



ANC Parliamentary Caucus

National Assembly

Heritage Day Debate

“A heritage of the crystallization of the South African Nation through the unity of our diversity”

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Throughout history, Africa has been a cradle of civilization, rich in culture, innovation, and resilience. From the ancient city of Timbuktu with a university, a renowned centre of learning and trade, it is estimated that about 300,000 extant manuscripts in circulation in Timbuktu and the surrounding areas. Within the manuscripts is one of Africa’s greatest intellectual legacies. The monumental Pyramids of Giza, and the Nubian Pyramids in Sudan, stand as a testament to the scientific and engineering prowess of early African societies. The Kingdom of Mapungubwe, located in present-day South Africa, exemplifies the complexity of pre-colonial African societies, showcasing advanced social structures and trade networks that reached China and India. These historical epochs not only highlight Africa's rich heritage but also serve as reminders of the continent's significant role in global history, a heritage that we should all be proud of as Africans.

The period of colonialism and imperialism led to the destruction of aspects of our heritage and expropriated our inventions and knowledge. Through slavery and other inhumane acts of subjugation, the story of African Civilization was thwarted and distorted. The 1884 Berlin Conference saw European powers scramble for control over African territories, dividing the African people, and leading to widespread exploitation and disruption of indigenous cultures. This era ignited fierce resistance movements and liberation struggles across the continent, as Africans fought valiantly to reclaim their autonomy and preserve their identities. The legacy of these struggles continues to shape contemporary Africa, as nations work to overcome the scars of colonial rule and assert their place in the global community. It is this history that has also shaped our Heritage.

This context should orientate our abstraction of the Heritage of our country, South Africa. It is the Khoi-San that defines our being as a nation that resisted colonialism. It is the leadership of Chief Magoma, Cetshwayo, Langalibalele, Moshoeshoe, Sekhukhune, Ngungunyane, Makhado, and Kgosi Galeshewe amongst others, who stood against colonial powers. Cognisant of the division amongst Africans in the fight against colonialism, the formation of the ANC in 1912 represented the unity of the oppressed, bringing together Africans across ethnic divides to champion political rights and equality against the Union of South Africa in 1910, which also signified the unity of the colonizers post the Anglo Boer War which ended in the Vereeniging treaty of 1902.

The election of the National Party in 1942 further led to a segregative, exploitative and racist government, which heightened antagonisms and led to the Liberation Movement to adopt armed struggle by forming Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961, the real spear of the nation and not this Mickey Mouse arrangements that resembles nothing revolutionary but a Family Dynasty.

These concerted efforts, in conjunction with the mass mobilization led by the resistance of the people of South Africa, international struggle, and underground work contributed to the defeat of the apartheid system, and the birth of a democratic

South Africa in 1994 which led to the crystallization of the formation of the South African Nation which recognised the human rights of all. The adoption of the constitution unified all South Africans behind a vision to address the injustices of the past and build a united nation. The realisation of unity in our diversity is enshrined in the Constitution as envisaged by the Freedom Charter of 1955. The Freedom Charter expresses the hopes of the people for diversity, equality, justice, and unity, proclaiming that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white."

This was further exemplified when our nation's founding President Nelson Mandela during his 'Speech from the Dock in the Rivonia Trial, Palace of Justice, Pretoria, on 20 April 1964 " During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

South Africa's 1994 democratic breakthrough symbolised the unification of the South African nation and a beachhead for the African Renaissance. The African Renaissance is also about reclaiming our African knowledge and practices in a changing world. It is also about the restoration of our African humanity, our values of ubuntu, and the nature of our coexistence with the environment and promoting our being as Africans.

This transition was not just a political triumph; it was a profound cultural rebirth that aimed to redefine national identity and promote inclusivity. The ideals of the Freedom Charter resonate today, serving as a reminder that the fight for true equality and economic justice continues and the vision of a united nation, grounded in shared rights and responsibilities, remains a guiding beacon in our journey toward an equitable, just and National Democratic Society.

Honourable Chairperson, the role of traditional leadership in preserving the cultural heritage and identity of our people is of utmost importance for the perpetuation of Indigenous languages, practices, and values. We call on the government to increase support for cultural organization's, writers, poets and storytellers in our communities as they play a role in nurturing collective memory and a shared sense of identity, which is essential for the social cohesion and well-being of South African society.

The enduring and invaluable contribution of African states and their people in the struggle against colonialism for the South African liberation, cannot be overstated. African states supported our liberation struggle and protected our leaders and freedom fighters. As one of the last nations to be liberated from colonial and apartheid oppression. It is, for this reason, that many of our freedom fighters including leaders lay in other African states such as Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, and Lesotho among others.

It has been an incredible 30-year journey for South Africa as the country has worked tirelessly towards reconciliation, nation-building, and social cohesion under the leadership of the African National Congress. The nation sought to embrace unity and diversity through the vision of the "rainbow nation." While there has been progress in areas such as health, education, basic services and human rights, the persistent challenges of high inequality and unemployment continue to threaten social cohesion and nation-building. The ANC acknowledges that genuine reconciliation requires not just political change in leadership , but radical transformation embedded in Economic Freedom and Social Change, with a focus on Skills Development and Industrialization to uplift all citizens. As South Africa grapples with these ongoing complexities, the ANC's unwavering commitment to nurturing dialogue, promoting shared values, and fostering a cohesive society remains crucial in pursuit of a truly united South Africa. We must shun racism, ethno-nationalism, sexism, and all forms of exclusion.

As I approach the landing strip Honorable Chair, the transformation of our heritage landscape is not merely an act of rearrangement but a profound act of reimagining our national identity. It is a call to action to ensure that our museums and public spaces reflect the rich tapestry of cultures that make up the South African nation. We call on the Government to fast track the process of returning the “TAUNG SKULL” to it’s rightful owners, BATLHAPING tribe in Greater Taung.

To honour those who lost their lives for our freedom, let us be guided by the principles of reconciliation, nation-building, and social cohesion, ensuring that our heritage landscape becomes a beacon of unity in diversity, a space where every South African can see their story told and their contributions recognised. Let us create a heritage that is truly ours, one that negates cultural and colonial dominance, we vehemently reject a notion of Braai Day instead of Heritage day and instead champions the collective diversity of our nation. As I land honorable Speaker, We call on the Department of Basic Education to implement the inclusion of our African history as part of our Curriculum to demystify an attempt to rewrite History.

I Thank You.