



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Member of the Mayoral Committee

Councillor Anthea Natasha Leitch

Human Settlements

Media Statement

For Immediate Release

02 October 2023

MMC Anthea Leitch represents City of Johannesburg at 19th annual Soweto Pride

The MMC for Human Settlements, Cllr Anthea Leitch, joined attendees at the 19th Annual Soweto Pride march and festivities to represent the City of Johannesburg's commitment to the cause of equality and justice for the LGBTQI+ community and their families.

After the march, which moved through the streets of Soweto from Dorothy Nyembe Park and saw marchers singing, dancing and protesting along the route, distinguished guests took to the stage to offer messages of support.

This included 19 European Union ambassadors, the office of Minister of Justice Ronald Lamola and representatives from Parents and Friends of South African Queers, Intersex South Africa, Out Well-being and Access Chapter 2.

In her closing remarks, MMC Leitch described Soweto Pride as a celebration of diversity and a powerful call for change.

"I loved being on the walk with you and seeing the spirit of inclusivity and love that characterises days like these. We need more love in the world, no matter who you are or what you might believe."

She acknowledged the work of the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), a trailblazing organisation that has been at the forefront of advocating for the rights of black lesbian and bisexual women in South Africa for more than two decades.

"Your commitment to creating safe spaces, building leadership, and championing non-discriminatory education environments is remarkable."

She spoke to how Soweto Pride was born out of FEW's vision in 2004 as a courageous march to becoming a powerful symbol of "unity, resistance, and resilience".

She said the event was a "celebration of diversity, a commemoration of the lives unfortunately lost to discrimination and oppression, and a call for change".

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“Over the years, Soweto Pride has evolved, welcoming not just lesbian and gay individuals but also families, friends, and allies who have joined in solidarity to end homophobia in townships. This is a reflection of the progress we have made in raising awareness and challenging the prejudices that still persist,” said the MMC.

“The theme of this year's Soweto Pride, ‘Creating Inclusive Communities’, underscores the importance of embracing and celebrating our differences. Inclusivity is not just a buzzword; it is a fundamental principle that drives our social progress. We must recognise that progress is made when diverse voices are heard and respected.

“As we gather here today, it is crucial to acknowledge the harsh realities faced by the LGBTQI+ community, especially in townships, where they continue to be targeted because of their sexual orientation. While our Constitution protects the rights of all citizens, we cannot ignore the daily discrimination, violence, and hate crimes endured by this community. Soweto Pride provides a vital space to express our outrage, demand justice, and stand united against hate crimes.”

She called on government departments, embassies, civil society organisations, community members, leaders, allies, and NGOs to join the City of Johannesburg in a united effort to create lasting change and “pave the way for a society where everyone feels welcomed, supported, and empowered”.

“Let us remember that pride is not just about celebration; it is a catalyst for positive change. It is about understanding, empathy, and the creation of truly inclusive communities. Together, we can build a world where love, respect, and acceptance are the cornerstones of our society.

“Thank you for your commitment to this cause, and may the 19th Annual Soweto Pride inspire us all to continue pushing boundaries and striving for a more just and inclusive world.”

Ends

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