

SPEAKERS CUP

Programme Director:

- Ms Tinyiko Mbentse - President of the Pan African Schools Council
- Cllr Alison Roberts – Area Council
- Chief Justice: Bella Mkhabela
- Chief Judge: Luvo Ben-Mazwi
- Chair Judge: Andile Kubheka
- Trainee Judge: Lebohang Malefane
- St Mary’s School Waverly
- The Freedom Community College in Johannesburg
- Itumeleng Mohanoe – Senior Vice President of the Pan African Debating Council and the Debating Coach
- Ms Brenda Andrews: City of Johannesburg
- Mr Thami Dlungela: Student Council Alumni
- Miss Shana Michelle Rabonda – Head of HR African Leadership Group
- Mr Siyabonga Nxumalo: Student Council Alumni
- All other JSC alumni present today
- Members of the Johannesburg Student Council
- All of my colleagues present today from the Speakers office and the City’s Legislature
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon,

To the young people of Johannesburg, I am very proud of you today. I look at you and the way you have engaged with vigour and robustness and I know that the future of the City, of the country and of the world is indeed bright, and that we will leave it in good hands.

Allow me to take you on a journey down memory lane, because in order to move forward it is important to know where we come from. Many many moons ago, in the year 1976, the young people took to the streets in the cold month of June in 1976 to fight against the then oppressive government.

They were fighting for the right to freedom and equal education. They were fighting against being educated in a language of the oppressor at the time. Many lost their lives in the process, some leaving their parents to continue the agonizing fight for democracy in our country.

This highlights the critical role that young people in our country played in achieving our democracy. In 1994, the newly established democratic government, deemed it necessary to create a united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society, in which the youth of South Africa would be key in the promotion of national reconciliation and unity, build a new patriotism and foster peace, justice and a human rights culture.

So, why is it important to understand the brief history I have just outlined? It is to remind you that you stand on the shoulders of giants who fought for you and I to be here today, in a context where race no longer matters, where being a certain Gender is

no longer a privilege, and where class no longer deems one more equal than the other.

But the story does not end there. Whilst they fought the battles of their time, the struggle for the empowerment of young people continues - it is not over, and you too, now have a very important role to play in the plight of the young people of your time.

There are many socio-economic burdens that our young people carry due to poverty, inequality, unemployment, gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF), and mental health problems, which have all been exacerbated by an unprecedented pandemic.

And as the city we remain committed to addressing the city-wide challenges faced by the young people of our city by way of the programmes that we embark on and the allocation of the budgets towards these programmes. However, we also need more participation from you our young people in the processes of local government. We as government cannot move forward without you as young people.

So I want to encourage you to continue to take interest in your communities and it's leadership. Continue to probe as to what the work of council is, and how it can improve the way it does things. When we call for young people to join our Community Based Planning and Integrated Development Planning session, I expect to see all these faces in those meetings, together with more your peers and friends.

This is because the involvement of young people in the formulation and implementation of development plans is important for service delivery and deepening democracy in the City of Johannesburg.

And these sessions that I have just mentioned (The CBP and IDP's) are key to ensuring that all voices in the City of Jo'burg, including those of young people are amplified, and that their various issues, are fully reflected and find expression in municipal plans.

These plans also include City's Youth Development Strategy which is part of our Youth Development Policy that strives to engender the active involvement of young people, and to improve the quality of lives of young people in Johannesburg, by mitigating against all social and economic challenges that may impair their human development ability.

Margaret Mead once said: **"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."**

So to our partner I must say that it is an honour to be navigating this space with likeminded and equally passionate partners such as the Pan African Schools Debating Council. We are very excited about this partnership because as government we cannot do everything for everyone on our own, we need to bring all corners of society on board when it comes to the development of young person, because as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child.

Ladies and Gentlement, as my parting shot, let me leave you with a quote from the great Tat' Madiba, who once said
“Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom”.

So to all you young and beautiful people here today, be great, be bold, be fearless, shine, let your voice carry the spirit of your fellow countryman, so that one day, you too can also be proud that your presence her on earth propelled us towards the kind of world that we can all be proud of.

With that said, I LOVE YOU. I THANK YOU.