the country we want to live in! Express in words, posters, placards, slogans, songs, poems...

The visitors from the provinces bring what they have prepared, finalize it and get ready for the presentations.

The ten groups: The people shall govern/democracy; Equal Rights for All; Share the Wealth; Share the Land; Equal before the Law; Human Rights; Work and Security; Learning and Culture; Houses, Security and Comfort; Peace and Friendship

Soup (with or without meat) is served

Presentations/ Performances (12.30-13.20)

Each of the clauses will be read and then interpreted in a poem, short speech, illustration, song poem. Some clauses might be presented together (4-5 minutes for each clause)

Short speeches and Reconciliation ceremony (13.20-14.00)

Swedish Ambassador Anders Hagelberg

Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture

Reconciliation ceremony for the future

National anthem

Time Plan

08.00 Prepare the site

09.00 People start gathering, rosettes are handed out

10.00 **Kliptown 1955**

Welcome, Presentation of the event, Initiation

Nkosi Sikelel', prayer

Leaders of 1955 address

Oath

Songs and slogans from 1950s

Read and repeat the clauses

10.30 Disturbance by police

The crowd comes together singing

10.45 Ending of the historical event

Soup

10.50 **Freedom Charter 2015**

Instructions of the activities

11.10 Activities in ten groups, Freedom Charter and dreams of today

12.30 Common gathering. Presentations and Performances

Adoption of the Freedom Charter 2015

13.20 Recognition of participants from 1955 event

Short speeches, Swedish Ambassador and Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture

Reconciliation ceremony, for the future

14.00 End

Lunch

6th May 2015

Bridging Ages South Africa