

Message of Encouragement to Gugulethu for the 50th Anniversary

And the Celebrations of Fezeka's Voices

Thank you for the opportunity to address this gathering on behalf of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. He has sent his congratulations and best wishes to you all.

My name is Nomfundo Walaza. I'm the CEO of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre, which was founded by the Archbishop and his wife Mrs Leah Tutu to, among things; inspire younger generations to work for world peace.

The Arch's message reads as follows:

Good afternoon, Molweni, Absheni, Goeie middag!

I am sorry that I cannot be with you this afternoon to share with you your well-deserved celebration of the 50+ anniversary of Gugulethu.

The story of the Fezeka School Choir and Gugulethu are examples of hope, and of the unquenchable spirit that looks beyond the obvious boundaries of achievement.

In reaching a point where Gugulethu can celebrate more than 50 years of existence, we can pause to trace a long and painful journey from the dark days of apartheid to the bright day of democratic rule, which has brought with it new hope, challenges and opportunities for us to make a difference.

As we celebrate today, it is important for us to take stock of where we have come from and not to lose sight of our achievements in the short time that we have secured our freedom.

Although the challenges we encountered left us scarred, we have managed to pull ourselves together and make a difference in our communities. There are many positive things that have happened in our communities even though the focus is often on the negative things like crime, poor service delivery drug abuse and violence. Yet there is so much to be proud of.

So today we pause to celebrate the establishment of a township that was meant to accommodate displaced workers from various parts of the Cape Town – a very humble beginning.

What has kept us together through those difficult years is the strong spirit of ubuntu, the recognition that my humanity is intricately bound in yours, a recognition that together we can achieve more. The repressive apartheid regime failed to break our humanity, that which makes us who we are, the essence of humanity. The results of today's celebration show that we emerged from it stronger than before.

Today's celebrations would be inadequate without mentioning the amazing feat achieved by the Fezeka Choir and their mentor and choir master, Mr Phumi Tsweu. What started as a small project has grown into something bigger and more prestigious and amassed international acclaim.

Well done - you have done us proud with your beautiful voices.

Do you realise that you have used your God given talents to make a difference not only in your lives but that of your community and other youths?

Do you realize that you have shown others that it is not enough to just sit back and lament the lack of opportunities without exploring that which you have?

You have not only touched your local community but reached out to the international community, and look at the magnificent results.

Some of the students have been admitted to further their studies at the University of Cape Town, and this is just the beginning of better things.

Thank you Mr Tsweu for believing in our children and for offering them an opportunity to explore other possibilities. And to the students, thank you for daring to be different, reach out for the stars and keep on dreaming. To our friends in Salisbury, thank you for your support in raising scholarship funds for our students. Last but not least, thank you to Ceil Productions and All Living Things for the production of the film. You enabled our children to project their voices louder!

And to the Gugulethu community and the steering committee, you have lived up to the true meaning of your name. It is important that we take time to look closely at ourselves, and celebrate life, and to always believe that we can achieve great things. You are our Pride!

In the same way that Gugulethu was intended merely as a workers' dormitory, but grew into a vibrant and embracing community, so a choir that started out modestly is soaring to new heights and international acclaim.

Blessings to you all and Congratulations!