

Address at the Launch of the Ahmed Timol Education Trust

On behalf of Ms Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education

Marie Louise Samuels

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Programme Director

The Timol Family

Principal of Ahmed Timol Secondary School, Mr Digvijay Juta

Rep. of the Organising Committee, Mr Aslam Khan

Chairperson and Members of the School Governing Body (SGB)

Distinguished Guests,

The SGB, management and staff of the Ahmed Timol Secondary School have chosen the most appropriate time to host this Gala Dinner and to launch an essential education trust in honour of Ahmed Timol.

Our presence here tonight reminds us in the most profound of ways that 2010 is the 39 th Anniversary of the tragic death of a brilliant educator and finest son of the South African revolution – Ahmed Timol.

History will judge us unkindly were we to forget that it is through great sacrifices of Timol and other patriots that we're celebrating the 20 th Anniversary of the release of former President Mandela from prison.

It is in this year that we commemorate in a democratic space the 34 th Anniversary of the heavy terror unleashed on our young people, on 16 June 1976 – an event leading ultimately to the untimely death of Timol and other patriots who died for our freedom.

We're enabled to remember, with dignity, that today is the birthday of another freedom fighter and champion of quality education, the late Eric Molobi who passed away in June 2006 after battling with cancer.

Had it not been of the daring struggles of these combatants, hosting the World Cup would have been too expensive a dream never to be afforded in our lifetime!

Accordingly, we give due credit to the leadership of Ahmed Timol Secondary School and the brains behind the education trust bearing Ahmed's name. Your work indeed ensures that the names of our fallen heroes and heroines remain indelibly on our collective memory.

I was moved when I met the Timol family. Had it not been of them, we would not have known a glowing personality with such a warm heart, whose achievements were recognised by our President. Last December, President Zuma graciously welcomed him posthumously into the Order of Luthuli, one of the highest honours in the land, for his excellent contribution and selfless sacrifice during the struggle against apartheid.

When he renamed Ahmed Timol Secondary School in March 1999, former President Nelson Mandela urged communities to “do everything possible in partnership with government to tackle the problems of crime, poverty and injustice that still prevail”.

In Mandela's words, “Timol would have encouraged those with skills to share them with the less privileged”. You have indeed taken Mandela's wish forward by launching the Ahmed Timol Education Trust. Together we can transform the lives of “the less privileged”!

My message to those endowed with skills and resources is that going by the school's excellent performance and Grade 12 pass rate, every step you take to affirm and empower its learners would not be in vain.

Last year, learners from this school of high achievers gave us a 100% pass rate in Computer Applications Technology; Mathematical Literacy; Tourism; Life Orientation and English.

They achieved a pass rate of 99% in Life Sciences; 98% in History; 97% in Geography; 95% in Business Studies; 89% in Mathematics; 81% in Accounting and 72% in Physical Sciences.

In this school we have a reservoir of brilliant minds and competent educators aided diligently by an efficient and effective management.

It would be a tragedy were we to fail to support these young people who are aptly described by our revered leader and stalwart, OR Tambo, as “the inheritors of our future”. We know for a fact that most of these learners – the inheritors of our future – come from historically disadvantaged communities of Kagiso, Mohlakeng and others.

Day in and day out, like patient and disciplined San hunters, they dare the scorching sun to come to class. Surely, we cannot disappoint them at the critical point when they have ultimately reached the zenith of their schooling years by failing to open the doors of higher learning for them.

If we are to tackle in the most sustainable of ways “the problems of crime, poverty and injustice” that Mandela has spoken of in Azzadville, we dare not fail to set in motion the Ahmed Timol Education Trust.

I'm humbled to be received as a “Friend of Ahmed Timol Secondary”. Amazingly though, the confidence you have shown in us poses an interesting irony. Granted, as ministers in charge of education, we touch lives of many in our quest to sow seeds of quality learning and teaching. But we are seldom showered with accolades. Not that we demand any.

But every move we make, like visits we recently undertook to schools, which we believe to be very critical to planning and taking informed decisions, is construed by some in the most pernicious of ways.

As true liberators, in the quest to reform our country's education system, we deem it prudent to rely on transformative principles of innovative educationists like Paulo Freire who postulates in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) that:

“Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it”.

It is most baffling how our detractors would find comfort in casting aspersions uncritically on those in charge of an education apparatus still reeling from decades of unequal resource allocation, and now with 28 000 schools under its wing.

We welcome constructive criticism. But we remain conscious of the fact that education is a societal issue. Everybody has a role to play. A blind dive into the abyss of pessimism is not part of that role. Far from it!

To honour Ahmed Timol, Eric Molobi and other political activists and their families, we invite all patriots to say with us, after OR Tambo:

“We cannot be true liberators unless the liberation we will achieve guarantees all children the rights to life, happiness and free development”.

I wish you a joyous World Cup experience and a memorable Youth Day!

Thank you.

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