

**EXTRACTS FROM  
SPEECH AT TREE PLANTING,  
ALL AFRICA VILLAGE  
Alexandra, 1<sup>st</sup> September**

**OPENING REMARKS**

In August 1943, in the African township of Alexandra, the local bus company raised its fare from 4d a journey to 5d. For many it would mean paying a fifth or even a quarter of their wages on bus fares. Angry and desperate, they decided to walk to work.

It was mid-winter. It was bleakly cold. Yet every morning from thousands of small, iron-roofed houses, some 20 000 people set out along the steep main road towards the city, trudging nine or more miles to work.

Again, in the chill of nightfall, they walked the nine miles home.

The famous bus protest, in Alexandria, 56 years ago, is part of the proud history of this place. A history of men and women who were prepared to defy; to resist.

I tell this story today because it shows us how far we have come; how long and how hard our journey has been. And it reminds us too that our achievements today are built on the struggles of those who began the long walk to freedom, all those years ago.

It is wonderful to stand here today. It is wonderful to feel the energy and the determination of our youth as they prepare for these historic games.

I would like, particularly, to give a great welcome to Penny Heyns who is here today. We are proud of you, Penny. You have shown us, once again, what commitment, talent and extraordinary energy so many of our young people have. You are a credit to us all. Well done!

Today, as part of the tradition of Arbor Week, I will plant a tree. And my colleagues, the mayors of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council and the Eastern Metropolitan Local Council will join me. These will be the first of 5000 trees that will be planted in this village, thanks to Trees for Africa and the sponsors who have made this historic tree planting possible.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

This village is a fine tribute to the spirit and energy of our youth. A celebration of the enormous importance of sport in our society.

But, it is also fitting that we pause for a moment to remember those who prepared the way for this wonderful occasion.

The Alexandra Development Forum has asked me particularly to mention three young men

who gave their lives so that we could stand here today.

The first is Khehla Nthutha, a commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe who is rumoured to have been assassinated by the SADF when crossing the border from Swaziland. Sadly, the full details of his death are still to be uncovered.

The second is Toto Skosane who was ambushed by the SADF inside a house. Rather than submit to the enemy, he blew himself up with a hand grenade.

The third is Nicky Hlongwane who was assassinated by the security police and lies buried in Swaziland.

These and thousands of other young people gave their lives for what they believed in represent the energy and total commitment of our youth. They are the heroes and heroines of the struggle that made it possible for us to come together today.

And I want to thank the many people who made today possible. The combined efforts of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, the Eastern Metropolitan Local Council, the Greater Alex Development Forum and my own Department. I want to thank Jeunesse Park of Trees for Africa and their sponsors, who will plant a forest of trees in this village.

And I want to pay tribute to the spirit of partnership that has brought us all together on this great occasion.

But, in addition, as we plant the first of the many trees that will provide beauty and shade to this village for many years to come, I would like we would like us to remember the many people who showed us the way over the years, and to whom we owe so much.

I want to call on all of you to take the seedlings you will receive today and to plant them in honour or in memory of someone who has paved the way for our involvement in these games. Care for those trees and they will flourish and add beauty and value to your lives and the lives of those around you.

Plant a tree. Heal our land.